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

AMBASSADOR JOHN M. JONES

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Q: Today is the 20th of October, 2011. And this is an interview with John M. Jones. And the M. Stands for?

JONES: Melvin.

Q: Melvin. All right, well let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

JONES: I was born on June the 30th, 1944 in Detroit, Michigan.

Q: All right. What do you -- let's talk about on your father's side.

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: What was your father up to? And grandparents, on that side, then we'll go to your mother's side.

JONES: Well, it's a long story. I don't remember Detroit at all. I was raised on a small farm in Buckingham County, Virginia by my great-grandparents. My dad had been away at the war when I was born. My mom was working in a defense factory in Detroit. And so as a youngster, I guess less than two-years-old, something like that, taken with my older sister Elaine to Buckingham County, to a little community called New Canton. It is about 65 miles southwest of Richmond. My great-grandparents on my mom's side lived there. My great-grandmother, Lucy Jones, lived to be 103. My great-grandfather, Joseph Jones, lived to be 98.

Q: Good heavens.

JONES: They were remarkable people. My step-dad had lived on a small farm adjacent to the one that my great-grandparents lived on. And that's where he met my mom when she came down from Pittsburgh to visit Grandma and Grandpa. She and my dad had divorced when he got back from the war in Europe. She and my step-dad were married when I was about six.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: I didn't know my step-dads' father, but I knew his mom. She was still alive and

she lived until the 1990s. His father was deceased before I arrived in New Canton. But, the bulk of my connection was with my mom's grandparents.

Q: Well, now these -- was it Canton and --

JONES: New Canton.

Q: Were these traditionally black communities or were this -- were these towns, or what --

JONES: No, this was rural. It was the country. There were small communities clustered around farmlands. New Canton, itself, was sort of the crossroads of two highways. There were a couple of grocery stores some shops and a post office.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: This is rural Virginia, South Side as the local folks called it. And, it was mixed. Everyone lived there, white, black, everybody lived there together. Adjacent to my grandparents' farm was a white owned farm. The Campbell's lived there. Everybody, you know, sort of lived together. And, of course we had our own church and school and so forth. This was in the days of segregation. So I went to a segregated school and we attended an all-black church.

Q: Virginia was --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- high segregation.

JONES: Without a doubt, without a doubt. We had a small two-room schoolhouse that was all black, of course. I attended Liberty School until the sixth grade. The first, second, and third grade were in one room, and the fourth, fifth, sixth was in the other. We walked to school, which is about five miles from where we lived. But I don't recall any kind of animosity with white people, as a child. Everybody knew each other and everybody got along.

Q: Well now, what -- let's talk a bit about the school

JONES: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: I had a good number of people who've been in one and two-room schoolhouses.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: And all that. How did it work for you?

JONES: It was great, because the kids who were there were neighborhood kids. You knew everybody. You knew their parents. Of course there were little conflicts all the time. You know, kids fight and get into difficulty. But the teachers were extremely caring, but very stern. We would get whipped with switches or belts or whatever when we did things wrong. So the teachers were like surrogate parents.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: The teachers cared about you and it didn't matter what section of the area you came from, they treated everybody the same. It was, learn your lessons, be a good boy and behave yourself, and things will be good for you. My grandparents of course, you know, did what they could in terms of enforcing how they wanted things to go. I was there with my sister. I have a sister who's a year older than me and, she and I were there together. It was a great school. The only difficulty is of course they were behind the times. We had books that were handed down to us from the white schools. We didn't have any new books or anything. We had to take the leftover books from the white schools. Some of the instruction was also behind the times. For example, I never learned to actually write in longhand until I got to Pittsburgh. I was in the seventh grade and the teachers sort of laughed at me, because I just printed until that point in time. The teachers in Pittsburgh forced me to write in longhand.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: There were things we missed. The school had no indoor plumbing. We had electricity, but no indoor plumbing. We had outhouses. When I was in the sixth grade, there was a bus that picked up the older kids, the older black kids, and took them to junior high school and high school in Dillwyn, which was sort of the county seat about 20 miles up the road. We were able to get on the bus and get dropped off at the elementary school. But, that was only in the sixth grade. I loved it. It was fantastic. I was a true country kid.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: You know, you did not have to wear shoes in the summertime, you fished and you hunted and you did what you had to do in terms of working on the farm. We had a cow and a horse in addition to pigs and chickens. I had to feed the pigs, feed the chickens, gather the eggs, milk the cow, the whole nine yards. During planting and harvesting season, I had to help in the garden that my grandfather had planted. It was a great life. A great life.

Q: Your father was in World War II, is that --

JONES: Yes. Yes.

Q: Where did he go?

JONES: Yes, he was in Europe. He was, I believe, a truck driver for an outfit called the

Red Ball Express.

Q: Oh yes, the famous Red Ball Express.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: There's a movie called the Red Tails--

JONES: Yes, they were pilots. The Tuskegee Airmen who really distinguished themselves in World War II. My dad was a truck driver and a mechanic. I also had an uncle, Melvin, my mothers' brother. He was also in an all -black brigade.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: He was wounded in, in the Battle of the Bulge in Belgium. And, was disabled his entire life. Another uncle, Ray, who was married to my aunt Elaine, in Detroit, was in the same outfit and he was shot twice in Belgium. My uncle Melvin, my mom's brother, and whose name I have, died in 2005. He was the one who was totally disabled. He had been impaled by a German bayonet through the left shoulder and left for dead. It's really amazing. I think he killed the German soldier that got him. He never talked much about it until I started pressing him on the details after I was grown. He said that it was cold. I think it was maybe December. I don't know what year it was, but it was in the dead of winter.

Q: It was December.

JONES: His unit had been detailed to England. They were loading warships in England for the invasion of Europe. They were pulled out of England after the Germans broke through Allied lines, and they were thrown into the Battle of the Bulge, with little or no training. He had been a Buffalo Soldier, assigned to Fort Huachuca in Arizona. They were riding horses. They were taken from being cavalrymen, put on a train and sent to New York. From there, they were put on a boat and sent them to England as support troops for the European invasion.

Q: Good God.

JONES: And they didn't train with guns or anything. They were just laborers. They were totally discriminated against in England; separated of course, from the rest of the American soldiers. But after the invasion of Europe they were thrown into the fight when the Germans started their counteroffensive. The military just grabbed every able bodied person that they could find, issued them weapons and sent them into battle. So it was pretty rough on him and the rest of the black troops. I remember him saying that there were no black officers and many of the American white soldiers hated blacks more than they hated Germans. They were used as cannon fodder.

Q: Oh yeah.

JONES: The German soldier got him right through the left shoulder. He was impaled and the bayonet stuck into the ground. His unit thought he was dead. So they moved off leaving the dead behind. It wasn't until the graves registration guys came back the next day picking up dead bodies that they realized that he was alive. So as a kid growing up I remember our Uncle Melvin always having to have his left arm strapped on. He told me later that while he was recovering back in the US, he and other black troops were assigned to work for German prisoners of war, here in the US. When they refused to dig latrines for the Germans, their white officers tried to court martial them. Somehow, word of the intending court martial was leaked to the press and the Army was too embarrassed to allow it to go through. German prisoners of war were allowed to walk around in the US without guards. But, black American troops could not eat in the same restaurants or ride on the same busses as German prisoners of war. These were the things he talked about. This is the same generation of Black women and men who started the civil rights movement. They were a part of America's greatest generation.

Q: Now, from your family, particularly your great-grandparents and all.

JONES: Yes.

Q: Were you picking up anything about the injustices of the segregation system --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- and -- I mean what were you getting through --

JONES: It was pretty difficult. Everybody was sort of made aware of what was expected of them. Our grandparents always wanted us to be able to protect ourselves. And, and so it wasn't a question of acting out. Grandma and grandpa had such a good reputation in the community. Everyone knew who we were, and they insisted that we call people Mister and Missus, and that we have manners at all times. So my sister and I were not confrontational at all. We were polite and did not call attention to ourselves. I do remember my great-grandfather going to the polls to vote. He was one of the few blacks in the region that voted, because he owned property and he paid his poll tax. And I remember him hitching up the wagon with the horse and he took his shotgun and put it on the wagon and we would go into New Canton to the polling place. He would hand me the reins, after we stopped the wagons, right in front of the polling place. It was of course all lined with a bunch of these old white guys who glared at everyone.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I remember them dressed in bib overalls and straw hats. And grandpa would take his shotgun under his arm and walk into that polling place and vote straight Republican. I mean, that was it. It took him, maybe ten minutes.

Q: Yep.

JONES: He would sign his name, check his name off on the poll tax register and come out. And, I would sit there and hold the wagon. The white guys sort of parted when they saw him come. He was a big guy. They called him "Big Six." He was 6'6. And that's a humongous guy. So nobody messed with him. He tried to vote in every election. He voted every year, straight Republican. At that time, of course, you know, the South was solid Democratic.

Q: It was real regime in Virginia.

JONES: Oh yeah, I don't recall who the politicians were in those days, but he never voted for any of them. He was strictly Republican. That was the party of Abraham Lincoln and all of the blacks in the south were still Republicans. Those are some of the memories that I have and will cherish forever.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Sitting there, holding that horse and, and watching him vote is something I will never forget. He had had a stroke later in life and partly paralyzed on his left-hand side, so he sort of dragged his left leg. I remember him, you know, having that cane in the left hand and shotgun under his right arm and going into the polling place. The looks on the faces of the old white guys as they backed away told the story.

Q: (laughs)

JONES: So he was a heck of a guy. He was, even into later life just as strong as a horse. He did not talk a lot, but when he did, everyone listened. So I have tried to pattern myself after him. He was a big strong southern guy who had had a lot of worldly experiences.

Q: I take it you probably weren't getting an awful lot of news beyond Virginia, were you?

JONES: No. It was really funny because we had an old radio, one of these great big old things, couple feet long with the huge battery. My grandma would listen to the church services on Sunday after she came back from church. They had their local news programs that they would listen to, but I don't believe they could get stations farther away than Richmond. I, of course didn't pay any attention to what was going on. I do recall cousins coming down from Washington. And, I don't recall what year it was, but the big news was Emmett Till had been lynched in Mississippi, and I remember them talking to us about it. I don't recall what year it was. I guess it was '56 or '57. But, we hadn't heard anything about it. I do recall listening to the Sunday programs, the local preachers, southern guys who were always talking about the differences between the colored and the whites and saying how the colored weren't favored by God. The colored were descendants of Ham and, and so forth and so on. I guess this was at the start of some of the civil rights movements, because they were saying that God didn't mean for men of different colors to be together. This kind of thing was broadcasted in those days.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I do recall some of those old radio sermons.

Q: Well, how important was religion to you?

JONES: It was the center of our lives, when we were out of school. School, you know, went from September through June, but church was every Sunday. And so it was the center of the community, because that's where everybody went. There were maybe I'd say within, *our small community three predominantly black churches, all black churches.* Every now and again a white person would show up if they wanted something or wanted to make a speech of some kind. But for us, Third Liberty Baptist Church was it. And that was our church, that's the church that our grandparents belonged to and that's where we went. But you were expected to go and, and behave yourself and do what the Sunday school teacher taught you to do. And, so it was sort of the center of where everything happened.

Q: Well, now were you able to indulge your reading and, you know, access to a library?

JONES: No. No, we had books in the school that were, I guess, collections that the teachers had. And you could borrow books. But I learned to read the Bible. I would sit up at night. We didn't have any electricity, so with light from kerosene lamps and the fireplace, I learned to read in the Bible. There were some very simple little books that we had that our parents would send down. My mom and step-dad lived in Pittsburgh. And, sent packages to my sister and I. They didn't take me to Pittsburgh until I was in the seventh grade.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: And so they would send packages all the time and they would put books and so forth in. But the few books that we had were books that we could borrow from a little shelf in, in school, and the Bible. So that's basically where I learned to read. Every now and again somebody would get a Richmond Times-Dispatch and they would sort of pass it around the neighborhood, so every household down in the valley where we lived would have a chance to see it. There were maybe five homes in the valley. And one person would get it on Sunday and then they would read it and pass it on. So you know, by the time it had gotten down to my grandma it was probably Thursday or Friday. So you'd have a chance to read The Richmond Times-Dispatch. But that was it.

Q: Well, what about further schooling? I mean you --

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: Were up to the seventh grade, you say.

JONES: Yeah. I started junior high school in, in Pittsburgh because the county decided to

close the schools in light of the Brown vs. the Board.

Q: This is in Virginia.

JONES: Yeah. The county commissioners decided they were going to close the school rather than integrate. And so my mom said, we don't know how long this is going to take. They came down, which they normally did in the summertime, and said, we are taking John back to Pittsburgh because we don't know how long the schools are going to be closed. I had been looking forward to going to, to the junior high school in Dillwyn, because it was a bus ride and I knew everybody from Liberty Elementary School would be there.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: You would also see some of the other kids from some of the other small schools around. But mom took me to Pittsburgh and I was put into a very integrated setting. It scared the heck out of me. On top of everything else, I was seated, in my homeroom, between two white girls. We were seated alphabetically. There was Judy Kelly and then myself and then Linda Irving.

Q: Sounds like that must have been alphabetical.

JONES: Yeah. And I sat there with my arms in my in my lap, scared to bump elbows with either one of them for almost an entire semester.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: We went together all the way from junior high school to high school. Every now and again I'll still see them when I go to Pittsburgh. They still laugh at me like crazy. They repeat the entire story. "He was afraid to say a word to us, wouldn't touch us, wouldn't look at us, for almost the entire semester".

My thinking was that these are white girls. I had been told that you don't touch these girls. You don't say anything to them. You know, how dare you?" And so they teased the heck out of me for almost a year until I got used to being around white people. But, it's hilarious to look back on these events and remember how I felt. I will see Judy today. I mean she's married and fat and has grandkids. If I walk down the street she'll start laughing. She'll be a block away and she'll start pointing, "There you are, John come and give me a hug." *(laughs).*

Q: Well, what was Pittsburgh like? And this is when, about the 19 --

JONES: This is 1959, I believe. I graduated from high school in 1962. So this had to have been '59. The neighborhood that we moved into was predominantly black, but there were other families living there, Italians mainly, Polish. Pittsburgh is like blue collar U.S.A. Everybody worked with the steel mill and things related to the steel industry or the coal

mining industry. And my step-dad worked at Jones and Laughlin Steel. And so everybody went to the mill. There were Eastern European, lots of Polish, Hungarians and Italians. But, there were also Jews and Irish. It was a community that was totally and completely integrated.

Q: Well, you say it's integrated. But I mean one visits so many places --

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: -- and there's just black and white. But the Poles and the Irish and Italians --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- often, particularly kids, you know --

JONES: Yes, yes.

Q: -- are in rock fights with each other.

JONES: Oh, of course.

Q: So how did this work? How --

JONES: I mean you knew right away who your buddies were. There were three or four Italian kids on the block. And they hung out with us. The majority of the kids on the block were Black, and so you sort of had an alliance. The Jewish kids were off by themselves. They didn't associate with us. You know, their parents wouldn't let them come out and play in the street and this kind of thing. So in terms of athletics, basketball or baseball played in the street. We played stickball, basketball and touch football in the street. The Italian kids were there. For some reason I don't recall any of the Irish kids coming out and playing, and the Jewish kids of course were kept off the street. But the Italians and the Blacks sort of got along quite wall. I mean I started playing football. I played baseball and I ran track. The white kids on our football team were Italians and Irish. When I moved high schools in my sophomore year, from Westinghouse Junior High School to Peabody High School, we had a couple Jewish kids on the team. But, by and large, Blacks, Irish and Italians. The big guys, you know, those playing on the line were mainly Blacks and Italians. But it was kind of strange because you sort of knew where you stood. You didn't cross people's lines. If you were known, for example, you're an athlete in a place like Pittsburgh you never had any problems, because everybody knew who you were. I am sure there are incidents where Black kids would be walking around and nobody knew who they were and they would have a problem. And, certainly going into the Italian neighborhood they would have been harassed. But for me, I guess, being my size and playing sports, sort of got me by. I never had any problems, in the streets, none whatsoever.

Q: Well, this is the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement.

JONES: Yes. Yes.

Q: How did this play out as -- in your perspective? Or did it?

JONES: It did. Because the lessons that my grandparents had taught me and my parents basically was, "Don't draw attention to yourself, you know, stay on the sidelines." I came here to Howard University the year that Martin Luther King had his march on Washington. I went to it. I was there. We were scheduled to have football practice, but everybody decided to take off and go down to see what the march was all about. So I was sitting there on the side of the reflecting pool and heard his speech and the others. We did not realize the real magnitude of what had, had happened there until later when we got involved in the movement. The movement started appearing on college campuses. And, you recall that Washington, in those years, the 60's was basically a segregated town. We could not eat at the White Tower Restaurants, for example, or any of the big restaurants in town. We could go downtown and buy clothes, but we couldn't try them on. So we started sit-ins. We sat in at White Tower and some of the lunch counters in the department stores. White people would pour coffee on us and I had guys squirt ketchup into my hair and they would call us names, this kind of thing. Slowly but surely, those things changed in Washington. The only white people we saw around the Howard campus were policemen and bus drivers. Cabdrivers of course wouldn't pick you up in that part of town. But bus drivers could not refuse to stop. There were still a few white bus drivers. Coming to Washington was another adjustment for me. It was not just being integrated like I was in high school. I was coming to a predominantly Black city and, for the first time in my life, I came into contact with the Black elite. Howard University was really the center of the Black elite culture and lifestyle.

Q: I'd like to go back to Pittsburgh first.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: What about school dances and all that?

JONES: *(laughs)*

Q: I mean how did that work out?

JONES: You would go to dances, but you wouldn't dance with white girls. They wouldn't dance with you, and you knew better than to ask.

Q: Mm.

JONES: So yeah, you'd have a band playing or somebody'd be playing music, but you know, the Blacks would be on one side and the whites would be on the other side. You'd be on the dance floors at the same time, but you wouldn't dance with the white girls. There were no rules or anything. You just sort of understood, that's what you did. I do

recall one instance where there was a black kid who had walked a white girl home and wound up in a fistfight with one of the Irish kids. But again, you know, for me, we got admonished by our parents constantly to behave ourselves, don't get involved, don't do this, don't do that. I remember my step-dad telling me, "You know right from wrong. If you do something wrong and you get arrested, don't call me. Don't call me. You suffer the consequences and learn a lesson not to do it again."

Q: Well, looking back on this --

JONES: Yes.

Q: Were you getting a black Southern attitude developed in you, you know --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- don't make waves, as opposed to --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- say a Harlem --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- kid or something. I mean, I mean did you feel this?

JONES: Oh yeah. I mean it, only became evident afterward when you look back on it. And yeah, that's exactly what it was. Harlem was different. Those large areas like New York, where you had huge concentrations of black folks who had their own support systems. But, that couldn't work in Pittsburgh. The Black population is too small. In Detroit, where my uncles lived it was different. They did have a little core of Black communities in which they could function. But Pittsburgh was totally mixed. I think the Black population in those years must have been 10% or somewhere around there. So we didn't really have that core Black community. There were certain black neighborhoods, of course, you know, some of the neighborhood schools were predominantly black. But, for example, my high school was about 70% Jewish.

Q: What was the high school?

JONES: Peabody High School.

Q: Peabody High School.

JONES: I started out at Westinghouse Junior High School and then switched over for my last four years. It was integrated and yet not integrated, you know. It's one of those cases where Blacks had their culture, which centered around their neighborhoods and the church. You didn't see white folks on Sunday except after church service and you went

out to the street to play basketball or stickball or something, and then people would come out. But, socializing with whites was different. I don't think I ever visited a white kid's home in the years that I was in Pittsburgh. Not in junior high school, certainly not in high school. So the reality was that you sort of kept to yourself and with your own kind. You kept your grades up, you did what you were supposed to do, you kept your nose clean, and, and hoped to get away from the life that you saw every day. One of the things that my parents always concentrated on was getting good grades. My mom always said this was important because she did not want us to have to live that same way she living. She believed we had a chance go past what she and our step-dad had accomplished. So I remember her, my mom, who worked in the cafeteria in the University of Pittsburgh, coming up to Peabody High School, in my senior year to complained to the guidance counselor that my sister and I had not been included in any of the interviews that the guidance counselor had set up for college recruiters who were visiting high schools in the city. All the Pennsylvania State colleges and others were looking for good students to recruit to their college. They were going around to the high schools looking at kids for possible admission. We were not on any of those lists, even though I played football, I was in the orchestra, ran track, and was in the student government. I was fairly well known made the honor roll. Some of the predominant black schools like Virginia State, Howard, Hampton and Fisk, were well known to us. But, they did not have local representatives in the region to recruit in the city. But, mom was determined to get us into college. In one of her jobs she had to work in the home of the Chancellor of the University of Pittsburgh, a Dr. Edward Litchfield. She served a luncheon or something and he always asked how we were. He knew me because I had worked in the summertime in the cafeteria at Pitt, washing dishes and cleaning up. She complained to Dr. Litchfield that we had not been included on any of the interview lists. So he said, "OK, I know of, of a man who is the President of Howard University, Dr. James Nabrit." "Let me write you a letter on behalf of John." He did write the letter and I got accepted to Howard. So that is the kind of thing that changed my life.

Q: During this time -- first place, where were you in 1960 during the election, Nixon versus Kennedy?

JONES: In Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh.

Q: Did that resonate with you at all?

JONES: Oh yes. Kennedy was the darling of Black people. For the first time, here was this Democrat, who was young, attractive had an attractive family. Nixon, even though he was a Republican, represented the old school. And, I think he was unattractive. I think young people just sort of flocked to Kennedy. I know he was very popular in Black neighborhoods. And I'm sure he got almost 99% of the Black vote in Pittsburgh. Nixon, I think, even though most Black people in those years were Republicans, didn't for some reason appeal to, to Black people. The union, the United Steel Workers and so forth, all supported Kennedy. So there were Kennedy posters up in the neighborhoods. The Democratic guys would come around and ask us to pass out fliers, which we would, you know, go stick them in people's mailbox and so forth. And, that was the first time since

Roosevelt, which I didn't remember, that I think the Democratic Party won over the hearts and minds of, of most Black people. But yeah, I do recall it very, very, favorably. This was one of those things that, for the first time, we talked about it in high school classes. I recall arguments in Civics class.

Q: How did you find classes?

JONES: In high school?

Q: In high school.

JONES: For me, not very challenging. Once I got my handwriting and so forth together I basically studied hard because it not was easy to get A's in those days.

Q: Mm.

JONES: I could read a chapter of whatever the teachers had assigned and was able to almost recite it back. So I didn't really study a lot. But, I did study. Once I started getting A's and B's people sort of expected that I was going to get A's and B's, so if I got anything worse on a test, I mean, they would call me in. The teachers in those days were disciplinarians, but very concerned. So it was fairly easy. My one concern, and, and this is something that I, I always voiced in history and civics was that the history of Black folks wasn't actually included. I knew siblings of my great-grandparents who had been born into slavery. I remember in a history class, the teacher was talking about Thomas Jefferson, whose home was not too far from where I had lived. We knew the stories about Thomas Jefferson and his Black children and so forth. This was passed on by word of mouth. And so, matter fact, one of his children, Eston, had descendents who lived right around that area near Charlottesville and Farmville and we sort of knew who they were. And, I raised that question and the teacher almost put me out of class. And, back in the day, when everybody denied the fact that Jefferson had fathered these children with the Black woman, Sally Hemings. We all knew the stories. Those are the things that started to draw my attention. Why were these things not written into the books? The other side of it was that the, the Black historian, Carter G. Woodson was a cousin of my great-grandmother. As a matter fact, the road that now goes through New Canton and past First Liberty Baptist Church and Liberty Elementary School, in New Canton, is named the Carter G. Woodson Highway.

Q: Huh.

JONES: Yeah. So anyhow, we had heard of Carter's writings and my grandmother knew him. As we sat around the fireplace in the evenings she used to talk about what had happened in the past. For example, how my grandfather got this property. Who people were related to, who were our white relatives, which other families were mixed, what the Hemings kids did? I mean this was talk. We did not have TV or anything and so you listened to the radio if you could get a program or if you had a battery. But, mainly, you talked and asked questions.

Q: My wife comes from a small town in Vermont.

JONES: Ah-ha.

Q: And I learned more about all the people who lived up and down that --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- one street than I really ever wanted to know (laughs).

JONES: No, exactly. In New Canton almost all the Blacks were related, in some way or another. They all had been a part of a huge plantation in the area of New Canton. It was called Bear Garden.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: After slavery, the slave owners called everybody together and parceled out some land and gave a number of acres to the people. My great-grandfather's father had gotten some of this land. They worked it and paid the former slave owners for it, over the years. It was passed on to children and kept in the family. That's how most of the black folks got, got their properties. So it was, it was something that you talked about at night. You would see a certain person at church and ask Grandma who she was. She would tell us about the local people. You know, this is Mrs. So and So, she's married to that family over there. They're related to us because of the marriage between her and Mr. So and So. I mean it was history in real life. We knew a long line of folks as well as their connections to us. And, when I started looking at American history for the first time seriously in high school, I sort of felt that a lot of it was left out. There was no Black history included. It was like Black people just appeared out of the blue and only existed after the Civil War and we had not accomplished anything since we were brought to America. Black people, however, knew their history and passed the stories to the younger generation.

Q: No.

JONES: And I knew it existed. And yet, nothing was included in any of the books about it. That to me was probably the most disappointing thing. I was a history major here at Howard, and I was able then to get into Founders Library and see the writings of a lot of the Black historians and to look at a lot of original information for the first time. To me, that was fantastic. I really enjoyed doing that. Also, one of the jobs I had in the summertime while attending Howard was working at The National Archives. I used to spend a lot of extra hours after work and look in the microfiche and old archives.

Q: Well, considering your later career --

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: -- were you getting much in the way of you might say world history and foreign affairs?

JONES: Yeah. I mean not in high school, because in high school they were still talking about the Korean War, World War II and World War I. The teachers were from those generations. In high school, we had the regular courses in European history, American history and so forth. But, you never really got an in depth look at anything. And so, you didn't know Africa was there. You knew China was there, but they were just Communist. You know Russia was there, but they were also Communist. Latin America was Mexico. We didn't get into the real history. We learned about the European Renaissance. We learned about the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and suddenly, *boom*, the next thing you know you're in World War I. The result is that we did not learn anything about the intervening history. Our study was totally void of Africa, Asia and Latin America. And, so I start looking at some of that stuff later on in life.

Q: All right. Well, you went to Howard --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- through sort of this connection between your mother and her connection to the President of --

JONES: Yes, the University of Pittsburgh.

Q: What was Howard like? First place, you were in Howard from when to when?

JONES: '63 through '67 in undergrad and '67 through '70 in law school.

Q: How did Howard strike you when you first went there?

JONES: *(laughs)* It was a difficult adjustment. Having come from a totally segregated elementary school to a totally integrated system in high school and junior high school, and; now I was back into another segregated society. But it was segregated by; what is the best way to put it; there were the elites and then there were the rest of us. There were the children of the Black elite establishment and then there were the rest of us.

Q: Sort of a class system.

JONES: Yes, there you go. That's it exactly. I wasn't in that upper class because I was poor, too dark skinned and because I was an athlete. So, the light skinned guys who came from the big cities who had light skin and curly hair were sort of the cocks of the walk. They dressed nice, knew how to act in social settings, had pocket money and some even had cars.

Q: So I mean this is almost spelled out practically.

JONES: Oh yeah, some of the girls wouldn't talk to you. They ignored you, you know. You wouldn't even try to talk to them. I remember, I worked in the cafeteria, it was one of the parts of my need to make some money and continue going to stay in school. I didn't have any money so I worked in a cafeteria and this was normally when football season was over. In the winter and, and the spring and so forth when I wasn't playing ball, that was my on campus job. I did that because I knew I could get food, because when you worked for the school that helped to pay part of your tuition. I remember having to work breakfasts and going to class at nine o'clock in the morning and sitting down in the classroom and girls getting up and moving away, saying, ugh, you stink, you smell like bacon. This kind of thing happened quite a bit. So it wasn't so nice. It wasn't nice at all and it was humiliating.

Q: Well, I'm curious about this. First place, OK, we don't have a photograph here, but I put you in the moderate range of, you know, I mean however you want to play this.

JONES: Yeah, but there is a big difference between my complexion and the lighter skinned folks who consider themselves to be a part of the Black elite.

Q: But I mean, you know, OK, so you're a male and the girls don't -- but there has to be -- there have to be girls who fit within your category of --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- color or chart or whatever you want to call it.

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I mean were these -- how did girls play into this?

JONES: They were there. But I, I think from our perspective, there were the girls out there who were untouchables; and then, there was everybody else. I married a girl from Howard, and from Washington D.C. But, it was the kind of thing where we had a lot in common because we were from the same social system. Her parents were government workers. The light skinned girls joined certain sororities. The light skinned guys joined certain fraternities. I couldn't afford to do ether until I was in law school. But yeah, we had friends. But I mean, that color line was always there and, and you would know in no uncertain terms when you would cross that line, because one of your buddies would tap you on the shoulder and say, "Hey man, you don't want to mess with her."

I remember a good friend of mine, a guy from Pittsburgh who was also an athlete and kind of dark skinned had been walking with this girl and dating her. She was just a beautiful light skinned girl. And this relationship lasted until homecoming. Her parents came down from New York to, to see her at homecoming time, and she totally ignored the poor guy. She wouldn't even talk to him. She didn't want her parents to know that she was dating this dark skinned guy who was an athlete. So that kind of thing happened at

Howard. It destroyed the poor guy.

Q: Oh yeah. Oh boy.

JONES: So here he was, handsome guy, played, played center on the football team and had a lot going for him. He was a really nice guy. But he realized right then and there that she was playing a game with him. On campus it was great because he was a football player, and she wanted to be seen with him. But, when her parents came down she put him in the wind.

Q: Well, while you're out Howard, what were you pointed towards and was there a change, you know, after graduating was there a change as you moved up through the college ranks?

JONES: Yeah, I had wanted to study history. History had been a passion of mine, since high school. So, I was a history major and a government minor. That was where I spent most of my time. I spent a lot of time in the library, a lot of time doing research and writing stuff, you know. I enjoyed being a history major. This was a time of the build-up of troops for the Vietnam War. I had done ROTC (Reserve Officers' Training Corps). I had thought very seriously about just going into the Army. I'd done four years Reserves as a student, going to summer camps and so forth. And, in my senior year, you take all of these test, the graduate record test and all these, and LSAT and so forth. And, I got admitted to law school. I remember getting ready to graduate. Maybe a couple months before graduation I'd gotten an offer to go into the military. And, I remember calling my mom to tell her. She was one of these ladies who would get right to the point. I said, well, they want me to join the Army. They're going to put me in MPs (Military Police), and make me a second lieutenant. She, I remember, was silent on the phone, for several seconds. To me that meant she was getting ready to nail me with something. And, she did. She said, "Are you stupid or what?" I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "I thought you got admitted to law school." I said, "I did." She says, "Well, why are you going in the Army?"

That was it. I got back in contact with the Army ROTC director and told him I did not want a commission. He warned me saying, "Well, you know, you might get drafted and so forth and so on." I said, "That's OK," "I'm going to law school. That fall, I entered law school. I luckily started studying here at Howard. And low and behold, the government did away with the draft. My first year, there was a draft lottery. Luckily, I was way down on the, on the draft lottery pool. So I was fairly safe from that perspective. I didn't go into the active duty military. But, I had really wanted to, because I felt that I would fit right in and I liked the life-style.

Q: Mm-hmm, yeah.

JONES: I believe I would have been a good officer and I really wanted to be an MP and so forth. But I'm glad I did what I did. It was one of those things where it was a crossroads for me. It kept me in the educational system. It kept me out of the war. We

had, I think, 35 guys who were taken into the military. Five were killed in Vietnam. So those were some very bad years. I was able to get that Student deferment and stay in law school. I think I made the right decision. I had gotten married in my last year law school. My wife was teaching here in Washington. And, I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do. The major law firms in Washington simply were not hiring black lawyers, they simply weren't doing it. There are a number of folks who had thought about getting an MBA's (Master of Business). And, since I had scored pretty high on my Graduate Record Examination, I applied to and got accepted at the University of Pennsylvania, Wharton Graduate School of Business. We decided that I would to go to Wharton after law school. It was a good decision. We moved to Philadelphia. She was able to get a job teaching there. Going to Wharton as a Black student in 1970's was a whole different ballgame and another new adjustment for me.

Q: What was different about it?

JONES: Well, I mean, it took me from that very nurturing world that you have in a predominantly Black university and law school to the cutthroat world of the Ivan Boesky's and the Michael Milligan's. Michael was in the class ahead of me. So all a sudden now you're exposed to this whole white world of American business. Our training at Howard Law School had been to prepare you to take a case to court and represent people in lawsuits. You were taught how to be a lawyer, to go to court to represent clients, to do things like civil rights legislation and so forth, and to have an impact on things. At Wharton, you were exposed to this whole world of finance, economics, and big business. This is something that I had not had experienced before. This was quite an eye opening experience for me. It was a whole different world. It was kind of scary because I didn't know how to function in that world. After getting my MBA, I passed the Bar Exam in Pennsylvania, and joined the bar. I started working for Johnson and Higgins, Inc., an international insurance consulting firm with offices in Philadelphia. I was invited to go out to Penn State University to do a lecture on estate planning for a business class. One of the people who'd been at the company invited me out. I went out, did the lecture and, felt right at home in the classroom. The school was nice. It was out in the middle of Pennsylvania, close to the Amish country. There were big farms, rolling hills and mountains. After I gave the talk, the dean of the Business School invited me back and made me an offer to teach full time. "Why don't you come and teach at Penn State?"

I said, well given all the potential money that you could make in big business, I had to really think about the offer. My wife said, okay, whatever I wanted to do would be okay with her. So, we moved out to Harrisburg. I became associated with a small law firm in Philadelphia, which allowed me to practice in the appellate courts in Harrisburg, which is the state capital of Pennsylvania. So I handled all their appellate work in, the appeals courts in Harrisburg, and at the same, I was teaching at Penn State. I taught business law and estate planning, taxation, contracts, and so on and so on. And so that was fun. That was great. Our daughter, Christie Robbin, was born in Philadelphia in 1972, a year before we moved out to Harrisburg. Things went well for us for a couple years. I taught at Penn State and practiced law with a small firm in Harrisburg. I was named to be a Hearings Officer for the State Workman's Compensation Board. We bought a house in a good

neighborhood in the suburbs. My wife taught in a special school. Unfortunately, my wife developed breast cancer in 1975 and she passed away in 1977.

Q: Mm.

JONES: So my four and one-half year old daughter and I had to carry on. During that time, I was thinking in terms of doing some other things. Her grandparents, my in-laws were here in Washington D.C. My parents, of course, were in Pittsburgh. And, so I thought about, moving to one place or the other and I started looking around for another job. I came down here and interviewed for a couple jobs. I interviewed with the Department of Justice, the Department of Army, and a few other places. Finally, I decided to move down here. I got married for the second time in 1979 and came down here and started working on the Hill for the International Commission of the Child. After, the commission ended, I joined the staff of the Select Congressional Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy as a staff attorney. I was also an Adjunct Professor at George Mason University. After a year on the Commission, I joined the faculty of the School of Business Administration, as Acting Director of Business Legal Studies. I enjoyed that quite a bit. The Select Committee on Immigration and Refugee Policy, which had been looking for some attorneys who had some experience as hearings officers gave me a chance to get my foot into the door of the Washington bureaucratic scene. The Commissions directive was to re-write the U.S. immigration laws.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: It was a select commission made up of four Senators, four Congressmen, four Presidential Cabinet members and four public appointees. It was headed by the Reverend Theodore Hesburgh, who was the President of Notre Dame University, at the time. One of the people on that commission had been seconded from the Department of State, Julio Arias. We became good friends. He kept saying, John, you should join the Foreign Service. I was of the opinion that I should get out of government. I want to go back to private practice and make money. At any rate, I was assigned to work with Senators Ted Kennedy and Alan Simpson. I also prepared hearings for Congressman Hamilton Fish and Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman. I worked closely with the former Secretaries of Labor and HHS. Working on the Hill for two years gave me a different aspect of what the political world was like in Washington.

As the Commission came to an end, I knew I wanted to do something else in Washington. I was just trying to decide what that was going to be. My wife, Aaronia, was working for IBM and she had gotten transferred here from Central Pennsylvania. In the interim, our son Jamal, was born in March 1980. She did not want to go back to Harrisburg. She said, "I don't want to live in Harrisburg, it's too small and too provincial." She was from New Jersey. So, her instructions to me were to look around for something down here in Washington.

And, that is what I did. I had made a lot of good contacts while working on the Hill. But, I had gotten my fill of working on The Hill. I decided that I could stay at George Mason,

on a temporary basis and interview at some of these other places. I had a fraternity brother who was the Secretary of the Army, at the time. I had an interview with him and other interviews with the Department of Justice. Julio took me over to the State Department and introduced me around. I met Barbara Watson who at the time was Head of the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs. She advised me to join the Foreign Service. And, so I took the Foreign Service Examination and waited. Finally, in April 1981, the Department called and informed me that I had passed the test. They invited me to come in for oral interviews. I told them that I was under contract to George Mason until June. So, I could not join the Department until June. I talked to my wife and she agreed that I would go to work for the first agency that called. Since State Department had contacted me in April, and they allowed me to wait until June, I would go with them for the interim.

They responded that it would be fine. An A-100 Entry Level Class was starting in June. I could complete the oral exams, the security checks and see how it went after that.

Everything worked out well and I came into the Foreign Service in June of 1981. I started my A-100 course in Roselyn, VA.

Q: Was it State? Was it State?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions that were asked of you on the orals?

JONES: *(laughs)* Yeah. There were three men. One gentleman, and I can't remember his name, but I remember he was a Consular Officer, either a retired Consular Officer, or getting ready to retire. And, he was from the South, a southerner. He knew that I'd been on the Hill working on the Select Committee. He wanted to know what I thought about issuing visas to people who were coming to the United States to work and whether or not these people were taking jobs from American citizens.

So, I said, our research indicates that the designated people, those who get H visas and other special purpose visas do not take jobs away from United States citizens and residents because the specially designated positions were those positions that were hard to fill with citizens and residents. And, so they should be able to get their visas and come to the United States to fill jobs that citizens and residents could not fill or did not want to fill. He became livid. I don't know what he was aiming at, but I'm sure he was trying to set me up to get me rejected by the panel. But, we got into a big argument. He said, "You can't give visas to these foreigners that come to the United States. You're going to be a Consular Officer. How can you do that?" Do you know what I'm saying? But why are they designated? You know, they supposed to have the training and the expertise, which is how they get the designation to start with. So why can't they come and do their jobs? It helps the United States. That was the one line of questioning that I really remembered more than anything. He was just adamant that we should not be giving visas to foreigners who come to the United States to work.

One of the things that I learned working on the Hill was how controversial the Immigration and Nationality Act was. Our job was to make recommendations to change and modernize the law. Very little has happened since then, by the way. The Congress will never get a consensus to make meaningful changes in the law. This is an issue that to this day is still a political hot potato.

Q: Going on.

JONES: Yeah, they will never change anything because illegal immigrants just don't have any political power. This is something that Congressman Fish always talked about. When he headed the hearings we had in Albany, New York, I was the Hearings Officers. We had a number of employers in the region around Albany and Syracuse, who owned and managed fruit orchards. They complained bitterly about the fact that they couldn't get people to do things like pick apples. One businessman testified that he had almost gone out of business. He said, "I can't find American citizens to the work. I can go to New York City and recruit a bunch of guys to come up here and pick apples in the fall. It's a hard job. And, they will not do it". He recounted his experience of 50 guys that he recruited in New York City to come up to the area and pick apples for one of the growers cooperative members. Most of them lasted less than two weeks. He said, "But if I go to Haiti or if I go to Mexico and I have the proper visas for these guys, they'll come and they'll work all season. They'll help us get our crops in." So he was in favor of getting these H-1and H-2 visas so they could come to the U.S. to do this kind of manual labor. We also heard the same thing in California. The growers out there couldn't find people to harvest fruit and agricultural products. Cesar Chavez and many of the other labor leaders were trying to organize farm workers. We talked to the people representing the union, the grape pickers, the lettuce workers, and so forth and so on. It was all the same story. So, I had all of these examples in my mind during my interview. I believed that these folks will come in and take care of that piece of the industry or the harvest or that very difficult backbreaking job that Americans didn't want to do. So it was that kind of an argument that I had with the man on my panel.

Q: Well, had you brought yourself up to, you might say date on foreign affairs at this point?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: Before you took the exam, in other words, you hadn't had any real foreign affairs exposure.

JONES: No, none whatsoever, except for this job on the Hill. You know, we talked about immigration and so forth. I learned a lot from the hearings. We had hearings in San Antonio, San Diego, San Francisco and Laramie, Wyoming. Senator Alan Simpson had been the chairman for the Laramie hearing.

Q: Oh yes.

JONES: And, he had a special exemption put into the law for Basque sheepherders.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: You know the sheep growers in Wyoming could not find Americans who were willing to do the work.

Q: Well, Basque sheepherders were big in Nevada too.

JONES: Yeah, exactly. The trip to Wyoming had been my first time to a place like Wyoming. I hadn't been to a city with so few Blacks. So going to Laramie, Wyoming for a hearing on immigration was quite an eye opening experience. I was literally stared at every place I went.

Q: Yeah, I was asking, was there any part of the world that you, you know, Foreign Service and all, that sort of grabbed you or --

JONES: It's hard to say. Everywhere you go is sort of unique. Each country has its own characteristics.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: It's hard to say. My family loved Southeast Asia and Thailand, and we got into Cambodia and Singapore and Philippines and a few other places. But, they loved it out there. Europe was good as far as my career was concerned. Again, the family loved it. Brussels was special. It was a transportation hub where we could take trips to some of the really great places in Western Europe. The family wasn't able to go to Africa with me. But the bulk of the time, at least on tours in Latin America, they were able to accompany me. Personally, I liked Africa. I say that because I felt comfortable. I could not compare it to being unique in Asia. In Asia, because of my size and color, people had a habit of walking up to me and staring. They would point and say things to their companions. My Thai language ability was not that good, but I could detect that they thought I was some kind of strange foreigner. On the other hand, I felt really comfortable in Africa. Africans tended to be friendlier and warmer. Again, maybe my size and color played a big part in my acceptance. The area of the Sahel, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad and northern Nigeria, was ideal for my temperament. I loved the desert and the vast stretches of open land. I befriended a lot of nomads and moved easily among them. In Latin America, with all of its racial problems I rarely felt comfortable. This is something that I didn't realize early in my career. I didn't realize how racist Latinos are. Here in the U.S. they are a friendly minority that is mostly considered Black. But, In Central and Latin America and the Caribbean, they are extremely color conscious.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Working in a place like the Dominican Republic where they have races

segmented into seven classifications was shocking. The DR is called the land of the seven races. This kind of thing had been imposed by the former dictator Rafael Trujillo. The Dominican Republic, because of its unique history with its neighbor, Haiti, had ongoing racist policies and the lighter-skinned Dominicans lorded over the darker-skinned citizens; often referring to them as Haitians, or Negritos. Trujillo and his lasting racial legacy made it very uncomfortable for us darker skinned people. In Costa Rica, my second tour, my wife was one of three Black women who drove in the entire country. The racist policies were very evident. While over one-third of the country had African roots, they were mainly confined to the Caribbean coast. The capitol, San Juan was in the interior and it was rare to see local Blacks in positions of importance. It was not until 1948 that former president Pepe Figueres enacted a law permitting Black citizens to live in the capitol. Costa Rica is still the whitest country in Central America. We made friends with two Black university professors and they helped us find our way around the social system in the country. Coming back to Central America to Honduras, in 2000, I found that some things had changed. Honduras was not too bad from a racial perspective, but problems made life difficult. Overall, I was really surprised by the actual racism that you face in Latin America. My last tour in Guyana was different, mainly because I was the U.S. Ambassador. Everybody knew me because my picture was in the paper and they all treated me with some deference. But, Guyana was a racially divided country. It is one of the most racist countries I've ever been in.

Q: Well, I've talked to people who've served in Brazil, which is supposed to be, you know, they pride themselves on racist and, you boy oh boy.

JONES: I've only been to Brazil once. And, I'll tell you, it's still one of the worst countries I've ever been in, from the perspective of race and economic disparity. People point out that Pelé, the famous soccer player, was a national hero. But, there are lots of stories about what he had to endure in his own country.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: He played for a club called Santos and he couldn't even go into the dining room in the Santos Country Club. That kind of thing happens all over Brazil. So yeah, I was really disappointed by Latin America, even though it had a long and probably more checkered history than the U.S. Slavery existed in many of the countries and in some instances its vestiges are more engrained than in the United States. The countries of Latin America have not gone through a civil rights movement and the airing of grievances that we have here, so most of the old racists stereotypes still exist in some places.

Q: Yeah. Well, before you went into the Foreign Service --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: Julio was a friend and all, and of course he's the Latin American hand and all.

JONES: Mm-hmm, yes. I am not sure he had the same feelings as the folks in Latin

America. He was a Mexican-American who had been educated in California.

Q: But were you thinking of any particular place that you'd like to serve or?

JONES: No. As a matter fact, I picked the State Department by default. I had really wanted to go into the Department of Justice or with Togo West in the Department of Army. And, I think had their acceptance letters gotten to me earlier I probably would have wound up in, Justice or, in the Department of Army. I interviewed for a spot in at that time was the Civil Rights Division. And, I had a compatriot there. I was really looking forward to going into the Civil Rights Division at Justice. But, I had verbally committed myself in June of '81 to the State Department. My wife said, "Well OK, if this doesn't work out you have a fall back in the Department of Justice."

And, can you believe it, about the beginning of July of that year, Justice called me back and said, "Well, we would like for you to come in, your interview was good."

I asked if they could hold the position for me for a while. I told them I was stuck in the State Department training and I'd like to see that through. And, if things don't work out I will call them back. That was the last communication I had with the Department of Justice. That was approximately July of 1981.

Q: Well, you know, the State Department has, has a long history of, of people who say, "Well, I'll try this for a little while."

JONES: Yeah *(laughs).*

Q: And once you're in, you know, it's a flytrap. I mean you're --

JONES: Without a doubt. Once you are in, you stay in.

Q: -- you're there.

JONES: Yep, it's really something, because I got pulled out of training and was placed in a temporary assignment. I had no idea what my career pattern was going to be. I don't think it had any pattern at all, at that time. After A-100, they snatched me out of FSI, because of my legal background and stuck me on the Iran Claims Task Force. This was in the Office of Legal Advisor.

Q: By the way, sort of almost a personal aside, how did you find Hamilton Fish?

JONES: You know, he was an old-line elitist, a very nice man, a blue blood patrician of course, from a very famous New York family. He didn't play around. He wanted you to do your job. He did not want to be your friend. If you did your job, he treated you like a professional. He always asked about my background, my teaching experience at Penn State and my legal practice.

Q: His grandfather was Secretary of State.

JONES: Yes, for him, you did your job. Everything was formal. Yes, Mr. Congressman, no Mr. Congressman. But I found out later he would go to bat for you. He was just the nicest guy in the world. The same held true for Alan Simpson. Now here was a guy would cut you up in public if you did not know what you were doing. And yet, he would do anything in the world for you. Both of them wrote great letters for me to get into the Foreign Service. Senator Kennedy, on the other hand, was sort of a cold fish. I remember having to meet with him early in the morning when we had hearings set up. I would wait for him at the curb in front of the building. The limousine would pull up to the curb, I would open the door and he would and he would hand me his jacket. I'd take his jacket and his briefcase and he would struggle to get out of the car and stand up straight. At the time, he was wearing a back brace. I guess that was after the plane crash or some other accident. So we'd stand on the sidewalk there and I would have to help him get his jacket on. There was no good morning John, no anything by way of a greeting. He would start right into business. What do we have today? Who is that? What's going on today? Let me see what the schedule is like. I didn't get a lot of warm fuzzies from him, even though his public persona was quite different. It was like being a servant. It is really curious because some of the men that people look at as being hardcore conservatives politically and socially were really nice people. These impressions are mine, of course. I don't recall a lot of complaining from the staff about how they were being treated by the commissioners.

Q: Yeah. I remember Hamilton Fish only -- I went to a prep school where he went.

JONES: Ah-ha! Yeah.

Q: And they had a -- they used to vary, but at times --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- he'd be the head of the table. He would come, he was the head, and so I always look at him with a certain amount of awe.

JONES: *(laughs)*

Q: OK, so you came into the Foreign Service in what, '81?

JONES: 1981, yes.

Q: What was your A100, your beginning course like? The composition and how did it get -- how'd you --

JONES: I was one of those officers that came in as a result of the lawsuit that had been filed by African-Americans against the Department of State. The settlement required the Department to recruit and admit a certain number of women and minority officers at the

mid-levels. I don't remember the number of people in my entering class. I can check on this, but I think 48 or 49 people. There were six blacks, three Hispanics, and a number of women who had been working in other agencies or had been in the Civil Service. Almost everyone had other experiences. None of us had come straight out of college. The rest of the class was composed of young candidates. Some had been in the Peace Corps or who had come out of college and taken the Foreign Service examination. Those of us who came in as mid-levels had had other careers and were experienced in other areas. I've stayed in contact with most of them. A couple of them are deceased now. Two of us minorities from the class made ambassador. Some of the others got frustrated at not being able to get across the threshold into Senior Foreign Service, and resigned from the Service. He was a good friend who is now a professor at the University of Arizona. He resigned even after finishing the National War College in 1994. I got an onward assignment as a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). He could only get an assignment to the Board of Examiners. After that, he just retired. So, during my career I have seen and experienced a lot of frustration. I think some of the frustration resulted from the carryover effect of resentment by the white officers in the Service who contended that we should not have been admitted. There was resentment on the part of upper level Foreign Service officers. Senior Foreign Service officers were not impacted, but those who were in the FS-1, 2 or 3 range felt that the imposition of the minority mid-level officers was preventing them from getting timely promotions.

Q: Of course this is a time when more than almost any other time it became very competitive to get into the Service.

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- Senior Foreign Service.

JONES: Yep, exactly.

Q: So people were very aware --

JONES: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Q: -- anybody inserted between them and their goal.

JONES: Yes. That's exactly right. It was made plain to all of us. On my first tour in the Dominican Republic there were a number of us who had come in through the mid-level program. I had been delayed getting out to the field because of the assignment to the Iran Claims Task Force. But, in that group that served in the Dominican Republic between 1982 and 1984, there were three African American men and three or four women. There were two Hispanic males, and two Hispanic women. We all had come through the mid-level program. We were section chiefs in the consular section and were in other section of the Embassy including the Regional Security Office. And, the Consul General at the time, I won't mention his name, but, he took us to task almost every day. We had a supervisory meeting every morning. He would tell us we all were out of line. We had no right being

in the Foreign Service. I put my time in and you are my competitors, so I'm going to do everything I can to make sure you don't get passed over me.

Q: How pleasant.

JONES: It was not nice. We had a tough time. I started out as NIV (Non-Immigrant Visa) chief and in my second year switched over to Citizen Services. Out of that group of six, three have become ambassadors, despite the problems that we had with the Consul General. So it's one of those things that I look at now and say to myself that it was a bad experience, in a way, but in another way it helped us to find our way through the maze of the State Department. I think because we were strong willed enough to fight the system and learn from it. I had to file a grievance against the Consul General and I know at least one of the others also had to file a grievance against him. I did not get tenure my first evaluation in the D.R. After I filed my grievance, the Director General of the Foreign Service looked into my case. He advised me to continue working hard and he would make sure I got another chance to prove my abilities. I was in my second tour in Costa Rica before I got tenured. I became tenured because the Director General, George Vest, came to post, and interviewed me personally about the details I had put into my grievance. At that time, I didn't realize it, but he was also looking at the others who had been there with me in the Dominican Republic who had also filed grievances. He made a determination that got all of us our tenure. So, this was one kind of thing that you had to be faced with. My second tour was completely different, and I enjoyed it.

Q: Well, let's talk about your first --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- posting was where?

JONES: Santo Domingo.

Q: What was the situation in Santo Domingo when you got there?

JONES: It was a visa mill. It was, probably outside of Mexico City, the second busiest visa post in the Western Hemisphere. We had maybe 20 Junior Officers. We interviewed from 7:30 in the morning until we were finished, sometimes 5:00 in the afternoon. The visa line would stretch out the building and down the block. There was lots of fraud and criminality. When I transferred over to the Citizen Services Section, I found some of the same difficulties. Lots of difficulties came up involving American citizens who had Dominican friends or relatives. I mean, there were always complaints because someone was turned down for a visa. The Americans would wind up in Citizen Services to complain. Lots of Americans got involved in illegal activities down there and we had to intercede with local authorities on their behalf. So it was just busy sometimes as the Visa Section. I became well known and couldn't even go shopping without being hassled by people in the supermarket. Literally people would stop me in the supermarket or restaurant and try to talk about their visa refusals. I remember many times they would

follow my wife and even my daughter's school bus. In restaurants, they would try to pay our bill just to get a chance to talk to me. So it was that kind of situation where you had to be very careful of how you conducted yourself as a Consular Officer. There was constant tension and stress. Security was also a problem. There was criminality in the streets, home invasions and threats. It got to the point where my wife had to pick our daughter at school and take different routes home. I mean it was a just necessary precaution, but it just caused a lot more stress for us.

Q: Did you get a feel for the political life --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yeah.

Q: -- in the area?

JONES: Yeah, there were always class differences between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Trujillo had set up this system of trying to make Dominicans white. And he was the one who started this nonsense about classifying people into seven color grades. He also tried to make himself white. He would go out with white powder on his body and act like dark skinned people were inferior. So any times there were problems in the country, he blamed the Haitians. Anybody with dark skin was called Haitian, unless they were well known, like pro baseball players. It even happened to us. Many times my wife would be in a supermarket or the bank and someone would refer to her as La Haitiana. This kind of thing happened often. So it was race and economics that determined a person's status in the D.R. The Creoles or the lighter skinned people tended to be the wealthier. The poor folks, as usual, tended to be darker. And there is no separation on the island. I mean for hundred years it had been mixed, totally and completely. And so there is no way to say that some particular person because of the color of his skin, is the Dominican, and someone else, because of the color of his skin, is a Haitian. I mean you have guys like the ballplayers, all of them based on the fact that they were stars were considered white. Sammy Sosa, Juan Marichal, and most of the ball players are darker than I am. But yet, they weren't considered Black by Dominican standards. That's the kind of nonsense that Trujillo had instilled in the society.

We went over to Haiti a number of times. It was devastatingly poor. And yet, the people had a spirit about them. They were completely different, socially from the Dominicans. Of course, this is back in the days of Duvalier. But there was a spirit there that I think had carried over for years based on their fight just to get out of poverty. Most people just wanted to get the heck out of Haiti. I think most of them would have done anything to get out. I'm not sure what Haiti's like now. I just can't imagine what would make it better today after natural disasters and failed governments.

Q: Well, on the visa line --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- how did you judge? I mean, because you know, when you start talking of these

things --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yes, after a while you got accustomed to the stories.

Q: -- you know, the color of skin --

JONES: Yeah, there were times you could include skin color as a part of the judgment.

Q: -- in some places can be an indicator, you know --

JONES: Yeah, unfortunately, it is done.

Q: It's the sort of thing we can't admit, but --

JONES: Of course.

Q: -- if you're trying to deal with --

JONES: Yeah, one of the criteria is the proof of the ability to pay for the trip to the U.S.

Q: -- if somebody is kept lower class they're less likely to get a visa than an upper class.

JONES: Exactly, that's what we had to deal with. Visa decisions were subjective. They were definitely subjective. The easy ones were those who had traveled before, who were simply renewing old visas or who had relatives in the United States. You could bet your bottom dollar that people between certain ages, once you got out of school, for example 18 to maybe 25 years of age weren't coming back, because there was nothing for them to do in the Dominican Republic. And, so you wound up turning those guys down, unless they were on an exchange or if they were, for example, the children of economically well-off parents who had traveled before. If they had close relatives in the U.S. you knew that even though you would deny them a visitor's visa, at some point they were going to go as an immigrant. And so we would say, "What the heck? Give them the visa." You knew they weren't coming back. Those folks who tended to be from the outlying areas, predominantly out near the Haitian border, poor or darker skinned were always turned down. Our refusal rate at that time was over 75%. And yet, time and time again you would see these same folks coming back to apply for a visa. And, we had basic questions, for example, "Where are you going?" The campesino (peasant) applicant with five hectáreas (acres) of land would try to explain that going to take his wife to Disney World. I mean that was always taken as a joke. You could ask them basic questions, you know, "Do you have family in the United States?" Most would deny this. We knew this was not true because almost every Dominican has some relatives or friends in the U.S. I mean, we knew some of the standard questions and answers. So interviewers had an assortment of basic questions that had to be asked and based on what the answers were given, one could tell right away whether or not to issue the visa. You could maybe ask four or five questions and within two or three minutes you could make a determination. We had to work fast because the lines were always full. And so, once you found out if

they knew where they are going, whether they had relatives in the United States, whether they could afford to pay for the trip and had strong ties in the D.R. that they would not abandon to stay in the U.S. you could issue the visa. But, you had to be careful because you could not rely solely on their documents. Documents from banks and letters presented as proof of employment were almost always false. There were people in the street who could produce any document that was needed. Most people could purchase false documents from vendors in the street around the Consulate. It was something that was manufactured on the street and purchased the morning of the interview. If they did not get the visa they had to return the documents and get some of their money returned. So, it was those kinds of fraudulent documents were prevalent. You simply could not depend on the veracity of any document. But, like I said, the refusal rate was about 75%.

Q: First place, who was the ambassador at the time?

JONES: Robert Anderson was the ambassador. John Blackman was his DCM.

Q: Was there much interplay between them and the Consular Section?

JONES: None. Nobody wanted to be with the Consular Section. We were down on the other side of the park, two blocks away from the chancellery. And so, the Consul General would go to the staff meetings at the Embassy and come back and report to us. Us Consular Officers didn't get to go to staff meetings. For official functions, there were events that we called, show-ups. You were told to be at the ambassador's residence at a certain time to stand in line to play part in the reception line. We were required to do this kind of thing. Ambassador Anderson was just unbelievable. In two years I maybe had two conversations with him. He had the reputation for just being very harsh, very critical, not a nice person. I believe he was an alcoholic. He would sit in a chair at the head of the reception line and the waiters would constantly fill his glass. So, by the time everyone was inside he would be drunk. As the reception continued, we had to be there until he decided to sit on the couch and go to sleep. Many times, the DCM or Political Officer had to be the unofficial host after the Ambassador went to sleep. This was not a good experience for us first tour officers.

Q: No.

JONES: So basically, the DCM carried the ball in terms of protocol and other official functions. The ambassador was a Reagan appointee and a former assistant to Secretary Kissinger. His wife, on the other hand, was completely different. She was a very nice lady who brought the women and kids into the chancery and gave unofficial functions for the families. She invited kids to the pool and let them play on the tennis court. But, I found her husband to be a mean and uncaring person.

Q: What was his background?

JONES: I believe he was on his second ambassadorial tour. He had been an ambassador in Guinea. It was said that he made the Guinean house-hold staff shave their heads and

wear white gloves before they served him food. I think he'd been a businessman and was a friend of somebody high up in the Republican Party. He had been a public Affairs Assistant or spokesman for Henry Kissinger. But, he was not a nice guy. I rate him at the bottom of the list of the ambassadors that I have worked for.

Q: Well, with this experience were you still sort of sold on the Foreign Service?

JONES: No, in my second tour, I thought very seriously about going to the U.S. Commercial Service. I'd been recruited by the Commercial Director in San Jose and got the entire application package. He asked me to do the application and so forth using my legal background, my MBA and my teaching experience to qualify. I thought very seriously about coming back to the States to go to the Department of Justice. But, I stuck it out. It was the kind of decision that would require pulling up stakes and moving someplace else, and it was hard enough on the wife and kids to do that since we had just moved to Costa Rica. But yes, I thought seriously about moving throughout the first year of my second tour. I hated quitting and it was not until the Director General came down and made a positive determination on my grievance that I decided to stay in the service. I found out later that a number of people who had started in the A-100 Course with me, had resigned from the service.

Q: Well, I would think that in the Dominican Republic, given what you say, social life must have been pretty awful, wasn't it? I mean because --

JONES: It was, it was yes.

Q: Because you were a giver and they -- everybody wanted you to give them.

JONES: Yes. There were one or two things you could do without being harassed. There was an American softball team. It was fast pitch softball. The embassy team had Marines and some other older guys, like me. I loved getting together and playing local Dominican teams. It allowed us to get out and see some of the other cities and locations in local communities. We played in a league of adults who knew who you were and they didn't pressure you for anything and would not let others bother you. It was fun. So you didn't get a lot of pressure from the other guys we were playing against. We would travel throughout and we'd be on the embassy bus and we'd have maybe one or two cops or security men with us, to keep people away from the bus. But I enjoyed that. The other outing was being able to play golf and getting out to the end of the island. Casa de Campo, where the Gulf of Western Resort is, and you'd spend a long weekend out there. There were several people at the Embassy who loved to play golf. And so, we would take the families so they could enjoy the beach and we would play early in the mornings before it got too hot and then go to the beach with the family. It was in a protected enclave so we did not have to worry about people bothering our families. The folks that you associated with at the resort were either expats or wealthy Dominicans who already had visas. This made things a little simpler. But, living in Santo Domingo and having to function there was kind of hard. We tried to get out and away from the city as much as we could. Getting out of the city was always fun.

Q: Well, what was the background of your second wife?

JONES: I met her at Penn State. She was a student who had come back to complete her degree after she had been married, divorced and was working for a new employer. She had moved to Pennsylvania from New Jersey. She was an IBM regional representative. One of her clients was the state government. She would help the various offices to install IBM computer systems and then train people on how to use the equipment. I met her while she was taking courses at the university. She was an attractive, mature student and worked hard at her career. She spent a lot of time working at state government offices. And, so we started dating. She was taking a couple courses at Penn State and eventually graduated in 1979.

Q: Well, how did the Foreign Service strike her?

JONES: I think she liked it. I think she liked the fact that we had the flexibility to travel, and see new things, to get out and move around the world. She made good friends everywhere we lived. We made friends who are still our friends today after all these years. There are a group of them all over the world. In the Foreign Service, the wives traveled whenever we were assigned abroad and they could do all kinds of different things during the deployment. We were able to move in different circles. A lot depended on where you were because the ambassador's wife was sort of the key community person. They planned and participated in tours, learned to dive and did all kinds of crazy stuff like pottery and art classes. I think she enjoyed herself. I think she enjoyed being overseas. Everywhere she went, she sang and participated in choirs. By the time we were on our third tour, in Bangkok, she and the wife of the CDC Director formed a singing group. They were backed up by some USAID guys who had formed a jazz group. They sang jazz at a lot in nightclubs in Bangkok and visited to a lot of the military bases in the area. She continued to sing when we were assigned to Brussels. She formed a duo with a Danish lady who worked for the EEC. They traveled all over Western Europe to the U.S. military bases and lots of night clubs in Belgium and the Netherlands. Now she is active in the church choir here. I think these kinds of activities kept her from being too bored.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: She is not the type of person to sit and brood over things, because she was able to get out and move around. She wanted to see things and do things that she would never get a chance to experience again. I mean riding an elephant, climbing the Eiffel Tower, touring the Louvre and all these things that you think about as a kid. We've seen things and done things that we had never dreamed about. I think that to her the life style was quite exciting.

Q: Well, then you were in San Jose from when to when?

JONES: From '84 to '86.

Q: And then you went where?

JONES: We went to Bangkok.

Q: OK. Now this is a whole different -- so what were you doing there?

JONES: I was assigned as a Refugee Officer to the Orderly Departure Program. This was a special project whose aim was to bring refugees into Thailand and the Philippines for eventual resettlement in the United States. After the war, refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia were trying to escape by boat and overland. They were being exploited and killed in high numbers. To prevent this loss of life, the Vietnamese government and the U.S. agreed to have a special program to allow for the processing of refugees and immigrants in Vietnam. They would be flown into Thailand and the Philippines and processed for eventually resettled in the U.S. My assignment was the Amerasian program. I was one of about six people who were permitted to enter Vietnam. We didn't have an embassy in Vietnam in those years. So we worked through the Office of the UN High Commission on Refugees in Saigon. We would fly into Vietnam the first week of the month and depending on how many refugees we could process, we would fly back to Thailand at the end of the month. The Amerasian children and their extended families along with regular refugees would be flown out on a weekly basis. The other refugees and regular immigrants were also being processed by our group. We were basically to offset the number of deaths that had been occurring on the high seas from piracy and traffickers so the boat people and others trying to leave the area could participate in this program get processed properly, without risking death on boats or going overland. We would process people in Ho Chi Minh City and fill up an Air France 747, and fly them to Bangkok. The Thai government would assign the people to a certain processing centers in Bangkok and in the countryside where they would be processed by the refugee units. From Thailand, they would be sent on to the United States, Canada, Australia, or wherever they could be sponsored and wanted to go. But it was quite interesting being back in Vietnam and being one of the few folks that were allowed to go in and out even though the U.S. and Vietnam did not have formal diplomatic relations. The Vietnamese government was very cooperative with us, as were the Cambodians. The Laotian government, at the time wasn't so cooperative, so you had to sort of watch your step out there. The Orderly Departure Program was, to me, one of the most rewarding jobs I've ever had.

Q: Well, the Amerasian --

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: -- these were basically children born of American, Caucasian or Negroid or whatever --

JONES: Yes. Yeah.

Q: -- and Vietnamese women. And they weren't well accepted into the society. I speak

because I was the former Consul General in Saigon --

JONES: Oh my goodness.

Q: -- during the war.

JONES: Yeah! So you know.

Q: So I mean this is a major program. There's a priest involved. Were they -- did the churches get involved?

JONES: They were heavily involved, yes. The churches were sponsors by and large. And, the man who headed the office was Eugene Verer, a French/Algerian priest but a Swiss citizen. He was the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He ran the operation in Vietnam and coordinated activities of the non-governmental organizations in Ho Chi Minh City.

Q: Oh.

JONES: I am sure he was of French/Algerian extraction. But, being a priest who spoke French and Vietnamese made him a valuable contact for helping the Amerasians and refugees get out.

Q: Well, one of the problems had been that so many of these Amerasian kids ended up as street kids.

JONES: Yeah. They were social outcasts in Vietnam. They were of mixed race and were ostracized by everyone.

Q: You know, tough --

JONES: They ran the city. I mean they ran the city streets. There was no doubt about it. I mean you could walk down Tudo, the main street in Saigon, to the Saigon River, past the big hotels and stores and you could see them in groups hanging on the corners.

Q: Tudo, yeah.

JONES: These kids were on every corner. They were tough. I mean they were bigger than the Vietnamese and they looked out for each other. They were the only ones who suffered constantly. I mean the authorities would just abuse them constantly. The girls, once they were 12 or 13 were forced into prostitution. They ran the protections racket in Saigon. And, I think some of them were involved in drug trade. Some of them had been kept in families. The mothers who had married Vietnamese men were better off if the father had accepted the Amerasian child. In those cases, they were considered part of the family. But, they were not really accepted in Vietnamese society. In those united families, as we called them, they were by and large the older sibling. If the mother had

remarried and had younger kids the fathers normally abused the older kids. So yeah, they were in some real dire straits. The Vietnamese, you know, referred to them as "mi lai". So life was awful for some of them. For some, that I stumbled onto with the help of some of the gang members, there was an enclave of these kids. They lived on the barges down on the river banks, for their own self-protection. They had been kicked out of their homes or, had run away from home because of abuse. They formed themselves into groups and lived on these abandoned barrages down on the river banks at the end of the city streets that led to the Saigon River. It was just an amazing sight to see. We were eventually able to find American sponsors for most of them. A large number of them were able to immigrate to the United States.

Q: All right, let's talk about sponsors.

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: First place, were the actual fathers, the Americans in play very much or were they pretty much had, had left?

JONES: *(laughs)* That's a very ticklish question. I would say ninety-nine percent of the fathers were not in play. Even in cases where the mothers knew the fathers or knew where they were, the majority of these guys would deny the existence of the children and would not agree to sponsor them. On the other hand, we had one or two cases where the father would readily sponsor the child as long as the child did not settle in the region where the father lived. A number of those type cases where the father would say, "Yeah, I'll sponsor them, but I just don't want them to live in the eastern part of the United States." Some turned out to be rather sensitive cases, because some of the cases involved former employees of the U.S. Mission in Vietnam. Some of these men were well known or had made names for themselves since serving in Vietnam. So we had to be very careful how we handled these cases. The most difficult cases were those where the mothers knew or had been in contact with the fathers since the war or where there were more than one child by the same man. You know, there were instances where a woman would have had three or four children by the same man. These were the cases where Americans had spent many years in Vietnam at the Mission or as a U.S. contractor. These men simply left at the end of the war and the mother and kids were left to fend for themselves. These men who had served long-term tours actually set up homes with these women. The women had a great deal of information that we used to locate the fathers.

Q: Oh yeah, this is one of the things I noticed at the Embassy--

JONES: Yep.

Q: I was there in '69, '70.

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And you had some people who, Americans, who basically had set up house.

JONES: Sure, they would have a Vietnamese wife and another back in the U.S.

Q: They were making good money.

JONES: They sure were. That is why they stayed.

Q: Because when things fell apart they left.

JONES: Yes. They left the wife, left the kids and headed for safety. I had one case where a woman had traveled to the U.S. with her husband. They had visited Washington, D.C. She had lived here for a number of years. She had pictures of Washington D.C. and from the White House and all these other tourist sites. The husband and father of her three children had been a mission employee. And she and the children had been abandoned by him. She came to her interview with her three kids and their birth registrations and expired passports. She said, "I know where the son of a bitch lives. I'm going to knock on his door and tell him that he owes me fifteen years of child support. " They were married. She had a marriage certificate. She had the kid's birth registry at the embassy. And, the only thing she wanted from us was plane fare. The kids spoke English. It's just amazing. You know, this guy turned his back on his wife and three children.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: And, that kind of thing happened a number of times.

Q: So what did you do?

JONES: We processed them, gave them plane fare and a Non-governmental organization hosted them in the U.S.

Q: (laughs)

JONES: We got them out on the next plane leaving Saigon. They were hosted by an NGO in Bangkok and then sent on to the U.S. The really funny thing was that the guy was shocked. She did what she said she was going to do. She showed up, knocked on his door and said, according to the organization, "Here are your kids. You owe me for fifteen years of child care." And, if you can believe it, the guy got in contact with the ambassador in Bangkok and complained about us. He alleged we had violated his privacy and caused him to lose a great deal of money. In the end, I got this little note from the ambassador, through my supervisor, that said "Tell John not to worry. I'll take care of this one. " *(laughs).* It was that kind of thing. He was really upset. I learned later that he had another family in the U.S.

But, these were the cases we loved to work on. By in large, the parent, the mom had abandoned the child. This was particularly the case if the father had been Black or some other racial minority. All that these kids could do was to band together for self protection.

I mean you would see them in the street and they were quite readily identifiable. You know, you would see a kid, who was six-foot-tall with a big afro or light hair coming at you on the sidewalk. You would know right away that they were of mixed race. I had two Vietnamese military guys who followed me everywhere I went. I would go walking down the street and I would ask the Amerasians where they lived. So I would walk the streets. I had my backpack and camera. The military and the cops were behind me all the time. And I would see a kid walking up the sidewalk. We would be looking at me and I would be looking at him. I knew who that he was an Amerasian. But, because of the close proximity of the cops, they would be afraid to reach out to me. I finally was able to identify the gang leader and asked the kids to have him contact me. I had been trying to reach this kid named Richard. He was the gang leader and the sort of guy you did not mess with. He ran the streets and led the Amerasians. After about a month, he came up to me on the street. He called me Ohm Jones. I said, yes.

He said, "Me Richard." I asked him if he would talk with me about the Amerasian children. I wanted to buy him lunch. I tried to take him into a small corner restaurant, but the owner would not let him. We stopped at a little sidewalk soup seller and they didn't want to serve him either. I went into the restaurant and bought two meals to take out. So we walked around the town eating and talking. He said he would show me where these kids were and would take me around. So, the arrangement worked out quite, quite nicely.

Q: Did you -- they would have been quite a bit older, but were you at all dealing with the, I guess mostly _____ --

JONES: That was an issue, yes. How would we be able to determine if the child was, in fact, the child of an American as opposed to some other nationality that had been in South Vietnam?

Q: French troops and they had --

JONES: Lots of them were too old to have been fathered by Americans.

Q: There was -- there were African --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- French African troops there.

JONES: Yeah. A lot of cases where the kids were over 24, at some point, you really had to be careful because the likelihood is that they were the children of the African troops, as opposed to Americans. It was hard. But, we accepted everybody. Just to get them the heck out of Vietnam. And, so wherever we found a child who was readily identifiable as bi-racial, we would try to get them out.

Q: You mentioned the two police, were they -- following you -- were they to find out what you were doing or to protect you?

JONES: They were there to protect me. Yeah. So I just made sure that, I would tell them I'm going down there and they would say yeah, no problem, you know, this kind of thing. But they were assigned by the people at the Foreign Ministry to stay with us. And I mean they weren't obtrusive at all. This, you know, made things easier for us.

Q: Where did you live?

JONES: We were housed in a little hotel, I forgot the name of it, but it was right outside the gates of Tan Son Nhut Airport. It was within the half a block of the Offices of the UN High Commission on Refugees.

Q: Main airport.

JONES: Yeah. They would take us in the minivan to the interview site at the airport. We were able to set up our processing center at the airport. It was there in one of the unused terminal wings. It was the terminal building that had been built by the U.S. Corps of Engineers during the war. They had a big enough waiting room so that we could bring all the children in with their families. We processed them, gave them a list of documents and things that they need to bring for travel, and advised them on how they would be treated in Thailand or the Philippines. For those who had no documents, we provided some travel documents to allow them to leave Vietnam and enter Thailand. Representatives from the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry would be there to assist with departure procedures. Once we agreed that they were qualified and they were properly identified, they would get the travel documents. They would get whatever medical check-ups or shots they needed to travel. If they were suffering from things like malaria or contagious diseases they would be put into a place where they could heal before being allowed to travel. There were lots of things like pink eye and colds; but, we tried to make sure they weren't bringing contagious diseases into the camps in Thailand or Manila. If they had traveled from the countryside or lived on the streets, they would spend the night at a dormitory in one of the halls at the airport. They had rooms and bath facilities in the building. Once a week, the French would bring in Air France 747, and we would load refugees on for the flight to Bangkok. In Bangkok they wouldn't go through the regular terminal. They had buses from the refugee center at the airport. They would go right on the buses, and be taken directly to one of the processing centers. So that's basically what we would do in terms of the process. The difficulty was, of course, to make sure you had the correct people. Many times these kids, particularly the street kids, had been purchased and sold. It was just unbelievable. We would see a fairly wealthy Chinese/ Vietnamese family who were obviously business people, but who knew that if they had an Amerasian child, they would be a part of the immediate family and thus would qualify to immigrate as the immediate relatives of the Amerasian. So you would always have to separate the family and interview the Amerasian away from the family. I mean you would have a family of five children, a very well kept woman wearing diamonds and silks, obviously a businessman husband wearing a tie, four neatly dressed kids, and then this shabbily dressed Black kid. We would wonder what the hell was going on. So, the first thing was to separate the kid from the others. We would get him off into a separate room and talk to figure out what

was going on. Then, we would take the mother away. And try to find out, based on the birth certificates that they presented, why there was only six months between the birth of this kid and the next kid. This would raise a flag. We had a mystery. So we'd go through that process, and finally someone would break down and admit that it was a scheme to get out of the country. I remember one kid in particular who broke down after I asked who he wanted to travel with. He said, "My grandma." The grandmother had actually raised the kid out in the country. He had been given to the grandmother by his mother who had disappeared during the war. The Chinese family learned about the child, after the Amerasian program started. They saw him as their ticket out of the country. The businessman had gone up to the country, found this kid, and paid the grandmother some money. Grandmother didn't want to travel, but she wanted to get the child out of the country. So, she sold him to the Chinese family so that they all could travel. This was the kind of fraud we saw all the time. In this case, I went out to Tay Ninh Province and located the grandmother. I asked her about the child and the story of how the Chinese family got him. She said she had been afraid because the Chinese had threatened her, so she gave them the child. I asked her if she would come to Saigon and go out on the same flight with her grandson. I assured her that she would not have to worry about the family. We'll make sure they will not travel." And so this is how we settled this case. We had to do this kind of thing many times where we had doubts about family relationships.

Q: What about kids who were out of the far parts of the country like Da Nang or --

JONES: We were able to go anywhere as long as we notified the Foreign Ministry. We had to travel by land.

Q: They helped you.

JONES: Yes, we went everywhere, Nha Trang all the way up to Hue and up to Buon Ma Thuot, to Phu Bai and down to Cu Chi and the Delta. Everywhere there were centers or where we heard from local authorities that there were Amerasians, we would go. And so that's what we did on the ground. Any time the authorities reported that there were Amerasians or legal refugees. They even let us go down into the delta where the Americans had had a couple of military bases.

Q: And Canto?

JONES: Yes, we went to Canto. Down to where the Vietnamese had the tunnels of Cu Chi.

Q: Cu Chi.

JONES: Yeah. I was escorted around in those tunnels before it became a tourist center. *(laughs).* One of the guys who had been there who had been a major in the Vietnamese Liberation Army took me through those tunnels. I mean it was just amazing. I have pictures of them back home, but yeah, we were never denied by the Foreign Ministry. They would say we have identified Amerasian children, please go down there and

process them. You know, I spent many nights sleeping in a car beside the road just because there was no place to stay in some town or small village.

Q: This is before we opened up relations of course.

JONES: Mm-hmm, yes.

Q: How were you received by the ordinary Vietnamese?

JONES: I think they saw us as friends. I never experienced any animosity, none whatsoever. Even in the restaurants and stuff, people would come up to you and say, "You're American? I have friends in America," you know. "We like America". There was never any animosity. Not even in the north. I got up to Hanoi twice. I never felt any animosity, never. We went there the first time with General Vessey and a number of other folks. I got a chance to see the Hanoi Hilton, you know, where the American prisoners were locked up. We went through it on a tour. And, it was quite an interesting process. I was introduced to General Giap, the Vietnamese general who defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu. I was one of the first Americans to go to the Ho Chi Minh Memorial. Four of us were given a special tour of the memorial. I didn't feel any animosity from the officials. I think they welcomed us. They wanted us to come back. I think, in those days they didn't see us as an occupying power anymore. They were running their own government. At the same time, there were Russians and others from the Communist Bloc countries in Vietnam. And so, most Vietnamese people favored Americans. They were very cooperative with us.

Q: Was it sort of both on the American side, maybe on the Vietnamese side, seen as just this is part of the reentry of Americans and Vietnamese into a relationship?

JONES: Yes. I believe our actions in the ODP led to the opening of an embassy in Hanoi and a consulate in Saigon. The meetings we had in Hanoi with the Foreign Ministry and the military set the tone for negotiations to reopen diplomatic relations with Vietnam. I thought it was a welcome entry. I mean other nations were still there. The French were still there. The Japanese were there. The Canadians were there. The Russians, Chinese and other communist bloc countries were there. Even Cuba had an embassy in Hanoi. I mean there were buildings and signs advertising Japanese products like Sanyo and Toyota. They were there and they never left after the U.S. pulled out. We Americans were the only ones who weren't there. And yeah, it was really, really something. Even from the airport you could see all these billboards advertising European companies. I think the Vietnamese, at least because of strong ties that we had over the years, really welcomed the Americans back. And I don't think there's still any animosity at all. We went to the lake in the middle of Hanoi where there's a statue dedicated to the rescue of Senator John McCain. It depicted him being pulled out of the lake after his plane had been shot down over Hanoi. There is a big statue of the Vietnamese pulling him out of the lake. He's like this, you know, spread eagled, being pulled out, out of the drink. I think he's been back a number of times. Even when we were sitting in a room with General Giap, it was not strained. He stared at us. He was standoffish, but other than that

there was no display of any animosity at all. He was just an impressive little man. But, I feel that this was one gesture to get Vietnam to develop into one of the, the tigers of South Asia. And, as you can see they are there because you have a very industrious and dedicated population.

Q: Oh yes, I mean --

JONES: I mean they are real movers. And, a group of folks who will work and get what they need to have the kind of development that will someday rival Japan and Taiwan and certainly Thailand, as an economic powerhouse. They are a resilient and interesting group of people.

Q: Did you get back to Thailand often?

JONES: Yeah. I tried to get there once a month. My family was there.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: So in those times when we couldn't fly in and out of Vietnam, we would go home to be with our families in Bangkok. We assisted in the processing of some of these folks. Some were immigrants and potential refugees who needed to be processed like regular visa applicants.

Q: How'd you find your organization was received, supported and all of that in Thailand?

JONES: Not well. Not well. I always felt there was animosity between the Thai and the Vietnamese. And I'm not sure what it is. It's historical I think. They tolerated the presence of the Vietnamese. But I think there had been some historical problems that I wasn't aware of. The Thai are very insular and very, very close folks who don't allow outsiders into their lives. They consider themselves to be superior to others in the region. And, as long as the Vietnamese were confined to their areas of the processing centers and, the refugee centers, there was no problem. But I didn't see a lot of interaction between the Thais and the Vietnamese at all. They had very little in common with each other.

Q: Well, you left there when?

JONES: I left in 1988.

Q: When did we establish full relations?

JONES: I think the U.S. established diplomatic relations with Vietnam in'91, something like that. I don't remember the actual date. But, we opened a permanent office in Saigon for refugee and visa processing. And, I think there was an accord reached in '90 to open the embassy in Hanoi. So, I left there end of 1988. I came back to Washington and got

assigned to Brussels, Belgium as Consul General.

Q: OK, well I think this is probably a good place to stop.

JONES: OK.

Q: But so we'll pick this up the next time.

JONES: All right, OK.

Q: In 1988 we are off to Brussels.

JONES: I came here to FSI to study French.

Q: Do French.

JONES: Yes. I was studying French and my wife and children I went out in the fall of 1988 to Belgium. I didn't join them until I had finished the French course.

Q: OK. How do we stand for our next meeting? --

JONES: I'm, pretty free in the afternoons.

Q: How about -- how about next Monday, the 31st? Halloween?

JONES: Monday, the 31st. 10/31. OK. What time, same time?

Q: Yeah, 10:00.

JONES: OK. If anything comes up I'll, I'll call you.

Q: OK, John.

JONES: I don't think there's a problem. We're pretty well all up to date.

Q: OK, today is the 31st of --

JONES: Halloween.

Q: -- October, 2011. It's Halloween.

JONES: Yes.

Q: And trick or treat! This is with John Jones. And so we're, we've come to 1988 and you're taking French-- how'd you find French. You took French, you were going to Brussels.

JONES: Yeah. I took French here at the Foreign Service Institute. The hardest part for me was getting rid of the Spanish. I had taken Spanish and then done two tours in Spanish speaking countries, and so it was pretty strong. Now, I had to pick up Vietnamese on the side in Thailand. But, French was a real bother, I think, because it conflicted with the Spanish. That was my biggest hassle, trying to get over the Spanish. I had a lot of fairly good teachers. They were mainly Africans, who spoke I discovered later on, a lot purer French than the normal Europeans speak. And, they were fairly strict. So, I had some difficulty. To that end, they held me over for an extra month, so I could get a 3/3 on my examination. I finally got a three-three and, and took off for Brussels in December.

Q: December 1988.

JONES: December 1988, yes.

Q: How long were you in Brussels?

JONES: Four years.

Q: Four years. You left in '92.

JONES: Mm-hmm, yes.

Q: OK, what was your job in Brussels?

JONES: I was a Consul General. I had responsibility for Brussels, the Tri-Mission, which was the Bilateral Mission, the US-Mission to the European Union and the NATO-Mission. In addition, I had to administer the sections in Antwerp and Luxemburg. So I did quite a bit of traveling down to Luxemburg and up to Antwerp. We eventually closed the section of Antwerp in about 1990, because it just wasn't enough consular work to have a staff there. But, Belgium was quite unique because it was a real mixed society. There were a lot of Middle Easterners, North Africans, Latinos and Asians. The history of Belgium as far as it relates to Africa was quite unique in terms of the Congo and what at that time was Zaire. And so there were lots of Zairoise living in Belgium. And, so with the great mixtures, it wasn't as bad as some of the other parts of Europe.

Q: How about Rwanda, was there much spillover from there?

JONES: Yes, there was quite a bit. The process of ethnic and tribal extermination hadn't started really, but there were lots of refugees coming into Belgium. It was pretty rough from the perspective of only hearing things from one side. We really didn't have any direct connection with the sub-Saharan countries. My main connection was with the Belgium mission in Libya. At the time, we didn't have a diplomatic representative in Libya. So, the Belgian government was our representative in Tripoli. We had a lot of Americans who were working in Libya at the time, even though it was discouraged.

Q: Yeah, the oil companies --

JONES: Yes, mainly oil and construction companies. And, they always had problems. The facts stated in the book titled *Not Without My Daughter*, that a woman wrote about trying to get out of Iran, also took place in Libya a couple times. We had to have the Belgians intercede for us in these cases. One time, the ambassador actually had to smuggle an American woman and her two American children, out of Libya, in the trunk of his car. He took them across the border into Tunisia, where they could be repatriated by the Embassy.

Q: I might point out to somebody reading this that I even got involved in this when I was Chief of the Consular Section down in Iran, Saudi Arabia back in the '50s.

JONES: Yes, I can imagine it was something like we experienced with the Government of Libya.

Q: But the problem is essentially that students from a country, particularly we're talking about Islamic countries --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- go to the United States. They usually have quite a bit of money.

JONES: Yes.

Q: They get married.

JONES: Yes.

Q: Everything is beautiful.

JONES: Right.

Q: They go back and all of a sudden the girl, the woman, the American woman finds herself --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- sort of smothered in the family --

JONES: Stuck. They would become lost and cut off from family back in the States.

Q: -- whole different lifestyle --

JONES: That's right.

Q: She has children.

JONES: Yes, and once she did, the situation would get complicated.

Q: She decides the hell with this and wants to leave.

JONES: Yes.

Q: And they say, "Be my guest, go, but you can't take your children."

JONES: You can't take your kids, that's exactly what would happen.

Q: And then, and then the Consular Section too.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: I mean is that what -- is that --

JONES: That's exactly what happens. Yes. I mean nine times out of ten the woman would have to come through Brussels in order to get visas for Libya. Brussels was one of the only places in Western Europe where Libya had diplomatic representation. And so, they would also stop by our Embassy and inquire about what to do about getting visas and traveling. I would always try to council them not go. I felt it was important to let them know what they were faced with once they arrived in country. And of course, they would say, oh no, no, he's a very nice man. He's educated, he has a master's degree in petroleum engineering, and he is Americanized. I have seen pictures of his family and I spoke to his mother on the phone. So, nothing is going to happen to me." Lo and behold, three to six months later she would be calling, asking for help to get out of the country. And, that happened time and time again. It was just an ongoing problem that we had to deal with. This kind of thing complicated our consular operations in Belgium.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: But, I did not get a chance to get into Libya, of course, you know, without permission when the Secretary I couldn't do that. But, I got down to Tunisia to help folks cross the border. The other side of it was dealing with the Zairoise. We had one war going on at the time in which we had to evacuate people from Congo-Brazzaville. I handled the repatriation end of it in Belgian. And at the time, President Mobutu had a huge house or two in Belgium and he would send his many kids and wives up to get visas to come to the United States. The Zairoise turned out to be my biggest headache. They would show up, of course, on Friday afternoon just before the section closed and want to get visas so that they could travel on Saturday to go to New York to buy things. I was threatened with getting declared Persona Non Grata and never being allowed to go to Zaire because I refused so many of those visas. These were young, rich African kids who drove around Europe in Ferraris and Mercedes Benz's and who really did not care less about conditions back in Africa. They expected the world to kowtow to them, and meet

their every demand. I had real problems with them. So every time a new ambassador from Zaire showed up in Brussels he would come by and introduce himself to me. He would want to make nice so that he could get expedited visas for the rich Zairoise. I would lay it on the line and tell him to get to the Consular Section before 5:00 pm on Friday if he wanted visas from these rich kids. And, lo and behold, you know, guys from the Zaire Embassy would come in almost crying. They would say, "If I don't get this visa, if she's not able to travel Saturday morning I'm going to get called back to the country and punished". So, I had all those kinds of problems with the Mobutu family members. Sometimes, you know, I had to sort of roll with the punches.

The hardest part of being the Consul General in Belgium was the fact that we had a lot of American soldiers there. They were assigned both at the NATO mission and at the Supreme Allied Headquarters down at SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe). And, a lot of them wanted to marry local or third country national women. And so, we had to go down to process them. I spent one day a week down at SHAPE just to interview soldiers and advise them of what they had to do to get visas for their future wives. That was the main problem. Many of them were young and inexperienced. Some had not been out of the U.S. before. So, some were being taken advantage of by unscrupulous women who wanted a ticket to the U.S. Belgium had a cross section of the world. We had Cuban refugees coming through. We had Vietnamese refugees. We had refugees from Iron Curtain countries. There were refugees from African countries and the Middle East. Brussels was sort of a crossroads of the world. We had high level assassinations, and all kinds of spying going on. One high-interest assignation was that of an American citizen. He had been an arms dealer. The press accused Mossad of having committed that assassination.

Q: What kind of assassination? --

JONES: This American citizen had been an arms dealer. I'm not sure whether it showed up on the news here or not, but he had just come from Iraq having met with Saddam Hussein and some of his people about putting together this large cannon.

Q: Oh yes, yes.

JONES: It was supposed to be able to shoot more than 50 miles, or something like that.

Q: Yeah, I remember there was a lot of --

JONES: Yes. Yes, he was in Belgium with his entire family. His grown sons and their families were there. Allegedly, he had just come back from Baghdad. He went shopping and returned to his apartment downtown. And, just as he entered his apartment building, someone shot him in the back of the head with a .22 caliber pistol and killed him. The cops of course knew that he was an American, so they called the Embassy. I was the first American on the scene. I got there with the police. I knew him because he had come to the section to complain about things. He was always having some type of run-in with authorities and was sort of a problem for us. So at any rate, I contacted the ambassador as

quickly as I could and informed him what was going on. He just told me to do my consular part and back out of the case. Our station guys got involved with it and handled it. I believe it was handled just as a normal robbery and killing.

Q: What was the feeling?

JONES: Everybody knew what it was.

Q: Mossad.

JONES: Yeah, everybody knew. I mean Mossad was very active in Western Europe. And, we even had hints from the Israeli Embassy that this guy was a real problem and that they were trying to talk to him about not dealing with Saddam Hussein and his crowd. But, it was kind of touchy, because the, the American community there sort of all knew each other. And, you sort of knew what people were doing. I am sure this guy had been warned before, so. It was really weird. He had just come back from Baghdad. But, you know, the uniqueness of what was happening in Western Europe at that time was sort of different from anything I had ever done. We were the transportation crossroads of Europe and Africa, people were coming from behind the Iron Curtain and from Africa. We had all the Western European stuff. We had the North African problems and the Central African problems coming through the city. It was, it was kind of a mixed bag of everything, and we had a huge staff and large consular section, almost 30 people. I think eight officers. We did the entire spectrum of consular work.

Q: Well, did your local staff reflect the problems of Belgium between the -- I want to say the Walloons.

JONES: The Walloons and the Dutch.

Q: And the, and the -- yeah. I mean did that show up in your staff?

JONES: Yeah, quite a bit. I mean it was obvious. It was obvious in terms of who worked where. We needed to have French speakers on the line. Most of the people handled the non-immigrant visas. The local staff was mainly Walloons. We had two or three who were bilingual, or trilingual. I put them mainly in citizen services and immigrant visas, because I needed to have Dutch, French and English speakers in those two areas. When we moved the section out of Antwerp, we brought two of the local staff down and we had them on staff basically handling immigrant visas and citizen services. Citizen Services was sort of a sensitive area, because we had to deal with American citizens. The other piece of it was religious. We had the huge Jewish community in Antwerp.

Q: This was the diamond cutters.

JONES: Yes, they were all diamond cutters or in some way connected to the diamond trade. This situation also complicated my life a bit. There were people wandering in and out of Antwerp who were using diamonds to do all sorts of nefarious things. One in

particular was Charles Taylor and the group of expatriate Liberians who lived in Western Europe.

Q: Associated with Liberia and --

JONES: Yeah. They came from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.

Q: Guinea.

JONES: We believe, the infamous blood diamonds all came through Israel to Antwerp; or came through Tripoli directly to Belgium.

Q: Was there a warrant for Charles Taylor at that time?

JONES: Yes, there had been a warrant issued from the United States, for Charles Taylor's arrest. He had escaped from a prison in Connecticut and wound up in Libya. He went allegedly went down through Libya into Niger and Burkina Faso and, then into Liberia. It was reported that he started working with Foday Sankoh, from Sierra Leone and the President of Guinea, at the time, Lansana Conté. They were monetizing the diamonds from the Mano River Valley. The Mano River was part of the border between Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. They all had borders on the Mano River. It is one of the richest diamond areas in the world. I have been told that there are times when the sun is just right, you can actually get down close to the ground and you can see the diamonds sparkling in the sand of the beaches of the river. So, Charles Taylor used members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which was commanded by Foday Sankoh, in Sierra Leone to get as many diamonds as they could. They would sell them to Lebanese and Jewish diamond dealers all over West Africa. The diamond dealers had direct connections to Tel Aviv, and Antwerp. They shipped them all out through Freetown, Conakry or Ouagadougou to Tel Aviv or directly to Antwerp.

Q: What about was it Tempelsman? Wasn't he involved in this in New York?

JONES: Yeah, yep.

Q: Boyfriend of Jackie Kennedy and but also really big deal. Did you run across him?

JONES: I tried to stay away from him. I would not go out of my way to get to know him. I mean when he called the Embassy, I would try to answer or foist him off to someone in the front office. He was not overbearing. But, he had good connections in the higher levels of the U.S. government and in the Embassy. So, I kept my distance. I know he was often at official functions and was well known in the city. The only time I really got close to the diamond industry was in dealing with Charles Taylor. He showed up at the section a couple of times trying to get passports for his American wife and children.

Q: How did we deal with him?

JONES: I had to call Washington to get permission to issue the passports. We had passport applications for his wife and two kids. They are all American citizens. I had to get a response from Washington, since they were on the "watch list". After I received the approvals, I called back and was told they had cleared. This took a couple of weeks. I got back in contact with Mrs. Taylor and told her that the passports were ready. Lo and behold, it was on a Friday afternoon when I got a call from the Marine on the front desk. He said, "CG, come out here because we have a problem." I came out and there was Charles Taylor standing on the sidewalk with his wife, mother and two children.

I went out and I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Taylor, you can't come in. If you come in then the Marines are going to arrest you. You know there is a warrant for your arrest."

He cursed me out, called me the N-word, and lots of other names. I told him his wife and kids could come in but he could not. So, he was just stood on the sidewalk fuming. The two Marines with me were just waiting for him to do something.

Q: He wasn't a nice guy.

JONES: Oh no, he was a horrible man.

Q: He was responsible for the deaths of many, particularly brutal deaths.

JONES: Yes, yes. He is reported to have been responsible for more than two-hundred and fifty thousand deaths in Liberia. He worked with some of the same tactics as the guys under Foday Sankoh, in Sierra Leone. People would have hands, fingers, arms and feet cut off and many more brutal things done to them, if they did not comply. This kind of thing was wide-spread in the region during the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Taylor was just a real brutal guy who in my opinion, did not give a damn about anything except his own bank account.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yeah, he cursed me out in front of the Embassy and didn't say anything else. I ran into him again when I was a Deputy Chief of Mission in Ouagadougou some years later in 1996. And, he remembered me. But, it was a different kind of meeting.

Q: Not the type of guy you want to remember you.

JONES: It was not a pleasant meeting. He had been fighting in Liberia a couple of years. While the war was going on he would get his money sent to him in Burkina Faso. The President, Blaise Compaoré, was married a cousin of Mrs. Taylor. And so, they had a refuge from Liberia. They had a house in Ouagadougou. He would come there quite often to see his wife and to pay his guys. We had sort of stayed away from him. But the ambassador somehow got permission to go and see him during one of his visits to Ouagadougou. This was after things had settled down a bit in Liberia and Charles was considered to be a little more benign. I told the Ambassador that I should not go with him

to see Taylor because I had had a run in with him in Brussels. The Ambassador, of course, said no, no you and I will see him together. So, come on.

Luckily because the ambassador at the time had been the DCM in Brussels, he understood that Taylor had been a problem for the Consular Section. And so, lo and behold, we go over to Taylor's compound. We were shown into this big room. It had a coffee table in the middle of the floor and a couch against one wall and a big arm chair against the opposite wall. There were guys standing in all four corners wearing Ray-Ban sunglasses and holding AK-47s.

Q: Well, you're -- nice comfortable afternoon tea.

JONES: Yes. So, we are shown in and they seat us on the couch. The ambassador is looking at the notes and this kind of thing, and in walks Charles Taylor. He's about 5'6, 5'7 at the most. He bops in, with sunglasses on the top of his head. His tie is undone. He wears has big diamond rings and a Rolex watch. And, he starts shaking hands with the ambassador, and he's looking at me. I'm saying to myself, "Oh my God. What's going to happen here?"

So, he said, "Welcome Ambassador," but, he's still looking at me and he finished shaking hands with the ambassador and he looks at one of the guys standing in the corner and said, "I know this [expletive] N-word from somewhere." I did not know what to say. He asked me "Where I know you from?" I said, "We met a couple years ago, Mr. Taylor in Brussels."

"Oh yeah, you got the passports for my family". Then his mood changed, completely. He came over and gave me the soul brother handshake and tapped me on the back. I said to myself, God, that's the last thing I need in the world from this guy. But you know, it got to the point that every time he came to Ouagadougou, he wanted to invite me over to his house. They would have barbecues and parties and this kind of stuff with the expatriate Liberian community in Ouagadougou and many of the fighters from Liberia. I would never go. I told him I had to get permission and made up excuses. I just could not go. I just I couldn't stomach being around the guy and the others who were committing atrocities in Liberia. He was not a nice person. But, he was not the typical kind of person we saw in the consular section in Brussels.

Q: Well, how did you find -- I mean you had -- is it the Walloons and the Flemish?

JONES: Yes.

Q: I mean here, here they couldn't get along with each other, and then you have all these African refugees coming from there. How are they treated?

JONES: They were treated horribly. I mean it was the kind of a class thing. There were the rich Africans and the poor Africans. The rich Africans, the Zairoise who were close to Mobutu and the relations of Mobutu's government and the people from the Central

African Republic, and some of the other Belgium colonial places were favored. People from Rwanda, who had moved to Europe, after the war and, and during the time that Belgium had colonies in Africa who were quite well off financially were accepted. The poor folks who came as refugees were not. So, Brussels had whole sections of town that was just Zairoise and other communities that were made up of other Africans. The rich ones sent their kids to the private schools. The poor kids went to public schools. So when you had that breakdown, and, on top of everything else, the Walloons (French-speaking) and the Flemish (Dutch speaking) people hating each other it was truly hard to find any common understanding or national identity. It is an artificial country. Belgium is an artificial country that was forced together after World War I. The, the northern part, which is Flemish, up around Antwerp, should have been part of the Netherlands. The southern part, Brussels and the South (Walloons) should have been a part of France. It appeared that the people pledge their allegiance to their communities. Some of the biggest street fights I've seen in my life were between street gangs from the Walloon area fighting Flemish gangs. They just hated each other. Even in the Embassy they didn't like each other. So if you went to the university, in Brussels such as DeVry and other places, they were all either Flemish or English speaking. In the community that we lived in, which was a predominantly Flemish area, just outside of Brussels it was kind of strange because no one spoke French. You could go to the Delhaize Market, which was the big supermarket chain there, like Giant or Safeway here in the United States, you would only speak English.

Q: Could be Giant --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- because Giant is a big supermarket --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- here in the Washington area. And it has I think Dutch antecedents.

JONES: Yes. I remember going to the store one time and asking a butcher, in French, for something like a certain piece of ham or something like that, and she answered me in English. She refused to speak French.

Q: Well, did you find people saying, "Ah! You're a gentleman of color, then you must be African," and therefore, I mean treat you -- you must have been sort of --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yeah.

Q: -- betwixt and between.

JONES: It was quite easy. They could spot an American right away. They knew how Americans dressed and talked. And so the whole concept of how they treated Africans never applied to us. They knew we were Americans as soon as they saw us. And, even in

Antwerp they knew that you were an American. I don't know how they did. I mean, I thought we dressed the same. But I think the minute we opened our mouths they knew we were Americans.

Q: I mean, you know, if you walked into a store did you have to figure out should I say French or was English better because --

JONES: English was always better, because everybody spoke English.

Q: And so you let them sort it out rather than try to explain who you were.

JONES: Exactly, you would go and just ask for everything in English. So everybody understood English and everybody would respond in English and it was quite nice from that perspective. Especially for my wife, who didn't take French and simply spoke in English to everyone. The kids loved it because they both learned to speak French. So it was quite easy for them to get around. Belgium was sort of the center of everything. You had all the major airlines as well as the trains, and so the kids could go to Paris or other cities in Europe. They would just get a Euro-Rail pass and travel when they could. It was easy for us to go to Amsterdam, Berlin and The Hague. It was quite a lot of fun. We had a chance to see most of Western Europe. Another thing was that my wife was a singer. She met a group of folks who were into jazz. She and a woman from Denmark formed a group called Black and White. She dressed in white and this other lady who was very blonde and very light-skinned, dressed in black. They toured the military bases in Western Europe. They got down as far as Italy and Spain, which is quite nice. She enjoyed herself. My daughter played basketball and volleyball on her high school team. The school would travel as far as Russia for intra-scholastic sports. My son, at the time, was a little younger, but his class went to Florence and the Netherlands. Brussels was a great experience for all of us.

Q: OK, well let's -- first of all I want to talk a little about the Consular Section.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: Somebody appeared, say obviously not African or something --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- but Belgian for something.

JONES: Hmm.

Q: I would think there'd be the problem of what language to use on them. I mean your receptionist, how did they -- they must have got pretty good at this.

JONES: Yeah, the easy part was that we had applications out front in three languages: English, French, and Dutch. So it would depend on which application they picked up and

which one they filled out. It was then submitted to the receptionist, and she knew how to deal with the person. The difficulty was for third country nationals. The Belgians were easy. They were under the visa waiver program which meant all they needed was a valid passport. That applied for visas if they were coming for some other reason like attending school or going to work in the US. If they were not coming as tourists they had to come in to apply for a visa. But, third country nationals presented the real problems. This was the case particularly for those from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Russians, East Germans, the folks from the Balkans and those who were not eligible under the visa waiver program provided us with a lot of problems. Asians like Vietnamese, Chinese, North Koreans, Taiwanese, were in Belgium in large numbers. Some of them were business people, some of them were refugees. There were Cubans, Libyans, Iranians and other nationalities that we didn't normally deal with. Lots of nationalities that we did not normally see would show up to apply for visas. The third country nationals made up probably 30% of our customer base.

Q: Well, there must have been an awful lot of consultation by telegram with Washington.

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I mean you've got a North Korean married to an Iranian or something like that.

JONES: Yeah --

Q: Oh my God.

JONES: -- Those were always very complicated. We would inform them right at the beginning that their applications would take at least two weeks before we get a response from Washington. They understood. Most of them were business people who had traveled to the U.S. before. The difficulties were with people like Cubans. There was, for example, an Aeroflot flight from Havana to Moscow. It stopped in Brussels to refuel. Well, on some days, it was like rats running off of a ship. You could watch them at the airport. The plane would land way out on the tarmac. Belgian officials would go to the plane with stairs and the door would open. The next thing you would see after the door opened was a bunch of people running off the plane. They would try to get away from their handlers. And, if they happen to get into the terminal at all, they would run and ask for political asylum. And, so we would warn the Belgians when the Aeroflot flight from Cuba arrived, because they would get ready for 20 or 30 Cubans running through the airport door and asking for asylum. They knew these folks wanted to get to the U.S. and Belgium was a stop-over for them. So, they would ask us to talk to them to find out if there were families in the U.S. who were willing to sponsor them.

Q: And so they're -- and there'd be seats available.

JONES: These guys were being sent to Russia to be lumbermen or to work in construction. I mean these were not the cream of the crop from Cuba. These were guys that the Castro government was trying to get rid of and The Soviet Union, at the time,

was willing to take in non-skilled workers.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: The Cuban government would send these men to Russia to go and cut wood or work in the oilfields or something like that. And, they were not expected to ever return to Cuba.

Q: What were our instructions as far as visas for them?

JONES: We had specific instructions. Once the Belgians accepted them as refugees, they would seek to resettle them. 90% of these guys had family in the U.S. and we would be asked to contact the families in the U.S.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: So, we would have to get in contact with the families in the United States, and through one of the relief organizations, see if the family would sponsor them. In the interim they were kept in a little internment place in Brussels. Almost all of them wandered off and we would never see them again. But, by and large, once they reached Belgium they were granted asylum. It was fairly easy for them to be reunited with the families. Many times, Congress people got involved. If a Congressman or a Senator got involved, then cases became complicated because we had to respond to the politicians and let them know that we could not pressure the Belgian government to release them outright, or to get special treatment for them, that was not accorded to other refugees.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: So, lots of these kinds of cases cropped up during my time in Brussels. But, there were also other less difficult things. I felt that working with the American community there provided chances to do a great number of activities. We were there during one of the WW II anniversaries, the Battle of the Bulge. My uncle had been wounded in the Battle of Bulge and he came over, along with a lot of World War II vets who had fought in Southern Belgium. It was a great experience. It was just wonderful to see those guys out there. Some were remembering places where they had fought. And, it was great fun to have him over there for two weeks, and to have had a chance to travel around with him. That was the kind of the thing that sort of gave us confidence that we were doing the right thing at the mission.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: -- The Belgium government was very forthcoming, always open to us. You could rely on them and deal with them face to face. I mean they were very competent, very capable, and I think appreciated us because we took a lot of problems off their plates, particularly as far as American citizens and members of the military were concerned. There was always some dumb stuff going on. We had to deal with American

women who had been tricked into working in brothels, people coming to Europe and running out of money, drug smugglers and all kinds of religious crazies.

Q: Yeah, there was an awful lot of coming out of the Soviet Union or the Ukraine and all --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: This is at the height of this --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- movement of, of young women --

JONES: Yes, yes.

Q: -- recruited to be waitresses to be waitresses or what have you.

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: And it's all fake, it's all to get them into the sex trade.

JONES: Yep. That's right. Amsterdam was probably the center of human trafficking. I was so glad I didn't work up there because the folks from Den Haag just had a real difficult problem with human trafficking. It was not so much with American citizens, but, they would always show up on our doorsteps asking for help when things god bad for them.

Q: Well, did you have a problem of issuing visas to the married women of Americans. Those who married ladies they'd met at, was it the Grand Place or whatever they call it?

JONES: I knew you were going to ask that.

Q: Yeah. In other words, this was the way for them to get into the U.S.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: I did this when I was in Frankfurt, Germany back in the '50s.

JONES: Yes.

Q: There's a difference.

JONES: Oh yeah.

Q: It was different, but not that different at all.

JONES: No, it's still the same.

Q: The guys met the girls through profession, you might say.

JONES: Yes. I mean it was really amazing. The cases were not strange. You would have some 19-year-old kid who was away from home for the first time and he would be completely out of his element. H would be stationed down at some American base and he would meet some 40-year-old lady and fall in love. Sometimes they spoke little or no English and he would speak no French or Dutch. So, he would get married by some local justice of the peace and bring her up to the Consul Section to request a visa for her. Sometimes, he would be smart enough not to marry her and just try to get a fiancé or tourist visa so she could meet his family in the U.S.

We always looked for the anomalies. Was there a big age difference? Were they able to communicate in a common language? And, I would always separate them and ask common questions. Our aim was to try to get them confirm that the relationship was authentic; or, was she just using the guy to get a visa.

Q: No.

JONES: We had to try to get them to understand what was going on. I would normally take him aside in the conference room and we'd talk a little bit. And I'd have my Senior Foreign Service local, a woman named Josee, a fantastic woman, and she would take the woman aside and talk to her. We had a list of questions that we would ask in order to see if the responses matched. And in most instances, by the time I finished talking to the guy he would understand what was going on, and wise up. The guy would often say let me think about this a little while longer before I make a decision. And, the woman would walk out very disappointed after having talked to Josee. But, we tried to do that mainly to save these kids from being tricked into doing something that they had not thought through.

Q: Sure!

JONES: We did this not so much to discourage what was going on, but to make them aware that they were being used. They were often away from home, lonesome, and were being preyed upon. I mean, some women would see a uniform, know that the man had a steady income, know they were an American, and all the woman had to do was to get her foot on the ground in America and they would be home free.

Q: Yeah, I taught early on and I'm sure people from World War I had the same problems--

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- same problem. I remember one guy came in and he had to say, you know, she's a

prostitute therefore she's ineligible.

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: And he thought for a while, and this guy's going to be a lawyer I'm sure. He said, "Well, would it make any difference if I was a guy she was selling it to?"

JONES: Oh Jesus *(laughter).* Wow, yeah. It was fairly straightforward depending upon how savvy the guy was. You could normally explain things to him pretty good. And, if you got in contact with his commanding officer, and asked him to give the young man some counseling it would be even better.

Q: Was there a problem you had, particularly in Amsterdam, with legal marijuana? And the spillover, arrests and all that --

JONES: Yeah. We didn't have a lot of that in Belgium. The Belgians did not arrest people with a little marijuana. They did have it a lot in Hague and in Amsterdam because of the legalization problem. We had a lot of possession cases. The Belgians weren't as liberal as the Dutch. So our marijuana arrests were by and large for possession with intent to sell or to export. We had the case of one American woman who had been befriended by a Nigerian guy in Houston. She was about 55 years old and was on welfare. The guy paid her way to Nigeria with the promise of marriage. He traveled with her to Nigeria and after about a week there, claimed that a member of his family, upcountry, was sick and he wanted to visit him. He would join her later in Houston, but asked her to carry one of his bags back to Houston. He would pick it up from her when he got back. So, she shows up in Brussels to get the connecting flight to Houston and, 20 kilos of brown heroin were found in the bag. So there she is, this little Black lady, with no travel experience who had been tricked by her alleged boyfriend into becoming a drug mule. I go over to the police station and, ask her you know, "What are you doing here?"
She tries to explain that he was such a nice guy. They had been dating for three months and he had promised to marry her. He was 25-years-old and she's in her fifties. He paid her way to Lagos and we thought they had a good time. She went upcountry and saw his family. Then he just asked her to carry the bag back to Houston. She did not check the bag before she boarded the flight. She did not realize she was carrying drugs until the police showed them to her in Brussels. So, she was convicted and, I think they gave her 15 years. She got a pardon later on, after five years. But, she had a 17-year-old daughter back home in Houston. Her welfare checks were cut off. The daughter had to go and live in a halfway house. So, those were some horrible things. Some people just didn't understand what they were getting into. They were simply naïve. We would get requests from kids who would be trying to transit Belgium after having visited Amsterdam and spending a week up there smoking grass and, and taking dope, and then they would come down to Brussels to get on a plane, carrying illegal contraband back to the U.S. The other side of it was Americans who had come up through Africa after transiting from South America into countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone and Guinea and into Europe. They were trying to sell the drugs they had acquired in Latin America and Africa. So we had a number of those folks, in jail. The Belgians were pretty strict. They were good in terms of

allowing us access. We could always get in and see Americans when they were arrested. They would call us immediately when someone was arrested and identified as an American. We also had good access to the police. They were quite cooperative. So we didn't have a problem in that respect. Their cooperation was pretty good.

Q: I would think that in a way it sounds like your Consular Officers would find this interesting; it wouldn't just be routine.

JONES: Yeah, it was a good assignment. The Consular Officers liked it there because basically it was almost living like in America. There was not a big cost of living allowance and so things were fairly reasonable. You could travel. You could speak English and the work was quite interesting. I think everybody who came through there in those years had a good time. We'd have all kinds of groups coming through going up to the North Sea Jazz Festival. That was a yearly event. We had all kinds of exercises going on with educational and cultural exchanges. I had a chance to meet stars like Barry White and Miriam Makeba. Ms. Makeba, for example, came in to get a visa during the time that she was appearing at the North Sea Jazz Festival. She was just a gracious lady. I had a chance to meet a lot of those folks because Belgium was the crossroads of Europe. And people like movie stars got arrested in Belgium.

Q: How did that happen?

JONES: One came in with human growth hormones. This isn't going to appear in my autobiography, I hope. *(laughs).*

Q: (laughter)

JONES: He came in with human growth hormones, he and his trainer.

Q: This is to bulk him up.

JONES: You know some of the big muscles guys would get caught and when I met with them at the airport lock-up they would want to argue. I would have to explain that I did not make the laws and I could not get special treatment for them just because they were well known. I would say the stuff you were carrying is illegal. You can either give it up, and let the Belgians destroy it, or you can go to jail for importing illegal substances.

It does not matter that you are an American citizen. So, make up your mind. You want to sit in jail here and have the reporters and the photographers right out front waiting to see if you're going to come out handcuffed or not. They would calm down and say okay let them destroy the stuff.

Q: Well, you were in NATO (North American Treaty Organization) at a very interesting time.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: This is -- we're talking about 1989 and all that. How did that hit you all? What was sort of going on at the time?

JONES: Yeah, we had a lot of problems going on. That was also around the time of the First Gulf War. Restrictions were clamped on our activities. It was pretty strict from the perspective of guys not being able to wear their uniforms in the street anymore. For us, we had threats at the schools and at some American companies.

Q: Threats from whom?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: From Saddam Hussein.

JONES: We did not really know who issued the threats. There were lots of hardcore, as we call it in the old days, Islamists. I guess it was a precursor to Al Qaeda and some of those organizations that exist now. But, there were lots of them wandering around Western Europe. And within a short distance from the embassy was one of the largest mosques in the city. On Friday's you had this huge influx of men in robes walking down the street. And so, it was felt that this, in some way threatened the peace of the city. The Belgians were hard core Christians. They didn't like this stuff at all. And, so they had lots of police protection out. There were threats and phone calls. I don't think any of the mosques were burned, but within the groups there was a lot of infighting because people got arrested for possession of weapons. It was kind of a weird scene in the city.

The day that the war started, when Saddam invaded Kuwait, the Mission was locked down. The schools were closed. We were told to stay put until further notice. I think three days afterwards, we were able to get out. But, there was still pretty tight security because there were all these groups in Western Europe at the time. And, even though we never actually had any overt threats, I think the Embassy did this to be on the safe side.

Q: Well, what about -- did you feel, first place, this rather quick collapse of the, the Soviet Bloc --

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: -- in '89?

JONES: Yes.

Q: The fall of '89.

Q: Did that have any impact on your work?

JONES: Yeah, because in those years, you had guys from The Ukraine, Slovenia,

Slovakia and Moldova, all showing up on our doorstep, applying for visas to go to the U.S. They had these little flimsy passports that looked like somebody had just stapled pieces of paper them together, and wrote passport on the front.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: You know, all trying to get visas. The East Germans were different. You could always tell when they were East Germans because, they drove these little junky cars called Trabants and dressed in old clothes.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: The cars were like little lawnmowers. They could not keep up the speed needed to drive on the highways and were constantly being run over by the fast driving Western Europeans.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: They would go puttering down the motorways. I mean Belgians drive like Germans. They go 120 miles per hour. The poor East Germans were going 40. So you had wreck after wreck, when the Mercedes Benz's and BMW's were running over these darn little cars. So, that was a real problem for these guys coming to the west for the first time. Our fear, probably more than anything, was the organized criminal gangs. The Russians and others from behind the "Iron Curtain" were vicious. They started moving into Western Europe, bringing with them all of the crimes they had perfected under the Soviet government.

Q: Did you have any -- I mean this was early on, but did you have any, as far as getting intelligence back, fix on who these guys were?

JONES: Yeah, we knew who they were. Sure. They had pretty good ideas in terms of information that we received from our missions that had experience in Eastern Europe. I did not want to deal with any of that stuff. I tried to keep my section away from it as much as I could. The only response we would have, from a consul side, was visa denials. But, I tried not to have my folks involved in dealing with them, when they applied. I let the Political Section, the agency, and these other guys handle them.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

JONES: Maynard Glitman. He just died about two months ago, was a professor at the University of Vermont. And then, we had Leslie Gelb. So those were the two ambassadors during the time that I was there. Both were very, very capable and nice people. They were good to work for and supported the Consular decisions.

Q: Coming from a different background, did they understand the role of consuls there? Sometimes this is difficult for somebody who's not grown up in the system to understand

the independence you have and the responsibility.

JONES: It was harder with Ambassador Gelb, because he hadn't come up through the State Department system. Ambassador Glitman had been a Career Ambassador. And he understood how the unit functioned. I don't think he ever came down to the Section, in the two years. But, Ambassador Gelb, on the other hand, because of his family ties and political connections and because he had friends in Europe, sometimes got involved in Consular cases. I remember once or twice him getting involved in a visa case. I would just have to go over and say, sir, you should not do that because the regulations prohibit us from issuing to that person. He was a nice man. He understood exactly what I was saying. And, he would back off. The only time he really got crossways of our section was in a case involving a young Cuban girl who had jumped ship -- jumped airplane. She had family contact with one of the Congress-people from Florida. The Congress- person called him, and of course he called me in the middle of the night. He said this girl had jumped off the airplane and that he wanted me to get her on a flight to the U.S. immediately. He wanted me to go out to the airport and get her from the Belgian authorities. I told him I could not do that. And, I explained why

He was quite miffed, and called me into the office the next morning. He started reading me the riot act. I said, sir, let me point you in the right direction. After I explained to him what the standing regulations were, he understood. That's the last time that we had that kind of problem. She was processed by the Belgians and was able to immigrate in due course. So again, I think it was because he came from the outside and he didn't really understand how the immigration process worked. She was not an American citizen. Yes, there was congressional interest, but until the sovereign country of Belgium had processed her and declared her as a refugee, there really wasn't anything I could do. He understood the process after it had been explained. That was the only time we had any kind of confrontation, so to speak. They do a pretty good job in the ambassador's course but I am not sure if he followed the Consular training part.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: -- It is hard to get political appointees to understand what an ambassadors' relationship is to the Consular Section. People think of us as a bunch of spies, but we do so much more to help people. We perform some of the key functions of diplomacy. And, as far as outsiders are concerned, it is hard to explain if they haven't come up through the system.

Q: Yeah. Well, the Belgians you say, I mean, had pretty good, Consular-wise, pretty good relations.

JONES: Yeah. They were quite good. They understood what was going on. We kept them in the loop as much as we could in terms of special cases. We can count on them. They would call us right away, for example when there was a problem with an American citizen. We, for example, would have a lot of young guys who idiotically had joined the French Foreign Legion. I remember a couple cases where these guys, when they got their

first furlough they would skip out and show up in Belgian. It was the closest embassy outside of France. They needed to get the heck out of France. These guys would come in asking for help. They would be sitting on the sidewalk outside the Section at 5:00 in the morning. The Marines would call me to say there is an American citizen down there who doesn't have a passport. We think he is in the Foreign Legion. I would go down and meet this poor kid. In every case, it had dawned on him that he had made an idiotic mistake, and wanted to get back to the U.S.

Q: Yeah, basic training for the Foreign Legion is not something you do for -- it's not Club Med.

JONES: *(laughs)* No sir, not at all. We would get the guy into the Section and start talking to him to find out where he was from, what happened, had he just escaped from the Foreign Legion? We would get in contact with his family back in the States and try and arrange for him to get back. The French, of course, would have confiscated his passport at the time he signed up. So we had to issue him a temporary passport, get some money for him, get some clothes and make arrangements for him to travel. The Marines were quite good in terms of donating things to them, like pair of jeans and some sneakers. Those are really sad cases. These kids had no idea what they were getting into when they joined the Legion.

Q: What about the fact that you were in this multinational organization? It was part of a -- did that -- did you find that you had to -- did that spill over into your work particularly?

JONES: All the time. I mean there were times when we couldn't go to church in peace. It got to the point where my wife would not want to go out with me. She would say she cannot enjoy herself because people would harass me. I would get followed on the street by people asking visa questions. I remember Charles Taylor's mother coming to church looking for me. She then sat down next to me during the sermon and talked in a loud voice about her passport. It was that kind of thing all the time. We would get followed by people wanted to know how they could apply for visas. They would try to pay our bills in the restaurant and do all kind of crazy things to get our attention. We just had to be very cautious.

Q: Did you have problems of attempts of bribery too?

JONES: Oh yeah.

Q: How did you deal with these?

JONES: I reported them to the RSO (Regional Security Officer), and just told folks, I don't deal with this kind of thing. If you want me to do something illegal, I will report you.

Q: How about your Vice Consul?

JONES: We had some problems. I had to send one young lady home, but, it wasn't out of malice. I had warned her because she was dating someone from a country that we didn't have consular relations with. And, unfortunately, it was one of those cases where she was seen in public with this guy and it was reported to the Regional Security Officer. He called me and said he had reason to believe that there was something happening between them and that I needed to have a talk with her to find out what was happening. She admitted that the relationship had become romantic. The RSO told her that under the circumstances she had compromised her security status and her position as vice-consul. The DCM signed the letter to allow her to curtail. She returned to the U.S.

It was awfully hard because we really had to be cautious. In most developing societies, once you started something like accepting bribes, the word would circulate quickly and it didn't matter what it was, the word would be out. I like to play golf. And so I would go out to one of the golf courses, particularly the public courses, and guys would line up wanting to play with me. And they wanted to know how they could get visas. I would say, listen guys, I'm just here to play golf. It got to the point where I would only go out with guys from the embassy. These men wanted to pay our fees or buy us drinks. So yes, it was an ongoing consular problem. It's a common pressure that Consular Officers have all over the world, I think.

Q: Well, it must -- you know, to be in charge of the Consular Section, I speak as someone who's been there, served in Korea, you must have spent quite a bit of time counseling your officers, you know, inappropriate relationships.

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: You know, it's -- it either can be sex or it can be money -- or it can be just gifts.

JONES: Right, exactly. We would get baskets, for example. The police would send over a big basket after Christmastime. Well, that basket stayed in the office and everybody shared. They would, sometimes, try to deliver stuff to your house. Well, if they left it on the front stoop, I would put it in the car, drive it to the office and leave it there. And, I had to advise the Junior Officers. We had a number who were on their first tours. For example, there was one young lady who was met at the airport with a bouquet of roses and a nice guy and driven to her home. And, I had to tell her about the lay of the land. I called her into my office and warned her about the developing relationship. Those kinds of things were constant. In a society like that where we had all these different pressures we had to be very, very cautious.

Q: How did you find your relations with the Political and Economic Sections? Sometimes this gets to be a problem because they've got -- they've got the same pressures. They're not used to dealing with them.

JONES: That was the worst part of being on the country team. I tried not to deal with the young officers, the junior guys. I tried to set a tone with the deputy or with the director

and told them it was okay to send in visa referrals but there had to be an agreement. If they are in fact true referrals then, they had to back it up with a written statement that we could keep in the files. It usually worked quite well. The difficulty that we had being in Brussels was that we had three missions. In addition we had a very large station. Just halfway down the block from the mission was the Russian Interest Section. And, we had constant surveillance from them. And, we had other people in our section other than Consular Officers who were looking for certain things. So we had to be cautious to make sure that they stayed in their lane and at the same time didn't give off the aura of not being a part of the Consular Section. That was one pressure we had to deal with. The Economic and Political Section guys were not a big problem because they understood, as Foreign Service Officers, what it was they could do. Most had already served tours as Consular Officers. And we didn't have a problem with them.

I could go to the DCM and have our classified meetings. I would lay out on the table, what was going on and piece together what changes I believed had to be made on visa referrals. And he would, of course, call in the station guy or whoever we had problems with and instruct them to correct their actions. I didn't want to directly confront those guys because they were carrying out some other sensitive activities and trying to keep an open communications line to many kinds of Europeans and others who sometimes, like I said, presented problems for us. I think we had good understandings with the other Embassy sections and it all worked out.

Q: Well, of course you were there at a time when all of a sudden everything came loose and I'm sure it's tightened up now, but.

JONES: Yeah. It was quite an eye-opening experience. Just being there during those years and staying from the opening of the east through the first Gulf War. The whole Consular process had to be revamped to come to terms with the times. I left there in '92 and things had started to calm down quite a bit.

Q: Well, in '92 where did you go?

JONES: I came back to the Department and was the Senior Watch Officer in the Operations Center. Being the Senior Watch Officer was probably the most difficult job I had had in the Foreign Service.

Q: You did this for how long?

JONES: For a full year.

Q: Yeah, because normally that's about all somebody can do.

JONES: Yes.

Q: You should explain what you were doing.

JONES: *(chuckles)* The Watch is a 24 hour per day, 7 days a week contact point for State Department operations worldwide. Each shift in the Operations Center is headed by a Senior Watch Officer (SWO). The SWO is normally an FS-01 or Senior Foreign Service Officer. The Ops Center runs on eight-hour shifts, every day, every day of the year. And, it is the contact point for all Department operations around the world. It is where everything goes when the building closes down. It's also the contact point for other governments and embassies around the world. When the normal Washington work day ends, other U.S. Embassies are opening. And so for those embassies on the other side of the world, China, Japan, Thailand, India and all the way around the world, the Ops Center is their contact point. The Ops Center is required to know how to contact the Secretary, at all times. It is also required to know the whereabouts of all top U.S. Government officials. We were also the contact point for American citizens in the U.S. who were trying to contact family members abroad. We had a standing order from the Secretary to make sure that we knew where he was at all times so that if something happened, we could contact him. This also applied to the Deputy Secretaries and from the Director of Political Affairs, and many others. We maintained a list of their phone numbers and locations. We knew where the President was at all times. We knew where the Vice-President was as well as the Secretary of Defense the Attorney General and anyone who was in a key Cabinet position within the government. So, if something did occur anywhere in the world, it did a number of times while I was SWO, we would have to make immediate phone contact with the Secretary and the key office that was being affected. So, if we did our eight hour shift from midnight until 8:00 a.m., depending on what calls came in or what emergencies arose, we would brief the Secretary and other principal officers when they arrived in the morning. And, if I started at eight in the morning, I would go until six that night, and brief the incoming SWO and crew. I would then come back in at midnight and run until eight in the morning. It was truly a backbreaking exercise. It was just horrible. We had a staff in there of eight other officers as well as Agency people and people from the Nuclear Regulatory Agency. Also, depending upon what was happening in the world, we would have someone from maybe the Department of Energy or Department of Homeland Security, or if a crisis was ongoing, there would be a working group assembled to deal with the emergency. The working group assembled in an adjacent room. So, we were the eyes and ears of the Department of State. I mean, it would be nothing but pick up a phone and it would be the Secretary of Defense who wanted to know where the Secretary of State was ask us if we could we get in contact with him right away. We would get calls from all over the world. The worst call I remember, from a gentleman named Jonas Savimbi, in Angola, who was at the time trying to reach the Deputy Assistant Secretary of African Affairs.

Q: Jeff Davidow.

JONES: Yes, Jeff Davidow. Jonas Savimbi called in around midnight, called in from Angola. He was as drunk as a skunk. He insisted on talking directly to Jeff Davidow. And, I called Jeff and told him who was trying to reach him. Jeff told me to stay on the line and make notes of the call. He laughed and said I would enjoy the conversation. . So we turned on the recorder and listened to Mr. Savimbi rant and rave for about half hour. Finally Jeff said okay President Savimbi, we have enough for one day. We will see you in

the near future. And then, he said, John, I want those notes on my desk when I get in in the morning, can you transcribe this stuff and put it on the desk? We will probably never hear from him again.

The other side of working in the Ops Center was that you would hear, and overhear high-level privileged conversations. The Secretary would call other cabinet members or The President would call the Secretary. I remember when we had the change of administrations, from Bush to Clinton we would have to sit and listen to these conversations which were extremely privileged. Many times, the Secretary would wand the calls monitored and notes taken. This was always the case when State Department principals were talking to foreign government representatives. Any and all classified operations that were necessary for the continued operations for the Department of State, the Ops Center made a record or transcript. I mean everything.

Q: Well, in a way the whole Operations Center has been used as the place where our very top people, particularly the younger people, go as sort of a trying out place.

JONES: Yes, exactly.

Q: You must have had an awful lot of bright, young people.

JONES: Oh yeah. I mean it's amazing. I trained one of the Directors of the Foreign Service. There, there are folks that I have worked with in the Ops Center, large numbers of whom have become ambassadors. So it was quite an eye opening experience in terms of dealing with people like Jeff Davidow and Richard Holbrooke and some of these people that you see in the newspaper and on talk shows as subject matter experts. The policy decisions and important things pass through that office and you are a party to what America is doing around the world. It can be truly frightening. I mean, you know, some of the things that people had to talk about and make decisions on. And, you had to keep that within the confines of that special room. And, it was sometimes worse because you would get called in by the Undersecretary of by the Political Director of by the Secretary himself and, and get questioned, quite, quite sternly about what had been said in a conversation with another official. We would have an agency representative there, and the FBI often had an observer. National Security Council representatives would often be there. So everyone who worked in the Ops Center had to be extremely, extremely closed mouth about what was going on. You just didn't have the luxury to talk about it even to your family. It was the kind of job that you either did well or horribly. If you did well you got rewarded for it. If you didn't, you were put out to pasture basically. Your upward climb would end at the Ops Center. So, it was a pretty rough operation. But, one that is essential to the smooth operation of our diplomatic system. It was something that you couldn't do for more than a year because you would get burned out.

Q: Whom did you report to?

JONES: We reported directly to the Executive Director of the Department. He would report to the Secretary. I mean there were times when you had to go in to brief the

Secretary. If he got there at 7:30 in the morning and he wanted to know what happened in Angola, Bosnia or Kuwait, or something like that, you would have to literally go there and brief him on what had happened. I remember the development of the situation in Bosnia and Kosovo. We would get calls in from people in the field, and the Secretary wanted to know what had been said. He wanted to know what was going on. The SWO would literally get up from his desk, ask the Watch Officer take his place and go to talk to the Secretary. So yeah, it was a tight job. I'd say it was the worst job I've ever had. I would never volunteer to do that job. But, it certainly helped me to get over the threshold and into the Senior Foreign Service.

Q: Well then, you -- when was this, 90 -- what?

JONES: This is '93. I finished my Ops Center tour in May of 1993.

Q: Where'd you go from there?

JONES: I went to the War College. I got rewarded for my Ops Center service. They sent me to the National War College, at the National Defense University. I was at Fort Leslie J. McNair for a year, which was quite a plum assignment.

Q: You want to talk about your experience there?

JONES: Yes, who's going to see this?

Q: Everyone.

JONES: *(laughs)* War College was the first time that I actually worked with senior-level military officers. There were only a small number of us from civilian agencies who were eligible to be assigned to the War College. Military officers from all U.S. military branches, including the Coast Guard were able to be assigned once they reached the Colonel or Captain level. Some of them were going to be promoted from colonel to general or from captain to admiral as the case with the Navy and the Coast Guard. The civilian agencies like State, Department of Defense, USAID (United States Agency for International Development), CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), Justice, Commerce, Treasury and some others, were able to send selected officers to the War College. There was also a large contingent of foreign military officers. It was a year long course of study that enabled us to earn a Masters Degree in Strategic Studies. We worked for a year, received a Master's Degree in Strategic Studies and interacted with some of the finest military personnel in the nation. This was a great experience for me. For the first time in my Foreign Service career, I experienced military and civilians studying together and working together as one team. The civilians had to learn how to deal with their military classmates. And there was a need to learn how to deal with the military jargon. They didn't understand our jargon and we didn't understand theirs. They also needed to learn to deal with civilians. When we started, the military just saw us as a bunch of striped pants wearing cookie pushers. And, we just saw them as a bunch of knuckle dragging war mongers. The year wound up with a lot of respect having been developed for each other.

And, I think it was one of the best things that I ever did, during my Foreign Service career. I can count now maybe 10 or 12 of those military guys who wound up as four-star generals. We had a good mix. But, in the beginning it was hard. I mean it was really difficult because the military guys just sort of laughed at us. To them, we were just a bunch of know nothing civilians. But it worked out. As soon as we realized what was going on we started to adjust. We were slowly able to understand what was expected of us. This experience certainly helped me later on in my career to learn what the limits were in terms of how the military interacted with the civilian government authorities. I think it certainly helped a lot of the military guys. When I got to Iraq I understood how the hierarchy worked and what was right and what was wrong. I knew enough of the jargon to be able to communicate with military folks, and I think that was the true value of the War College experience. It is probably the best assignment I have had in the Foreign Service.

Q: What sort of trips did you go on?

JONES: I went to Africa. A group of eight of us did the Africa trip. We got to South Africa in May 1994, just in time for the Mandela swearing in. So, I was there when Mandela took the oath of office. We went from there to Botswana. We got to the northern part, which is up near the Angola border to a place called the Chobe Reserve. It was fantastic. We saw a lot of the natural habitat and the animals there. We went from there to Zimbabwe. We visited Victoria Falls, one of the natural wonders of the world. From Zimbabwe, we went to Kenya. We had a chance to see the Serengeti and The Masai Mara National Park. I had a good time. It all worked out quite well. During the year, we did all of the in-country visits. We also had a chance to see some of the new weapons systems and visit sites that are off-limits for most Americans. We saw the latest airplane.

Q: The Stealth.

JONES: Yes, the Stealth. I had a chance to ride in one. Those things are truly frightening. We got down to Fort Hood, Texas, out to the Air Force Academy, up to West Point to the Naval Academy and Coast Guard Academy. We traveled around quite a bit. But, it was worthwhile. I think just the coming together of senior level government officials from the military and civilian worlds' reaped benefits when those folks were put into leadership positions. We were all getting ready to become seniors in our own services. And, the ability to understand and appreciate the requirements and limitations of the combatant commands were extremely valuable. This came into play when I became ambassador. The SOUTHCOM commander, at the time, was a classmate from the War College. I had a personal relationship with him and it helped develop the coordination of efforts in training and equipping the forces of the host nation.

Q: Did you get any impression of the different outlooks of say the Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines?

JONES: Yeah, they hated each other as much as they hated us. In 1993, the concept of jointness, or joint military operations was something the academicians talked about. It

was in the days before the different branches of the military accepted the concept of joint operations. Jointness was put forth by the Goldwater-Nichols Act had already been signed by the president. The military branches were trying to go through the throes of integrating their training. The law made sure that any officer who reached the O-6 or O-7 levels, had already held some kind of a joint office or had joint training. The point was to give him an appreciation for what the other military branches brought to the table during future operations. The whole idea at the War College was to provide jointness to future military and civilian leaders. That was one of the reasons why a large number of civilians were admitted. So, early in the school year, the branches were still fighting like, like cats and dogs. You know, they had all these old concepts of what, the various branches did and they teased each other constantly. Marines, for example, were teased about being dumb. An Air Force Officer would say, for example, tomorrow we will have a lecture at two o'clock. For you Marines that means the shorthand is on the 2 and the longhand is on the 12. They were always doing that kind of thing. They teased the Air Force about its golf courses.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: -- I mean it was on and on, constant teasing. The old cultural differences between the branches would come up constantly, and it was hilarious. The guys would harass each other mercilessly. The Army was of course was the fall guy for everything. On the other side these were a group of very intelligent women and men. They were all college educated, most of them already had master's degrees. The big difference between the civilians and the military students was the different political perspectives expressed by the two groups. I couldn't understand why the military students were so conservative. Even the minority officers held very conservatives points of view. I mean, t was hard for me to sit down and talk to these guys and understand why they were so conservative based on where they were and what they were doing.

Q: You mean sort of what we call in the political sense?

JONES: Yeah. For example, Rush Limbaugh was a hero to some of them.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: And you know, some of us would say, wait a minute, man. You are a colonel in the U.S. Army. Listen to what this guy is saying. It was hilarious sometimes to try to talk sense into some of these guys. I guess their culture just wouldn't allow them to disagree with the opinions expressed by their leaders. Or, they were afraid to express differing points of view in the presence of others. I developed strong friendships with several of them. We still keep in touch. In private, they would express their own reservations about political opinions expressed by conservative political leaders. Most were quite neutral on issues that did not relate to national defense. During the year, we had some great speakers. Supreme Court Justice Scalia, Senator John McCain, ambassadors, reporters and people like Congressman Newt Gingrich. The guys just jumped all over Newt Gingrich. I mean they embarrassed him. He was the Speaker of the House and they just

went after him tooth and nail.

Q: Scalia.

JONES: Yes, and they tried to get Justice Clarence Thomas but some of the students objected. The civilians pounced on the invitation and it was withdrawn. The military guys complained about the damn *diplomats*. It was hilarious. We had one speaker every week. The students at the War College were an impressive group of people. The Foreign Officers ran the gamut of personalities and backgrounds. The worst was a guy from Saudi Arabia who was the younger brother of the ambassador in Washington. He was supposed to be a Saudi Air Force colonel. He always tried to sit in on our classified discussions. The professors always had to chase him out of the classroom. He would complain loudly that he has a security clearance. He wore insignias on his uniform such as pilots' wings and a chest full of medals. He had nice uniforms and but was everything, but, he was dumb as a doorknob. But, because he was a member of the royal family, he was sent to the National War College. On the other side, there was a Colombian colonel who led the raid to capture the drug kingpin, Pablo Escobar. One student was a Kenyan Brigadier who was very much involved in the leadership of the Kenya Army. We had some folks there who returned to their countries and assumed positions of leadership. There was an Israeli pilot, a colonel, who was a very sharp guy, but, was very disrespectful of Americans. Nevertheless there was a good mixture of people. I believe there were ten Foreign Officers in the class. We didn't have a lot to add to the discussions, in the beginning. But, for the Americans, we civilians added a lot of insight and experience to the school year. Our military classmates came to depend on us to provide a perspective that they had not encountered before in their own careers. Also, our careers were enhanced by our year at the War College. We gained the experience and understanding of what we needed to move into the senior ranks of the Foreign Service. And, for the military guys, it opened the doors for them to move into the flag level ranks.

Q: Did you have any particular study or anything personally, or of sometimes -- it depends on the era one goes to the War College.

JONES: Yeah. For us, because it was 1994, people were still reliving the Vietnam War and a lot of the guys had served as younger officers in Vietnam. And so, a lot of the discussions stemmed around what had happened during that war. The other side was the Cold War. All of these guys had Cold War experiences and mainly in occupied countries. They had been to Korea, to Germany and had served in Europe at NATO and some of the other places in Europe. So, we had those two trends of thought at the War College. We had a lot of studying to do about, fending off the Russians, and trying to figure out to make sure that we don't give up too many secrets to our enemies. There were still enemies in that day. Even though the Soviet Union was no longer in existence there were big gaps of unknown enemies. All the Eastern European issues were starting to brew. Yugoslavia was breaking up and the small countries that had been under the thumb of the dictator were starting to cause problems for Europe.

Q: Was Mainland China seen as a sort of a new threat or --

JONES: No, not at all. They were not. I'm not sure whether it was because of the emphasis being placed on other parts of the world, but they weren't considered a threat at all. Our biggest problems in those days were the Persian Gulf area. Iran of course had been an enemy since the embassy had been taken over. So, there were a lot of discussions about Iran. The U.S. policies towards Iran were pretty hard core. They worried about the developing terrorist networks. They were concerned about the information gap in terms of folks getting information from inside the country. Other issues were developing at the time, for example in Latin America. The development of some of the trends that we see now, the drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal immigration were developing in Latin America. We talked about Pablo Escobar and other traffickers. There was the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)), who were sort of running things in part of Columbia. There were issues with human rights in other Latin American countries. So, we had lots of different trends developing all over the world.

But, I was a history major in college and I wanted to write about something else. I wrote my research paper on Ho Chi Minh. I had been one of the first Americans to be able to officially go to into Vietnam, after the war. I had had a chance to meet General Giap and some of these other folks, and I was really interested in what their perspectives were. So I tried to do some research on Ho Chi Minh in terms of what his early life was like. And I put together a fairly nice paper on some aspects of his early life. The fact that he had been to France and really had extended himself to the U.S. had been overlooked in most books. The Vietnamese Constitution is actually based on our Constitution. And had it not been for people like Allen Dulles and some of the other people in power after WWII, we probably would not have had to go to war in Vietnam. Had we used some common sense and met with Ho Chi Minh, as he wanted, we could have built diplomatic bridges to the Vietnamese people instead of supporting the French colonial desires in Indo-China. Ho Chi Minh had sought to meet Allen Dulles, in France, but the French intervened and stopped the meeting. The French asked Dulles not to go to the meeting. So, Ho Chi Minh was sort of left on his own after he got back into Vietnam. The Chinese started to support him and helped defeat the French. So that's why I concentrated on that piece of the puzzle. Why did the U.S. not extend the hand of friendship to the new government in Hanoi after WWII. GEN Giap, who turned a hundred years about a month ago, had his own ideas. He's another strange little guy, but you know he was a real tough guy. He used Chinese and Soviet Union help to defeat the French in Indo-China.

Q: We've certainly seen a change in his country.

JONES: Oh yeah. But anyway, the War College was a great year for all of us. I still have friends who are either still in uniform or retiring. We still stay in touch with each other.

Q: Well now, when you were at the War College who was president?

JONES: Bill Clinton.

Q: Clinton, yeah. I was going to say --

JONES: Yeah. Clinton, I'm sorry, I should have remembered that.

Q: How was Clinton viewed? He had not served in the military and --

JONES: Are you sure this isn't going in be made public*(laughs)*?

Q: I mean, you know, I mean --

JONES: Most of the military students hated him. They hated him. They hated anybody with a progressive stand on international and social issues. They didn't like Secretary of Defense William Perry. It was by and large, a feeling of us against them. Secretary Perry came over to the College once. And of course they had proper decorum, you know, they acted properly like they were supposed to do when high ranking officials appeared. But, by and large I think the military members didn't respect him and they didn't like him. They hated Hillary Clinton even more.

Q: It's interesting how Hillary Clinton as first lady developed so many people to dislike her. I mean she's -- as we speak now she's Secretary of State --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- and certainly has proved her intelligence, her competence, and talking in the Foreign Service people at the time had the greatest respect for her.

JONES: Oh, without a doubt.

Q: Because particularly on certain things like women's issues she was wonderful as far as presenting a very strong -- our views very strongly and all. But the Military, I don't know. I think it was, I think it was almost cultural that they didn't want to see a strong woman.

JONES: That was it. That's exactly what it was. They equated her to a being some kind of tough broad and they were scared of her. Remember Lorena Bobbitt? The woman who cut her husband's penis off?

Q: Yes.

JONES: They saw Hillary Clinton and Lorena Bobbitt in the same light. While they tried to make jokes about her, to them she was an emasculating strong female. Those of us in the civilian world loved her. You know, I thought she was fantastic.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I have met with her a couple of times and she's just fantastic. I think she's

probably one of the best Secretaries of State that we have had.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I don't know whether the military guys feared her or just disliked what she represented. I'm not sure. And, they thought Secretary Perry was a weak Secretary of Defense. But, we had a good Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, at the time. It was Colin Powell. And, they loved him. They loved the ground he walked on. They would have done everything for him.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the Gulf War had diffused off a lot of the unhappiness over the Vietnam War.

JONES: No, it was a different thing. I don't think we'll ever get over Vietnam until this whole generation of veterans die. Those guys who are in their seventies and eighties now will have to die off before the anger subsides. By and large, the military guys blamed the loss in Vietnam on politicians. And, they made no bones about it. I think that will continue. The bulk of the guys who served on the ground are probably in their late sixties and seventies now. I believe when the generation is gone the country will see Vietnam in different light.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yeah. But, in 1993 Vietnam memories were still fresh. All of the senior guys at the War College had been Vietnam vets. Some guys had actually served in Vietnam were there as junior officers.

Q: Well you left there when?

JONES: I graduated in June of 1994, with a Masters Degree in Strategic Studies. Afterwards, I was assigned to be the Deputy Chief of Mission in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

Q: OK. Let me stop for just one second.

JONES: OK.

Q: OK. So you're off to Ouagadougou.

JONES: Yep.

Q: Ouagadougou is the capital of what country?

JONES: Burkina Faso.

Q: Burkina Faso.

JONES: Yeah.

Q: OK, talk a bit about Burkina Faso.

JONES: Burkina Faso is a former French colony on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert in central West Africa. The population of the country is, I think about six to eight million people. By and large, the northern two-thirds of the country is in the Sahel, which is the southern part of the Sahara Desert. It is one of the countries that is experiencing desertification on a massive scale. The bottom third borders Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire. In the west it borders Mali. Niger is in the east. So it's a landlocked, very poor country. It is one of the third or fourth poorest countries in the world. It's main crop is people. By and large there are no industries in Burkina Faso. People go abroad and work and send money back. It had one railroad trunk that runs from Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire up to Ouagadougou and stops. The highway system runs, I would estimate 25 or 30 kilometers north of Ouagadougou and ends in the desert. Even though there are a number of large towns up there, there are no paved roads. You have to sort of learn how to get from place to place by knowing the way or having a compass so that you don't get lost. There are oil drums buried in the ground with arrows and names on them. So you know that if you get a certain distance and you miss the oil drum, you should go back and try to get your direction from the last oil drum. That's how you get up to a place like Gao and Dori and Koudougou and other places in the northern part of the country. The people in the north tend to be Tuaregs, Berber Arabs and nomads. The Afro or Negroid group tends to be in the southern part of the country, south of Ouagadougou. There is a road system in the south that will take you south to the city of Bobo-Dioulasso, which is sort of the economic capital. This road will allow you connect to the road to Bamako Mali or south to Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and southeast into Ghana. That road system also goes to the east to Niamey, Niger. And if you take a branch from them you can go into Lomé, Togo and to Cotonou, Benin.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: There is nothing north of the Sahel except Algeria and Libya. It's a country that should not exist. Maybe I shouldn't say that in public.

Q: Well, no --

JONES: But no, it shouldn't. There's no reason for it to exist.

Q: How did it --

JONES: It was a colony that the French used to divide the ethnic groups. It started out as Upper Volta. And so you have an ethnic group in Mali that is basically Tuareg (Berber) and this same ethnic group continues on across Mali through Timbuktu and into Burkina, Niger and Chad. They are mainly Moslems. And, they tend to be of one racial- ethnic group. In the south you have a different group. They are mainly Black and are dominated

by the Mossi Tribe and ethnic group. They are Christians and Animists. Other smaller tribal groups that are mainly Black and Negroid populate the south and are farmers and small traders. The French wanted to cut across the tribal and ethnic lines to keep the similar groups from organizing and becoming too strong. Weak tribal groups would not offer an organized challenge to the colonial authorities. So, they split the groups in a north/south basis as opposed to allowing them to unify in an east/west direction. This would have put all the ethnic/racial groups into individual countries and allow them to unify and become strong. So, you have Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad all there with just this one ethnic group in the northern regions of each country. They don't have any outlet to the sea. Nor, do they have the ability to unify to control the territory where their ethnic group resides. They do have salt and they recently discovered some small deposits of gold and uranium, but very small amounts. So, they just continue to exist as herders and traders.

Q: Well, did religion follow the same pattern where the Tuaregs who were Muslim and the Negroids were either Pagan or Christian get isolated in their own communities?

JONES: Yes, exactly. It's the same pattern that most colonial powers used. And, it provides a stimulus for ongoing conflicts that we think of as normal. The herders tend to encroach on the farmers / pastorals yearly as they move their herds to the south, to find grazing and water. The Negroid tribes tend to be farmers and are found in permanent local settlements. So it leads to a continuing conflict. When the Tuaregs, come south with their herds of cattle, camels, donkeys, horses and goats, they destroy the crops that the farmers have planted and ruin the scarce water sources of local villages. So, horrible fights erupt yearly, out in the countryside. I think the French organized the region like this on purpose to prevent one group from getting too much power over the others. In the southwest of Burkina, is the tribal kingdom of the Mossi. They are the dominant tribe in Burkina Faso. The Mossi Kingdom has headquarters down near the city of Bobo-Dioulasso. Historically, the Mossi king had worked in concert with the Tuaregs. During the years of slave trade, they helped capture and drive slaves to the coast where they could be sold to the whites.

Q: Because that was an area that was a major source of slaves, wasn't it?

JONES: Yes. They were bringing slaves out of West Africa through centers that used to be called the Gold Coast and the Slave Coast. Today this area includes Ghana, Liberia and Guinea. There were several sites on the coast where they sold slaves and now have become tourist havens and centers of cultural exchanges. Presidents Bush and Obama have visited these sites.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: The Ashanti tribe controlled the northern half of Ghana around Kumasi and places like that during the slave trading days. They were a separate kingdom. And, they fought wars with the Tuaregs, the captives would be taken to the gulf and sold to the Europeans. The Mossi were a part of that slave process. They still do not a good

reputation among the other local tribes. I think the French divided their region up like that so these tribes would have a protected enclave that could not be taken away. Also, I don't know why Togo or Benin exists. They are just two slivers of territory. The only reason I can think of for Togo to exist was because the Germans had an outpost there. Benin was formerly known as Dahomey. It was a buffer colony the French established to prevent the British in Nigeria from expanding westward.

Q: Germans, yeah. So when they left Africa, they left a colony behind.

JONES: Yes. Yes.

Q: -- divvied it up they couldn't let it get swallowed up.

JONES: Exactly. Nigeria of course is the big boy on the block. They sort of control the economy in the region. But, Upper Volta was one of these countries that really had nothing. And, and I don't know why it was first established. It continues to exist because the people have been told that they are different and should be a country. Once that happened, human egos became involved and no one wanted to give up his power to become a part of something bigger. Racially, ethnically, culturally and religiously, the countries on the Gulf of Guinea should join forces and become a force for peace, stability and economic development in the region. All of them from Nigeria, through Senegal should form a union and control the natural resources and trade in that part of Africa.

Q: In a way -- who was ambassador, by the way?

JONES: The first ambassador was Donald McConnell.

Q: I mean did you sort of sit around at the embassy and wonder why are we here?

JONES: *(laughs)* No, Donald McConnell and his wife had been former Peace Corps volunteers and they always had something going on. Every weekend we would have to go somewhere to visit a site of special project. And, so I got a chance to take, for example, a caravan from Dori to Timbuktu. We slept out in the desert for two weeks. I was with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees for the region. We did a lot of walking and talking to local people. It was one of my greatest experiences. You know, it was just breathtaking out there, especially at night. Ambassador McConnell had asked me whether I wanted to do it and I jumped at the chance. I said yes I'd love to do it. So, I was out there with some of the United Nations High Commission on Refugee folks who were traveling in the region to check on the status of refugees fleeing from the wars in Mali and the region of the Sahara that extended all the way up into Algeria and over into Libya. Because of the revolution in Mali, the refugees were strung out along the border with Burkina Faso, into Niger and up into southern Algeria. They were running from the Malian troops and mercenaries. The U.S. had been asked to assess the status of the refugees in order to make donations to the UNHCR to assist in refugee resettlement. And, so I was the U.S. person sent out to do the checking and to see if we should coordinate with the U.N. to help these refugees.

Q: What was the struggle between, in Mali?

JONES: There was a coup in Mali, I think in 1992. The Tuaregs allegedly sided with the revolutionaries and were attacked by the Malian army. They were all displaced from their homes and their properties confiscated. Most of them were fairly wealthy merchants who lived in and around Bamako. They controlled the trade routes that extended from Bamako into Timbuktu and northward into Algeria. Most of them were traders and businessmen. But, they were being rounded up by the Malian Army and allegedly persecuted. So, the UN High Commission on Refugees was called in to monitor the actions of the countries in the area. Since some of them were nomadic and moved on a seasonal basis, they had come into conflicted with many of the local farmers and villagers in the other countries. And, the Malian Army was forcing them to move farther and farther to the south in order to escape capture. Burkina Faso had not engaged a lot because most of the Tuaregs who came into Burkina would only come during the dry season to get to water and better pastures. Then once the rains started and grass started growing again, they moved back north. It was quite an interesting experience. I got a chance to get to Timbuktu a couple times. But, the president at the time was Compaoré, Blaise Compaoré, who is a Muslim, in name only. He married a Liberian woman who was a cousin to Charles Taylor's wife. He speaks basic English but will not do so in public. He lived across the wall from my residence which backed on to the military compound in Ouagadougou. And as you know, Burkina in the last couple months have had some, some problems with the revolt of the military and the police. But, back then, socialism was the rule. In the early days after independence, a man named Thomas Sankara who was a good friend of Jerry Rawlings, who was the president at the time in Ghana, had set up a socialist republic and renamed Upper Volta, Burkina Faso, "The land of Upright Men", in some local dialect. The French inveigled Blaise Compaoré to kill Sankara, even though they had been classmates in the military. Sankara had been sort of a wild card. He tried to pattern his government after the Castro government in Cuba and had extended hands of friendship to the Soviets and the Chinese. So, after Sankara was assassinated, Compaoré took over as president. He was still president up until the end of 2014 when he was overthrown and was forced to flee. Over the years, he had been considered one of the senior African heads of state. But, had there been something there to fight over I'm sure that the people would have kicked him out sooner.

Q: No blood diamonds, no oil.

JONES: No, no, nothing.

Q: No groundnuts.

JONES: No groundnuts but, some cotton and salt. I saw slaves for the first time in my life in Burkina Faso. I went up to some of the salt mines up there in the northern part of the country. It was desolate and depressing. There were a lot of young boys working in totally deplorable conditions. In addition the Tuaregs also had a tribe of slaves called the Bella. They had been historical slaves of the Tuaregs and had never been freed even after

Mali got its freedom from France. These same groups extend across the border into Mauritania. Mauritania is one of the few countries in Africa that admits that slavery still exists within its borders.

Q: I mean there obviously isn't a hell of a lot of character involved, but were the Libyans messing around there?

JONES: Yeah, Libyans were there, Iranians were there, Chinese were there, and the Cubans were there. I lived next door to the Cuban ambassador and his son played on the embassy softball team.

Q: What the -- I mean did you all get together and say what are we -- what the hell are we doing?

JONES: All the time. As a matter fact, the Cuban ambassador would come to our softball games to see his son play. He was a good guy. But, we couldn't be seen together in public. The Iranians were different. They wouldn't even talk to us. We would see them at a reception and they would literally turn their backs on us. The Algerians, Russians and Chinese would act civilized. But, we had the whole mix of countries in Ouagadougou that we did not recognized diplomatically.

Q: I would have thought that I mean, you know, this is a losing game for everybody.

JONES: It was only a show of face. That was the only reason why those missions are there. There were both Taiwanese and Chinese embassies there. The mainland Chinese expanded their operations throughout Africa. They built the stadium in Ouagadougou. They built the highway and repaired the railroad. And you know, they're basically out there speculating, trying to get things for China. Niger was probably almost as bad. I know it had the same cast of characters in residence there. But, living in the desert is no fun. In Burkina, Mali, Niger and Chad the existence is really difficult. Sand storms, seasonal rain storms happened every year. Things really get bogged down during the rainy season. When the rains came in you had to plan your time and events around the weather. When it rained, it really rained. I mean everything flooded and the streets were full of water and impassable. People had their homes washed away. There was no drainage system in the city. Those poor people who lived in these mud huts would all lose their houses. Walls and roofs would collapse. Malaria and dengue fever would spike. It would be like the end of the world. People got used to it. But, for us outsiders, it was a yearly disaster.

Q: Well I mean, knowing nothing about it, but when I'm talking to my colleagues I often toss off, "Well, you could always wind up in Ouagadougou," you know, I mean --

JONES: Yes.

Q: And, in American language --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- One thing. It's not so much now, but Timbuktu was the end of the world.

JONES: It was really interesting. To go to Timbuktu to see what it looks like now and to understand that it was a truly historical place was really something for me. People can tell the history and the place still stands in what used to be the crossroads of the known world. You have the old grios who know the history of the place, by heart. They can tell you the history of the kingdoms and that this used to be the center of the trade routes between the kingdoms in the south and the kingdoms in the north, like Egypt, Syria and Europe. They used to have forests, they had gold and jewelry and a university that taught medicine. It was all there. And then, as the desert creeped in over the years, the university started to fall apart, the trade routes were crippled and kingdoms fell. The University of Timbuktu today is just a series of sand covered buildings. The real desertification started about 1300 AD. After that, things went downhill. The city lost its importance and they just lost everything. It is now just a shadow of its former self. The Sahara just grew until it overtook Timbuktu. But, you still have the trade routes and trading groups going through there; carrying trade goods to outposts in the desert and into southern Algeria and Libya. It's amazing to sit in the marketplace where people would tell you that, you know, this place has been in operation since the 1500's, and talk about kings like Kankan Musa, who in 1590, or something, took 10,000 people on the hajj to Mecca. There were thousand camels and horses in the caravan. This is the kind of fact that happened throughout their history. It was just truly amazing. And, on the other hand, the Tuaregs consider themselves to be a part of the lost tribe Israel. They contend that when the Kingdom of Egypt started to break apart and expelled the Jews, some of the tribes went north and some went south. And they, the Tuaregs, considered themselves to be the lost tribe that went south. And, genetically they are the same people that you currently find in Israel and the Middle East. They also have some of the same religious and cultural traditions as the ancient Israelites.

Q: Now, did the Tuaregs, I mean is there a Tuareg national movement? I think of the Kurds, and the Tuaregs seem to be somewhat of the same ilk, you know, sort of on all sorts of borders.

JONES: Yes. The Tuaregs range from Senegal and Mauritania in the west to Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia in the east. I mean it's just truly amazing. There are no borders for them. I've been in Bamako and some seen guys and, and then a month later I would see those same guys in Dori, Burkina Faso. And, two months later you see those same guys in Niamey, Niger. You know, these folks just walk with their livestock and trade goods from place to place, just like they have been doing for centuries. That is what they have done all their lives and in spite of political borders being drawn they continue to ply the same trades, over the same ground.

Q: They still have sort of blue faces?

JONES: Yes.

Q: From the veils they wear?

JONES: Yes. I'll show you some pictures one of these days. They dye their cloth an indigo and they wear it as turbans and head scarf's and when they sweat dye runs onto their skin and turn it blue. It's like the color of this sweater I am wearing.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: The women also have the same coloration because they use the same cloth.

Q: Now, the women are treated differently than --

JONES: Oh yes.

Q: I mean they're sort of equal to men, aren't they?

JONES: Oh yeah, in the Tuareg community there is always a "head woman". Oh yeah. You have a meeting and if the head lady isn't there they will have a meeting, you know. She has to come, she has a place at the table she sits at the side of the chief and discussions will take place. Not like the Arab situation at all, totally and completely different. And, in terms of tribal hierarchy, it comes through the wife's family, not the husband's family. So, if your father was a chieftain and you're the oldest daughter, you would become the chieftain when he dies. This kind of thing was common. Even in business transactions, normally, the head woman had the business knowledge and experience. So it's an interesting society. It is an extremely society with old traditions. And, believe it or not, they still had slaves in places like Mali and Northern Burkina, Niger and Chad. So it's a hard life, but you know, the kind of slavery was different from what we had in the new world.

Q: How do they get along at the time you were there with the neighbors?

JONES: They don't get along at all.

Q: They're surrounded by -- God.

JONES: Almost every spring and fall there are just flat out battles. In the springtime after the rains stop you're going to have a fight, because these herders are moving their cattle across villages that have planted crops and prepared for harvesting. The planters are also from warrior backgrounds. So they do not shrink from a fight. Every young Tuareg boy when he reaches the age of 12 gets a dagger, as a sign of his reaching manhood. So they all carry these curved daggers. And, they hide their guns, of course. You know, they don't let outsiders see them. But, during the years I was there, a number of the USAID convoys had been ambushed up in the border area. Our regional USAID director in Mali was ambushed and attacked a couple of drivers were killed. So yeah, these guys adhere to a warrior's credo. Currently, this is where one of Qadhafi's sons fled. He was somewhere

up around the border of Niger and Burkina. Blaise Compaoré offered Qadhafi asylum in Burkina during the Libyan uprising. So the Tuaregs wander around out there. It's a tough area to police, and you can't get on the ground out there without somebody knowing who you are. Strangers have been known to disappear easily in these regions.

Q: All right, how about on the Negroid side? Is this a different culture?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: I mean really different attitudes or --

JONES: Totally and completely different. Their perspectives were oriented southward, toward the water. So their relations are more with people of northern Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Togo, Ivory Coast and Liberia. So, they tend not to be so much concentrated in Ouagadougou, but in villages south of the city. In the western part of the country near the Mali border, they tend to be Christians or animists. They don't venture up into the desert at all. I mean the history is that they would be captured and taken as slaves if they wandered into the territory of the Tuaregs. After the Songhai Kingdom ended and the Ashanti Kingdom was defeated by the British, I think is around 1350 or so, the Blacks tended to avoid the northern areas, at all costs. So what you would have would be raids by the Tuaregs. They would come from the north to raid villages and capture people. They would then take them south to sell. It really wasn't until about 1600 or 1700 that whites started to go into the interior. The tribes did not permit them to go into the interior in the early days. So, all the slave trade, in the early days of international slave trade was carried on by Tuaregs and other groups of friendly tribes. The camel, the horse and donkey would be the chief means of transportation. The tribes who had the means to move around in the region dominated life. The farmers and pastoralists were mainly the victims.

Q: OK, here you are the Deputy Chief of Mission. What'd you do? I mean what were our interests? I mean what were we doing there?

JONES: I was mainly managing the day-to-day operations of the mission and interacting with the international community. We didn't have good friends in the local government. We had not really made friends with Blaise Compaoré. I think he saw me as a black man and, and somebody that he could deal. This particularly came into play after Charles Taylor spoke on our behalf. But yes, he, he would come by my house when nobody was looking. He would bang on the gate and the guard would come and say, "Monsieur Jones, the president is here". It would be around 10:00 at night and he would creep in through the back gate and ask if I had any scotch.

Q: Why would he do it secretly?

JONES: I think because he wanted to come over to drink and as a practicing Moslem he was not supposed to drink alcohol. Also, I think he wanted to pick my mind about things we, the U.S. was doing in the region.

Q: Ah-ha (laughs).

JONES: He drank scotch. So yeah, he didn't want people at the military base to see him drinking. And so he'd sit there and drink up my booze and we'd talk. His favorite American was Marion Barry, the former mayor of Washington, D.C.

Q: Oh God.

JONES: So, you can see the direction in which his mind ran.

Q: This is the Mayor -- was the Mayor of Washington with all sorts of cocaine and --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- money problems and --

JONES: Yes. He just wanted to meet Marion Barry. So you know, he'd sneak in and we'd talk until sometimes until 2:00 in the morning. And then he'd stagger out and go back through the gate and probably go to sleep. But, I got a chance to see inside the government inner-circle, so to speak. I got a chance to see what was going on inside the government. I think he trusted me a little bit. Even though I reported back about what had happened, nothing ever came back to him to indicate that I was not keeping his conversations confidential. So he sort of felt I could keep my mouth shut about what transpired during the conversation.

Q: Well, was there any interest in Washington?

JONES: Very little. State was more interested in Charles Taylor, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Foday Sanko, Mali and what was going on in Nigeria. We had a big Nigerian mission in Ouagadougou. There was an unfriendly administration in Lagos. The President of Nigeria, at the time, was a General named Sani Abacha.

Q: I want to say he died, but his --

JONES: He died in office. It was reported that he had been poisoned by his food handlers.

Q: He was rather nasty.

JONES: Yeah, I will always remember his name.

Q: He hung people --

JONES: My experience was with the ambassador from Nigeria. While I was Charge, he called me one night to tell me that the Nobel Prize winning writer, Wole Soyinka, had

escaped from Nigeria overland and he was in Ouagadougou. Soyinka had been very critical of the President Abacha and after being beaten up, he escaped and found his way to Burkina. He wanted to know whether I would help Wole get out of the region so that President Abacha's agents would not be able to find him. While he was in sympathy, he could not do anything without the president finding out about it. I called the Washington Operations Center and spoke to the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. I told her that the man was outside my door. I asked her what I should do. She told me to use my common sense and remember that I was also a Consular Officer. So, I invited him in. He had been beaten pretty badly. After a few days, we were able to make an arrangement with the UN High Commission to let him stay in their compound until we were able to get permission for him to travel to a neutral country. And so, we were able to arrange a special passport, a U.N. Laissez Passer, and I issued him a visa on one of the pages, which we were able to attach to the UN booklet. He was able to get out to France and eventually he wound up in Switzerland.

Q: Abacha was not a nice man.

JONES: Yeah, Abacha was a real nasty SOB (son of a bitch). But, during this tour we had all kinds of operations going on. There were all kinds of secret stuff going on with Charles Taylor showing up with guys like Foday Sankoh from Sierra Leone, Cubans moving through, Nigerians escaping and French-Algerians being deported to Burkina.

Q: Sounds like almost an R&R (rest and relaxation) spot for nasty people.

JONES: Yeah, it was pretty bad. These were wild times. I remember France had a big operation going on in Algeria and Southern France. They kicked out a lot of Algerian leftists and Burkina Faso offered them asylum. And so, again, one of our jobs was to go and talk to these guys. These were the Algerian rebels. They were quite an interesting group of folks who were embarrassing the government of France. Now, they are considered patriots. They were allowed to return to France after the government changed in Paris.

Q: Well, did you have the equivalent to Lebanese shopkeepers and all that?

JONES: Oh yeah. They ran everything except the Nigerians businesses. They ran the restaurants. They owned the supermarkets and owned the hotels. The Nigerians ran the rag trade and all the trade goods. But the Lebanese and the Chinese were there, in force. Nigerians were, of course, hated. Lebanese, because they were French speaking, were white, were more accepted. To give you an example of the kinds of bad reputations the Nigerians had, someone started a story in town that Nigerians were cursed. The story was that if you allowed a Nigerian to touch you, your genitals would disappear. I remember, on one occasion going over to the marche, the open air market, which is the big market in the middle of town, and hearing a sword fight going on. We heard the clanging of swords. C*lang, clang, clang*, I was with my cook. And he said, come on, sir, we've got to run. I asked what was happening. He said, some Nigerian touched a Tuareg guy and the guy claimed his genitals were disappearing, and so they got into a big swordfight. It was

just unbelievable.

And then, we would have crazy acting Americans wander through. One Friday afternoon I got a call from Chief of Police. He asked me to come down to the station right away, we have a problem with three American girls.

I got there as soon as I could and asked had what happened. There were three young girls dressed in shorts, t-shirts and sandals. The police officer said that they had been attacked on the street. They had been beaten pretty badly. I asked what had happened.

They said they were just walking down to the market and there were these guys out there in front of this building and they were sitting on rugs listening to a loudspeaker. They had their little rugs on the sidewalk and as we walked through the crowd on the sidewalk, they were attacked. I said, "You're kidding me."

They walked right through the men attending a prayer section at one of the largest mosques in town. I mean they were in shorts and t-shirts. I asked them if they realized what they had done. They said that no one had warned them about dressing that way, let alone barging into the Friday prayer and walking on prayer rugs with their shoes on. They had just come up from the coast and planned on hiking to some of the northern villages. I was really taken aback, ignorant American kids. They were lucky not to have been injured worse. I told them they were lucky you're alive. I explained that the mosque was in the middle of its evening prayers. The men you disturbed were praying. And, you walked across their prayer rugs in your sandals, shorts and t-shirts. Little things like these were our bane. I mean, it was just truly amazing how little attention people paid to local customs and practices, before coming to a place like Burkina Faso.

Q: Was there any residue of the I guess the '60s and the '70s of black Americans going back for, for their roots, you know?

JONES: I'm glad you pointed that out. That was probably some of the worst experience I've ever had in my life. African-American visitors didn't understand that they were seen as strangers in Africa. Somehow, they figured that once they got off the airplane in Africa, they would be accepted as brothers and sisters. Well, they aren't. I mean they were Americans. And so the people in Africa made no bones about it. They would respond "You're not my brother". I have a brother, but he lives in my village. And, it was hard to get American Blacks to understand that just because they had the same skin color doesn't mean that you are going to be accepted as a kinsman. And yeah, it was hard on some of them. I had a number of cases like that. Black Americans thought that they would just be taken in and treated like long lost family members. Some would show up with no money, and having no way to get them back to the States. The misconception that a lot of them had, that led them to come to Africa, in the first place, proved to be false. It was so hard to explain the facts of life to them.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Once, there was an American lady who had come out to Africa to volunteer her nursing skills. She had driven up, alone, from Accra in a brand new Range Rover. And she was going to meet another woman who was French and they were going to travel to Niger to help the Tuareg refugees. This was, I guess, around the end of April. The rains hadn't started and it was still really dry. She came by the Embassy and explained what she was planning to do. I tried to convince her that it was a bad idea to have two women out there alone. After a couple of days, and the French nurse had not shown up, she decided to drive on to Niger alone. I told her she should not try to make the two day trip alone. I warned her about having to cross two frontiers and go through long stretches of countryside that was desolate. Like most driven people, she was determined to do what she had set her mind to do. She was determined to get out to the desert to help those poor Tuareg children. Finally, after waiting three days for her friend from France, she said it did not matter, she was going to go out there alone.

I said, "I don't advise you going by yourself. Don't you think you should make some other kind of arrangement?"

She said she had planned a driving route and would stop at certain places on the way. So, two days later, the lady from France shows up in Ouagadougou. In the interim, the American nurse had departed. I called the mission in Niamey and was told that she had not arrived. We checked with the border control post on the frontier and were told that she never arrived there. So, we checked with the game park guys rangers down in Nazinga Reserve and places like that along the normal routes to Niamey. No one had seen her. Well, the rains started in May and then three months later when the game reserves reopened some rangers found her in her vehicle. After the rains, the vegetation grows so rapidly that new trails have to be cut into the reserves to get to the water holes. And so, while the rangers were hacking out a trail down to one of the water holes, they found her. She had been dead, I don't know how long, but it had to have been several months. She had obviously driven into the reserve and gotten stuck. Her vehicle had broken down or she could not find her way back to the highway. She stayed with the vehicle, but obviously something went wrong with the car and she couldn't get it started. But, she kept a diary which the rangers found in the vehicle. She started out writing in a very neat script. And, towards the end, you could see how she had been unable to control her writing. She would have two or three words per page. It was really something to see. You could actually see her failing health in her writing. I mean she would write her most intimate thoughts knowing that she would not be found and being too afraid to venture away from the vehicle because of the animals. She had died in the vehicle and her body had dried out because of the heat. It was just unbelievable. But, those are the kinds of things that would happen out there, all the time. People would just take off and do stupid things, like going off by themselves and forgetting that they were not in America.

Q: What about trying to get UN votes and all that? I mean --

JONES: We knew the countries in the diplomatic circles of Burkina Faso weren't going to vote with us at the U.N.

Q: Where did they go for their marching orders?

JONES: They basically did what France told them to do. The French had the biggest mission out there and, and by and large they considered themselves socialists. The Francophone countries would do what France told them to do in the international bodies. So, if we could get France to take a certain position, the Francophone countries would follow along.

Q: Well, the French president at the time was a socialists.

JONES: Yes. The only countries that were sort of independent, out there, at the time, were Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria of course. But, by and large the Francophone countries did what they were told to do.

Q: Well, what were your relations with the French embassy?

JONES: They were great, really. We had a lot of good exchanges. They were very forthcoming. I mean we could deal on any level with them. They were quite cooperative.

Q: Well, the French had several places where they kept troops.

JONES: Yes.

Q: Were they -- were any troops, French troops involved in -- when you were --

JONES: Oh yeah. There was a garrison of French Foreign Legionnaires in Burkina Faso. The French also ran the police department as well as the fire department. It was a very comfortable setup for them. There weren't really any problems. I would always see the troops jogging in the mornings. They knew me and sometimes asked me to run with them. I would always try to catch up with them because I knew nobody was going to bother me in the street, as long as I was with them. But, they were quite active and with the big garrison there, they were easily recognized and respected by local people.

Q: Well, you left there when?

JONES: I left there in 1998. I was assigned to the Department to the Bureau of African Affairs, Office for West Africa. I was responsible for the countries in West Africa.

Q: OK.

JONES: In the West Africa Office, I worked for the Assistant Secretary for African Affairs.

Q: All right. Well, I think that's a good place to stop.

JONES: OK.

Q: And this is 1998 and you're going to the Bureau of West African Affairs.

JONES: Yes.

Q: All right.

JONES: So you shouldn't repeat anything you hear here. Okay?

Q: OK. Today is the 7th of November, 2011 with the Master tape for John Jones. And we're up to 1998. What are you up to?

JONES: I left Ouagadougou and came back to the Department. I was assigned to The African Bureau, Office of West Africa Affairs. The office basically had responsibility for all the countries in West Africa. I was basically a glorified Desk Officer. I was also assigned to work on special projects like the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. I handled the confirmation process for incoming ambassadors to Senegal, Burkina, Niger, Togo and Guinea.

Q: All right, well how did we look upon -- I mean these are the, sort of the Charles Taylor wars, aren't they?

JONES: Yes, these were the blood diamond wars.

Q: How did we view those? What was the cause and what was happening from your perspective?

JONES: From our perspective, we had a two-fold approach. One was to try to get Taylor to come over to our side. And, the other was to try to prevent organizations like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) under Foday Sankoh, in Sierra Leone and in Southern Guinea from taking over more territory. We had a very active Assistant Secretary at the time, Ambassador Howard Jeter. And, we had a series of office bosses who had worked in West Africa. One of them was Sharon Wilkinson who had come back after having served as Ambassador in Burkina. There was little agreement on what the U.S. should be doing in the region. Many in the office had strong opinions about what the U.S. position should be concerning West Africa. We had some policies that we were trying to put into place. We had some Special Envoys that we sent out to try to talk to the leaders. One of them was Rev. Jesse Jackson. He was such a disaster that he had to be recalled. But basically we were trying to mollify Charles Taylor and keep him from spreading violence outside the region. In Cote d'Ivoire they still had a fairly stable government under the Ivorian President. He and his crowd had taken over after the death of long-time President Houphouët-Boigny. And, we had a good friend in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cote d'Ivoire. Alassane Ouattara, he had been one of my classmates at the Wharton Graduate School. He eventually became president. So, we did not worry about what happened there, during those days.

Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea were our major problems. Abdoulaye Wade had just taking over as president in Senegal, and it was a stable country. So it wasn't, too much of a problem for us. We sent a very strong ambassador out to Dakar, Ambassador Harriet Elam-Thomas, former USIA officer but a very strong lady who was well respected. She maintained an excellent relationship with the Senegalese government.

Q: What's her name?

JONES: Elam-Thomas, Harriet.

Q: And where is she now?

JONES: She is now the Scholar in Residence at Central Florida University. She is a very, very talented lady who started out in the Foreign Service as a secretary and wound up as ambassador. She was one of my mentors. I had the pleasure of working with her to prepare her for ambassadorial hearings. I also did the same for Jimmy Kolker who went out to Burkina Faso. Barbro Owens- Kirkpatrick who went out to Niger, was another ambassador I helped to process. During my two years in the office, I helped process about five or six different ambassadors. I briefed them and prepared talking points for their confirmation hearings. It was interesting from the perspective that I could provide some first-hand information to them because of my experience in the region. While we saw Charles Taylor as sort of a loose canon, he was still willing to talk to us. This was better than talking directly to someone like Foday Sankoh whom it was determined was a human rights violator. Lansana Conté, the President of Guinea, did come to Washington, but it was just a total waste of time. He was not willing to change his ways or loosen up on his control over the government of Guinea. I attended the meetings between President Conte, Rev. Jackson and Assistant Secretary Jeter. We really couldn't get anything from him. He was sort of stuck in his way and wasn't going to change after all the years of being a virtual dictator.

Q: What was his way?

JONES: He was a dictator, a flat out dictator. He had no concern whatsoever about human rights and any violations of human rights. We were trying to get him to clamp down on what was going on in southern Guinea with the illegal diamond trade. He was obviously getting a lot of money out of the trade. There is a river called the Mano River that forms a part of the border between Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The Mano River Valley is probably one of the richest diamond areas in the world. I mean it's one of those places where you can see, if the sun is right, the diamonds sparkling in the sand along the river banks. This is where a lot of blood diamonds were coming from. A great deal of money flowed through the area. It was controlled by armed elements from all three countries. Most of the money was used to pay local officials and warlords for protection. Men like Charles Taylor and, and Foday Sankoh with their armed groups of paid mercenaries, mainly from South Africa and Russia, were cleaning out the diamonds and reaping huge profits. They were selling the diamonds and buying arms to continue the violence and gaining more power. Monetizing the diamonds was easy because the

Lebanese and Israeli merchants were middle men who facilitated the trade by buying diamonds as well as selling arms. They were hanging around in large numbers in capital cities like Freetown, Monrovia, Ouagadougou and Conakry. Mercenary armies were buying arms from the Israelis and Libyans and shipping them overland into West Africa, or by sea into Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Some other nationalities like Libyans, Moldovans and Georgians were also busy, selling arms in the region. Arms were being sold openly. But, our policy was basically to try to keep the violence from going across the borders. We didn't want violence to get into Cote D'Ivoire or God forbid, Ghana. We knew it was not likely that violence would flow over into Burkina or Mali because the leaders in those countries were facilitators of the arms for diamonds trade. So this was one of those strange situations we faced in the bureau. But, it was an interesting two years.

Q: For somebody reading this, how would you define blood diamonds?

JONES: These were diamonds that were being mined basically by slaves. They were young kids that were taken from villages in Sierra Leone by the RUF or were captives from Liberia. These were young men, mainly and they were made to work in the diamond fields. Some of this happened in Guinea, but there was little reporting from Guinea. Down in Liberia some of the child soldiers were also sent to work in the diamond fields. They were fed very little. They were given drugs to keep them going until they fell dead or simply passed out from exhaustion. They were fed a drug called brown-brown. I'm not sure if you've heard of it. It is a mixture of cocaine or heroin and gunpowder. I understand it just eats the user's brains. Charles Taylor had turned these little kids into animals. I mean, after they became addicted, they were basically non-communicative. And, they were just out there to get rewarded for the number of diamonds they found. And so you know, one kid might pick up a diamond, but if he was small or weak, somebody would beat him up and take it away from him. Turning in a diamond meant that they would get some special favor from the work leader or get an extra ration of food. The diamonds were processed in Freetown, Monrovia and Conakry. They would then be shipped out by Lebanese and Jewish merchants mainly to Israel and Antwerp, Belgium. They would then be cut and sold on the open market. So, the Mano River Valley was just a devastated area. I mean, young men and women from the age of about six into the teenage years were literally being held in servitude and under slave-like conditions. So that's what the male kids would face once they got captured and sent to the diamond fields. They could work and obey or they would be killed or die from the conditions out there.

Q: Were we trying to do anything in the field?

JONES: We didn't have a policy to address this practice directly. I mean, we really didn't know it was going on, at the time. These facts started to come to light after they had been in place for some time. You know, having been the Consul General in Belgium and knowing about the other end of it, like Charles Taylor coming and going from Belgium and having access to Libya, we should have guessed what was happening. But, the wars were ongoing in Sierra Leone and Liberia and we had no way of finding out what was

happening on the ground. We didn't have eyes on the ground and policy on West Africa was not a priority, at the time. The Israeli government was involved, so I believe, the U.S. just turned a blind eye to what they were doing in the region. I mean the Jewish diamond merchants in Tel Aviv and Antwerp were working hand-in-hand with these guys. The same applied to Muammar Gaddafi's government in Libya. Libya served as the conduit for the diamonds being sent out as well as for the importation of some of the arms into West Africa. So yeah, we saw the end result in terms of the violence that the kids suffered. But, we ignored the actual process of what was going on in other places to make their suffering what it was. For example, if you refused to work, particularly in places like Sierra Leone, you would face the knife. I mean they would cut a hand off or a foot or your ears or genitals. They were known for disfiguring people. They would ask whether you wanted a long sleeve or a short sleeve, before they cut off your hand or arm. This was the Revolutionary United Front, under the leadership of Foday Sankoh. He had been a Sierra Leonean Army Sergeant, I think. But they all had friends here in Washington. Charles Taylor's family lived here, also, Sankoh's wife was here in Washington. The large Liberian expatriate community and the large Sierra Leone community were also here. So it really wasn't possible to form a perspective or policy, against our traditional friends like Liberia and Sierra Leone without some hard information that they were violating human rights. We were always trying to maintain good working relations with them.

Q: Well, I think that there would have been a concurrence of non-governmental agencies, NGO's (Non-Government Organization) dealing human rights and all --

JONES: Oh yeah.

Q: -- which we tried to get the British, the French, the Germans, the Americans to do something about.

JONES: Yeah, they were very active. I mean Red Cross, Red Crescent, World Food Program and lot of these type organizations were out there. But, you have to understand the climate. They are also preyed upon once they got out into the field. So it was awfully difficult to get somebody down into the Mano River Valley to give us reports for fear of them being kidnapped or killed. They were able to work in Freetown, Monrovia, and Conakry, but there was very little you could do out there on the ground. I mean there are so many refugees. There were just millions of refugees going back and forth across the borders depending on where the battles were taking place. If there was a fight going on in Liberia people ran into Guinea or Sierra Leone. If there was a fight or a raid or something across in Sierra Leone they fled back to Liberia. So it's just a big, huge flux of people. They even went as far as Burkina and Ghana, just to get away from the fighting. So, a big Liberian community grew in Ouagadougou as well as in Cote d'Ivoire, as far north as Bouaké and some cities up near the border. It was a time of flux and, and our policies were just slow and backwards.

Q: Was there any interest in Congress?

JONES: Yeah, the Congressional Black Caucus sent a couple people out there. And, the secretary appointed Rev. Jesse Jackson as a special envoy of some kind. But Jackson proved to be totally inept, totally, completely inept. As a matter fact, the Assistant Secretary sent him home once. They went out to Monrovia and had a dinner with Taylor and some members of his cabinet. Jackson made some off the cuff remarks about Charles Taylor being a brother and was respected for the job he was doing in Liberia. The Assistant Secretary pulled him outside and told him to go back to Washington. It was not the kind of message that the U.S. wanted to give Taylor. He put the Reverend on a plane the next day and sent him home. So it was awfully difficult to get a concrete message to leaders because there were other things going on and no firm policy had been developed in the department. I got the feeling that they weren't really interested in what was going on out there. It was just one of those areas that they had sort of been neglected for so many years. We had gotten our fingers burned in Rwanda in 1994 and we didn't really want to get into the difficult position of sending more than one or two representatives to that part of the world, least we get involved in a quagmire. So it was hardcore, a really hardcore decision that was made.

Q: Did you have any people in the press who were particularly interested in the --

JONES: There were lots of journalists and reporters in the area. Unfortunately, there were not a lot of American journalists. There was lots of press from France, Great Britain and other European countries. After all, these were former colonies and the Europeans felt impacted by the activities in the area. And so, they were looking at putting stuff in the French press, particularly how the war impacted on Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina. But you know, they considered Sierra Leone and Liberia to be ours. They were considered as former American colonies. So there was no need to mess with those guys. The word was let the Americans handle it. Human Rights Watch did a couple stories. But other than that, everything centered on the illicit diamond trade. That was a key issue out there.

Q: How about the gun trade?

JONES: *(chuckles)* Guns were everywhere. I mean even in the early '90s arms trafficking was rampant. I got to Ouagadougou in 1994. I lived in sight of the airport. I could always tell who was coming and going because all regular flights maintained regular schedules. The use of private planes was rare. But, you knew exactly what was coming in. At the time, Air Afrique and Air France flew in every day. And, sometimes, you would have these huge aircraft landing in the middle of the night with no markings. We knew they were either from Russia or South Africa. The Georgians, Moldovans or Libyans would be sending in arms and other contraband. They would come in and I could sit on my patio and watch them land and unload. I would start jogging, around 5:00 in the morning, soon as it got light, and I would always have a couple guards following me. They weren't really guards. They were security men who would just watch to see where I was going. I would often run down the path by the airport to see if I could see the tail numbers of the aircraft. They were always obscured. So, I would see a couple trucks pull up there and guys unloading crates. But, as soon as it got light the plane would take off. Later, Charles Taylor and some of his buddies would show up with a couple trucks and they would load

the crates and take off, I assume for Liberia. So that's basically how some of the guns came in. They came through Ouagadougou, basically. And, I'm not sure whether they were from Libya or whether they were from some part of the former Soviet Union. The guns didn't show up in Burkina. You really didn't see them until you got down as far as the city of Bobo-Dioulasso or Mann on the Liberian border. But Blaise Compaoré was kind of guy who would not want uncontrolled guns in his country. And, so I am sure he had an agreement with Taylor not to use guns in Burkina. Other than that I believe this was how some guns got into the region. And you know, the U.S. Navy, was watching the coast so they couldn't bring much through the ports of Monrovia o Freetown. This was an ugly time, a very ugly time in the region.

Q: What were sort of the politics of the African Bureau --

JONES: *(chuckles)* Yeah. There was lots of politics in the Bureau.

Q: -- because you -- I mean I, I can see you sitting there in a staff meeting and talking about the slaughters and all this.

JONES: Yes.

Q: I mean after all people begin to roll their eyes.

JONES: Yeah I would sit there and my eyes would glass over after a while. But you know, the hard part for us was that we had policies inside the bureau that I just don't think that were being translated into policy up at the seventh-floor level. You know our Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary would go to meetings every morning, but I'm not sure whether the messages from the functional desks got expressed and whether there was any real attempt to come up with policies to deter the violence in West Africa.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: And, like I said, I think there was this fear, after having gotten embarrassed by not doing anything in Uganda or in Rwanda that there was a feeling that we didn't really want to get involved, at all, in something going on in West Africa. These were a tough couple years there.

Q: What about AIDS? How much of an issue was it?

JONES: AIDS had started to become a big issue in Africa. The incidence of AIDS infections had started to grow in West Africa in the 90's. It initially was found in the Southern Cone regions but it quickly grew in the western part of the continent. But because it became so pervasive in so many seaports in the region, it had to be addressed. Most of the AIDS cases were found in the cities and was carried from the cities like Accra, Abidjan and Lagos to the countryside. The road system allowed truck and taxi drivers, who brought goods into the interior cities, to bring the infection with them. They

are considered to have been the initial carriers of the disease. They would go to the city, get infected and bring the infection back to their villages in the interior. I think that's where the problem was compounded. You would find a city like Ouagadougou that was sort of at the end of the road and the terminus of the railroad, having a very low incidence of infections, in the early days. And, countries like Burkina, Mali, Niger, and Chad, didn't really have high incidents of AIDS, in the early days. However, countries on the coast like Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, had large numbers of infections.

Q: Did we have any programs?

JONES: No, we did not have any programs in those years. For a long time, it was not accepted as an actual sickness. People were dying from what some locals called "the slim". Infected people would lose all of their body fat and become like skeletons before they died. I mean, people had different theories about how to prevent its spread. Most people did not accept the fact that this was a sexually transmitted disease. A lot of these guys, unfortunately, believed that some old witch doctor or somebody could come up with a cure. So for a week or so you would have a lot of people running to see this guy. Then, the theory developed that AIDS could be cured if the infected man had sex with a virgin. But other than that, there was really no concerted effort to do anything about it, except to educate people about the use of condoms. The major programs out there were trying to introduce condom usage. But, this did not go over well in the local culture in the interior. Most folks really didn't like to use condoms. Some people attributed it to Muslim traditions and the fear that men would lose their virility if they used condoms. A guy might be a truck driver coming from Accra and driving up to Ouagadougou. He might have three wives. And, if he got infected in a brothel in Accra, he would return home after his trip and infect all of his wives. In addition, he would probably stop in a brothel along the way. This kind of conduct enabled the rates of infection to grow dramatically. So, it was a difficult problem that could not be addressed with simple solutions. Peoples conduct had to be changed and they had to become more educated about the disease. Old traditions had to be put aside and women needed to be more forceful in changing men's traditional sexual practices. It was a really difficult problem for people in West Africa.

Q: Did we have a problem with our embassy employees? I'm thinking of the Americans.

JONES: Everybody was on guard. There wasn't a lot of dating. I was out there without my family. But, most of the folks who were in the embassies had family. And so we worried about the young guys, the Marines and young officers. I mean for most of us, you didn't dare go out and do anything like date locally. I warned my staff, I had, one or two single guys out there, plus we had a large contingent of Peace Corp Volunteers and so they were fully aware of the problem. The volunteers carried some of the prevention programs into the interior. So they were well aware of what was going on. And I think they probably did more to spread the word about prevention than anybody in the country. They were pretty good about it. I don't think we had to recall any volunteers during the years I was out in West Africa. Back in the department, I really don't know if it was just

not wanting to get involved, or just allowing others to do the heavy lifting on this issue. I don't think the politics of the time really came into play. At least I don't think the Secretary was that engaged in West African issues. But, anyhow it took some time before the Department started seriously to address the AIDS problem.

Q: Well then, you left there in 98?

JONES: Yes, I left the Africa Bureau in '98.

Q: 'And after 98?

JONES: I had remained in the Department and was named as Deputy Director of EUR/RPM. The Bureau of European Affairs, Office of Regional Political Military Affairs. I was in effect, the NATO Desk Officer. It was a year- long assignment that turned out to be quite interesting. I was the only Black face in a sea of whites. I worked for a great guy, Ambassador Robert Beecroft. We had a chance to look into issues surrounding the expansion of NATO into Eastern European countries that had been under the thumb of the Soviets since World War II. We were able to travel to Austria, Slovakia, Slovenia and Moldova. We visited the Office of Security Cooperation for Europe (OSCE) offices in Vienna. It was quite an interesting process and I think laid the framework for increasing NATO membership. Our trip to Moldova was the most interesting. It was the first time I had visited a former Soviet republic. The stark reality of the place is something I will never forget. It was a developing country with ice and snow. It was also where we saw the evidence of how weapons of war were being manufactured, without any apparent oversight. Also, how they were shipped down the Trans-Dniester River to Odessa on the Black Sea and out to the rest of the world. The eastern part of Moldova was a separate state unto itself. It is where the Kalashnikov factories are located and where the famous weapons were being made. The capitol, Chisinau, had little or no control over the region. The Russians controlled the region.

Q: I mean in the --

JONES: Oh, in the Department. Yeah, I left EUR/RPM in 99. I went over to the Inter-American Defense College at Ft. McNair, as a professor and faculty advisor.

Q: This is part of the National Defense University or was it something else? --

JONES: Yes, it's one of the seven units of the National Defense University.

Q: So what were you teaching?

JONES: I concentrated on diplomatic relationships in the Western Hemisphere, Latin America and the Caribbean nations. I did political analysis for the students who had come from Latin American and Caribbean countries. They were civilian, military and political types who had been assigned by their governments to attend the college for a one year program that ended with a Masters Degree in Regional Studies. I did a lot of the political

and historical relations between nations in the region. I also mentored several students and assisted them in their research for their final theses. The Department wanted to have a civilian in the military setting in order to give a perspective that most military students had never had. The idea was to enable the students to look at how they could best integrate civilian points of view into what had been wholly military operations in some countries. The college was trying to get future key government leaders in Latin America, understand that they should be under civilian control.

Q: Well, how did you find the students? Did you find some better, some worse? I mean --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yes, I mean you could look at them and determine from their demeanor how they would relate to others . They were all political appointees. Any time you get to be a colonel in countries that have histories like Colombia, Nicaragua, El Salvador or Argentina, you had to have political connections. So most of them came here as military attachés or in some kind official diplomatic capacity and stayed on for an extra year to do a Masters at Inter-America Defense College. It was a boondoggle for most of them. Some of them had their kids here who were in high school and didn't want to leave until the kids had graduated. There were also some very interesting men and women. The former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet, was a student advisee of mine. Carlos Castro who was to become the Head of the Police in Colombia was a student that year. And, there was the future Head of the Police in Ecuador. One of the students led a coup d'état in Ecuador and was also an army colonel and a student that year. So, we had a number of fairly high-ranking students from Latin America who went back and made big differences in their countries' history. They were both military and civilians. It was quite interesting, and sort of different from what I had done before. While I had served in Latin America twice, up to that point in time, I had only been in minor diplomatic positions. I had been Consul and Vice Consul in the Dominican Republic and Costa Rica. So I didn't interact with the level official that most of these students occupied. These were the cream of the crop of the countries they represented. For example, in the case of President Michelle Bachelet, her father had been a colonel in the Chilean Air Force who had been tortured and killed by former dictator Augusto Pinochet.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: She was just a very bright lady. She was a pediatrician in her own right and had a jewel of a personality. She was delightful to be around. Some of the students were just thumb breakers, as we called them. I mean, they were just outright thugs. They are probably in their sixties and seventies now. But, in those days you sort of knew who to stay away from. And, in some instances some of the people surprised us and turned out to be quite responsive and good students. The Foreign Minister Panama, for example, the guy who is now trying to get new elections in Guyana and the Minister of Education for Peru were there. All of them were advisees of mine. We had an opportunity to go to Venezuela during the year. I was introduced to Hugo Chavez, before he became president. It was quite an interesting experience.

Q: Well, were we trying to coordinate and educate these guys in the ways of democracy,

but in a way sort of civilize some of the nastier elements within the region. --

JONES: Yes.

Q: -- military as far as torture and --

JONES: Yes I mean it was awfully hard sometimes. These guys had their own cultures and brought them to the program. I remember an Argentinean colonel. He came into the office of the top American Air Force enlisted man at the College. As you know, the staff of Inter-American Defense College was made up of members of the American Military. And the man who ran things, outside of the director, was a Senior U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant. I mean this guy had like 12 stripes. He was "the man". He was in charge of almost everything. I remember, I was sitting in his office one morning and in walked this little short, fat Argentinean colonel with a pair of riding boots in his hand. He plops them down on the sergeant's desk and said "Shine these for me, I will be back at 12 noon to pick them up." I knew from the look on Sarge's face that I was either going to see a killing or something close to it. So, I slid back, got out of my chair and backed away from the desk. The colonel was standing there looking at the sergeant. He stood up. He was an African-American who stood about, 6'2, and weighed over 200 pounds of solid muscle. He said, "Professor Jones, can you excuse me for a minute?" *(laughs)*. So, I got the hell out of there. He slammed the door and he read this poor colonel the riot act, "You arrogant son of a bitch, who the hell do you think you are? I run this God damn place. You can take these god-damned boots and stick them up your lazy ass. You are a guest in my country so you can forget that racist shit you have been led to believe." I mean he went off on this poor colonel. Within a few minutes, some of the other people had heard the commotion. We were standing in the hall and laughing like crazy. *(laughs)*. He finally opened the door and this poor colonel walked out with his boots in hand, looking like he had just been skinned alive. He walked down the hall with his head down and did not say a word to anyone. It was this kind of thing that went on with these very elite guys thinking and acting like they were still back in their own country. This incident set the tone for how the students would treat the faculty and staff. From then on, nobody displayed any signs of disrespect for the local military staff.

Q: Did you sort of review horrible events, you know, and -- I guess in El Salvador and the killing of the nuns?

JONES: Yes. We tried to raise these issues.

Q: You know, the really unspeakable crimes and saying this, this is -- first place, you know, this is nasty business --

JONES: Yes. It was hard to do because some of the students had first- hand knowledge of some of these incidents.

Q: -- but also it's really ineffective. I mean were you --

JONES: Yes, that was what we were trying to get across. Our director was a retired army general. He was General John Thompson. He was still on the faculty here at the National Defense University, as of last year. Our deputy director was a Venezuelan Brigadier Air Force General. We had a number of professors from various countries in Latin America and the U.S. They were both military and civilian. I was one of two Department of State officers assigned to the College. We were all there for the very purpose of trying to get the students to understand that human rights and civilian overview were key parts of what their countries needed to consider in order for them to respond to the needs of their populations. In addition, under a democratic governmental system, authority should rest with civilian leaders rather than with the police of military.

But a number of these guys were pretty bad characters. I mean they had done things in their own countries that everybody knew about. So yeah, some of the guys from El Salvador were there. Everyone was fairly aware of other peoples backgrounds. They were smart enough to be aware of what was happening in the region. We didn't have any Cubans, of course. The Venezuelans were there in large numbers. They understood what we were trying to get across to them. Most of the students were very perceptive about the image of their country. In public, they would stick to the party line. But, when got them alone they would always say, they were a member of the police or army of their nation and as such they had these other problems to deal with and if they spoke out of turn or said something against the position their government has taken it would not bode well for them or their future in the organization. That was always a problem. What we gave them in some instances wouldn't fit with what they had to deal with when they got back home. And you know, that was always a problem with these guys. Many of the countries had problems. Whether they were able to put our lessons into practice when they got home was anyone's guess. I do know that the Colombian guys, the Colombian police officers were fairly good. One of them led the raid that killed Pablo Escobar. Their political restraint was something we had to deal with. The Mexicans probably were the most forthcoming. They understood what they had to do. The Brazilians were quite good. And so, the students from Mexico and Brazil had the most open approaches to the lessons. Both countries had sent a number of civilians as well as police and civil servants. They would send maybe one military person, one police officer, and then a bunch of civilians who were high ranking in their Ministry of Defense or in their police hierarchy. And that, I think our program went over a lot better with them than students from countries like Ecuador that only sent hardcore military types to the program. We had a chance to visit Mexico during the year. We had a chance to tour some of the border posts from Tijuana all the way over to Ciudad Juarez. Unlike the Venezuelans, the Mexican officials were more forthcoming and cooperative. They wanted to make sure that we understood their issues with the American frontier, from their perspective. Hugo Chavez, on the other hand, was just getting ready to come into office. His approach to Americans was quite different. I personally believed that the man was insane; totally, and completely insane. He had a mercurial personality. You know, if he didn't take his medicine he would be bouncing off the walls. He was a bit of a character. One minute, he would be open and friendly, the next he would be mean and snarling. He admired the U.S. and at the same time, would criticize it at every opportunity. I was the only African-American faculty member to meet with him, so he kept referring to me as his "hermano" (brother). He even

said the Americans were against him because he was Black. But you know, he was not the only high-ranking political guy that we had difficulty with.

Q: He came through.

JONES: He did. But, like I said, one minute he would be very cordial and very nice and down to earth. The next minute he would snap and try to tear your head off. But you know, that's the way he was. Everybody knew him. There were a couple guys who'd been in the military academy with him. And so they would sort of guide us in terms of what kind of questions to ask him. The funny thing is that Hugo Chavez spoke English and that he was basically an Afro-Venezuelan. And so he, he understood what I was saying to him, you know. If I challenged him on a number of things, you know, he would say "Oh! My brother, mi hermano, that is not true. But, I understand where you're coming from." But no, he was just a very up and down, very mercurial kind of guy. The real hardcore people were guys like Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua. He was a nasty, nasty guy. I mean he was just, a real old hard line communist. He was a Cuban communist type. He does not like Americans and made no bones about it.

Q: Well, what were we doing with him?

JONES: Well, at the time his predecessor was president Alemán. He was a big fat guy who had been one of our real friends in Central America. And, Ortega was still sort of working in the background trying to get up enough power to run for president again. Alemán was our guy. I mean he was as corrupt as the day is long, but Ortega was just there biding his time. Eventually, he got the chance to retake power and he did. The Nicaraguan students at the IADC were mostly silent about how the power structure functioned in Managua. It was really interesting to talk to them. When we made our trips to these places we always tried to engage the, the people that we thought were going to be role models or somehow assume a leadership position in the future. So that's what we did. But, Latin America was a really fascinating place.*(laughs).*

Q: Well, how stood our relations with Ecuador and Venezuela at the time?

JONES: They were all good. All of our relationships were good. The current leaders down there, Evo Morales and those guys were still way off. They didn't come into the forefront until the mid 2000's. They were factors that we understood were the new guys on the block that we were probably going to have to deal with in the future. But it wasn't until I got to Honduras, as Consul General in 2000, that these guys started bubbling up in terms of being leaders in Venezuela and Ecuador. It was interesting from the perspective of having known these people or known about them before they became leaders.

Q: How'd you find working in a military -- an American Military establishment? Did you find you were all reading off the same book or was it a problem?

JONES: *(laughs)* I knew somebody was going to ask that. No, it's a huge problem. It's a huge problem. You got two different cultures and they don't overlap. At least in those

years they didn't. And even though the Military itself was trying to get itself organized with under the Goldwater-Nichols Act, which ordered the military to come together and do joint training, they had very little space for the civilian aspects of joint training. The State Department wasn't part of that process, at the time. And so, we were still seen as being sort of the cookie pushers. You know, we did the nice things. We had receptions and passed out coffee and cigars and stuff. The military was the hammer and the civilian piece did not fit in their world. The two pieces didn't match. I mean even the Latin militaries laughed at the civilian types who were there. It was awfully hard to bring the two together. I think it was so important that Mexico and big countries like Brazil appointed civilians, to come along as a part of their contingency at IADC. I think they were trying seriously to get the military under control. And, the hard part, being an American diplomat, was trying to say this is what you guys should be doing in your country. They would turn around and say yeah, but you guys aren't doing that either so why are you trying to get us to do it. It was difficult in that respect.

Q: Would you take the line we're working in?

JONES: Yeah, I mean we didn't get anything going here with the integration of civilians into the military operations until Iraq and Afghanistan happened. You know, we started forcing the problem with the POLADs (Office of the Coordinator of the Foreign Policy Advisor) and this kind of thing with the various military commands. Even though they had been in some of these places back during World War II, it really didn't come into effect until first Gulf War. We actually had guys placed in the regional combatant commands. And, this is still going on. It's a part of one of the courses I'm teaching now at George Mason University. It is called the Interagency Process. The difficulties that we still have, not just in terms of political advisors at the commander's level, but at operational levels like the provincial reconstruction teams that we saw in Iraq and Afghanistan. That's a problem now. It's still a problem. So it's hard to do. But anyhow, it's one of those things that I think we're aiming at. I'm not sure whether we're going to get there. So, we shall see. But no, it was easy for the Latinos to complain because we weren't doing what we were asking them to do. And, that was one of the problems we encountered at IADC.

Q: Well, at that time were viewing Ecuador and Venezuela with a certain amount of suspicion or?

JONES: No, not really. Ecuador had had a lot of resources. And Bolivia, probably a little bit more suspicious because of the ground swell of indigenous groups down there. Venezuela had been a friend for forever and large supplier of petroleum to the U.S. It had been under the control of people that we approved of. We had a huge mission there. And so it worked out quite well. But, at that time you have to remember, Hugo Chavez had not thrown his hand in with the Castro brothers. Once he started doing that we had a problem. But at that point in time he had not gone over to get the approval of the Cubans. But, I think had we, from a policy perspective, treated him a little differently, I think our history would have been a little different. But, that's my own personal perspective in terms of even treating the Venezuelans and Cubans a little different.

Q: Well, what about Cuba? Was this a subject we ignored or did we tackle this head on or what?

JONES: *(laughs)* No, they controlled it from Miami. You know, the Cuban American community down there was very strong. And, even to the extent where Cubans would show up in Central America. When I was in Costa Rica there is a huge Cuban community. Even in Honduras, the huge Cuban community basically had their roots here in the States. They had families here. They had businesses here. The tobacco industry in Honduras is controlled by Cubans. The phone company in Costa Rica is controlled by Cubans. So they are all over Latin America. My statement was basically that we should have treated the government of Cuba differently. But, because of politics we couldn't do that. And so it is one of those cases, I think where we need to go back and revisit that issue. But, you know, we shall see. So, I'm not that bad, am I?

Q: Well, then with 2000 you left?

JONES: Yeah, I had gone to Honduras as consul general and acting chargé --

Q: So how long were you in Honduras?

JONES: Four years.

Q: Four years.

JONES: Yep.

Q: So you were there from when to when?

JONES: From 2000 until to 2004.

Q: What was the situation in Honduras when you arrived?

JONES: When I got there Carlos Flores was president. But, there was an election coming up two months after my arrival. Honduras is divided between the liberal and conservatives. They have the Red Party, which is the liberal party, and they call it PPL, I recall. And then, there is the blue party, which is the conservative party. They are about the same. They are both as corrupt as the day is long. The president prior to Carlos Flores, Rafael Callejas, was so bad they nicknamed him "Mobutu". We finally canceled his U.S. visa a couple years ago. But no, Honduran officials were just a bunch of thugs. And, the parties just took turns governing. One group would get in and they would steal as much as they could and then the next group would come in and they would steal as much as they could. The guy that they had the coup against a few years ago, Mel Zelaya, was also one of the key people down there. But it was a typical of Central American country. The drugs came through there in huge amounts. Guns came through in huge numbers, and even though the U.S. has a military base there I'm not sure how effective it

is. Our concentration is just in terms of looking at foreign influence and drug interdiction. Drugs come up through Panama, they come up both coasts from Colombia and Venezuela, and they come into both the southern and the northern part of the country. They have basically destroyed the society. So, we shall see what happens there in the future.

Q: This consul general job was sort of a peculiar one, wasn't it? What was your situation?

JONES: *(laughs)* Yeah, it was very peculiar in terms of being a senior guy in a country like Honduras. And, at the time, the ambassador was here in the States and there was no DCM. And, I basically had to run the mission. It meant coordinating with our military base at Soto Cano, which very few people know about. We have about 1,100 soldiers down there. They have a south looking radar system which is set up on a mountaintop to look at what's going on down south. In terms of drug interdiction they have Black Hawk helicopters basically working with Southern Command in Miami, to look at drug trafficking in the region. So, it was a very difficult situation because we basically ignored the Honduran government and did basically what we wanted to on the interdiction front. We were running interdiction flights out into the Caribbean and into the Pacific. We didn't have a navy down there, but from the perspective of watching what was going on in the Caribbean it was quite easy. Not only did we have radar, but we had Black Hawks. The difficulty for us was that we couldn't interdict in Honduran waters. But, the Coast Guard could keep watch on both sides of the country.

Q: Well, what happens? You catch a fast boat and what happens?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- ship out and open water --

JONES: Yes, yes.

Q: -- and a helicopter, what did it do?

JONES: We would mark it so that once it got out of Honduran waters the Coast Guard could pick them up international waters.

Q: How would you mark it?

JONES: Just in terms of deciding where it was and what it looked like. There were very few shots fired. If there were shots fired they would try to disable the engines. But yeah, they sunk a couple. You know, some of the boats were just fantastic. I mean, I was in a helicopter once and the darn boat took off. I mean it had four outboard engines and it stood up in the water like a rocket. *Boom*, you know, it was gone. It outran the helicopter. So you know, it depended on where it was going and if we felt that we needed to shoot it, we'd shoot it. Don't repeat this please *(laughs)*. But, you know, most people don't know

that we have a big base there. But you know, I believe the Hondurans didn't care. The whole area up on the Caribbean side was called the Mosquito Coast. It is just rife with inlets and islands and hidden coves all these other kinds of things, including a huge swamp. So, when the traffickers came up from Colombia on that side of the country, there are a number of stops that they could make. One was the Bay Islands, which is right off the coast of Honduras. They would drop their bails and head back or they would drop their bails, head into the island, get more fuel, and then head back to the Colombian coast. Or, just in the Blue Plains on the Caribbean side of Nicaragua. So, that was the way it was in the drug trade. Very few planes were used. Those that did, flew under the radar and would land in clandestine strips out in the Mosquito Coast. They would get refueled and head back to Colombia. So it was kind of a hard thing to deal with. You had a very isolated kind of a community there in The Mosquito Coast. Afro-Hondurans, called Garifunas, populated the Caribbean side of Honduras and the other indigenous types lived down in the interior of the country but did not cooperate with the central government. The Hondurans who were considered Caucasian lived up in the northern part of the country. And so, there was a lot of, of race conflict, particularly with the Garifunas who it is rumored were escapees from what used to be British Honduras, and who speak English. A lot of these were the descendants of escaped slaves and some on the Bay Islands had come in there with Captain Cook in the old days and had mutinied and jumped ship. So Honduras had quite a stilted society. Right now the street gangs have taken over most of the neighborhoods in the bigger cities. Salvadorian gangs, Nicaraguan gangs, Honduran gangs are basically running the streets in every capital in the region. You got to have a pass to get through their lines. So, whole neighborhoods are held hostage by these thugs. But, Honduras, in spite of its gang problem is still a very complicated country.

Q: Well, how did you get around? I mean did you bypass this or?

JONES: Oh no. AKA-47. No, I'm just joking.

Q: (chuckles)

JONES: No, we believed they wouldn't mess with a diplomat and by being the only big black guy who spoke English there they wouldn't mess with me. Everybody knew who I was. I had pictures in the paper, this kind of thing. So I could go places and nobody would mess with me. But normally they wouldn't allow me out of the complex without two guards, so I did have some escorts when I ventured out on official functions.

Q: But still, I mean basically would you say it was a completely corrupt regime?

JONES: Yeah, totally and completely. The majority of the officials and police were totally and completely corrupt. Drugs and guns were the order of the day and everyone's loyalty was for sale.

Q: Well, I guess the guns came from the drugs, didn't they?

JONES: Yeah, they were easy to get across from the neighboring countries. There was really no border. You couldn't tell when you left Guatemala, or you couldn't tell when you left El Salvador to get into Honduras. I mean it's just mountains and jungle down there. You could get into Nicaragua without even going through a border post. And then, there was the coast, which basically were unpatrolled on both sides. And so if you bought guns in from Colombia or a neighboring country, it would be just a matter of a day or two before they arrived in Tegucigalpa.

Q: Well, was there any attempt to interfere with our interdiction of the ships?

JONES: No, none whatsoever. There were some major drug dealers that were able to be extradited. But, many others that were able to avoid extradition to the U.S. by bribing judges and other officials. I think what was driving the thing was that the Honduran leadership was so afraid of these people on their own and they didn't really want to cause a problem for themselves or their family. And, they knew that if they did get into difficulty, they could blame it on the Gringos. You know, the Gringos made me do it. They threatened to prosecute me in the U.S.

Q: It's very peculiar situation because you don't hear about this.

JONES: Of course not. *(laughs)*. There's a reason.

Q: What's the reason?

JONES: The reason is that we don't want the American people that we have a base down there and that we are operating down there as a narcotics stop-gap. The other side is that we don't want the, narco- traffickers to understand that we do start monitoring them that far south. They think this is all being done by the inept Hondurans or farther north in Mexico.

Q: Well, they must know it.

JONES: I mean, in certain circles I think they do. I mean we can't hide the base. The base is there. Down in the flat area there it's just sitting out there by itself as a part of a small Honduran air base.

Q: Aircraft and helicopter?

JONES: Yes. They have both.

Q: How about small boats?

JONES: Oh yeah. Yeah. There is mainly Coast Guard type boats. We've got to get permission for them to come into the port, but I mean they can run back to any of our bases up there. Jamaica is close. We have a small place that we can go into Costa Rica and of course Panama. So you know we have a pretty much free access to the area.

Q: And what about Mexico? Does it play a role there?

JONES: Now it does. Mexico really didn't play a large role in Honduras when I was there because everything went through Mexico. Mexico was sort of off the beaten path in terms of anything that related to Honduras. If the planes got away it would land somewhere in the Yucatán. And, then we would just let the Mexicans know. It was also the sort of the beginning of this whole transient thing where you got drugs on the ground in Mexico and then it was just a matter of transiting through Mexico and getting them into the United States. So Mexico, even in those days, was considered to be totally corrupt in terms of police and the officials in the southern part of the country, in particular.

Q: You must have had a DEA staff drug enforcement?

JONES: Yes the Embassy had a big DEA staff.

Q: How did you work with them?

JONES: I didn't want to know details. If they got into trouble I wanted them to let me know as quickly as they could. We only had one plane crash in the time that I was there. We lost five guys. But, I would say, give me the outline. I didn't want to know details at all. Because, if I had to go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I would have deniability in terms of what was happening. That was basically our instructions. I mean we were to cooperate and see what we needed to have done within the Honduran government to get these things completed, but as long as I didn't know details I couldn't respond to direct questions about personnel and/or actions. For example, we had a plane crash in the Mosquitia somewhere that I didn't know anything about. So that is basically how we had to be able to function and not compromise our personnel or future operations.
Q: And that had been the modus operandi for some time?

JONES: Yeah. This had gone on for years.

Q: Had there been any spillover from the fighting Nicaragua, the Contras and all that? Or is this a different war?

JONES: Yeah, that was a whole different war. It was The Contra Wars. It ended in the mid-'80s, I think. I left Costa Rica in '84 and that part of it was dying down. So, 1986, I think was the last of any kind of difficulty. What you did have, though, up in the Mosquitia and up in that coast was very ill-defined area where was still a lot of old camps with guns and equipment still out there. It is where a lot of the guys who are currently in Managua now running the government, came from. They all trained up there with the Cubans. And, so it's sort of passé, but it's been over for years and it's not something that either of the governments seemed to be concerned about right now.

Q: What about the situation with the government? Was the government turning a blind

eye or just raking in money or what?

JONES: *(laughs)* It depends. I think by and large if you make it to the head of one of the political parties down there you're guaranteed to make a lot of money. And, in order to do that, you have to turn a blind eye when the other guys are in power. You don't complain about them and they don't complain about you. This is not small stuff. But for example, if some little gang does something like robs somebody's store or kills somebody that is connected to a family, they will have a problem. But it's like a system where you say it's my turn now. So when you're in the catbird seat you do what you need to do for yourself and your supporters. And, when the other guys come in, you sort of overlook what they do with the understanding that they will do the same for you.

Q: You know, sometimes you hear about some of the places where ten families run the country or 80 families run the -- I mean how, how did this stand in --

JONES: It's typical. I would say no more than ten. The key people aren't who you think they are. The key people are not in government. The key people are a small group of families that the locals call the Turkos. These are the descendants of people who were immigrants between the wars and, during and after World War II, from the Middle East. They are mainly from Lebanese, Jewish and Palestinian origins. They came in as businessmen and merchants. Their names are definitely Middle Eastern, not of Spanish origin.

Q: These are --

JONES: They are from Arabic backgrounds and they are Christians and Jews.

Q: -- basically Arab, Lebanese --

JONES: Lebanese, Palestinians and Jews. And, they came in during World War II and at the end of the war. Basically they have control of the economy of the country. The Mestizos and, and the Garifunas and these people respond to them. They are the big landowners. They initially controlled the sugar and pineapple plantations. Then they opened import operations and sold merchandise. They then took control of the banks and lending institutions. They now control the palm oil industry, the ports, and the construction industries. They have moved around all over the country. There are a few Jewish families thrown in the mix, but by and large these guys also run the tobacco industry, except for the Cuban cigar market. And they are the key to the future of the country. They lately have moved into the government and support their own candidates for top positions. Even their former ambassador to the U.S. was from a well placed Turko family.

Q: How was social life there?

JONES: For me, as a Black American, it was not bad. You know, we got along, my wife and I, with folks because of who we were. By and large, the circles that we moved in,

there were no other black families except those that were assigned to the various international missions. There were one or two Garifunas who were university professors, one or two who were high-ranking military and, and police. But other than that, you didn't see a lot of Blacks. Not up in central part of the country. They resided mainly along the Caribbean coast around the cities of San Pedro Sula, and La Ceiba.

Q: Well, on the coast -- it's the Mosquitia Coast?

JONES: Yeah, a piece of it. I'd say halfway up the Caribbean coast before you start getting into Guatemala was the Mosquito Coast. And, like I said, in the northern part of the country you have the city of San Pedro Sula, which was the largest city in Honduras. It is the business capital. And that's where the main port, Puerto Cortes, is located. It is the largest port in the country and serves the largest city. And so that's the commercial center of the country. Tegucigalpa is a smaller city down in the interior that is the political capitol.

Q: Now, what about the Mosquitia Indians?

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: Were they a significant factor?

JONES: No, no. They were basically co-opted. They had a number of factors to deal with. One factor was their location. They were basically isolated up along the eastern border with Nicaragua and the jungles in the east. Most spend more time in Nicaragua than they do in Honduras. All of the area away from the coast is primarily Indian territory. A few Blacks are scattered throughout the area nearer the coast, but the interior is where the Indians have their farms and raise their cattle. The Blacks are also in the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras. I don't recall any Mosquito representative being in the parliament at all. To go out to where they lived was a long trek. I mean you couldn't drive out there because there are no passable roads. You had to fly or go by boat. You could fly into one of the smaller landing strips and then hike into the villages. There were Peace Corps volunteers out there and some missionaries, but other than that they were isolated. The television show, The Survivors wanted to film a series in the area but when they went out there and checked it out they found it to be too isolated and dangerous. They had stopped at the Embassy and asked about doing a film. I advised them not to go. They went out there and checked it out and they admitted that it was too difficult *(laughs)*. They simply could not find suitable arrangements for security and protection from the elements and the animals.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I warned them. I told them to go out there and take a look, but I would not advise them to send a film crew and actors into the region.

Q: I take it that this is not a tourism area.

JONES: Oh no, the islands are tourist destinations. There are three islands, Roatan, Guanaja and Utila. They are called the Bay Islands. They are very touristy. They're just off the coast of San Pedro Sula before you get up into the Belize frontier. Diving is a great attraction as well as sport fishing. They are fairly built up and have hotels and amenities. But, the Survivor series was looking for something a little more rustic. Blacks live on the Bay Islands and have always dominated them. They all speak English and all have English names. They are said to be the descendants of former English slaves who mutinied against British sea captains like Captain Cook, and established their own settlements on the islands in the early 1800's.

Q: Well, I take it that the authorities or whoever asks as the authorities keeps things under control?

JONES: Oh yeah. I mean up there on the coast, you will get killed if you try to rob somebody on a beach or something like that. They don't play that stuff up there. The area is a major money making venture for the government. So we had some Americans that would go up there to do things like trying to buy land not realizing that they could not buy within a certain distance from the sea.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: Americans and other foreigners would get taken in constantly by unscrupulous land sellers. They would come down to the embassy to complain about the fact that when they came back from home, somebody else was occupying their property. The sellers or real estate agents would sell the properties to unknowing foreigners without telling them that they needed to have a Honduran citizen on the deed with them in order for the sale to be valid. Well when they came back from the states, the Honduran guy would have had taken over the property and sold it to someone else. This kind of thing happened so often that we had to put a warning notice in our Embassy bulletin, alerting potential buyers about the situation. So, it was awfully difficult to get them to understand that they weren't really buying this property like they could buy in the U.S. They were essentially renting it from the Honduran citizen. There were more than a few scams. We had people coming into the Bay Islands and San Pedro Sula on cruise ships. Some came to dive, others to fish or just to lie in the sun. There were always accidents and people dying while scuba diving. So, American tourism was another headache for the Embassy.

Q: I take it you had a good system for shipping bodies?

JONES: Oh yeah. The Hondurans had a refrigerator truck that the Military maintained up in San Pedro. So, if we could get prompt notice of a death of an American, we could get the authorities to put them into the cold storage facility until arrangements were made to transport them back to the U.S. The only difficulty was we couldn't do autopsies. But, if we could get them into cold storage and get them shipped back, examinations could be done in the U.S. We could get the body on to an airplane in a hermetically sealed coffin and let autopsies be done in the U.S.

ANONYMOUS: TLC?

JONES: Yes, Lisa Lopes, Left Eye Lopes, had come down there, to attend a drug eradication clinic and I guess, get herself drug free. Anyhow, she was killed in a car accident outside of San Pedro Sula. I got a call at around 11:00 at night, from the San Pedro police and our Consular Agent in the area. They said and American singer had been killed. So I dispatched our duty consular officer to the area to make arrangements to contact family members and find out the details of the accident. We had help from the military base to get up there. They sent a helicopter to fly us up there. We arrived early in the morning and the authorities had not moved her body. She was still lying in a ditch beside the road. The other people who had been injured had been taken to a hospital. We were able to get an undertaker from San Pedro Sula down there to get her body. They put her into a coffin and took it to the freezer. I called her parents in New York and they had already been contacted by others in the group. We got her body on a small plane and flew it to Miami and from there to New York. The undertaker in New York had to do everything to prepare her for burial. In most cases, if a Honduran gets killed in an accident like that, they would be buried the next day in a religious ceremony. We had a number of cases like the Lopes case. People would die on a cruise ship. Some old guys, like us, come in and they would run around all day, drink rum, and would fall dead the next day on the cruise ship. The ship would bring them in and the authorities would have to bring them into the freezer and try to get their bodies put into a hermetically sealed coffin and put it on an airplane back to the U.S. The hard part was the guys who would go diving and fall off an underwater shelf. In some places the sea floor drops down to like 400 feet. And inevitably, some idiot would go over the side. I mean diving instructors would take groups down to 75 or 80 feet. Then, someone would take off on his own, to look over the side of the shelf and would get sucked down. And they would never find the body. That happened a couple times in the Bay Islands. We had to give these dive instructors good information about how to deal with tourists. We would warn them when they did their briefings you tell these idiots to stay with the die group, otherwise they're going to get sucked over the cliff and drown.

Q: Is there a current that takes them?

JONES: Yeah, the Gulf Stream current.

Q: And does it take them down?

JONES: It takes them down. I mean drops off there to 1200 feet off the Gulf of Mexico. So we had those kinds of things happening all the time, which made consular business hard in that part of the world.

Q: Were there any sort of issues, other than drugs, that involved you at all there?

JONES: There were little things like business development. There was an attempt to develop an international highway from the U.S. to South America.

Q: There's a Pan American Highway --

JONES: Yeah. Anyhow, it didn't really exist in Honduras. It turned into a little narrow two-lane road. And, they were thinking about trying to get that expanded. There were lots of those little bilateral issues basically, but nothing major from a strategic perspective. Just little things like landing rights. I mean if you have flown into Tegucigalpa, Honduras you would realize that it is the second most dangerous air strip in the western world. Coming into Tegucigalpa is just unbelievable. The most dangerous strip in the world is in Nepal, by the way. I mean you've got to come in to Tegucigalpa and land in a bowl with a mountain cliff at the end. You come in from the north, you circle around, come over to the end of the bowl, and drop down to land on a fairly narrow strip of runway. At the end of that strip is a 100-foot drop-off. And so you've got to stop the plane well before it reaches the drop. It's really kind of unbelievable. First time fliers, I always tell them don't sit on the left hand side of the airplane because it will scare the hell out of you. Landing at the Tegucigalpa airport is a horrible experience. But, thank God, we only had one crash during the time I was there. Nobody was killed, but there were many injuries. Topics like Honduran immigration always gave us bilateral problems. There is a large group of Hondurans living in the U.S. Temporary Protective Status, which is a form of temporary asylum. They were allowed to come into the U.S. in the late nineties because of the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch in the country. They were given temporary asylum until the conditions got better in Honduras. TPS has however been continued year after year. The terms are open to interpretation and because of the confusion, people have been allowed to linger and remain in limbo as long as it's necessary. It is unlikely that they will return home. There are between 5 to 10,000 of them. They have a great deal of impact on bilateral relations with the U.S.

Q: Did you get any high level visits?

JONES: Yes, Secretary Colin Powell came down as did Donald Rumsfeld. There were lots of politicians from Florida, Texas, and Louisiana as well as former governors from Arizona -- Bill Richardson.

Q: What were they doing?

JONES: Mainly the OAS (Organization of American States) would have meetings. Secretary Powell came down for one of the OAS meetings. Secretary Rumsfeld came down because we were adding something to the base in Soto Cano. Sometimes they would come through as a part of the military operations that extended from Panama through Soto Cano and the combatant commands in Miami and Tampa. We had a lot of guys coming down to coordinate activities with the Honduran military. And, so it was quite nice from that perspective. We had a lot of high-level visitors.

Q: Well, then you left there when?

JONES: I left there in June of 2004. I had a good break in 2003 when I was given the

chance, after getting promoted into the Senior Foreign Service, to attend the Senior Seminar in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. It was a great experience for me. I have had a chance to interact with a lot of the people who had gotten promoted that year. Also, I had a chance to attend the Maxwell School at Syracuse University for a six week long Executive Education Course. I was granted a Certificate of National Security Studies at the end of the course.

Q: And wither?

JONES: I came back to Washington on a special assignment as the State Department Representative to the Foreign Terrorist Asset Targeting Group. (FTATG) Our offices were over at the agency. We had group meetings at the Department and worked closely with Justice, IRS, the Agency as well as Homeland Security and other security agencies. The Foreign Terrorist Asset Targeting Group was an eye opening experience for me, to say the least. I developed some specific insights on how federal agencies cooperated on specific security issues at the Washington level.

Q: Probably something we shouldn't talk about.

JONES: Right. It was a start-up for the establishment of the International Counterterrorism Center, ICTC. It has spun off into a number of other initiatives by the U.S. and coalition allies.

Q: And then did the events of 9/11 and the attack change things?

JONES: Yes, I would say they did. They changed things a great deal.

Q: -- did that have any affect on your operation in Honduras?

JONES: Yes.

Q: Impact?

JONES: A huge impact. We had a big TV in the waiting room in the Consular Section, and people would always sit there and watch it, you know, while they were waiting for their interviews. And, one of the ladies who was a Senior Foreign Service National, ran and grabbed me and said, "Oh, a plane just ran into a building in New York." So everybody sort of gathered around the TV and people out in the waiting room were also looking at it. As we were sitting there looking, there came another plane, and *boom*, oh God, it hit the second building. Within ten minutes, the alarms went off in the Embassy. The Marines came through in a hurry and hustled everybody out. They shut the place down. We had to get escorted home. We lowered the flag to half-staff, and basically we were on lockdown for about two days. All kinds of condolences came in from the public. We had a memorial ceremony later in the year. In the end, there were three Hondurans who were killed in the buildings. Their bodies were never found, but we had a ceremony for them at the embassy. The Honduran vice-president attended. It sort of changed things

because you knew right away the difficulty that we had with the large number of the Turkos in Honduras. Some proposed that the Turkos were very anti-American, and even though they had visas and everything, they would not be allowed to enter the U.S. We got involved into looking at whether or not there were elements of al-Qaeda or other anti-American terrorists living in Honduras and being supported by the Turkos.

Q: And of course these were some of the ruling elite in your country.

JONES: Yes. I canceled some visas, based on information we had that these guys were supporting some of these extremist organizations like Hamas, and some other organizations. So yeah, some people got quite mad at me. They were quite mad at me. The new ambassador had gotten there, by that time, and he supported me completely. But you know, we had a big station in Honduras. They were up to date on having information about people who were being brought into Honduras from the Middle East and East Asia. Some were given Honduran identification, and some didn't speak a word of Spanish. They would come in to the Embassy and try to get visas to go to the United States. So, we set up a practice in which I would always be the officer who would interview these guys. I spoke a little Arabic. To their surprise, I would start interviewing in Arabic and they would be taken by complete surprise. They would start responding in Arabic and we would know right away that they were not Hondurans. So, it was this kind of very serious issues that helped us work with other elements in the Embassy to make them aware of what was happening in Honduras. I think some of the tension of those times has died down now. I think they're fully aware that we know who these guys are and they are no longer trying to sneak them into the U.S. The station had been beefed up a little bit in the early years. Some of these guys had come through the Tri-Border Area down in Latin America. So, they were being watched pretty closely. We shall see if this leads to success.

Q: I'm going to stop for just one second.

JONES: OK.

Q: OK, we'll pick this up again. OK. So we'll finish your undiscussed --

JONES: *(laughs)* OK.

Q: -- work with the CIA. And wither and when?

JONES: OK. Well, I finished in 2006 and then got recruited by the Office of Inspector General. This was based on what I had been doing at the agency. I started working on an inspection team as a Special Senior Inspector. I did a number of trips into Latin America, again because of the experience that I had in the region. We did inspections in Colombia and Peru.

Q: What did you find in Colombia and Peru?

JONES: The two missions were performing well.

Q: Because there, I mean these are embassies where there have been difficult times.

JONES: Yes, without a doubt. Both missions had had problems.

Q: It's not been easy because of the politics and because of gang warfare and -- or whatever you want to call it. You had the Shining Path and you had the drug gangs and all. What'd you find?

JONES: Colombia was sort of a dichotomy because it depended on where you were located. If you were down around Bogotá in the interior you were in a little isolated enclave, or so it seemed. Once you got out of Bogotá, either north or south, you were in the middle of nowhere. I got up to Barranquilla to examine the Consular Operation and to Cartagena where there were lots of Americans living. And, I got out into Medellin in the south western part of the country. They were a completely different world from Bogotá and the central valley. Bogotá was very urbane and sophisticated. It had all the very modern cultural trappings with lot of things going on all the time. They also had lots of displaced people begging on the streets. Colombia has the largest number displaced persons in the Western hemisphere.

Q: Displaced because of --

JONES: They had fled from their homes because of the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)) and some of the other right wing organizations that had started to operate in the countryside. I didn't realize at that time that the whole west coast of Colombia was primarily Black. And, that regions like Medellin were controlled by Blacks until the revolutionary forces moved in. Medellin had a Black mayor. And so, a lot of stuff that went on with the FARC and the growing of poppies and drug production took place in the countryside that was not controlled by the regular Colombian police or Armed Forces. Coca is being grown in the region there just north of the frontiers with Ecuador and Peru. These areas had historically been farming areas that had been controlled by Blacks since the days when slavery existed. The former slaves remained in the region and became farmers. So, a lot of the street people we saw in Bogotá were Blacks who had been driven off the land by the FARC and the drug producers. The streets in Bogotá were very modern with buses and taxis. There was electricity, super highways and golf courses, high rise apartment houses and modern shopping malls. But, when you got outside of that area, up to Barranquilla or Cartagena and out to Medellin it was a different world. The port cities were as dangerous as hell. There were gunfights during the daytime and organized street gangs controlled sections of the cities. They were not nice places at all.

Q: What were the gunfights about?

JONES: I think these were trafficking organizations getting even with each other. I hit the floor and crawled away from the windows. I found out later that one group of guys were

loading containers and stuff in the port and another group of guys were trying to take something out of a container. But, Colombia is different, completely different, from anything I had seen before. People who work there and just stay in Bogotá, are surprised when they get out into the countryside. They are surprised by the large rural population. When we were there three Americans were being held by the FARC. Their plane had crashed while they were spraying pesticides on the drug plantations. They were still being held but, I believe they were released a few years ago. Everybody knew it. So even though people like me, as consul, had to get outside the city, they sent protection details with me. Barranquilla and Medellin were dangerous and as the word was out, that the American consul was coming, it was feared that something would happen to me. They wanted to make sure that I was safe. Colombia is, without a doubt, a beautiful place with mountains, rivers, and jungles. It is just unbelievably beautiful. But, it was also dangerous. It was extremely dangerous because of conditions on the ground.

Peru, on the other hand, with its history of Sendero Luminoso insurgency, posed a different challenge. Lima, the capitol city, is right on the Pacific coast and it's, an old city with a lot of Spanish influence. I got down to the southern part which was the Altiplano or high desert. It was temperate, but did not have the vegetation that is normally found in the temperate zones. I was going to drive down to Chile but didn't have enough time. We did get to Machu Picchu and Cusco in the north mountains. It was truly something to see. I had never seen anything like Indian ruins outside of Honduras and Mexico. But, the Inca ruins in Machu Picchu were truly awesome. They were really impressionable. At the top of the mountains, the air is thin and is always kind of crisp and cool. But, the area was really beautiful, really beautiful to see. The Peruvians are, I would say 90% indigenous. There is a small Black contingent in Peru that are the descendants of slaves. They tend to live and work in the interior. If I compare the two cities, I would probably pick Lima over Bogotá, only because of its location. Also, the kinds of amenities available to you in Lima are better. Peruvians are very nice people. I didn't have any problems in the country. I got a chance to play some golf in Peru because I had a friend who was the Military Attaché . We had served together in Honduras. So, I got a chance to get out and see some countryside with him. He took me to see a cock fight, for example.

Q: Well, tell me, let's say first Colombia and then Peru.

JONES: Mm-hmm.

Q: Did you find the embassies were coping with the dangerous situation?

JONES: The embassies were virtual forts. They were forts, literally. Bogotá had the largest embassy. I am not sure exactly how many people were there at the time, but it was a huge complex surrounded by a high wall. There was no way in the heck you could get in there without proper identification. A large contingent of Marines guarded the interior. There were also large contingents of the DEA, the Military Support Group, USAID and many other agencies. It was surrounded by a big high wall and looked like a fort from the outside. Everybody understood that they were subject to be kidnapped or robbed. The streets were dangerous and you didn't simply go out by yourself. We were warned to go

out with a group. One of the Administrative officers had gotten stabbed about a month before we arrived. He lived in one of the apartment buildings that he supposedly was occupied by many embassy personnel. He was visiting his girlfriend in another building around the block from where we were staying. The area was called the Zona Rosa. So, it was a pleasant neighborhood. But, it was kind of dangerous. This is one of the reasons why I picked Lima over Bogotá. The embassy in Lima was new and sat behind a 20-foot high wall in a neighborhood that was sort of off limits to the regular citizens. I mean you couldn't literally walk around in the area. It was fairly protected both by Marines and by local police. Also, other international missions were located in the neighborhood. The people in Peru had a little more leeway in their ability to get out and move around the city. I did not think the Peruvians had the same sense of being confined or being under siege that the people felt in Colombia.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: So from that perspective I think Lima was a little better in terms of living. They had a good American school there where the kids could go. But, the old threat of Sendero Luminoso was I think just about over. The leader had been arrested and confined to a long term jail sentence. Other high ranking members had been co-opted or chased into hiding.

Q: Now, Fujimori had been put out of office --

JONES: Yes, in that year, former president Fujimori had come back to South America, but had been permitted to get into Peru. And so, he was allowed to enter Chile. He was living down in Santiago. He was trying to come back into Peru and had filed a lawsuit to force the country to allow him to re-enter. But, it was really weird how the timing was because other governments had been in contact with the government in Chile to give him asylum. That's a different story, but it was one of those kinds of things that was happening to try to keep him out of Peru. Most Peruvians were just not ready for him to come back. And, once they got him there they of course prosecuted him. But it was really weird because of the timing. We were there at the same time he was trying to force the Peruvian government to permit him to re-enter.

Q: Any other trips that you made?

JONES: Oh yeah, we did the Mexican border posts. I did all the consulates from Tijuana all the way over to Nuevo Laredo.

Q: Well, how are they coping? Had sort of Mexico collapsed in regards to police authority at this point?

JONES: Yes. Conditions were so bad that the American officers were being housed in the United States and were sent across the border every morning to staff the consulates in the border cities. It was an unbelievable amount of security, particularly in places like Juarez. I visited a newspaper office in Juarez. It was one of the papers that had been blown up

about a week before because they had written something that one of the drug cartels did not like. The cartels were so powerful they put up their own signs on the bridges and overpasses. They would put up notices telling people that they would come through at a certain time. Or they would put up warnings telling people not to do things. They would also hang the bodies of people they had killed, as a message to others not to engage in the same conduct. If a person had reported something to the police, you know, they would be caught and killed. I saw them in Nuevo Laredo. They were just driving in a line of black armored Cadillac Escalades. There were eight or nine vehicles in a row. They ran the red lights and nobody got in their way. I scared the consul in Nuevo Laredo one morning when I went for a walk down to the supermarket, which is about a block away from the hotel. I walked down and got some fruit and pastries to take back to the hotel. When I got back, two Diplomatic Security Agents were standing in the lobby with the cops. They asked where the hell I had been. I said, I just went down the store. Don't do that, they said. Don't ever leave the hotel without letting us know and getting an escort. I didn't realize it was that bad, you know. I could see the store from the hotel.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: The DS guys said that if I want to go somewhere I was to call them, and they would take me. That was another eye opening experience for me because I had only been to Mexico City once. Even Tijuana was unbelievable in terms of the police and military. Juarez probably was worse than I've ever seen in terms of violence. I mean you could see cars on the street that had been shot up, you know, four, five bullet holes in them, this kind of thing. And, the Mexican people seem to do what was necessary to survive. They would go along with it what was happening as long as it did not touch them. But, they could not just turn a blind eye to what was going on around them. The border cities were not nice places. The border was not a nice place to live.

The other trip I made with the OIG was to Afghanistan. I was a part of the joint State-DOD Police Training Program evaluation. We went out there for three months to evaluate the effectiveness of police training that was being provided to Afghan police officers.

Q: What was your particular contribution to that?

JONES: I was the deputy team leader. The head of the team was a DOD (Department of Defense) Chief Inspector. We were charged with observing the training and writing a report on how effective the American trainers were with the Afghan police. So basically, I was responsible for writing that piece of the report that included observations and ended with recommendations for change in the training regimen. We came under fire soon after we arrived. We landed in Kabul, received and orientation brief from the Embassy and then took off for training sites in the various provinces. Our first stop was in Ghazni. We landed at the landing strip and while driving, to get to the PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team), there was a roadside accident. One of the Humvees had accidentally hit a young man on the road. So the convoy stopped to try to find out where the man was from and to call local authorities so they could pick him up. I think he later

died. The minute we got into the PRT we started getting shelled. Rockets were coming from the nearby hillside. This happened everywhere we went. I visited all eight different training sites, from Kandahar in the south to Khost in the north and Bamiyan in the west. We got to Jalalabad on the Pakistani border and up to the Paktika Valley. My first observation was that Afghanistan is a country that is stuck in the 16th century. It's strictly tribal. In effect, it is not a country at all, in the sense that we think of modern day countries as having borders, a functioning central government and effective local governmental entities. Kabul was the capitol, in name only. The country is segmented and separated by rugged mountain ranges, ethnic and linguistic differences stretching back to the days of Genghis Khan and Alexander the Great. A police colonel from Bamiyan reminded me that Afghanistan had never been conquered by outsiders. Each region has its own ethnic and linguistic characteristics. Historically, it has never functioned as a real country with a central government. Getting involved there is akin to kicking over a hornets' nest and then trying to get the hornets to go back into the nest. It's horrible. It's not going to work without a lot of investment in time and manpower. I don't care what we do out there, it is like whistling in the wind. It simply isn't going to work without some major investment in time, money and manpower. So, as we looked at the police training it was evident that it would be a long term project to get the force to be effective. Questions about how they were being structured, who was being trained, where they were being trained and on what kind of weapons they were training on were material to our inspection. We concluded that much depended on who the trainers were and how the training was being conducted. A lot of the training contractors came from security companies here on the States. Companies like DynCorp, Black Water and others had major training contracts. It was hard to say whether the short term training would result in changes within the Afghan police forces. We agreed that they need to have their own system in place that would take into account the unique characteristic of the ethnic and cultural differences in the country. We might be able to train the Afghans how to search a house or how to stop a car at an intersection or how to search a man, but outside of that, the cultural differences need to be considered in how to carry out some of their other duties. So, this was a report that the Secretaries of Defense and State got that wasn't published in its entirety. We had to put in a classified portion. I'm not sure what happened to the report after it was submitted.

Q: That wasn't an encouraging report.

JONES: No, not at all.

Q: Did you feel any pressure to make it sound better?

JONES: We got our instructions from the secretary to be as hard hitting as we possibly could. She told us, in no uncertain terms, that she wanted to know what was actually going on. We were the first team that was allowed to do this kind of investigation in a war zone. The team was made up of four men from the Department of State and four from DOD. I think we did exactly what she wanted. We did not gloss over any of the hard issues. We examined training projects in places like Bamiyan in the north central part of the country where the Buddha statues had been blown up by the Taliban. The

police training there was being conducted by New Zealanders. We went all the way out to Khost in the northern part of the country where the Germans were conducting the trading. The U.S. training sites down in Jalalabad and Kandahar and other places were examined in detail. The process was just unbelievable. I couldn't really see how they were getting anything done. There were language barriers, there were cultural barriers, and the vetting process for these guys was incomprehensible. Out in Bamiyan, for example, I sat in a class the New Zealanders were teaching. There were about 60 guys in class, ranging in age from, maybe the late twenties to 60. I asked the question, "How many of you are, you know, former Mujahideen?" About 90% of the class raised their hands. I said to myself, oh my God, we are training these guys to be cops.

One of the Afghan colonels out there, who was in charge of the training detail, through the interpreter, told me We defeated Alexander the Great, we defeated Genghis Khan, we defeated the British, we defeated the Japanese, we defeated the Russians, and we're going to defeat the Americans."

All I could do was to say OK, thanks for your opinion. I have had enough of talking to you. I have learned a lot. That is the approach that most Afghans have. It is a strange country. It's us against everyone else. We fight against each other, but if an outsider fights one of us we will join forces to fight the outsider. You fly over 5,000-foot high mountain range into a valley and the people in that valley have never ventured outside that valley. You fly over the next range at 8,000-feet into another valley, and they don't even know the guys who are in the other valley. They've never been there. They're not a member of their tribe, so they don't care. Kabul to them is just another village somewhere. You know, they don't care what happens in Kabul. Kabul has no control over what they do. They have been doing this for a thousand years. So for us to go in there and talk about democracy or capitalism is like talking to the wall. They have no concept of what they are and they don't want to change their traditions to act more western. Policies for them are made while sitting around the Jirga with the head man telling people what's going on, or him listening to people and making a just decision. And, if he doesn't listen well enough and take the right action he is no longer going to be part of the Jirga. So it's that kind of, of community. And, it's a huge country, first of all, and extremely mountainous. I mean we were out there in June and flew went up over the Hindu Kush Range. There was still snow on the mountains. I mean it was just like going back 200 years. It's just hard to explain to people what's going on out there. It's just something that we are not used to and we have no idea what to do to address their problems. So, we're trying to make little Iowa's out there for people who have a thousand year history of doing things a certain way. We can't make major changes in the culture and practices of the Afghanis, in a few generations. This realization dawned on the entire team very early in the trip. It was discouraging. However, I believe we did a good report. I think we had a chance to see some of the things that you only read about. It is a beautiful country. I mean just unbelievably beautiful. It has clear blue skies with snow capped mountains, crisp clean air and so forth. Flying out of there we went over some of the poppy fields down in the southern part of the country. There were acres and acres of poppies growing in the south. And, the war lords who control that part of the country support the government in Kabul with drug money and have their own standing armies.

Nobody messes with them and they could care less what goes on in Kabul as long as they are left alone to ply their trade. They are able to get their drugs out through Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan. They control the drug traffic through places like Central Asia and all the way into Europe. And, they don't care what we do with the government in Kabul. There is nothing we can do about them. So anyhow, it was a good trip.

Q: Well, then where did you go?

JONES: After that report I'm not sure whether the Secretary was mad at me or what. But, they asked me to go out to Iraq as a PRT team leader. I guess they thought that I had seen the PRT operations in Afghanistan and could use the experience in Iraq. I thought about it for a while. And then, I said OK. I could be an opportunity to see something new and really have some impact on the outcome of our new diplomatic strategy. So, I was called in November of 2006 after having gotten back from one of the inspections. I was supposed to meet the person that I was going to replace in Iraq. She was a USAID officer, a woman who had decided that she did not want to go back to Iraq. I met with her for about an hour in the Department cafeteria. First, she said you're crazy as hell to go out there. She had come from some USAID project in India and gone to Iraq to head up a PRT in Diyala province, Iraq, which is north of Baghdad. It was a major farming region. She had arrived there in September. She came home for Thanksgiving, and refused to go back. I didn't realize this until after I had agreed to go out there. So, after a short orientation course at FSI, I got out there in January 2007. I had heard that flight into Baghdad was something special. And, it was. We were on a C-130 military airplane. We flew out of Amman, Jordan at about 9:00 at night. And, we are flying and flying and all of a sudden the plane turns on its side, and starts spiraling downward. We say "Oh my God, we're going to crash." Anyhow, it spirals in because at the time al-Qaeda was targeting the aircraft coming in to the airport. And, it hits the tarmac with a, *boom*, and slides to a stop. The loudspeaker comes on and orders everyone to grab his stuff and run. The tail drops down, you grab whatever you can and get the heck out of there because the plane is moving. Once you jump off their tail they close up again and start down the runway. In a few minutes, it has taken off. And you are standing there on the tarmac in the dark. The airplane's gone. You think to yourself, now what?

So there are about 50 of us standing there looking like *ohhh damn*, what did we get into? *(laughs)*. And then, you know, somebody runs out of an airport building and hollers at us. "Get your crap and get the hell in here, what is the matter with you all?"

So, we grab our bags. We were only allowed to take what we could carry. We rush into the half lit building and are shown to a series of benches. As our names are called, we are issued helmets and flack vests. After we get the equipment, we are sent running to various little hangers that are sandbagged and have gun placements outside. Inside, it's half lit, it's cold as hell, and guys start reading our names off. You know, "Jones, OK, get over there," sign this form, stand over there to get your photo taken. We are tired and half sleep, but they don't care. After a few hours of in-processing, you are assigned to a hooch with only two or three other guys. So you sleep there until the next morning when they start banging on the doors. Someone yells, "Jones, are you John Jones? I say yes. They

say get ready, we are going to take you over to the Embassy today. So we get some food gather up our stuff, go over to the hanger and wait. Then they say we are waiting for the rhino to get back from the city. I had never heard of the rhino. I'm not sure if you've heard of it or not.

Q: Yeah, big armored bus.

JONES: That's right. It is an armored bus. And, the first time you get into it with your helmet, flack vest and your baggage, it is something that will stay with you forever. This machine takes off from the airport and runs the gauntlet into Baghdad. I mean this is like running an obstacle course. The rhino carries two automatic weapons as well as a driver and a security person. Twenty to thirty passengers fit into it for the run to the green zone. We are briefed before we load, about what to do if the rhino is attacked or breaks down before it reaches the green zone.

A gauntlet?

JONES: Yes. It runs like a bat out of hell. It has slits for windows and has a special engine. We are warned about keeping our head down. As we go along, we can hear the little thing *pings*, you know, *ping ping, ping, hitting the rhino.* What the heck is that? Finally, I realize that guys are shooting at us. This is when you realize that coalition forces don't control the area between the airport and the city. And you know, once you got past that piece of information, you were OK. Running these little road blocks became routine. And so, finally we get into the green zone. We are ushered into another big warehouse. You are now at the mission. I guess we were in the Green Zone complex. It was at the time in one of the palaces that Saddam Hussein had built. . And they call your name out again and, and somebody will meet you from the office that you're going to go to. So I was in the PRT office and so they got me, showed me over to a hooch, which is a CHU, a containerized housing unit, that just had a bunk and a light, you know, no bathroom. The bathroom was down the block and around the corner. The next morning they, tell you to come over to the PRT office at such a time. And luckily for me, I was on my way to the office and was lost and ran into a guy that had been a classmate of mine at the National War College. He was a major general at the time. So he sort of showed me around. But got in there and tried to get briefed in about what was happening in the province. Surprisingly, no one in the PRT Office had ever been to Diyala Province. When I announced that I was going to Diyala, there was silence in the office. Everyone stopped working and stared at me.

I repeated that my orders have me going to Diyala Province.

After a few minutes of silence and staring, someone said "Oh, you going to Diyala. Oh, you are going to, oh no!" No one in the whole damn office had ever been to Diyala. They laughed sheepishly and returned to what they were doing. I asked if someone could brief me and no one answered. *(laughs)*.

I say, "How can you brief me if you've never been up there?"

One of the colonels responded that they get reports. I say o boy, what have I gotten myself into. What am I doing here? I found out later that I was supposed to get three days of briefings and wait for a helicopter ride up to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse which was located about eight miles from Baqubah, the provincial capitol of Diyala Province. And, one of the guys promised he would ride up with me because he had been in Iraq for nine months and had never been to Diyala. He was supposed to have been the PRT Coordinator for the operations in the area. He was sort of our coordinator, but had not found it necessary to go into the area.

And so low and behold, about 6:00 one morning, he knocked on the hooch door, said, "We got a ride to Diyala this afternoon." We were able to get a couple of seats on a Chinook helicopter, you know, one of these great big old slow machines.

Q: Yeah. Flying banana.

JONES: A flying banana, yeah. We get over to the airfield that afternoon and are able to get seats on the Chinook. We take off and fly out over the city. So, I'm sitting there. You know, I have my bags sort of strapped to the wall and I am sitting there in a little scooped out seat. The thing takes off, it's very slow and it's dark outside. They have only small blue interior lights on in the aircraft. It circles around the city in a slow arc. And, all of a sudden I look out of the open tailgate and see illuminated things going by. Red and yellow things shooting by the plane, *pshhu*, *pshhu*. And one or two of the tracers hit the plane. We were flying up over Sadr City and guys are shooting at the airplane. I said to myself, "Oh God, this is the last thing I need to have happen, to come out here and get shot down over Sadr City would be horrible." Anyhow, you know, we made it out with I think one or two hits on the plane. We got into Warhorse, which was a Forward Operating Base approximately 65 miles northeast of Baghdad up near the Iranian border. We landed there and, were met by a bunch of military guys. And that was it. I was there until April 2008. So you know, it was the most difficult assignment I have had in all of my Foreign Service years. The PRT was being hosted by the Third Brigade of the First Infantry Division. The commander was Colonel David Sutherland. We became fast friends and supported each other's efforts to bring some kind of normalcy to the province. The experience was, how do I say it-- scary. You know, getting rocketed every day is something that does not happen in a normal life. Going out with the civil affairs officers and getting into Baqubah, which was the closest city and the provincial capital, was just unbelievable. We had a difficult time for the entire year. I believe the brigade lost more than 140 men to combat actions .

Q: Ooh.

JONES: It was just an unbelievable situation. We were part of the surge. When the surge started, coalition forces drove the insurgents who were mainly Shia, out of the Baghdad area. They came right up Route 2, into Baqubah, which was a Shia stronghold and set up their training bases and headquarters. Coalition forces had running battles with those guys every day almost. It was not a nice existence. We got ambushed quite a bit as we

moved around in the province. We only lost two civilians during the time I was there, but my hooch was hit once. Luckily I wasn't there at the time. FOB Warhorse was unfortunately located at the confluence of the Diyala River and the Tigris. Also, Route 2, the major north-south highway, ran right by our base. There was a lot of open farm land around the base as well as small villages and palm groves. Trucks used the highways all the time. And, insurgents would load rocket launchers onto these trucks and stop and shoot off one or two while on the road or while hidden in the palm groves, and then take off. So, we could never stop them. But, this was just one difficult situations. *(laughs)*. Can I get a cup of coffee?

Q: Well, what were you doing?

JONES: I was the Special Advisor to the governor of the province. As the PRT team leader I had 48 people and a company of civil affairs soldiers, plus representatives from USAID, Department of Agriculture, Treasury, Commerce, and a Public Affair Officer. We were trying to get the government of the province up and running, that is basically what it amounted to. So, we tried to work with the governor and the provincial government as well as the local and city governments up and operational. I would meet with the governor every day, except Friday. That meant going up to his village, which is about 12 miles outside of Baqubah, picking him up, and taking him down to the government center in Baqubah so that he could go to work. After losing a couple guys during the transportation phases, back and forth to his village, we decided that we wouldn't do that anymore. We would try to fix something for him, in town. So we built a small apartment for him in the City Hall building. We had a platoon of soldiers down there to protect it and to serve as an outpost that could communicate with the FOB. This meant that we didn't have to travel every day except for twice a week to take him home for the weekend and bring him back. Diyala was one of those provinces that was 70% Sunni and about 30% Shia, but the governor, the chief of police, and the head military guy were all Shia, mainly because the Sunni boycotted of the election in 2004. The provincial council was chaired by a Kurd. There were deputy governors, one Kurd and one Shia, and one Sunni. And, it was a recipe for disaster basically. It was designed to fail. We were able to open a lot of the governmental functions before we left. For example, the governor hadn't met with the provincial counsel in executive session for six months prior to my arrival. We knew that these meetings had to start or nothing could get done to improve the living conditions for the people in the province. To that end, we had the Army Engineers fix up and fortify the provincial headquarters building so that it would be safe to host meetings. We were able to locate the members of the council who were still alive and living in the province. We were also able to locate some of the local mayors and judges. The officials were, of course reluctant to come into town because of the threats from the insurgents. We would try to set a date for council meetings and it would be difficult to get a quorum. I went out and talked to some of the village elders. They agreed that they would come in and have a quorum. The council included seven women. We had the first meeting, with a quorum, in March 2007. The night after the first meeting, one of the council-women, who was a Sunni, was dragged out of her home and shot in front of her family. I thought that would be the end of the meetings; but surprisingly, the very next week the council met again. One woman, a former school

teacher, traveled from her village and spent the night sleeping on the floor of the council building, alone, in order to make a quorum. She informed me that she had two pistols on her and was not afraid of the insurgents. These people were fairly resilient and tough and they wanted to get things done. We were able to get the schools open and functioning, we got the banks open, we got the electricity and water turned on, a number of mosques repaired, along with clinics and municipal offices. So, when I went into Baqubah the first day it looked like a bombed out World War II city. When I left in 2008, there were traffic jams and kids were going to school and there were soccer matches and the utilities were on. So I think I did a fairly good job in the year and a half that I was there.

Q: Well, did you find that you were able to work with -- I mean were you able to -- how'd you get things done?

JONES: *(laughs)* Through the good graces of the Army, and you know, we had a brigade commander, COL David Sutherland, who was very open in terms of wanting to get things done in the province. He had lost a lot of men and saw us an extension of his battle space. If we could get things done with the civilian population, it meant that he and his men did not have to engage in combat operations to get things done. He is one of the men involved with The Wounded Warrior Program. They have been feted on the 60 Minutes Program. I'm not sure whether you saw that. But anyhow, he wanted to get things under control. He wanted to try non-combatant operations as an alternative to combat. He saw us as being able to expand his battle space, and he always said that if we could get some progress towards the return to normalcy in the province, he would support it. The other pieces of PRT support came from General Petraeus and General Odierno. They were very much in favor of getting things done by using civilian power. Odierno would come up at least once a week and give us long encouraging talks. He always told me if I needed anything I should let him know. He fully supported civilian operations. He was quite involved in getting things like equipment for us. We were able to get specialists like a banking inspector, for example. I went out to one of the villages up in the northern part of the province and the senior imam asked for a clinic. I was able to comply with his request by going to COL Sutherland and asking him to use Commanders Emergency Relief Funds, (CERP). So it was one of those things that we could do my mixing civilian know how with military skills and abilities. If you looked at the numbers of people who were lost in Iraq, you could say it was not worth the effort and declare our efforts as a failure. But, I think in terms of what we accomplished in the province, I can say that it was a measured success. Final determinations, of course, will be reserved for the historical records.

Q: How were the people lost?

JONES: Oh, you mean the soldiers? Most were shot. Some were also killed by IED's and suicide bombers.

Q: But I mean was this to and fro or was this --

JONES: Well, it depended. We would lose one or two guys a month to mortars hitting the

base. But, once the operation started to chase the dissidents out of the province then we would get caught in firefights as we moved around the province. Occasionally we would have an IED. They were probably the most dangerous thing we had to deal with. Our convoys were prime targets it was hit three times going to and returning from Baqubah.

Q: These are --

JONES: Improvised Explosive Devices, yeah.

Q: These were roadside bombs.

JONES: Roadside bombs. They would also have vehicle borne explosive devices (VIBED's) that moved along the roads. Once, we got separated from our convoy. I normally rode in the last Humvee with the senior staff sergeant. One day we were going upcountry. Myself, with the senior squad leader who was a master sergeant, a driver and our turret gunner were in the Humvee. Our engine cut off. And, the squad leader was trying to reach the other guys on the radio. They had gone ahead and had gone over a hill. We were left standing there in the road alone. The turret gunner was looking back behind us and saw a car coming. I mean it was speeding towards us like a bat out of hell. It was a little sedan. The normal rule was that civilian vehicles remained 100 feet behind convoys. And so as the car kept speeding towards us, our gunner opened up on it. And the thing just exploded, with a loud *boom*. It had been a VIBED. The driver was on a suicide mission and had been trying to get us. And when that happened, guys started to come up out of the ditch and out of the palm grove on the other side of the road. They start shooting at us. By that time the other members of our convoy realized that we were missing and they turned around and started to come back to get us. The guys had started to return fire just as the rest of the convoy reached us. Now, it's really hard to recount the total number of times that we got hit. It's just one of those things that you sort of look back at and thank God that you did not get hurt. One time as we were moving back from town in a slow convoy, a guy stood up at the edge of a palm grove and fired a shoulder held rocket at the Humvee just in front of us. I saw him when he stood up and, it was just a matter of seconds when he raised the rocket launcher. He stood there and shot at them. The rocket hit the door right where our senior nurse was sitting, and fell on to the road. It was a dud. You know it just fell in the road. Well, I mean you can imagine how everyone felt. I caught up with her once we made it back to the FOB. I asked her if she was okay. She said she was fine but unnerved. She was as pale as a sheet. She did not extend her tour. And, I could not blame her. These kinds of incidents went on and on. One day, the FOB got hit with a chlorine VIBED. It was a dump truck full of chlorine canisters and explosives. It exploded after the driver was killed by our sentries. It was headed right towards our front gate. The sentries shot at it because it did not slow down as it got close to the gate. It exploded about 15 yards from the main gate and left a crater about ten feet deep. The PRT offices were sort of close to the gate. A cloud of chlorine gas covered most of the FOB. It affected, I think 62 of us. I later developed blood clots in my lungs because of it. And basically that's what got me out of there. So you know, we will have to see how things will turn out in Iraq. As the U.S. moves out and closes down the operation out there, the Iraqis' will still have the same problems. The issue will be how

they want to solve them. There really isn't a whole lot we, as outsiders, can do. It's something they've got to solve themselves. I don't care how long we stay, we're not going to be able to solve their internal problems. I mean this is a problem that goes back to the time of The Prophet Mohammad. And you know, if the prophet couldn't solve it, we're not going to solve it. I mean it's something they have to want to do. It's basically a balkanized country existing inside false borders that were forced upon them by outsiders like Europeans. They've got to try to reach some proper division, so that each ethnic group will be equitably represented. They have to have a representative form of government. They have to give the Sunni their piece, as well as the Shia, the northern Kurds and the other minority groups that exist within their borders. And, unless they get to that point they are never going to have a functioning government.

Q: Was there any attempt to accept that as a fact and try to do something about it or?

JONES: No, I'm not sure whether we had the right information in the beginning. We did not have any idea about what would happen when Saddam Hussein was removed. We listened to a bunch of corrupt politicians who had not been in Iraq for generations and I believe we did not have effective leadership from U.S. civilian officials in the early days of the invasion. I am not sure whether we put the proper leadership in place in Baghdad. We, for some reason didn't want to talk to the violent al-Qaeda or the Shia and Sunni hardliners. And, without bringing those guys into the fold we were not going to be able to do anything permanent in Iraq. So you know, I am not sure that we are capable of bringing this country together. Going in there was just one big international blunder.

Q: Well, was the feeling that once we pull out --

JONES: Yes, a mess will be left in our wake.

Q: -- that this would become a hot bed of plotting to hit America or are they going to be pretty well absorbed by their own hostilities?

JONES: There's a guy called Muqtada al-Sadr, who's sort of the head of that very conservative Shia sect. In the southern part of the country and in Iran, he is held in high esteem. We considered him an outlaw and tried to kill him on several occasions. What we needed to do was to try to talk to him to see how some kind of an arrangement could be reached to prevent the country from evolving into a continual battleground.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: And, I think he's going to be the king maker in the future. I think that they will be a part of our own problems. And, it'll be one of those cases where you are going to have different elements operating in different parts of the country, and I don't think the central government will be capable or willing to carry out what they need to do in order to make Iraq a functioning nation. I don't think, however, that it's going to be a hot bed of attempts to hit the United States. I think the Iranian influence on one side and the hard line Saudi and Islamic fundamentalists on the other side, will make Iraq a failed state for

some time to come.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: We also have to remember that in the southern part of the country where most of the Shia reside, there are severe problems relating to the government in Baghdad. They had historically been abused by the central government under the Hussein regime. And, one has to remember what we did to them after the first Iraq War. We basically left them to sink or swim on their own after we had promised them that if they revolted against Saddam Hussein, we would support them. We set up a no fly zone, but that did not impact them. And so, we left to fend for themselves. Of course, Hussein went in there and killed a lot of those folks. They still remember what it is like to rely on the U.S. I think they're still bitter against us. I don't think they have the capabilities of doing anything violent yet, but that's not saying they might not develop some capabilities with the help of Iran.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: I think Iran is the bad boy in the neighborhood. They will have influence over al-Sadr and the Shia. And, so much depends on what may happen if Iran develops the bomb. I'm not sure what happens after that. But, I just sort of feel that right now the current government isn't capable of even managing the country.

Q: Well, coming away from this experience, did you have a chance to express your feeling of, you know, we weren't getting anywhere to anyone by authority of official report?

JONES: Yeah, we did after action reports. And these were sort of confined to the bureau. I think, the embassy certainly was aware of what was going on in the country. But I'm not sure whether their opinions were taken into account when planning for future actions was going on. I look at what's going on now and I think the drawdown to five regional offices and the embassy means one thing to the Americans, and something else to the Iraqis. I think it signals that they beat us because they were able to chase us out of their country. To America, its interpreted to mean that we've pulled out so we would not have to spend any more money or spill any more blood out there. We were going to get our guys out of harm's way. The realty is somewhere in the middle. Iraqis are going to go through some hard times before they get it right. And, we all know, they don't have a history of what we call democracy. They don't even know what it is. Even the educated elite, the governors and so forth, people who were educated in Europe and in the west, they have difficulty explaining democratic concepts to some imam or village elder who is 80-years old and is doing things the way his father and grandfather did. So how do you convince folks that this is the way to go? When we come in and impose things like women's rights and universal suffrage in representative classes. We impose things like a new monetary system, or elections so that everybody over the age of 18 can vote. All of this is something new to them. Some government worked for a while because the country had the heavy thumb of Saddam Hussein and his Baathists Party controlling everything.

They were controlled since the '60s. So how do you now impose democracy when nobody in that country ever lived under that form of government? How do you now turn them around in a matter of a few years to form a representative democracy? You can't do it. I'm not optimistic. I just don't think Iraq will be a thorn in our side for a while. Iran? Yeah, maybe but, I don't think Iraq will. It's just too bad in terms of the total number of folks that have been lost out there. Does the total number of Americans and Iraqis who've been killed amount to a waste? I certainly hope not.

Q: Well, then when you left there what did you do?

JONES: I got pulled back here and spent nine days in the hospital and then was assigned as a Special Advisor in the new Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization.

Q: This is the blood clot?

JONES: Yeah. I got a call from one of the Deputy Assistant Secretaries in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs who asked me whether I would consider an ambassadorial position. Of course, I told him yes. In January 2008, I had been called back here to brief The President and National Security Council on operations. We had a close video teleconference with the Embassy in Baghdad. Ambassador Crocker was on the vtc. The President was there, the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and I guess the whole group of Security Council representatives. I mean the whole national security group was there. And, I was asked some very pointed questions by the President and by the Secretary of State. I gave my opinion on some salient issues relating to our ongoing operations in Iraq.

Q: Who was the President at the time?

JONES: George Bush, George W. Bush was the President. And, after the briefing, he had an outdoor press conference in the Rose Garden concerning what was happening in Iraq. Three of us PRT Team Leaders were with him, in addition to the Secretary of State. After the Press Conference, the President called me into the Oval Office with Secretary Rice and thanked me for my service. He hugged me, patted me on the back, and said, "Take care of yourself out there. What are you going to do after Iraq?" I told him I planned to go back into the ranks and maybe bid on a job at another embassy. He smiled and said he would be following my progress. I was ushered out, but Secretary stayed behind and told me to wait for her outside.

Q: Secretary Rice.

JONES: Yes. But like I said, a month and a half later I got the call asking me if I would consider becoming an ambassador. So, I came back in April 2008 and was seconded to the Special Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization. It was a special office located on the 8th floor of a half empty office building in Rosslyn, Virginia

Q: Well, why don't we pick it up at that point?

JONES: All right, OK.

Q: And this is 2000 and --

JONES: And eight.

Q: And eight.

JONES: Yeah, 2008.

Q: And we'll pick this up when you had been called back and you're dealing with stabilization and -- OK?

JONES: All right.

Q: Good.

JONES: Great.

Q: Today is the 14th of November, 2011 with John Jones. And John, we had left this off at -- you were brought back to Washington. This is 2000 and --

JONES: Eight.

Q: Yeah. And so what were you up to?

JONES: I think it was Baghdad. I was in Iraq as a PRT team leader in Diyala Province.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: And, I had gotten called back here in the early part of 2008 to do a briefing at the White House.

Q: Well, you -- just talk about it again, I think.

JONES: I found out later that the planners were getting ready to do the last part of the surge. More troops were being brought in to the country in an effort to clear the region of insurgents, north of Baghdad. I forget the name of the military operation. The administration wanted to have a feel, from the perspective of the provincial reconstruction teams, about what was going on on the ground. Ambassador Crocker was in Baghdad along with three PRT team leaders, and three of us were brought back to brief at the White House itself. President Bush and the National Security Council team were supposed to ask us specific questions. The briefing itself was about an hour and a half long. The President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense and Chairman of Joint Chiefs were the ones asking most of the questions. But, I had the feeling that I had not

come across well because I was the only one who was saying that things were not what others were saying about conditions on the ground in their part of the country. I was saying that things were not going well from the civilian perspective. I felt the reconstruction and development efforts within the civilian communities of Diyala were not what they should be in terms of having the ability to transition from military rule to civilian control. I didn't know whether the situation in Diyala Province was unique or whether this was something that the other people were saying because it was what they thought our governmental leaders wanted to hear. Up in our area, I knew what was happening and I knew that because of the population make-up of the area, things were still quite hard to get accomplished. We had combat operations going on in the province. But, some of the people who were down south or who were in the Baghdad video conference with the Ambassador were saying one thing, and those of us from up north were saying something completely different. So it was a long briefing. There weren't really a lot of detailed questions asked, just general overview and impressions of what we saw as progress that we were making or could be making. We were asked how we felt in terms of our host brigades and the other units who supported the civilian efforts. There was interest particularly about the forward operating bases. They wanted to know, whether or not the concept of combining the civilian and military units was functioning and whether the civilian- military mix enabled us to get anything done. Because of the uniqueness of Diyala Province, again, we were not making as much progress as some of other provinces where there were more homogenous mixtures of people. Ours was a province that was about 60% Sunni, 25 or so percent Shia, and the rest were mixed with Kurds and Chadians and a lot of other groups. So we had a big mixture of groups to try to bring together. The eastern part of the province was predominantly Shia. It was on the Iranian border. Unfortunately, the Sunni had boycotted the last elections and therefore they didn't have anybody in a position of power in the province itself, even though they outnumbered the Shia. This was the reason for so much of the violence in the province. The residents in the western part of the province, Sunnis, got a lot of support from the other provinces in the north and west, as well as outsiders from the west who came across the border from Jordan. So, it was kind of a hard sell for to say that things were going well. We felt certainly that we weren't having the same kind of experiences that they were having in the predominantly Sunni provinces. I stated that and then didn't get a lot of feedback until I got back to post and got the impression from the ambassador that he wasn't really satisfied with what I had said. So, for those of us that were in the north and who were getting hit with IED's and mortars, and having our patrols ambushed, we sort of felt that we needed to say what was really happening rather than saying that things were going well. And I said that. The funny part was after we had finished, the President went out on the steps of the Rose Garden and made a public statement to the press that had gathered. The three of us PRT Team leaders and the Secretary of State stood there with him. He had me down next to him on the step between himself and the Secretary of State. The press corps asked a few questions. We answered questions and went back inside. It was weird because the other folks were kind of taken by escorts and led out, and I was still there in the Oval Office and didn't know what was going on. And, the Secretary and the President were there. The Secretary said, "Well, do you all want to talk, and if so I'll leave."

The President said, "No, no, that's fine." He asked me, "How are things really going?"

I said, "We're catching up. We're not making progress at all in certain aspects of standing up the provincial government." I mean the conversation went like that. So, finally, he gave me a hug, patted me on the back and thanked me for my service. He said he would be back in contact with me. Then, I turned to walk out but Secretary Rice stayed behind and told me to wait for her outside. So, a month later, when I am back in Iraq, I got a call to come down to Baghdad. I was able to get on a late afternoon chopper flight out of Warhorse. The Black Hawks always flew in pairs. So, they agreed to drop me off at Camp Liberty, in the Green Zone on their way back to the airport. When they drop you off, the helicopter sort of hovers, and you jump out and get the heck out of the way of the rotors. In Baghdad, you are supposed to run to the nearest bunker. I was carrying my backpack and didn't have time to put it on. I was running toward the bunker, which was the normal practice, at Camp Liberty because it let the choppers clear the field and take off again. They didn't stay at Camp Liberty overnight. Liberty was just a drop-off area, inside the perimeter of the palace in the Green Zone. So, just as I reached the bunker, my cell phone rang. It was a person from the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs calling to tell me that my name had been submitted by the Secretary for nomination as ambassador. He wanted to know whether I would accept or not. I really didn't hear what he was saying, you know, so you know, just saying yeah, yeah, yeah, I understand what you're saying because of the noise of the helicopter engines, and, so I asked him if he could call me back. And, about an hour later he called me back. I was sitting in the Green Zone, in one of the little coffee shops inside the palace. He called me back and said my name had been submitted to the president and he had approved for me to come back as Ambassador to Guyana. I stayed at FOB Warhorse until April and then I received my orders to come back. They found a man to take my spot up in Diyala. He has been a deputy team later in one of the PRTs down south. And so I overlapped with him for about a week and then moved out of Baghdad and back to the U.S. via Amman, Jordan.

Q: Before you move out of Baghdad, did you find the fact that you're saying things in Diyala weren't going very well. How did this affect you when you came back? I mean what were you getting from Crocker and others?

JONES: Ambassador Crocker was not someone who pulls punches. He comes directly at you. And, he was right on. He said I had said what I was supposed to say. I had the impression from the video conferencing that he might have been putting on another face. But, certainly when I met with him he seemed to feel that I said what was necessary. And, certainly being truthful about what was happening up in Diyala was what the President and NSC needed to hear. You recall that after the surge started there were a lot of combat operations going on in the province.

Q: It doesn't seem to be registering. But this, this one is, so -- that's why I have two.

JONES: Well, I could tell he was not happy. But, he has always been friendly to me. I've never had any problem with him. He's just been very straightforward, a very nice man,

and I'd work for him anywhere. But he said, that I had said what needed to be said and, I said it in the right forum. It might not have squared with the impression the President wanted to present to the public or with the theme the press was being given about how easy it was going to be to chase the insurgents out. But, it was said.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: No major problems at all. Once the surge started there were lots of operations ongoing and the biggest one was right there in Baqubah. It was where insurgents had been training some of their men. The Sunnis had come in from outside the area such as from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Somalia, and lots of places in the western part of Iraq. They were not local. So the coalition forces chased them out of Sadr City and they wound up 60 miles up north in Diyala. The largest and closest city was Baqubah and so that is where they went. They dug in and entrenched. The brigade had to go in and dig them up. So we had lots of firefights going on there. One of the things that happened at the time was, the base getting hit with a chlorine bomb. A VBIED, a dump truck full of explosives and chlorine canisters hit us. It was a suicide bomber. We heard it coming. It was one of these big trucks with a powerful motor and you could hear it coming. The front gate was set up in a series of serpentine switchbacks that all vehicles had to traverse in order to reach the gate. You had to go through these serpentine barriers and then pass through the entry gate. Normally drivers would slow down when you got to one of those barriers. But, this thing didn't slow down. Our little area was not too far from the main gate of the FOB. The guys in the tower that overlooked the entry gate opened up with their machine guns. And, this thing, you could hear it bearing down and gunning its engine. The sentry opened up on this guy and the truck exploded. I mean the concussion from the explosion knocked some of us down. A huge chlorine gas cloud covered half of the FOB. I was one of the guys who were out there in the open. I just started choking and coughing. And then, I started to cough up a little blood. The medics checked me out and the coughing just kept getting worse and worse. And, so by mid-April they pulled me out of there and brought me back here to the States. It coincided with my acceptance of the ambassadorial offer. The break gave me time to start working briefings and looking at what was going on to prepare me for ambassadorial hearings. My medical problems had not worsened after my initial hospital stay. So they had me in the hospital here in Fairfax Virginia for nine days. They suspected that it had developed a pulmonary embolism. It was suspected the blood clot had developed in one of my lungs as a result of the exposure to the chlorine. So, during that part of my treatment, I was basically assigned as a special advisor in the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction Stabilization. It was here in Roselyn. I worked there until almost the time for the hearings and then I was switched over to the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. In WHA they prepared me for my congressional hearings. I was instructed on how to do my read-ins and special visits and so forth. Once the Agrément had been received from the Government of Guyana and congressional hearings were held. It was just a matter of time to complete hearings and prepare to go to post.

Q: What would you gain from the Washington perspective, I mean as you were looking at the situation in Iraq, was it a different one than the one that you knew? I mean was there

a Washington perspective?

JONES: I think so. And, this is my own personal opinion, I never checked with people here. But, I could see that there were two different perspectives, one in the field, which I think was a little bit more realistic. And, there was another perspective here in Washington. If they had talked to the military guys out there, they would understand what was going on. Two of the most remarkable guys I've ever run into have been General Petraeus and General Odierno. In our meetings they were constantly saying, "We need to have you non-uniform civilian guys here. You expand our battle space and create the goodwill that men in uniform cannot do."

Gen. Ray Odierno told me, that we expanded his battle space. He needed us in Diyala province because we could get out and do farm projects and health care and all this other kind of stuff. I can't do that. I need you here." So, he fully bought into the concept that we needed the kinds of joint operations, and a non-uniformed civilian presence to help the military bridge the divide with local civilians. And in a place like Iraq, it was all about trying to win the hearts and minds of the local people. It wasn't so hardcore. I mean, this was an insurgency brought on by a gap in leadership that occurred after thirty years of a dictatorship. So we had to address the real meaning of why there were insurgents in the area. This is a thing that I think he wanted to address more than anything else. He understood that this was not an ordinary war zone. Back here in Washington, there were certain people who were talking about victory. They kept saying things like "let's win this thing". And, those of us on the ground were saying, "What's a win?" I mean how do you win in a place like this where, one day the people that you're helping are, are saying thank you very much. The next day, they're using what you gave them to hurt you. They have loyalties and connections with each other that go back centuries. How are we supposed to account for this with our new and foreign ideals about democracy and representative government? A good example is the case of the Minister of Health for Diyala Province. The Minister of Health for the province was a very prominent local doctor. He was a very nice guy who spoke English and had been educated in Europe. He was from a prominent family in the area. We put together a program to donate ambulances to the ministry. We got the military to put up some funds and we purchases 26 ambulances for the local hospital. We had a big ceremony with the governor and the brigade commander. The press covered the ceremony. Within a week those ambulances were being used for carrying wounded al-Qaeda fighters to special medical clinics. It turned out the doctor's brother was one of the heads of al-Qaeda in the province. Everyone, except us, knew about the minister's brother. Folks in the province said that luckily we didn't see any ambulances come back in the form of VBIEDS. Later, they were found transporting arms, and they had been stopped at some road blocks by American troops and found to be carrying wounded al-Qaeda members. It's that kind of thing that happened because of our lack of knowledge of local customs and because we failed to realize that these folks owed greater loyalties to their families than to the coalition forces. It was hard for us to understand the minister's motives. He had been a good contact for us. He had been an interlocker for us. He helped us get to the point where we needed to look specifically at which clinics should be built, and where they should be. He even dealt with local people determining whether individuals should be

sent to a hospital in Baghdad or treated locally. So it was really hard to determine how to play it with local officials, after this case. And, back here in the U.S. I think the press and people were looking at how well things were going. We were winning the war. Whereas the folks on the ground out there understood that this was not something that you could win. You simply couldn't do it. You needed to have someone in there who understood the dynamics of what was going on on the ground. We were, in fact, trying to offset the effects of these guys who we were calling terrorists. But, we could not tell the difference between who was a terrorist and who was a local boy. Local boys were unemployed. They had no jobs and no stake in the future of the nation. They had no prospect for jobs or educations. How do you address that? How do you address that with the military perspective? What do you do if you can't make enough money to feed your wife and small children? And for us, how do we make sure that we don't turn this guy into an enemy insurgent? There were so many guys up there who were former policemen and former military who were left with nothing when the American s disbanded the army and the police right after the invasion. Had they been left in place, I believe they would have made a big difference in the future governance of Iraq. They were the stabilizing force that the citizens knew, trusted and were familiar with. After Paul Bremer disbanded them and left them to fend for themselves, they went out and did what they needed to do in order to survive. I mean they had no way of making a living, none whatsoever. And in a province that's 70% Sunni, with a Shia governor, a Shia chief of police, and a Shia military commander the options were few. While the military and the police were recruiting other Shia from down around Baghdad and from the south and bringing them up to a predominantly Sunni province to act as police officers, the life for the men became intolerable. So, these Shia guys were killing people and locking up young boys. I mean, the Shia police would go into a village and arrest any male over the age of fourteen. I went to the Baqubah jail for the first time way back in 2007. I found kids, from 14 to 16-years-old, chained to the walls in the corridors. The jail cells were so crowded that people couldn't lie down. These were just men that had been picked up in what they called sweeps. They would go through a village and, ask what an individual kid did. If they found out he was related to a certain person and was not in school, they would take him in for questioning. Or, if he was fourteen or older, he would be detained. So that kind of thing we saw over and over and over again. They would bring in a judge from Baghdad who was a Shia. And, of course, he would find every Sunni guilty of something. There weren't enough cells to allow any kind of separation of the sexes so you had women, who had been arrested in some village for whatever reason, sitting out on the benches in the halls, chained by the leg. I asked, what are you guys doing here? How on earth do we, as representatives of the United States government, come in here and support this kind of activity and then try to convince people that we have their best interests in mind. We can say we are winning Iraqi hearts and minds, back in Washington. But, what are we doing beneficial for the folks on the ground. It was just the worst thing I had ever seen in my life. We succeeded, at least, in getting a couple of the local judges back into the province. We found a couple of them hiding in Baghdad, and one or two still in the province. We reopened the courts. We got most of the kids released from jail. We set up a system so that there would be some system of self-policing in the Sunni communities. Also, the people in the Shia community would police themselves. The Kurds were given an opportunity to work in their own community. General Odierno

came up with this concept. He called them the Sons of Iraq. They were being paid a couple hundred dinar a month to be police and security officers in their own villages. And as long as they weren't shooting at each other, there wouldn't be a problem with the Americans. It worked quite well. I understand that now there was some complaining about the system because these guys have moved into becoming seen as stooges for the Americans. But, at least during that period of time, the latter part of 2007, early part of 2008 the system worked quite well in terms of giving these guys moneys that were taken from the oil ministries and so forth to allow them to have some income. And so, we got the markets reopened. The Saturday market would reopen, we reopened the schools, got the electricity functioning, got the bank open and running, cleaned out the water canals so that the farmers could irrigate their crops and get them harvested in the fall. So, from the perspective of short term accomplishments, I guess our efforts were a success. Nothing really has happened up there in terms of pitch battles except for a few car bombs and some IEDs. But other than that things seemed to work quite well. But there was this big break between what was going on on the ground and I see as the reality and what the perceptions were back here in Washington. It was so disappointing from that perspective, but I think, the politicians played a big role in how the actions were seen and reported in the U.S. We had a number of visits from people like Senators McCain, Kerry and Lindsay Graham. But, none of them wanted to come to Diyala. When, when Senator McCain came out there, he stayed in Baghdad and had a flak vest on walking around the market, with General Petraeus. And, if you look at the pictures you notice that everybody else has on their helmets and flack vests. Only McCain is walking around with a baseball cap on. Well, he occupied a whole darn battalion of guys just to provide security. I mean they were all over the rooftops. They had helicopters circling and this kind of thing. So the press coverage of his visit was kind of a joke for all of us. When Lindsey Graham came out he was dressed in the uniform of an Air Force colonel. I introduced him to the governor of the province and we had dinner together. I thought he was probably the most realistic of our visitors. But again, he had been an Air Force lawyer and knew how to carry himself in a war zone. He understand what the policy was. I have not had a chance to visit him. He's invited me to come and see him when I got back. I haven't had a chance to see him since I got back. Some of the big named visitors were just tourists. You had reporters like Katie Couric and these people running around out there. And, some of the Dallas Cowboys cheerleaders and musicians visited to troops. None of them would show up in Diyala because it's just too darn dangerous, you know, so it was hilarious. You could go to Baghdad, you'd see these guys all hanging around in the Green Zone and filming reports back to the U.S.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: -- It was like a feeding frenzy when we came into Baghdad from up country. When we jumped off the choppers, I mean the reporters all descended on us like locust asking what's going on out there. Tell me what is happening in Baqubah. I would always say come up, why don't you come up and see for yourselves. They knew what was happening in Diyala but they refused to come up. I remember one young lady who was a Public Affairs Officer who was supposed to be assigned to replace our Public Affairs Officer who had rotated back to the U.S. I forget, but it was probably toward the end of

the year, because it was raining and kind of cold and overcast. I knew she was supposed to be coming, so I went out to the landing pad to wait. I was standing there with my mud up to my knees, wearing dirty boots a helmet and flak vest and waiting till the choppers landed. This young lady jumps off the chopper and is wearing high-heeled shoes a white blouse and a mini-skirt. I'm looking and saying to myself, you have got to be kidding me.

The crewmen grab her bags and start to run over to where I am. I had my vehicle sitting there. And, she walked up to about 20 feet from me and stopped. She looked at me and said -- excuse my English -- "Fuck this." She turned right around, grabbed her bags, and got back on the chopper. The crewmen just look stunned. They turn and got back on the chopper and took off back to Baghdad.

I'm left standing out there in the mud. I get on the phone and I call OPA, you know, the Office of Provision Affairs and tell them I just lost my Public Affairs Officer. *(laughs)* .

Phyllis Powers, who was the ambassador in Panama, said, "Yeah John, you're right, she came back."

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: Yeah, it was not a nice comfortable place. I mean we were living basic. When I say basic, I mean basic. So, I guess she just would not have fit in. We have a lot of folks who came out like that and after spending one or two days on the ground, they would say the heck with this. I'm not putting up with this stuff. I mean, getting mortared every few days and getting ambushed almost every time we went out, they just couldn't cut it. And it was good that they left, because when you're out there on the ground and you're accompanying military patrols around, you have got to be able to keep up with them and appreciate the environment that you are in. You've got to be able to understand what's going on, and if you go into a village and there is a firefight of some kind, I mean you have to be able to take care of yourself and not be a hazard to the troops and yourself. So, we had a lot of folks that I call tourists. They came in they saw what was happening and they left. It was their choice and no one is in a position to judge them. We were all volunteers.

Q: Well, did you have -- I mean OK, you're in this, you're a civilian. Were you firing back?

JONES: Do I have to answer that? I had a weapon, yeah. I fired a couple times. I mean I don't think I hit anybody. I certainly wasn't trying to hit anybody. But I mean, you know, if you are out there in the field with eight or nine guys and you're on a patrol somewhere and your mission is to go and talk to the village head or to see the school and you're cut off or you get ambushed somewhere you initially have to look out for yourself. The soldiers are there, and they're on their mission. Their mission is not to be your bodyguards. They are doing their patrol because this is their sector and they got to make sure that they know what's going on inside of it. And, if you tail along to talk to the village elder or to see the imam or to see whether the clinic is functioning it accomplishes

your task along with theirs. It is always an added benefit to be able to go in and see what is happening on the ground. But, if there is an attack, their job was to drive off the attackers. Then they can come back and see what is happening to you. But to me, I didn't want anybody to get hurt because they were accompanying me to a meeting somewhere. And, after I found out that Al-Qaeda had put a price on my head, I always carried a weapon. I did not want to be a burden to the guys. So, I carried for my own protection, but I kept it quiet. But you know it bothered me a bit. I felt that if I was going to be out there with the soldiers, I needed at least to be able to keep them from getting hurt because they were with me at a meeting or at a site visit.

Q: Yeah. All right. Well, when you left what was your impression?

JONES: Overall, I think a good analogy is comparing it to kicking over a hornet's nest and then trying to get the hornets to go back in. Maybe that's not a good analogy, but I think it's a situation that we stirred up. It did not have to be stirred up because there was relative calm in the country before our second incursion. And now, we are left with trying to plug up the holes that we created. And, there was no coordinated, well-planned strategy to bring calm back to the country. We made false assumptions based on false information or on just outright lies. We had no intelligence about conditions on the ground. Yet, policies kept coming out of Washington that did not add up to the reality of what was happening in country. Maybe Washington did not want to admit that they had made some really big mistakes in the first place by invading Iraq for no reason. And, once they got in, they did not know what to do to get out. I am not sure.

My personal insight into this problem happened the first time I met the governor of Diyala Province. After going through the pleasantries of introduction and having tea, he looked at me and he said, "Mr. Jones, we have a 3,000-year written history. What are you here to tell me?"

I replied that I was not here to tell him anything. I am here to listen. He smiled at that. Because, I think we had gone into Iraq thinking that we would be openly accepted as some kind of savior. We were the big guys on the block. And, we were going to go in there and set up a democratic government and they were going to be converted into a little Iowa, you know enjoying a representative form of democratic government. That was not possible. It's simply not possible in that kind of a society, with the history and culture that they have there. I think the initial rationale presented as the reasons for our invasion were all wrong. The idea of trying to set up a democratic form or representative form of government just isn't going to work in Iraq. Maybe they do need to have some kind of a benevolent dictatorship or something where you have somebody who's able to direct the way things go. But I think there were lots of misconceptions, on our part, by going out there and then trying to impose our will on a culture that is ten times older than ourselves and has a history of dictatorship and colonial control. I mean this is a fight between religious adherents of religious sects that has been going on since the death of the Prophet Mohammad. So, for us to go in and try to impose our will on them was just arrogance and a total misconception of the reality of the situation. And I think people like Ryan Crocker and certainly Generals Petraeus and Odierno and the folks who spent time out there, now

see that this was a misadventure that the U.S. should have never gotten involved in. They understand. I think it took a little while and maybe by 2007 or 08, they started to realize that.

Q: Now, did our Christian religion and, you know, the things that are part of our culture, does this get in our way do you think?

JONES: I don't think so. Not in the part of the country where I was. But I've heard from guys who have been out in Fallujah and places like that had a bit of a problem. As long as you remained on the base you were okay. You were in Little America. But once you got outside we expected to work five days a week. The funny part is we had to understand that on Thursday and Friday and sometimes Saturday the locals did not come to work. On Friday they went to mosque. And, the certain key people in communities, that you engage with followed local practices. You could not schedule meetings for Thursdays, Fridays or Saturdays. I mean the shop owners and the average guy in the street just disappeared. You went to either the village elder or the imam when you wanted to gain an introduction or contact with a particular group of citizens. So, you might encounter a local businessman or someone sent out from Baghdad to be local minister of some public works. But you did not go directly to him. He was not in reality the key person in the community. You would have to go to the local mayor or the local imam or ask the mayor to set up the meeting for you, in his office. I guess our lack of real understanding of the local culture hampered our ability to get things done quickly. I am not sure it hurt us in the northern part of the country. There were Chadians, Christians and the Kurds up in our area. We're also about 30 miles from a huge enclave of ex-pat Iranians that had settled in the province. They had fled from Iran and had been given safe haven by Saddam Hussein. They had been attacked several times by Sunni insurgents. But, we were responsible for their continued existence.

Q: Well OK, you talk to the imam, imam says I suggest you do this and that. Did you usually follow what --

JONES: Yes. I would take the requests back and discuss them with the brigade commander. I'd see what the brigade commander wanted, whether or not it was possible to do in the area. There were many things being recommended by community residents, like digging wells or putting a work party together to clean out a water canal. This is something the governor or mayor would organize. The military might provide security for the project and pay the workers through the use of CERP funds. We were probably able to escort a tractor or get a special machine to plow the fields or something like that. The other side of it was once you got an agreement done at the province level you had to get it done at the capital city. We had to get Baghdad to the correct ministry and get them to buy in on the project. If Baghdad didn't buy in, for some reason, the project would be lost. I remember going to one of the schools and one of the ladies who was on the parental council needed to have the exams collected from everybody at the high schools in the province, to be sent to the Ministry of Education for grading to determine which students could go from high school to the university. The exams had to be sent to Baghdad for grading and then you would determine whether the students had graduated

from high school. She wanted like crazy to have soldiers escort her up to the villages so she could collect these exams from these rural schools. I could not do it. I felt it would expose the guys to too much danger. Going from school to school out in the countryside would certainly have gotten some of them hurt. Little things like that came up often. You always had to go through the military because we were hosted and supported by them.

One of the things that we did get done was getting the pomegranate processing and juice extraction facility reopened. The plant was a major industry in the province and provided a lot of jobs to the local community. When we got there, pomegranates were literally falling on the ground and rotting because the plant did not have a reliable source of energy. They needed a generator for the processing plant. We went up there and checked it out. It was basically ready to function. They just didn't have any reliable source of electricity. So we were able to get Baghdad, the Ministry of Public Works, to donate a generator. The brigade transported the generator up to the plant site and the engineers connected it and tested it. So, instead of these guys sitting around the village doing nothing, they could go out and start gathering pomegranates, which they would take to the factory to make juice, jelly and the whole line of products. We also found out that there was a sizeable bunch of beekeepers in the province. There were a lot of orange groves and other fruits grown in the province. In the past, there had been a association of beekeepers. They had disbanded when hostilities started. Luckily, we had a farmer from North Carolina in our Civil Affairs Company. He was a reservist from the North Carolina National Guard. He was a very basic down to earth guy and he came up with the suggestion to get the beekeepers organized and help them start to produce honey, again. Again, the problem was that the little processing plant had almost been destroyed during the fighting. We put together a working group with the help of the local farmers and were able to find a couple of honey pasteurizing machines in India. With the help of our USAID officer, we were able to get the machines donated to the province. The Brigade, again pitched in to get them into country and transported up to Baqubah. Within the short spring months, we got the local farmers organized and they were able to reopen the processing center under the direction of our civil affairs officer. This was a good example of how the various parts of our PRT coordinated efforts to complete a very successful project that is still operating. We had three honey processing plants up and running before we left. So those are the kinds of things that we did. I mean the idea was that you had to do things within the parameters of what the entire unit was able to do in coordination with its various parts. Once the fighting stopped, once the Sons of Iraq were up and running and they were able to protect their own community, then they felt less like engaging in combat because they were no longer being threatened, they would turn their attention to making a living for themselves and taking care of their families. So yeah, I think there was a big miscommunication between what was happening on the ground and what was being said back here in Washington. I'm not sure whether it was for political purposes or what else was being planned.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yeah, so.

Q: Well, when you're back here you're going to go to Guyana.

JONES: Yes. The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs started to arrange briefings for me.

Q: Obviously you ready up on it.

JONES: Yes.

Q: What were you getting from your reading?

JONES: You mean in terms of the country itself?

Q: Yeah.

JONES: The Bureau had arranged some face-to-face meetings. We had gone over to USAID, we talked to the Peace Corps, we talked to the pentagon and visited military installations in Florida. Eventually, we tried to meet with all the agencies that had offices and personnel on the country team in Guyana. Afterwards we got basic briefings in terms of what was going on politically in Guyana and the region. Everybody remembers Jonestown and that was always a thorn in my side. Folks started to call me "Jim Jones".

Q: When was Jonestown?

JONES: Jonestown was 1978.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: And, there were still a lot of bad memories about that in Guyana. Like I said, the funny part was they started referring to me as Jim Jones in some local papers.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yeah. They even did it when I got on the ground. They would always make a joke. There was even a local song from an early time in Guyanese history. "John Jones, a son of a gun." I'm not sure whether it was about some old pirate. But, they sang it a lot in Guyana because of what Jim Jones had done. Basically the briefings, overall, were planned to get me accustomed to what was happening in country. We had to go to the Guyanese Embassy a couple times. We met over there with, with their briefers. I tried to do as much as I could to get as solid a background as possible. The Guyanese Ambassador, of course, was invited to my swearing in. And, just as I was getting ready to go a blood clot developed in my lung and they put me back into the hospital. I was there for about a week and then the docs cleared me to go to post. My wife and I arrived there around the end of August of 2008. And, it was quite interesting. My wife came down initially and stayed for a couple of months. Then she came back because we had some renovations going on at our house here. But it was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it.

Guyana is one of those countries that is sort of lost from the perspective of being on the world stage. It is a small country of less than a million people. It is a former British colony and is English speaking. There are more Guyanese living in the U.S. and Canada than in Guyana. It's a society that is very stilted by race. The Afro Guyanese make up about maybe 30% of the population. Indio Guyanese, from India who had come over as indentured servants during British colonial times, make up about 50%. And, the rest are Portuguese, Chinese, Brazilians, a lot of different small groups, plus indigenous people.

Q: Were there any indigenous --

JONES: There were several large groups in the interior of the country.

Q: -- natives?

JONES: Yes, most of them still live in tribal groups.

Q: How do they fit in?

JONES: They didn't really make a big impact in politics or the economy. I mean one or two who were educated became elected officials or were appointed to positions in some of the ministries. For example, the Foreign Minister, Carolyn Rodriguez is an indigenous person. There were very few of them in the Georgetown region. Like I said, they were in the hinterlands basically. They were far out in the border and frontier areas near Brazil, Surinam and Venezuela. Those who come into Georgetown or into the populated areas normally did quite well. But, we must remember, 80% of the people in Guyana live within 20 miles of the sea. The other 20% are scattered down into the interior. Because most of the interior is still jungle and farmland a lot of the folks in the interior are of Afro Guyanese ancestry because they were brought in as slaves and as indentured servants. They were sent to plantations in the interior and so they still inhabit the cities in the interior. In particular down near the frontiers with Brazil and Venezuela. Mainly Indo-Guyanese live down on the coast of Suriname. But by and large there the indigenous tend to live along the border there with Brazil and Venezuela. They don't really have a big political voice at all. The Indians since the time of Cheddi Jagan have basically controlled the country. The Afro Guyanese tend to be military and police, by and large, with a very few civil servants. They are teachers and those kinds of things. The Indians tend to be the educated elite and own business. T hey also run the drug trade. A lot of the drugs that come in to the United States come from Venezuela via Guyana. Since Plan Colombia was initiated, clamping down on Colombia has been rather effective, I would say a good 70% of the drugs that now make their way into the United States now come from Venezuela.

Q: Are they flown in?

JONES: Planes fly out of Venezuela for Central America and Mexico, but there are only a couple of highways from Venezuela into Guyana. There are only two official border crossings. On a border that's about, a thousand miles long there is little or no control.

And, what you have are a couple of old cops sitting out there on the border with rusty side arms and they can't stop anything. And so you have trucks coming in and boats coming down the rivers and all kinds of stuff being carried in private cars and trucks entering through uncontrolled border crossings. There is also a huge interior river system in Guyana. There are four major rivers running from the interior of Guyana into the Caribbean. You can see them on that map. This is where a lot of the drugs that come in. It comes overland across the border then the traffickers meet up with their counterparts in Guyana in some of the creeks or small rivers and then it is put on boats and they go straight out into the Caribbean where it is picked up by larger boats and then moved on into the Caribbean islands or into Nicaragua or Honduras. From there, it is transferred into Mexico, and from there into the United States. So, Plan Colombia basically has cut off a lot of the drugs coming directly out of Colombia into the United States. But, traffickers are very inventive and as long as there is a profit to be made, they will find a way to do it. There are also reports that the border between Venezuela and Colombia is basically uncontrolled. Except when you get up in the north near Cartagena or Barranquilla, you do you see some border crossing police. Otherwise it's nothing, I mean just jungle. And so you can't tell where one country stops and the other starts. This is the same thing that exists between Venezuela and Guyana. There are some mountains along that border there, but by and large the border is uncontrolled. So drugs just flow like through the region at will. Word is that almost every politician and police officer is on the take.

Q: What was the government like?

JONES: The President when I arrived in Guyana was Bharrat Jagdeo. He had a kind of mercurial personality. He was easy to get along with, one-on-one, but was very dictatorial and demanding when dealing with policy issues or international relations. It's hard to really pinpoint what his intentions were. He was a hand-picked successor of the Jagan family and was the former Minister of Finance. He was brought into the government after the wife of Cheddi Jagan, Janet Jagan, was forced to step down from the presidency. After Cheddi Jagan died, the leading political party named her the president. She lasted only a year in office. After she was deposed, they convinced Bharrat Jagdeo to accept the office of president. They even had a one-sided election to make it official. But, it was hard to determine what kind of mandate he had. I think he really was a figurehead and did not have a clear mandate for what he was supposed to do. The difficulty was that he was only trying to preserve what the Indio-Guyanese have built. And everything else was up for grabs. He was not really that keen on doing anything except looking out for himself, after his term was over. What you have now is one of his old handpicked buddy's serving as president. On the other side there was a very well-respected Afro Guyanese retired general as the opposition candidate. He was also a faculty member at the National Defense University, here in Washington. He was Brigadier General David Granger. The fear was that David would win, even though the Afro Guyanese community's only 30% of the population. The Indo-Guyanese political party spread rumors that Granger would turn his mignons, the military and police loose on the community. So the Indian community basically armed itself and prepared to defend itself in case the opposition won the election. Things did go smoothly in the election. The winner in the December election

was Donald Ramotar, a hand-picked candidate from the Peoples Progressive Party.

Q: Well, at one point I know we were concerned about Guyana being taken over by Grenada and the New JEWEL (New Joint Endeavor for Welfare, Education, and Liberation) Movement and all that.

JONES: Yeah, I heard about that.

Q: And we were actually thinking of -- I mean there was talk, coming, looking around and saying, "Well, here's where we'll land our troops and all that sort of stuff."

JONES: Yeah, yeah.

Q: I take it that had all gone away.

JONES: Oh yeah. The only thing was that the Guyanese were not ready for this type of change. The average person would not have gone along with it. I understood that the guys in Grenada were trying to pull a coup d'etat of some kind, and install a socialist government. The problem was that the men in charge at the time Cheddi Jagan and Forbes Burnham were not willing to concede power to the likes of Maurice Bishop and the Cubans. The connection was that a lot of the guys who were in control of Guyana, particularly in the Indo-Guyanese community were educated in Moscow. And, they were hard core communists. Jagdeo still goes around calling people Comrade and that kind of stuff. But, he hasn't tied himself in with the Castros or anybody else. His basic outlook is towards the United States because there are more Guyanese living in the United States than there are in Guyana. So he has to appeal to the Guyanese people in New York and Washington and Miami. That is where his power base lives. And, these ex-pats are all merchants and businessmen and are fairly wealthy. They send a lot of money back to Guyana. So, that is the base that all Guyanese leaders have to play to. It would be awfully hard for any Guyanese leader to try to develop a Venezuela or Cuban style government operation.

Q: Well, they don't have the oil or that sort of stuff.

JONES: They do. They have just started within the last year to explore for oil off the coast. There is a big question as to where the Venezuelan border stops and where the Guyanese territory picks up. The World Court of International Justice has already determined where the line is. Venezuela of course, objects to the line. So we may see a lot of the difficulty coming up in the next couple years when they actually start having exploration and drilling. The Canadian Oil Company has drilled some test wells out near the Surinamese border; but inside Guyanese waters. They determined that there is a huge amount of oil there, just offshore. There is a refinery in Trinidad, which is just a short distance away. So once they start drilling and get rigs set up in deep water they will have a source of oil and revenue. I think Guyana is probably going to change a lot when they start getting this new income. So it's a question of how the government will work out this situation. So many strange things have been going on during the history of the country. It

is hard to determine how the country will react. When former president, Cheddi Jagan, and his government came into power, they advocated for a socialist kind of government. They were friends with the Castro's in Cuba and tried to align the country with socialist governments around the world. I'm not sure whether you're aware that Cheddi Jagan attended dental school at Howard University, here in Washington, D.C. It is also my alma mater. He went on to practice dentistry in Chicago.

Q: Oh yeah. And his wife was --

JONES: Yes. He married Janet in Chicago. She is Jewish and was a nurse. She came to Guyana when he returned to enter politics.

Q: She was a dentist, wasn't --

JONES: No, he was a dentist, she was a nurse.

Q: A dentist, yeah. He was a dentist.

JONES: He was a dentist. He was a dental assistant in a Chicago practice, which is where they married. They both were considered to be political radicals.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yes. Once they moved back to Guyana, they announced that they would try to set up a socialist republic. Janet even tried to renounce her American citizenship. It did not go through, but she was granted Guyanese nationality. I had a chance to talk to her briefly during the time I was in country. She passed away in 2009. She was still a very feisty old lady, and was always critical of American policies in the developing world.

Q: When you say she tried to, I mean how can she not renounce your American citizen --

JONES: Well, in her particular case, she had gone down to Guyana and tried to become a citizen. But, because she hadn't been born there she could not get Guyanese nationality. While a lot of Guyanese come to the United States, and naturalize, they keep their Guyanese nationality. She tried to do it the opposite way. The State Department did not go along with it. They ruled that she could travel on Guyanese passports as long as you want to, but that doesn't mean that you are not also an American citizen. She was always upset because the U.S. would not issue her an official renunciation. Every time there was a new ambassador she would drill him on how come the U.S. would not let her renounce. I informed her that it was up to her to renounce, but we would not issue her an official declaration to that effect. She was not happy. She wanted to be able to go to the public with a paper in hand to show how evil the U.S. was by making her renounce her citizenship.

In my last conversation with her, I said "Mrs. Jagan, you are 80 something-years-old now, what difference does it make? You can still travel on a Guyanese passport and you

can go to the U.S. whenever you want to visit your grand children. Well, I know she understood. She seemed to be a nice enough old lady. She just loved to be in the limelight and be the center of attention. But, she wanted to know what was happenings in the social scene in the U.S. She asked me "How can you as a Black man come down here representing the United States of America with all of its problems and hateful treatment of Blacks throughout history?" I told her that Blacks are fully integrated into the government and private industry. We make up a part of all sectors of society. There are all kinds of folks in the United States. Unfortunately, she died before President Obama was elected.

Q: Well, do we have any sort of programs going?

JONES: We have lots of programs and lots of exchanges. We have Center for Disease Control there, a huge Peace Corps operation, we have military exchanges, we have cultural exchanges, we have a big USAID operation going on down there and Guyana participates in the Millennium Challenge Program. The military out of SOUTHCOM in Miami does projects in the interior. There is no military to military training. But, we do a police training program. We had, as a matter fact, two commanders of the Defense Forces in a graduate program at the National Defense University here at Ft. McNair. And, there are more Guyanese living in the United States than there are in Guyana. And so as a matter fact here at the State Department even in the office where I am now there are three Guyanese ex-pats who have become U.S. citizens.

Q: Where do they settle for the most part?

JONES: New York, Washington, Miami.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: They are well educated and active. For example, one of the top neurosurgeons in the area, is a Guyanese ex-pat. He lives in Prince George's County, Maryland and practices in several Washington hospitals. So, there are lots of them around. And, they were English speaking they fit in quite well. Howard University has a large contingent of Guyanese students. As a matter fact, the advisor to President Jagdeo, Dr. Roger Luncheon, was a classmate of mine at Howard University. I had known him for years. So, Guyana is in a very unique place geographically. It could do so much more for its people to ensure the future of the nation. The interior of the country is just pristine. It could be a haven for tourism and naturalists. I mean they have things like harpy eagles, jaguars and all kind of bird-life in the jungles. They have natural resources like gold and diamonds in the interior. These resources are just being exploited by corrupt politicians and thieves. There is little or no control over the exploitation of its natural resources.

Q: OK, and what are the Venezuelans doing?

JONES: Complaining. They complain a lot. They don't seem to have a standing policy with Guyana on anything except the location of the border. I'm not sure what they want

to do. The international courts have determined the location of the borders. But, they still complain. I think they are waiting until Hugo Chavez dies. I think once he's gone and out of the picture and the Cubans are chased out of Venezuela, they will become more proactive in the region. Potentially, they could be the big brother in that region. I mean there's nothing between them and Brazil except for Guyana, Suriname, and French Guyana. So they should be helping to develop that area into a trading zone. They should be taking the leadership and developing that area. The river system in Guyana and Suriname should be enough to provide electricity for the entire northern part of South America. But, as of now, nothing has been done to develop the hydro-electric industry in the region. Also, the land in the interior is fertile enough to provide food for the entire region, if managed properly. The educated people there just haven't done anything. It is truly disappointing. So, I think Venezuela, once Hugo Chavez is gone should start to take the lead in developing that region of South America.

Q: Well, why is Hugo Chavez a problem? I would think he would be an instigator and extend his influence.

JONES: I don't think the Venezuelan people would put up with it. I think it's okay as long as he stays inside Venezuela. I just don't think the Venezuelan people would be in favor of invading a neighboring country. And, he has gotten his hands burned already with trying to do something along the Colombian border. So, I don't think he is interested in anything except engendering himself to the Cubans. At least that's my impression.

Q: What about Suriname? I mean there was the Dutch influence and all, but --

JONES: Yes, they are in just about the same economic shape as Guyana. They have a huge criminal problem there. As a matter, the new president, Bouterse, was considered a, a terrorist at one time. He is excluded from the U.S. He can't come to the United States. So yeah, there are lots of problems. I didn't really get a good understanding of the internal politics over there. I visited Surinam once for a two day conference. The ambassador there was a classmate of mine. So, she and I exchanged visits. But they were just as bad off, economically, as we were. Surinam is a little bit more developed than Guyana in terms of the infrastructure system. They have a good road system, for example, and good electricity, which is what you don't have in Guyana. Georgetown is six feet below sea level. It is protected on three sides by huge sea walls, interspersed with huge water pumps. The pumps were installed by the British many years ago. So, whenever there are tropical storms and heavy rains, the city of Georgetown is flooded. They have canals along each one of the main streets in the city. But, it's nothing to have, several feet of sea water in downtown Georgetown. So, as you go around the city, you notice that all the government buildings are built on stilts or they leave the bottom floor of the building open so the water can pass through. This is also the way the average houses are built on the outskirts of town. Little things like snakes and other reptiles are a constant threat. You just learn how to put up with them as little annoyances. For example, I came out of the residence one morning on my way to the embassy. And around the corner, there were five or six guys, over in the ditch wrestling with something. My wife asked "What is that?" We stopped to see and it was a 20-foot long boa constrictor. I mean

this thing was huge. They were trying to capture it to sell it to one of the zoos. This thing was humongous, I mean like -- it was huge. And, this thing was right down the street from our house. We had four guards at our house, of course, and they would always go out with my wife. But, we liked to sit out on the patio, so they would always go out there when she was there to check to make sure there weren't any snakes or other animals lurking around.

Q: Oh boy.

JONES: But right across the road from us was the ocean. It was right there, literally a stone's throw away. When the tide goes out it leaves a half a mile of mud flats. You know, they don't have any beaches in Georgetown. It is because of the silt that is washed down from the interior of the continent by the rivers and is deposited at the mouth of the rivers and over the years, the silt had grown to the extent that it has overtaken entire coastline of Guyana. So during most of the day you see mud flats and the huge wall. The rest of the time it just the brown sea water. You have to go out into the ocean several miles before you see blue water. The 15-foot high sea-wall was as wide as a street on top. People walk and jog on it. They have all kinds of social activities going on like religious festivals and concerts. It is a place where people gather for social events. Even with the sea-wall some parts of the city are flooded when the tide comes in. It's not a pretty place. It's the kind place that time forgot and since Guyana has very little strategic importance in the hemisphere, it is a hard post to highlight. An incident like Jonestown helped put it on the map. But, it also points out the fact that the capitol has very little control over the countryside.

Q: Were there any American interests there?

JONES: Americans own things like hotels, commercial enterprises like stores and car rental agencies and of course restaurants.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: The airlines could come in and set up a hub. Probably when they have a better more active Chamber of Commerce you might have more investments. But there really aren't any major industries. There are limits on logging, for example, so you don't get the lumber companies down there. There are a number of companies that are doing things like sugar refining and oil and gas exploration. Electrically and energy production could also be a big winner for the country. Hydro electricity could be a major endeavor if it was ever developed. But, I did not see any real interest in long-term investment in major industries. Everything's sort of exploratory and so it's an interesting place that has so much potential. You just don't have the political leadership and the capability of the civil society in the country that can ensure the protection of outside investments. So, this does not bode well for early future development.

Q: Well, now is there anything like the equivalent of pilgrimages to Jonestown or anything like that?

JONES: No, I know there were some television programs about Jonestown but, nothing major. We went out there once, my wife wanted to see it. We were able to go out there when the military was developing a medical project in the area. It is just overgrown. I mean you wouldn't know it existed. It has been taken over by the jungle. There are some trees now, but all of the buildings are torn down and have been carried away. The fields are overgrown, and there are a couple fences and some sign posts. But, other than that, you wouldn't know it was there. Most of the people who died were brought back to the States for burial. The lady who was Leo Ryan's assistant is now a member of Congress. Jackie Spiers, now has the same seat that Leo Ryan had. It is a district in San Francisco. We tried to get her to come down for the thirtieth anniversary, but she didn't have the time. She had some other things to do. But, I did have a chance to meet with her before I went to Georgetown.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: We met in her office on Capitol Hill. She told me the story of what happened. And, I could tell that it was really difficult for her. She took time to recount the story to me, in detail. I could tell she was not willing to go to the site again.

Q: Yeah. You know, you might want to look at our oral history, because I have a -- particularly some accounts, including that of a --

JONES: Yes, Ambassador Maurice Parker was a Consular Officer in Georgetown at the time.

Q: -- DCM who went --

JONES: Yes. I also think the DCM went out to the site with Congressman Ryan.

Q: -- who was wounded --

JONES: Yes, I believe so.

Q: -- out there.

JONES: Did you talk to Maurice Parker?

Q: I think we've talked to him.

JONES: Yes. He retired as ambassador a couple of years ago.

Q: And, we had, we had a number of people talking about it.

JONES: Yes. I know it was a horrible experience.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Maurice was a Consular Officer and I know he had a real difficult time trying to get things taken care of for the deceased and their families.

Q: Did you have many people from America coming to settle or to --

JONES: *(chuckles)* There are lots of folks coming back. They are mainly people who had migrated to the U.S. worked and who are retiring in Guyana because their retirement benefits will go much farther. Most of them have moved back to their old homesteads and near families. We find them over the place. They are becoming a factor in the society in Guyana.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: You know, they were living even in some of the villages in the interior. We found a number of people who had retired from New York and decided they wanted to die in their country of origin. They came back built a little house and live good on their retirement income. I would think that the expatriate community is probably less than 10,000 people.

Q: How about any connection with Brazil there?

JONES: Lots of connections. There's a highway that runs up from -- what's the name of that main city in the north central Brazil?

Q: I want to say Belém.

JONES: No, it starts with an M.

ANONYMOUS: Manaus?

JONES: Manaus! There's a highway from Manaus all the way to the border. They Guyana are in the process of building a super highway from the border near Manaus, all the way to Georgetown.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: The highway's completed up to the border on the Brazilian side. However Guyana hasn't completed its piece. If you drive from Georgetown down to the border you go through a number of middle sized cities. Well, the highway stops in Lethem, which I think is about 20 miles from the border. After Lethem, it is a bad dirt road all the way to the border. Yet, there are still trucks that come up all the way, because it is a major outlet for Brazil. Georgetown could be the major port for their agricultural products from the northern part of the country. It is closer than driving to the Atlantic coast. But, the Guyanese simply haven't completed their piece of the highway.

Q: Hm.

JONES: That highway could usher in a huge economic boom to the country; if they could ever get it together. Farming is the key industry in the northern part of Brazil. It is Brazil's breadbasket. It borders an extensive area on the western and southern borders of Guyana. Right now, it is a gap that Guyana has not moved to take advantage of in that area.

Q: Well, I mean, you know, Brazil is developing a new class of entrepreneur --

JONES: That's right.

Q: -- millionaires and all.

JONES: Yes, yes.

Q: Are they sniffing around there?

JONES: Oh yeah, there are lots of Brazilians coming into the southern part of Guyana. Brazilians are illegally mining gold and diamonds. And, instead of bringing them to Georgetown for proper registration and assaying so they can pay taxes, they take them back into Brazil and sell them to brokers. There's no control by the Guyanese government. I mean they pay off a local politician or a local policeman and they dig wherever they want and essentially steal the raw materials. No one is monitoring their activities or controlling their entry. They steal whatever they can and take it back to Brazil. I've gone out to a number of their operations. There are huge ground scraping machines, gouging up the river bottoms, washing and leaching the silt and throwing it back into the rivers. I mean there's no control whatsoever. And, and there are huge encampments of Brazilians in the interior that are paying off local officials to allow them to take the raw materials like diamonds and gold and go back to Brazil. But yeah, the country's getting raped in its interior. This is happening, without a doubt.

Q: What about your staff? How did the embassy, people at the embassy like it there?

JONES: By and large I think they hated it. I'd say 90% of them hated Guyana. It's not a place that lends itself to the development of good friendships. Most of the people there, particularly in the Consular Section, Political Section, and security sections were first or second tour officers. Some were there because they didn't get off language probation and it's an English speaking post. Morale was fairly low. Some of my predecessors had, I think, exacerbated staff morale problems by limiting access to recreation activities and limiting travel.

Q: Was it would you say personality problems?

JONES: Yeah, without a doubt. It was a small post with less than fifty direct hire

Americans. In that space you had first tour officers who were trying to find their way through the State Department maze. Personalities clashed in almost every section. Little things like being able to swim at the ambassador's residence, for example was an issue. We had a huge pool at the ambassador's residence. And prior ambassadors limited staff access to the pool. The ambassador's wife would say, you know, you can only come on certain days, this sort of thing. Well, I thought that's crazy. My wife and I changed that rule. We let staff and families come any time they wanted, during the day. Other ambassadors did not allow the Peace Corps volunteers to come to the pool or use the tennis courts. I changed all of that. And so, it would be okay except when something official was being held at the residence. So, the families could bring their kids out, we had a huge backyard. They could cook out and we had grills and stuff and, and play tennis and go swimming. And so that, that helped them a little bit, but that's about it. They had a dinky nine-hole golf course that was dangerous and it was not recommended for Americans.

Q: There were snakes.

JONES: We had snakes, alligators, tarantulas and every kind of insect known to man. The city was surrounded on three sides by mud flats and on the other by jungle. A former ARSO had been kidnapped out on the golf course. Two years before I got to Guyana, the assistant regional security officer had gone out to the golf course, alone. He was kidnapped and held for ransom by a street gang in the small town of Buxton. So there wasn't a lot of distraction. I mean you could go into the interior, but it's a two-day trip to get down anywhere in the interior. But, if you like the jungle, it is available. A lot of hikers came through Georgetown. Nature lover type folks who wanted to see what the interior was like would go camping in groups. There were harpy eagles. These eagles were just humongous. They are about three feet tall. And, they have talons that are as long as your fingers. In the interior there are jaguars, lots of exotic snakes and birds and this kind of thing. So you had a lot of nature groups coming in. Kaieteur Falls is there, which is the highest falls in the world. It is a day-long trip and you have to fly down to the falls. You can't drive to it. There are a number of small landing strips around the falls. People can go in and land on dirt strips and do a day at the falls and come back to Georgetown, by evening. But it simply hasn't been developed. I mean those things could be, extremely valuable to the country if properly developed and managed.

Q: You know, one hears about the deforestation of --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- the Amazon Valley in Brazil.

JONES: Yes, there were lots of issues arising about the logging going on in the interior. And, as you know, it is also a problem in Brazil.

Q: Had that crept into the --

JONES: It has. One of the great things, I think of the few things that Jagdeo, President Jagdeo has done is to try and make sure that there isn't any illegal logging going on in Guyana. He was very sensitive to the issues surrounding deforestation and the loss of the ozone layer. He had gone to a conference in Norway where people from, from Brazil and from Central Africa and a lot of these other countries were talking about carbon credits to prevent the depletion of the ozone layer. So he wanted Guyana to be a big player in this area. With its jungles, it could become a major player on the environmental stage. He was really serious about that. And so that whole swath of jungle, from Colombia all the way over into Brazil, is going to be one of those areas that the world will look at as a protected area. The countries could sell carbon credits to industrial countries, so that there will no longer be any logging or cutting or anything like that in the region. Guyana is very much into this issue because of Jagdeo's involvement. And I think it will lend itself well because that whole area, except for a few plains areas, or Llanos in south central Venezuela and around Manaus will blend into what's happening in southern Guyana and Suriname. It is a huge swath of jungle out there. It is full of wildlife and things like capybaras and other animals. Have you seen a capybara?

Q: I've probably seen pictures of them.

JONES: Yeah, local people eat them. They are big rodents, like opossums. I've never tasted them but local people eat them. There are other kinds of wildlife like jaguars, you know, there are lots of jaguars out here. Lots of bird life, particularly in the wintertime.

Q: Have parrots?

JONES: Yeah, lots of parrots.

Q: Did you have parrots at your residence?

JONES: We did not. My wife hates birds because she thinks they are nasty, but you know, there a couple kept outside.

Q: (laughs)

JONES: Huge seabirds because we were right there on the water. They were called frigate birds and terns. There were also lots of other seabirds, gulls and egrets and others.

Q: Did you get any taste of the sea? I mean could you go out and sail and all or?

JONES: The mud flats extended out for several 15 miles. So, there was little or no sailing. Small fishermen would go out in small boats near the river mouths where the silt was not too thick. The area needed dredging to keep the river mouths clear of silt. Sometimes there would be large dredging machines coming from other countries like Trinidad and Venezuela to dredge the river mouths so that the boats bringing goods into the port could have deep enough water level to actually get in to the port. But no, there was no sailing. I mean the rivers were huge but boats can only navigate for a short

distance. The Essequibo was one of the biggest rivers in Latin America. It is only out sized by the Amazon. Smaller boats could go up the river, but seagoing vessels cannot.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: There was no sailing unless you could get out beyond the mud flats.

Q: Did drug money play a role in the, in the life of the country?

JONES: Yes. It was obvious. There were lots of wealthy young people hanging around, the clubs and restaurants. Some guys rode around on big motorcycles and sported gold chains and gold grills on their teeth. Some of them had been deported from the U.S. and Canada. Most of them have never worked, or if so maybe as a guard or escort. It was rumored that they would unload the drugs and guard them until they were shipped out. Lots of luxury goods like televisions, electronic devices and luxury automobiles were being shipped into the country. These things were reported to be in payment for services provided to a smuggling group in the U.S. This was done so that they did not have to send in cash. Large amounts of cash would raise questions. Traffickers would send the drugs, and instead of receiving cash money back, they would get something like a new truck or a new car or a new motorcycle or bunch of new TVs and other goods that could be sold locally for cash. It was obvious, in some cases, you would have a guy who five years ago was selling food on the street; and who would somehow come into enough money to open a supermarket and build a big house in the city. People would say, wow, he's done well for himself. Those in the know would say you bet he's done well. The drug trade is making him wealthy. So, drugs and the drug trade play an important role in some segments of Guyanese society. We didn't get a lot of input in terms of knowing what was going on, but certainly our drug enforcement team had their hands full. The team from the DEA that dealt with local authorities felt that they were getting good cooperation. Some local authorities had to be by-passed because it was known that they were corrupt. We had a team of drug guys that came over once a week from Port of Spain. So, they basically worked for me. I tried not to interfere with their operations. I didn't want to know all of the details. I insisted on getting briefed about what they were doing. The difficulty was that everybody in country knew who they were. And so, when they came in they had to come to the embassy and, and report in. If they were working contacts they would try to do that from Port of Spain. The regional office in Port-of-Spain asked for our cooperation in terms of getting their operatives into and out of Guyana. I was a little uneasy about the ongoing operations because they would put me in a sensitive position if they involved public officials that I had to deal with. But it was something that you couldn't really get away from. It was evident to everyone and almost in plain sight. Something had to be done because it was one small effort to stop drugs before they got to the U.S.

Q: Yeah. Was the State Department interested in developments there?

JONES: Yes, there were a number of initiatives ongoing in Guyana. USAID had a number of ongoing projects with the schools and health officials. PEPFAR, the anti-HIV-

AID's project was being carried out by the Centers for Disease Control. The Peace Corps also had more than fifty volunteers in Guyana working on a variety of programs. On the State side, we had what you could call a small embassy. We had 48 people there who were classified as direct hire Americans. There were about a 150 LES employees. (locally employed staff). But, there really weren't many major targets of State policies. The relationship with the government of Guyana was not such that it allowed us to get into some of the issues that arose in other countries. We didn't want, for example, to go in and train the police. They were considered to be corrupt from top to bottom. The police commissioner was on the list of excludible persons because of his known connections to the drug traffickers. The military was a little more professional. The leaders had been trained in the U.S. They were considered to be professional and competent. I did not allow our military to bring in arms, however. I just didn't want to have more arms on the ground. Nor did I want our military to add to the problems by bringing arms in for the Guyanese military. On the developmental side, the military was a major factor in bringing in equipment and building materials. There was no problem to get a generator or pieces of medical equipment into the interior to help open up a clinic or do some vaccinations or something like this. In terms of development, we were trying to encourage organizations like the Chamber of Commerce and Rotarians back in the United States to invest more time and effort to bring projects to Guyana. We tried to encourage the expatriate Guyanese community living in Miami or New York, who might have been a merchant of some kind, to open up a franchise in Guyana. We had a McDonald's, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and these kinds of fast food outlets. There were also a number of top of the line restaurants owned by expatriates. We started to encourage large outlet stores like Wal-Mart type variety stores. So there are a number of those small things going on. But, the difficulty was when you got into the details, you had to be careful and really figure out who you were dealing with. There were so many people whose credentials were questionable. A large number of Guyanese, because of their criminal connections, aren't permitted to travel, for example. We could not issue them visas because they were on the exclusion list. One of the guys who owned one of the small airlines, we found out was involved in drug trafficking from Venezuela, so I canceled his visa. So, we really didn't have a lot of give and take from that perspective.

Q: Well, what about -- what are the groups that have gotten involved in both Africa and South America, the Lebanese?

JONES: Lots.

Q: Lebanese community.

JONES: Yes. They are probably the fastest developing community in the country, and I think they see it as an opportunity to make some money.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: So, they are there. They are traders mainly. They bring in their own ships and so forth. And, during the time I was there at least three new mosques opened. I did have a

chance to meet with the head imam. The Moslem community is looking at things like education, healthcare, and development. And, while they were somewhat standoffish when I started asking detailed questions, I got the feeling that they were trying to develop and protect their community. Had I stayed for a little longer, I might have been able to get to talk to more members of the community.

Q: Well, was there concern on our side and reason for it regarding terrorists and al-Qaeda and that kind of thing?

JONES: Yes. Yes. There was a case in New York City in which there were a number of people indicted for planning to blow up the fuel line at JFK airport. Two of those guys were Guyanese. So yeah, there was a lot of concern about this kind of thing. There as a lot of concern. And, you know, we had a modest station in Guyana. We would have some temporary people in to do special projects, but this was rare. It is difficult to assess now, in terms of knowing what to look for. I didn't want to know the details about their activities, but, they would ask to get country clearance before bringing people in. They would then let me know who they were bringing in and, in general, what they were planning to do. If anything developed I wanted to know about it. But, if it was an ongoing process, they would keep me abreast. These guys take their time, they are very cautious, particularly in deals when it comes to dealing with local authorities who may have contact with the American embassy. The hard part was trying to get an inroad there and get a good contact. The station chief would always tell me that the hard part was to get the local guys to be truthful with them. The Moslem community had just started to develop in Guyana. They had a number of mosques in Guyana. They had contacts in Jamaica, Trinidad and also in States. There is growing concern, because this is one of the areas that no one pays a lot of attention to. And, a lot of these guys get educated in the Middle East and Palestine, Lebanon, these kinds of places, and come back as teachers in the madrassas, or secondary schools. So, this is a developing problem.

Q: Well, did you have much in the way of official visits there?

JONES: Yes, we had a number of Congress people come through. There were some officials, but not too much from the State Department, regional bureaus. The OAS (Organization of American States) officers did visit. In addition, we had the CARICOM (Caribbean Community and Common Market), offices headquartered in Georgetown. So there were many representatives from the Caribbean countries. So, I had a chance to meet with the Cubans and Venezuelans during the CARICOM meetings. I was accredited to both the country of Guyana and also to CARICOM. As the U.S. representative, I had a chance to interact with all members of the Caribbean community. There were lots of exchanges. The Cuban ambassador, in fact, did come and see me a number of times at neutral sites. But we were able to talk. For the first time I think, the Cubans really wanted to sit down and talk. The ambassador was a big baseball fan. The Cubans and the Venezuelans and the Surinamese and everybody accredited to Guyana often met in informal groups. They were basically Caribbean type get- to know each other. So, the informal system worked itself out quite well. But you know, there isn't a whole lot of going on in Guyana, so you had to be a part of the process, or be left out of the loop.

Doing things informally worked well for us.

Q: Well, talk to me a little bit about CARICOM. What is this?

JONES: It's the Association of Caribbean Nations, and they're headquartered in Georgetown. There are 26 members, all of the Caribbean nations. While some are very small, each nation has an equal voice in policy determinations. And, they meet both on bilateral and unilateral issues. And for example, during the time that I was there they had the CARICOM security administer's meeting. They also had the CARICOM military meeting. And, because of my connections back at the National Defense University I was able to invite down some leaders from our SOUTHCOM operation. So, it is basically a functioning committee, in name only. You know, they don't have a lot of money or impact in the region. But, the member nations had chipped in to hire a staff and to build a nice headquarters building Georgetown. But by and large they just talk. They really don't have the international clout to do a whole lot. It's not like the OAS, it's sort of like an adjunct OAS where they can exchange ideas. But they don't have the impact, yet. And some of these nations are so small like Dominica and St. Lucia and some of these places such as St. Kitts where you don't really have a lot going on except things like crime and drug trafficking. They are all concerned about their security. They would start off meetings by opening topics like drug trafficking from one place to another within the region. Some of the small islands were stop over or transit places for drugs coming from the coast South America to the United States. We would be sitting in the meeting listening to the member countries trying to avoid their obvious responsibility for lax enforcement by their governments' by trying to foist blame on to the U.S. for not doing more to stop drug addiction. I remember one representative addressing me saying Mr. United States of America, you all are the problem because you guys are the market for all of these drugs. We would not have our problems if you could stop people in the U.S. from using drugs.

Q: Yep.

JONES: Their major refrain was if we can stop our drug market they would not have a security issue or other kinds of trouble in their countries. I developed a thick skin on this issue. I would listen and respond that I would certainly report their concerns back to my government. That was all I could do. But, also they always wanted the Americans to chip in and give them more money so they could better fight their drug wars. Give us more money, send in the Coast Guard and patrol our shores. Give us a ship so we can train our own men. This was their way to address the issue.

Q: Were you at all on the tourist route?

JONES: *(laughs)* No, unfortunately, Guyana was way off the beaten tourist path. Pleasure boats and cruise ships could not get within 15 miles of the shore.

Q: It didn't sound like it.

JONES: No. I mean there were small fishing boats and this kind of thing, but just smaller boats. The cruise ships and bigger boats would stop in Trinidad and that's about as close as could get to Guyana. They were permitted to go into Caracas and Maracaibo. But no, they couldn't get close enough to the Guyanese coast to be a factor. It would have been ideal had they been able to dredge the silt out of the river mouth because the rivers certainly were deep enough. But I don't know if the infrastructure of Georgetown could manage a large influx of tourists. I mean there are maybe two, three-star hotels. And they were always occupied by members of the fishing community. So you didn't really have a tourist attraction. You had a small zoo in the city. But, the sights for tourists are in the interior. Those who wanted to go on treks into the interior could find guides but it was still rough living for backpackers. People coming in off of cruise ships would have to have some kind of attraction. Not everyone wants to see snakes and jaguars in a zoo.

Q: (laughs)

JONES: They had not really thought about developing a tourist industry. So, right now, there is no reason for people to come into Guyana as tourists. Not yet.

Q: OK, I've got big political connections in Georgetown and make money. Where does my wife go to shop?

JONES: My wife shopped all over the place. But, options in Georgetown are limited. Oh, you can go over to Port of Spain or New York. You can only get trinkets in Guyana. There's a huge Chinese embassy in Guyana. The Chinese are very active in terms of bringing in products. It is not quality stuff, but cheap flashy stuff that you buy at the mall stalls and in some small shops. The wealthy folks and those who can travel aren't going to shop in those places. These stalls are for the poor folks or the guys come in from the interior. Others come to Georgetown to buy stuff for their kids for Christmas or some other holiday. Some buy in bulk to take things back into the interior. If you have money and power, you get on an airplane and go to Miami or to New York City to buy your stuff. You would see the people coming back from New York, just before Christmas, with these huge bags of stuff they have purchased. The funniest thing is trying to fly into Georgetown around Christmastime. I mean as ambassador, we would get seats from the airline. But, the regular people would have a fight on their hands to get seats. I mean these guys coming in with the walkie-talkies, radios and all kinds of big toys. They didn't want to check them as baggage because they knew the folks at the airport would steal them when they got to the airport in Georgetown. And so, you'd see these guys come on with these huge bags that you could not fit into the overhead bins and biggest fights and arguments would take place. I mean the plane would always be late leaving New York because of some guy who didn't want to check his stuff, and you know, they would fight with the flight crew. *(with accent)* "Aw man, they thieved me the last time I put my stuff in the check in!" The funniest thing was to sit there and watch them try to figure out what to do with all of the packages. The poor airline flight crew would have to determine how they would fit all the stuff on board. Most of the passengers lived in the U.S. They would work all year just to be able to come back to Guyana during Christmas with huge toys and gifts for the whole village. People don't stay in Guyana. There's nothing for them to

do in Guyana. Once you finish high school there is nothing to look forward to. The national university is probably worse than some of the high schools. The facilities are second-rate, the infrastructure is falling apart and lacks funding. The most basic equipment such as libraries and computers do not exist. It's just a broken down system. So, high school grads leave in droves. They try to go to Trinidad, which is the closest place for them if they can't get a visa to come to the U.S. If they can get into Trinidad, they try to find work or try to enter the other islands in the region. If they are fortunate enough to get a U.S. visa they can get to New York or Miami where they connect with the ex-pat community and never come back until they have gotten residency or citizenship. So that's the general idea, after high school. They go out, they get educated, and they don't come back. So, this is why there is a brain drain in Guyana. By and large the community, the American community is just retirees. You know, you've got guys 70 and 80 years old. They probably had come to the United States as youngsters and made enough money to retire and now they have come back to live the rest of their days in luxury. But no, there is very little to attract tourists to Guyana. The tourist industry could be ideal for a place like Guyana.

Q: What about your Public Diplomacy Section?

JONES: Yeah.

Q: Did they have much to work with there?

JONES: Yes. There were mainly local stories. They wanted to make sure that there was a weekly meeting of the Press Corps. Embassy reps would attend. But they were covering mainly local stories like things happening to Guyanese citizens in the United States. We had a big outreach program particularly for college students. There are also a number of Guyanese here in the United States who are fairly well known in the educational circles. So stories about Guyanese citizens doing good things at American universities were always in the news. Whenever U.S. officials came into country to do development or health programs, it was on the news. We had visits from two big navy ships. The crews did a lot of projects in Georgetown and in the interior. They were great press opportunities. And so, a lot of that was a part of what the Public Diplomacy folks did. There were big efforts by our PEPFAR program to help fight HIV-AIDS in the military and police. The SOUTHCOM Deputy Commander came in to kick off the program. We met with the President and it was a major press event. Also, people wanted to know what was happening in the Guyanese community in New York. They wanted to know what's happening in Washington. And, they were quite interested in what the Secretary of State was saying and what was happening in Miami. They were interested in sports scores and what the latest fashions looked like.

Q: Well, what about the British connection? I mean Georgetown had been a British colony?

JONES: Yeah, it's still there. And, it's huge. They have probably the second biggest embassy after the Chinese in Georgetown. They are well respected. They're into

everything. I mean there a bunch of old guys who would, on Guyanese national days, show up in their red British uniforms. They were well respected in the community. Their embassy is right next to ours, just a half a block down the street. We had a weekly meeting of the ABC ambassadors (American, British and Canadian). The French, of course, were included, and the Germans and every other ambassador who wanted to attend. But you know, the British had the biggest western mission there. Even though most of the Guyanese felt closest to the United States, the history of the country was still tied to the British. There is still a statue of Queen Elizabeth in front of their parliament building. She had come through Georgetown on the train while visiting South America. The Guyanese felt so honored that they accepted the donation of the statue from the British government. They respect the British quite a lot and they hold them in high regard.

Q: Well, you were there how long?

JONES: I was physically there from August of 2008 until December 2009.

Q: Mm-hmm. What was social life like?

JONES: There wasn't any. I mean we in the diplomatic community were close. We would get together at each other's houses for dinner and those kinds of things. And normally there was something to do every Friday or Saturday. There was one decent church. Being a Baptist, I'm not a member of any organized religion, but you know, we try to at least to show our faces in church on Sunday. There is one dinky nine- hole golf course, which was dangerous to play alone. My wife liked trekking into the interior. She went up to Kaieteur Falls with a group from the embassy. Other than that there really wasn't a lot to do except to sit around and read. Some of the British guys liked to play golf and so we would sneak out on Saturday, maybe play nine holes of golf. I would just ride around to try to see as much of the country as I could. I would try to plan something for almost every week, depending upon the weather. For example, the Peace Corps was doing projects in Lethem, near the Brazilian border. I tried to get to every project and maybe spend the night at one of the sites. I liked doing that kind of thing. I would always call on the town mayor and local officials. They would be very hospitable and want us to see how well things were going in their region. Or, if there was something going on out towards the Surinam border, I would try to get out there at least once a week. But there really wasn't big time social life. The indigenous Indians have their own thing social developments. They are a functioning society that is active and self sufficient. Normally outsiders were not invited into their centers. But, they constantly invited my wife and I to come to their villages. We were able to make a couple of visits. There was a movie theater in the city but it was not safe. Television was okay. We were able to get cable TV from Miami. We could see football games at least during the season, or baseball games. Cricket was a big thing there and so they had fairly good cricket teams and the Trinidadian team was quite famous. And, so you'd always be able to see a cricket match or something on television. For me cricket is the most boring sport ever invented. I don't know if you've ever been to a cricket match. I mean they go on for hours and no one can explain what is going on.

Q: I have never have been able to figure out --

JONES: Yeah.

Q: -- what's happening, except there's a Tea break and --

JONES: *(laughs)* They go on for hours! That, you know, you sit there in the stands and you see guys sleeping and stuff like that. Something would happen and suddenly, everybody would cheer. I would ask what happened. Then someone would have to explain what had transpired. But, soccer was quite a different story. It is also popular in Guyana.

Q: Oh yeah.

JONES: And so, the Guyanese would be fighting for their favorite teams. And, every now and again there would be a visiting team coming in from a place like Jamaica, Trinidad or the Dominican Republic. But that was about it. I mean there really wasn't a great deal of social life. So, we sort of had to come up with activities to keep ourselves from getting too bored.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: Yes. Because of the life style, it was hard on the younger officers. It was, particularly difficult for the single officers, because there was little or nothing to do. There were a couple famous bars in the big hotels in town and a small casino. We would always worry about the U.S. military men and women who were in town. People drink a little too much and get into fights and do other stuff. So, we had to make sure they were well briefed before they were let loose on the town.

Q: What about AIDS? Was that a problem?

JONES: AIDS was a huge problem. It was huge because of the port and the lack of any organized programs to make people aware of the exposure and the lack of information about how the disease is transmitted. There was a high rate of infection in the mining camps in the interior and at the port in Georgetown. The police and military were especially vulnerable.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: There were fishing vessels coming in to the port and there was quite a lot of prostitution in the city. Guyana is a Tier Two country, from the perspective of trafficking in persons. There lots of indigenous girls and women coming in from the interior. There were also Brazilians and Venezuelans being brought into brothels in Georgetown and into the camps in the interior. So, AIDS was a huge problem. We had a big program with the Center of Disease Control. They managed the PEPFAR program, which was strictly for

the purpose of HIV-AIDS prevention and education. Members of the U.S. military from SOUTHCOM supported the program. We had a special representative who was the wife of the Guyanese Army Brigade commander. She was the liaison with the Guyanese military and the U.S. military. She was a trained nurse and would go out as a teaching nurse to bases in the interior. She would work with the police and military to try to explain things like condom usage and information on protection and so forth. This was a very successful program. With the exception of Haiti, I would say Guyana probably has the largest infection rate of AIDS in the Western Hemisphere.

Q: Did that concern you as far as food handling and that sort of thing?

JONES: Yes. Yes. My wife is fairly strict and she found a person who had worked for diplomatic missions before. He had been the former house manager and cooked for the Brazilian embassy. The former ambassador gave him an excellent recommendation. He was very organized and controlled the household staff and made sure that things were done properly inside the residence. There was also a food service company that worked for the embassy and managed cafeteria. They were quite good and had a good history of preparing food for the community. We had our nurse check all food service employees. The embassy is right next door to the hospital and so we would always have people come over and check to make sure things were going well. But yeah, I mean it's the kind of thing you get accustomed to after having lived overseas for so long. You get used to using chlorine and iodine and all kinds of disinfectants in the food and water. But my concern, more than anything else, was for the young soldiers. The young guys who were coming in as part of the military assistance group who would go out and frequent prostitutes and drink too much and get into trouble. But, thank God, we never had any problems with those guys. We didn't have full time Marines. We had local guards and a pretty large military contingent, but these were mainly Air force, Army/Navy types. Things worked out quite well.

Q: So you left there when?

JONES: I left there in June of 2009. They medevaced me out. I had developed congestive heart failure as a result of the pulmonary embolism. I got back here and spent 21 days on my back in the hospital being treated for a pulmonary embolism. And, it wound up that the doctors wouldn't give me a medical clearance to go back to post. Eventually, the pulmonary specialist referred me to the University of California at San Diego Hospital, The Thurman Center. Several pulmonary specialists had developed a special program to treat pulmonary embolisms. They had developed a special operation called a Pulmonary Thromboendarterectomy (PTE). The operation is extremely sensitive. It involves opening up the patients' chest by cutting the sternum. Next to a heart transplant, according to my doctor, it is the most complicated operation on the face of the earth right now. So, the doctors attached me to a machine that reduces the body's temperature down to 65 degrees. The purpose is to stop the blood from circulating so much. Your vital functions are being carried on by the machine. Then, the doctors operate on each lung, individually, and they take out the blood clots. The operation lasted for more than eight hours. After he examined me he predicted that I had three clots. Well, after he operated, he found

fourteen clots. I had fourteen clots instead of the three that I had been treated for. And so, it was an eight-hour operation. I went into the operating room on a Wednesday night and I didn't really come to myself until late the following Sunday. The doctor woke me up to tell me that he had to go back into my lungs again to check some bleeding or something like that. I don't remember that conversation very well. My wife, daughter and sister were there. So, they re-opened me and I woke up the following Wednesday. I now have a scar from my neck down to my belly button. I have three holes going across my abdomen where the doctors put in tubes to drain my lungs. So, the doctors found fourteen blood clots. I was the 234th person to have had this special operation worldwide. And, the funny thing is that The University of San Diego is the only place in the United States where this operation is done. When I first arrived in San Diego, the doctor, after examining me said I will tell you straight up, there's a 90% chance that this is not going to work. I responded, well, if it doesn't work I'm going to die anyhow, so let's go for it.

And he said, yes one major blood clot will kill you. And so, when he came back and I was able to talk to him and he said they found blood clots. He asked what had I been doing. I told him about the chlorine bomb in Iraq. He said that is probably caused the large growth of blood clots. He said I was lucky to be alive. He cautioned me to take care of myself and follow the doctors' instruction to rehabilitate my lungs. I'll never forget Dr. Hadad

Q: Yes.

JONES: Luckily, I found a doctor at Fairfax- Inova Hospital who had enough insight to look into experimental treatments for my problem. Had it not been for the doctors here at Fairfax, I would have never known about the PTE program. So, I got out there in October. I got back home just before Thanksgiving and worked from home until the end of the year. I then decided to retire at the end of the year, knowing that I would not be able to get a medical clearance for a long time to return to post. By the beginning of the year I'd started teaching part-time at George Mason. I got my medical clearance back in April. I was asked by the Office of the Inspector General to come in as a WAE. So that's basically what I've been doing since the operation. I enjoy working in the Office for the Inspector General. I've done three inspections, so far. My first one was in Scandinavia last year, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

Q: How'd you find that?

JONES: Interesting. I had never gone to that part of the world before. And I can see why those guys used to rule the world. I mean they are just physically large. All of them are, big, tough looking blond guys. When you see them you say wow, these guys were the real *Vikings*. But, they are very close and very friendly. They seem jolly and very outgoing. It was an interesting trip. I took my wife along. She spent the six weeks out there with us. She and several of the spouses of other team members did all of the tourist stuff while we worked on the inspections. It was a great area to see. They are just a different group of folks. I thought I was a big man, but there were girls out there taller than me. They were all 6'2 and 6'3, big, blonde and strong. But, they were very nice and

very polite. If they saw you standing in the street and looking around, they would approach you to find out if you were lost or if you needed directions to go some place. We left there at the end of November. It was so cold in Norway that the ground froze at night. I mean you could just hear your footsteps on the ground as you walked. I just could not see how people could live there all year round. The sun sets around three o'clock in the afternoon and rises at eight or nine in the morning. But, other than the weather, it was not a bad trip. The missions were in excellent shape and the officers seemed to have been having an enjoyable time working at the missions.

Q: Did the embassies have any particular problems?

JONES: No. The national governments were going through some adjustments. The governments for the first time are experiencing the influx of people from North Africa and from Eastern Europe. The Africans and Eastern Europeans don't seem to be adjusting to the local societies. By the same token, the local people don't seem to be adjusting to having people who don't look them walking around the streets. I had my hair cut in Stockholm by an African man who was married to a Swedish woman. He had immigrated to Sweden as a professional soccer player. He was college educated, but, even though he had attained Swedish nationality, he still could not get a job. So, he would up opening a barber shop in order to make a living. He said there was some racial discrimination and a person had to have connections in order to get good jobs. While we were in Norway, my wife had her purse stolen from the back of a chair in a restaurant in the hotel. The police intimated that it was probably taken by one of the foreigners who worked in the hotel. But, I guess they aren't really accustomed to seeing brown folks walking around.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: Denmark I think is a little more open than Sweden and Norway. I think the Danish are more accustomed to seeing foreigners. There are more Africans and Middle Easterners living there. In Sweden and Norway there were a lot of Eastern Europeans, and Slavic types immigrating. So they were going through a lot of adjustment and growing pains in terms of how they would adjust to these people who were different physically. Immigrants come in, they get citizenship, and then complaints grow. In Sweden where I had to try to find a barber, I had to ask the Black Marine Guards where they got their haircuts. The black Marines told me not to go to the Swedish barbers. They directed me to a barber who happened to be from Senegal. He had been Sweden for ten years and was married to a Swedish woman and who was an engineer; he could not find a job. Basically, the Swedes and the Norwegians aren't accustomed to seeing a lot of dark skinned folks walking around. They are adjusting themselves. They point out things like crime statistics going up and more drugs are coming in from the Middle East and its all the fault of the new immigrants. There is also some anti-Moslem feelings in the region. Remember, the killing of the cartoonist in Copenhagen, who depicted the prophet Mohammad in a cartoon.

Q: Oh yeah.

JONES: -- It was printed in Denmark. And, the cartoonist was stabbed to death in street in Copenhagen. I mean this was the first major thing that had happened in recent history where someone was actually stabbed in the streets because of a cartoon. Local people blame these kinds of things on the influx of radical Islamists. So yeah, immigration into the region is creating changes for them. They are accustomed to having a homogeneous population where everyone looked alike and had the same standards. I think the region is going through growth pangs. It's going to be interesting to see how they deal with the immigrant population. But, I get the feeling that because the society is so open that I think they will adjust to it. It will happen gradually. The hardest part will be in places like Norway where there are fewer immigrants.

Q: How did you find -- I don't want to get too personal in this -- but the ambassadors? I know over the years --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yes, all ambassadors have their own particular styles of operating.

Q: -- we've had a lot of political appointees appointed obviously there and some of them have a --

JONES: *(laughs)* Yes, the three ambassadors in Scandinavia were all political appointees.

Q: -- proclivity to chase these beautiful Norwegian or Swedish --

JONES: *(laughs)* Again, I think it depends on the individual. The ambassador in Denmark was female. The other two were men.

Q: -- girls around their desk. They don't have --

JONES: Yeah. I have heard of these kinds of things.

Q: -- we don't have a map here. But did you have any of that?

JONES: Oh yeah, we have all heard these stories. This is why the OIG sends out Inspection Teams that are headed by old line ambassadors like me. And yeah, we had, without going into specifics, some real difficult problems in one of the missions out there. The political appointee type who had no concept at all of what it is he was supposed to have been doing in terms of representing the government of the United States. He was out there to have a good time. And yeah, lots of complaints surfaced. Other appointees who had real strong political ties to the White House felt they could run the mission like they wanted to, without regard to directives from the Secretary of State, or from the geographic bureaus. So, the OIG needs to have an old hard nose like me, who has been around the government for a long time to tell them that they cannot do certain things. It's always a problem when we have to confront someone who feels that they are only answerable to the president.

Q: No, I know. I've been doing these interviews for many years now.

JONES: *(laughs)* Yes, I can only imagine.

Q: You have everything but often I mean a tendency to -- Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries.

JONES: Yes. These are nice missions and so you have big political contributors, with strong connections in Washington going to these nice places. And, inevitably they wind up in these compromising situations and the OIG (Office of the Inspector General) has to come in and straighten them out, so to speak. Sometimes, it gets confrontational and a lot of times I would shoo my staff out of the room and sit down, one-on-one with political appointees and say, listen, let me tell you what it's going to be. Here are your guidelines and I need to get answers from you about these issues. Some responded that they will call the White House. I say, please do, and let me know what they say. These folks lose all perspective when they get out to a post as U.S. ambassador. They are the American ambassador and think that no one can dare to tell them that they can't have a girlfriend sleeping over night in the official residence. This is particularly the case when the wife is back in the United States. Who's going to tell her? They say you work for me, how dare you tell my wife. We had those kinds of things ongoing. Like I said, OIG needs a hardcore old guy like me who's been around the State Department to say stop what you are doing and adhere to the current guidelines. You have got to stop doing this activity. If you do this one more time I will recommend that the Secretary have you recalled. So an inspection can be an eye opening experience for a politically appointed ambassador. They, like all ambassadors, those who have not come up through the ranks, I think have a misconception about what they're capable of doing and what they can and cannot do.

Q: Yeah. And say it's not always those who did not come up through the ranks who -- I mean who did come up through the ranks?

JONES: Yes. There are the few who go off the reservation and try to do their own thing once they get to post.

Q: This is not something, this is human nature we're talking about.

JONES: Yes. We see this happening when the ambassador isolates his/her staff and tries to micro-manage every aspect of the mission. Fear of retaliation on yearly evaluations play a big part in preventing officers from speaking out in these types of operations.

Q: And sometimes the, particularly with the career ambassadors, with the wives of the, you know, finally I've got it, now I'm going to really --

JONES: Yes, they feel now that they are in charge, they will do what they want to do. They want to "crack down on everybody" and make people "toe the line", so to speak. They let their wives play too large a role in managing the mission and this can really get out of hand and destroy post morale.

Q: Yeah.

JONES: My wife, thank God, was a little bit more rational, with this kind of thing. And so she understood the dynamic of being Mrs. Ambassador. And since she had worked in private industry for a long time, and had taught school, she had a little bit more understanding of how the mission should have to run. She knew how to deal with people and understood the sensitivities of dealing with people in the limited environment of the foreign mission.

Q: Well, then how long did you do this? Inspecting?

JONES: I started inspecting actually when I, when I came back from the agency in 2006. I did two years at the agency as State Department representative to the Foreign Terrorist Asset Targeting Group (FTATG) after I left Honduras. I came over to the OIG in 2006. I left the inspector general's office, to go out to Iraq in 2007. I came back to the U.S. in 2008. I went to Georgetown and came back in 2009, and then retired at the end of 2010. I got my medical clearance again in 2010. So OIG brought me back in as a retiree in 2010. I led an inspection team out to Scandinavia in September of 2010. That was my first foray out as a team leader.

Q: And are you continuing this?

JONES: I am still doing inspections once or twice per year. The inspection calendar year is divided into quarters. Normally, every other quarter I will be asked do an inspection. They can be domestic or foreign, depending on the schedule. But, I am also teaching at George Mason University in the School of Business Administration and the School of Public Policy. I am also doing a yearly exercise at the National Defense University and also at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College in Quantico.

Q: Teaching at George Mason, how did you find the students? I mean what are you teaching and how did you -- what's your impression of the students?

JONES: Let's see. I started there last spring and I was only teaching Business Law at the undergraduate program. Then last summer, I taught the Business Law course in the MBA program. This semester I'm doing a course in the School of Public Policy called The Interagency Process and also a course in the underground business law program in the School of Management. Evening students tend to be quite dedicated. The difficulty is with the students who do not have English as their first language. This is particularly difficult when you are teaching law. Legal concepts are ideals that build on each other. And, if a student was not raised in a democratic state where legal rules are respected and enforced, it is difficult for them to understand the concepts that are applicable here.

Q: Mm-hmm.

JONES: And so if, a student has to make a selection on a multiple choice exam question, they will have difficulty if they are not familiar with the basic concept. Foreign students

tend to have little understanding of basic legal concepts and have to spend more time trying to understand what a certain concept means and how it applies to the society. What does injunction mean, for example is the kind of thing I see all the time. American students or those who have English as a first language don't really fall into that category. They're able to understand the questions. The concepts are difficult for them, particularly if they've come from a place like China or Japan. It's hard for the average American student so sometimes it takes foreign students twice as long to get the information. Most evening students are working during the daytime. Most have had some college. Many are military veterans. The student average student who graduated from high school here in the United States does not seem to have a great deal of difficulty handling the undergraduate course materials. It is hard to grade an essay, for example, because students no longer write the way we did when we were in high school. They don't get the concepts in the beginning. They can tell you what's right and what's wrong, but they don't have the ability to explain the concept in writing. And so, you have to try to read meaning into their answers. The subtleties of English for those students who are not native speakers of English are lost when students write essays. The course that I teach in the School of Public Policy is a little different because there the foreign students tend to be better prepared. They are equal to the American students because they've come from different educational systems. Students like those from Pakistan, India, Lebanon and English speaking African countries tend to do quite well in writing classes. But they do not understand the concepts. So, if I talk about a benign dictator, my student from, from Congo has experienced that and she understands what that concept is, and she can explain that to the class. So it's really different from the past where you had students just going through a class and memorizing material. Concepts now have to be applied and sometimes, if they have only memorized material, they cannot apply it. But, teaching is fun. I enjoy it tremendously. The give and take in class arguments is just phenomenal in terms of forcing students to expand their own ideas and apply them to real world situations. And the hard thing is to keep the conversation away from me and my experiences. They want to question me about what I've done and what I have done.

I always say no, this is not about me. What do you guys think? But, it's fun. I think there's nothing more challenging than teaching at the university level. And so far I'm having a good time. I am looking forward to developing some more current courses for the university.

Q: Great. John, I want to thank you so much.

JONES: No problem, this has been a real pleasure. The process made me think about a lot of stuff that I haven't thought about in years.

End of interview