The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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AMBASSADOR DENNIS C. JETT

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 23rd of March 2011 with Dennis, D-E-N-N-I-S, Jett, J-E-T-T. Do you have a middle initial?

JETT: C.

Q: C, what does that stand for?

JETT: Coleman, C-O-L-E-M-A-N.

Q: All right, this is a first tape interview. Dennis, this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Dennis don't you?

JETT: Right.

Q: Okay, Dennis let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

JETT: June 26, 1945 in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Q: Let's talk about the family a bit. On your father's side where do the Jett's come from?

JETT: It's an old Virginia family; I don't have much family on that side because my father was an only child as was his father. They were from the Washington, DC, Northern Virginia area. I remember my grandfather had a house in Falls Church, which many years ago became a supermarket parking lot on Route 7. If you do a web search on the name you find it dates back to the late 17th century with a Peter Jett arriving at that time, so it's a family that's been around for a long time in the United States.

On my mother's side, her maiden name was Driscoll and her mother's married name was Coleman where I get my middle name from; basically Irish, County Cork, I think probably largely potato famine products. They lived in Massachusetts, which is why I was born in Waltham. They had a fair number of relatives on that side of the family but most of them stayed in the northeast.

Q: To come back to your father's side what was your grandfather up to?

JETT: He was a civil servant and I think he worked in the Treasury Department, as I recall.

Q: And your father?

JETT: My father was a career Air Force officer, or when he started it was the Army Air Corp. He served until the mid 1960's, when he retired and continued working for the Air Force as a civilian. I was born in a military hospital in Waltham and then we moved around when I was very young to a number of different places including Alabama and six months in Germany. Then Levittown, New York, when it was a new subdivision and I went to kindergarten and first grade there.

Q: Let me go back. What about your father; did he graduate from college or the military academy or anything like that?

JETT: He went to Georgetown but I'm not sure he graduated. I know he did about three years at Georgetown.

Q: Did he get caught up in the war as far as timing?

JETT: He was in World War II in the European Theater. I know he saw some combat but I don't frankly know many of the details and I didn't, unfortunately, ask him to talk about it before he died.

Q: On your mother's side what was her family like?

JETT: The women either were homemakers or had secretarial positions. She had a couple sisters and a couple brothers. One brother went to MIT and was an engineer and another one went to Harvard and was a journalist; so the boys seemed to get the college education and the girls got clerical jobs.

Q: That was very much a pattern at that time.

JETT: Yes, absolutely.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

JETT: My mother moved to Washington to get a secretarial job with the government and they must have met there somewhere in the mid '30s because I have an older brother who was born in '38. So they met in Washington.

Q: Well, you grew up in Levittown was it?

JETT: No, I went to kindergarten and first grade in Levittown and then my father got assigned to Kirkland Air Force Base in Albuquerque so we moved there. Second grade through my master's degree was all in Albuquerque with one exception of one year.

Q: What was Albuquerque like as your early memories as a kid?

JETT: When I heard that we were moving to New Mexico I expected to see cowboys riding down dirt streets and Indians and that sort of thing; it wasn't like that obviously. Albuquerque was probably around 100 thousand when we moved there so it was a smallish town. We lived close to the university, which then was an area that seemed pretty suburban. Then as the years passed the town sprawled north and east toward the mountains so it was not that far from downtown. It was a good place to grow up. It was high and dry and not a lot to do except outdoor stuff. There is a book called the Albuquerque: A City at the End of the World. The title alone gives you an idea of the sense of being isolated from civilization in a place like Albuquerque because you are far from the cultural and intellectual life of the West Coast or the East Coast. I didn't even know which baseball team to root for because we didn't have a professional baseball team and the ones in California were the closest ones yet still 800 miles away.

Q: I've been interviewing this morning a session with Ed Salazar, who was a Soviet hand. Ed grew up in a Spanish heritage going back way back before the founding of

Massachusetts or something with his family and how different the feel was for that group as the Pilgrim Fathers were nothing.

JETT: Its true, Santa Fe is the second oldest city in the United States. St. Augustine, Florida, of course, is the oldest and both of those were Spanish and predate the pilgrims by a century or so.

Q: Albuquerque, when I visited there, struck me as a kid must have been great bike country because it is relatively rolling but you can bike all over the place as a kid couldn't you?

JETT: I used to ride my bike to school every day even in grade school. I don't know whether it was less traffic or a different approach to life, but there was nothing about biking anywhere I wanted to go because it was, as you say, pretty flat. Even though my mother worked full time while I was growing up, I wasn't a latchkey kid as it was a time and place when no one locked their doors.

Q: What sort of life did you have as a kid? I mean was it just sort of get out and play or where there gangs or what?

JETT: I have three brothers. I had an older brother I'd sometimes hang with but mostly it was kids in the neighborhood that you would knock around with. In second, third and fourth grade I was in a public school and then fifth grade changed to a Catholic school. I was mostly at that point hanging with my friends that lived in my neighborhood from that same Catholic school.

Q: Was it run by nuns?

JETT: Yes.

Q: How were the nuns? How did you find them?

JETT: You know reflecting back on it, some of them were very strict and real disciplinarians and others were nice and easy to get along with in primary and middle school. I went on to a Catholic high school, but it was much more mixed there; about half of the teachers were lay teachers, civilians. Most of the others were priests and there were a couple nuns but they only taught the girls in high school. In grade school, the strictness of the nuns and their regimentation and discipline were memorable.

Q: In your family how Catholic were you?

JETT: Not very, when I was growing up. My father was not Catholic. He described himself as a heathen and had really no religion. My mother was nominally a Catholic. Being Irish she had that Catholic tradition, but she didn't really push it too much. I, as a kid, I was an altar boy and because of going to a Catholic grade school and high school, I went to mass every Sunday and observed the other kinds of requirements of the religion.

Q: Did the priesthood ever temp you?

JETT: You know I thought about it; I'd get out the recruiting brochures for the priesthood. I remember I would look at the various orders and it seemed that the most important difference between them was who had the coolest uniforms.

Q: Oh yeah.

JETT: I must say I thought about it but never seriously and never for very long. I had more an aspiration to go into the Navy. I guess because my father was a career Air Force officer, my act of youthful rebellion was to go into the Navy.

Q: Where did your family fall politically or did they?

JETT: They were pretty much apolitical. Once when Eisenhower was running in 1956, I remember visiting the campaign offices and Eisenhower people were giving away as many bumper stickers and lapel pins as we wanted and the Stevenson people said oh just take one or two. I took one of the bumper stickers and stuck it on the car without telling my father. He discovered it was there and was a little bit upset because being an Air Force officer he pointed out that he had to be apolitical and he didn't want any bumper stickers.

There was an appreciation for current events in my family even if no real political involvement however. We always subscribed to Newsweek and watched the evening news on television every night, but neither of my parents really expressed much in the way of political beliefs.

Q: Were you much of a reader as a kid?

JETT: Yeah, I can remember reading Sherlock Holmes, G.K. Chesterton, the Hardy Boys. I wasn't a bookworm by any stretch. I was more typical boy out riding my bike and playing with my friends.

Q: In playing with your friends I assume particularly in this period there wasn't a lot of organization you just got out and played sandlot football or baseball or something like that?

JETT: That's right. I marvel at kids today who are shuttled in the car to endless organized activities. My younger daughter, who is finishing middle school this year, takes ballet lessons, flute lessons, art lessons, and field hockey. It is just one thing after another. I did cub scouts, which was organized obviously, but the rest of the time it was just making up your own games. I remember we had a drainage problem on our street and you don't get a lot of rain in New Mexico, but when it does it can cause flash floods. We lived on a street where the water became curb deep all the way across. Our street became a river for a few hours after a heavy rain. They finally installed some water runoff pipes under the

street and they dug up the whole street. I can remember playing war games with my friends in the excavations.

Q: Trenches, oh yes.

JETT: Exactly so that was a popular game when the street was torn up.

Q: I think of that time I go back even farther than you but your mother would say go out and play and we are going to eat at 6:30 and be home by then; that was kind of it.

JETT: Right. Basically it was that way. My mother worked as a secretary at the same air force base. So she put in a full day's work and then came home and had to make dinner; so basically she wanted us out of her hair. We actually ate earlier than 6:30. She got home about 4:30 and we usually ate about 5:30 or 6:00 so she would say go occupy yourself somewhere and come back for dinner.

Q: In school how did you find your studies let's say at the elementary school? Were you a good school kid or not?

JETT: You know at the elementary level I was your typical boy and I wasn't a great student. When I would apply myself I'd always do very well, but often I didn't have the self-discipline. I compare myself to my daughter who, despite all those activities I described, is a straight A student. She sits down every night and does her homework religiously; she has a lot more discipline than I had.

Q: In elementary school were there any teachers who you still remember or stand out?

JETT: I had a fourth grade teacher named Mrs. Kitchel. I think she stood out because she was nice and she was generally pretty easy. Then from fifth grade through eighth grade I was in a Catholic school and the nuns were the teachers. I don't really remember any of them individually.

Q: Well then when you got to high school you went to a Catholic high?

JETT: Right.

Q: Were the Father or Monks as part of the educational process?

JETT: I would say probably half the teachers were lay teachers and about 40 percent of the teachers were priests and about 10 percent were nuns. I can still remember a lot of the priests. Father Eggert has just retired and was stern, but inspiring. Father Barzak dropped out and married a former nun. Father Ghopal had a drinking problem. He went on to be accused of sexual abusing a student in the 1970s at a university where he was teaching. Father Cushing came out of the closet a few years later, Father Fitzgerald also had a drinking problem, Father Sanchez went on to become the Bishop of Santa Fe and then got

reported by a couple of female parishioners for sexual harassment. Father Falbo and Father Desantis tried to educate us, often with limited success.

Q: Yeah, sort of the history of the Catholic Church.

JETT: Yes, it was sometimes a sad collection.

Q: Well the church is going through a very difficult time now I guess.

JETT: Yes, but I think all that has changed is the institution is less able to hide its secrets and problems than in the past.

Q: In high school were there any courses that you particularly liked and didn't like?

JETT: I liked the math courses. I had a guy named Eli McCullough who was my Algebra teacher and a great guy. Some of the science courses were interesting and challenging. Father Eggert taught biology and that was kind of fun. I remember Father Desantis trying to teach us history and was trying to give us an appreciation for how the Spanish Conquistadors spread diseases among the native population and that sort of thing. I don't know that we ever really appreciated what he was trying to do. I would say that science and math were probably the most interesting. I took German, but the teacher was kind of stiff and had never been to Germany even though she was a German teacher. I liked Geometry and we had a fellow named Colonel Dowd, who I think was basically senile, but he was enough of a teacher to impart the logic of the axioms and postulates. I remember it finally clicking in my mind the process of proving a theorem and it was kind of like this revelation. I really got into the logic of the whole thing.

Q: I'm surprised you took German. I would have thought Spanish would have been sort of the prevalent course.

JETT: The Hispanic and Native American culture were certainly prevalent in New Mexico, but I got it into my head that I was going to be an engineer and that scientific articles were in German. I remember when I first went to high school they did some testing and they decided I should take a classical course of study which included four years of Latin. I said, "No, I want the scientific track, I don't want to take Latin. I want to take four years of science and four years of math and two years of a language." I chose German because of the fact that scientific articles were often written in German at the time.

Q: What was social life like at the high school?

JETT: I had a girlfriend, the occasional dance and party and when you were able to drive you would date and that sort of thing. Beyond the occasional dance or party it was just kind of hanging out and driving from one drive-in restaurant to another.

Q: Were you much into movie or TV or that?

JETT: Not terribly. I would watch a certain amount of television but I can't say that I was into either in a big way.

Q: Were you looking as you were getting ready to graduate from high school looking at any of the service academies?

JETT: I was actually and my girlfriend's mother was the county clerk so she was an elected official and, therefore, had some connections to Congressmen. One Congressman she knew had filled his quota for the Naval Academy, but offered me an appointment to West Point. I said, "No, I want to go to the Naval Academy." Again, I'm not sure why I wanted to do that. The middle of New Mexico is as far from the sea as one can get. But I had my eyes set on the Naval Academy so I joined NROTC when I entered college at the University of New Mexico. UNM was about a mile down the street from where I grew up so it was an easy, logical and inexpensive choice. Ten appointments a year were made from NROTC to the Naval Academy. So I applied for an appointment to the Naval Academy by that route and at the beginning of the summer after my first year in college, I got a telegram. I'd never received a telegram before, and it said, "We've just had somebody drop out of the incoming class at the Naval Academy on the first day. If you want to enter the Naval Academy be here next week, one week from today." So I said okay and so a week later I was a midshipman at Annapolis. I had to bring $300 and give them that amount. After that you belonged to the Navy and everything you had was provided by the Navy. This was at the end of June 1964. I entered the class of '68 along with, although I didn't know it at the time, Oliver North and future Senator James Webb.

Q: That was a very famous class.

JETT: Admiral Mike Mullen, the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was also in that class. There were 1,300 of us in the incoming class and so I started my second year of college as a plebe.

Q: My brother was the class of '40; he's ten years older than I am so they got World War II. He started at Pearl Harbor as an ensign. Anyway, how did you find plebe year?

JETT: It was one of those excruciating experiences where you are constantly harassed and constantly scared and just running around doing all the ridiculous things they have you do. It's like boot camp. I think anybody who has been though boot camp and, of course, these days if you said that to a group of students they wouldn't know what you were talking about.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: It is one of those formative experiences that you hated while you are going through it. But after it's over, you're glad you did it and felt that it was a beneficial experience even though you would never want to repeat it.

Q: How did you find the plebe year and how did you find the training method? Was it still lines on a page or was it a bit more open?

JETT: It was still very regimented, although he academy had just loosened up a little bit. My year was the first year where you didn't march to class as a company and where everybody didn't have to take exactly the same naval engineering curriculum. With my year you were able to minor in something. Everybody took the same core courses, but you could minor you in a very limited number of fields by taking half a dozen elective courses in that area. I put down I wanted to be a minor in management and then I listed a number of secondary choices. The Naval Academy, however, for whatever reason I'm not sure, decided that I should be a systems analysis minor. So that is what I would have taken. But everybody still had exactly the same courses except for those few electives.

The teachers were often rigid and had virtually no autonomy. I remember being in a history class of eight students. Naval officers taught about half the classes and the other half of the professors were civilians. A naval officer taught this particular history class. Whenever you answered a question, whenever you said anything in class he made us stand at attention. It seemed silly to me to have that kind of regimentation in a class of eight students. He cared more about memorizing facts than having any kind of discussion of history.

On the other hand I had an English professor and also a math professor, both civilians, who encouraged a more relaxed atmosphere and wanted discussion of the topics. They seemed very frustrated by the limitations placed on their teaching however. Everybody in the class, all 1,300 of us, for instance, would have the same reading assignment in English on the same day. Then his job was to talk about only the assignment. It was the same in all the other subjects. All of us took the same exams and they would grade the entire 1,300 of us and create a bell-shaped curve and decide where the A's and the B's and the C's were. It took the initiative and responsibility away from the professors. Being a professor now I appreciate the latitude I have where I decide what I want to teach, how I want to teach it and how I want to test and grade. I sensed the frustration they faced in having that discretion taken away from; they were told what was going to be covered and their job was to talk about it in each class and not a whole lot more.

Q: In the first place I imagine plebe year there wasn't much time for introspection or discussion or anything else; you were running around all the time.

JETT: Right and it's not the kind of environment that encourages much introspection. I still lecture at the Naval Academy on occasion; I have a good friend there who asks me to come down every other year. It's gotten better, but the military system seems designed to teach you how to memorize facts and to respond accordingly. When the order comes, they don't want people to engage in introspection; they want people who follow orders. What I think is missing is the critical analysis piece of it and what I try to do with students at Penn State is get them to think about what the problem is, what you need to know to analyze that problem and also to think about your own prejudices, your own background and how you approach it. All of that goes into the way you look at the

problem. I tell them to be careful of your sources and stress you can't go to the Internet and just pull off what some blogger has written and say here are the facts. You have to dig down to a bedrock of established facts and then start constructing your argument from there. The academy didn't encourage you to do that; it was simply memorize this and that. One of the many features of plebe year was you had a small blue book called Reef Points, which you had to carry with you at all times. You had to memorize the entire book. In addition you had to memorize the menu for the next three meals and the officers of the watch who changed every day. Upper classmen at any point could ask you any of these questions.

Q: But also how is the cow?

JETT: How is the cow? Sir, she walks, she talks, full of chalk and so forth.

Q: The female of the bovine species…as a kid I grew up in Annapolis…

JETT: Right. That was the required response when asked at a meal by an upperclassman how much milk was left on the table.

Q: …when my brother was there and I stayed on so I memorized some of the Reef Points thing.

JETT: Right, well you know that and all the other stuff like the famous naval sayings; memorization seemed to be where the emphasis of the education was.

Q: You know as you moved on through the academy did you get a feel for what was the role of the Navy or where you wanted to be in the Navy?

JETT: Well I began to get that but then I didn't get all that far. I completed plebe year and became a third classman and went off to my summer cruise and then went home; I spent nine weeks on a destroyer-the USS Bausell, DD-845. She was used sunk in 1987 after being used for target practice for missiles. When I was on her in the summer of 1965, we sailed from San Diego to San Francisco, then on to Tacoma and Pearl Harbor before returning to San Diego. The first couple of days into the voyage we ran into a storm and the ship was rolling 45 degrees from one side to another and taking waves that were splashing over the tallest parts of the ship. It was then perhaps that I decided I didn't want a life at sea.

After the cruise, I went back to Albuquerque on leave and then returned to start my sophomore year, my youngster year. By that time decided I wanted to get married rather than become a Naval officer; you couldn't stay in Annapolis and be married. So I went back and got married to my high school girlfriend and was put into the reserves as an enlisted man, an E-3 or seaman. The naval reserve there had a facility in Albuquerque. I got promoted to E-4 and then E-5. I also went back to the University of New Mexico. By going to summer school and taking a heavy load I completed my degree in four years despite the fact that the year in Annapolis was a repetition of my freshman year at UNM.

Whenever you go into Annapolis, they made you take the whole four years regardless of whether you've had no college, one, two, three or even four years of college. I graduated in economics, finished my degree requirements in August of '67, applied for commission, got a commission in the Naval Reserve as an intelligence officer and started graduate school at the UNM, also in economics. I continued there and got my masters degree in June of '69.

Q: At the University of New Mexico how did you find the education there after the Naval Academy coming back to that?

JETT: Well, the University of New Mexico is not a great university. New Mexico is a poor state, and in engineering my first year in college I remember sitting in a large lecture class and the professor saying, "Okay, I want you to look at the person in front of you, look at the person in back of you, the person to the right of you and the person to the left of you. The reason I asked you do that is because those people aren't going to be here next semester because one in five of you is going to make it to sophomore year." So there was an attitude that we are a state institution and we have to take you in, but we don't have to keep you. After I came back from the Naval Academy I decided I was going to be a math major. So my junior year in college I was a math major and then I decided well I don't really want to do that either. My senior year in college I decided that I wanted to be an economics major and so I became an economics major and a math minor. Again, the classes were fairly large; when I look at potential universities where my daughter might go I think she is going to have a great advantage in hopefully going to a very good small liberal arts college and getting a lot of inspiring teachers. Some of the teachers were okay but a lot of them were seemed to regard the students more of an annoyance than much of anything else.

Q: You graduated in '67?

JETT: Yes, I finished my degree in August of '67 and I think they actually awarded it in June of '68 but I finished the requirements for my BA in August of '67 and my MA in '69.

Q: Did you move into the Navy at the time?

JETT: I stayed in the reserves; I didn't have to do any active service. I just did my two weeks in the summer and the one weekend a month you would do drills. I stayed with it for a couple reasons. One, the Vietnam War was on and I didn't particularly want to get caught up in that. Also, I needed the money as a graduate student and finally I actually enjoyed what I did. My designator was 1615, which meant I was a cryptology officer so I would go off to places for my two-week summer duty and work on classified projects and training. My first job was working for the State of New Mexico as an economist and when you went on reserve duty they paid you your regular salary; it was double dipping for those two weeks so I had a strong financial incentive. I enjoyed the opportunity to go off for two weeks, wear a uniform and talk about cryptologic questions and issues.

Q: You got married. Did your wife go on to college or what?

JETT: She did not, she did about a year in college and then when we got married, we had two kids and she worked as a secretary to help support us as I went to school.

Q: Well then sort of following through what did you do? You were working for the New Mexico state government?

JETT: Actually after getting my masters degree, the very first job I had was in Austin, Texas with something called the Texas Water Development Board. I went there and discovered it was largely an operation with three times as many economists as they needed. Their task was to come up with economic justifications for more irrigation projects. They would justify them as being for recreation and boating purposes in West Texas. Really it was because the agricultural interests there were mining the water out of the Ogallala formation and the water table was dropping. Since they wanted to continue agriculture in West Texas, they wanted the government to subsidize their irrigation. I found that job very frustrating; I liked Austin but we had been there literally two months and I got a job offer to go to work in Santa Fe for the Bureau of Revenue, the agency in the state government that collected the sales tax and the income tax. It was doing tax analysis and it was Santa Fe and a chance to get back to New Mexico. I remember one of the first days in my job in Austin I was told next Monday is a holiday, it's Jefferson Davis' birthday. I said, "Fine, I will take the day off but I will keep my celebration small." Given the job and the culture, I was happy to have the opportunity to go back to Santa Fe and work.

I eventually became the director of tax analysis for the Bureau of Revenue. I would make revenue projections and tell the legislatures how much money to expect to have that coming year. When they would propose exempting things like prescription drugs from the sales tax I would have to do an analysis and tell them how much money that was going to cost and where the benefit was going to fall. It was interesting work because you could see you had an impact on policy. After two years though I decided I pretty much reached the top of what I could aspire to in Santa Fe and I thought the federal government had a lot more upward potential for economists and so I was looking around for other opportunities. This friend of mine who I went to graduate school with had only been a naturalized American citizen for about five years and he gave me this brochure that essentially said, "Join the Foreign Service and see the world." He couldn't use it because at the time the requirement was to be a citizen for ten years to take the exam. I looked at it and said, "Hey, this sounds interesting and they hire economists." I took the written exam in the fall of '71, I passed it and in early '72 I decided to go to Washington to take the oral exam. At that time, the oral exam consisted of being grilled by three people for a couple hours on any question they wanted to ask. I remember Melissa Welles was the chair of the oral exam panel and so I went in, got grilled and then she asked me to step out. They deliberated and she came out and I decided I never wanted to play poker with Melissa Welles. I thought I would be able to read on her face whether I had passed or failed, but it was completely opaque and expressionless. Then she stuck out her hand and said, "Congratulations, you've passed." I went on and took the physical and the

background investigation and in November of '72 packed up the kids and the wife in the Volvo station wagon and drove from Santa Fe to FSI.

Q: I would like to go back a bit. The election of 1960 got a lot of young students and all involved. This is Nixon versus Kennedy on both sides. Did that particular one engage you?

JETT: I remember being fascinated by the fact that Kennedy was a Catholic and I doubted that he would get elected because of that. He actually came to Albuquerque and I remember walking down to the end of the block and seeing his motorcade go by. Of course, everybody remembers his "Ask not what your country can do for you" speech, but I was still a little young to ask myself that. Then, of course, I was walking to chemistry class as a freshman at UNM when I heard that he had been shot. Then I was at graduate school when his brother was shot so I remember the political turmoil, but was not involved that much.

Q: Well then you were sort of there in an isolated area but did the protests both for civil rights or for Vietnam affect you at all?

JETT: There wasn't too much in the way of civil rights because we had a very small African-American population in New Mexico and the civil rights of Hispanics or Native Americans was not a problem that attracted much attention at the time. I do remember the only time I demonstrated was when George Wallace came to town and he was running for president. A couple of us stood on the road leading to the football stadium where he was going to speak and help up signs protesting his bigotry. People would drive by and say oh you dirty hippies and things like that. There were also considerable anti-war protests. I tell my students today that it was not something that they can relate to because they don't have the draft to worry about. When people were being drafted off of campus and sent off to fight and die in Vietnam, it provoked a lot of passion and protests against the war and companies like Dow Chemical because they produced napalm. I didn't really get involved too much in anti-war protests, but I do remember being thankful that I had a deferment because I was in the Naval reserves. Nonetheless every couple months I'd get a letter from the Selective Service Board and asking what my status was. For the Naval Reserve I had to take a physical once and went downtown and took the physical with a bunch of potential draftees. Some of the things they did to avoid passing the physical were amazing and to this day I remember the experience and the anxiety of those people as they waited to see what their fate would be. It was very much felt everywhere in the country.

Q: You started the Foreign Service; do you remember any of the questions that were asked of you during the oral?

JETT: I remember some on the written exam and a few from the oral. There was a copy of Time magazine that came out that week with a cover story on whether taxes were too high. One of the questioners asked, "I know that you may not have read this article but can taxes be too high?" I was a tax economist, but I can't remember what I answered. I

have subsequently come up with a much better answer, but whatever it was, it was sufficient. I also remember Melissa Welles asking, "If there were a foreigner who you had to recommend five books on America to read, what five books would you recommend?" Another question was if you were in Brazil and there was an American company interested in setting up a business there, what kind of information would you put in a report that would be useful to that company.

Q: I think probably this is a good place to stop because we can pick it up when you came into the Foreign Service and we will talk about your class and all that. When did you come in?

JETT: November of '72, it was the 104th class of A100. I understand they renumbered them or have started it over.

Q: I think they have. I came in, you were the 104th; I was in class 1 in 1955.

JETT: Really, wow.

Q: Today is March 30, 2011. Okay do you remember where we left off?

JETT: I think I was just joining the Foreign Service.

Q: Yeah, okay, when did you come into the Foreign Service?

JETT: I started in November of 1972.

Q: Okay, in the first place were you familiar with Washington at all or not?

JETT: I had some familiarity. I had been there as a tourist and I can remember in high school they still had the steps of the Washington Monument open and I ran up those steps.

Q: Oh yeah, that's a rite of passage.

JETT: I think they stopped that long ago so people don't have heart attacks. My father was actually from Washington, DC, northern Virginia area. My grandfather had a house in Falls Church, and had a house on Alaska Avenue in the District and a couple other properties.

Q: Oh sure so you were not…where did you settle in?

JETT: For A-100?

Q: Yeah.

JETT: I remember the first thing we got to town was to check in at the Holiday Inn in Rosslyn. We parked in the underground garage and the first night we were there the car was broken into and they rummaged through our things including some birthday presents for my older daughter. So that was our introduction.

Q: Welcome to Washington, yeah.

JETT: Right. Then we rented a little duplex in Alexandria, it was near the Masonic Memorial.

Q: Oh yeah.

JETT: We thought about buying, but it was one of those things where you never know how long you are here for. You are here for six weeks at A-100, but after that it all depended on your first post. You didn't know if you were going to do language or not, nobody knew at that point where they would be assigned; so we just had to make temporary arrangements.

Q: What was your class like, the composition of your class? How big it was, what minorities and background?

JETT: It was about 55 and ten of those were USIA officers. We had maybe 20 percent women and several minorities; both were under represented but they were represented.

Q: How did you feel you fit in at the time?

JETT: We all got along well and I did not feel like an outsider since those in the group cam from a pretty wide range of backgrounds. We developed a lot of class cohesion. They took us through management exercises and that developed some solidarity; we seemed to get along well in general. We had parties together, including a St. Patrick's Day party at our place that was very lively. The average age at that point was around 27; I think it's actually gone up a little bit since then. I was a little bit younger than average but I had a master's degree and several years of work experience, which was pretty much the average of people coming in at that point. We had three or four people with law degrees; one guy with a PhD but most of us had master's degrees. A couple people just had bachelor degrees.

Q: As an economic officer how did your training work?

JETT: We were all in the same A-100 class. We all went on and did other kinds of things related to our first posting including language classes. I received consular training and area studies, but no specific economic training.

Q: Did you want to go any particular or did you have sort of a target there or were you willing to let the system take care of you?

JETT: Having grown up in New Mexico and never really learning to speak Spanish I decided that I wanted to try Latin America. They gave us our list about maybe half way through A-100 of the possible assignments; there was a rotational job in Buenos Aires. So I thought that was exotic and it was Latin America so I put that down. I think of the 45 of us, 29 got their first choice. I was fortunate enough to be one of them. It was described as a junior rotational assignment where I was supposed to do a year of consular work and then six months in the economic section and six months in the political section. I thought that is good, as I'd get broad exposure. I prepared for that and I took consular training as well as language training. But when I got to post they said I was going to be in the political section the entire two years. I thought great; I don't want to do visas for a year, that's fine with me.

Q: What was the situation in Argentina when you got there? Was this still '72?

JETT: It was July of '73.

Q: '73.

JETT: It was a very uncertain time where no one knew what was going to happen. In May '73 the military government headed by General Lanusse decided they had had enough of trying to run the country so they allowed elections, but they wouldn't allow Peron to come back and run. So the Peronist Party put up a guy named Hector Campora, who was a dentist, instead and Campora was elected. I arrived July 9th and Campora was in power for just a couple more weeks. He resigned and turned it over to the Speaker of the House, Raul Lastiri, who called for new elections. Peron came back and he ran and won the election. He lasted about a year before he died. He went up to Paraguay on a trip, came back with a cold and died at 78 years old. His wife Isabel was vice president so she took over. Peron chose her because he knew she would never be a political threat to him. Unfortunately she had zero qualifications or preparation for the job and made Sarah Palin look like an elder statesman.

Political sections divide up the country into various components and each officer is responsible for following specific areas. My reporting assignments were to cover universities, the Jewish community, minor provincial political parties and terrorism. Terrorism was a growth field because there was constant rightwing and leftwing terrorism. The left was randomly assassinating police officers, military officers, and on about three or four occasions attacked military bases, with 100 or more people and tried to steal weapons. The right was responding with random acts of violence against anybody they thought was a leftist. There was something called the Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance, which was a rightwing death squad. I remember we had a walk-in at the embassy one day and, being the junior political officer, I got to handle whoever came in off the street with a desire to see the ambassador or see somebody in the embassy. So I went down and this guy hands me his business card that has his name and below that it said Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance. I said, "It's nice to meet you Mr. whatever his name was, what can I do for you. He said, "Well, it's not what you can do for me, it's

what I can do for you." I said, "Oh, what would that be?" He said in effect, "Anything you want."

Q: Oh God.

JETT: I thought for a moment since there was a taxi driver that short changed me once and it was an opportunity to have him eliminated, but I resisted that impulse. Anyhow, I thanked him for his card and his time and that was the last I saw of him; but that was the kind of place it was very strange. Peron was one of those leaders who were always trying to enhance his own power and cut down any potential rival. That's why his wife, a nightclub dancer with at best a high school education, was named as his vice president. There was a labor leader, a Peronist named Rucci who was considered a possible heir apparent and he was assassinated at the time; so it was a very violent time. It only got worse once Mrs. Peron took over, she had an advisor named Lopez Rega. To say he was Rasputin like would be an insult to the memory of Mr. Rasputin. Lopez Rega was strange beyond belief; but was widely thought to be the most powerful person in the country. So the anti-terrorism effort was going on and all these kind of groups were freelancing some and encouraged by Lopez Rega; some by groups in the military and so it was kind of random, chaotic violence and the country was rapidly going to hell.

I left in July of '75 and already it was quite clear that the situation was not going to last. In March of '76 the military came back. To the surprise of no one and the regret of few, they staged a coup and ousted Mrs. Peron. Then they went about dealing with the terrorism problem in the way that militaries usually deal with things -- by wielding a blunt instrument. That's when the dirty war began in earnest and the word 'disappeared' became a noun as well as a verb form; the Argentine military arrested anyone who looked like a leftist and took nine or ten thousand of those people and threw them out of an airplane over the ocean. Even to this day they are still arguing in Argentina whether those efforts saved the country from Communism or whether they were human rights abuses and whether people involved ought to be punished for it. And those that were "disappeared" were often women and a number of them had children while detained so Argentina is now dealing with hundreds of people in their thirties who were raised by the people that killed their parents.

Q: Well let's stick to the time you were there. In the first place when you arrived you were a brand new officer and you've been given some pretty important elements of our interest. Who was our ambassador and what was the tone of the embassy toward what was happening?

JETT: John Davis Lodge was the ambassador when I arrived and the DCM was Max Krebs. The political counselor was Bill Sowash and his deputy was Wayne Smith. Roger Gamble was also in the political section and he was the labor attaché. We were reporting all the chaos, but didn't really have a clear sense of which way it was going. I must say John Davis Lodge, if you were making a movie and wanted an ambassador and called up central casting and said send somebody who looks like an ambassador, John Davis Lodge

would have been the perfect guy. In fact, he appeared in a movie with Marlene Dietrich. He was a former Congressman, former governor, as well.

Q: Oh yes, I saw that movie about Katherine the Great. He had long hair; yeah he was great he was quite something.

JETT: Yes he was. He spoke great Spanish, he spoke great French and he was a complete stuffed shirt and a fool. I remember there was a Washington Post reporter named Lewis Diuguid who, while I was in language training before going to Buenos Aires, who wrote an article that appeared in the style section about what it's like to go to a reception at the ambassador's residence in Buenos Aires, which was an incredible, elegant and beautiful house that occupied a square block of downtown Buenos Aires. The article described in detail how the ambassador toward the end of the meal would signal his accordion player to come over and then he would start singing at the table. There would be a little bit of that and then you would adjourn to this magnificent ballroom and he would continue to sing. He had a favorite Argentine couple. The man would play the piano and his wife would sing duets with Lodge; kind of a Porgy and Bess routine.

Meanwhile, if anything serious was to be done on the diplomatic front in terms of talking to people, Max Krebs and others in the embassy who were on the sidelines of this dinner show handled that. They were conducting diplomacy, while Lodge was doing the entertaining because he always loved an audience.

I thought this article is completely exaggerated, this is ridiculous; it can't be like that. Shortly after I arrived in Buenos Aires I got invited to a reception at the residence because I was control officer for Frank Ortiz who was the office director back in Washington who was visiting. I remember I had this cream colored shirt with a little pattern in it and I heard later that Lodge called over his assistant, Bob Felder, and said to him, "Who is that guy over there?" We only worked on the same floor for several months at that point and yet he had no idea of who I was. Felder told him and Lodge said to Felder, "Will you tell that young man if he wants to stay in diplomacy he needs to buy himself a white shirt." Lodge once dispatched Felder to return to the residence from Mar del Plata, where Lodge was vacationing at the beach, because he wanted Felder to fetch something he forgot, his handkerchiefs I believe.

The dinner made clear the article by Diuguid was no exaggeration. In fact, it was as if it had scripted the evening. Around dessert time Lodge called over the accordion player, he started to sing, after a couple of numbers we got up and went to the ballroom where he continued to sing with this Argentine woman while her husband played the piano. Meanwhile, Max Krebs and Ortiz were talking to the Peronist leadership, which were invited to this party. There was a great deal of uncertainty as to whether they would actually come to this reception for Ortiz because our relationship with the Peronists at that time was very much in question. How was Peron going to reinvent himself, what attitude was he going to take toward the United States and vice versa were open questions at the time. Anyhow, the evening ended and we were all about to leave. The embassy staff was the last to leave as usual. Somehow Lodge found out Krebs had been in the

backroom having a serious talk with the Peronists and he just exploded in front of all of us and said, "I've been stabbed in the back before but never in my own house. How could you do this to me?" Max Krebs had to say nothing and it was rather embarrassing.

Q: Was the issue the mere fact of dealing with a Peronist or…?

JETT: No, I think it was the fact that Lodge wasn't part of the conversation; he was off singing and entertaining the guests and so Max thought the Peronists are here, it's an opportunity to talk to them with Ortiz so he did. Lodge was just upset that he wasn't part of the conversation. Initially, when Peron first came back Lodge was repeating the line of the Argentine oligarchy that Peron was evil, he was a pervert, he was this and he was that. Then he went off to meet Peron for the first time and he came back completely captivated by the guy and said, "Oh this guy is terrific, he is the savior of Argentina." When Lodge left post in November 1973, he got on a boat back to the States; you could leave on a ship and go home. That was one of the ways the U.S. Government subsidized American shipping lines. Instead of flying back to Washington you could get on a boat and take a much slower and much more expensive trip home. As the boat pulled out John Davis Lodge was heard singing O Pampa Mia.

Lodge was so bad as ambassador that there is a declassified memo on the website of the State Department historian from an NSC staff member who wrote to Henry Kissinger in November 1971 about Lodge and said "the country is paying a very heavy foreign affairs cost by retaining Ambassador Lodge in his present position." That incompetence did not prevent Reagan from naming him ambassador to Switzerland in 1983 however.

Lodge was replaced by Robert C. Hill who was a very interesting character, a very savvy Republican political operative I guess you might say. He was youngest ambassador at we had when he was named ambassador to Costa Rica years before. He had actually been ambassador five times, this was his fifth Spanish speaking country and he still didn't speak hardly any Spanish. But he was remarkably effective and had pretty good judgment. Given that he was kind of a senior statesman at that point and he wasn't getting much attention from Henry Kissinger, he was not above putting a stick into Washington's eye by sending in a telegram that he knew was not going to be well received; he felt that it had to be said nonetheless and had the integrity to say it. Plus he was fearless because he did not have to worry about how it might affect his career at that point.

Q: How did you work? This was a tricky situation and you were reporting on terrorism and I guess the Jewish community was it Timmerman or somebody?

JETT: I didn't meet Timmerman until I was in Israel in 1983; this is just before I went back to Washington to be the desk officer for Argentina. I don't know where Timmerman was at that point; his son is now foreign minister oddly enough and has just apparently made a deal with the Iranians but that's a different story. I didn't meet Timmerman there but there was a guy named Marshall Meyer who was a Rabbi, a fixture of the Jewish community.

Q: Was the Jewish community under any particular pressure?

JETT: They were under pressure because there was some identification of them with the left and by extension with terrorism because they were intellectuals and leftists and the right did not distinguish between being a leftist and a terrorist. Argentina has one of the largest Jewish communities in the world in Buenos Aires. Most of them were not involved politically and wanted to keep their heads down and not attract any reaction from an overwhelmingly Catholic country.

Q: Why was there such a big Jewish community?

JETT: That's a good question. I suppose that it was one of the places that was willing to receive Jews before, during and after World War II. It was a place that traditionally had a lot of immigrants. Workers from other countries, mainly Italian and Spanish, came to harvest the crops and then would go home. You had a lot of people who came and stayed, you had an Anglo-Argentine community, with people who for five generations had been there and still spoke the Queen's English and little Spanish, which put them in a difficult situation during the war over the Falklands-Malvinas.

Q: Yes.

JETT: So it was a place that attracted a lot of refugees economic and political; migrants of all kinds.

Q: You had responsibility for reporting on the terrorist groups, who were they? I mean you mentioned both right and left but were they coming out of any particular sources?

JETT: There were two main leftwing terrorist groups, the ERP, the People's Revolutionary Army and the Montoneros. The ERP was more violent and they were both pretty strong organizations. The Montoneros were identified with the Peronists until Peron gave one of his first major speeches in from the balcony of the Casa Rosada. In it, he said something about I am not going to be pushed around by the bearded ones; meaning the longhaired lefties. At that point, there was this massive walkout of a good percentage of the young people in the crowd. They had been looking forward to Peron's return thinking he was going to be a leftist like Allende in Chile. Peron was very good at speaking in generalities and slogans and so it was unclear where he would stand. When he came back it turned out he was going to be far more conservative and pretty far right. So it was a very dramatic moment when they realized that and walked out.

Q: Were we keeping at the embassy an eye to the Castro influence when you talk about the bearded ones and all?

JETT: That was always a fear back then that any kind of Communist influence was an automatic red flag you might say. Again, it was unclear how, out of this political chaos and violence, things were going to emerge and so the proponents of stability usually have

a stronger argument when you can't predict the outcome. Not unlike a lot of situations at the moment in the Middle East.

Q: Did you get out in the countryside much or was it pretty much a centric operation for the embassy?

JETT: It was pretty difficult to get out of the capital because of the terrorism problem. When I got there there were 200 Americans in the embassy; there was a USIA guy in Cordova who the Montoneros shot and kidnapped. They eventually released him and he survived. Then about a year later we had a consular agent also in Cordova who was murdered by the terrorists. At one point makeshift rockets were fired at the residence. They were set up in the back of a pickup truck with a timer, they didn't really do any damage and weren't particularly effective, but it made things very uneasy. There were things like that going on so in the midst of all this we cut the size of the embassy staff in half down to 100 Americans and there was prohibition against travel outside the capital. Ambassador Hill had a Marine guard in the residence and we had a crazy Security Officer that wanted to issue hand grenades to the Marines, but was thankfully restrained.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: We went to Mar del Plata to the beach once, which was a four-hour drive from Buenos Aires. But beyond that, it was hard to go anywhere outside of Buenos Aires, particularly to a place like Cordova. Back in those days it was also very hard to communicate upcountry. It was easier to call the United States than most of the rest of Argentina. I traveled much more when I was desk officer and came back in '83-'85 than when I was actually posted there.

Q: I would think with Peron coming back and all that the political reporting the attachés would be as significant part of the political reporting complex or something wouldn't they? Because waiting for the military shoe to drop.

JETT: They were very active and we had a huge CIA station there too. One of the things that happened when I was there was Philip Agee published his book where he came out publicly and named the names of every CIA officer he knew. He was a former CIA guy who went over to the other side. He had a Cuban girlfriend or that helped persuade him to convert. His book, called Inside the Company, detailed the kinds of things he did as a CIA officer with diplomatic cover. He named names and there were three people in the embassy in Buenos Aires who were identified and they immediately packed up and left including the station chief. So that was going on and there was a lot of interest in Washington in what we were reporting. So all of us were constantly talking to the Peronists and to anybody else we could to try and make sense of what was going on.

Q: I mean I realize you are at the bottom of the food chain as a young political officer but did you feel that there was a connection between the thought of Henry Kissinger and also Richard Nixon about our policy towards Argentina that was well interesting?

JETT: I didn't see that much interest at my level. I don't think it was a surprise to anybody when the military came back and removed Mrs. Peron and there was probably some degree of relief because of her incompetence; but it wasn't like Chile.

One of the other things that happened when I was there was Allende fell in Chile and I remember this huge demonstration in front of the embassy; this was the old embassy which was at 663 Sarmiento Street, right downtown. It was a very narrow street in an office building that fronted right on the street. It was the kind of situation that would be a security nightmare these days with car bombs and the lack of any setback or ability to control the traffic in front of the building. There was this huge crowd outside that night and I remember leaning out and looking down at this enormous crowd and thinking why are they blaming us for this coup in Chile; not knowing at the time the degree to which we had encouraged and supported it. In Argentina, the policy of undermining leftist leaders, even when elected, didn't prevail because we were still kind of ambivalent about the Peronists and it was so chaotic. And Mrs. Peron needed no help undermining herself.

And I don't recall any major policy differences between us and them at that time. The Argentines do of course have a shoot-yourself-in-the-foot nationalism that they put on display from time to time. There was a bill being considered in congress that would have had some impact on foreign investment. The Economy Minister, a man named Jose Ber Gelbard, asked the embassy for its opinion. The econ section drafted an aide memoire, which is less formal than a diplomatic note, but still an expression of the official American position. They should have done it as a non-paper that did not identify where it came from. But they did not know that Gelbard was going to hand it over to the congress as soon as he got it. That, of course, provoked charges of interference in internal affairs and Gelbard never admitted he asked for it. There demands to declare Max Krebs, who was charge at the time, persona non grata, but those were ignored by us and the whole thing quickly blew over.

Q: Peron was only there a year. Was there a feeling that his charisma or whatever it is had dimmed or was he still the person he had apparently been earlier on or what?

JETT: He had this populist rhetoric that seemed to have broad appeal except to the oligarchy. Once in office, his only priority seemed to be to stay in power. He had no program that I can remember. I've described how quickly the leftist youth figured that out and walked out on him. It would be fair to say his charisma had dimmed in that first year because he had no plan for dealing with a very difficult economic situation and the political violence continued. One of the other things that added to the political chaos was the economic chaos; inflation was running at hundreds of a percent a year. The exchange rate was fluctuating wildly. I once went down to the embassy snack bar and ordered a sandwich, which amounted to a huge slab of steak in a baguette. I was sitting there eating it and calculating to myself, let's see, it cost so many pesos and it struck me that I had just paid about a dime for this huge slab of meat on a baguette. That was the kind of economic chaos there was there, the inflation, the exchange rate was just destroying people's confidence in their government's ability to deal with the situation.

Q: I imagine it must have been the cocktail talk, the talk of particularly political and economic situation. Here is Argentina that has everything going for it. The Indian population has been eliminated, I would assume had been energetic, German, Italian, British immigrants were there, extremely rich agricultural country and all and the place is going to hell in a hand basket. What was the problem?

JETT: Well there was a standard joke that even the Argentines liked to tell on occasion. When God created the world he was deciding which resources were going where. I'll put water here, I'll put energy resources there. He kept putting all these resources in this one particular part of the world; on the southern tip of South America. It was a beautiful agricultural land, energy, mountains, lakes, etc. So finally one of the angles said "this isn't fair you are giving such advantages to this one part of the world." God's response was, "Just wait until you see the people I put there." Or another version of it was that nature rebuilt during the night what the Argentines managed to destroy during the day.

I think a good part of the problem was because all these people were immigrants, but they didn't come to build a new nation or to escape tyranny. They came for short-term economic opportunity to make a few bucks and to then go back to where they considered themselves to really be from. Because of that Argentina has also been characterized as 25 million hotel guests all complaining about room service.

Q: Oh my God.

JETT: You didn't have that sense of national spirit and no notion of sacrificing for the common good. The most popular movie when I was there was a Robert Redford/Paul Newman movie called The Sting.

Q: Oh yes.

JETT: Over one million people saw that movie in Buenos Aires and it was mainly because the ultimate really clever thing to do was to screw somebody and do it with style. So that movie is all about this scam they ran and how they made a few bucks with it. The idea, for instance, of paying your taxes because you owed your taxes would be considered crazy. If you'd said you were paying your taxes because you should, people would look at you not as some sort of patriotic, well-intentioned person. They'd look at you as some sort of nitwit. So there was very little compliance with paying taxes and all the attendant problems that go along with that. I think it was just part of the culture of the country and I'm not sure it's changed all that much.

Q: I take it the military was a profession unto itself. There was no universal draft or anything like that?

JETT: There was conscription, but I don't think it was universal. They got their rank and file through conscripting people as do a lot of countries in Latin America did back then. It was a profession, but it was a profession apart and very isolated from the general population. I can remember going to the defense ministry and some officer was

screaming at an enlisted man. I was kind of shocked as he was yelling at him in the same way a drill sergeant would scream at somebody in boot camp; it just struck me as strange. I looked at this officer and he looked at me and he sort of shrugged and said, "Look, we have to maintain discipline." The officers were a very distinct group of people who were very much separated from the rest of society. And for many years, because they were one of the few institutions that people respected, they were called upon to take over the government when it proved totally incompetent as Mrs. Peron's did.

Q: What about the academic world? You were young and I imagine you had contact with the young, well educated people. How did you find them?

JETT: Well it was very dependent on where they fell on the political spectrum. One of the other chores I had was covering university politics. The public universities were enormous institutions with virtually no resources; they also charged no tuition. So the University of Buenos Aires would have 100 thousand students, all getting at best a third rate education. The other thing that was striking was none of the university professors that I knew were full time. They were all teaching at two or three different universities and trying to put together enough to make a living. It was like they were all adjunct professors and not engaged on a permanent basis by any single institution so they had to work for a collection of different ones.

The private universities tended to be those of the elite and, therefore, they tended to be very conservative and relatively expensive. At one point I went to Wayne my supervisor and I said, "Maybe I should go take a class at the university and improve my Spanish and it could give me some insight into what's happening." His reaction was, "Naw, that's not a good idea because they would find out who you are, they would wonder why you were there, they would immediately assume you were some sort of CIA spy. So why don't we forget that idea."

Q: Were you picking up the general feeling among the upper classes, that as a diplomat you would normally meet, that the military boot is going to drop very soon?

JETT: Certainly toward the end but I don't think anybody was surprised and very few were particularly distressed by the fact that the military came in and ousted Mrs. Peron. It was clear that the civilian politicians had failed. There was a guy I remember named Italo Luder who was a senator. At one point he was at a reception that I was at and I was contemplating going over to him and saying something like why the hell don't you do something about this government? It's obvious the politicians were completely incapable of dealing with the situation and eventually the military was going to come back. I never said that to him, but I was certainly tempted to at that point and trying to think how I could say that diplomatically. But the Peronists never coped with the fact that Mrs. Peron was a total incompetent.

There was another joke, a cartoon actually that I remember, from the time. There was a glass case and inside the glass case was this general in uniform. On the glass case was a hammer and a sign that said: "In case of democracy break glass." People looked at the

military as the government of last resort and they were pretty much used to that happening in the '60s, '70s and even the '80s. If anything has changed in Latin America after all these years it's that they've gotten away from that. Now they find constitutional ways to replace the president instead of just waiting for the military to step in and have another coup.

Q: Here you have towards the end when you were there Isabel Peron and her Rasputin. What were they after? Was it corruption or just inefficiency or was it a drift towards the left or the right or what?

JETT: I don't think they had any coherent philosophy, I don't think Peron did either for that matter beyond using populist rhetoric to garner support. It was all about being president for the sake of being president, for the power, prestige. They attempted to deal with the situation in any way that they could, but spent most of their time trying to undercut any potential rivals. I think for Lopez Rega there was a certain desire to accumulate power and wealth through corruption; I'm sure he did that effectively. Basically, they were just trying to hang on and they didn't have a philosophy that in the same way, I think, Hugo Chavez has a philosophy. Hugo Chavez is interested in Hugo Chavez and his power and his willing to do anything to maintain that but at least he professes to be a populist and does have some programs, funded by oil export revenues, that do help the poor.

Q: While you were there you mentioned the mob about Allende. Was the situation in Chile something that you were dealing with on social occasions or when you were making your calls or not?

JETT: It didn't come up that much. People were looking at Chile and seeing the situation there and were distressed by it. Again it would depend on where you were in the political spectrum. People on the right were concerned by it because they viewed Allende as representing a Communist takeover. People on the left were concerned by it because they saw it as a military coup the ousted an elected president. Of course, Chile is a perennial rival of Argentina, which seemed remarkable whenever I ran into that sentiment. When I was desk officer for Argentina about eight years later, I was talking to one Argentine intellectual about their nuclear program. Basically I said to him, "Tell me again why you need a nuclear program." His response was, "Well, the Chileans." I said, "The Chileans? What's the deal there?" He said, "Aw, the Beagle Channel." I can't imagine a less important piece of real estate in the world other than maybe the Malvinas. So people were concerned about the situation in Chile because of the long border with Chile and it was looked at as a strategic potential threat, which the military was always concerned about. Those kinds of rivalries seem absurd to an American, but they are very real to Latin Americans.

Q: What about Brazil? This was the real nuclear politics between Brazil and Argentina at the time weren't they?

JETT: There was definitely a competition there. Brazil was a competitor, but the language barrier was significant. Even though Brazil dwarfs Argentina, Argentina always saw itself as the leader of Latin America. That was another cause of jokes among Latin Americans--the degree to which Argentines had such a high opinion of themselves. Of course, Brazil had the size and economy but it was Portuguese speaking and so it was seen as doing its own thing; but the competition was definitely there. It wasn't until the Treaty of Tlatelolco that they actually gave up the possibility of nuclear weapons. It was a remarkable achievement. I think eventually democracy prevailed enough in both countries that the military industrial complex, which probably was pushing for nuclear weapons, was overcome.

Q: Did that go on while you were there?

JETT: In a low-key kind of way; both countries had their nuclear programs and they both had declared that they were peaceful. I'm sure they argued they were for peaceful purposes, but everybody knew they had the potential for building nuclear weapons in the same way Iran has today. So that was always there, but I think Chile was looked at as more serious rival in part because of the long border.

Q: But the border was basically the Andes, wasn't it?

JETT: Yes, the border is very mountainous.

Q: As a political officer actually for work it must have been fun wasn't it?

JETT: It was a fascinating place.

Q: What was the social life like there?

JETT: Well I was married with two small kids and we had about three other couples; one embassy couple with small kids and two other couples with Argentine men married to American women. We were all very good friends so that was a good bit of our social life. We went on picnics, cookouts and one of the Argentines had a small farm outside of town with a couple acres of farm land so we'd go out there; there was tennis and we belonged to a club. The upper class had their clubs they would go to because there wasn't much in the way of public recreation facilities. There was also a fairly large diplomatic corps there because it was an important capital so you had the usual national days and other kinds of diplomatic receptions to go to.

Q: I would have thought that everybody's cholesterol must have gone way up with all that steak there.

JETT: The per capita consumption of beef was, and I assume still is, about twice what it was in the United States. In the United States it was 70 pounds a year per person and in Argentina it was like 70 kilos a year. You'd go by a construction site and there would be one construction worker whose sole job was to tend the barbeque for lunch. You knew

economic times were difficult if you saw construction workers eating baloney sandwiches instead of preparing a grill to put their meat on to. The wine was very good too and people were reasonably fit. I remember always being impressed at how Argentines were rarely overweight generally. Even women who would have a baby within six weeks would be back to their pre-pregnancy weight. I attributed that to a certain level of social pressure. They ate a lot of natural foods, the steak and the salads and French fries and if nothing else it was all grass fed beef with real taste and not kind of the ultra processed stuff that is so common today in this country.

Q: You mentioned that Frank Ortiz was the country director was he?

JETT: Right.

Q: Had you known him? Because you had all come from the same obscure part of the country, New Mexico.

JETT: I didn't meet him until he came to Buenos Aires on that visit. We did have that in common and so that was one of the reasons I was made his control officer.

Q: Well then let's see you left there when?

JETT: July of '75.

Q: Where did you go?

JETT: I went to the Operations Center. One of the other guys in the political section had been in the Operations Center and he said this is really the job you need to do next. It will really give you a great perspective for how the Department functions. You have your bureaucratic organization chart, your wiring diagram, but if you really want to know how the Department works and who does what you need to be in a position like this. I said this sounds good. You had to have a recommendation from your boss and I guess Wayne wrote up a pretty strong recommendation because I got the job. I went back to Washington and was a watch officer in the Operations Center for an 18-month tour.

Q: I've done many, many of these interviews and the Operations Center is sort of the training ground for up and coming young officers who are going to go somewhere in the Service. As you say, you learn the wiring diagram of the State Department, who does what to whom and all which somebody who is not in that particular group has to learn in a much more difficult way or never learns at all.

JETT: I think that's right. The seventh floor staff jobs have a couple advantages. One is that you see the highest levels of policymaking, the other is you meet a large range of people and they are all ambitious and on the rise to and so you have great exposure to a wide range of people and that kind of network of contacts helps tremendously. Sometimes people talk about the old boy network and I remember being in one meeting in the Department where there was some sort of public forum. This woman stood up and

was complaining about the old boy network. My thought was well you have an old boy network whether you want one or not, it's called your corridor reputation.

Q: Yes.

JETT: You either understand how that works and make it work for you or you don't and you suffer. In the Operation Centers you are looking at all the cable traffic coming in from around the world and so another thing you get is a very broad appreciation for all the problems. For the first half of the tour you were a watch officer. In the second half of the tour you were an editor, which meant that you were took the six or so most important cables that had come in overnight and then summarized them for the secretary each day. So you got to work under pressure and under deadlines, see all these issues and the process of how these issues were dealt with. In a crisis the Ops Center because the center of the Department's response at least until a task forces was set up to deal with it.

The other attractive thing about it was you worked this weird rotation. You would go in for two days for the midnight to eight shift, which meant you got there at 11:15 p.m. and you went home at 8:30 in the morning. Then the next two days you would work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and the last two days you would work from 4:00 p.m. until midnight and then you were off for three days. Then you would start the rotation over again. So you were constantly a bit confused about which day of the week it was. One other important thing it gave you was a parking pass, which was incredibly useful because as a junior officer you can't afford to live anywhere close to the department. Also, because of working nights and weekends, there was about a ten percent pay supplement, which was incredibly useful when trying to live in D.C. on a junior officer's salary.

Q: Oh yes. During the time you were a watch officer did you get yourself, I realize this is very episodic but, involved in any particular events that stuck with you?

JETT: I just remember reading some of these cables coming in and looking at the situations and being struck at the difficulty and complexity. One cable I read, which I wasn't supposed to read because it had a very, very limited distribution, was about how the Russians were bombarding our embassy with microwaves. It was a long discussion of what are the health implications of that; but no one really knew. They were bombarding our embassy with microwaves as a means of bugging the place from a distance.

Q: Yeah, this became a very serious problem later on of people worried about was this inducing cancer and all.

JETT: Right, right. But this was the age of détente and we didn't want to complicate our relationship with the Soviet Union and so there were lots of things going on and that impressed me.

On the humorous side, there was one other event. While I was working there the National Inquirer picked up Henry Kissinger's trash can off the street in front of his house and

carried off the contents. They then ran some articles about its contents. There was nothing classified in it, but it was very embarrassing to the Secret Service. Kissinger had their protection because he was also the National Security Advisor as well. One night I had to run a briefcase full of sensitive documents out to his house. So I walked in to the basement office where the Secret Service had its office in his residence. One of the two agents on duty looks at me, my State Department ID around my neck and my Stated Department pouch in hand and, nonetheless, in a snotty voice says: "Who are you and what do you want?" So I replied: "I'm from the National Inquirer and I'm here to pick up the garbage." He was not amused.

Q: I think what came out of this was, particularly in the Kissinger period, he was not exactly personnel conscience.

JETT: No, he was not. I was approached by his staff and asked if I wanted to become one of Kissinger's staff assistants. After the Ops Center you usually moved on to a staff job on the seventh floor to an under secretary or above or the sixth floor to an assistant secretary. So they came and indicated that if I was interested I could be one of Kissinger's staff assistant. I guess I didn't show the right amount of deference to him so that never went anywhere. I didn't regret that because Jock Covey was one of his staff assistants and he also was a skydiver. One of his duties on the weekends when Kissinger was out of town was to take care of Kissinger's dog. He went to retrieve Kissinger's dog from the residence in Georgetown and take it with him while he was going skydiving. Kissinger was in the kitchen when he came in and he says to Covey, "Where are you going with my dog?" Covey said, "Well, you're going out of town and I've got to take care of him, I'm going to take him with me." Kissinger said, "Well where are you going?" Covey says, "I'm going to go sky diving but I will leave the dog in the car and after each jump I'll come let the dog out and make sure the dog's okay." The legend goes that Kissinger responded, "Yes, but what happens to my dog if your parachute doesn't open?" That's the kind of warm and fuzzy guy he was.

Q: Okay, well I think this is probably a good place to stop. We will pick this up after your time in the secretariat where did you go?

JETT: I was an economic officer so I was looking around for where to go next and the economic bureau seemed to be a good place. The executive director at the time was a woman named Frances Wilson…

Q: Oh boy, yes.

JETT: …who was quite a power. Economic officers always suffered in comparison to political officers in terms of career success, at least that was the perception. She was known for taking good economic officers and nurturing them and giving them stretch assignments to help them get to the top. If you were an FSO-5 then you might be able to get yourself a 04 or a 03 position; Paul Boeker and Steve Bosworth were people that she promoted because they showed such promise; both became ambassadors. So I thought

that sounds like a good place to work since I'm an economic officer and so I went to work as a staff assistant to Jules Katz and Joe Greenwald.

Q: Oh my goodness, well we will pick this up. This is when?

JETT: Let's see I left Argentina in '75 and then I spent about two years in the Ops Center so about '77.

Q: Something I didn't cover but did our collapse in Vietnam did that have any repercussions in Argentina just before you left?

JETT: I think among the left certainly there was opposition to the war but it wasn't a big issue for the military or Argentine government. But the general unpopularity of war was growing in Argentina as it was in the United States.

Q: When you were in the Ops Center was there sort of a flood of ex-Vietnam hands?

JETT: There were people around and I had just missed the CORDS era when people were being forced to go to Vietnam and serve in the rural pacification program. It was a bureaucratic trauma in the same way more recently people have been threatened with being forced to go to Afghanistan and Iraq.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: Those kinds of directed assignments always rubbed the bureaucracy a bit raw, especially when there were questions about the wisdom of the policy. The war had largely been turned over to the Vietnamese to lose at that point. Those who had served there, whether willingly or not, had moved on to other assignments. When it did finally fall apart, I was in the economic bureau. The embassy was still sending in cables about how even though the north controlled more and more territory, South Vietnam was still going to be viable economically.

Q: Okay, well we will pick this up when you went to the economic bureau with Jules Katz and Greenwald in when? '75?

JETT: '77.

Q: '77, we will pick it up then.

JETT: Okay.

Today is the 8th of April 2011 with Dennis Jett on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. Dennis it is 1977 and you are off where?

JETT: After the Operations Center I went to work as a staff assistant in the economic bureau in EB. I was staff assistant to the assistant secretary and the principal deputy assistant secretary.

Q: It was Jules Katz wasn't it?

JETT: Initially it was Joe Greenwald and Jules Katz and then Greenwald left and it was Katz and Paul Boeker, who was the deputy.

Q: It was certainly a high-powered crew there.

JETT: It was a very active place because EB attracted good officers. There is sort of a built in bias in favor of political officers in the Department in terms of senior positions but this being the economic bureau, it was clearly the economic officers who ran things. I think I mentioned last time it was Frances Wilson that was the executive director. That sounds like an administrative function, but if you have somebody who knows the bureaucracy and has been there a long time, as she did, it was the kind of position that could have tremendous influence on how important and successful a bureau would be. She protected the bureau and worked tirelessly to make sure it was a player. If you wanted a job in the bureau basically you had to start with her and if you didn't meet with her approval as being a capable officer you were out of luck.

Q: Well she did seem to go for excellence from all accounts.

JETT: Yes she did.

Q: This was not I like how he cuts his hair or something like that.

JETT: No, no it was the best and the brightest among the economic officers and she would use stretch assignments as an incentive to attract good people. She would take an 0-5 who was particularly good and give that person an 0-3 job; one and two grade stretches for really good officers were not uncommon. So you had people like Paul Boeker, Steve Bosworth, Al Larson and a lot of other people who went on to hold some very significant positions in the Department and overseas as as ambassadors.

Q: While we are on the subject of Frances Wilson did you ever find that she would clash with whoever was the head of the economic bureau or not or was she a member of the team and everybody was delighted with her?

JETT: I don't remember any clashes, I think everybody recognized her ability and relied on her judgment a good deal. There may have been some disagreements over personnel issues but I don't recall any. I think the assistant secretary regarded her as an essential part of the team and an incredible strength. Senior officers general like to be policy makers more than they do personnel managers, so they were happy to have her run that part of the bureau because she did it so well. She was a civil servant and she had been there in the building forever, so she knew everybody and she was a very effective

bureaucrat. You would give up an asset like that only if you were not very smart about the way the bureaucracy operates; the assistant secretary, I think, valued her and appreciated those skills.

Q: What was your job in reality?

JETT: There were a couple main functions. You would go in early before the assistant secretary and the principal deputy got there in the morning and you would pick up a stack of cables from the message center. Essentially your job was to quickly read through those and separate the wheat from the chaff. You would pull out the five or ten cables that the assistant secretary really needed to see and highlight what was important about those and then put them on his desk and call them to his attention when he came in. So by the time he was ready to have his staff meeting with his senior staff people he could ask them what was happening or what was being done about these particular cables; being economic cables they were from all over the world and covered any subject that had any economic content.

Then you did other things: during the time I was there, there was the great bugging scandal and Henry Kissing was found to have been putting taps on peoples phones. One of the things we did was use a mute button on the phone and so whenever the assistant secretary would get on the phone you would hit the mute button and pick up the phone and listen in on the conversation. If there was some follow up that was necessary the assistant secretary would say okay I'll have a memo down or I'll have a meeting or something like that you would write that down and make sure that happened.

Once the Kissinger scandal happened it was discovered there were a lot of people listening in to a lot of phone calls so they went around and took those mute buttons out. There was the same button in the operations center, by the way, when I was up there so I would listen in on phone calls if requested and follow up as necessary; that was another function in the ops center.
As staff assistant, if the assistant secretary needed a memo to get to the seventh floor you would call up the office that was drafting it and say, "Okay where is it, you've got thirty minutes to get it up here because he is leaving for the day." You would proofread stuff going to him and attempt to catch any mistakes as you didn't want to pass a memo with any typos on to the seventh floor. You'd make sure it was in the right format as you'd get a lot of officers who'd come up and they wouldn't know the proper format or who to clear it with or some of the basic stuff that is required to get a memo to its destination. Essentially it was making sure the paper flowed in and out and that meetings were held and appointments kept and whatever else you needed to do to keep the assistant secretary working at maximum efficiency and the trains running on time.

Q: Well you had several assistant secretaries didn't you when you were doing that?

JETT: Yes.

Q: How did you find each individual operator? Were they screamers, or lazy or what?

JETT: None of them were lazy; they were all incredibly hard working. If it was one thing I learned working in the Department during those years it was that the higher up you go in the bureaucracy the longer hours you work. The only people who worked longer hours than those higher officials were the staff assistants who have to get in before they do and have to stay around after they have gone home and clean up and make sure whatever actions they took were implemented and the mail was delivered to the proper place.

Greenwald was low key, but a very capable guy, Katz definitely had a temper. You could see the fuse being lit and he had a low tolerance for incompetence. Again, both these guys were officers with decades of experience and so they were on top of the issues and if they got upset it was not over something petty. Paul Boeker was easy going, incredibly bright and again hardworking. None of them were screamers in the sense of some of the more famous screamers in the history of the Department; there was no Henry Kissinger. I've been reading about the 9/11 Commission and the book described Phil Zelikow, who was the director of the 9/11 Commission, as a classic screamer and control freak who made it a habit to intimidate people to ensure he maintained control. None of the people I worked for were that type.

Q: In the first place you were there from '77 until when?

JETT: Until sometime in '78.

Q: Were there any issues that sort of focused or engulfed the economic bureau during that particular time?

JETT: There were a lot of energy issues. One of the advantages of being in that position was I could look at everything the bureau was doing in every office and become familiar with the issues. So when it came to choosing what job I wanted to do after being staff assistant, I chose the energy office because they were doing a lot of interesting stuff; this was in the Carter era and energy was a big deal.

It wasn't quite at the time when they had the gas lines. That was about a year later. It was when there was a whole series of commodity negotiations. Basically the Third World wanted commodity agreements to regulate the price of basic commodities and keep them artificially high as that's where their export earnings came from. The developed world wanted the markets to determine the supply and demand as that usually meant cheaper prices. Commodity producing countries were generally the Third World countries wanted some stability and predictabilities and did not want their economies subject to the whims of the market. I remember that being a fairly contentious kind of issue and there were multilateral negotiations on such problems that pitted the First World against the Third World supported by the Second World.

Q: Well, then you went to the energy who was running energy at the time?

JETT: The office was called FSE at the time, the fuels and energy office. Larry Raich was in that office as well as Bill Milam, Bill Ramsey and Steve Bosworth. The last three all went on to be ambassadors.

Q: You were doing energy from when to when?

JETT: It was a three year period but it was interrupted; it was roughly '77-'80. I did a year in the energy office and then at that point promotions were moving very slowly and I was wondering whether I wanted to slog along in this career forever. A friend of mine, who had served with me in the Embassy in Argentina, had gone to work for an Argentine company in New York trading commodities. So he called me up and said, "Hey, we are doing great things up here why don't you come up and work with me?" I thought about it and it sounded interesting. I don't know what the rules are now but you could take a year of leave without pay as long as you justified it as being a useful experience and said you were coming back. The Department would hold a position open for you; you wouldn't get paid but they would guarantee you a job when you came back in a year. So I went on leave without pay and went up to New York, we traded commodities and we bought and sold wheat, sugar and soybeans mainly. We weren't on the trading floor screaming at people but we had a direct phone line. You would pick up the phone and it would ring on this broker's desk and you would tell him what you wanted to buy or sell and then he would pick up a direct phone line that would go straight to the floor. The guy who did the yelling and screaming would then take your order and attempt to execute it.

Q: Were you watching a ticker or were you…

JETT: Yeah, you had a primitive type of computer screen. We could watch the prices come across as it happened and then we were looking at world news and all kinds of other things. We weren't speculating so much. It was more a hedging operation. If you had a producer in Argentina who had a crop of soybeans coming in and the price at that particular moment was good he might do a hedging operation with futures to ensure that he got that price. That's why when the crop initially did come in he was guaranteed that price; it cost him a little bit to do the transaction for the hedge but he'd guaranteed himself the price. It was mainly hedging for our company and other clients. But we would sometimes speculate on the margins of those hedging operations. We did a little day trading on our own account. It was an interesting job; it was completely different from government in that the responsibility was almost entirely yours. The decision you took was determined very quickly to be right or wrong and you knew exactly to the penny how right or wrong it was. That is totally unlike government where it is hard to hold anybody responsible for anything because so many people are involved. You don't know often whether you are right or wrong and you never know precisely how much. You never know that one policy is 13 percent better than a different policy because you don't have that ability to measure anything with any precision.

So it was interesting and it was fun and it seemed like a potential for making a significant amount of money, but after that year I looked around and saw people who had spent their entire careers not only trading sugar, but just one grade of sugar. They could tell you

everything about sugar and could tell you next to nothing about anything else. So I said, "Well, when I retire thirty years from now, do I want to measure what I've done in terms of sugar bought or sold and whether I made a profit or didn't. Or, do I want to work on things I consider more important, that make a contribution, that I consider more meaningful than just being a middle man between a soy bean producer and somebody who makes mayonnaise." So I went back to the State Department and did a second year in the office of fuels and energy.

Q: When you went back, actually in both times, what was happening in the fuels? Were you working any particular source of fuel or fuel in general?

JETT: We divided things up. I was working on liquefied natural gas; there was a big issue about importing liquefied natural gas and safety issues and all kinds of other issues. One of the things I remember was preparing Congressional testimony for Steve Bosworth on LNG imports. Then there is something called the International Energy Agency, the IEA, which is the consuming countries counterpart to OPEC. The oil importing countries were trying to organize and share data. So one of the nicer things about that job was every three months, once a quarter, there was an IEA committee meeting in Paris because it was housed in the same offices as the OECD. It was my duty to go to Paris once every three months and act as the U.S. representative along with somebody from the Department of Energy. I'd sit in those meetings and write up a report on what occurred at the meeting after I got back. That was a lot of fun; I enjoyed that aspect of it.

Q: During the Carter years there were lines for gas odd and even license plates and all that. During the time you were dealing with energy how stood the market?

JETT: Well, that year that I was up in New York trading commodities when they had the big gas lines and the shortages I can remember actually moving some stuff back to Washington. I had a Ryder truck and you could only buy $5 worth of gas at each gas station and you had to wait in line for a long time just to do that. Of course, this Ryder truck was burning about $6 worth of gas between gas stations so it was a very irritating and frustrating trip. It was a big issue then because of OPEC and Carter's attention on energy. Today we are arguing once again about our dependence on imported oil. I was listening to the radio last night and I occasionally listen to the rightwing screamer radio and there was some moron on talking about how if it wasn't for the EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, we could meet all our energy needs by drilling in America. Anybody who has spent more than fifteen seconds looking at the statistics for imports and reserves and energy consumption knows that's a total pipe dream even if we had no environmental concerns. The debate back then was intense because prices went up so fast and availability became a question. This was also just at the transition from Carter to Reagan and I remember going to the Department of Energy and this mid-level energy department official saying, "Well we need to ration gasoline, we need to set up a coupon system." To do that it would be like World War II. I looked at him and said, "You're nuts. That's never going to happen." Then, of course, Reagan got elected and he was much more into dismantling government so a particularly dumb rationing gasoline never had a chance after that. It was a big issue back then because we suddenly learned the economic and

political impact of our dependence of foreign oil, which made working in that area all the more interesting.

Q: From your perspective how did the concentration of interest affect you?

JETT: I think it affected me in the sense that things you were working on were the subject of headlines every day so there was some intense interest from assistant secretaries and under secretaries on energy issues; it gave you a sense of urgency and working on issues that mattered to people. It wasn't like sitting in an office that dealt with textile negotiations in an era when nobody cared about textile negotiations except of course those workers that were about to lose their jobs because of imports. There was a lot of attention but there was also a lot of pressure and work to be done.

Q: The major oil companies did they have representatives coming in and seeing you or were they doing their thing and you were reporting what they were doing?

JETT: I wasn't directly involved with them. I did have some contact with companies who wanted to import liquefied natural gas, but it was more or less reporting on what they were doing. We weren't at a policy-making level and they were probably concentrating their lobbying their efforts at the department of energy, but occasionally they would come around and talk to the Department of State.

Q: Well liquid gas was becoming quite a product wasn't it in this time?

JETT: It was just beginning. The feasibility of doing it was pretty well established as a physical process, but you had a lot of regulatory issues. You had these enormous ships that are giant thermos bottles with this very cold liquid. If a ship like that had an accident with and it ruptured, the stuff would pour out into the ocean and start becoming gas again. Then you'd have a huge cloud of flammable gas that was just one spark away from being a major explosion or fire. There were a lot of safety issues and other concerns; this was long before there was that much attention paid to terrorism. It was more a question of just accidents with potentially catastrophic results, as we've just seen in the Japanese reactor.

Q: Yeah. Who were some of the countries that were into the LPGA, as you call it?

JETT: LNG, liquefied natural gas.

Q: LNG.

JETT: Well, Trinidad and Tobago was one considering it because they had some gas. I actually made a trip to Trinidad and Tobago with a delegation from other offices in the State Department. It was memorable because Miss Trinidad and Tobago had just won the Miss World contest and we kept getting included in receptions for that crowd. There were other OPEC countries that were potential exporters like Algeria. There was some

question about dependence on importing energy from countries that may or may not be stable or friendly.

Q: Well then we are talking about we are up around about '79 or so?

JETT: Yeah, I was there until '80.

Q: '80, so then where?

JETT: Actually, I was supposed to stay on in the energy office for another year, but a friend of mine from the economic bureau, Richard Kauzlarich, came by one day and said, "I have a problem. I'm going out to be economic counselor in Tel Aviv and there was a guy who was supposed to be science attaché. At the last minute he decided he couldn't go overseas at this point so I've got this vacancy coming up in a matter of weeks. Who can I get to do it?" I thought about it for a couple of minutes and I said, "Maybe I'll do it." I then went out and I found another friend who was willing to replace me in the energy office so they would not object to my leaving on such short notice. So in a course of about four weeks I went from expecting to sit in the energy office for another year to being on my way to Tel Aviv. I was an 0-5 at the time and it was a 0-3 job so it was a two-grade stretch.

Q: Great. Well now you were there from 1980 until when?

JETT: It was about September 1980 until March '83.

Q: Oh that was an interesting time. What was happening in Israel when you went out?

JETT: Within my time there they bombed the reactor in Baghdad so that was a source of excitement. They also invaded Lebanon and pushed their way to Beirut; so you had the consequences of that. It's never is a dull time there. It's always of intense interest; there is always a steady stream of Congressional delegations and other prominent people. I got to be control officer for any number of Congressmen and Senators and other dignitaries; I was control office for Charlie Wilson a couple of times. He is just as much a character as Tom Hanks portrays him in the movie.

Q: Oh yes, there's a movie called "Charlie Wilson's War" in which he is shown to be a prime person in arming the Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviets.

JETT: Exactly and Tom Hanks makes him seem more kind and benign than he really was. He had a mean streak in him and he was a big supporter of Israel so when he came to Israel they loved him and he loved them. I guess the only thing you could say about Charlie Wilson in his defense is that he was a scoundrel but freely admitted it. He had a drinking problem and a drug problem and a womanizing problem but he didn't attempt to hide it; he didn't say I'm a family values politician. He just said, "Yeah, I like to drink, I like women and I like…" and he kept getting elected; so apparently it didn't matter to his constituents. He was such an ardent anti-Communist that he saw arming the Mujahedeen

as a crusade. Too bad we did that and then lost interest in Afghanistan as they morphed into Al Qaeda.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you arrived there?

JETT: Sam Lewis. He was ambassador for a total of eight years in Israel...

Q: Yeah.

JETT: …my entire time there he was ambassador.

Q: How did you find the embassy? It must have been quite different from Buenos Aires?

JETT: It was a small embassy. It had this huge AID program but AID for Israel consisted of handing them a check every quarter so we didn't have this army of AID people to supervise projects and track the money. We had four people in the economic section; I was the science attaché. I would often encounter Israelis who would say, "If you have a couple degrees in economics why are you the science attaché? Aren't you really CIA?" I would just say, "Well believe what you want to believe" since trying to explain was probably a waste of time.

So there was the economic counselor, Rich Kauzlarich, and Harry Stein who was internal economics, then there was me and another guy who was the AID officer; he was a State Department officer and had other things to follow since, as I mentioned, the only AID work was handing over the quarterly check. Then they had four or five people in the political section, a pretty big consular section. I think it's still in the same building right there across the street from the beach. It was a pretty small embassy, but it had all these Congressional delegations. It probably had if not one a week or at least every other week. The other thing about it that was different was you had this consulate in Jerusalem but they didn't report to the embassy. So you had to keep reminding yourself to consider the consulate in Jerusalem as if it were an embassy in a different country in terms of how you coordinated with them.

Q: What were the Congressional delegations? Were they coming out to have pictures taken and live off the largesse of the Israelis or were there real issues at stake?

JETT: Well there are always real issues and the biggest issue was, of course, the effort to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which has been going on for years. Most of the Congressmen, I think, were coming out just to have their ticket punched to show that they cared about Israel so they could score points with their Jewish constituents or their evangelical Christian constituents and to go shopping. But there were some who really cared about the Middle East peace process. When I was there Reagan came out with his peace plan. I remember I was with a couple staffers of Stephen Solarz and the announcement gets made that this new plan is on the table and the staffers were incensed at me because I didn't have a copy of the plan in my pocket to hand them instantaneously as soon as it hit the news. So there were some people who really cared about the issues

and then sometimes there were economic issues and trade issues between Israel and the United States that drew a little bit of attention.

Of course, some cared about the military relationship so it was like anything. You had a mix of some Congressmen there for tourism and ticket punching and others because they really wanted to learn about the issues and have an understanding of where they ought to come down. And the Israelis were masterful when it came to hosting congressmen and making their pitch.

Q: I talked to somebody, Sam I can't remember his last name; he went as ambassador to a place in Latin America later.

JETT: Hart.

Q: Yeah, he was disenchanted because he would draw up plans about what Israel should get and the Israelis would laugh at him and just go to Congress and get what they wanted. I mean this was very frustrating. Did this affect you at all that sort of thing?

JETT: That is clearly part and parcel of the relationship. They a tremendous influence, one of the most powerful lobby's in Washington is AIPAC, the American-Israel Political Action Committee. They are very skillful at getting things out of Congress. People sitting in an embassy, whether it's in Israel or anywhere else in the Middle East, can say based on our interests and our resources and everything else this is what the policy ought to be. And the policy gets determined in Washington by people who are worried about whether their Jewish voters are going to vote for them or not. Three quarters of Jewish voters vote Democratic. It dropped to two-thirds for Mr. Obama, but typically it is three-quarters. But even in Republican districts there is a significant group there that no Congressman can afford to ignore -- Evangelical Christians. Of course, they love Israel because they read about it in the Bible and not because they understand anything about the Middle East. It's a very politicized relationship and I think anybody who sits down and makes a calculus of what they define as American interests is going to be disappointed in the sausage that come out of the Washington policy-making machine. I also think that AIPAC does not care about Israel or the United States as much as it cares about AIPAC's power. The worse thing that could happen to AIPAC would be for peace to break out in the Middle East. Then their empire and their influence would evaporate overnight.

Q: I mean this is a political and political-military issue but how did you view and maybe comment on how some of your fellow officers felt about the Israelis; it can only be described as a premeditated invasion of Lebanon. How did you view that?

JETT: Well I remember it was kind of triggered by there had been incidents along the border for a long time and then there was an assassination attempt on an Israeli diplomat.

Q: Yeah, on the ambassador to London.

JETT: Right.

Q: I'm told that everyone knew that Sharon had cocked the pistol…

JETT: Right.

Q: …and waited for it to go off.

JETT: I think that's true. The assassination attempt happened on a Friday and then you had an exchange of artillery and rockets between both sides on Saturday. I had an Israeli-American friend who was in the army reserves and he got a call Saturday to mobilize. On Sunday morning, they were rushing past the UN peacekeepers and on into Lebanon. I guess you could say Sharon was looking for an excuse to invade and deal with the problem. It's in the same way that today they get rockets from Gaza; so they attempted to go in and deal with it in Gaza. Eventually they pull out after much loss of life and destruction and things calm down a little and now they are getting more rockets from Gaza. It's an unfortunate cycle that seems to be repeating itself.

Q: As this fighting progressed there were you developing a feel for this? I mean whether this a good thing, a bad thing or what?

JETT: Initially it was pretty easy as the Israelis had military successes and then, of course, when it got to the outskirts of Beirut where there were the two refugee camps Sabra and Shatila. Lebanese Christians went in and murdered hundreds of women and children while the Israelis did nothing to stop it. So that created a huge controversy. Then the whole operation bogged down and became a war of attrition and that's not a war that Israelis are willing and capable of fighting for very long. I remember talking to an Israeli, who was trying to explain to me the impact of the war on Israel. He said to me, "You know how many people died in Vietnam?" I said, "56-57 thousand" and he said, "How many did you know?" I said, "Well I knew a handful maybe a half a dozen." Then he said to me, "Well so far in this war in Lebanon we've lost 200 soldiers and I know the soldiers or the families of at least 180 of those."

Q: Good God.

JETT: One of the constant things you hear in Israel is "it's a small country" and it's very small in a lot of ways both geographically and in terms of the number of people. The number of people, of course, has grown fairly significantly with the influx of Russian Jews and others, but it is a very small country, which is one reason peace with the Palestinians is so difficult to achieve. They would have the names of the soldiers that died on television at night. There has been some controversy in this country when people like Nightline or some television program started putting the names of the dead on and conservatives were criticizing that because they never like to be reminded of the cost of the wars they are always pushing for. I remember back in the Vietnam War, I don't know why I remember this, but I remember watching the nightly news on television. They were saying 343 American soldiers died in Vietnam this week. Then the next story was about a cheetah that had escaped from a zoo and they attempted to recapture it and shot it with a

tranquilizing dart. It died and I remember hearing myself say, "Oh." Then I thought instantaneously they just told me 343 Americans died and I had no reaction and yet this animal escaped from a zoo and I am sort of touched by it. I don't know, but for some reason I've never forgotten that moment.

Q: No, no it is a sort of thing. It's a very common reaction.

JETT: It's like a Bulgarian student I was talking to a couple days ago. He quoted Stalin as saying, "One death is a tragedy, a million deaths is a statistic." So I think you lose the sensitivity when it gets to big numbers.

Q: You really do. Sabra and Shatila, the two refugee camps of Palestinian refugees where there was a slaughter by the Christian militia, how did that play in Israel at the time?

JETT: I can't remember specifically but I think initially there was some confusion as to who was responsible and what the Israeli role was. It was the usual fog of war and perhaps some self-censorship and manipulation of the media. It was pretty clear that the Israelis didn't do it from the get go, but exactly who did and why was a little bit unclear. And the extent of Israel's involvement was not clear until months later. I think probably people on the political right in Israel said, "Well this is just the Lebanese killing Lebanese and it's unfortunately but it's not our problem." I think the people on the left said, "Well we don't know to what extent we are involved, but certainly it happened as a result of our invasion so we have some responsibility and so on." I think almost anything in Israel has a wide range of reactions because you have an amazing range of political views and religious views and nationalist Zionist views; anything provokes a very diverse range of reaction.

Q: How was Sharon viewed after you'd been there a while? Did you have a feel for him?

JETT: No, it was Begin and Shamir who was the head of the government or maybe Shamir was foreign minister still.

Q: I think Begin during that time was the…well maybe they switched back and forth.

JETT: I can't remember when Begin left. I remember being at the airport once and seeing Begin walk out just a few feet away. I was in a meeting once with Shamir when he was foreign minister. I took some Congressmen in and he was always described as a Sabra. A Sabra is the Israeli cactus and it is also a native born Israeli or an Israeli born in Israel. Begin was described like a cactus, prickly on the outside and soft on the inside; Shamir was described as soft on the outside but prickly on the inside. But Sharon was defense minister and he was viewed as a tough guy and given his military experience and his political leadings he was a hardliner.

Q: Could we stop here or just one section. As the science attaché I assume that you did not report on nuclear developments in Israel?

JETT: I did to the extent that there were nuclear developments that were known. There was a guy named Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli who started talking about the nuclear program but that hadn't happened yet. There were people from the American nuclear power industry who were coming to Israel so I would talk to them and find out what they were trying to sell Israel and what they knew about the Israeli program. In terms of classified stuff I didn't engage in trying to collect that as it would have been unsuccessful and not well received. I remember Edward Teller, the so-called father of the H-bomb, came through for a visit and I met him and I said, "Oh let's have breakfast." He said, "Okay," so the next day he and I had breakfast and we talked a little bit about Israel and nuclear power and nuclear weapons. That kind of strange encounter was not unusual in Israel. The thing I remember most about it is he had about a third of a cup of coffee and took about five packets of sugar and stirred it into his coffee until it was almost like syrup; then he drank it. Anyhow, that is what I remembered more than I remember what he had to say about mutually assured destruction and nuclear weapons.

Q: What was personal life like in Israel? I've had people say you got much more involved there than anywhere else.

JETT: I think that depends on the individual obviously as in any country. Some people only shop at the commissary and they'll go home and a weekend for them is to get out their DVD or their video tape player and they'll watch five movies. If they can't get Diet Dr. Pepper in the commissary and watch five movie CDs in a weekend then they are depressed. Other people will get into the society in a really big way. One sport I took up in 1977 was running marathons. I continued doing that in Israel and found a small but friendly running community. I could got to a race, look around and tell you where I was going to finish. It was usually not in the first five, but usually in the next five. The first three years they ran the Tel Aviv marathon, I finished fifth twice and seventh once. I still have running friends from those days with whom I stay in touch.
The degree to which people got involved also depended on things other than the sports. During the year I was in New York trading commodities I got divorced and so when I went to Israel I was single; that put me on the diplomatic dating circuit, which was new and different. That also gave me a different way to involve myself in the local culture.

Q: How did you find it? I assume that you were dating Israeli women; were they different compared to the American girls or not?

JETT: I would say so. Israelis in general have the same level of civility of New Yorkers during a transit strike. But once you got to know them, and getting to know them was basically getting introduced to them, then you became a member of the family virtually. I think the single women were also very brusque and abrupt. One reason that was offered for that attitude is that they lived for the moment because they lived in a county that could be invaded tomorrow and be overrun and destroyed. So they didn't mess around. They cut to the chase rather quickly; either they were interested or they weren't and they let you know pretty quickly which way it was.

I was not only dating Israelis, but women in other embassies as well. I had one interesting thing happen to me there in that regard. I was going out with a woman who was in the British embassy, a British Foreign Service officer. I just went out with her a couple times, and hadn't seen her in a while. Everybody listens to the radio news in Israel. They have the time signal on the hour, which also announces the beginning of the news. You could be almost anywhere in Israel and you can hear the beep, beep, beep of the time signal. You would see ten year old kids walking down the street listening to the news on the radio because people cared and it usually had the potential of affecting them directly and immediately for good or for ill. Anyhow, I'm listening to the news on my way home from the embassy and on the news it's reported that a British diplomat has been arrested as spy. She had gone on to date some guy from the Egyptian embassy and he had convinced her to share some documents that she should not have. So the Israelis arrested her, threw her out of the country and she was kicked out of the British Foreign Service; I don't think she was ever charged with anything, but there was quite a scandal. So it was kind of weird to hear her name on the radio and wonder if anyone was going to come question me.

Q: Oh God yes. I'm trying to think we had already gone through the Camp David process hadn't we?

JETT: Yes we had.

Q: Did you have much contact with the Egyptian embassy?

JETT: Not too much. I knew this guy she had gone out with. Another experience that I had was related to Camp David, which was signed the year before I arrived. There was an environmental conference on the Red Sea and it was the first time that the Israelis and Egyptian scientists were getting together to talk; the first contact of almost any kind. So I said, "Hey, maybe I should go to this conference." The embassy agreed even though it happened to be held at a Club Med in Egypt. It was an interesting experience. Both groups were scientists and had an interest in the ecology of the Red Sea so they had that in common. But they were from two countries that had this prolonged state of conflict, which had only just ended. The conference almost ended before it began because the packet of information handed out by the Egyptian organizers had a map of the Red Sea area and the map didn't include Israel; as maps often don't. You see Israeli maps that don't include Gaza and the West Bank and that upsets people. But this one had some sort of vague reference to Palestine where Israel was and so the Israelis basically said you hand out a new map or we'll leave. The Egyptians found a new map, but that was the sort of level of tension and concern. It was an interesting discussion nonetheless.

The other thing that happened while I was there is that Israel withdrew from the Sinai as part of the peace deal. I had gone to Sinai and started scuba diving when the peninsula was Israeli territory. I have an Israeli-American friend, whom I still maintain contact with, who ran a dive center in Sharm el Sheik. About a year after the Sinai was given back to Egypt, he and I took a trip to Sharm el Sheik to see what had changed. It was an amazing experience. We got hassled at the border and did not arrive there until well after

dark. He wanted to immediately find a former employee who was a Bedouin, so we pulled off the highway and start driving into the desert in my Pontiac Firebird, a car that was about six inches off the ground because of all the diving gear we brought with us. We got stuck in the sand and I was beginning to wonder what they would say about me at my funeral assuming they ever found the body. Out of nowhere in the middle of the night in the middle of the desert six or eight Bedouin appear and pick up the car and put it on solid ground. They also gave us directions to find his friend's place. We got to his house, which consisted of some rugs for a floor, some plywood for walls and no roof. His friend greets us like family and we go in and sit down on the rugs and are served mint tea. As my friend and his former employee are talking over old times, I'm looking up at the stars and thinking this is why I joined the Foreign Service.

Q: You left there when?

JETT: It was March of '83. Again, I should have stayed a little bit longer, but I found out they wanted a desk officer for Argentina in the Department. There was a person in the job that had some difficulties shall we say and so they needed an emergency replacement quickly. Any desk is a good job and Argentina is a great job so again I found somebody who was willing to replace me on short notice so my boss couldn't object too much that I was leaving. I uprooted and went back to Washington in March of '83.

Q: What did you feel, as you left there in '83, about the future of Israel?

JETT: One of the people I talked to once while at a dinner was Moshe Arens who was a rightwing member of the Knesset.

Q: Wasn't he an ambassador to the U.S.?

JETT: Yes. He was pretty far right. But he was educated in America, had a PhD in aeronautical engineering and incredibly articulate. I just remember probing him on what's the sort of long-term plan here because the demographics are going against you in terms of population growth. His point of view was that's the long term, we need to worry about the short to medium term and we don't have a partner for peace and we can't trust them and therefore why negotiate. You see the same thing today, the same argument offered. I was reading a piece in the Weekly Standard by Elliot Abrams, a man charge with two felony counts for lying to Congress during the Iran-Contra scandal during the Reagan administration. For his crimes he got to be on the National Security Council for George W. Bush and in charge of Middle East Affairs and now he disgraces the Council on Foreign Relations thanks to the poor judgment of Richard Haass. Abrams was essentially writing this piece a couple days ago saying that the Palestinians should just go and be part of Jordan. So to this day you've got people like that and I think essentially that's where the rightwing Israelis, Likud, Netanyahu all are.

I don't see much prospect for peace because I don't think Netanyahu has the vision or the guts to be a Begin and sit down and do a deal and the only way he can stay in power is with a coalition of religious parties that are even more extreme than he is. They are

continuing to build settlements on the West Bank and Gaza; this is something that both the Likud and Labor governments have done consistently throughout the decades, which allowed the settlements to continue to grow. Now you have 300 thousand settlers who think they have a Biblical right to cheap housing on somebody else's land. They are a powerful lobby and Israeli governments are always coalitions and generally pretty weak. In the same way the Tea Party today represent a minority of a minority and yet they are having this impact because they are fanatics and dictating policy for the Republicans. I think, in the same way the settlers essentially hijacked Israeli policy and have made serious negotiations impossible.

Q: Yeah. You went to the Argentine desk and you were there from when to when?

JETT: I was there from '83 to '85; so two years basically.

Q: What was the situation in Argentina in that period of time?

JETT: Well it was interesting because they had already lost the Falkland-Malvinas War; that debacle had happened the year before. They were just having the first democratic elections and Raul Alfonsin ran and won the presidency. One of the nice things about being desk officer for a country is you are pretty much the only person, certainly in the State Department, and maybe in the entire town that worries only about that particularly country. So even though you are a decidedly middle to junior grade officer, you can have impact on the policy because you know the country. I remember writing a memo to the office director saying there were three things we ought to do to improve relations with Argentina. A fourth issue was the nuclear program, which I said was basically too hard to deal with because that's an issue that is only going to be resolved over time. But those other three things we were able to accomplish.

Q: This is the day the Brazilians were sort of starting up rival programs, weren't they?

JETT: Exactly, they both had rival programs and they were the kind of programs that could easily be converted to make nuclear weapons; like Iran today. There was great suspicion between the Argentines and the Brazilians. I remember talking to this Argentine foreign policy guy and saying, "Why do you need nuclear weapons? You aren't threatened by Chile." This guy looks at me like I'm crazy and says, "What about the Beagle Channel?" I said, "The Beagle Channel, okay."

Q: Yeah.

JETT: I mean there's something to go to war over.

Q: Sure.

JETT: But, of course, the Falklands are a collection of treeless, windswept sheep pastures 600 miles off the coast. You couldn't get "a porteño" out of Buenos Aires let alone 600 miles out to sea with 600 thousand sheep and 2,000 people who thought they were more

British than the Queen. Anyhow, I was able to insert in various memos to the sixth and seventh floor the idea that there were ways to improve relations with Argentina besides the nuclear program. When Alfonsin got elected, I put into the talking points that were prepared for the delegation to Alfonsin's inauguration that President Alfonsin should come on an official state visit to see President Reagan in the White House. That somehow stuck and lasted through the clearance process and the invitation was extended. Alfonsin accepted and came and I traveled with his delegation. We started in Washington and then we went to New York and oddly enough out to Albuquerque, New Mexico; I think in part because Frank Ortiz was ambassador at the time. The visit set a new tone in the relationship between Argentina and the United States. The two countries don't have to get along. They can easily ignore each other and have antagonistic relationships, but there is no reason why they can't get along because we have a lot of common interests. Right now with Mrs. Kirchner, and her deceased husband before her, in power the Argentines have reverted to the shoot-yourself-in-the-foot nationalism the Argentines are so good at displaying. So relations now aren't that good because the Argentines seem to think they have some advantage by being antagonistic. If you can set the tone early on and get a positive dialogue started it makes a lot of difference. We were able to do that back then and Argentina was made a non-NATO defense partner and all kinds of other things that showed a more profound relationship than had ever been possible with Peron or the military governments for that matter.

Q: Did we get involved in resolving the disappearances and that sort of thing?

JETT: Well when I was in Argentine for my first tour the dirty war was just beginning and it wasn't really until March of '76 when the military coup happened that it began in earnest. Then the military started disappearing people by the thousands for the next couple years '76 to '79. That's also the Carter era when he established a human rights bureau and the requirement for doing human rights reports each year on every country. Patt Derian was the assistant secretary for human rights and Tex Harris was the human rights officer in the political section in Buenos Aires. He was doing a great deal in trying to call attention to this problem and provide an opportunity for people who had lost children or relatives who had been "disappeared" by the government to come and report this to the embassy and Tex Harris would keep a data bank. All of that was vastly unpopular with the people who followed in the Reagan administration. Jeane Kirkpatrick's school of thought was that any rightwing dictator has to be our friend because we are in the struggle against Communism and we can overlook their human rights abuses. They believed some day we will convince them to be democratic, but in the meantime we have to be firmly in bed with them. By the time I got there, as desk officer in '83, because the military had lost the war, they had the election that brought Alfonsin to power. So Alfonsin began to deal with the past human rights abuses, but it is still a problem to this day. They are even still arguing in Argentina about how many people died. The common figure you see all the time in the news is that there were 30 thousand. The only attempts to come up with a list of the victims came up to between nine and twelve thousand and yet you still see the 30 thousand figure used all the time.

Q: Uh huh.

JETT: I have some academic friends who are Argentine specialists and one of them sent around this paper recently arguing in the dirty war it wasn't just the right that was committing abuses, but the left was actually killing people too. That was obvious to anyone who had been there at the time, but it launched an online discussion about how many people died. I pointed out that the 30 thousand figure was largely a back-of-the-napkin estimate by a human rights activist in Argentina whose daughter was one of the people taken and killed by the military government; so you can understand his concern. The figure was literally no more than a projection of what happened in one neighborhood to the entire county so it made little sense to always use 30 thousand as if it was absolute fact. I said, since you can't explain that in every article, journalists ought to explain that it's not a precise figure. Then we got into this discussion and someone said, "it's actually 20 thousand because 10 thousand of those people reappeared." This is the kind of debate that continues to this day. And it indicates how elusive the truth is in countries where they have not gone through a thorough process of reflection and investigation like what happened in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

Q: I know I've interviewed people who were in Indonesia when Sukarno was overthrown and a lot of Communists were killed by Suharto's forces and all. A lot of them were Chinese and the figure developed actually one of our officers was asked and he said, "Well I think about 350 thousand were killed." That figure has stayed and that's purely as he says an offhand feel for the thing but it is still quoted.

JETT: Some figures gain credence and become a shorthand description for what happened, but nobody goes back and really bothers to explain why you can't really say well 30 thousand and the lists that were compiled only add up to 9 to 12 thousand. Perhaps journalists say 30 thousand because it somehow sounds like a more important story than 12 thousand.

Q: Were we pressuring the Alfonsin government to come up with figures or was this left to them?

JETT: No, it was left to them. There was no lack of debate about the whole thing. The people who defend those actions in the dirty war say the county was saved from a Communist takeover and the people on the other side want justice for all those who were murdered by their government. The debate continues and the Argentines seem incapable of resolving it. There was no need for us to push for a figure. There was some suspicion about our real role and interest so it would not have helped. I remember making a visit to Argentina as desk officer to reorient myself. I told the embassy I wanted to go around and talk to the human rights activists and they were saying "I'm not sure we can do that. You aren't going to be well received." I said, "Well, I'd like to try." I went around and talked to these people and they seemed to appreciate the fact that I had actually sought them out and talked to them. I think there was still some wariness or concern about our role. Everyone knew the kind of difficulties that Tex Harris had with people like the ambassador who was a political appointee, Raul Hector Castro. He believed the relationship with the military government was important and that we had to downplay the

human rights stuff. Then you had people like Patt Derian who were trying to point out the impact of it and that you can't completely ignore human rights just because you want to have a cozy relationship. I think it is the same dilemma you face today in all the places like Egypt and Yemen and Bahrain. You embrace the dictator of the day because he says he is an ally and represents stability. But what do you do when democracy comes along after a popular uprising? It makes those kinds of transitions very difficult as seen in the recent debate about when was the right moment to throw Mubarak under the bus.

Q: Was Argentina in this '80s period when you were the desk officer did it have much contact with the States? Were they sort of students going through the States or were they mainly going to Europe and how about trade?

JETT: There was not that much of either. In Latin America in general, even today, the students don't go to study in the U.S. There are about half a million foreign students in the United States. 100 thousand of those are Chinese and another 100 thousand are Indian and maybe 50 thousand Koreans and a lot of Japanese, a lot of Turkish students, but it falls off pretty steeply after that. Very few are from Latin America. There are some Venezuelans and Columbians because of the chaos in their countries; particularly Venezuela. But there is not a lot of student exchange and they tend to stay in their own countries and study in their own universities. I remember when I was in Peru I said to the head of the University of Lima, "There are a lot of Latin American studies departments in any number of American universities. Why are there no North American studies departments in any Peruvian university?" She really had no answer other than they seemed to be more preparing students for a limited number of careers, being accountants and lawyers and whatever rather than engaging in academic pursuits like area studies.

Trade was growing, but not large. There had been some American investment there; there was a Ford factory. During the time prior to the dirty war there was considerable leftist terrorism, which included kidnapping businessmen for ransom. It was one of the things that helped to provoke the dirty war. Because both countries are big agricultural producers we were competitors in that area much more than trading partners.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: There was hoof and mouth disease so uncooked meat imports were banned; that has subsequently has been lifted. One of their economic policies under Peron was essentially to create their own manufacturing industry so they wouldn't have to import stuff so they tried to manufacture virtually everything.

Q: Brazil was going through that same thing?

JETT: It was common in Latin America to have that sort of economic philosophy. They didn't really believe in trade, comparative advantage and that sort of stuff; they believed in self-sufficiency as a way to limit their imports and their dependence on their need for foreign exchange. That approach caused a lot of inefficiency and a lot of subsidies and a

lot of government involvement and a lot of corruption, but that gave a lot of politicians an opportunity to enrich themselves. That philosophy is still around as it's been a slow process of Latin American economies facing the economic reality and that process continues today.

Q: I'm just trying to think maybe this would be a good place to stop.

JETT: Okay.

Q: After two years on the desk where did you move to?

JETT: I was still single at the time and I developed a romantic interest that was living in Miami and so there was something called the Pearson Program where you could go off and spend a year with a state or local government or local organization so I said I'll go off to Miami for a year and see how this relationship works out. So that's what I did. I spent the next year '85-'86 in Miami working for something called the International Center of Florida which was an association of companies in Miami that had an interest in things international. The center sponsored events and promoted international trade and that sort of thing.

Q: Okay, today is the 13th of April 2011 with Dennis Jett. Dennis, by the way, was Raul Castro ambassador while you were on the desk?

JETT: No, he fell in between the time that I served in Argentina and the time I served on the desk. He was there from late 1977 until 1980.

Q: I got a copy of an email saying Raul Castro has apparently written a memoire. Somebody sent it to Tex Harris pointing out the fact that although Tex was a major player during the time he was there he wasn't mentioned once.

JETT: That would require Castro to talk about what he downplayed support for human rights in order to cozy up to a military government that was a gross violator of human rights. I think he at various times confronted Tex and said stop reporting all this negative stuff, it's complicating our bilateral relationship. It was obviously easier to avoid it rather than discuss how little he did for human rights. I gather from looking at a description of the book that he came from very humble beginnings to rise to great success despite the discrimination against Mexican-Americans, but telling that story is not served by mentioning Tex.

Q: Okay, alright, well love has moved you to take a Pearson assignment going down to Miami. Is that right?

JETT: Right.

Q: You were in Miami on the assignment for how long? From when to when?

JETT: It was just a one-year assignment; it was the middle of ’85 to the middle of ’86.

Q: So what was this assignment?

JETT: In the Pearson program you are sent off to work with a state, local government or other entity. In this case, it was something called the International Center of Florida, which was an association of businesses with international interests, mainly in Latin America, but all over the world. It organized events and encouraged international trade and other things. One of the things we did when I was there was there was host a panel discussion by former Secretaries of State that they’ve filmed and put on as a program on PBS (public broadcasting system). It was usually held in Atlanta, but that particular year we got it in Miami and the International Center was one of the organizers. There were five former Secretaries of State that came for the event: Rusk, Rogers, Haig, Vance and Muskie. Kissinger did not come.

Q: Miami has over the years, turned into a really major commercial place as well as an R&R for the drug people in Latin America. How did you find the environment in Miami when you were there?

JETT: As you said, it’s often been characterized as the most important and fastest growing city in Latin America. Dade County is the only county in the United States where there are more people born outside the United States than are native-born Americans living in that county. So you’ve got this tremendous international flavor, obviously the Cuban exile community, Latin American community in general and Haitian community. It was a very tropical place in terms of climate, very multicultural and pretty dynamic economically; it was an interesting place to be.

Q: Did you find in there were the Cuban-Americans almost calling the shots or not?

JETT: They have a very heavy role in local politics and it spills over into national politics as Florida is often a key state in a presidential election and Miami is an important determinant of who wins the state. Their understandable hatred of Castro has led to periodic efforts to ratchet up the sanctions against Cuba. Under the George W. Bush’s administration, in even numbered years the State Department would dutifully do a report saying the sanctions weren’t working and the solution was harsher sanctions. This was solely intended to rile up the Cuban community in Miami and make sure they continued to vote Republican even though it did nothing to help our relations with Latin America. On the local level their impact was even more evident. I had a friend who was active in Democratic politics and I asked him once, “Why don’t you run for Congress? He said, “No thanks. It doesn’t matter who I am, I am the wrong ethnicity and will never get elected.” Those communities tended to elect people that represent them based on the ethnicity of the candidate. The Cuban community was so strong because they would vote as a monolithic block and cared about only one issue. They had a lot of power.

Q: What was your impression of businesses that were working through your center?

JETT: Well there was a wide-range of business; there were banks with international operations. There was a guy who was a representative of BCCI, the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, which was a major money laundering operation.

Q: Was this out of Doha? Or Middle Eastern states?

JETT: Yes. There were other banks as well. Miami is a favorite place for rich people from Latin America to have second homes and park their money. It was a hedge against political instability in their countries. Then you had companies like Wackenhut, a guard service company, which later on in my career becomes the bane of my existence. What else? A couple of airlines and a couple hundred smaller companies mainly trading with Latin America belonged to the Center.

Q: What was the center doing for them?

JETT: Providing information, organizing events, the same sort way the Council of the Americas does things. I was just answering an email about ten minutes ago from the Council of the Americas who want me to come down to Washington on June 7. The Peruvian runoff election is on June 5 so they are going to organize a panel to talk about it. They will invite businessmen and other members of the council. It was the same sort of thing in Miami but a much smaller version, of course, because you only have a couple hundred members and I'm sure the Council of America's has hundreds and hundreds.

Q: At that time I imagine it's gotten only worse but was the drug influence speaking particularly in Colombia and elsewhere. Was this a real factor of money coming in or people coming in or anything like that?

JETT: Well it was talked about and certainly you would occasionally hear about it in the newspaper because of the crime it brought sometimes. We lived in a house in Coral Gables, it was a very small house. One of the David Merrick historic houses and it was a very nice neighborhood a block from the golf course. But two blocks away there was this home invasion robbery. There were several members of the family killed; it turned out to be a drug related thing. I can't remember when Miami Vice was on television but Miami had that reputation for being a home for people in that business because of its access to Latin America and because it was a place where you could do your banking as long as the banks were willing to look the other way and take the money and not ask where it had come from.

Q: How did they use you?

JETT: Well I was involved in the organizing committee for this Secretary of States thing. One of the other big projects that I had was trying to set up an arbitration center that would handle commercial disputes as an alternative to going to the courts in Latin America. So I worked a lot on that trying to get it set up, get people to subscribe to it and use it. I think those were probably the biggest projects that I had.

Q: When did you leave there?

JETT: ’86.

Q: ’86, so where did you go then?

JETT: At that point I decided if I wanted to move up I needed to be DCM somewhere so I went back to Washington and walked the halls and talked to the people in Latin America and there wasn’t really anything that worked. Part of the problem was I wasn’t married at this point.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: I would go to ambassadors and I would say I’m single, but I want to be your DCM. They would say to me, some of them quite explicitly, “Well, you know you’ve got to have a wife who can do the representational stuff because I don’t want my wife stuck with all of it so I’m going to hire somebody else.” I remember the ambassador to Guyana saying that and so he hired somebody who was married as his DCM. That guy went to post, but the irony was that his wife didn’t go with him; she had a career of her own and it was not going to prosper in Guyana so she stayed in D.C. So, being single and aspiring to be a DCM was a problem.

Finally, I found a DCM job in AF working for the political appointee who had been sent to Malawi. One of the features in the Reagan administration was they sent political appointees to some rather obscure places. They had a higher percentage of political appointees than previous administrations and needed places to stick them besides the Caribbean and Western Europe. So they sent political appointee ambassadors to Malawi and to Rwanda. That opportunity came up and I said, “Well I don’t know anything about Africa or Malawi or this person, but this is the kind of a job I want so I will go.” So off I went. Of course there were no direct flights. You had to fly overnight to London, land in Heathrow and hang out during the day and then fly overnight to Johannesburg and take a connecting flight the next day from Johannesburg to Lilongwe. I was replacing Genta Holmes as DCM and we literally were two ships passing in the night because we got together for breakfast in Heathrow as she was heading back to D.C. and I was heading to Lilongwe. It was then that I learned that the ambassador who had been there only two years had decided that was enough. Another thing that the Reagan administration instituted was a policy that all ambassadors stayed in place for three years, whether they were political or career. It takes about a year of paper work to get an ambassador from being selected to arriving at post so they wanted that predictability, they wanted to know a year in advance which posts they needed to fill so they instituted a three year rule.

Nevertheless Genta informed me at breakfast in Heathrow that the ambassador, Weston Adams was his name, had decided due to family health problems, that he was going to leave after two years and that he would be departing within six weeks of my arrival. She said I’d be chargé for an extended period because it will take a while for the system to generate a replacement on such short notice. I arrived and sure enough Weston Adams

left a month and a half later. So all of a sudden, I was not only DCM, but I was chargé. As it turned out they came up with a replacement but he had difficulty, he was a career officer but it was one of these things where somebody raised a rather spurious unfounded, objection to his appointment as ambassador. Often in those situations you just twist in the wind, if you will, waiting for the system to satisfy itself that there is no merit to this objection. To get a decision you are put in the position of trying to prove the negative. In any event, I was chargé for two years because it took the bureaucracy that long to resolve the issue.

Q: Well that was a great boost wasn't it?

JETT: Well it was because after you've been chargé for a few months you get half the difference between your pay and an ambassador's pay. So you are a middle grade officer and all of a sudden you get half way to what ambassadors make; it is a tremendous hike in pay. And it was also great professional development.

Q: Well let's talk about Malawi. Where is Malawi and what was the situation there when you arrived?

JETT: It's a small landlocked country on the lower east side of Africa. If you think of Mozambique as Y shaped, in the crook of the Y is Malawi. So the southern half of Malawi is surrounded by Mozambique on all sides, on the northwest you have Zambia, and on the northeast you have Tanzania. Most of the eastern border is Lake Malawi or what the Tanzanians call Lake Tanganyika. It's the tenth largest lake in the world and the one with the more species of fresh water tropical fish than anywhere else. Malawi then had eight million people. It was one of the poorest countries in the world and still is. Probably 90 percent of the people engage in subsistence agriculture, exports were tobacco and tea and a few other agricultural products such as macadamia nuts, some coffee. Hastings Kamuzu Banda was the president. He had made president for life because he was the guy who led the country to independence.

Q: It was Northern Rhodesia wasn't it?

JETT: Right, It was Northern Rhodesia but became Malawi when it got independence in 1964. Banda was elected president and then after a while in office he liked power so much he had the Congress declare him president for life. It was interesting that nobody was quite sure how old he was. Probably at that point he was somewhere in his 90s but it was unclear what year he was born. He had a medical degree and he studied in the States at a couple universities and then got a medical degree in Scotland. He must have been all of five feet tall and about 98 pounds soaking wet, but he was an absolute dictator. If you criticized the life president and someone reported you to the authorities, the police would often come by and pick you up the next day and that would be the last you would be heard of or seen. In a country where the per capita GDP was probably $200-300 a year he had presidential palaces all over the country. The commercial center of the country is Blantyre and he had one there, the traditional colonial seat of government was Zomba, he had a palace there. He decided that he wanted the capital in the center of the country,

which is where he is from, so he designated a small trading center, Lilongwe, as the capital; it was kind of like Brasília. In the bush you had these new government buildings surrounded by beautiful landscaping and some nice housing for expats and senior bureaucrats and little else. One of the things that was under construction on a ridge, within the view of my house as DCM, was another presidential mansion. To illustrate the kind of contrast between what average Malawians faced in their daily life and Banda's life style, I sent in a cable in once and the opening line was "There are 37 elevators in the entire country of Malawi, six of them are in the new presidential palace being built by Banda on the outskirts of Lilongwe."

Q: Good God.

JETT: It was a bizarre place in that regard; it was very isolated. There was one newspaper and it was owned by the government, there was no television because that wasn't permitted, there was one government-owned radio station. Banda had these strange cultural and moral hang-ups. If you arrived at the airport and were a man and had hair that reached below your collar you had to get a haircut at the airport or you weren't allowed into the country. If you wore bellbottom trousers you weren't allowed into country. If you were a woman you had to enter the country wearing a skirt that extended below your knees, no short skirts, no shorts or pants. That was the kind of country it was. When I was there, the first satellite dish in the entire country was set up by USIS. The first show that we carried live, and I made a big deal of this and invited a lot of people to come watch, was the inauguration of George H.W. Bush. At the time for such an isolated country it was an innovation to say the least. People really were out of touch or unfamiliar with technology. I remember once we had what looked like a weather balloon float over Lilongwe and it was silvery and bright. Everybody was looking up and wondering what it was and I got a call from the permanent secretary at the foreign ministry who was an educated guy with a college degree from an institution outside of Malawi. He says, "Well we've got this thing up in the sky; can't you aim your satellite dish at it and tell us what it is?" I said, "No, I'm afraid that is not what this satellite dish is capable of doing."

It was a great experience for me as charge because it was a small embassy with a big AID program. Banda was a favorite of the donor community because he was as ruthless with government officials who corrupt as he was with any political dissidents. Mike Armacost, the undersecretary for political affairs, came once. He was one of the few people who visited since it was so far off the beaten path. I was in the car with Armacost and he says, "Well, what are our interests here?" I said, "Development aid, but that is well administered, human rights issues, but there is not a lot of interest, and that's about it." He said, "That's it?" I said, "Yeah, that's it." And since Banda was a staunch anti-communist and far more pro-western than the rest of the countries in the region, I don't think there was all that much concern about human rights. The other big issue while I was there was we had a half million Mozambican's come across the border seeking refugee from the civil war in Mozambique. When I got there there were 50 thousand Mozambicans and three years later when I was leaving it was approaching 600 thousand. People just streamed in because the southern half of Malawi was surrounded by

Mozambique so you had all these people coming in seeking to avoid the fighting and then setting up camps and having to rely on the international community, the UN high commissioner for refugees, to supply them with food, water, shelter, sanitation and medical care. The issue was making sure the response was adequate because these people would flood across and sometimes it would take time for the UN bureaucracy to gear up and provide them with assistance that was needed.

Q: Would the Mozambicans use this, as often happens, as sort of base camps and then go back and fight or were these all refugees pretty much?

JETT: They were refugees. The border was very porous, but the Mozambicans controlled so little of their own territory that there was little need for bases in Malawi and I don't think they would have been tolerated by Banda who would have to fear retaliation from FRELIMO. RENAMO was the rebel movement in Mozambique and the government in Mozambique was run by FRELIMO, which had a Marxist-Leninist orientation. When they were in the bush, they got some support from the Soviets. So when they got their independence and took over that's the philosophy they adopted. Having all the political power gave them control of everything including the economy. FRELIMO abused that power and sent people who disagreed with their politics off to reeducation camps in the far reaches of the country. As a result there was considerable discontent to tap into and an anti-Communist group called RENAMO took up arms against FRELIMO. RENAMO was largely a creation of white-ruled Rhodesia because Mozambique was supporting those trying to end minority rule. When it did end and Rhodesia became Zimbabwe, RENAMO was taken over and supported by apartheid South Africa. The border was pretty porous so people would go back and forth, RENAMO people as well as refugees to buy things. The control of the Mozambican military was so poor that there were large areas of Mozambique where there was no government presence so RENAMO had no problem; it didn't really need sanctuaries in Malawi because it could operate quite freely in Mozambique.

Another aspect of the war, at least in terms of American policy and involvement, was the right-wingers in Washington who saw RENAMO as another anti-Communist freedom fighter movement in the same way that Savimbi and UNITA was in Angola and the Contras were in Central America. They were agitating for a policy of covert or even open support for RENAMO by the United States and an end to diplomatic relations with the FRELIMO government. You had people like Dan Burton, Congressman from Indiana who came to Malawi once when I was there and demanded to meet with RENAMO. I told him that RENAMO doesn't come in here officially; if they come in here they had to come in clandestinely. I explained the Malawian government wouldn't permit a meeting and risk a crisis with Mozambique and they also would not like a congressman crossing illegally into Mozambique. Burton threw a hissy fit when he understood that he wasn't going to be able to meet with RENAMO. But Burton, in my view, ought to be in a mental institution and not representing Indiana in Congress.

Then there were other American groups of right-wingers who would come and enter Mozambique illegally. Sometimes we had to have contact with these American groups

even though we had no official contact with RENAMO. Because we had relations with the FRELIMO government in Maputo; there was no official contact with RENAMO. I would talk to these Americans and sometimes find out what they were doing and get their impressions, but I had to be careful about making sure that I didn't really get involved in a way that would somehow imply any kind of relationship with RENAMO.

Q: How stood Banda vis-a-vis the South African government at the time?

JETT: Well he was the only African leader willing to have diplomatic relations with apartheid South Africa. There was actually a South African embassy there because he was willing to have formal diplomatic relations. The South Africans liked him because he gave the apartheid regime legitimacy; he was unique in that way. But none of his fellow African leaders liked the fact that he was willing to have diplomatic relations with Pretoria.

Q: Did you have much to do with the South African embassy?

JETT: It was a very small diplomatic corps. There were about eleven embassies in total. There was an Israeli embassy because they wanted to have embassies wherever they would be received. There was a Taiwanese embassy and actually he was the dean of the diplomatic corps. The Taiwanese liked having that kind of status and thought it gave them some legitimacy as an independent country so they would not let this poor guy leave Malawi because the dean of the corps would then have passed to the next person with the most seniority. He may still be there for all I know. China and Taiwan compete to see who can bribe the local government more to have diplomatic relations. Since Banda was such an iconoclast and lacking any significant trade with mainland China; he was happy to have Taiwan there and he was anti-Communist as well. Who else was there? There was a British High Commission, a German embassy, a French embassy and some neighboring countries. It was a very small corps and we all basically got along. Occasionally there were things that caused problems. I remember one time the South Africans had their national day and I thought well I'll send my economic officer I don't think I will bother going to the national day of the apartheid state; of course they boycotted the next Fourth of July. Other than that they were a pretty professional bunch, but wary of us as they were probably up to things that we wouldn't appreciate.

Q: What about UN votes? When we don't have much with a country UN votes become rather important don't they?

JETT: That was not a problem with Banda because he was not taking the typical Third World Marxist-Leninist line. He tended to vote with us on UN issues more than most any other country in Africa. Human rights issues at the UN were not a problem at that point because they hadn't gotten the focus that they do today in obscure corners of the world. I guess there are still obscure corners of the world in human rights. In Equatorial Guinea for instance it doesn't get the attention it deserves. I think he had a pretty good voting record as far as we were concerned. Because he had the Israeli embassy there and relations with Israel he wasn't one of those who automatically voted against Israel.

Q: On human rights I take it that anything that was to be done from our point of view had to see Banda himself?

JETT: Well you didn't really call on Banda. It was a very formal relationship and he would have rejected any suggestion from us on how to improve human rights; I'll give you two examples. The head of the Peace Corps a woman named Loret Miller Ruppe came on a visit since we had a Peace Corps program in Malawi; it had been thrown out though in the past. Paul Theroux, the writer, at one point was a Peace Corps volunteer in Malawi and in his era there were accusations that Peace Corps was getting involved in internal politics which basically meant that Peace Corps volunteers were saying, "Why are you allowing this little tyrant to oppress you," I suppose; so Banda threw out the Peace Corps. It had been reinstituted and it was a fairly pleasant place to live and so it was a pretty big and popular program even though you had malaria and obviously a lot of poverty.

So Loret Miller Ruppe came to visit and thanked Banda for hosting this program. Following the normally very stiff protocol for such a meeting, she and I on one side of this table, Banda is at the head of the table and on the other side of the table was the minister of state for administrative affairs. The conversation started off with Loret Ruppe saying, "Thank you very much for hosting the Peace Corps. I know we've had problems in the past but I'm happy to see the program is such a success." Then Banda launches into a historical review about how the Peace Corps had meddled in internal politics and Ruppe said something like, "Yes, we have learned that lesson and we won't meddle in internal politics." Banda said, "Yes, I am a strong believer in discipline and respect and I will give you an example. Then he points to this minister who was sitting there taking notes. He says, "You see this guy. He's the minister of state for administrative affairs and he is sitting here at the table, but if it were just he and I, he would never sit at the table. He would sit on the floor and he would hand things up to me. I would read them and sign them and hand them back." Then he turns and he looks at the minister and this guy's eyes got wide and he jumps to his feet and stands there rigidly at attention and says in a loud voice, "Yes, his Excellency the life president is absolutely correct. If I were in a meeting with him alone I would never think of sitting at the table. I would always sit on the floor and hand things up to him." Then he sat down. Ruppe and I were both stunned, but the conversation went on after that. That was the kind of guy Banda was. Any perception that you were disloyal meant you might wind up crocodile bait.

Q: Yeah.

JETT: The government's favorite slogan was "peace and calm, law and order." I remember talking to a Malawian official once and he was saying, "Yes, his Excellency the life president has brought us peace and order." He stopped and he got this horrified look on his face and said, "Uh, peace and calm, law and order;" as if had he failed to repeat the words right he would be arrested. The Malawi Congress Party government officials had a little button that they always wore on their lapel; it was sort of their flag lapel pin like American politicians think they have to wear. Only this had Banda's face

on it and if you were an official you would never be seen in public without your Banda button.

I have one other example. Each year on Banda's birthday they would invite the diplomatic corps to a nice reception at the Zomba presidential mansion. They'd line up the diplomatic corps in order of precedence. They would have each ambassador or chargé sit down with Banda for something like sixty seconds, express greetings and then move on to the next one. Banda had a woman named Mama Kadzamira, who wasn't his wife, because Banda wasn't married, but she acted as if she were first lady. All we knew was that she was next to Banda and therefore potentially very powerful. We didn't know what she was thinking or how much power she had or anything else. So it was the two of them and the ambassador or chargé. So when I got my turn I thought I'm not just going to exchange pleasantries. I'll use the opportunity, even though I have no instructions from Washington. Shortly prior to the reception the only well-known Malawian writer named Jack Mapanje, who had published books in London of poetry and other writings, had been abroad for awhile and had come back and was living there. All of a sudden he gets arrested and disappears. The rumor was that some official had read one of the books that had been published years before or one of his poems and decided it was critical of Banda. So he was then arrested and put into prison for that. When I sat down for my minute with Banda and Mama Kadzamira, I said, "Well it is a great honor to be here today thank you very much. You are the founding father of your country, etc., etc., but there is one question I would like to raise and that's Jack Mapanje. Not everybody likes his poetry, but I don't think I would call it subversive and shouldn't there be a judicial proceeding to determine whether he should remain in jail?" At that point Banda half way rose out of his chair. His two characteristics were he always wore black suits and a homburg hat and carried a flywhisk. So he starts shaking the flywhisk in my face and saying, "That's an internal affair and it's none of your business." I just said, "Your Excellency, thank you very much but internal affairs have international implications. Thank you for the day." By this time the protocol people were going nuts because they saw this confrontation and so they rushed over and said, "What did you say?" Anyhow, Banda was not happy; he didn't take to criticism or intervention from abroad in his internal affairs. He hung on to power until 1994 when somehow the donors finally leaned on him and his government sufficiently to have a referendum as to whether he should continue to be life president. He lost and he actually stepped down in a very peaceful transition. Of course the elected presidents that followed generally turned out to be corrupt and incompetent, but at least they were democratically elected.

Q: Well did you find yourself having to observe the Peace Corps because these are young kids who are full of idealistic ideas and all. I would think it would be difficult to handle them in that sort of country.

JETT: They were all well briefed about what to expect and they were all told look, we were thrown out of this country once and if you start messing around you are going to get the program throw out again. I think they understood that and so they avoided saying things that would be interpreted as meddling in internal affairs or if they said anything they were very discreet about it. They were scattered all over the country so there was no

way to observe what they were doing and it would not have been the embassy's job to do it unless there was a serious problem. Malawi is a densely populated country and it was about 8 million people at the time, but Lilongwe was 100 thousand people and Blantyre was 300 thousand people so most of the people were in rural areas. You could drive along in Malawi and almost never be out of the sight of somebody walking along the road or people in fields. The Peace Corps volunteers were scattered all over the country and generally behave themselves.

Q: You were there before AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) became such a factor in Africa?

JETT: AIDS was already a factor. When I was there, five percent of the Foreign Service national local employees had died that year in the embassy next door in Lusaka. I remember having a discussion with the regional medical officer, "Obviously we don't want Malawians dying but particularly we don't want our key employees dying. What can we do to educate them to demonstrate to them the seriousness of the problem?" So we hit on the idea of when they got their envelope with their paycheck every two weeks we put condoms with their paycheck as a way of encouraging them to practice safe sex. I remember having a discussion with a group of local employees as to what was the right number of condoms. It was a very uptight society because of the British colonial and missionary influence and because of the rigid morality and political oppression under Banda. In three years there I set foot in the home of a Malawian on one maybe two occasions, but was never invited by Malawians into their home for a meal because they were very careful of who they associated with and there was no reward in associating with diplomats.

Q: How big was the embassy?

JETT: I think there were about forty Americans; the biggest group was the AID (Agency for International Development), John Hicks was the AID director.

Q: What were we doing AID wise?

JETT: They were doing some agricultural work, some rural development basically, and health projects. I went to a village once where they had built a pipe that ran up the side of a mountain and took water out of a stream and delivered it to a well in the village. That way they had a source of clean water in the village instead of having to walk down to the river. We also had feeding programs.

Q: Was it a cattle culture?

JETT: No, there were some cattle, but it was mostly just growing maize. Cattle were beyond what most people could afford. The land was all pretty intensively cultivated, it was pretty fertile land, but very dependent on the annual rainfall. You really got an appreciation of the fact that 90 percent of the people were making a living from subsistence agriculture. If the rains were late everybody became intensely concerned

about when they would start because foods stocks started to run out. The seasons were rainy or dry, not summer, fall, winter and spring. And the months before the maize was ready to harvest was the hungry season.

Q: How about tribalism in the area was that much of a factor?

JETT: Not too much. There were about eight main tribes. Chichewa was the second official language after English, but there were others. There was regionalism; there was a north-south-central sense of identity. There was never a situation where there was inter-ethnic violence in Malawi; it was all pretty well contained though there was this regional identity and particularly in the north they felt that they were under represented. They thought they were better educated because there had been more missionaries in the north and they may, in fact, actually have had a little bit more education. There was that tension, but the government was aware of it and made some efforts to see there was some representation from all the areas in government and in the military as well.

Q: Did you finally get an ambassador there?

JETT: Yes, after two years George Trail came and took up the reins as ambassador so I continued on as DCM for another year.

Q: Were there any sort of major developments or any problems with terrorism or was this pretty much a static situation?

JETT: No there was nothing like that. It was a thoroughly repressive society. The only issue was the war going on in Mozambique and its spillover effects that went beyond a huge increase in the number of refugees. For instance, Air Malawi had an Irish-built plane, a boxy little propeller plane that carried maybe twenty passengers. They had a flight from Blantyre to Lilongwe and it cut across a corner of Mozambique. It was daytime and a scheduled airline flight. But the Mozambicans always suspected Malawi of supporting RENAMO. So this Mozambican army officer decides to shoot this plane down with a surface to air missile. He shoots down this civilian airliner and it crashes in Mozambique and everyone died; the Mozambicans refused to let the Malawians go to the wreckage site and assess whatever they could assess. So that was a point of some tension.

The other issue was the rightwing Americans who wanted to see RENAMO as freedom fighters instead of a bunch of thugs. While I was there a USAID contractor named Robert Gersony who came to tour the region. He went to Mozambique and all the neighboring countries. He did an analysis of the situation and his report concluded that RENAMO was responsible for massive human rights abuses and while the government was indeed responsible for some as well the vast majority were committed by RENAMO. He also said the RENAMO was using child soldiers. When that report was presented to Congress. Jesse Helms, of course, went nuts because he was not interested in the truth if it weakened his argument that these were anti-Communist freedom fighters. So that was absolutely the last thing he wanted to hear. Roy Stacy, who was retiring from AID, got the job of giving this report in a Congressional hearing to Helms. I think Roy was

selected because everybody knew whoever gave this report to Helms was never going to be an ambassador or get a position that required Senate confirmation because Helms would always retaliate against anyone who crossed him. He had a long memory and if you made his enemies list you could forget getting confirmed for any position.

One other issue that came up had to do with a group of missionaries who had an operation in Zimbabwe. An American nurse named Kendra Bryant was working with them. RENAMO took the group hostage and then marched them across a good part of Mozambique. The fact that they had kidnapped an American became a big issue and Helms and company were saying, "If she is released to the Mozambican government, they will kill her and blame RENAMO." In the end what happened was they walked to the border with Malawi and then were turned them over to me mainly because I had some contact again with these rightwing Americans who helped make the transfer happen. It was agreed that we would meet at this spot on the border on a given day and time and they would hand these people over to me.

Since communication was very difficult there were one or two false starts. At one point I went with this guy who was supposed to arrange the handover and we came to this river, which marked the border between Malawi and Mozambique. He goes across and he comes back and says, "The RENAMO commander wants to meet you." I said, "I can't. I have to stay on the Malawi side and can't enter Mozambique that way. They have to bring the hostages to me." The guy says, "No, he insists that you come and talk to him. Otherwise these people are not going to be freed." I said, "Well, okay." So I got in this little rickety boat and row across this rain-swollen river with this guy. He wasn't an American. He was a White South African or Zimbabwean who was a little strange in his own right. So I illegally entered Mozambique and we walked up the trail twenty paces and out of nowhere three guys materialize wearing flip-flops and shorts and tee shirts and carrying AK-47s. So we had a little chat and it turned out that the hostages were still several days walk away. But the leader of the group said now that we have met he was willing to turn them over to me. Then my escort and I got back in our little boat and we rowed back across the river. Several days later at a different place, the handover actually worked out. I waited on the Malawi side and they brought over the hostages including this American woman. Then I took them back to Lilongwe; there were three Zimbabweans and this woman. The ambassador's residence was still unoccupied at the time because the new ambassador hadn't arrived so I put them in the ambassador's residence so they could rest and adjust to being free and being able to eat a normal diet. I also had to convince the Malawians to not object to how they entered the country and to let them leave without any problems. They had been held for many months in captivity so they had some health issues. I had the nurse practitioner look at them and help them.

After a couple of days they decided they wanted to go back to Zimbabwe where they had started their ordeal so I told them they were free to do whatever they wanted. The American woman says, "I want to go back with them too." I said, "Well I'd gotten a call from this guy who says he's your preacher back in Houston and he's on his way here to escort you back to Houston." She said, "Look, I don't even know that guy. I shook his hand once or twice, I went to his church once or twice, but he is not my preacher. I don't

even know him; I don't want anything to do with him. I want to go with my friends back to Zimbabwe." So I said, "Well, you are free to do whatever you want." So she gets on a plane and flies out.

Then a couple hours later this preacher shows up and in tow he has a journalist from the Houston Chronicle who I suppose is there to chronicle his daring adventure. This guy was a self-promoting blowhard who wanted to be the hero who led this poor girl out of captivity and back to the United States or some such nonsense. This clueless journalist shows up and gets told at the airport that they don't allow journalists into Malawi. That's another thing Banda didn't allow. So I had to talk to the officials at the airport and get them to allow the journalist to come in, spend the night and leave the next day. This minister was furious with me because I had not locked this young woman in a closet I suppose, until he could get there and be the hero. The journalist was also angry because she had no story and a lot of travel expenses to justify so she wrote this article about how quaint all the people walking around with no shoes were and how I had not helped her in any way and was responsible for the fact that she had nothing intelligent to report.

The minster must have gotten on the phone and complained to anyone he could because a few hours after that Dan Burton, the deranged congressman, calls me up and started screaming at me over the phone saying, "You let her go and she is going to go back to Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwean government is going to arrest her at the airport and torture her and kill her." I told him Embassy Harare was going to meet her, but he was sure she doomed. I finally screamed back at him and said, "You are entitled to your opinion, but I have no right to detain an American citizen against her will and tell her what to do. If you don't like it then write your Congressman."

The Zimbabwean officials questioned them for about twenty minutes and then released them and she was fine and eventually went back to Houston. She even wrote a book about her ordeal. But that was the kind of ridiculous stuff that happened because you had these rightwing people in Washington who were basically self-appointed lobbyists for RENAMO who were trying to always look for opportunities to promote their cause.

There was a funny story I heard that sort of put the nail in the coffin of the people who wanted to promote RENAMO. Somehow Chet Crocker, the assistant secretary for African affairs, was able to get Samora Machel, the president of Mozambique, into a meeting with Ronald Reagan when Machel visited Washington; it was supposed to be a 15- minute courtesy call. Machel went into the meeting and immediately told a joke about how stupid the Russians were and Reagan came back with his favorite joke about stupid Communists and so they sat there for about 45-minutes exchanging jokes and stories. Machel completely charmed Reagan and they really connected even thought their politics could not have been further apart. At that point any thought of attempting to overthrow Machel by giving covert assistance to RENAMO became impossible. All the time I was there were rightwing Americans trying to make RENAMO the contras of Africa, but during the Cold War the rabid anti-Communists wanted to jump in bed with anyone who said they were against Communism too regardless of how reprehensible they were.

Q: I understand that one of our officers in Moscow during the Reagan administration was assigned to pick up jokes to pass on to the president.

JETT: I think Machel knew of Reagan's love of such jokes and so he took advantage of that and gave him a few of his own. They immediately hit it off.

Q: Did you have any particular contact with African affairs when Chester Crocker was there? He was very much involved in Namibia and all that, but I was wondering whether you had any feel for this?

JETT: No, we were pretty isolated both geographically and politically in the sense that Malawi was kind of a pariah among African states because of its diplomatic relations with South Africa and because of its diplomatic relations with Israel. We were mainly ignored by Washington, which had plenty of problems to deal with and was happy to have one country off its radar screen. One of these groups of Americans came and I thought they were there just to learn about Malawi. They land and immediately tell me that they are going to cross illegally into Mozambique and go visit RENAMO. I remember being really angry that Washington never bothered to give me any indication that this was what these people wanted to do.

I would say basically we were ignored because we weren't important and because Banda was not going to take our advice about how to run his foreign policy. If the issue had to do with assistance to refugees I would call up the right bureau and ask them to send out somebody TDY (temporary duty) and help us assess whether there was sufficient aid for them and that it was being done properly. Washington would respond, but in terms of AF, Chet had plenty of other irons in the fire and there wasn't any particular need to pay any attention to Malawi, particularly when a lowly chargé running things. So we were ignored basically.

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

JETT: Okay.

Q: Where did you go after you left Malawi?

JETT: I went on to be DCM in Liberia under Jim Bishop.

Q: Oh yes, I've interviewed Jim. You can read his accounts on our website; the Library of Congress and just Google frontline diplomacy and I'm pretty sure Jim's account is in there.

JETT: Okay, I'll take a look.

Q: Today is the 27th of April 2011 an interview with Dennis Jett. Dennis when you arrived in Liberia what was the situation and could you describe the history of Liberia.

JETT: For about 150 years Americo-Liberians, the descendents of freed American slaves who were brought back to Africa, had been the political and economic elite of the country. Even though they were never more than five percent of the population they controlled everything. Then in 1980 a master sergeant named Samuel Doe, along with 16 other sergeants and corporals, jumped the wall of the presidential mansion and murdered the president in his pajamas; a man named Tolbert who was the last Americo-Liberian president. Basically it was a military coup and Sergeant Doe took over and proceeded to eliminate most of his rivals among the 16 others that plotted this coup with him. He was from the Krahn tribe. There are about eight major tribes in Liberia. He basically picked his fellow tribesmen to fill important positions and he quickly began running a very corrupt and incompetent government. They took the ministers of the previous government out and, in a very public display in front of a group of international journalists, they tied them to the telephone poles behind the military barracks and proceeded to shoot the former cabinet members. The firing squad was drunk and it took them several volleys to be able to hit their target.

So that was the kind of regime that it was. It stayed in power by ruthlessly eliminating any rivals and by promoting people that were loyal to Doe and suppressing anyone who wasn't. One of those people who came in the midst of this chaos was a guy named Charles Taylor who was a Liberian who had gone to the United States. He was in jail in Massachusetts for some kind of fraud or something.

Q: Yeah, I think bank fraud of some kind.

JETT: Yeah. He escaped jail somehow and made his way back to Liberia and he took up the position, appointed himself perhaps, head of the procurement agency. It was the equivalent of GSA, general services agency, and then, of course, he proceeded to start stealing everything he could get his hands on. He apparently didn't pass enough of the proceeds on to Mr. Doe and so he had a falling out with Doe; and Taylor had to leave the country. He went to various places including Libya where he got some military training. He then reappeared on the scene at Christmas time in 1989 leading an insurrection from the Ivory Coast into the northeastern corner of Liberia. From there it gradually spread until it engulfed the whole country.

We stuck with Doe during his ten years in power despite his corruption and human rights abuses because it was still the Cold War and he was our friend. We had landing rights at Roberts Field and various assets there and that made Liberia a relatively important in terms of our presence in Africa and our ability to support Savimbi in Angola and do all kinds of other things in Africa.

In 1985 there was a thoroughly fraudulent election and I remember Chet Crocker testifying before Congress about it. The best defense he could offer was he said, "Relative to previous elections it was an improvement because previous elections were ones where the Americo-Liberians just past the presidency from one to another in highly

rigged elections." So this was somewhat less rigged, but the outcome was still the same; the incumbent won.

Doe maintained a tenuous grip on power despite being absolutely ruthless. There were numerous coup attempts against him including one in '85 or'86, where some people from the Gio and Mano tribes up in the north of the country tried to oust him. I always tell my students the rules of the overthrow-the-dictator game are you have to capture the radio station, the airport and the presidential mansion. If you do those three things you win the game and get to be dictator until someone stronger comes along. In this particular coup attempt, the rebels swept into Monrovia. They were able to capture most of the city mainly because there wasn't much resistance, but they didn't finish the job by capturing the presidential mansion. Doe got up on the roof of the mansion with a handheld walkie-talkie, which was a favorite means of communication as their telephone system was so bad. There was a repeater on the roof of a hotel not too far away on top of a hill and this repeater takes a signal from a hand-held walkie-talkie and boosts it in power and retransmits it. Because the rebels had not knocked out this repeater Doe was able to call troops loyal to him who were out near the airport near Roberts Field, which was about 40 miles outside of town. He rallied them and they came into town and quickly defeated the rebels and then Doe went around trying to eliminate anybody he suspected of supporting the rebels. The local television station had filmed the people celebrating Doe's downfall. His people went through the tapes and anyone they could identify and find was eliminated. They also carried out some massive repression in the Geo and Mano areas in northern Liberia. When at the end of 1989, Charles Taylor invaded northern Liberia he immediately got lots of support from the local people, the Geo and Mano, who had no love for Mr. Doe and because of what happened in 1985.

Meanwhile, we had been pouring in lots of military aid throughout the '80s and economic aid. As part of the economic aid we had a group of 17 AID accountants who were overseeing the finance ministry. It became inconvenient for Mr. Doe to have that much oversight and it became harder and harder for them to do their work. So in the end Ambassador Bishop saw it was impossible to ensure that the Liberian government's money was being accounted for. So the mission was terminated and the accountants packed up and left.

During the entire 1980s we continued military training and poured quite a lot of money into the Liberian army, but only if you were a fellow tribesman of Doe or somehow displayed your loyalty to Doe did you got promoted. If you didn't you were out of luck. So the Liberian army was a very hollow shell despite millions of dollars of U.S. equipment and training to try and make it a national army worthy of the name, but it was never more than just Doe's bodyguards.

At first, at Christmas 1989 when this incursion happened up on the border, it seemed like a minor incident. Then it became like a cancer and started spreading. There were reports from up-country that there had been a clash, a battle had happened and there were casualties, but the details were always hazy. Then it would be quiet for a time. The government really did not want people to know what was happening since it would affect

morale and support for the regime. There was a long report on the war on the television program "Nightline", which we obtained a copy of. The government made clear we were not to have any public showings of the tape. I did show it to the diplomatic core as a way of encouraging them to think about evacuating people and other measures to take. The Spanish ambassador refused to watch the tape because he argued it was never going to get that bad. The rebels eventually overran his embassy and he and his staff barely escaped with their lives.

It was becoming clear that the rebels were increasing the territory under their control and that the government was being pushed back and that this was going to be far more serious than previous attempts to overthrow Doe. After he put down the uprising in 1985, the situation returned to normal pretty quickly at least in Monrovia. While there was an evacuation of embassy personnel within a month or so they were back.

This time, however, it was unclear how long it was going to last or how bad it was going to get. We decided in April to start sending out dependents and non-essential personnel and any Americans who wanted to leave. So we started with an airlift using chartered aircraft that we flew in, loaded people up and then flew out because by that time all scheduled airlines had ceased to operate. We continued that until eventually we drew down from an official community of about 600 people to 30 or 35 people in the embassy at the end; just the essential personnel and some security people and that was it.

All the time tensions were increasing in Monrovia. There were headless bodies turning up in the street, there were clear tribal elements to the conflict, it was increasingly nasty and adding to the violence and the tension. By sometime in May the city was surrounded and totally cut off and the only part of Liberia that Doe still controlled was the capital, Monrovia, and not much of that.

It was all the more difficult for the embassy due to the large, nonofficial, American community. Because of the historical relationship with Liberia there were a lot of people with dual citizenship and a lot of missionaries there. Despite our warnings urging people to leave the country there were many who stayed. We advised people to get out and our warnings because progressively stronger as the situation worsened and the possibilities for getting out became fewer and fewer. Road travel became impossible and air travel more difficult as no air carrier would land any longer. Roberts Field fell pretty early on because it was pretty far out of town. There was an in town airport -- kind of like Reagan National and Dulles airport; Dulles fell pretty quickly but Reagan still operated. The in-town airport was called Spriggs Payne but it had a very short runway. But eventually not even it was functioning.

I remember about March Jim Bishop left because he was being transferred and I remember…

Q: He was going to Somalia wasn't it?

JETT: He did.

Q: Oh God.

JETT: He went into the fire from the frying pan. I remember vividly we were having a going away party for him and in the midst of the party we get this call on the radio that the embassy warehouse was on fire. Because we had a community of 600 and due to the need to import almost everything in terms of furniture, appliances and other stuff; we had a very large warehouse. What had happened was that Wackenhut, the company that had the security contract for the local guards, was getting paid in dollars and was paying the guards in local currency. The inflation rate at the time was about 100 percent a year or so. The guards were seeing the purchasing power of their salaries steadily diminishing; Wackenhut was more than happy to pocket the dollars and pay in local currency and laugh all the way to the bank. Eventually the guards got so angry that they torched the warehouse. In the midst of this party we were called to the warehouse to see what was happening. In the warehouse was Jim Bishop's airfreight; his sea freight was outside the warehouse because it was all crated up. His airfreight, which is the stuff that gets shipped via air to meet your most immediate needs when arriving at a new post, that was all inside the warehouse and it went up in smoke. Then he went to Washington and was on the task force in Washington and on the Liberian crisis for a number of months before he finally went to Somalia at some point in that summer of 1990.

Once he got to Somalia his sea freight arrived and then, of course, things fell apart in there all that was lost. He left Somalia on a helicopter in rather a dramatic fashion in the middle of the night carrying only his briefcase and his tennis racquet. His entire household effects were gone; what he didn't lose in Liberia he did in Somalia. Anyhow, while I was chargé he was back in Washington as head of the task force on Liberia from March until just after the 4th of July when Pete De Vos arrived to become ambassador. De Vos had to fly in on a small, chartered prop plane as that was the only way in at that point.

While I was still charge, about June 1, 1990, I got an instruction to go seek an appointment with the president. Because of the growing crisis and the inability of the Liberian army to do anything other than attack civilians, there was deepening concern in Washington about the embassy and the situation of the remaining Americans and others in Monrovia. At that point Monrovia was completely cut off and there was no way in or out by air, land or sea. In response Washington put four ships off the Liberian coast, a task force consisting of a destroyer, a small aircraft carrier, the Saipan, and two supply ships.

I get this instruction to go tell President Doe there will be 2,000 marines and 2,000 sailors just over the horizon, but they are only there in case some sort of emergency required a full evacuation of American personnel. I requested an appointment to see him and the appointment didn't come through until late at night.

By that time the electricity had been cut off; the power plant was outside of town and was now in rebel hands. The only place with any lights in town was the American embassy

and the presidential mansion with a few other assorted places with generators, but basically the city was completely blacked out. It was filled with soldiers who were walking around afraid rebels were going to infiltrate and there was constant gunfire and rounds being squeezed off in the dead of night.

So I go see him and he receives me on the top floor of the presidential mansion, a kind of terrace, one side overlooking the darkened city and the other side with a view of the ocean. This is probably my best anecdote of 28 years in the Foreign Service. So I explain to him about the 2,000 marines and 2,000 sailors. He erupts in anger and says, "You know, I've been your good friend all these years and this is how you repay me." I said, "No, no. It is not any threat to you, it is only in a dire emergency that they would come ashore. They will be over the horizon and you won't even see them. Again, we don't want to bring them ashore, it is only a contingency." He finally understood and he calmed down and we had a chat about one thing or another, soccer or something. It was getting pretty late at that time and I thought even though the embassy was maybe a mile away it was probably time to get home since the later it got the more like I would get shot at during that short drive.

So our conversation finished and he walked me to the elevator on the seaside of the building and he looks out at the ocean and he says to me, "You know, I sit up here at night and look out over the ocean and I sometimes see the lights of your submarines going by." I said to him, "Well Mr. President, I don't think that they are the lights of our submarines because we have nuclear powered submarines now in our fleet and when they leave port they submerge immediately and go on patrol and they don't surface again until they are reentering their home port after their patrol is over six months later." He thought about that for a few seconds and then he said, "I wonder what kind of person could live that kind of life under the water for months on end?" So I said to him, "Certainly someone who doesn't insist on sleeping with his windows open." He kind of looked at me strangely and I repeated it and then he had a good laugh; then I left.

Among the stories told about that terrace on top of the presidential mansion was that when one coup plotter, from one of the previous attempts, had been brought up there for interrogation by Mr. Doe, Doe told him how he was going to meet his end. Rather than hang around and meet that fate the man decided to jump off the balcony and fall six floors to the pavement below instead of waiting to see if Doe was actually going to do what he threatened to do. It was a very strange environment in a strange place at a strange time.

Q: What about all these Americans? Had you really gotten down to 30 or so?

JETT: Dealing with the official community was relatively straightforward. We were able to get down pretty quickly to that number and, of course, by the time you get down to that number you are trying to decrease the size of the embassy but you have these security people saying, "Oh, we have to send in more security people to protect the embassy." But you are trying to keep people who can do political reporting or carrying out humanitarian aid programs and just run the embassy and keep it open. So, on the one hand, you are

getting pressure to push down the number caring out embassy functions and on the other you're under pressure to increase the number of security people protecting them.

On the unofficial side you had all these people who refused to understand how bad the situation was and that it was not going to get better anytime soon. I remember having a meeting with some of those left in the American community, to the extent there was one, and telling them we don't know how this is going to come out, if it is going to end tomorrow or when, but the trend is not in a good direction. So I think you all need to think about whether it's worth risking your lives to stay. Whatever it is you have here whether it is church, or a missionary role or business involvement think about the possibility of risking your life to maintain your presence here. I think a lot of people left after that, but others just stayed.

There was a Firestone rubber plantation outside of town. Despite all the services being cut off there was a radio link out to the plantation. There was a guy out there who was a British citizen who was married to an American woman and when the rebels got to the plantation and surrounded him he calls up and says, "Okay, can you send a marine helicopter to pick me up?" I said, "Well we told you weeks ago to leave and so good luck." He didn't appreciate that, but there wasn't anything I could do in terms of putting a helicopter and troops at risk landing in the middle of an area controlled by some of the worst soldiers in the world. They didn't even deserve to be called soldiers. He wasn't too happy about that, but I believe he got out somehow.

There was a missionary who decided to stay and some looters, I don't know whether they were Doe's army or whether they were rebels, decided to come in the middle of the night and loot his place; he came out to the gate and refused to open it. They tried to shoot the lock off the gate and a bullet ricocheted and killed him. There were some sad cases but most of the expatriates got out. Thousands and thousands of Liberians were not so lucky. The figure of 200,000 deaths is often used, but really no one has the slightest idea how many died.

In early August things had gotten so bad and because of the lack of supplies to keep the embassy open we finally brought some of the marines ashore from the task force that had been steaming in circles off the coast all this time. We were running out of food and water and a number of other things. We had Americans not only in the embassy compound, but also at two communications facilities about ten miles outside of town. One was a communications facility that received communications and the other transmitted communications; there were some technicians at each of both but no real protection for them other than a fence. They were really way out there in no man's land.

Charles Taylor, who was leading one rebel group, had a lieutenant named Prince Johnson. Johnson split off from when Taylor began to see him as a rival and tried to have him killed. So Johnson took a couple hundred troops and went off and started his own revolution. He was coming into the city from the north and Taylor was coming in from the East and we had the sea to the south and the west.

Prince Johnson was a really colorful character. All three of them Doe, Johnson and Taylor were psychotic killers. One day Johnson was interviewed on the BBC and said, "Well, I'm not getting enough attention from the international community so I'm going to start taking foreigners hostage because I am not getting support." At that point the station chief and I sat down with Ambassador De Vos, who arrived a month earlier.

We had been holding off bringing the marines ashore and not doing anything with these four ships that were just over the horizon. The station chief and I basically said to Pete "We have no choice now. This guy is threatening to take hostages and we have a half dozen security officers with pistols and that's not enough to defend this place against any kind of real threat. And the technicians at the two communications facilities have no protection." He agreed and we asked for the Marines to come ashore.

So the next day we had 278 Marines land on the embassy compound while helicopters landed at the two communications facilities and scooped up the technicians at each site and whisked them off to safety. We knocked down the posts on the Embassy basketball court and made it into a helo pad so the helicopters would come in and land, off load food and whatever else was needed.

That began a new phase in the evacuation. People would make their way to the embassy and were evacuated to the Saipan and then on to Freetown by helicopter. That was also very difficult. As with the evacuation by charter air that we had arranged months earlier, we had to decide who was going to be included and who was not. In the end, that meant most expatriates were accepted and most Liberians were on their own. That made for some difficult decisions and dramatic moments. Decisions like if a child had been born in the States, and was therefore an American citizen, the child was included but what about the Liberian parents and siblings. Moments like when my wife, Lynda Schuster, took one of the last charter flights out in May. As she is going up the stairs to board, she was in the midst of a crowd of Liberians fighting to get a seat on the plane.

When we brought the Marines ashore, they were strictly limited to protecting the embassy compound; I remember looking at the faces of the local Liberian employees at the embassy as the Marines landed. At first they were elated as they thought that we were going to insert ourselves into the civil war and end it. Then they realized the Marines were not going outside the embassy compound and their expressions changed to ones of disappointment and despair. The orders from Washington were clear however--we are not going to get in the middle of this; we will keep the embassy open as long as we can to continue humanitarian aid, but we are not going to get into the middle of a civil war between a cast of such reprehensible characters.

When the Marines were about to land, De Vos called Doe on the radio and told him and explained why. Doe offered to send his soldiers over to the embassy to protect the operation and De Vos had to delicately talk him out of that since it would have only drawn a response from the rebels and probably provoked a firefight just outside the embassy compound as the helicopters were landing. Those helicopters became our only link to the outside world for a while. They came in off loaded supplies and went out

empty. Because everyone was evacuated in such a hurry there were many pets left behind. We asked if they could be taken out. The Marines refused I think mainly because they were mad at us for keeping them steaming in circles for two months just off the coast. A communications technician came to me one day and asked if I wanted to get the pets out. I said sure and asked how. He had the solution. On the next supply flight, instead of going out empty there were ten large canvas diplomatic pouch bags put onboard. Because the helicopter wanted to minimize its time on the ground the engines were never turned off and it was impossible to hear. So that is how nine dogs and a cat survived the Liberian civil war. Embassy Freetown met them at the airport and put them on commercial airliners to Washington. In the best of times, dogs were part of the Liberian menu so their fate would have been different had we not done that. There were lots of other pets since this was a community of about 600 people, but I'm sure most of them died. Along with pets people had to leave behind all their possessions that wouldn't fit into a suitcase. If a person's house was more than a block from the embassy compound, everything in it was either looted or covered in mold once the air conditioners stopped running and keeping the humidity down. I went through my house, which was about a block away, with a tape recorder trying to record a description of everything we had so we had some idea of what to claim for insurance purposes if it all was lost. It came through without a problem, but that was mostly luck as the place could have been looted anytime anyone decided to do it. During the time when the Marines were on the compound they were eating a ton of Meals Ready to Eat. The MREs come in very sturdy cardboard boxes so I began packing up our library and sending it via military mail to my wife who was by then back in Washington. We had a lot of books but the Marines were providing a large supply of empty boxes and I just marked them "Postage and fees paid by the State Department" and sent them off. Not to far into this process our postman in D.C. asked my wife what kind of business she was running out of her house that required delivery of so many heavy boxes.

That was the situation in the summer of 1990. The war continued and in late August of 1990 ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, sent a peacekeeping force into Monrovia called ECOMOG; it was supposed to stand for the economic community military observer group.

They landed in the port of Monrovia, but didn't leave the port; all they did was essentially freeze the military situation. They were in the middle of it as Taylor was pushing in from the east. He got within a couple blocks of the presidential mansion, but didn't have the strength to end it because Doe's army literally had its back to the sea and finally had to defend itself. Then you had Prince Johnson pushing in from the north where the port of Monrovia was, but again he lacked the military strength to defeat Doe's army or Taylor's. All three groups had almost no weapons heavier than a man could carry so they didn't have the fire power to end it in the way the French just did in the Ivory Coast recently when they assaulted Mr. Gbagbo's compound and pried him out of the basement of the president's mansion. Neither rebel group had the power to do that against Dr. Doe and his military; and then ECOMOG landed and really froze the military situation.

Doe at one point in August decided he would leave his presidential mansion compound and drive to the port, which was a couple miles to the north, thinking he would visit ECOMOG and that he would be safe because they would protect him. When his entourage got to the port Prince Johnson heard that he was in the port so he sent his fighters there immediately. The ECOMOG peacekeepers, when confronted Johnson's fighters, simply melted away.

So Johnson's troops captured Doe and wounded him in the process. They proceeded to interrogate him and they actually made a videotape of the interrogation, which was widely circulated. I have a copy of it if it hasn't deteriorated completely; it's a very old tape at this point. It shows them cutting off Doe's ears as they try to make him say where he has hidden all the money he had stolen. He eventually went into shock and bled to death that night. So that was the end of Mr. Doe, but we still had Taylor and Johnson vying for power and remnants of Doe's army still trapped and trying to survive in all of this.

Q: Ooh.

JETT: It had become a very tribal kind of conflict and ethnic killings were something all sides did. Taylor's people had checkpoints and people trying to pass through those checkpoints to escape the fighting were asked what tribe they were from. If they gave the wrong answer or were even suspected of being part of Doe's government they were taken aside and shot. The army did the same. That was the kind of place it was and that situation basically persisted until I left in August of '91.

Q: Why did we hang on there?

JETT: Why did we hang on? We had this long-standing relationship with Liberia and significant assets there. We hoped that, as in the past, the situation would eventually stabilize before too long. The embassy was the only thing that continued to function and by trying to provide humanitarian relief, we hoped to prevent an even bigger humanitarian disaster.

Once ECOMOG arrived it stabilized militarily, but the political situation didn't improve. Eventually it seemed possible to continue with a reduced force of Marines; so we cut back to about 50 of them guarding the embassy. The four-ship task force went away toward the end of August and then eventually the 50 Marines pulled out. Because we still had some helicopter support from Freetown, it was still possible to continue a presence there. I supposed there would be a greater inclination to evacuate and walk away from a situation like that today, but at the time the thinking was that this can't go on too much longer and our presence allows us to monitor the political situation and at least prevent humanitarian disaster from becoming worse. That was the main reason.

Q: Was there any choice between Johnson and Taylor as far as we were concerned?

JETT: A choice? No, we didn't want to choose sides because they were both psychopaths and neither had the power to end it militarily. I knew this guy who was a French-Canadian aid worker. He was distributing rice and Johnson came along with some soldiers and said, "You people are making money, you are profiting from selling this rice. You are exploiting these people." So he handcuffs this French-Canadian to a Liberian who was working with him and he then proceeds to shoot the Liberian right there and leave the French-Canadian handcuffed to this dead man for the night. That was the kind of guy Johnson was. He's now a senator in the Liberian parliament.

Taylor was no better and employed child soldiers. His troops were basically kids with AK-47s high on drugs. He was tried in The Hague for his war crimes, but for war crimes committed when he attempted to spread his influence to Sierra Leone and his crimes became international. The atrocities there were as bad as in Liberian. Thankfully an international tribunal was eventually set up that managed to try and convict him.

There were no good options. Eventually the thought was we would have elections and somebody will get elected and the legitimate government will have a mandate and things would calm down. They had an election finally in mid-1990s and Charles Taylor won because people thought that was the only way to end the war. It was clear if Charles Taylor did not win he would go back to war in the same way that Savimbi did when he lost the election in Angola. But the hope was that this situation would sort itself out and Liberia could start rebuilding instead of destroying itself.

Q: Did we see the hand of Gaddafi in there or was he sort of off to one side or what?

JETT: He was definitely in there since Taylor had received training and support from him. At one point Doe handed me a notebook and said, "This notebook was from a captured rebel and it shows the notes he took while he was in training in Libya; Libya is your enemy." This was after the Reagan era when we had dropped some bombs on Gaddafi. It's ironic that when under siege from rebels Gaddafi tried to attract support by saying that al Qaeda was involved with those opposing him. Samuel Doe was saying that we should support him because Gaddafi was supporting the rebels. Charles Taylor was trained in Libya, but the civil war wasn't any real philosophical issue; it was just one group of thugs wanting to take over so they could steal everything opposed by another group of thugs who were in power so they could steal.

Q: What about your staff? I take it all the dependents had gone by a certain point hadn't they?

JETT: They all left by early May including my wife who wanted to stay, but Washington ordered me to get her out.

Q: Was it hard keeping people there? How did they react? I'm talking about the personnel who stayed.

JETT: No, everyone who was needed to stay, stayed and did their duty. I remember once there was a lot of lead flying around and Hank Cohen and Karl Hofmann came to visit and they flew in on a helicopter. They got off the helicopter wearing their helmets, flak jackets and toured the embassy compound with this constant gunfire in the background. It freaked them out, but by that time for us it was like the weather report -- light to scattered small arms with occasional artillery.

Fortunately, we were situated at the end of the peninsula on the down slope of a hill as if fell into the ocean. We also had a couple tall apartments on the other side of the street from the embassy compound. We were somewhat shielded from stuff going on just over the hill and downtown in terms of being in the line of fire, but we still got occasional stray rounds bouncing off trees and buildings. One 50-caliber round smashed the front door of the embassy. I was sitting at my desk one day. I had just a couple days before decided that even though there were these heavy cement louvers in front of the window, I needed to take precautions. My window faced the street and the cement louvers had space between them. So I moved my safe between my desk and my window. A couple days later a M-16 round comes zinging through the window and hits the safe and bounces off and comes to rest. Had the safe not been there it would have come zipping across my desk. I still have the slug somewhere.

Q: And how did the others on the staff react?

JETT: That's best illustrated by another event I'll describe. One day Prince Johnson's people were in the port, which was to the north of us, and the presidential mansion was still in Doe's hands where they had a small artillery piece. So they started firing this artillery piece and you could hear the cannon booming and the rounds zinging over the embassy as they headed randomly in the general direction toward where Johnson's troops were. It was more disconcerting than the usual small arms because if they had a short round or didn't aim properly we could have had a round drop in the embassy compound. So we moved everybody onto the first floor into the consular waiting room as far from the exterior walls as possible. There we are just sitting in the waiting room waiting for the artillery fire to stop. There were some partitions in that room where the bottom five feet was paneling and then there were two feet of glass on the top part of these partitions. Somebody said, "Well if we take a round nearby there is the possibility there is going to be this glass flying all over the place." Somebody else said, "Yeah, you are right." So we got up and started putting big pieces of duct tape in various patterns across the glass so it would hold together rather than shatter and spray everywhere. We then resumed sitting there--secretaries, political and CIA officers, economic and consular officers, and the security people, and the ambassador.

At that particular moment I was really struck by the fact that all these people were doing their duty and accepting the risk without question. Everybody knew we were there to do what we could and that there was considerable danger regardless of the precautions we could take. But nobody came and said, "I've got to get out of here, I'm afraid." Everyone continued to soldier on. It really struck me how brave and dedicated the people were that

were there and how that usually goes unnoticed by the media and almost never by the average American.

Q: Maybe in retrospect did you ever consider there is this thrust to do one's duty and be brave and all? Maybe you should have just gotten the hell out?

JETT: Yes, that's certainly a consideration. I remember when Freetown fell apart at various times and the ambassador there was saying, "I'm going to stay here and do my duty." Again, it was one of these things where rebels were fighting a corrupt, incompetent army and we never knew who was worse or how bad the situation was going to get. I just thought to myself there is nothing in Sierra Leone that really matters, why not just close the embassy and get the hell out and not put those people at risk.

I guess though in Liberia the thought was that we had more significant interests here, we hoped to reestablish them. You are never sure which way the conflict is going to go; whether it's going to get worse or end quickly. Sometimes conflicts are illustrated on a graph as a bell-shaped curve with time on the horizontal axis and the level of violence on the vertical axis. In that representation it is nice and neat—the violence starts, grows, peaks and then gradually diminishes until it ends. This is a gross misrepresentation of any real life situation because at any point along this curve you never know whether you are going to spin off in one direction or the other, whether things are going to get worse or better. As I said, I think at this point we seem to be more prone to evacuation completely than hanging on, but in that particular situation the decision was to stay at least with a minimal presence and try to affect the situation.

Q: Well you left there when?

JETT: August of '91.

Q: When you left how stood things?

JETT: The same political and military stalemate even though Doe was dead. Taylor and Johnson were still vying for power with Taylor in control of most of the country, Johnson holding on to the port area north of Monrovia, the remnants of Doe's army downtown and the ECOMOG peacekeeping force not doing much of anything except looting. The acronym ECOMOG soon became known to the Liberians to stand for an "every car or removable object gone." The peacekeepers, who were principally Nigerians, spent most of their time literally stealing anything they could lay their hands on including cars, putting them on the ships sent to resupply them and then sending them back to Nigeria. So basically it was a political-military stalemate in the midst of a humanitarian disaster with peacekeepers mostly interested in looting. It took most of the '90s before anything changed. The election in the mid-nineties where Charles Taylor took over didn't resolve anything. It allowed the West African peacekeepers to leave and a UN peacekeeping force to take over, but there was still the same political and economic chaos.

Q: Where did you go then?

JETT: After that I went back to Washington to the senior seminar.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. You were in the senior seminar from when to when?

JETT: I was there it would have been September of '91 to early April of '92.

Q: Okay we will pick it up then.

JETT: Okay.

Q: Today is the second of May 2011 with Dennis Jett. Dennis, before you said you could talk all day. Can you think of any little old stories that you might not have mentioned?

JETT: Well there are lots of them and I guess it depends on what kind of gory details you want.

Q: Well, gory details are really what oral history is about.

JETT: Right, well it was a pretty grim existence. We were essentially surrounded; the ebb and flow of the civil war was taking place literally right outside the embassy compound. The DCM's residence, which was called Holland House because it had been the Dutch embassy and Dutch ambassador's residence until 1985 when the Dutch gave up in disgust and departed Liberia; then it became the DCM's residence. It was about maybe 100 yards at most from the embassy compound. It was just unsafe to drive even that short distance particularly at night so for a long time I stayed in the ambassador's spare bedroom rather than drive home. In front of that residence there was a vacant lot, a little patch of beach right on the ocean. In normal times it was used as a dump and a public toilet but you still had a nice view from the residence, if you could look over that. There was a building next to the residence that was an abandoned health ministry building. It was occupied by something like 70 or 80 squatters. One day the army went in there and took the people from the wrong tribe out, crossed the road to the little vacant lot and executed them. Then a day or so later the rebels swept into the neighborhood and did the same thing with the other tribes, the tribes that supported Doe. They got a couple people from the building and shot them and dumped their bodies in the lot. I came home in the middle of the day and the staff of the residence was standing outside and they had handkerchiefs over their faces like the bad guys in an old western movie. I thought this was strange and wondered why. I got out of the car and I instantly knew because there was an offshore breeze blowing in from the ocean and the smell of the decomposing bodies was so strong that they were wearing these kerchiefs over their faces to reduce the odor.

In the midst of that kind of atmosphere you had to come up with strategies for dealing with it and one was gallows humor. I was eating lunch in the embassy snack bar one day, where we usually all gathered for lunch. There were a couple of guys from a secret military unit who had been flown in to help provide communications. They had found a

human bone and they took it and they boiled it to make sure it was clean. One of them was eating his soup at lunch and it was cream of chicken soup. There were a bunch of us sitting around at a long table including the regional medical officer who was on his first overseas tour and was not in on the joke. So while everybody else was looking the other way this guy slips the bone into his soup and then he lifts out a spoon full of soup with this bone in it and he says, "What is this?" very loudly and dramatically and theatrically. The regional medical officer takes one look at it and his jaw drops and he turns pale. He says, "That's a…" and he identifies the bone; I think it was a part of the spine. In the midst of all of this commotion the cook comes running out of the kitchen and looks at what's going on and looks at the bone and he says, "But it was boneless chicken." At that point we were doubled over laughing except of course the doc. That kind of grim humor will seem more than a little macabre and callous to anyone reading this in a nice warm library somewhere someday, but it is what gave us some relief from the reality we faced every day.

Q: But it gives a feel of the times.

JETT: There is another vivid memory I have, which is even grimmer. I mentioned in the last session that walkie-talkies were the only means of communication because the telephone system rarely worked and once the rebels got close to town they knocked it out. Everybody had a walkie-talkie including NGOs and missionaries and other people that the embassy wanted to stay in touch with. It was like a party line on an old-time telephone where everybody could listen in to the conversations. People from the wrong tribe trapped in Monrovia collected at churches, embassies, UN compounds, anyplace where they felt safe. They flocked there and camped out not knowing what else to do to be safe. There was one church, St. Peter's, that I visited at one point because it was within the government's small zone of control and there were a lot of people from the wrong tribe there; there was no way for them to cross the battle lines and go anywhere else. At one point some soldiers, I assume government soldiers from Doe's army, entered that church and started killing those who were there who were mainly women and children. As a result, this church was literally full of bodies and there was a discussion on the radio by the missionaries and an NGO that was involved with the church about what to do. The discussion was about whether to attempt to remove the bodies and bury them and run the risk of being shot by the soldiers or should the church be torched with bodies inside and just reduced them to ashes. In the end, I don't think anything was done for a few weeks until it was safe enough to go in and bury them. I think that gives you an indication of the kind of time that we were living in.

Q: Did you have…you don't have to give names but problems of the breakout of some people who couldn't…I mean our embassy staff who just couldn't, this was horrific conditions, did you have any problems of this sort?

JETT: Everyone pretty much just endured it. As I described last time when there artillery rounds were going over the embassy and people started taping the glass in case it shattered, it was a remarkable display from secretaries to the highest ranks and everybody in-between, an incredible dedication to duty. I don't recall any case where someone

didn't do their duty or someone refused to do their job because it put them in harm's way. To the contrary, Tom White, who was our economic officer, was out there every day trying to organize rice distribution when it was possible to do that to keep people fed. Another incident that I was involved in was when Ken Noble, the New York Times correspondent, was being arrested. It came over the radio that he was at a restaurant just over the hill in downtown Monrovia and some soldiers wanted to drag him and his driver off to an uncertain fate. As this was being reported on on the radio I decided I needed to do something about it rather than sit in my office. So I jumped in my car with the driver and one of the guys from a small contingent of Delta force soldiers that we had at the time. We drove over the hill and pulled up at the restaurant and I got out. There was a Liberian army major and a couple enlisted men still insisting that Noble and his driver come with them. I went up to the major and took him aside and said something along the lines of "This guy is from the New York Times and you don't need this kind of bad publicity so whatever supposed infraction you are arresting him for and his driver why don't we just forget it and we can all go about our business." After a few minutes of conversation and cajoling he finally said, "Okay."

Noble and his driver were able to depart and I drove back to the embassy. On the way back over the hill, however, we encountered another army patrol. They were very nervous and fingering their weapons because there had been a report that rebels had seen in the neighborhood. They made the car stop and leveled their guns at us. The Delta Force guy was a very cool character. We were in an armored-plated car, but the choice was to get out and give up its protection or stay in it and see how long bulletproof glass will remain bulletproof, which is probably about one and a half rounds from a rifle at point blank range. So he got out and palavers a bit, as they say in Liberian English. He chats them up and assures them that we weren't rebels and we hadn't seen any rebels. He gets back in and we go finish driving the three or four blocks back to the embassy compound. That was the kind of stuff that happened all the time. You would go see Charles Taylor, you'd go see Doe or go see Prince Johnson and you'd go through these checkpoints manned by teenagers with AK-47s who were probably high on drugs or something. It was always interesting and more than a little stressful.

One other anecdote. There was a Liberian woman who worked at USAID who was able to leave with her husband before the situation got really bad. She went to Washington, but her father stayed to protect what property they had. She wrote and asked me to find out what happened to him as she had not heard anything from him in some time. I went out to his neighborhood and asked around until I determined that he had been taken out and shot by the army and his body dumped near the airport. I then had to go back and write the woman and explain what had happened.

Q: Was anybody from Washington, the State Department or the NSC, coming out to take a look and say the situation is acceptable or unacceptable or something as far as our presence was concerned?

JETT: We few visitors. One that did come out as I mentioned was Hank Cohen, the assistant secretary for Africa and his assistant Karl Hofmann. They landed and at the time

there was this constant gunfire in the background and they could hardly believe that was a normal day. But we were there because we thought we were making a contribution in helping to avert a humanitarian disaster and hoping against hope that we could somehow negotiate a political solution, that there could be some sort of election or that we could get into a discussion with Doe about leaving. But he always said, "Well, I can't leave unless I have an airplane and I'd have to put all this stuff on the airplane. I have to take so many people with me." In the end I don't know if he was ever serious about leaving. It wasn't like Mubarak recently in Egypt. Mubarak finally took the hint, and with some encouragement from his army, he left. But Doe wasn't smart enough to do that, and his army did want him leaving them in Monrovia to the mercy of the rebels, so he stayed and met his demise as a result.

Q: How did we feel about Taylor taking over? Do we think he was worse than Doe or was the situation as far as we were concerned humanitarian or whatever our interests were there? Did we feel that Taylor talking over would be particularly bad or not?

JETT: We didn't know just how bad Taylor was at that point. We knew he was a psychopath like Prince Johnson and Doe, but it appeared that the only way the humanitarian catastrophe was going to end was for someone to take over. Taylor was probably the least bad alternative because he had the most military strength; the fighting was going to continue if he didn't get to take over. As long as the fighting continued the civilians were going to be the primary victims. In previous coup attempts Doe had put the coup attempt down easily. There might have been a little fighting, but it ended pretty quickly and there was some retribution, but the massive humanitarian disaster was short lived. Since we weren't willing to intervene militarily we had little influence on the situation and it was either going to be more fighting or Taylor taking over and the latter was better if the fighting ended sooner.

Q: Well then you finally came to an end and you left when?

JETT: August of '91.

Q: Then you went to the senior seminar? That must have been quite a change?

JETT: It was; I'm sorry that they have abolished the senior seminar. I think it's ironic that Colin Powell was the one who presided over that since he is a military guy and understands the value of training. I thought it was a great time, particularly coming out of Liberia. I enjoyed it thoroughly; we had a nice mix of people. There were about 15 State Department officers and 15 who were from other agencies and each military service. We got to do all kinds of things like fly up to Alaska on our own plane and go to nine different places in Alaska in the course of a week. We got to go out to the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln and do an arrested landing and spend the night and do a catapult launch the next day to go home. We visited each military service; I got to drive a M1A1 tank and fire all the guns that the army plays with. It was great and it also gave you a chance to refamiliarize yourself with the United States on a lot of the issues and get practical training like how to do a media interview and how to be on television and that sort of

thing. The idea was that most of these people were going on to higher positions and leadership positions and needed this time for training and reflection.

Q: Did you find you'd come out of a very hostile…was anybody taking you sort of debriefing you?

JETT: I'm sure I went by the desk when I got back and told them whatever they wanted to know. I didn't have any interaction with the guy that replaced me. We, for some reason, didn't overlap and I didn't see him in Washington. I don't remember any specific debrief and even the desk did not seem all that interested.

Q: Something that I try to ask on these things is if somebody has been at a very difficult place or hot spot the State Department is not very good about extracting information for one to understand what is happening and get a clearer picture from the field and also to prepare those who are going on afterwards.

JETT: I think you are right they really didn't do that in any systematic way. A year or two later somebody was putting together a book entitled Embassy's Under Siege and I contributed the Liberia chapter and tried to impart some of the lessons I learned from that experience. There were other chapters, Jim Bishop wrote about Somalia and other people did other chapters. It was published and there were probably a few aspiring future diplomats who read it, but I don't know if anybody in State Department ever did.

Q: No. What number of your senior seminar do you remember?

JETT: I don't remember. I was in the 104th A-100 class, but I can't remember what number the senior seminar class was.

Q: Well I was in the 17th senior seminar but that was in 1977. In the first place did you find they had an assignment for you or did you have to go out and get your own assignment?

JETT: No, you definitely had to go out and hustle your own. Being in Washington you could do that more easily since you could go around and talk to people and learn what jobs might be coming up and you could lobby for them in person. I had lined up becoming director of the office of Israeli affairs, and then all of a sudden the opportunity came up to be executive assistant, essentially the chief of staff, to the undersecretary for political affairs Arnie Kanter. That seemed like a more interesting job, so I took it and left the senior seminar about a month early; I left in April.

Q: April in……

JETT: In '92.

Q: In '92. How long were you there in the undersecretary's office?

JETT: The election in November of '92, when Clinton won, changed things since Arnie was a political appointee. In January, with the transfer of power, Peter Tarnoff took over as undersecretary for political affairs. In essence, he said to me and most of the rest of the staff, "Thanks for your service I'm going to bring in my own people." So I was suddenly out of a job and my time in the under secretary's office was just from April 1992 to January 1993.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about this time. Would you explain just what the undersecretary for political affairs job is about and how you fit into this?

JETT: He is typically the senior career officer in the State Department, but not always. Arnie Kanter was not a career FSO. He was one of those people in Washington who come into government under a Republican administration and go out when Democrats are in power. He had a lot of experience, however, and wasn't like many political appointees in that he was more professional than political. He had spent his whole career working on foreign affairs in one fashion or another.

As for the division of labor, what usually happens is the secretary will take those issues that interest him or her and the deputy secretary will be take on the issues that person is interested in doing. Then the undersecretary for political affairs is the clean up man. He has the rest of the world, all the parts of the world that are not on the radarscope of the secretary or the deputy secretary. The top two, the secretary and the deputy secretary, are always political appointees. The under secretary is often the one that knows better how the bureaucracy works and how to make it respond. He's the utility infielder, I guess, of the seventh floor. Of course, much depends on personalities, and relationships with the secretary and the deputy. As to who does what, one thing I learned in my second tour in the operations center was that a wiring diagram or organizational chart is one thing, but who does what depends a lot on personalities and who is the better bureaucrat and who has the more forceful personality.

My job was essentially to be chief of staff; there were six special assistants who divided up the world geographically. There was one for each regional bureau and then I was nominally between them and the undersecretary; I had a couple areas that I dealt with like personnel issues. The committee that selects career ambassadors is called the D Committee. It is usually chaired by the deputy secretary and includes most of the undersecretaries. Arnie sat on it so I would prepare a briefing book for him for each of its meetings. I also had the intelligence portfolio; when it came to intelligence questions I sat in his meetings.

Q: In the first place could you describe from what you were able to observe how Kanter worked and his methods?

JETT: He was a pretty low-key kind of guy; he wasn't a screamer. He was a very, very decent human being and a very good boss and he worked incredibly hard. He would get in at seven in the morning or maybe 7:30 at the latest and he would not leave until 9:00 or later at night. Saturday's were sort of eight in the morning to four or five and then

sometimes half a day on Sundays. As one of the staff people, particularly in my role, I had to get in almost as early as he did and I had to stay until after he left to gather up all the paperwork he had gone through and make sure that it went on its merry way to whatever destination it had to get to and make sure that whatever paperwork he required for the next day was produced on time.

I'd say again because he had experience in government, and particularly in the State Department, he had a good grasp of the issues particularly arms control. He wrote a book on bureaucratic politics with a couple other people that I think is particularly insightful. He was low key but effective at doing whatever it is he needed to do.

Q: The Secretary of State was who?

JETT: Baker at the time.

Q: Baker was renown for having a rather tight circle around him. Was Kanter part of the circle?

JETT: He was not really part of the inner most circle, which was very small. My impression was that Arnie was in the outer circle. He wasn't an intimate of Baker; Eagleburger was the deputy secretary, Zoellick was the undersecretary for economic affairs. Margaret Tutwiler was part of the inner circle.

Q: Were there any particular issues that you found yourself supporting Kanter during this time you were there, any particularly crises?

JETT: Nothing that jumps to mind. When you are in a job like that it's the crisis of the day because you get everything, as I said, that the secretary or the deputy secretary doesn't want to deal with; it was kind of a constant crisis atmosphere and I was often helping to prepare press guidance for the spokesman to use at the noon briefing. A draft would usually come up from the bureaus and there was tremendous time pressure to get it to the spokesman in time for the daily briefing. But no I don't remember anything specific at that time; there was the great preoccupation with the election and then Baker left to run George H.W. Bush's reelection campaign ultimately unsuccessfully. Eagleburger took over as secretary and was the first career person to become secretary. Even then he did not go directly from being an FSO to the job. He had retired and worked for Kissinger making money for a while before coming back to government.

Q: George H.W. Bush was one of our most experienced diplomats. He was president …did that show up? Did you get a feel for that or…?

JETT: Yes in that you knew that he could be relied upon to meet with foreign dignitaries, to make phone calls to foreign dignitaries, to use state dinners and official visits with foreign dignitaries as a way of establishing relationships and discussing problems with foreign leaders that I think was generally effective. It stands in sharp contrast to his successor, Bill Clinton. I'm getting a little bit ahead of the story, but after I ceased being

Kanter's executive assistant I eventually went on to being the senior director for African affairs on the National Security Council, a position I had for the first six months of Clinton's first term.

During this time there was a chiefs of mission meeting of the ambassadors in African bureau; George Moose was the assistant secretary. I asked George if I could have a couple minutes to address my colleagues who were ambassadors in these African posts to talk about the new administration. He said, "Oh yeah, sure, good idea." So I gave each of them an autographed picture of Bill Clinton signed with an autopen that said "Best Wishes" or something like that. I then said, "I hate to tell you this but that's about as close as you're going to get to him because this is a new crowd; and 'it's the economy stupid' is more than just a catch phrase. The corollary of that means it's not anything international; it's not foreign affairs so you can forget phone calls to heads of state because that's not going to happen. You can forget most meetings with foreign leaders, you can forget state dinners because the new administration wants to be folksy and they don't want to have these formal black-tie affairs; so they are not going to have fancy dinners."

In fact, during my time at the NSC we got one African leader into the White House for a meeting. It was decided we needed to choose an African leader to be the first in the door before too much time had elapsed without one. But he had to be acceptable politically and there were not many democrats among the African leaders from whom to choose. So we finally settled on Sam Nujoma of Namibia, but it was just for breakfast because they didn't want to do the fancy state dinner stuff.

New administrations often come in and say they are going to cut the White House staff and do things differently from what the last president did. For example in the case of George W. Bush, before 9/11 he did his best to ignore terrorism because Clinton was concerned about it. With a bit of experience they learn oh, all those staff people are important and necessary and those black-tie state dinners serve a function, are sometimes necessary and meeting with other dignitaries and phone calls are just tools of the trade. It was an interesting contrast between the two administrations at the start however.

Q: You were enjoying that for about six months with Clinton?

JETT: Like I said when Tarnoff fired me I literally had no idea what I was going to do. I had a windowless office on the fifth floor where I was supposed to cool my heels and come up with something on my own. The other thing that happened was in the fall of 1992 I had been put up for an ambassadorship beginning the summer of '93 in Mozambique. I and 35 other people had been approved by the D committee and gone over to the White House and been approved by the White House of George H.W. Bush. The nominations then all had come back to State to begin all the paperwork that is necessary before the appointment is announced and forwarded to the Senate for confirmation. Mainly because a new background investigation is required all that takes a good six months before it becomes official. The election took place in the midst of that process and so all 35 of us were placed on hold until the Clinton people could review the

situation and decide which of these appointments they wanted to go forward with and which ones they did not. That question was up in the air and I had no job, so I was in this windowless office twiddling my thumbs. I started calling around to different people I knew saying, "Do you have anything I can do for six months, maybe longer?" I actually found a couple interesting jobs, but then I discovered a gap was being created at the National Security Council; the person covering Africa was leaving. There was another person who was supposed to be take that job was not coming until the summer, which was hopefully just the length of time I needed to fill it, so it just worked out. Of the 35 people I think probably 33 of them were eventually confirmed by the Clinton administration to go ahead to the posts that they had been assigned to so the paperwork process continued for most of us. By the summer of '93 I was announced and had my hearing and was ready to go to Mozambique.

Q: You are saying that obviously Africa was not high up on the agenda of the Clinton administration. It is probably true in most administrations unless there is something…actually the George W. Bush administration paid a bit more attention than one might think particularly in AIDS I think.

JETT: He did and I think there is only one reason for that and it was not that he had any interest in Africa. You are right. In general, Africa has low priority because our interests generally there are not that great. On the other hand it makes it one of the most interesting places in the world to work because you have a lot less political interference to deal with either from political ambassadors or from political appointees in Washington. It's a fascinating and challenging part of the world with a lot of countries. The ambassadors to those countries, with very few exceptions are career officers, so there is plenty of opportunity for the ambitious.

I enjoyed my time in Africa even though the Liberian civil war was as we have discussed a harrowing experience. But Africa is not a high priority. Normally Democratic presidents might have some interest because over 90 percent of African Americans vote Democratic, but Clinton came in with the "it's the economy stupid" mindset. He had to concentrate on improving the domestic economy and he was going to devote as little time as possible to anything international. So it was not just Africa, but anything international got little attention early on. It was only when he was forced to focus on something like Bosnia that he really spent much time on an international issue.

Presidents in their first term are always interested primarily in their reelection; that's their number one agenda item. Whatever is number two is pretty far down in the terms of how they devote their time and energy. In the second term, it's their place in history that they worry about. For instance, George W. Bush's interest in Africa stems from the fact that he needed something to be a positive legacy given the disaster he created with his invasion of Iraq. Also there were some Evangelical Christians, who are an important core constituency of the Republican Party, who came to him and said, "If you fund these programs in Africa we'll be able to proselytize and spread our religion. We'll be able to preach abstinence and we'll throw in some AIDS stuff as well because AIDS is a horrible problem." So that idea clicked with him and so we had PEPFAR, the President's

Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief created. No matter that abstinence programs have never been effective, it was a chance for a positive addition to Bush's legacy. It did put lots of money into medicines that save many lives, but it also created a bit of a dilemma. If you put a lot of money into anti-retro viral medicine, sure you save some lives, but then you're committed to maintaining those people on these medicines for as long as they live. Since the program has limits, there are lots of other people out there who aren't getting these medicines so how much do expand the program, who do you help, and who don't you help and do you want this long term commitment? And I doubt there was ever a debate about how many lives could be saved if you put an equivalent amount of money into other programs like reducing malaria.

Q: Let's go back to Clinton for six months. Were there any African issues that reached out to the NSC?

JETT: Well certainly Somalia was there but Dick Clarke took that on so I was just as happy to have him deal with it. What other? I remember we had a letter from Senator Carol Moseley Braun who wanted…

Q: From Illinois.

JETT: Yes, from Illinois who just ran for mayor of Chicago and lost. She was subsequently ambassador to New Zealand. She wrote a letter when we were trying to decide who was going to be the first African head of state to visit the Clinton White House. To prevent criticism that the new administration was ignoring the continent there was mounting pressure for such a visit. So she writes a letter and says, "President Babangida is the perfect candidate." Of course that was the vile military dictator of Nigeria who was best known for corruption, human rights abuses and spreading a lot of money around Washington through lobbyists and PR campaigns.

Q: Oil money, yeah.

JETT: Oil money. And obviously Moseley Braun was getting some of it. So I had to do was draft a polite letter back to her saying, "Well, given our interest in human rights, etc., we don't think having the dictator of Nigeria as the first head of state in the door would be such a swell idea." And so we settled on Sam Nujoma of Namibia.

As for other issues, Mobutu was still in Zaire so that was continuing its downward spiral; there were some interest on the part of missionaries and other Americans on that situation. There was a conference for which I had to write a speech for Tony Lake, who was the National Security Advisor, outlining the Clinton policy toward Africa and so I wrote a draft of that. It went through various hands and then got to Lake and then Lake suddenly had something he had to do so I had to go out and give that speech at the conference. It didn't plow any new ground or make any particular headlines because we didn't have any new initiatives to announce at that point, but it met the need to say something.

One other NSC experience is worth mentioning for two reasons. It gives you an idea why presidents distrust the State Department and also an appreciation for what the media responds to in Washington. One thing Clinton had apparently said during his campaign was that he was going to extend diplomatic recognition to the Angolan government. Jonas Savimbi, the rebel leader trying to overthrow that government, was a darling of rightwing Americans because he professed to be anti-communist. We had supported Savimbi for years because of that, even though he was just another thug. Elections had just taken place in Angola, which he lost but refused to accept and so he restarted the civil war there.

The State Department did not want to go ahead with recognition at that point and was thinking up various excuses for delaying it. So the NSC decided we would just make the announcement that we were recognizing the government in Luanda and let the Department deal with the details.

This was in May of 1993. One day I had to escort Desmond Tutu into the Oval Office for a meeting with Clinton. The decision was made to announce recognition at that point. I told Tutu before we went into the meeting and he was very happy that we had finally gotten around to doing it. When the press were called into the Oval Office to take photos at the beginning of the meeting, the President mentioned the recognition of Angola's government. This was the day, however, that Travelgate happened so the press had no questions about Tutu or Africa or anything international. All they wanted to know about was why the staff of the White House travel office had been fired and they were desperate to prove that this was some kind of ethics scandal. Of course after years of investigations, it was shown that there was no scandal.

While a very small incident, it shows how the media can focus on one subject to the exclusion of all others if they think they can blow it up into a major story. And it shows how the NSC is dedicated to carrying out the president's agenda while the State Department marches at its own pace and sometimes seems to think its calculation of American interests is more important the president's.

One other NSC story. Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were running against each other for president of South Africa. Nonetheless they had agreed to come to the States to go to Philadelphia and collect some kind of joint award. The idea was that de Klerk would come to the Oval Office and have a short meeting with Clinton. Then Mandela would arrive, there would be a great photo op with the three of them and then de Klerk would leave and Mandela would have his short meeting with Clinton. About ten minutes before de Klerk is set to arrive, someone from the ANC calls and says no photo op because it would not play well with the folks back home. Well everyone wanted to be in these two meetings so not only was I left out but I had to tell de Klerk the news about the photo op when he arrived. Needless to say he was pissed. So he goes into the Oval Office and what was supposed to be a 15-minute meeting extends to over 40 minutes because I suppose this is de Klerk's revenge. Meanwhile Mandela arrives and I'm the only one there to greet him. So I take him in the Roosevelt Room and I'm trying to keep a conversation going while we wait for de Klerk's filibuster to end. It finally did and

Mandela went in, but at least I got a nice photo out of it where Mandela and I are chatting.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. You went off to where now?

JETT: It was to Mozambique in the summer of '93.

Q: Mozambique, okay. Well you haven't even touched it so you went there in '93, so we will pick it up then, great.

Today is July 27, 2011. I think we left off in '93 when you moved somewhere.

JETT: In '93 I went to Mozambique. I was in Liberia from '89 to '91 and then in Senior Seminar the next year and then the Department for the last half of '92, the NSC for the first half of '93 so in the middle of that year I left Washington to take up the ambassadorship in Mozambique.

Q: Let's start there. How did that come about as an assignment?

JETT: When I was the chief of staff to the undersecretary for political affairs, I began to get consideration for an ambassadorship as I had already served twice as DCM. My name was put forward to the D Committee, which chooses the ambassadors or at least the Department's nominees for ambassadors. The Committee always gets four of five candidates for each post, but they selected me for Mozambique. I sure one consideration was that my having the ability to speak Spanish, I could pick up Portuguese fairly easily.

We talked in an earlier session about how the election of Clinton put that nomination on hold for a while and how I left the under secretary's office and made my way to the NSC. The new administration decided to move forward with the nomination so the paperwork process got underway again and the FBI began its work. Basically, they redo your background investigation and then they have you fill out this enormous questionnaire about your financial stuff and whether you paid your maid's social security and everything else that they ask. Then they asked for agrément from the Mozambican government. That came through in short order and they announced it in July, and shortly thereafter the Africa subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held my confirmation hearing. I gave a short statement. They asked a few questions, sort of generic questions, nothing in particular about me or about Mozambique, as I recall. I got a vote out of committee and then a vote by the full Senate. In the summer of 1993, I left the NSC and started taking Portuguese. I spent a month or two trying to convert my Spanish into Portuguese. All the procedures and paperwork were finally accomplished and I went out to post in November.

Q: How stood things in Mozambique in the fall of '93?

JETT: It was a very interesting time, in part because of its history as a former Portuguese colony. When the Portuguese had a coup in Lisbon, the military took over and in 1975

the military decided they were tired of losing soldiers fighting to maintain the colonial possessions in Africa. So what had been previously been unthinkable, giving their colonies independence, happened virtually overnight. This was quite a change from the past when the people in power in Lisbon didn't regard Mozambique and Angola and the other countries as colonies, but as integral parts of Portugal. They were used as places where Portugal could sell its industrial goods, exploit the resources and also export their unemployment problem by encouraging emigration.

As far as colonialists go, I think the best, if there is such a thing as a better colonialist, were the British who actually invested in the local population. The French did too a bit as it was a useful way to maintain control of the colony. In Mozambique and its other colonies, the Portuguese invested nothing and only exploited the population and reserved even the menial jobs like selling tomatoes in a market place. The Portuguese and the Belgians were the worst colonialists.

Q: How would the Portuguese control who sold tomatoes?

JETT: They would have the police go in to a market and if you weren't Portuguese you didn't get to do that, I suppose. They had, at least in the cities, enough control that they could do whatever they wanted. They invested nothing in the education of the populace so when the military overthrew the civilians and they made all these former colonies independent almost from one day to the next, a couple of things happened; first, whatever particular faction of guerrillas or terrorists or revolutionaries or freedom fighters, or however you want to characterize them, were the strongest, they took over the government. These were people who had been in the bush trying to get rid of the Portuguese and had no preparation to govern. In Mozambique there was only one at the time. It was FRELIMO. In Angola there happened to be two or three and they quickly allied themselves with various sides in the Cold War and so a civil war broke out that became a proxy Cold War struggle. It took a little longer in Mozambique, but it also had its civil war.

The other result was of the 200,000 or so Portuguese living in Mozambique at the time of independence, 90% of them up and departed immediately upon independence as they did in Angola. They did things like destroy infrastructure that they couldn't carry away with them. There was a hotel under construction in Maputo. It was about 14 stories tall and the skeleton of it still stood there in the 1990's because nobody bothered to tear it down. It was useless, however, because when the Portuguese departed they poured cement down the pipes and things like that.

Because of the lack of investment in any kind of education of the natives, when independence came the number of university graduates in Mozambique was literally a handful of people and the same was true in Angola.

In Mozambique two of the neighboring countries, South Africa and Rhodesia were under white rule. Mozambique began to support the independence struggles of the blacks in those countries and Rhodesia retaliated by taking a group of discontented Mozambicans

and creating a rebel group called RENAMO. When Rhodesia became Zimbabwe and majority rule took effect it ended that policy, but apartheid South Africa took over the support of RENAMO and the civil war continued.

FRELIMO had modeled itself on the Marxist Leninist philosophy in part because the Soviet Union was supporting struggles for liberation because it was a good way to fight the Cold War and antagonize people who were part of NATO. So when FRELIMO became the ruling elite they had this Marxist Leninist philosophy and little real formal education. They did things like anybody who opposed the government's policies was sent 1,000 miles north to a re-education camp. So they created a great deal of resentment among the people whose property they seized and people with opposing political views, which they wouldn't tolerate. The Rhodesians and then the South Africans exploited that discontent and the war raged on and off until 1992.

When I was in Malawi from '86 to '89 I saw firsthand the effects of the war. When I got there in '86, there were 50,000 Mozambican refugees and when I left three years later, there were 550,000 Mozambican refugees in Malawi because of the war. It was not unlike Liberia in that it involved a very poorly equipped, poorly led government army trying to protect the regime in power and an even worse equipped, worse led guerrilla force trying to oust the regime in power. Ultimately, 98% of the time the victims were the civilians caught in between and that created the refugee situation like the one in Malawi.

All of that had changed by 1992 through a series of negotiations and efforts by a Catholic lay society called the Sant'Egidio. They helped broker peace talks in Rome, with the support of the Italian government, and as a result a peace agreement was signed in 1992. When I got there in 1993 the biggest challenge was to ensure the implement of that treaty. It had the typical elements necessary for ending a civil war--both sides were supposed to demobilize their troops and most of the troops would be sent home and reintegrated into society. A smaller national army was to be formed from the remnants of those two armed forces. There would be a political process leading to elections that would result in an elected government with a mandate and the legitimacy to rule. Then the strengthening of democratic institutions like the legislative branch and judicial branch could also begin.

On the economic side, with peace they could shift from humanitarian relief to attempting to rebuild what had been destroyed during the war and begin to bring about some economic development. Mozambique was a poor country to begin with. The Portuguese invested little and left nothing. Then the war for all those years managed to destroy what little infrastructure there was. It was one of the poorest countries in the world at that point and one of the most desperate.

When I arrived the efforts to implement the 1992 Rome peace treaty were just getting underway through the third largest UN peacekeeping force at the time. Their mandate was to see that this treaty was implemented successfully with all its various aspects and elements.

The head of the UN peacekeeping force was a man named Aldo Ajello, an Italian who had experience as a politician and a journalist and as a UN bureaucrat. He used to joke about how he became the special representative of the secretary general, which meant he was the top UN guy running this very large peacekeeping operation. He said the reason he got the job was because of the Italian support for the peace process. They had a stake in the outcome and so Boutros-Ghali said, "OK. We have to have an Italian head up the peacekeeping effort. Who do we have that is a senior UN bureaucrat who is Italian?" They went to their list, which was in alphabetical order, and according to Ajello, his name was the first so they gave him the job.

For whatever reason, he was an inspired choice. He ran it very ably. He coordinated carefully. We had a group of ambassadors; from the EU, Italy, Portugal, Germany, France, the United States and the OAU. We met every week to discuss progress and keep things on track. He was very skillful at keeping both sides, FRELIMO and RENAMO, working toward the task at hand. One thing you learn is it is a lot easier to negotiate a peace treaty sitting in Rome, but then when these former combatants who spent years trying to kill each other actually have to implement the peace treaty, it is a lot more difficult. Essentially it means you have to give up the men under arms that you have control of. Those go away and so your military power goes away and your political and economic power, as well. Your political power is going to be determined by an election that you might lose in a country that had never had an election before.

The outcome of the election would determine not just a party's political strength, but economic power as well. The country of Mozambique had an economic output roughly equivalent to a town of 50,000 in the United States. So it was a very small economic pie and you either won political power or you were out of luck. In a country that poor, there isn't anywhere else to go. You can't go off to the American Enterprise Institute or the Heritage Foundation or some right wing think tank if you are a Republican and the Democrats come to power or go off to the corporate sector or academia or somewhere else. It was a winner takes all and loser gets nothing situation so we had to go to some extraordinary lengths to keep both parties in the process and implementing it. The international community gave a lot of money to RENAMO so they could become a political party.

One illustration of that during the 1992 negotiations in Rome, the RENAMO people came to the Italians and said "We are not going to come to the negotiations tomorrow." The Italians said, "Why?" and the RENAMO delegation said, "We don't have any clothes. We came straight out of the bush so we have our beat up military uniforms and all the government people are going to show up in suits. We are just not going to feel good about that."

The Italians said, "OK, we'll take you out and we will buy you suits." So they took the RENAMO delegation out and bought them suits.

I often wondered if the United States government were faced with a situation like that it would probably be powerless to do anything because we don't have any money to buy

suits for foreign delegations. In any event, with their new suits RENAMO felt sufficiently empowered to show up and negotiate.

Converting them to a political party was not easy given RENAMO's history. This was a group that had committed hundreds of human rights violations. I've mentioned the report by Bob Gersony, which was done actually in 1988 when I was in Malawi. He came through to interview refugees and went on to other countries neighboring Mozambique and Mozambique itself. He wrote up this report which basically said that there had been incredible human rights abuses; child soldiers and all kinds of other things and RENAMO is responsible for about 80% of it and the government, the FRELIMO government, has committed abuses too but basically it is mostly RENAMO.

One of the reasons that was done was you had Jesse Helms and other right wing Republicans back in Washington saying these are the African version of the Contras in Central America. They are pro-American, pro-capitalist freedom fighters and the people in power in Mozambique are godless communists and therefore we should oppose support RENAMO militarily. At the time we had relations with the FRELIMO government and we saw RENAMO mainly as a creation of Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa that was guilty of countless human rights abuses. As Savimbi did in Angola, RENAMO would adopt any political philosophy if they thought it was going to attract political or financial support. These people were definitely not worthy. I don't think the Contras were worthy of support either, but certainly these people were not worthy of support. The Gersony report estimated that RENAMO had killed more then 100,000 civilians in the preceding two years.

While we didn't support them and they didn't deserve our support during the war, during the peace process it was still necessary to keep them in the game. There was some criticism of that. On the Human Rights Watch and other websites you could find comments that I was too close to RENAMO. When you are in a post war situation like that there are those who push for reconciliation and political accommodation and getting on with it and those who push for accountability and revenge.

In South Africa they had a truth and reconciliation commission and they gave amnesty to people who testified about what they did in the name of the apartheid regime. It wasn't the truth and retribution or the truth and revenge commission, it was reconciliation. If you want truth and you want reconciliation, you sometimes don't get justice or at least justice in the eyes of everyone. I was occasionally criticized for being too close to RENAMO because I treated them like a political party, which is what they had to become if the war was ever going to end.

The criticism also stemmed from the fact that in Mozambique the media was completely in the hands of the government. It was part of their Marxist Leninist philosophy to completely control the media and again in a country so poor it was not hard to do. In fact, they didn't even call them journalists. They called them the means of social communication. Whenever you were talking about the media, it wasn't the media. It was the means of social communication, which must be some Leninist terminology.

There was only one daily newspaper in the capital of Mozambique. The government owned it. There was only one other daily newspaper in the country in Beira, the second largest city. The government owned it. It also owned the only AM radio station. There were two TV stations and they only broadcast in the capital. The government owned one and a member of the FRELIMO central committee owned the other.

The only remotely free press there amounted to one fax newsletter run by a guy named Carlos Cardoso. He was actually a Portuguese Mozambican. He was young enough and enthusiastic enough about the revolution that he didn't leave at the time of independence and so he stayed on and actually had worked for the government media, a news agency called AIM, the Mozambican Information Agency. It was again completely government run. He got disenchanted with that and started this fax newsletter. It had a very limited number of subscribers because there weren't many Mozambicans with a telephone or electricity or a fax machine so it wat the embassies and a few others in Maputo that subscribed.

Cardoso became the only real investigative journalist worthy of the name in Mozambique. For his efforts he was assassinated about a block from the president's residence in Maputo and it was subsequently demonstrated that the son of President Chissano, who was the second president of Mozambique, hired the guy who assassinated Cardoso because he was uncovering the total corruption of the economy under FRELIMO. If you were a FRELIMO insider, you could get not only an interest-free loan from the government banks, but a principal-free loan.

The government controlled the media and I became the target of the media because I was pressing very hard on the government to live up to its obligations under the Rome agreement to go ahead and implement the peace treaty. The treaty said the media was supposed to be privatized, but all that changed was the various media outlets were sold to a company that was owned by a bank that was owned by the government.

As I said, it was one thing to negotiate in Rome and another thing to actually implement it when it came to giving up power in a very real way. The best example of this was the fact that the government was dragging its feet on demobilizing their troops. They were attempting to keep people back from these assembly centers that the UN had set up to gather the soldiers from both sides together and begin the process of reintegration. FRELIMO was trying quite hard to keep some people out of the demobilization camps so they could retain the option to go back to war. Exactly the same thing had happened in Angola at about the same time and the Angolan process fell completely apart after their first elections when Savimbi rejected the results and the war started up again.

So we had a very clear object lesson in how not to do the peace process. To try to keep the process moving forward, I took every opportunity to drive home the point that the process was at risk if either side held troops back from the demobilization camps. At a typical national day event, the ambassador gives a speech at a big reception that is full of blather and banalities about the great relations between the two countries. I used my

Fourth of July speech in 1994 instead to make the point that Mozambique was soon going to have its first elections and when people went to the polls they were going to make decisions on who to vote for and that decision was going to be affected by their perception as to who made peace possible and who put peace at risk by dragging their feet in the process. I did not name the government specifically; but there was no doubt in anybody's mind who I was talking about. That greatly irritated the FRELIMO elite because they didn't want to have the voters reminded of it.

Ajello has said he believes the speech saved the process and kept it on track. I still have hanging on my wall in my office the clippings from the government press. One article from the daily newspaper has the headline in English is 'Dennis Jett, Please go Home'. Then the article goes on in Portuguese at great length about why I should go home.

There was a Sunday newspaper called Domingo, which was even worse. Its front page one day said that RENAMO was preparing to go back to war. The sub headline said that the American ambassador, Dennis Jett, and the British businessman, Tiny Roland, were helping RENAMO get ready to go back to war.

Basically, I was pretty far out on a limb in terms of speaking up since I wasn't doing this under instructions. My general instructions were to help make the peace process be a success, but they don't tell you specifically how you are supposed to accomplish that. There is always the danger when you are going out on a limb that you are going to hear the sound of sawing as Washington gets nervous.

Q: Did you have the equivalent of a political observer, a spy particularly over on the right wing of Senator Helms' office?

JETT: At that point I think they had kind of lost interest. Once the peace was signed and it was a question of implementing it, there wasn't that much right wing attention to the problem. There was a guy in Washington who was kind of a lobbyist for RENAMO and basically he was self-appointed. He wasn't paid. He discovered RENAMO and supposedly believed that they were freedom fighters. His name was Tom Schaaf, a former missionary. He would try and stir things up and get people excited but again, at that point, I think people didn't care that much because there was a peace process under way so we didn't get all that much attention. By 1994 the Cold War had ended and even the rabidly anti-Communist types lunatic like Helms and Burton had lost interest.

Q: When you arrived there, the country had a president, is that right?

JETT: Right. The first president was Samora Machel. He died in a plane crash of mysterious causes when he was returning from a meeting, an OAU meeting in Zambia. This plane, instead of touching down in Maputo, wound up running into a hillside over on the South African border. There here have always been accusations that the South Africans put up some false radio beacon that messed up the plane's navigation. The plane crashed into a mountain.

I must say I am not sure I really believe that there was a plot to make it crash. In a Zambian newspaper there was a transcript of what purported to be the voice recorder of the cockpit and crew. It was a Russian crew and they spent most of their time arguing about who was going to get the Coca Cola that was left over after the flight that the VIP passengers didn't drink. I think it is perfectly possible that they managed through pilot error to mess up.

Machel died in 1986 and then Chissano took over and was president and he was president for the whole time I was there. Now they are on their third president; a guy named Guebuza who again, all these people were from the FRELIMO hierarchy who passed down the presidency as if they owned it basically.

Q: What was your impression of the president?

JETT: He was a soft-spoken, mild mannered guy. He was certainly likeable. He was one of these people with remarkable linguistic ability. He was very comfortable speaking English as well as his native language and Portuguese and French. I thought he was relatively honest. He wasn't like Mobutu in Zaire, the consummate cleptocrat who was just steeling anything that wasn't nailed down. I think corruption was still there but it was it was somewhat subtler.

Q: When you met with him to present your credentials, was it obvious that they expected something from us?

JETT: I think they were basically wary of us, but wanted our development aid. Because of their Marxist Leninist revolutionary background, we never supported them during their struggle. They were well aware of the right wing effort in the United States to declare RENAMO freedom fighters and so they were never quite sure that we hadn't done that or didn't want to do that. I guess you could say they were skeptical and a bit cautious. They knew we were an important player and an important source of aid, but they were unsure of our intentions and whether we really meant what we said. There was always that element of distrust, if you will, or at least wariness.

Q: The Soviet Union just about fell apart just about the time you arrived, didn't it?

JETT: Yes, it did. Even before the Soviet Union fell apart in 1991, FRELIMO had a convention in the late '80s. It was at that point that they changed the name of Mozambique from the People's Republic of Mozambique to the Republic of Mozambique. So they already knew which way the wind was blowing and that they weren't going to get more aid from the Soviet Union. So, as my predecessor, Townsend Friedman characterized it, they changed their software without changing their hardware. They were still pretty much hard-line Marxists but they knew that they had to sing a different tune so they changed the name of the country and dropped the more obvious trappings of their Marxist/Leninist philosophy, but they were still pretty hardcore.

Q: When you went out there we had a new administration. Was there any thought of doing something here or was this more or less being an observer?

JETT: The main goal was to make sure the peace process was successful and that was the number one objective. That was the key to everything. Otherwise, if they went back to war as Angola had, they would just continue killing themselves and destroying their country and creating a humanitarian disaster, which results in a humanitarian disaster that costs hundreds of millions of dollars. While humanitarian aid is important it is just slapping Band-Aids on the situation. We had to get through the election successfully before there could be any chance to end the war for good and begin to rebuild.

As I've mentioned, one of the things that I saw in the first six months of the Clinton term was the effect of the line "it's the economy, stupid." There was little White House attention to anything foreign. You couldn't get Clinton to make a phone call to a foreign leader the way you could with George H. W. Bush.

In terms of the State Department and the Africa Bureau, it was basically go out there, keep things under control, keep the process moving forward and the less we hear of you, the better we like it because we've got plenty of other things to worry about. So there wasn't any scope for a grand initiative.

The one time I did get some attention from Washington, actually two times, we had Tony Lake, the national security adviser come out and take a look on one of these swings through Africa. I had him primed to say to the government you've got to keep the peace process on track because that's the most important thing for your future and the most important thing we care about. He said that and then he indicated that our degree of economic support would depend on how successful they were at implementing the peace treaty and instituting elections and democracy.

About six months later I get this instruction from Washington that's says go sign this aid agreement that gives them 20 million dollars worth of food or something like that or economic assistance of some sort. I sent back a message to Washington. I said, "Well, look. They are not implementing the peace treaty. They are trying to keep their troops out of the process and it is putting the whole process at risk so I don't want to go give them 20 million dollars and reward them for failing to do the most important thing they are supposed to do. What kind of message would that send?"

I got this instruction back from the Africa Bureau saying we don't care about your opinion. We want to go ahead, sign the agreement and give them the money. I guess AID had money they needed to get rid of or some other bureaucratic rationale like that.

So I called up Susan Rice who was on the National Security Council and I said, "Look, I got this instruction from Washington. I just wanted you to be aware of it. I just wanted to remind you that Tony Lake told these people they needed to implement the peace treaty or our relationship and our economic aid would be affected. I've got this instruction from

Washington go ahead and reward them for doing exactly what Tony Lake warned them not to do."

She immediately got it because she is smart. That is one reason she is now ambassador to the UN. So she countermanded the instruction from the Department and I got new instructions that allowed me to go and tell the minister involved, "Mr. minister, I'd like to sign this agreement but I am not going to until we have more evidence that your government is implementing the treaty as negotiated."

Ultimately, because everything in the end went well and the peace treaty was implemented and elections were held and the UN peacekeeping operation concluded, my effort was recognized. I think April Glaspie of Iraq fame, who was the office director for southern Africa at the time, put me in for the Christian Herter Award for Constructive Dissent. Because things had come out well, I guess I looked good and George Moose, the assistant secretary, had the good grace to sign off on the award nomination and I won the award. But again, it was not without taking a lot of flak from the Mozambican government and irritating them and getting accused of all kinds of things by the government press and then sometimes being unsure whether Washington was going to support me or not.

Q: Were the people in Mozambique saying, "Gee, we don't want to have that happen"? Was this a theme that you were aware of?

JETT: It certainly was a theme from our perspective because we saw what happened in Angola when they failed to demobilize the troops. They went ahead with the election with both sides having considerable armed forces. Savimbi, like a lot of politicians, defined a free and fair election as one that he wins. If he didn't win it, then by definition it wasn't free and fair. He had the means to go back to war and he did. He had something like 500 million dollars a year coming in from diamond sales and the government had three billion dollars at the time in oil revenue so both sides had plenty of money to buy weapons. That money gave them plenty of incentive to keep fighting and it also gave the neighboring countries the incentive to get involved and to get a share of the diamonds so you had a lot of the neighboring countries involved in negative ways.

The difference in Mozambique was that it does not have oil and diamonds. It has shrimp and cashews as the major exports. They don't generate huge quantities of money to buy arms and give people a big incentive to keep the war going. The neighboring countries therefore weren't interested in prolonging the war. Actually, they were interested in peace in Mozambique because nearly all the neighboring countries are landlocked. Even in the case of South Africa, Johannesburg is closer to the port of Maputo than it is to the port of Durbin. So all these those countries; Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi and South Africa wanted peace to get their exports out and their imports in through the ports and rail lines in Mozambique. They therefore played a positive factor.

Because there were no resources to fight over, the neighbors were a positive force. The leadership in Mozambique was probably better than in Angola. Or maybe they just didn't

have the capacity to return to war, but the head of RENAMO, Afonso Dhlakama, actually accepted his loss in the election but it was touch and go. The election was going to be carried out over two days. After the first day of voting, Dhlakama announced that he was going to pull out because he said FRELIMO was not allowing his people to vote and there were too many election discrepancies or fraud going on. That immediately put the whole process at risk because it made no sense to have an election that was not considered reasonably legitimate.

I knew him and had worked with him in the sense of having a relationship with him, probably a better relationship with him than with the government. I was pressing both sides to implement the peace treaty, but the government was the one that was much more reticent and dragging its feet. Perhaps because I was always being criticized by the government and its press for being too favorable to RENAMO, he trusted me. In any event, I went to see him that night, one on one. I said, "Look, for your future politically, for the future of the country, for the future of peace and stability, etcetera you can't drop out now. You have to go ahead. We will get the international community investigate any discrepancies or any charges and we'll give this a thorough examination but you can't drop out." In the end he was convinced to stay in. He saw the process through and it held together.

Angola was very much on people's minds. I think the FRELIMO people drew the wrong lesson. They thought it was a demonstration to them they really needed to hold onto power. For Dhlakama, the head of RENAMO it was a lesson that war could happen again so he had that card to play. For us it was here's the way for a peacekeeping operation to be a giant failure and we wanted the peace to last. For that to happen it was essential that the demobilization, reintegration and the creation of the unified army on the military side proceed at the same pace that the preparations for the election proceeded. You didn't want to have the election go ahead with people still with armies, two separate armies controlled by the two contending factions in the election that could then go back to war if they didn't like the outcome.

Q: This army or armies, particularly one that has been used to living off the land, this isn't easy.

JETT: Actually, it was easy in Mozambique because living off the land is easy when the land is rich. When the land is poor, that's a pretty strong disincentive for people to stay in the army. There was some effort by humanitarian aid agencies to deny food to RENAMO areas because people recognize that providing humanitarian aid into those areas would strengthen RENAMO's hold on those areas and on the people.

The government troops weren't much better. The country was so poor that the soldiers rarely got paid. They weren't paid much to begin with and mostly their officers managed to steal their payroll or whatever else came their way in terms of resources.

Q: What sort of an embassy did you have?

JETT: It was very small as one might expect. There were about 40 Americans. The biggest contingent of course, was AID. There was a DCM, there was one economic commercial officer, there was one political officer, one consular officer, one PAO, but the biggest contingent was the AID people.

One of the things I was confronted with was Wackenhut, the American company that had the guard contract. Again, as in Liberia, they were treating the guards very shabbily and trying to maximize their profit by minimizing what they paid the guards. One day I went to the embassy and was confronted by two hundred guards who were threatening to go on strike if they didn't get better conditions.

As in Liberia it demonstrated to me the stupidity and folly of relying on a company like Wackenhut instead of just having the Department run the guard force. It was so much easier for Washington to contract things out. I think that is one of the reasons this privatization nonsense has been so popular for so many years is it is easy to contract it out. The people sitting in Washington aren't particularly affected, whether the guards are unhappy or not. It is the people who are supposed to be guarded that have to deal with that and yet they have no power to deal with it because the contract is between Washington and whoever wins the contract. When there is a problem the bureaucrats in Washington always say, "Well, you know, it is in the contract. There is nothing we can do." We are not talking about a threat like terrorism, but rather common crime. In a very poor country, if you don't have a guard on your house you run the risk of robbery and no one wanted to go off to work in the embassy and leave their family at home unprotected.

At the time because of the challenge of implementing the peace treaty the job was fun despite the flak from FRELIMO. It was a difficult country at a difficult time, but I think one of the things you find in the Foreign Service is people who go to these really difficult places recognize what they are getting into so their expectations are not great. As a result I think you get people who are probably happier than a lot of people who go to Paris and discover it is expensive and they have difficulty living because of the expense. I think often as long as you have good leadership in the embassy, people are happier at hardship posts than some of these great European capitals because of the attitude of people who go there.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop this session. I think we want to pick it up again. The peace treaty is being implemented. What were you all up to after the peace treaty and were there other embassies involved there? Were the South Africans messing around? By this time South Africa was under, was no longer a white-run country, was it?

JETT: Yes, that's right, about then. When I was there Mandela was elected and inaugurated. One of the great experiences I had in the Foreign Service was going to Pretoria and being at the ambassador's house for a party for the American delegation following the inauguration and just hearing the people speak on what that occasion meant to them.

Q: You were there until, you got there in '93. When did you leave?

JETT: ’96.

Q: We will talk about after the peace treaty, what were we doing and what were you observing? And what was life like there too.

JETT: The treaty got signed. Did we go into the implementation of the peace treaty and through the elections?

Q: We left with the peace treaty.

JETT: All right. The peace treaty was signed in ’92 and I got there in ’93. They were supposed to have elections in ’93 as stipulated in the peace treaty but they couldn’t get their act together, basically, in that amount of time so they had to postpone them a year until ’94. There were several moving parts to this process, you might say. You had to assemble the soldiers from the FELIMO, the government army and you had to bring them to assembly areas. You had to do the same with the soldiers of the RENAMO rebel group and then you had to reintegrate most of them into civil society, meaning make them civilians and give them some sort of stake in society so they didn’t go back to fighting again. And then you had to take the remainder and put them into a new unified government military that would presumably represent the entire country and keep it at peace and provide whatever military it needed.

Under the provisions of the treaty the armed forces were supposed to be 30,000 strong composed of 15,000 from the government and 15,000 from RENAMO. The international community, through the United Nations, gave a very modest stipend to former soldiers to reintegrate them back into society, become civilians again and learn to make a living. It was literally a couple of dollars a month, but it was so attractive, as opposed to remaining in the military, that people were anxious to demobilize and get out. So in the end the government could only come up with 8,000 people who wanted to stay in the military instead of 15,000 and RENAMO could only come up with 4,000 people.

Q: Were there children soldiers involved in this process?

JETT: Oh yes. That was part of RENAMO’s tactics and that’s why they were so roundly criticized by the human rights organizations. They were a pretty brutal group. Using child soldiers was one of the tactics they employed. They abused a lot of civilians and deservedly got criticized by the human rights community. The Mozambican government was quite interested in highlighting that and making a point of that. It was well documented by the Gersony report, which I described earlier.

So there were human rights violations committed by both sides, but overwhelmingly by RENAMO. But they had signed the peace accord and they were partners to this process. The government didn’t forget the abuses or the fact that they had been fighting to stay in power all these years. So while the peace treaty had been signed, there was still a great deal of animosity between FRELIMO, especially the FRELIMO elite that were running

the politics and economy of the country and they weren't particularly interested in sharing economic or political power. They were very critical of RENAMO.

The press, which was controlled by the government, never referred to RENAMO as an opposition political party. It was always RENAMO, the former rebel group. I asked them once, "Why don't you refer to FRELIMO as the former rebel group?" They didn't think that was too funny even though that is exactly what they were under Portuguese rule.

So that is why I took a certain amount of flak because I basically felt that I had to work with both parties to get them to adhere to this agreement, to get them to implement it. To get the troops to assembly areas and demobilized and an army created and the elections held so that you had a legitimate government and you could begin to rebuild the country after so many years of tearing it apart.

The criticism was not just from FRELIMO. Human Rights Watch once said in an annual report that I was too close to RENAMO, but my job was to see the accord implemented and not to punish people for their past sins.

So the challenge was to get these people to and through their first elections and to avoid the mistakes committed in Angola. One example of what was happening was when we were flying around once in a UN helicopter and quite by accident landed in what was supposedly a training center for the police. The problem was nobody knew about it and it looked for all intents and purposes just like a military base with people in uniforms marching around, drilling.

So suspicions were high on both sides and it required a good deal of pressure from the international community to keep things moving forward. As I've mentioned, the special representative of the secretary general, Aldo Ajello, was a very able, capable guy, very political, very smart. He also worked very closely with the key ambassadors. He was dedicated to getting the job done and was not afraid to kind of lean on people when they needed to be leaned on.

In the end, our efforts brought the whole process to a successful conclusion. The peacekeeping operation, which was the third largest in the world at the time, was declared a success and ended. Ajello packed up his bags and went back to New York.

Then after that the remainder of my tour got kind of boring because it became another development story, trying to get a poor country to bring about its own economic development and get them to establish the conditions that would allow businessmen to come in and invest and do things without jumping through a hundred bureaucratic hoops and taking a year or so just to set up the most simple business.

One of the things I spent a long time working on was a gas project. I remember having a journalist come in to my office and he asked about it. I said, "Yes, that file over there that is about eight inches thick. That's the file on the project. It was a gas pipeline project that Enron was trying to complete. I must say, the Enron people were the most inept people I

have ever dealt with so it is not surprising that the company subsequently collapsed in a great financial disaster several years later. At the time they were working on this gas project, which was pretty straightforward, creating a pipeline. It would have doubled Mozambique's foreign exchange earnings. I think what happened though was the government was so unsure of itself and also the energy minister was getting lots of favors from South African companies, free tuition in South African schools for his children and that sort of thing. I think it made it impossible for us to compete even if Enron had been astute.

One example of the environment there was I went once to talk to the transportation minister about a project to create a toll road from Maputo to the South African border. It would have replace a road that was in horrible shape and generated all kinds of economic activity. For a long time the road was very unsafe. There times when we drove it when it was kind of scary because it was never clear when RENAMO might attack or plant a land mine. The highway was littered with the remains of burned out cars and trucks from earlier attacks. Just navigating the checkpoints manned by government soldiers was sometimes a challenge. All that changed once it was clear the peace was going to last.

The proposal was to create a toll road where a South African company would come in and refurbish the road, make it a superhighway and then charge a toll to people using it and recoup their funds. So I went to the transportation minister and said something, "Sounds like a good project to me. You get all the economic activity that results. All you have to do is say OK."

He said, "Well, we've got a problem. We don't have any legislation which permits us to have a toll road."

I said, "Well, in the United States if something is not illegal, then it is permissible."

He replied, "Well, not here. Under our system if it is not specifically permitted by a law making it legal, then it can't be done."

They eventually upgraded the road. There are now lots of tourists and businessmen driving back and forth on the road.

Again, it was the kind of mentality. I don't know if it is Portuguese colonial mentality or kind of Marxist Leninist one that meant the government had to be involved in everything but it was hard to combat. It made it very difficult for anybody who wanted to do business there to come in and set it up. The bureaucratic red tape was quite significant. I was noted in a speech that McDonalds was in over a hundred countries and asked rhetorically when one would open in Maputo. I checked Wikipedia recently and it said there is still none there.

That's about it for Mozambique.

Q: When you left dealing with that, how did you view the future for the country?

JETT: I thought that given the success of the peacekeeping operation that the country had a pretty good future. You had lots of interest from South Africa and neighboring countries in investment. It was also a great tourist destination. You could ask any middle aged white South African male about Mozambique and they would all get this faraway look in their eyes and say, "Lourenço Marques" which was the name Maputo had during colonial times and they all used to go there on vacations and getaways and have a good time and to do things they couldn't do in South Africa. There was a great potential for tourism and for the country to slowly rebuild itself. It's got a lot of mineral resources and other things going that are now beginning to be exploited.

As long there was peace, it had a bright future. Basically the peace has held together, mainly because there aren't any resources or any external forces that would be interested in returning to war and so they haven't gone back to war.

Q: What about retaliation and the demobilized soldiers?

JETT: There was very little of anything that could be considered retaliation, surprisingly. You would think that a country that had fought a very bitter war for that length of time there would have been more of that. There was not that much even though FRELIMO still clung to all the power in the country. The president still appointed the provincial governors and they were all FRELIMO loyalists, even in the northern provinces that had voted overwhelmingly for RENAMO. The FRELIMO elite weren't interested in sharing power, but they did not retaliate.

At about that time there was a power sharing arrangement worked out in South Africa and I suggested that it sounded like a good idea for Mozambique to consider. Again, the government controlled press, were incensed by that. They weren't interested. Basically, they wanted to go back to the good old days when they ran everything, controlled everything.

They have 250 people in the unicameral parliament and those 250 people basically draw a salary but they don't do much else. They don't have offices, and they don't have any staff or administrative support. Most of the time they are not even from the provinces they represent and rarely get there. So it was a way to offer jobs to a few. The RENAMO people won a good number of seats. They won about 110. They didn't have a majority, however, so the government would come up with legislation, introduce it and there would be a straight party line vote. There was no opportunity for anything the opposition wanted to do in terms of legislation.

But it seemed to work well enough that the peace was kept and Mozambique has stayed peaceful and continues to develop. Chissano eventually served out his term and was replaced by Guebuza. He was one of the FRELIMO old guard who was using his contacts and influence to make things happen for the people who paid him enough to make them happen.

Q: What about the infrastructure? Was there much infrastructure before the war? What had happened to it?

JETT: There wasn't much infrastructure and they managed to destroy what little there was. The Portuguese invested nothing in their colonies either in terms of infrastructure or in education for the local population in terms of trying to create a class of people that was capable of governing.

If you look around Africa the best colonialists were the British because they actually educated people. They saw it as part of their Christian duty or something to do that. The French also created an educated class. For the British that was one way they controlled the population with a small portion of educated people, an elite that became part of the system, had a stake in it and therefore, were willing to help run it.

But that didn't happen in Portuguese colonies or in the Belgian colonies. It was all about exploitation and looting whatever they could. Mozambique came to independence quite literally with fewer college graduates among the population than you could count on the fingers of your hand. So they were totally unprepared as there had been no attempt to build up either the physical infrastructure or to invest in human capital.

Q: Did the Catholic Church who I presume had what little educational teaching that was going on, did it jump into the breach?

JETT: The short answer is no. They didn't have much of a presence there and to the extent they did much they kind of saw themselves as the church of the colonialists.

The other thing that happened in Angola and Mozambique is that all the people left. There were about 200,000 Portuguese in Mozambique and 90% of them up and left when independence happened. As I mentioned earlier, they did things like destroy what little was there in terms of infrastructure that they couldn't take with them.

The Catholic Church wasn't a missionary organization as some other denominations were in Africa. In Malawi you had missionary groups that would come in and set up a school. Scottish missionaries or other Protestant missionaries and so they provided education to a limited degree but that didn't happen in Mozambique.

Q: So you left there, was it '96? What were you doing after you were dealing with Mozambique?

JETT: I was in Mozambique until '96. '93 to '96 and I got a call from Victoria Nuland, who was the deputy secretary's chief of staff in the Department. I thought I would probably just retire. I had been an ambassador and didn't know what else I was going to do and then I got a call and she said, "Would you like to be considered for Peru?"

I said, "Sure, great, put me on the list" and they did and eventually the D committee approved me.

So I went back to Washington and took a Spanish refresher course and had my hearings and then went off to Peru.

Q: When you went back to the Department, you had been involved in this very difficult set of negotiations and situation. Did you feel there was much understanding of what had gone on there and how things were developing or not?

JETT: I think the people that understand the best are the desk officer and the office director. There is not much understanding beyond that unless something has caught the eye of more senior officers. They are vaguely aware of whether you did a good job or a bad job. That makes sense. The assistant secretary for African Affairs worries about more than 45 countries so he's not going to have in-depth knowledge of any of them. He is going to have an impression of all of them. Sometimes you get the feeling they just don't want to hear from you. Your job is to make sure you stay off their radar screen. If you come to their attention you could be criticized because you haven't managed it well and they don't' want to be distracted from dealing with other problems. They are putting out the fires; whatever is raging at the moment so they don't welcome having something else dumped on their plate. That's the impression you get.

You go around and talk to a few people. Intelligence analysts at a low level in INR and at the CIA will want to talk to you and get a little firsthand feel for some of the personalities. There isn't a whole lot of interest unless there is some specific reason why there should be due to whatever was on the minds of policymakers at that particular moment. Since things had calmed down in Mozambique and appeared to be staying peaceful, there was not a lot of interest.

It was my conviction, however, that there were valuable lessons to be learned from the peacekeeping experience in Mozambique, especially given the failure of peacekeeping in Angola a few months before. Both were former Portuguese colonies that had long civil wars, but it had worked in Mozambique and didn't in Angola. This actually became the main focus of my Ph.D. dissertation, which I later wrote.

To make sure that experience was not lost, I had the embassy work up a cable entitled "Lessons learned from peacekeeping in Mozambique and why its success won't be repeated elsewhere." I kept it unclassified to give it the widest possible circulation and eventually had a version of it published in the Journal of Humanitarian Assistance. At one point I went to New York and went around UN headquarters and chatted with various UN officials including Kofi Annan to discuss the report. My reception was somewhere between polite disinterest and thinly veiled hostility as I was not always complimentary of the job the UN did. The Special Representative of the Secretary General, Aldo Ajello, did a great job and the whole process probably would have fallen apart without him. Other elements of what was a large and complex peacekeeping operation were often very weak however. In addition, the chances for success are often dictated before the operation even begins by the politics in New York and by the mandate and rules of engagement given the operation by the Security Council. In the end, I

decided that the most important factors were the resources that were being fought over in the country in question, the role of neighboring countries, and the personalities, motivation and goals of those leading the various factions doing the fighting.

Q: In '96 you are pointed toward Peru. What was the situation in Peru at the time you were going out there?

JETT: It had just come through a very difficult period. I got there in fall of '96. I replaced Al Adams. Fujimori was the president at the time. He had been elected in 1990. He had been elected to follow Alan Garcia. Alan Garcia's presidency from '85 to '90 was basically a disaster with rampant inflation and terrorism out of control.

There were two groups, Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path and the MRTA, Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement. There was serious concern in the early '90s that the guerrillas were somehow going to take over the country and the government. There were bombings and kidnappings, not only out in the provinces but even in the capital.

In 1992, after being in power of two years, Fujimori closed the congress, closed the courts, instituted martial law and military tribunals and rewrote the constitution. At the same time the head of Sendero Luminoso, which was by far the nastier of the two terrorist groups, was arrested. The CIA provided some intelligence support, which helped in getting him arrested. His being in prison really broke the back of his organization. It ushered in a modicum of peace to a country that had been suffering from terrorism for some time. A few years later they formed a truth and reconciliation commission and that commission did a report and decided 50,000 people had died during this time from the early '80s to the mid '90s, and that most of those were killed by Sendero Luminoso, a good number by the government and a few hundred by the other rebel group, the MRTA.

Fujimori was given a lot of credit for restoring order and bringing terrorism under control and enjoyed considerable popular support because of it.

Q: Had the Japanese chancery reception situation been resolved by that time?

JETT: No, it hadn't happened yet. I got there in maybe early November of '96 and immediately started making the rounds and meeting people. The first person I met was the Japanese ambassador because he was a very influential guy and Japan had this special relationship because Fujimori's parents had come to Peru from Japan. Fujimori was born in Peru but he still had that tie to Japan and Japan was very interested in making sure that Fujimori was a success because it reflected on Japan. So the Japanese ambassador was a significant player and so I got to know him quickly and well.

He had their big national day reception on the emperor's birthday, and that took place on December 22 of '96. I got invited as did everybody who mattered in town. So I went. I had gotten back into Peru that morning from a trip to Miami. My wife was pregnant at the time and we had to go have a visit with the obstetrician and do some other things. The airplane was late so I got in at 2 in the morning, got a couple hours sleep, went to the

embassy and then went to this reception. I said I was only going to stay the minimum amount of time that would be diplomatically acceptable because I had to go back out to the airport because my mother was coming in for the holidays.

The reception was supposed to be from 7 until 9. I got there at 7:15; I stayed half an hour and at that point I decided it was probably minimally acceptable and so I slipped out at 7:45. The Israeli ambassador left about the same time, along with a Peruvian diplomat and a few other people. Most of the people stayed and there were still about 600 people in the backyard of the ambassador's residence under this giant tent.

While I was in Peru I had ten armed bodyguards, a lead car, a follow car. When I got there I thought well, things are much improved. This is kind of excessive. Maybe I will recommend to Washington we cut back a little. I hadn't done that yet. When we got to the residence they had a very high wall around the ambassador's house, sort of typical third world architecture. At the door they would only let in the person that was invited and you went through a metal detector and then on into the house. All the bodyguards and the police and the army that were there to protect the dignitaries were all on the outside of this wall.

The MRTA had taken over the house next door and they placed an explosive charge on the common wall in the garden between the Japanese residence and the house next door and blew a hole in that wall. Then they came in, took everyone hostage, and fired some shots in the air. There were14 MRTA and they were able to take over the entire house and over 600 people inside without anybody getting shot or wounded because all the police and bodyguards were on the street in front of the ambassador's residence.

This was at 8:15. I had left half an hour earlier and missed all that but there were still nine of my staff there and five of their wives. My DCM, Jim Mack, when I took off said, "Well, if the ambassador leaves, I guess I can leave" so he left shortly after I did. The DCM and I had left, but the head of the political section, the head of the economic section, the head of the drug office, several AID people, and another political officer were all still there and became hostages.

The MRTA released the women right away, including Fujimori's mother. I am not sure that they knew they had her, but they released her so without the 200 women they got down to 400 men as hostages within a couple of hours. They soon realized that 400 was still too many so they started to slowly release them. The takeover happened on a Tuesday night.

On Sunday, so five days later, they released all the Americans in a group of about 250 that were freed. All our people were therefore out in five days. They kept releasing people and then started negotiating with the government. The demand from the MRTA was the release of something like 234 MRTA people in jail in Peru, and other countries. They wanted them freed in exchange for releasing the remaining hostages and being allowed to go the airport and get on a plane to Cuba.

According to the head of the economic section one of the MRTA came up to him and said, “Your ambassador? Where is he?”

He said, “He left” and the MRTA guy expressed regret that I wasn’t there to meet him.

They got eventually down to 72 hostages; 14 terrorists. The 72 consisted of the Japanese ambassador and his staff, a number of prominent Peruvians and the Bolivian ambassador.

The Bolivian ambassador was kept because there were a couple of MRTA people in jail in Bolivia. The Bolivian government refused to release them so the MRTA refused to release the Bolivian ambassador.

Uruguay, on the other hand, its ambassador was in exactly the same situation. The Uruguayan government immediately capitulated and released the MRTA that were in jail in Uruguay and the MRTA released the Uruguayan ambassador.

The 14 terrorists held those 72 people hostage for 126 days. On April 22, 1997 Fujimori ordered the military to attack the residence and the hostages were freed. While they had been negotiating, the government had been gathering information on the actions and the routine of the terrorists and we helped them out in that regard. The Peruvians insisted on running their own operation so they weren’t interested in much of anything we had to offer other than our help with gathering intelligence. This has been published information and is not classified. We provided listening devices; one in a guitar and one in a crucifix and one in a crate of oranges and all these listening devices were taken into the residence. People were listening to the conversations picked up by these devices and trying to figure out who was where and who was doing what. The terrorists were mostly a bunch of amateurs and young kids. They set a routine of every afternoon at 3 o’clock they would confine all 72 hostages in two bedrooms on the second floor and they would leave one or two people up there to guard them. Then the rest of them, 10 or 12 of them, would gather in the living room and play this kind of indoor soccer game.

The Peruvian government learned that and they tunneled under the house. Ironically, the tunneling became public because some newspaper reported all these truckloads of dirt that were leaving the house next door so the terrorists knew there was tunneling going on but they didn’t take any action or didn’t do anything different in their routine. What the Peruvian government did was put a large explosive charge under the floor of the living room and when the hostages were all upstairs on the second floor and the vast majority of the MRTA gathered in the living room to play their soccer that afternoon, they detonated the charge and it killed probably 10 of the terrorists right there and stunned the rest. At that point Peruvian soldiers climbed out of other tunnels and jumped over the wall and rushed the house.

It took several seconds for that to happen. If the terrorists had been well disciplined, they could have killed a large number of the hostages. As it was, for some reason the one terrorist who wasn’t affected by the explosion started running around trying to find the Peruvian foreign minister, a man named Tudela. I don’t know why he was trying to kill

him but Tudela went out the back door of the bedroom he was in and this terrorist was chasing him and shooting and throwing grenades at him but ignored the rest of the hostages. He walked into the room where the hostages were and saw Tudela leaving through the other door and in anger, I guess, fired a burst from his machinegun but it was at chest or waist height. All the hostages were on the floor, keeping their heads down except one hostage who went into a closet. He was standing up and perhaps thought he would be safe there if he wasn't seen. One of the bullets went through the closet door and hit him and severed a major artery because he bled to death before he could be given medical care.

The same guy who was chasing the foreign minister around killed two officers who were leading the assault, but he and the rest of the 14 terrorists were killed in the attack. There has been some debate whether any of them were executed after being captured. One hostage later claimed he saw two of them were taken alive, but all of them wound up dead. A case was brought against the military officers involved, which is still in the courts 15 years later.

So the 14 terrorists, two of the officers and the one hostage died, but the 71 hostages were freed and it was a huge success for Fujimori. It added greatly to his luster.

Q: Was there speculation that somehow you had left early because you knew about it or something? I am just thinking about how rumors get started.

JETT: Yes, there was. I left at the same time the Israeli ambassador did. One news report said I had been taken hostage and my sister-in-law in Michigan heard that and she called up my wife at the residence. She was crying and saying, "Oh, what is happening?"

My wife had to explain to her that I was safe and sound.

The other rumor was since I had left with the Israeli ambassador we knew it was going to happen and that's why we left. I guess that doesn't say much for my management style if I left my staff members to be taken hostage. In any event, we obviously had no inkling this was going to happen.

There is another phase to this story, which is interesting. During this negotiation, during the 126 days that the MRTA held the hostages, they initially started out with a list of 234 MRTA in jail they wanted released in exchange for the hostages. They were negotiating down to a shorter and shorter list and by the time the government launched the raid to free the hostages, they were down to a list of 22 people that they wanted to get released in exchange for these 72 hostages. I don't think Fujimori was ever serious about giving in to their demands no matter how low the number. He was just negotiating to buy time. He wasn't the kind of guy who would have given in; he would have seen all the hostages killed before he would have given in to the terrorists. That's just the kind of mindset he had.

But on this list of 22 the third person was a woman named Lori Berenson, an American woman. When I got to Peru there were 25 Americans in jail. Twenty four of them were Americans who showed up at the airport in Lima with a suitcase of cocaine, thinking they were going to fly back to Miami and give it to some guy named Jose and get $5,000 for their trouble. They got caught and arrested and received nine-year prison sentence. In every case I can recall, they served three years and then got out on parole and were sent back to the States.

The 25th person was a woman named Lori Berenson who was arrested at the end of '95 and was accused of helping the MRTA. She was supposedly a journalist, that's what she said, though she has never published an article of any description anywhere at anytime. She was supposedly writing for two publications; Third World Viewpoint and something called New Times or Modern Times. I have never been able to find a copy of Modern Times; and I doubt such a publication exists. Third World Viewpoint was a newsletter that came out a few times sometime in the '90s.

Berenson had been in El Salvador working for the FMLN and then when peace broke out in El Salvador, she headed to Peru. En route to Peru, she stopped in Panama, met some guy at the airport, 20 years older than her and they started traveling together, went to Ecuador and then to Peru. In Peru they rented a house. She was arrested a year later on a bus with a woman named Nancy Gilvonio.

The plan, according to Peruvian authorities was that Berenson was collecting information to help the MRTA stage a mass hostage taking at the congress. She was supposedly was doing a story about the Peruvian congress and so she was going into congress and interviewing people, writing down seating charts and other information on the congress. The woman with her, Nancy Gilvonio was supposedly her photographer for this story.

So they were arrested. She was tried, accused of being an MRTA member and she was brought before the Peruvian press and she in a very angry voice with her face contorted by anger said, "The MRTA are not terrorists; they are revolutionaries." At that point she was taken before a military tribunal. The prosecutor had been asking for a 30-year sentence, but after her press conference she was given a life sentence.

A year later, after she had been accused of plotting to do this mass hostage along the lines of one that happened in Colombia a few years before when some terrorists took the Colombian parliament hostage, the MRTA does the mass hostage taking at the Japanese ambassador's residence. The leader of those 14 terrorists was a guy named Nestor Cerpa who just happens to be Nancy Gilvonio's husband, the photographer of Lori Berenson. Gilvonio herself was a leader of the MRTA and apparently was in charge of their finances and knew where the MRTA's money was. They had collected a lot of money from kidnapping people for ransom.

The summer I was transferring from Mozambique to Peru, before I held my hearings or anything, I had literally just gotten to the hotel in Washington a few hours before and was going to start my round of debriefings from Mozambique and briefings for Peru and

preparing for my hearings, when I get this knock at the door at my hotel room. I open it and there is Lori Berenson's parents accompanied by their congresswoman, a woman named Carolyn Maloney who is still in congress. They didn't mean to interrupt but they insisted on coming in so I could tell them what I was going to do for their daughter. I said I would do whatever I could and that I took the protection of American citizens very seriously. Also that I was aware of the case, but didn't know the details and would certainly look into it.

The whole time I was in Peru, the parents were constantly making trips and constantly trying to attract publicity to Lori's case and constantly getting congress involved. They got a majority of House of Representatives and a large number of senators to sign a resolution on her behalf.

Our position was, the American embassy's position, the U.S. government's position was that she was tried before this military tribunal that included hooded military judges and it wasn't a fair judicial process and that she should be given a fair trial in a civilian court. There is no small irony in that given what the United State did in the wake of 9/11. You can read in the newspaper, like yesterday, that the Republicans in congress want the military to be in charge of handling any terrorist suspects. So after 50,000 Peruvians die in their struggle with terrorism, we demand due process and yet after we get attacked the law, the constitution, international obligations and everything else gets thrown out the window as we used military tribunals, rendition, enhanced interrogation techniques and so on.

When Fujimori increasingly got into trouble politically, he decided after I left in 1999 to give her a new trial. So she had a trial in a civilian court which was actually televised which was unheard of in Peru. It was televised on a cable channel and this time she was charged not with being a leader of a terrorist organization but with being a collaborator with a terrorist organization.

In her first trial before the military court, her defense was she was a not a leader of a terrorist organization, but just a low level international sympathizer. In her second trial when she was accused of being a low-level participant, her defense was she was completely innocent. She was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

After they arrested Berenson and Gilvonio on the bus, the police went and raided the house that she and the Panamanian guy, Pacifico Castrellon, had rented. They discovered there were 17 terrorists in it and hundreds of weapons, thousands of rounds of ammunition and all kinds of explosives. It was a terrorist safe house, but Berenson claimed she did not know anything about how it was being used. She had rented a couple of apartments and said she was living in one of them and, though she went to the house frequently, she had no idea what it was being used for. Castrellon testified against her at the trials and said he had been hired to help the MRTA and they both fully knew what the group was doing.

Her parents nonetheless continued to loudly proclaim her innocence and at one point came down with a delegation that included a woman named Amy Goodman who's got a TV and radio program called "Democracy Now'. She reports on stories all over the world and she asked if she could record this meeting with me and Berenson's parents and the other people in this delegation.

I knew it was going to be a long and difficult meeting and I said no. You can take notes if you want, but I am not going to have you record it. I knew she would selectively replay whatever she wanted on her radio program. She threw a hissy fit. I have never had a journalist try and tell me what the ground rules are, let alone throw a fit of anger, but she eventually calmed down and stayed in the room because I threatened to walk out if she didn't. So we had the meeting, but the way Amy Goodman reported it was that the embassy and the ambassador are either stupid or incompetent or more likely they are in league with Fujimori to deny poor Lori Berenson her human rights.

Last year, Berenson after serving 15 of her 20 year sentence asked for parole and at her parole hearing she confessed to being a collaborator with the MRTA. She didn't go into detail about what she did for them but she confessed. She was given parole with the condition that she stay in Peru for the remaining five years of her sentence.

She had a son in jail because they allow conjugal visits and she married an MRTA terrorist in jail and had this child with him. She and the child currently live in Lima living and will come home in a couple of years when she is allowed to by the Peruvian authorities.

One of the other aspects of the case that I knew at the time, which has now been published, was that of those 72 hostages, five of them told me that they had talked to Nestor Cerpa, the head of the 14 terrorists and Nancy Gilvonio's husband. They had all asked him why Lori Berenson was the third person on the list of the 22 that he wanted released when she is an American. His response in every case was, "I feel guilty because I involved her in intelligence collection."

Up to that point she had provided administrative support and had rented the house and two apartments as safe houses from which the MRTA could operate. Obviously, she had been assigned by Cerpa to go collect information on the congress so they could attempt to stage the mass hostage taking that they later staged at the Japanese ambassador's residence.

Again, it sort of gives you the flavor of how you get beat up by the press and by certain groups, all of whom were proclaiming Lori Berenson's innocence when it was obvious to anyone who wanted to analyze the facts even slightly dispassionately that she was guilty as hell and deserved to be in jail.

Q: Before you went out to Peru, when you had your initial hearing, did the case come up?

JETT: Even the first day I was in Washington, the parents were there at my doorstep in the hotel. So I asked about it and it was pretty clear the circumstances; again, her history in El Salvador, the fact that she had been arrested in the company of Gilvonio. Castrellon admitted his guilt and testified against her. The fact the house she rented and lived in was full of terrorists, all of that made it pretty clear.

The other thing was she was unapologetic; in jail she became a spokesman for the MRTA, she was a cheerleader for them and refused to appear even the slightest bit remorseful. An American getting arrested for terrorism was big news and drew a lot of attention and I am sure that 99% of Peruvians thought she was guilty as hell and deserved what she got.

It would have been political suicide for any Peruvian politician to come out in her favor. I repeatedly made pitches on her behalf in terms of getting a fair trial to everyone up to and including Fujimori. Secretaries of State raised it. President Clinton, President Bush raised it; all these different people raised it and she was guilty as hell. That's not to say she shouldn't have gotten a fair trial and I think she certainly did get a fair trial in 2000 when Fujimori gave her a trial in civilian court. She didn't a fair trial under the military tribunal because she wasn't a leader of the MRTA and she didn't kill anybody and she didn't carry any weapons but she certainly provided them administrative and logistical support and tried to collect intelligence for them.

So it was a difficult issue. It was kind of a no win issue where you weren't going to make any headway with the Peruvians. Fujimori owed his popularity to bringing terrorism under control. So he was the last person who was going to be soft on terrorism.

At one point years later when I was talking to Alejandro Toledo who was Fujimori's successor and a friend of mine. I said to him, "Why don't you just pardon her and let her leave the country?" and he looked at me like I was crazy.

"Why would I do that? It would be the equivalent of Obama pardoning John Walker Lindh, the American Taliban who was given 20 years for associating with the Taliban and fighting against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.

People are outraged about John Walker Lindh in this country and thought he deserved to have the book thrown at him, but when it came to Lori Berenson in Peru, well, she is just a poor little, misunderstood social worker or something. I think there is a strong undercurrent of racism that comes out as "When it happens to us, its terrorism and anything is permissible in fighting it. But when it happens to them, that poor white girl couldn't possible be guilty of anything."

Q: We will pick it up. We talked about the Berenson case and the Japanese Embassy situation. Let's talk next time about Fujimori and developments in Peru thereafter and also what were you getting from Jesse Helms and his staff because they always took quite an interest in Latin America.

JETT: The last question is pretty easy. There wasn't any interest by Helms. I don't know if he was even still around by then but Central America was their thing and they didn't have a problem with Fujimori or any particular interest. I never saw them. To the extent there was congressional interest, it was in the counter drug program.

Q: Today is the 9th of November, 2011 with Dennis Jett. Dennis, we have talked about the Berenson case and some about Fujimori. Is Berenson, is she any relation to the Venetian Berensons?

JETT: Not that I know of. Both her parents are retired college professors that live in New York City or Queens and beyond that I don't know who she is related to.

Q: How did they strike you in dealing with them?

JETT: I think like most parents, they were very protective, willing to do anything to help out their child. I must say, if one of my three children were in jail in a third world country, I would do anything to help get them out.

This may be reading too much into it but I think they felt a certain amount of guilt because they instilled in her this great sense of social consciousness and justice, which I think is good. But they didn't bother to add any degree of judgment and so she went off to Central America and played around in revolutionary politics by working for the FMLN. Since she was on the political side, she was never carrying out acts of violence. When peace broke out in Central America, she moved south to find a new revolution and take up with the MRTA. Again, she was not committing acts of violence but she has now admitted collaborating with them. To get out of jail she admitted that, but I read anything about her being pressed to be specific about what she did. Looking at the evidence, however, it is clear she knowingly, willingly and enthusiastically provided the MRTA with administrative, logistical and intelligence support.

I am sure the parents knew that. They in fact, at one point sat in front of a consular officer and discussed what their strategy be following her arrest. They said, "Shall we admit what she did or should we just claim she is innocent and try and pressure to get her released?" They decided on the latter strategy. They knew their daughter was still a committed revolutionary and a committed supporter of a terrorist organization. So they probably thought the only way to get her out was to lie about what she did and try to get the American government to force the Peruvian government to release her.

My argument to them was instead of making this a very public issue and trying to make the government of Peru and the president of Peru to back down, that they and their daughter ought to keep it quiet and she ought to act a little bit contrite. I pointed out the example of all the Americans, the ones in jail for drug charges who showed up at the airport in Lima with a suitcase full of cocaine thinking they were going to go to Miami and turn over the cocaine to somebody and get $5,000 for their efforts. All those people got nine-year sentences and all of them behaved in prison and were released after only three years and went back to the United States on probation.

My argument to the parents was that is what Lori ought to do. She ought to keep quiet, act contrite but she didn't; she took the opposite approach as she did at her only public press conference. She asserted that the MRTA were revolutionaries and not terrorists. She made it clear she was sympathetic to them and in prison she became a cheerleader for them and a spokesperson for them and she also married a MRTA member in prison. It was her second or third marriage, as she also had been married in Central America again I believe to a terrorist.

That was the approach they took. It would have the same chance of success as a foreign government demanding the release of a convicted terrorist in the United States just because the supporters of that terrorist asserted his innocence when all the evidence demonstrated his guilt. No foreign government is going to capitulate to American pressure like that, especially in a country that had been traumatized by far worse terrorism than the United States has ever experienced 9/11 notwithstanding.

We were all traumatized by the incidents on 9/11. Many talking heads have commented that the world changed on 9/11. The only thing that changed is that 99% of Americans who thought terrorism was something that happened overseas to someone else suddenly realized it could happen to them. In the resulting hysteria, America collectively wrote Mr. Bush and Mr. Cheney a blank check to deal with it and threw away the constitution, the laws and the treaty obligations of the United States because they thought it would make them safe.

The same thing happened in Peru with Fujimori. By nature he was a stiff-necked guy who had no doubt about the wisdom of his own judgment. He made his reputation by defeating terrorism when he broke the back of Sendero Luminoso by putting Guzman, Sendero's leader, in jail. That made him extremely popular because it improved the security situation dramatically in Peru. So he wasn't going to take the thing that made him, won him the most popularity and turn it on its head by releasing a terrorist just because she happened to be an American and the Americans wanted her release.

So it was a ridiculous strategy on their part but, given the daughter's attitude, perhaps it was the only one they could pursue. As I said earlier, it was somewhat motivated by their own sense of guilt. When she was arrested, Berenson had a checking account with $50,000 in it. This was a person who had not ever worked at a paying job had no visible means of support. Her parents said they gave her the $50,000 and that it was royalties on a textbook written by her father. They essentially were financing her revolutionary lifestyle. I'm sure they knew what she was up to. Perhaps they thought it was appropriate for her to carry out her concept of social justice by supporting groups that were attempting to violently overthrow the existing social order.

I am not defending Peruvian society or saying it was the most just in the world but if you go to another country and work to violently overthrow the government of that country and get caught, you have to pay certain consequences and the United States government or the United States ambassador cannot save you from those consequences.

Q: Were any other Americans attracted to the situation there? I know in Nicaragua you had the Sandinistas and I was wondering if you had other Americans trying to do something.

JETT: Not that I am aware of. I can't think of any other Americans involved either with Sendero Luminoso or MRTA. Sendero was an extremely violent group. The MRTA less so, but both were terrorist organizations. Both groups were most active in the remote rural areas.

Perhaps because South America is further away than Central America and the political philosophies and the existing social order weren't quite as bad as it was in Central America. Central America captured the imagination, if you will, of the political right here. You had all those people in the United States, Jesse Helms and likeminded conservatives, supporting the Contras because they saw this as a communism versus capitalism struggle. The involvement of the American right in Central America helped generate a reaction against it from the American left.

That same analogy didn't seem to apply in Peru. I wasn't aware of any other American. I know there was at least one other American who had traveled to Peru and she had been arrested and detained but I think she was completely innocent. She wrote me a letter saying this happened to me and isn't it the same thing that happened to Lori Berenson? I wrote back and said thank you for your letter but the circumstances aren't the same. I don't know if she appreciated that or not but they weren't the same. She was just traveling up country and there is always a great deal of suspicion of gringos in the remote parts of South America. It is a suspicion of strangers in general so it would have been hard to go unnoticed in those kinds of circumstances.

As I said, I am not aware of any other Americans who got involved. Some got involved in supporting Berenson. I mentioned the antics of Amy Goodman. Ramsey Clark, who was Lyndon Johnson's Attorney General also came down to support her. I remember having a lot of respect for him when he was AG, but he seems to have gotten into looking for publicity by defending the worst of the worst. People like Charles Taylor, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and others. Once when I was briefing a congressional delegation came to Lima and I was briefing them, I showed them a videotape of Berenson's rant before the press. Ramsey was incensed by that and wrote me a letter saying I had no right to show the congressmen a tape that every Peruvian had seen and had used to form their opinion of Berenson.

Q: Was there any spillover from Chile of the Allende group in support since they are both at least were coming out of the left?

JETT: No, not from Chile or any other neighboring country. I was always surprised at how little interaction there was, including trade, between Peru and its neighbors.

Q: What about the French? The French in Latin America particularly had a socialist government in, had certain affection for the left. Did that play out at all in Peru or not?

JETT: No, there was no indication of any particular European or any other involvement or sympathy for the terrorists in Peru. There were enough socialist, mainstream politicians that were legitimate so if you were of that particular persuasion you could find people who were legitimate to communicate with and work with.

Sendero was basically a Khmer Rouge type organization whose main idea was to kill everybody and remake the society in a very dramatic way. The MRTA was more bourgeois but their philosophy was pretty thin and their funding was from kidnapping and the ransom and providing protection for drug traffickers. So I don't think there was a whole lot of philosophical identification with either of them on the part of any outside group.

Q: During the time you were there, Fujimori was the president the whole time?

JETT: Yes, he was basically president for all of the 1990s and I was there from '96 to '99.

Q: How did you find him as a president and his policies?

JETT: He was very hard-nosed. There is always a debate, whether it is in the United States or any other country, among the press and other political junkies about which officials and other advisors have the president's ear and the ability to influence him.

I always thought the inner circle of Fujimori consisted of one and a half people; it consisted of Fujimori who's convinced of the wisdom of his own judgment and about half the time it consisted of Vladimiro Montesinos who was basically his hatchet man and his go to guy when he wanted things fixed. But I don't think he ever relied on him for policy advice.

In '92 he closed the courts and the congress and rewrote the constitution to permit reelection. In "95 he ran for reelection. He had won the first election in '90 and under their constitution said he could serve one term. In '95 after rewriting the constitution he ran for reelection and won.

In '96 he had a law passed saying that the '95 election was his first election under the new constitution; therefore, he could run for reelection in 2000. He ran, but he attempted to rig the outcome and that's what ultimately brought him down.

He was like a lot of political leaders. Lord Acton's cliché about power corrupts is an old cliché because it is true. I think Fujimori was corrupted by power and convinced he was best for the country. He did bring terrorism under control. He did reform the economy. He inherited an economy that was out of control and a political security situation that was out of control, so he did achieve that.

I will also give him credit for also signing a peace treaty with Ecuador that brought an end to a silly border dispute that had occasionally flared up into mini wars between Peru and Ecuador. So those were solid accomplishments.

But then he decided to perpetuate himself with power. We just saw Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua reelected to a blatantly unconstitutional third term so it's something that continues to go on. It is just evidence that power corrupts.

One thing about Fujimori that was clear was that he was not going to be influenced by the American ambassador just because the American ambassador came to him, and whispered softly in his ear.

I heard one anecdote abut when my predecessor presented his credentials. It was this very formal ceremony in this very elegantly furnished room. You presented your credentials and then they pulled up these gilded chairs that you sat in and made polite conversation for about two minutes before you were excused. At that time my predecessor, according to the story I heard, leaned over, put his hand on Fujimori's arm and said, "Just think me of your adviser and call me any time." That's probably the last time Fujimori spoke to him.

I took that as a warning that I wasn't going to be friends with Fujimori. I wasn't going to play basketball with him. One of our ambassadors in Ecuador used to play basketball with the president there.

My successor tried to influence Fujimori by going jogging with Fujimori's daughter, thinking that I suppose what he said to her would get repeated to him. I don't think that worked either but that was his call.

I figured if I wanted to communicate with Fujimori it was best to say something to the press, carefully worded and it would be in the newspapers the next day and then he would read it. He could react to it or not. Since the press was always around and very active and always asking questions, there were plenty of opportunities to do that. That was my strategy and I thought by perhaps having some impact on public opinion that might have more impact on Fujimori than the traditional approach to quiet diplomacy and appealing to him to do something. He wasn't going to do anything that wasn't by his calculation in his interests. He wasn't going to do the United States any favors.

He was cooperating with us on counternarcotics and counterterrorism activities because that was in his interest and he was not going to compromise that just because he didn't like something I said. So I thought the down side was limited and therefore worth taking a public stand as that would be the best way to influence government policy even though it ran the risk of irritating the government.

Q: Were the United States and Peru running on parallel lines or drifting apart or what?

JETT: We were certainly on parallel lines when it came to combating narcotics, up to a degree. There was some corruption there. It is always hard to nail down the degree of corruption but the number of hectares under cultivation for coca went down every year I was there significantly. I think there were honest efforts to control that. Perhaps there were efforts to channel the remaining traffic and profit from it but overall, I think there were efforts to do that so we shared that.

We shared the counterterrorism desire as we worked with Peru to combat that because we saw that as a threat to a stable government in Peru. So we worked together on that.

As I said, Fujimori had reformed the economy to open it up, to get the government out of a lot of sectors that they had been in. He sold off a lot of government owned companies and by and large, it was my understanding that that process was pretty fair and transparent. The same process had taken place in Argentina and it was widely perceived there was a lot of corruption. In Peru it seemed like the process was pretty fair.

So the Peruvians were open to American investment and American tourism so we had that in common. I guess where we parted ways to a degree was the strengthening of democracy and Fujimori's efforts to perpetuate himself in power. He was co-opting or coercing the press and taking steps that were decidedly undemocratic. I thought we had an interest in seeing democracy strengthened, that we did and Peru did and actually Fujimori did. If Fujimori had stepped down after serving two terms with his record of success, he would have been hailed as a hero and probably would have gotten reelected after he sat out for five years. But instead he tried to perpetuate himself and got into trouble and fled the country to Japan and faxed back his resignation in 2000. Several years later he decided the people missed him and that he was going to be greeted as a hero if he went back. So he left Japan, where he was protected because the Japanese cared more about their image and its links to Fujimori's image, than they did about seeing him extradited and tried. When he left Japan, he went to Chile and was arrested, extradited to Peru, tried and now remains in jail.

So the difference was when it came to questions of democracy and to a degree transparency and corruption. I went out to the University of Lima once and gave a speech. Afterwards one of the students asked me whether the United States was upset that Peru had just bought some MIG-29s from Belarus. I said, "No, we didn't mind that. We don't sell arms to either Peru or Ecuador because we want them to settle their border dispute." I probably should have stopped there, but I went on to explain that in a democratic society there is always a debate about guns versus butter; about government spending on social programs versus government spending on defense programs. If you spend ten million dollars on a MIG-29, you can build 400 rural classrooms with that same ten million dollars. So you have to have a discussion within your society about what is the threat that your country faces. Is it a threat from abroad that can be met with a MIG-29 or is it the threat from within, lack of education and opportunity that can be addressed by building more schools in rural areas?

In fact, I visited one project that had taken former terrorists and given them a hectare of land and taught them how to grow asparagus. The person running that project told me how these formerly terrorists were largely indigenous youth, descendents of the Incas, basically from the highlands who had enough education to know what is possible and enough education to know they are not going to achieve it because society is stacked against them. But given that small bit of land and the chance to earn a decent living they became capitalists instead of terrorists.

My suggestion was therefore that providing more education and opportunity to address the internal threat was a much more effective way to protect national security than spending money on MIG-29s to counter some supposed external threat. The government, and the journalists they had on the payroll, were, to say the least, not happy with my remarks.

In response that night on the highway overpasses around town there was graffiti spray painted that said things like 'United States, tell your traitor dog ambassador to go home'. Those signs were painted by young men with closely cropped hair who were apparently army conscripts who were ordered to do that by the general officers who had been making money off arms acquisitions like the purchase of the MIG-29s. The commander in chief of the armed forces several years later was discovered to have a nine million dollar bank account in Switzerland or somewhere. This was a guy who made maybe a thousand dollars a month from his official salary.

Again, the transparency, democracy question was the one where we occasionally parted company with Fujimori. Or at least my approach to confronting the problem and doing it in a public way set up a fairly difficult situation at times. I was called to the foreign ministry once and had my hand slapped because there was a guy named Chirinos Soto who was a congressman. He was a member of a minor party; he was not part of the government party. So the vice minister of foreign affairs says, "Chirinos Soto has been complaining about you interfering in internal affairs."

My response was "I am here to represent the United States and I get my instructions from Washington, not from Mr. Chirinos Soto and I don't have time to worry about what a every congressman has to say especially a drunk like him." The guy had a significant drinking problem. Buy the vice minister took great offense at that nonetheless. I also added that if Peru and Ecuador wanted to be known as the only democracies that couldn't peacefully resolve their differences, that was up to Peru and Ecuador. He didn't like that either.

When I left the ministry, the press had apparently been alerted and was outside. They all asked, "What happened? How was the meeting?" My response was, "The conversation was somewhat more polite than the recent heavyweight boxing fight between Mike Tyson and Holyfield." That was when Mike Tyson had bitten off a piece of Holyfield's ear. I'm not sure many of them got the joke. In any event those were the kinds of confrontations that sometimes happened.

Another time there was an OAS meeting that brought delegations in from all over the hemisphere, including a delegation from the United States. The delegation from the United States included Mac McLarty and Jeff Davidow. The three of us went to call on Foreign Minister Tudela, the guy who survived the ordeal at the Japanese ambassador's residence. So we had this discussion about the OAS issues being discussed at this conference. At the end of it the foreign minister says, "I have one other topic to raise on instructions from my government." He was the foreign minister so obviously the president had told him to raise it.

Then the foreign minister says, "I need to ask you whether the recent remarks by Ambassador Jett reflect U.S. policy."

McLarty immediately said, "I assure you we have total confidence in Ambassador Jett and yes, they do reflect U.S. policy."

Davidow jumped in. Davidow was the assistant secretary for Latin America and he said, "Yes, and I want to reiterate that as well. We have total confidence in him and what he said reflects U.S. policy."

And Tudela said, "OK, thanks very much. I just was required to ask that question and will report that answer."

So then we walk out of the room and Davidow said something to the effect of, "Well, we saved you this time but be careful."

So I said, "OK."

Whenever you are in a situation like that there is always the potential for being charged with interference in internal affairs and it is not clear how that will play in Washington. There was one article once in the Washington Times repeating that charge, which a politician named Victor Joy Way had made. The implication of the article was that Joy Way was right. He later went to jail for corruption, undermining democracy and had a considerable sum stashed away in his foreign bank account.

I was talking coincidently yesterday on the phone with Heather Hodges. She was my deputy in Lima and then went on to be ambassador in Moldova and in Ecuador. Because some of the cables she sent in were leaked to the world by wiki leaks, she was declared persona non grata from Ecuador. We were talking about that and she was saying how cautious she had been in her public statements.

In fact, the only time the Ecuadorians got upset with her was when she gave an interview to a magazine and she was asked the question, "Are American investors coming to Ecuador?" Her response was something to the effect she didn't see much evidence of that. Even that mild, oblique criticism caused a reaction from the Ecuadorian government. So sometimes even the most diplomatic diplomats can get in trouble.

In Peru there was a sector of the press that was basically owned and operated by the government because they had bribed the media moguls in question. So there were newspaper articles that claimed, Ambassador Jett is saying those things because he doesn't like Japanese people and he has some prejudice against people of Japanese descent and other ridiculous things. Then you had congressmen charging interference in internal affairs. I thought, as I said, the way to get the message to Fujimori that might be effective and also to register our discomfort at the deterioration of democracy was to say things publicly but that required taking some flak.

I also worked with human rights organizations and visited them to show our support for civil society and those organizations. I also visited the opposition press again, to signal the importance of a free press. The press that wasn't free didn't particularly like that either. I thought it was important to make it clear. I guess it was a demonstration of public diplomacy before public diplomacy became the buzzword that it is today.

Q: How stood Peru with Chile?

JETT: They were traditional rivals. One of the things that is said about Latin America is they are always looking backward to the past instead of toward the future. One of the demonstrations of that was the War of the Pacific, which was a late 19th century sea battle where Chile soundly defeated Peru. That was still brought up as an irritant and impediment to better relations because Peru lost some territory and Bolivian lost its access to the sea. And then there was the border problem with Ecuador.

The border problem with Ecuador arose because in the late 1940s a U.S. military plane that was out trying to map the border between Peru and Ecuador discovered a river nobody knew existed. So it immediately threw into doubt where the border was. And so every decade or so the two countries went to war over this small bit of trackless jungle. Like the War of the Pacific, that problem was always available to inflame nationalist sentiments whenever there was a politician who wanted to exploit it.

There were Peruvian congressmen who said Peru should never surrender not even a square centimeter of sacred soil of the disputed border area with Ecuador. I always thought, OK, Mr. Congressman. Why don't you go stand there on that square centimeter and defend it to the death rather than send off draftees to do that.

The historical problem with Chile had not resulted in another shooting war but it was there. Nevertheless Fujimori had opened things up to foreign investment and there had been considerable Chilean investment in Peru in some companies and utilities even though there was some sensitivity to that. For political purposes, the ultra-nationalists occasionally raised the fact that it was Chilean investment but generally relations were OK. The Chileans had a very professional ambassador there who I thought was capable and well plugged in so that helped.

One thing the Chileans did while I was in Lima, which I thought was interesting, was the Chilean military, for the first time, published publicly a defense plan in which they laid

out their strategic vision. Most countries in the region never sought to lay out a justification for the money that they spend on defense. They just decided within the government what to spend, like buying MIG-29s, and then questioned the patriotism of anybody that asked why.

Q: The MIG-29, as I recall there was a brief little air war with Ecuador where Ecuador essentially did better than the Peruvians. Was this sort of getting ready for another round or what?

JETT: I think the short answer is yes. That's true; Ecuador did fairly well in the last skirmish and so that was the justification for the purchase of the MIG-29s to confront Ecuador.

I remember Foreign Minister Tudela talking once about a government meeting where they were talking about buying these weapons and the commanding general was saying, yes, we will be able to attack Ecuador with these weapons. Then the foreign minister asked, "How do we deal with the counter attack?"

The general had no answer to that according to Tudela.

The defense establishment in Peru was motivated mainly by the Ecuadorian threat. Relations with Colombia weren't a problem, relations with Brazil also were not a problem. That was all basically Amazonian jungle. Relations with Bolivia; there was some sort of affinity, ethnically between Bolivia and Peruvian people and they also shared their antipathy toward Chile so relations with them weren't a problem. I don't think anybody thought that Chile was a military threat and that even if it was, the Chileans were probably too strong anyhow. To the extent there was a justification for buying MIG-29s, it was based on Ecuador.

Q: Within Peru how stood things between, I don't know what you would call them but sort of the indigenous Indians up in the high country and the descendents of the conquistadors? Was this a noticeable divide?

JETT: Yes. Even though you probably had 40% or more of the country that was purely indigenous and maybe 10% or 20% that were clearly of European descent and the remaining 50% was some sort of mixture of the two, this divide was nonetheless very sharp. There was a kind of not too subtle racism. I think one of the reasons the political system was so weak in terms of reflecting democracy was because virtually all the previous presidents had been of European descent and from Lima and from the best one or two neighborhoods in Lima.

Then I think it was 1979 they rewrote the constitution and essentially did away with literacy requirements and that increased the number of voters from 2 million to 9 million. Fujimori was one of the first to tap into that; he would campaign upcountry and he would put on the traditional dress, including the funny hats. I think he won a lot of support because he was not the traditional European looking candidate; he was Asian and Asians

had an image there of being well organized and efficient. Many of the indigenous people thought at last a president that is not one of these typical rich European looking people from Lima who only look out for rich European looking people in Lima.

Toledo, the president who was elected and took over after Fujimori was forced out, is very indigenous looking. He looks like the other side of a buffalo head nickel. He drew a lot of support because of that.

As I mentioned many of the terrorists were people who were indigenous, well educated and from the mountain areas. They knew enough to know they wouldn't succeed in the society because of this inherent racism. They have a derogatory term, "cholo'" for the indigenous looking people, which the white people used with some abandon.

I remember talking to a minister in Fujimori's government. He was a guy I got along with well and liked. I can't remember how we got onto the topic but he basically said to me, "You criticize Fujimori about democracy, but I support Fujimori and I am going to continue to support him strongly for a very simple reason -- because I am a descendent of indigenous people. Those white people made us feel stupid and ugly. I wouldn't be a minister if Fujimori hadn't given me a job and given me the opportunity to show my ability and therefore, I am sticking with him."

It was a very poignant moment and a demonstration of how the underlying racism affected people's attitudes. The Lima elite always flocked to whoever the American ambassador was and tried to ingratiate themselves with him. It was a very small, closed elite. It was basically the country club of the European looking people and everybody else was on the outside to the point that some of them seemed irritated that I would invite Toledo to a reception at the residence. They thought that he just a cholo, even though he has a PhD from Stanford; he still looks like a cholo so why are you inviting him? They didn't say it quite so explicitly but they showed it with their body language. So that underlying tension was there and quite profound. It is still there and it plays out in Bolivia and in other places in Latin America.

Q: Were you seeing you might say the native movement? It obviously came out strong in Bolivia. You look at Latin America as being maybe the wave of the future or more assimilation or how did you see things at that time?

JETT: I guess I saw it as a problem that was centuries in the making. Pizarro conquered the Incas in the 1530's. I didn't see much in the way of momentum for change. Obviously, with the rewriting of the constitution there was an expansion of the number of people who could vote and voting is obligatory in Peru like in a lot of places in Latin America. Since it is obligatory that has brought about some change but I think the underlying attitudes have been there for centuries and are going to be there for a long time. They only change very slowly over time. It just doesn't seem the kind of place where these things get addressed and discussed. There are human rights organizations that are concerned with the plight of the indigenous and also that of Afro-Peruvians. They didn't have the agriculture industry that Brazil did and so they didn't import the number

of slaves they did in Brazil and didn't create this black underclass but there were still some Afro-Peruvians. The percentages are debatable. It doesn't exceed 10% but there are organizations working to improve their status, but probably not making much headway.

One thing that comes with economic development is a more robust civil society. In Mozambique there were two human rights organizations. At least one of them, and probably both, were infiltrated by the government so they made sure they could keep them under control.

In Peru there were over 50 human rights organizations and they were very active. I think that is something that comes with economic development and gradually makes a change in society but it is slow. We are not exactly a post-racial society in the United States. A lot of the reaction to President Obama by the Tea Party and others on the right and the whole debate about illegal immigration, is motivated by a subtext is of racism. It takes a long time to change attitudes. It really takes a new generation that has a different approach. There is some of that happening in this country, but social change seems to happen more slowly in Latin America and it's going to be a problem for a long time to come.

The Bolivian model with Evo Morales is not a solution. He lurched from representing an oppressed majority to running a majority that is oppressing. And to get the right balance seems to be difficult. It will be a long-term problem.

Q: Evo Morales is the president of Bolivia at the present time.

At one point, this goes back a ways, but we really had a very difficult time with Peru over nationalization of communications and other things, American investment there. How stood things when you were there?

JETT: There was a long-term history of that. Alan Garcia was the president the last half of the 1980s. He engaged in that by nationalizing the banks and other companies. When Fujimori came in, he reformed the economy, he got the government out of a lot of areas and sold off publicly owned companies. That set the stage for the continuing economic growth of the last 20 years. The Peruvian economy has had low inflation and steady economic growth for that period of time. Rising commodity prices for stuff like copper helped, but reforming the economy was main reason. It created opportunities for American companies to come and invest in things like telecommunications. It also opened up possibilities across the board. That made for a positive element in our relationship. When potential investors come in and they are well received it is something both governments want to see.

Q: As the ambassador you have a significant American firm coming in to invest. Could you say that the political climate and the foreseeable political climate seem to indicate that this will be a good one in which to invest?

JETT: Yes, a lot of American businessmen look to the embassy for just that kind of advice. They are basically businessmen and they know how to do business in the United States often, but they are generally clueless about operating in another country; they don't know the country, they don't know its history, it politics, its economics or anything else. And often they don't bother to learn and think operating in a foreign environment won't be much different from operating in the United States.

A classic example of that was in Mozambique where I was working with Enron on the natural gas project I mentioned earlier. It was supposedly a big sophisticated firm but the people working for it were the biggest collection of dopes I had ever seen. They never succeeded in Mozambique, in part because they didn't figure out how to operate there and there were plenty of South African companies who were willing to come in and corrupt the energy minister and other officials.

By and large, the big investors come in and they want a briefing from the embassy and they want to be able to calculate their risk. Then they can get to the bottom line and make a decision about whether an investment is a good idea or a bad idea. Because they know generally nothing about the politics or history of the country in question or how to do business there, where the obstacles may be, they look to the embassy to help provide on that.

If you can tell them, "Yes, this is a welcoming environment for foreign investment, there is a reasonable transparency, honesty and a reasonable amount of capability in the judicial system to actually resolve disputes, they are much encouraged.

Q: How did you find living there?

JETT: Hermann Melville went there in the middle of the 19th century and he wrote that Lima was the most miserable place on earth. It had improved since then. It has an interesting climate. The whole coast of Peru is basically a desert. The people who live in Lima used to get in these discussions about when the last time it rained was. Some would say, "Oh, it was March 1973."

Someone else would say, "No, it was December 1972. I remember because I had this birthday" or something like that.

It was literally a city where it never rained. I saw enough precipitation to form a puddle on one or two occasions. Half the year there was a heavy, overcast, cement colored sky and high humidity, but never anything you would call rain.

The other half of the year you'd get sunshine, and always very little variation in temperature. The monthly high temperatures average between 80 and 65 and the average lows from 70 to 60 year round so very little temperature variation from season to season.

It is also a very large third world city with a lot of traffic. Traffic was insane and it was made worse by the fact that whenever I went out I had 10 bodyguards. I had a lead car, a

follow car and my vehicle, which had armored plating. They would attempt to maneuver through this traffic and keep three cars together. In Latin America you never give the other driver a break and you never used your turn signals because that gave the other drivers information they could use against you. So it was kind of chaotic. They were very aggressive. I quickly said to my bodyguards and drivers, "We are going to drive a lot less aggressively. I don't think it adds much to the security threat to wait until a light changes so let's calm it down."

The other thing I couldn't do with the more aggressive tactics was read in the car because they were constantly slamming on the brakes or stomping on the accelerator. So I calmed that down a little.

The embassy originally was close to the city center but it was right on the street and had been blown up a couple of times in the days when terrorism was at its worst. So they moved it in 1995, just before I arrived, way out in the suburbs. The new embassy was a massive structure that was called 'the bunker' by the Peruvians. It had the required setback from the street one and is not an unattractive building, but it had very small windows and it was surrounded by a high wall. It was formidable looking.

It was also a nine-mile drive from the residence instead of just down the street as the old embassy had been. That doesn't sound like much, but this is nine miles in bumper-to-bumper traffic and chaos at all hours of the day so that was a bit tiring.

The ambassador's residence looks beautiful and is certainly enormous with 22,000 square feet inside and 11 servants, sitting on three acres of land with four or five gardeners on the outside. However, it was located between two of the busiest streets in town so there was constant traffic noise and honking horns and busses and trucks going by.

Not to mention that the residence itself had been attacked four times in the preceding ten years or so. When Ambassador Tony Quainton was there somebody pulled up with a van full of explosives, parked it next to the wall and ran. The van detonated and blew off one section of the house and killed a couple of policemen and caused about $200,000 worth of damage. Because of that history there were a number of soldiers that were permanently stationed in the little park across the street and heavy police presence, a heavy presence of soldiers to prevent that from happening again.

The other aspect; there were a couple of parks nearby which was nice but there was also the national soccer stadium a block or two away so you would have soccer games and the attendant noise and fireworks. Then if the home team lost, the rowdy crowds were looking for trouble after the game.

Overall Lima has gotten steadily better in the last two decades. Alberto Andrade was the mayor when I was there. Because of the absence of rain, life was only possible because of the snowmelt from the Andes. That provided water to a couple of rivers, which were the source of drinking water for the city. But if you wanted to grow anything like grass or flowers, you had to water constantly to keep it alive.

Andrade cleaned up the city and planted flowers around and so it improved very visibly and it has continued to get even more attractive over the years since I was there as the economy has continued to grow.

The other result of that kind of climate and the poverty was a kind of siege architecture where all the houses had walls around them, often with barbed wire on top. Because of the poverty, the climate, and often a lack of proper title, people would build their houses slowly. They would buy some cement blocks and build half a wall on a second story or third story on their house and then run out of money. So many of the houses looked like they were under construction. Because it never rained and because the temperatures were never that harsh, you were able to do that and continue construction at your leisure.

The other aspect of the city that was interesting was that there was an absence of property titles. A lot of the land was public land. People would actually organize groups and say, "OK, there is this little plot of public land. We need land for our houses and so tomorrow at six o'clock in the morning we are going to show up and occupy that land. We are going to squat. We are going to lay out our plots and streets and basically defy the authorities to remove us and if they come and try to remove us, then we will start a riot."

About half the housing in Lima had grown up that way and there was no title to the land because people had just occupied it.

Hernando Desoto, a famous Peruvian economist wrote two books; one called The Other Path and the other was The Mystery of Capital. The first title is a takeoff on Sendero Luminoso, the terrorist group. The translation of Sendero Luminoso is Shining Path. His book was The Other Path and was designed to show that terrorism is not the only option for the downtrodden. In it he argued economic development is always going to be held back until people get titles to property. Much of the land around Lima was government land that had been occupied years ago. Desoto said since they are there, why not just come up with a scheme to give them title to the land they are sitting on and have occupied in some case for decades. That way they will have collateral to go out and get a loan and they can invest in improving their houses with the confidence that it is not going to be taken away by the government some day.

Some of that was done. Some land titling but not enough so the result was you had a lot of slums that were basically flimsy structures that people were reluctant to improve upon even if they could because of the uncertainty of the titling.

Lima was an interesting place; very good museums, in part because they have so much history there with the Incas and so much of it was well preserved in the dry climate. It is a great town for cuisine. They take some pride in their cooking and so it was a good town for restaurants. But in general it was a difficult place to live as any third world city is. That difficulty is compounded by the scrutiny one gets as American ambassador; there is scrutiny from the media.

Q: You left there when?

JETT: 1999.

Q: How stood things when you left?

JETT: We had good relations because of the cooperation on narcotic counterterrorism, on investment, opening up the economy and on signing the peace treaty with Ecuador, but then we had the fact that Fujimori was fully engaged in undermining democracy to perpetuate himself in power. So when I left, I planned to leave just after the Fourth of July picnic. I decided to use the occasion as I had in Mozambique, where I used the speech given at the Fourth of July to pressure the government to live up to its obligations of the peace treaty and continue to demobilize its troops.

I thought well, here is another opportunity to put a Fourth of July speech to work. So I made a speech that noted that relations are good but there are concerns. I pointed out I had a daughter who was born in Peru and that some day in the future I wanted to come back with her to visit. So I asked rhetorically what kind of country we would find. Will it be a country with a judicial system that is capable of justice? Or one that is capable only of serving the needs of the rich and powerful? Will we find a press that reports facts or reports only what certain interests want them to report? Will we find a congress that is respected? The public opinion polls consistently showed the congress had the respect of about 13% of the Peruvian people, which is higher than the U.S. Congress has at the moment, for much the same reasons.

So it went through a whole list of things like that. It created quite a sensation and I still run into people today, Peruvians, who say, "Oh, yes. We still remember your Fourth of July speech and appreciate what you said." They are very proud that they have a functioning democracy and that things have stayed on a very course since Fujimori. There was some concern that President Humala, the current president, was going to go the way of Hugo Chavez, but he has turned out to be much more pragmatic and practical and seems to be following the Brazilian model of President Lula. So they point to that as another sign of the maturity of their democracy.

The speech made quite a stir and then I got out of town the next day but I believe it was an effective way to communicate with the Peruvian public. One of the things I often said was Peru's democracy is for Peruvians to either defend or to lose and the violations of the rights of one person are the violation of everyone.

Q: Where did you go after that?

JETT: I spent a year at the Carter Center. They used to have diplomats in residence at the Carter Center. They had two slots. I think they may have abolished those under the Bush administration. Essentially you were assigned to the staff of the Carter Center in Atlanta for a year with a potential for renewing for another year.

Q: I think we will pick it up there because the Carter Center is an interesting institution.

Today is the 16th of November, 2011 with Dennis Jett. Dennis, you have just left Peru and where are you off to?

JETT: I went to be a diplomat-in-residence at the Carter Center. They had two slots, but they were only occasionally filled depending on whether they had an FSO or two that wanted to work there.

Q: You did that from when to when?

JETT: Just for a year. That was my final year in the Foreign Service. It was 1999 to 2000.

Q: What was the purpose of the Carter Center and how did you find it?

JETT: It is often listed as a think-tank in academic publications and elsewhere. It is really not a think-tank. Part of the Carter Center is the Carter Library and Museum. The other part is the professional staff. They are dedicated to doing things in three areas: health, agriculture and what might be called peace and conflict resolution. They numbered less than 100 so it is a pretty small operation. The Center is in a beautiful facility, in a very nice setting in Atlanta.

In the agriculture area they are trying to improve crop yields in third world countries where the overwhelming majority of the population is getting by on subsistence agriculture.

In the health area they targeted a couple of specific diseases: river blindness and guinea worm, which again are endemic in certain parts of Africa and the third world and are horrific diseases that are easily treatable with some fairly simple interventions. They have almost entirely eliminated both of those diseases.

Then they had the peace and conflict side, which is where I worked. It had a couple of different programs. It was mostly on different functional lines, but they did have a Latin America program and they had a China program, which was trying to promote local elections at the local level in China.

They also had a conflict resolution program, and a couple people working on human rights. Election monitoring was another big part of it. They have monitored dozens of elections around the world and Carter has participated in many of those efforts at basic democracy promotion.

I was essentially assigned to the staff, but I think even though my immediate superior was a retired Foreign Service officer, they really didn't know what to do with me. I just fell into their lap. I was going to be there for a year, maybe two and so I just got plugged in to things, different projects at different times, depending on the need.

I monitored elections in Guatemala twice and went back for the inauguration of the new president and represented the Carter Center at the inauguration.

I also monitored elections in Venezuela and went with Carter on one of his trips to carry out that function. We met with Hugo Chavez and other Venezuelan officials.

I went to Nairobi, Kenya twice to try and get the Ugandans to talk to the Sudanese. The Sudanese were backing rebel groups creating havoc in Uganda and the Ugandans were doing the same to the Sudanese. The idea was to try to get them to talk to each other and settle their differences and stop supporting groups that were causing problems in each other's country. That was mainly it.

Backing up to Mozambique, I decided that I was probably going to get out of the Foreign Service soon. I didn't really anticipate getting a second ambassadorship. In Mozambique I had already started thinking about my second career and decided academia looked like a good place to go, a good place to continue to contribute. So I decided to pursue a PhD and met with some people at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and talked to them about what getting a PhD from them would entail. I was inspired in part by Ken Brown who got a PhD from the University of the Gold Coast, I think.

South African universities use the British system where you read a subject and you write a dissertation to get a PhD. So I decided I would write a dissertation on my peacekeeping work in Mozambique and why it had failed in Angola about the same time. So I began in Mozambique working with a professor at Wits. We kept a garden apartment in the backyard of a house of some friends of ours in Johannesburg. So we went there frequently for a little break from Maputo so I got to go to use the library and talk to people in Johannesburg.

Then when I went to Peru, I literally finished my dissertation via e-mail by writing a chapter and sending it off to my adviser in Johannesburg and getting his response and then making changes and continuing on. I finished the dissertation in Peru and finally was awarded the degree while I was still in Peru. It was December of 1998.

While at the Carter Center I decided, well, maybe I should do something with this dissertation so I decided to get it published. I found a publisher; St. Martin's Press and then put in shape to be published. It got published at the time.

That drew a little bit of a reaction in the media. There was a problem at the time in Sierra Leone. The peacekeeping operation there was falling apart. So I had a call from CNN to do an interview on peacekeeping and an invitation from the Atlanta Journal Constitution to write an op-ed piece on peacekeeping and so I did. So I thought, well, this is kind of fun.

I was still in the employ of the State Department but working on the staff at the Carter Center so I wasn't quite sure if people were going to object to, or how they were going to react to writing op-ed pieces. I thought well, if the State Department objects, I will just

tell them I work for the Carter Center and if the Carter Center objects, I will just tell them I work for the State Department.

I started writing op-ed pieces about different foreign policy subjects and, through various connections and because of the book, got articles published in The Christian Science Monitor, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune and other newspapers and I have continued that practice until today. I have written about 120 op-ed pieces for major newspapers since that time, in the last 10, 12 years.

Q: I want to come back to that but first, let's go to the Carter Center. What was President Carter's role as you saw it there, during your time?

JETT: He was very active. He is a very hands-on kind of manager so he was closely involved in decision-making. As I said, it wasn't a think-tank. They weren't sitting around writing up papers or trying to influence policy in Washington. Think tanks today have become just one more weapon in the war to make policy and to attract government dollars, but that wasn't the role of the Carter Center. They did things. They wanted to find projects within their very narrow focus on agriculture, on health and on peace programs where they could get in with a very small staff, have an impact and get out and not create an empire and simply become one of those entities that needs to justify its existence by continuing to nurture that empire.

He was in Atlanta about one week a month. He had an apartment in the Carter Center that he stayed in. He spent about two weeks a month, roughly, in Plains, Georgia, his hometown, which was a two-hour drive away. He spent the final week of every month traveling; either traveling to engage in the election monitoring or often traveling to do fundraising.

His goal was to create a substantial endowment for the Carter Center so that its work would continue after he was gone. I think the goal was 250 million dollars. The idea was that about half the operating budget would come from the earnings on the endowment and the other half of the operating budget would come from contracts with governments and foundations. He had support from various European governments and some from the American government. He was very much involved, very much engaged in the work of the Center but again, only physically present probably one week out of every four.

Q: In your time there you mentioned that you were monitoring elections in, was it Guatemala?

JETT: Guatemala and Venezuela.

Q: Let's talk about Guatemala. What did you find on the ground? How does a center monitor elections?

JETT: It is usually an international effort where it is not simply one organization so you are part of a team. In this case we were part of the Organization of American States. We

worked with their officials and essentially, divided up the country. They give you a shirt that says "OAS Election Observer" in Spanish and a little vest to wear.

In my case I went to this village a couple of hours from the capital and was basically walking around, looking at the voting and making notes as to how many people were there, whether there were lines, whether everything seemed to be in order, etcetera. So that part was observation of the actual voting process itself.

Then you had the vote tabulation. That consisted basically of standing there in the square, the main square of this rural village by the light of kerosene lamps and a few electric bulbs. They would take a ballot box with say, 200 ballots in it. They would take it out, set it on the table. They would take each ballot up and hold it up and show it to the international election observers, the representatives of the political parties in the election and anyone else standing there. It would be marked for Party A or Party B. They would hold it up to show which party had been marked and then put in the pile for that party. So we literally went through every ballot that way. It was a system that was very slow and very cumbersome, but it gave people a great deal of confidence that the ballots were accurately counted. I look at the confusion and the differences in the election procedures in the United States today and I am appalled at such things as touch screen voting where you tap the screen and it goes into this computer and then it spits out results. It is very quick, very fast and you have no idea whether it is accurate or not because the software programs are proprietary and therefore are not public or open to public scrutiny. Any computer can be hacked and yet we seem to have widely adopted this system without sufficient safeguards.

I was in Florida after I left the Carter Center when the election of 2000 took place and I can tell you what happened in Florida wouldn't have met the approval of international elections in a Third World country because it was so ridiculous in so many different ways. It was an interesting lesson in democracy and an interesting perspective on how we take it for granted and go through voting procedures that I think are suspect, at best. I am, as I said, appalled that there isn't more attention or uniformity in the standards that states are required to use.

Q: In Guatemala, what were the issues?

JETT: The incumbent party wanted to have its guy re-elected and there was another guy promising change. Security was always a big issue in Guatemala and whoever promised he was going to improve the security situation for the average citizen, to protect them from crime was going to attract voters.

The winner's name in Guatemala was Alfonso Portillo and he took office in January of 2000. He was from a different party from his predecessor and was looked at as the candidate of change.

Portillo was supposed to improve things. He actually turned out to be fairly corrupt and inept. It was a great disappointment. He fled to Mexico after his term in office, was

eventually extradited back to Guatemala and is in prison there with money laundering charges against him still pending in the United States.

Q: In Venezuela when you got there, what was the situation? With Chavez, particularly, but what were we looking at?

JETT: There was a series of referendums. He had been elected at that point but had not been reelected. It was a series of referendums on ways that he was going to change the constitution and that was part of a longer term plan that he had to accumulate power and so this was just one more step under the guise of acting democratically.

Q: How did you find the election? Where were you observing it? What was your impression?

JETT: In Venezuela?

Q: Yes.

JETT: Again, I think it was pretty well run. In any election you've got three phases: the pre phase, the during phase, and the after phase, if you will. The pre phase meaning the campaigning, is the campaigning free and fair? Do both parties have access to the media and so on?

One of the things the Carter Center tried to do is it didn't just parachute in on the day of the voting, watch the voting and then issue a statement and fly out the next day. It had people on the ground monitoring the situation for weeks before the voting and throughout the entire process of counting then, which can again be weeks.

In the campaigning phase in Venezuela the campaigning was OK, but the government of course, used its resources to promote the position of Chavez. That's typical, it's not really fair but it is not so outrageous.

Then you have the actual voting and the voting was OK, as far as we could tell.

After the voting phase was the vote tabulation. In Mozambique, for example, I think that's where the fraud really happens, is in the vote tabulation. I think they have mastered the art of manipulating the computer results.

While I was at the Carter Center they had an election in Mozambique. It was the second election for Chissano. The Carter Center monitored that election as well. The Mozambican government made clear to the Carter Center that they didn't want to see me as part of the election monitoring team because they didn't want me back and saying mean things about their lack of adherence to democracy. Election observers are sort of like peacekeepers; they are there at the invitation of the government and the other political parties so they have to bend over backwards to give the appearance of being

neutral. I guess the fear was if I was on the delegation there would be instant charges from the government that I was prejudiced against them and not going to assess their election fairly.

As far as Venezuela goes, there was some confidence in the vote tabulation but we were struggling to make sure there was technical capability within the election observers that would be sufficient to ensure that there was no manipulation of the vote. So that was a challenge. I am not sure that we were thoroughly satisfied that we had reached that level that we could say with confidence that the tabulation was not manipulated.

Again, if you have a computer system, it opens up that possibility of manipulation and makes it much more possible to make that accusation and harder to prove that the process was in fact free and fair.

Q: Was there any sign of Chavez's bully boys at the polls?

JETT: No, even though there were some incidents. There was passion on both sides and that led to a few minor incidents but I don't recall anything significant and certainly nothing systematic.

Q: In your time in election monitoring, did you feel that this was a good thing for the international community to get into?

JETT: Yes, absolutely, particularly after you have had a civil war. There are a couple of ways to end a war; one side wins a military victory but in these Third World countries rarely is the military sufficiently strong to do that. You can have a peace imposed from the outside, but rarely is the international community willing to use force to impose that kind of peace. The other two possibilities are a negotiated peace where it is negotiated in good faith and a negotiated peace where it is negotiated in bad faith. The parties are just waiting to rearm and see what happens before they go back to war.

The process of making that negotiated peace a lasting one, usually entails electing a government that can claim it has a popular mandate and therefore has legitimacy to govern. That requires the people who lose to accept that and not go back to fighting. I think when the international community should be there, as we were in Mozambique and say, yes, this election was free and fair and everybody should accept the outcome. That puts pressure on the people who would wish to reject the outcome to go ahead and accept it. The international community saying an election is free and fair gives people confidence in their own democracy and that is an incredibly important.

The potential for losing faith in our own democracy here in this country is significant, given the problems we have had in conducting our own elections and seemingly lack of urgency about spending the money and taking the steps necessary to ensure uniformity and above all transparency in how these elections are conducted.

Q: I monitored two elections in Bosnia in the 1990s. I found, we were part of the OSCE process. I did one in sort of a Serb area and another one in an Islamic area. I found it worthwhile.

JETT: I would agree completely and it is often inspiring to see these people when they are excited about democracy and want to participate. I still remember in Atlanta I went to the supermarket one day. The guy behind the fish counter was obviously African and I asked him where he was from. He said, "I am from Senegal."

I said, "Oh, you have just had elections in Senegal."

His face lit up and he said, "Yes and we found for the first time that we can bring about political change through democracy and elections and it doesn't have to be through violence."

I think that remains true and is important. I am always appalled at my students, for instance, who say things like, "Well, I would vote in an election if I could do it online. If I could take 30 seconds and get on my computer and do three clicks with my mouse, then I would vote.

I just think back to one example in Mozambique that I reported. I sent in a cable that said one of the people who voted today was this man from this village and he had to travel ten kilometers to vote. That is no big deal. Everybody in this country has to travel some ways often to vote, but this guy traveled that distance not only on foot but also on crutches.

The South African elections took place when we were in Mozambique too and the people were lined up for hours to vote. It was inspiring on the one hand to see that and see people take control of their own political system and of their fate. I contrast that with those of my students who say say they can't invest more than 30 seconds and a couple of clicks on a computer mouse to carry out that duty.

Q: When you were at South Africa, how did you find the academic situation?

JETT: Well, it was like everything else. They had a very strong infrastructure but it was designed only to serve in most cases the ruling elite, the whites and so it was just beginning the process of transforming itself to serve the vast majority of the people whom it had ignored for so many years. In this country we have had a great deal of difficulty bringing about equal opportunities, but our African American population is something like 12% for the total. In South Africa the whites were 15% and so you had a situation where 85 % had to be somehow accommodated and provided things that had been provided to the whites and higher education was one of them. How do you go from a situation where it is a small, very limited system of higher education? How do you accommodate an equal opportunity situation where everybody can apply? Often some of the students from the black African secondary schools and primary schools have come up through a system like the inner city schools here where they are provided a very poor education but then they still have the expectation of going on to university. But the

university has a limited number of spaces in the system because it hasn't been equipped to accommodate the numbers that are now looking to find entry into it. How do you provide for diversity? How do you provide for opportunity and at the same time maintain the quality of instruction and the faculty and also the quality of the students coming in?

It was a real challenge for them and it will take a long time to deal with.

Q: How did you find the faculty? Had they sort of adjusted to the new scheme of things?

JETT: They were all like a lot of social science faculty in this country, they all tended to be liberals or liberals on the question of race and so they were in favor of equality and in favor of the end of apartheid. At the same time they were also concerned about the standards of the university. Again, it is not just a question of accommodating students and providing opportunity and particularly dealing with students who may have a very poor preparation. It was also a question of how do you make the faculty more diverse. Some of them wondered what their future was. Most whites in South Africa at the time were wondering about their future in a majority ruled country. Since that time many of the whites left. Many have stayed on. It is an evolving political system but for the moment it is all ANC all the time. They welcomed the end of apartheid but were concerned about the future not only what that held for their institutions but them personally.

A couple of the people I worked with there, I didn't know all that many faculty members because I was just working with a couple of different ones on this dissertation and I didn't have to take classes. The two I did work most closely with, one left while I was still there. He went back to Ireland and the other one was actually an American, but he left and went to the London School of Economics.

I would suspect the ones that stayed on are still struggling like the institutions to accommodate diversity, the goals of diversity, equality and opportunity while at the same time trying to see a future for themselves and a future for their institutions.

Q: Turning back to your work of writing op-ed pieces; did you just dream up subjects or were most of them sort of assigned you, write papers or what?

JETT: It was mostly the former. It is kind of surprising. I think one thing many people don't realize about op-eds is some newspapers assign op-eds. They don't sit there and wait for some brilliant piece of analysis to come floating in through the transom. They decide what they want to write about and they go out and ask someone to write about it. I was contacted by a woman at The New York Times who said we want you to write a piece on this. I wrote the piece and she looked at it and said, "I don't like it" and so she didn't run it.

Then I bugged her a couple of times with other suggestions and I guess she finally felt OK, we will run one. So she actually ran one.

I asked another friend who was on The Washington Post on the Outlook section. I said, "How many of your op-eds do you assign as opposed to ones you just take unsolicited?"

He said, "Oh, about half."

I suspect he was being conservative with his estimate. I think the majority of the op-eds for the major newspapers are ones that are assigned. They decide what they want written and then they decide who they want to write and to a degree, I think they even dictate what they want written. If they don't get what they want then they don't run it or they suggest changes. It is not where people are just sitting back waiting for a brilliant piece to come in.

I think the other thing that is important is that generally when you have been in the Foreign Service for a while you have contacts at newspapers, you have talked to journalists and it is like a lot of other things. You need to, if you wanted to place an unsolicited piece, you need to reach out to your network and the reporters you know. There is a sharp difference between the reporters and the editorial page, but if you know a reporter you can say, "Could you pass my name on to the editorial page writer and tell him that you know me and know I am a good guy? Then I will contact that person and pitch the piece to him."

So those connections can often get you in the door, if you will, and get you distinguished from the dozens and dozens of submissions that come in every day. They have to be able to cut through the chaff to get to the wheat pretty quickly. If you have some established connection, then that makes it easier.

Once you've got a connection, you can work that personal relationship for subsequent pieces sometimes.

The newspapers themselves change. I had several pieces in The Orlando Sentinel. This was in the wake of 9/11. It is a fairly conservative area in a conservative newspaper and I approach things from a decidedly liberal perspective, but I had some success with them. Then they seemed to lose interest in things international after a while so they just were publishing far less on anything I would write about. I eventually just gave up on them.

A lot depends on the publication. Obviously, the competition is fierce for the nationwide newspapers like The New York Times, The Washington Post. If you get down to the more local newspapers, it is far easier to get something published.

Q: I would think The Miami Herald and the papers down in Florida would have a considerable focus on Latin America.

JETT: Yes, they do. That's another important thing. I have written a lot of articles for The Miami Herald and still go back to them periodically. Certainly if it is anything about Latin America I do because they will be most interested in anything on Latin America. Each newspaper will have its own interest and its own culture too.

The Christian Science Monitor; I have had at least a dozen pieces in The Christian Science Monitor. I always have to be careful with the tone there because they don't like overly aggressive pieces. My wife actually worked for them as a bureau chief in southern Africa. So we had good friends there.

One of my friends there told me once that there was sort of a shouting match about one of my pieces, whether they were going to run it. Some within the newsroom questioned whether it was appropriate or not.

When my wife went there to work she had to do some orientation before she went out to Africa. She had worked for years at the Wall Street Journal, but she said the newsroom at the Monitor was the most remarkable scene she ever experienced. In a normal newsroom, where there are usually a lot of deadlines and nervous energy, people are always yelling and screaming as the deadline approaches. There was none of that that and no one even raised their voices. Everyone was quite civil to one another. I can't remember what particular piece I wrote but it was kind of ironic that that would be the one thing that would cause them to get into a shouting match.

Q: You retired when?

JETT: August of 2000.

Q: You have been teaching since then?

JETT: When I got to the Carter Center I began looking for a job in academia and reading The Chronicle of Higher Education each week, the job section in that. I started applying to different universities and the University of Florida wanted to hire somebody to become the first dean of the international center which was the office on campus that ran study abroad, foreign students, international scholars and some international programs. I interviewed with them for that. They eventually made me an offer.

I could have stayed on for a second year at the Carter Center but I thought this is a good job at a good university and so we concluded the year at the Carter Center and in August of 2000 moved to Gainesville. I was at the University of Florida for 8 years, mostly in an administrative position because I had the rank of dean.

I also taught in the political science department. I taught graduate and undergraduate courses in international affairs.

In 2008 Penn State started a new master's degree program called the School of International Affairs. I applied and they hired me and about three or four other people to start up the program, to be inaugural faculty members. I came here in 2008 as a faculty member. My duties are mainly teaching. I still have administrative requirements and things to do, but this point I am largely just teaching and doing research.

Q: Did you find the academic world a different culture than the one you were used to? Was it difficult to get used to it?

JETT: It was certainly a different culture. I approached it in the same way I did whenever I was going to a new country. There would be a different culture; a different language, different habits and things. So I read a number of books about academic culture and academic leadership.

It was different. How was it different? I think there is on the surface less hierarchy. You have a president and provost and deans and things but once given tenure, faculty members tend to be fairly independent.

There is a famous saying; I think by Henry Kissinger, that academic arguments are so intense because the stakes are so small. Academics specialize, or as the old joke goes they learn more and more about less and less until they know everything about nothing. Because they focus on narrow areas, it often deprives them of any wider vision. One of the buzzwords you often hear on campus is the word 'interdisciplinary', which means trying to get people outside their own field and to think a little more broadly and work with people in other fields, but it rarely happens.

If it is a research university as Florida and Penn State are, the emphasis is about 60% on research and 30% on teaching and about 10% on service. Those are the three things that faculty do. So you have this tremendous pressure to attract research dollars and to publish in peer reviewed journals. That is the main measure of your success at a research university. Teaching is important, but it is often given lip service. I think that is slowly changing. At least at Penn State they make an honest attempt to have an evaluation, a student evaluation of teachers. We go through that exercise every semester.

The service is serving on various committees and those sorts of things. Those are often exercises in frustration as universities are amazingly bureaucratic and resistant to change.

One thing I found interesting. You could publish in a peer-reviewed journal on some obscure topic in some obscure journal that may be read by five people who have interest in that obscure topic. That was far more important than publishing an op-ed in The New York Times that thousands of people would see. There is basically no reward in academia for publishing op-eds. It is just not something that is taken seriously. Academics write to impress their peers rather than to educate a wider audience, to affect policy or to enter into debates about policy.

Today we have the Republican candidates talking about various tax proposals. Herman Cain has 9/9/9. Rick Perry has his 20% flat tax. These are the most absurd and obscene proposals I have ever heard of. There would be a massive redistribution of the tax burden; reducing it on the wealthy and piling it on the working poor and the middle class. It astounds me that these ideas get taken seriously for more than 30 seconds. I just wonder where the economists are in these discussions. Why aren't they writing op eds giving an estimate, at least, of the impact these programs would have?

Again, that doesn't seem to be what is rewarded. Perhaps it is a question of training and focus and also it is a question of the reward system and the punishment system. The reward system rewards being a peer-reviewed journal articles. Since your peers review you, you get promotion and tenure from your peers and that is who you have to impress.

The punishment part happens when you take a stand that someone doesn't like. The articles I wrote while I was at Florida often generated negative e-mails from people saying things like "I pay my taxes to the state and you are a professor at a state university so you have no right to express your opinion." I guess that means I have no right to an opinion that they disagree with. I think eventually Florida's President and Provost, who were two of the most incompetent people I have ever seen in a position of authority, decided that they were going to punish me for expressing my opinion. They would never admit that. I think that in the end is what happened however.

Q: Do you think there is a problem? You mentioned the fact the way political scientists are trained. Has the situation gotten to the point where political scientists are all pretty much coming out of the quantitative side of looking at things?

JETT: I think the short answer is yes. I think the emphasis is on the science part and they rarely understand the politics. They want data to be able to quantify things. They want theories they can apply in all circumstances. I was just reading in my class The Essence of Decision by Graham T. Allison and he talks about observers of foreign policy and politics are either artists or scientists, meaning if you are a scientist, you're looking for the data. If you are the artist, you are looking for understanding of the actual situation.

I think academia stresses the scientific part of it because they like these mathematical methods and number crunching. One of the areas Penn State political science department is very strong on is something called the 'correlates of war', meaning they crunch the data about conflicts. They would say things like the average war lasts 4.67 years and this one has gone on for 4.5 years. Therefore in the next couple of months this war is going to end without ever knowing anything about the war or the country or the people or the issues of the conflict.

I had a PhD student approach me recently and say, "I want you to sit on my dissertation committee." His dissertation topic was an examination of the re-election of heads of state.

He talked about all the data he had and how he was going to proceed. I said, "How are you going to account for fixed term presidents, like in the United States who have to run after four years for re-election versus a parliamentary system where the government can fall at any time?"

He said, "Oh, I am not going to worry about that. My data won't permit me to deal with that."

I said, "Well, find somebody else to sit on your dissertation committee because I am not interested in doing that kind of work."

I think that is the emphasis. Also on theory; I wrote an article recently with a colleague here and we sent it out to be reviewed before we submitted it to a publication for consideration. One of the responses he got was, "Where is your theory here?" This actually had to do with how ambassadors are selected. We don't have a theory. We just explained a lot about how the process works. He said, "Oh, we gotta have a theory" and so he did some research. He found some organization theory example and he put that in the article and I looked at it and said, "Yeah, but this is not how it operates in the real world. It doesn't work that way."

His response was, "That's OK. We've got to have a theory for the article so this is where we gotta go."

So the choice was between trying to explain the world and how it works or trying to construct a theory that other academics are going to appreciate and argue about even though it has no relevance to what actually happens in the real world?

Q: I have been doing these oral histories and talking to people who have been involved in the diplomatic process and all, but then dip into the academic world, either at the beginning of their careers or at the end of their careers. There seems to be this terrible disconnect; that what the academics produce, one, doesn't make sense in the foreign affairs field or even if it did, it is not read. It seems to exist in its own world.

JETT: I wouldn't argue with that. They call it the ivory tower for a reason because it is in its own world. It is easier to construct a theory than it is to learn the details of the history and culture of a particular country and then know that it does not necessarily applied to the history and culture of another country. I think, yes, practitioners find that frustrating. They find it frustrating from the point of view of what they see as the minimal utility of what's done. But also I think they feel undervalued.

I was at a conference of former diplomats who are now teaching that the American Academy of Diplomacy organized in Charlottesville. A lot of them were sitting around in effect saying, "We feel like Rodney Dangerfield, we don't get any respect." I would liken the attitude of academics toward people who have been in diplomacy for a career and then have gotten into academia with about the same enthusiasm that we look at political appointees who have been named ambassador. They just have a different perspective. They value research and publication in peer-reviewed journals and so they tend to undervalue practical experience.

Ironically the students tend to appreciate real world experience because they like the anecdotes that we can tell after a career in the Foreign Service. I think they also like the practicality and can see how it relates to jobs that they may have some day. I always emphasize in my classes that acquiring the skills that allow you to work in the real world means being able to write, being able to speak, being able to work in a team and not

simply being able to crunch numbers or to talk about theories that have no real applicability. So I think the students appreciate that perspective and learn from it. Certainly the people who have spent their careers in academia don't have that perspective and as I said, don't view us with any more enthusiasm than we would view some real estate developer who got an ambassadorship because he gave the president a couple hundred thousand dollars during his campaign.

Q: Where do you find satisfaction in working within a system that undervalues experience over nonsense?

JETT: First of all, you get satisfaction from working with the students. There are enough good students who seem to respond. Helping mentor them and help them make their way in the world is always gratifying. Not that all the students are that way, but there are enough of them that it helps.

I think there are those who do appreciate it. The program at Penn State was set up within the aegis of the law school. We report to the dean of the law school so it is a professional master's degree program and not a master's degree on the way a PhD, on the way to a career in academia program. We are housed in the law school, in that part of the campus where the business school and other professional programs are so I think that there is more appreciation here than there would be say at the University of Florida or another university where there wasn't that emphasis on the professional nature of the program that we have here.

I shouldn't say there isn't any appreciation from faculty for the experiences of former diplomats; there is certainly some. There are those who do value that experience and who do appreciate what you can bring to the institution but in terms of the average faculty member who has spent his life trying to get published in peer-reviewed journals, I don't think they are going to appreciate it. They never will and one shouldn't be surprised or particularly expect them to.

Q: Do you see a counter movement away from the number crunching approach to situations in world affairs? Is there an opposition to put it in sort of Foreign Service terms, a significant opposition?

JETT: I guess if you looked at international relations theory, you've got the traditional realist theory where the state is a unitary actor and acts rationally. It is anarchy out there so every state is trying to accumulate power. I think a lot of people have come around to the idea, particularly in the age of globalization, that that doesn't really apply. You've got other kinds of actors besides nation states in a globalized world. You've got lots of other international relations theories that look at other ways of constructing or deconstructing the world. There is a lot of debate but I think these people are largely political scientists and consider themselves scientists. They have to collect data and analyze data. So when you come along and say this real estate developer was just appointed ambassador and there is no theory or formula for why that happened, they are still going to resist that or not be particularly interested in it.

There are lots of different approaches to the problem I guess you could say. I think the hidebound traditional, number crunching approach is going to be with us for a long time. It is not going to go anywhere else because they don't know where else to go.

If you talk about why Bush invaded Iraq, for instance, you can analyze it through different models but unless you can water-board Mr. Cheney and a few others you probably won't get to the truth because the data isn't here, if you will. There aren't enough ways to measure what happened in any kind of precise, meaningful way that would allow you to apply a theory. It is somewhat schizophrenic. You will have political scientists that will write an analysis of actual events that draw on media reports and sometimes they will have interviews with the actual principals. It is still hard to give an actual picture of precisely what happened. We are still debating for instance, about the Cuban Missile Crisis and the different perceptions about who was doing what when. Over time it has become clearer and there have been conferences with the various participants but anything more recent is a lot harder to analyze. You have Rumsfeld, Cheney, Rice all publishing their books recently, all of course, defending their role and never, ever admitting that they ever did anything wrong, illegal or stupid. And yet there are tens of thousands of American servicemen dead and wounded as a result and hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqi civilians as a result. But none of the people who participated in the decision-making that produced the mess in Iraq will take responsibility for it. It will be a struggle to figure out what really happened.

Q: This is one of the great moments of our time with the invasion of Iraq and all. How did you feel about that as somebody who has been involved in foreign affairs? How about your fellow faculty members looking at that decision to go in there?

JETT: When I was in Florida one of the things I was asked to do was be an advisor to the infamous School of the Americas, which had been criticized for providing training to Latin American militaries. These Latin American militaries would go back and be involved in coups and human rights violations. So every November you have a group of people who gather outside Fort Benning, Georgia and demonstrate against the School of the Americas and demand it be closed down. You get a few liberal Democrats who will introduce legislation to that effect each year as well.

The School of the Americas was replaced by something called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. WHINSEC is the acronym. I got asked to be on the board of visitors for WHINSEC. The board of visitors was supposed to be an outside body that looked at what this son of the School of the Americas was doing and ensured that it was providing human rights training in all its courses and not doing anything that could be considered objectionable. During its first meeting I was named the president of this board and so it had a couple of meetings and had been going for about a year and then the invasion happened.

I wrote Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld a letter and I said, "I am resigning from the board of WHINSEC, not because I have any problems with what WHINSEC is doing but

because I don't want to be associated with people who would invade a country, invade Iraq without exhausting diplomacy. I don't believe you made an honest effort at dealing with the problem diplomatically."

At that time I suspected but didn't have any clear idea to the degree to which they had fabricated and manipulated the intelligence to present the case. I remember being interviewed on the radio the day Colin Powell gave his speech to the UN on February 5, 2003. The guy said, "Well, what do you think?"

I said, "Well, I thought it was compelling and seemingly comprehensive but not conclusive. I am still not convinced that this is a basis for going to war."

Obviously Powell was taking his prestige, which was the highest of any government official at the time, and doing what the boss wanted, which was to justify going to war. Powell had made his fortune and his fame by doing what the boss wanted and went along with it. We had the war.

There are lots of reasons offered for why the war happened. Some people blame it on bad intelligence and the intelligence community. Others blame it on our need for oil. I think it was basically because George Bush needed a wider war, and Afghanistan didn't provided it, in order to get re-elected. He had accomplished nothing in his first term and so by having a bigger war he becomes wartime commander in chief. He wraps himself in the flag and he gets re-elected. I think it was Karl Rove's strategy and it was the only mission that Bush ever really accomplished.

The other factor was Bush's hang-up about his father. His father thought he was basically a loser and that Jeb should be the one to run for president. So it was an opportunity for Bush to prove his father wrong and to take care of Saddam Hussein where his father had left Saddam Hussein in power.

That was the motivation and so they set about fabricating a case for invading Iraq. Because it was post 9/11 and because the brains of many Americans were paralyzed by the fear of terrorism and having no ability to assess the threat, they put their faith in Mr. Cheney and Mr. Powell and Ms. Rice and the President. And they lead us into an unjust and unnecessary war, not to mention things like torture and rendition and secret gulags of prisons and all the rest of it.

I just wish that the Obama administration had the guts to have the Justice Department would investigate what was done. If the Justice Department won't investigate the crimes of the last administration then I think they ought to be turned over to International Criminal Court. That's what is for. When national judicial systems are incapable of dealing with the crimes committed by their authorities, then that's what the international body was set up to do. But of course, we apply the international criminal court to African countries but steadfastly fought to prevent any consideration of applying it to the United States and even punished countries that supported the court and didn't accept our vision of exempting us from the court. All in the name of course of protecting U.S. servicemen

but it was done to protect people like Cheney and Rumsfeld and Bush from prosecution by the court.

Q: Lawyers can debate this but we are really talking about our top people committing treason. Getting us into an unjustified war is treasonous.

JETT: Perhaps if you define treason as to betray our values and to undermine our country to the extent that it has. I think George Tenet and Colin Powell knew what was happening and they went along with it because their fame and fortune was based on telling the boss what he wanted to hear. But also because they were convinced we were going to win and the winners write the history and so they thought we were going to get an easy military victory, turn it over to Chalabi and our friends in the Iraqi exile community and get out and that was going to be it. The fact that there were no weapons there, nobody was going to object to if we won quickly and got our quickly.

I think it has been a complete betrayal of everything we supposedly stand for and it continues to this day. The debate on Saturday night where some of the Republican candidates were endorsing torture and saying it yields information that we need to protect our troops. The fact is that it never yields reliable information, the fact that it is a crime, that it violates U.S. law, it violates our treaty obligations and it destroys our image abroad and recruits more terrorists than you can ever hope to eliminate through the information that is supposedly generates somehow doesn't matter. The fact that they don't get it demonstrates how clueless some of our supposed political leaders are when it comes to these issues and what cowards they are.

Q: You are teaching at a state university. What we just discussed here, can you express this to your students?

JETT: Well, I do. I always start my classes by making no bones about the fact that I have certain political opinions but I tell them the purpose of a university education is for them to collect information, analyze it and to reach their own conclusions. I always emphasize, what are your sources? Any paper you write, I want it footnoted. It can't be just some random blogger on the Internet because the Internet can have anything. It has to be a reputable source and you have to know what the bias of the source is. When you pick up a book the first thing you should read is about the author; what are his or her background, history, and education? What are they trying to accomplish in this book?

And the same with me. I talk about this in class and leave room for discussion and other points of view but again, I don't attempt to hide my beliefs. Is that possible? I think there is certain amount of academic freedom that's expressed at universities and I think it would be hard for any administrator to suppress that and say, "Oh, you can't express those thoughts." Administrators have different ways to punish people and as I said, I think the president or provost at the University of Florida just decided that I was too liberal.

I think one of the things I learned in the years in academia is the distinct difference between different parts of the country. We all know that implicitly. Things that I would write and publish in Florida newspapers would draw this incredible e-mail reaction, not extensive; three, four, five e-mails sometimes but they would all question my patriotism, question my intelligence, my integrity and whether my father married my mother. Any kind of mud they could throw. Since coming to Pennsylvania I have continued to publish but I have gotten exactly one complaint from somebody who said something like as an alumni of Penn State I disagree with you, blah, blah, blah.

So I would say there are places basically in the Northeast and the West Coast you can express those things. I think if you are in the South, in places like Oklahoma, Nebraska, you'd have real difficulty expressing those kinds of things and probably be facing some kind of retribution regardless of what they say about academic freedom.

Q: I can't help but ask. Right now the media is full of this scandal at Penn State about the football coaches not reporting the sex abuse and all that. Has this caused real debate among the student body? Are you fining this activates the student body?

JETT: There was the immediate reaction after Joe Paterno got fired with some students going downtown and some even committing acts of violence and overturning one truck of television equipment but it was a pretty small minority and less than a thousand at a university with 42,000 students. The majority probably agreed that it was necessary that Paterno go, but there is still a lot of doubt about how culpable he was. Within Pennsylvania he was such an institution, so revered that there is still support for him. I saw one report that said support for firing Paterno was overwhelming outside of Pennsylvania but it was pretty mixed within Pennsylvania. The guy was tremendous loyal to the institutions. He made a million dollars a year, but football coaches these days make three and four million dollars a year and give nothing back to the university. Paterno made a million dollars a year and was always fundraising, always giving back.

The library here is named for him because he gave money for the library. I don't know of any other instance where there is a library named for a football coach.

So he was an institution here and he did great things. Ironically I think it was his loyalty to the institution and perhaps to his own image and legacy that led him to not do what he should have done or perhaps in his mind he reported it to the athletic director and that was sufficient.

One of the problems in analyzing all this is we really don't know at this point who told what or who did what when. But it is hard for me to believe this guy was abusing these kids for so long without that very close circle having some appreciation for what he was doing. I don't know what they thought, but they obviously didn't do the right thing and I think the students now understand that better and appreciate that. I think students are also concerned about the damage to the institution, the damage to their own future as well. It is a black mark.

In fact, there was one letter to the editor that was published in the school newspaper yesterday where this guy in Texas that has a company wrote and said "Well, I am never going to hire anyone from Penn State again." I can't imagine that represents a very wide view or that really matters. Still, when you think of Penn State's image three weeks ago and where it is today if you constructed a plot for a novel, you probably would have rejected this one as being too fantastic. To drag the image of the institution and people as revered as Paterno through the mud so quickly and so thoroughly is a tragedy for all concerned but especially for the kids who were abused.

Q: I think this pretty much finishes off what we have been talking about.

One thing I would like to add as you are in the academic field, I hope you will direct your students to various people. We've now got 1,700 finished oral histories. If you are teaching on a subject take a look at who were some of the principal players in Peru or what have you at various times and to direct your students to use this.

JETT: I will certainly do that. Are all of those on line now?

Q: We keep adding; 1,700 are now online. You can Google "frontline diplomacy" and it puts you into the oral history collection. That takes you right into the Library of Congress's collection.

Thank you very much.

JETT: Thank you, Stu. I enjoyed it.

End of interview