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

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM B. MILAM

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is 29 January 2004. This is an interview with Ambassador William B. Milam. It is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Bill don't you?

MILAM: I do indeed.

Q: What does the name Milam mean?

MILAM: Well I don't know if it means anything. It is an English name. My brother who is the family historian believes that the Milams came from a village in England near Norfolk which is spelled Mileham.

Q: Ok, well Bill, let's start sort of at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born and we will talk a little about your family.

MILAM: I was born on July 24, 1936, in Bisbee, Arizona.

Q: My, that is real mining country there.

MILAM: Bisbee, as I understand it, used to have one of the biggest copper mines in the world. My dad was not a copper miner. My Mom and Dad were always there temporarily, even though they stayed 6 years or so. They were there pretty much since early in the depression because my dad had lost his job in Santa Barbara, California, and was out of work for a year. But when he was re-employed by the Western Union Company, he was sent to Bisbee. My Dad had moved around a lot before they were married, and didn't mind moving to new places, whereas my mom was a southern Californian from a young age and didn't like moving, but they had no choice. I was not their first child; a girl was born dead in 1934, and my Mother never really got over that the rest of her life.

Q: Let's talk about the family. Can you talk a bit about on your father's side, what do you know about them and your grandfather, grandparents and father

MILAM: Well my Father's family came from Indiana. I still have relatives there, cousins, second cousins and so forth. My dad was actually born in Illinois, raised in Illinois, but his father had come from Indiana. My Dad spent almost every summer in Indiana, so was close to the Indiana family. He and his father didn't get along very well. So when he was about 16 or 17, he left home for good and went first to Oklahoma to learn how to be a telegrapher. Then he went from there to California where he worked in the 20's and up

until the time the depression came along. He met my mother in the late 1920s, and they were married in January 1930. So he was basically a Midwesterner transplanted to California. He did not go back to the Midwest until I was a teenager; thus I never knew his father.

Q: On your mother's side, where did your mother come from and what was her background?

MILAM: My mother was born in Truckee, California, and grew up in Santa Barbara. Her father and mother had moved to California probably at the end the end of the 19th century. They came from Arkansas, but there was almost no connection left to Arkansas. I don't think my mother had ever been there.

Q: What was your mother's maiden name?

MILAM: Pierce.

Q: Do you know anything about her parents?

MILAM: Well I knew her father, he was still alive when I was young. He lived until he was seventy died in 1949 or 1950. I remember him as a very good grandfather, kind generous, loving to his grandchildren, of which he had 6. A fantastic story teller; he kept us entertained for hours with his stories of his youth and of his wanderings after he left Arkansas and before he found the promised land -- California. We loved him a lot. He was tall -- I must have inherited my stature from my mother's side because both my maternal grandfather and his son, my mother's brother, were quite tall. But that is about all I know about him.

Q: And your mother, what kind of education did she have?

MILAM: Oh she was a quiet shy person, but accomplished enough to finish high school and be told she could go to college if she wanted to. If she did, however, the family wouldn't have enough money to send her brother to college. So she said she would let her brother go, and went to work and then met my dad.

Q: What type of work did she do?

MILAM: I don't really know. She worked at the Western Union in Santa Barbara which is where my dad met her, so…

Q: Do you recall Bisbee at all?

MILAM: No. They left when I was about a year old.

Q: Where did they go then?

MILAM: We went back to southern California which is where my mom always wanted to be. They went first to Ventura, which is between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. My dad worked for the Western Union, an obviously mobile profession and I think we spent 4 years there before moving to Santa Ana which is south of Los Angeles in Orange County. We were there when I went to kindergarten. We were there when the war started in December 1941, and my dad tried to volunteer for the military. Now I had by then two brothers and another on the way. The army recruiter would not take his application but told him that if he wanted to contribute to the war effort, he should go to work for the railroads. They were going to be critical in the need to ship soldiers and equipment back and forth. As he had a skill which the railroads could use, telegraphy, he quit the Western Union, and went to work for the Southern Pacific Railroad. The first thing the SP did was transfer him to eastern Nevada.

Q: Oh my God.

MILAM: That is what his family said too.

Q: I don't think there is anything in eastern Nevada.

MILAM: There are a lot of little small towns, and the SP runs through them. He went to Wells, Nevada. My pregnant mother and we 3 children moved to Santa Barbara, back to live with her father in Santa Barbara. I started the first grade in Santa Barbara.

Q: Do you recall Santa Barbara at all?

MILAM: Just barely. I was in kindergarten there. I have memories of my first day in kindergarten, of playing around with different friends, but that is about it.

Q: Did you go to Knott's Berry Farm?

MILAM: I have a vague memory of going there It must have been when my father was still with us. But that is about all I remember.

Q: That strikes me looking at the map, Las Vegas, Carson City, Reno are all on the western side.

MILAM: Wells is on the Eastern side. It was a small town. I finished the first grade there. It was not the only place in Nevada we lived because my dad kept getting transferred. So we lived for a year in Reno -- the West side of the state. Then we lived for a couple of years in Carlin which is also in the East, though a little further west than Wells but still on the eastern side. Then we lived for a couple of years in Elko. In 1950, under great pressure from my mom, and concerned that the rather rudimentary and much more costly higher education system in Nevada would not provide adequate access for his four sons to get the u n iv e r s it y education he had missed and insisted we should have, my dad changed employers and, took us back to California--to Sacramento, which is where I

really call home. It is where I went to high school. So I tell people I grew up in Sacramento. And I did after I was about 13.

Q: Do you recall your schooling in Nevada?

MILAM: Well Nevada in those days Nevada was kind of a three R state. I mean you went to school and you learned reading, writing and 'rithmetic. It depended on the teacher of course, but it seemed to me like the standards were real high, because I thought I had a pretty good elementary education. In the Sacramento school system, in those days, they test you on entry. I was pretty far ahead of many of my peers in terms of reading and writing and even arithmetic I think.

Q: Well this is one benefit of the fact that so many dedicated women were in school teaching.

MILAM: That is absolutely right. I think almost all of my teachers in Nevada were women. They were all good, and you learned. If you disrupted the class you got yourself rapped across the knuckles. But it was a good education. I don't regret it at all. I didn't like the moving around. No kid likes to move around.

Q: Did you get much taste for outdoors particularly in Nevada?

MILAM: Particularly in eastern Nevada, that is all you did. Of course winters were really brutal so you didn't do a lot outdoors in winter. But in spring, summer, and fall, you spent all your time outdoors.

Q: So by the time you were 12 you were in Sacramento.

MILAM: Yeah, I think it was 13.

Q: How did you find schooling there?

MILAM: Well, scary. I had been in very small schools since the first grade. All of a sudden I found myself in enormous schools. The high school I entered had 3,000 kids. Some of the kids were like they were 27 already. They were enormous. I was very small anyway, and I looked up to them and I thought oh my gosh, am I going to make it here? But the educational standards were pretty slack. I didn't have any trouble academically at all. In fact I sort of did next to nothing and still got through pretty well.

Q: How about at home? Was there much discussion of what is going on and all that?

MILAM: Oh yeah, you know my dad had a limited formal education, but he made up for it by being a voracious reader of history, politics, and current events. He was always discussing what was going on in the world. We all had very interesting discussions. He had a very lively intellect.

Q: How about you for reading?

MILAM: Until I was about 7 or 8 my parents wondered why I didn't read very much, and that was because I couldn't see. But once they had my eyes tested, I read constantly.

Q: I went in southern California, San Marino, I went for quite awhile without realizing I needed…

MILAM: I didn't know how bright and sharp the world was until I got a pair of glasses, and then I started reading a lot right after that. I have always been since a heavy reader.

Q: Were there any sort of extracurricular things in high school that you were interested in?

MILAM: Oh yeah, I was very interested in sports, not that I was very good at them. But I tried to play basketball. I tried to play baseball. Not football; that was a bit out of my league because the kids were so big, and I was so small. But basketball. Sacramento High School when I got there, was good in that respect because, they had basketball teams by size. So if you were a little guy you could play "C" basketball competitively against other high schools. Why did they do that? I suspect because among other reasons about half the student population was Chinese or Japanese. So you had all these little Chinese and Japanese kids playing on your basketball team with you. But it was fun and I enjoyed that. And, by the way, I also wrote and was the sports editor of the school newspaper.

Q: Well did you run across the phenomenon that is so prevalent today in California schools, where if you have a significant number of Japanese or Chinese or Korean, they sort of blow you out. I mean they are so dedicated to the academic world, the parents push them, it makes it sort of tough competition for the Anglos.

MILAM: I have heard of that, but you know, I didn't notice that when I was at Sac High. The kids took school seriously and worked hard. But I didn't feel like they were pushing us or doing that much better than we were. I don't remember that at all. Most seemed much like me, and in a sense they were -- I was an outsider, a new kid who didn't fit in in many ways; they weren't new, but I think that though they tried hard to fit in, they must have felt down deep that they didn't really fit in either. Most of the Nisei kids had been in the internment camps during the war, which I am sure contributed to that feeling.

Q: You would have been in high school from…

MILAM: In the 50's. I graduated in 1954.

Q: What subjects were you interested in?

MILAM: I was always interested in history because my father was such a history bug. But I also was interested in English literature, and biology. I can't remember all the subjects I was interested in.

Q: Any books stick out in your mind as sort of being really that you remember even today?

MILAM: I remember I read a lot of books. In fact my mother used to worry that I was reading books well above my age level. I don't know when it was, but probably too young I think, I read All Quiet On the Western Front. I must have read that book five times -- once a year when I was in my teenage years. I loved it. I don't remember exactly why. I didn't feel any particular anti-war sentiments at the time, but it was just such a good book. I mean there were lots of others that I read, all the way from kind of teenage adventure stuff, sports. A lot of sports books were written in those days.

Q: Well it was interesting because it was written about German soldiers in World War I.

MILAM: That is right. I cannot for the life of me tell you exactly what was so attractive about it.

Q: Did you ever see the movie?

MILAM: No I never did

Q: Well particularly while you were in high school, did the outside world intrude?

MILAM: In what way?

Q: Well I am just wondering about the cold war?

MILAM: Oh I am sure it did. I remember the duck and cover drills that we now make fun of.

Q: You had to do something.

MILAM: I guess. I think the domestic unintended consequences of the Cold War intruded. I remember especially coming home from right after school, instead of hanging out with my friends as I usually did, to listen to the McCarthy-Army hearings. I wouldn't say that intruded, but I think I was probably a little bit more interested than the average kid in politics and international affairs. I remember looking at the newspapers and reading about when Winston Churchill was re-elected as prime minister. For some reason I thought that was a good thing. I kept up., without I think making a fetish of it. But let me say that as you get older in your adolescence your interests start to change, particularly you start to be more interested in girls.

Q: Absolutely. I mean that is the most important thing in the world.

MILAM: I guess.

Q: Did you have afternoon jobs or summer jobs?

MILAM: I had summer jobs. I never had an afternoon job until I got into college, but I always worked in the summer. I worked at the state fair which actually about a quarter mile walking distance from my house. I didn't even have to get a ride to the fairgrounds. That was only a few weeks a year, but it was the only place you could work before you were 16. So before I was 16 I worked at the state fair every summer. Then after I got to be 16 I worked in the Western Pacific Railroad shops a couple of summers.

Q: What kind of work were you doing?

MILAM: In the Western pacific Railroad shops. It was really hard. I was a little kid. I weighed 115 pounds. You wouldn't have thought I had any weight to lose, but it was so hot, and the work was so hard that I lost ten pounds over the first summer. My mother must have thought I was going to shrivel up and blow away. I ate enormous amounts of food just to try to maintain weight. Anyway it was basically just physical labor.

Q: Well you think of the wheels. Rolling stock is not light weight.

MILAM: No. We didn't have to lift any of that, but clean it up and had to clean the shops. And one summer I worked in as shop that washed and pressed in steam presses the padding that went into the wheel housings. It was hard. But I enjoyed it because it gave me money and a measure of independence.

Q: Whither after high school?

MILAM: Well there was never any question in my parent's mind that I was going to go to college, never. I mean I didn't even think of not going. The first year I was out of high school, in fact that was a year the Western Pacific was having some economic problems. I couldn't get a job that summer. So I was pointed towards the University of California Berkley, which was cheap, as we all know in those days. But I couldn't even afford to go down there, so the first year I went to the local college, and I worked at night to save money. I did save some money, and in the meantime so when it came around again to what I would do the following summer, I took an exam for what they called the California State scholarships. I won a state scholarship. That was, can you believe it, the princely sum of $750 a year.

Q: That was big money.

MILAM: That was big money to meat least. That was exactly the amount of money I would need to pay tuition at Stanford. So I said, "What the hell, I am going to go to Stanford. My tuition is free." You know by then I had enough money saved so I could do the room and board and then work during the summers and so forth.

Q: So you were at Stanford from…

MILAM: Well, ’56 to ’59.

Q: What was Stanford like when you went there?

MILAM: I loved it there. I had a great time. I think the 50’s are not recognized for what they really were. It was a time, at least on campuses, of a lot of intellectual ferment. The 60’s revolution began in the 50’s. I was into a lot of different kinds of intellectual things. I didn’t work all that hard at my classes, but I got through OK. But I was quite active in the intellectual life of the campus. I went through at least three majors. I started in journalism. I have to explain why. My mother’s brother whose name was Ardle was a fairly big time journalist on the west coast -- not known nationally but highly regarded on the West Coast. He was the great success of the family, the first one on my mother’s side of the family to have ever gone to college. He went to Berkley. I was going to emulate him, and I was going to be a journalist. So I got to Stanford and took journalism for a couple of years. I decided it wasn’t for me, and switched to anthropology. I liked that, but they didn’t have much of an anthropology department at Stanford in those days, and the big star of the department, the guy I liked best, decided to go off to India for a research project. I had taken a lot of history classes all the way through. So I ended up in guess what, history, modern European history. I graduated with a degree in history.

Q: Well did you find Stanford, was there a class difference there? You know on the west coast there is a very good state system but Stanford stands almost by itself as being the west coast co-equal to the Harvard and all that.

MILAM: You know I look back on that. I know there was some feeling of class difference, in some small part of the Stanford student body, but that part could easily be ignored. But frankly, for the great majority of those I knew, I think that such considerations just didn’t exist. I was with in a whole other level of people who were in the same boat as me, who were on scholarship of some sort or another, and had to work for spending money. I remember hearing that over half of the students at Stanford were on some sort of scholarship. I have still a great many friends from Stanford. They were, some of them obviously came from family backgrounds somewhat different and perhaps a little shall we say much more lucrative and wealthier than mine. They didn’t seem to pay any attention to that kind of difference. We mingled, and everybody got along. It was more or less on merit. People either liked you or didn’t like you not what you were but how you did in school and whether you related to other people.

Q: Extra curricular activities?

MILAM: I had to work, that was my first priority. I worked in the student union. I worked folding blueprints. For my board, I was a hasher.

Q: Hasher means…

MILAM: As a hasher I served meals and cleaned up afterwards. I hashed at one of the residence halls. But I had some fun. I played intramural basketball. I couldn’t give up the

basketball yet. I played intramural softball, intramural touch football. A lot of things like that.

Q: At Stanford what was the mix of male and female?

MILAM: Not very good -- for the boys. I guess it was good for the girls. In those days I think it was 2/3 male and 1/3 female, something like that. It was fairly common, you know, that a lot of guys went looking for female company at down at San Jose State, which is only an hour's drive.

Q: You were going to graduate in what, '59?

MILAM: I graduated in '59. That is because that extra year I spent in Sacramento taking a few courses, but working full time at night.

Q: Well then you had a history degree; were you thinking about where you were going to after?

MILAM: Along the way, I can't tell you exactly when, I made up my mind to try for the Foreign Service. Now part of the genesis for that was that I participated in two model UNs. Do you know what the model UN was?

Q: It is still going.

MILAM: I think it is different now, done more at the high school level.

Q: It is at the high school level.

MILAM: In those days they did it at the college level. So I went to two of them actually. I have to tell you I never ever felt that I was going to spend my life in Sacramento. I knew I was going to go somewhere else and do something else. First it was to be a journalist and later on something involving international politics. Then I got interested in the Foreign Service, and I had some friends who were probably ahead of me on this who told me about it, told me that the exam was given once a year and how to enter. The State Department sent a recruiter to Stanford one year, who handed out applications and explained how to apply and so forth, The frosting on the cake, so to speak, was a wonderful professor of Modern European History named Gordon Wright, who had been a part of what must have been a wartime auxiliary of the Foreign Service, who spun terrific stories of his days in the embassies in Paris and Bonn during his honors seminar which I took in my senior year. I had been thinking seriously about it when I was a sophomore or junior, but Professor Wright eliminated any shred of doubt that remained. In those days, you remember, you couldn't take the exam until you were 21, and they only gave it once a year. And they didn't always give it. I turned 21 the summer of my senior year. I applied to take that exam; I was all ready to go in there and take it. But they decided not to give it that year. There was a cutback or something. I don't remember.

Q: A reduction in force, a RIF.

MILAM: So no Foreign Service exam. It was still my objective, but I would have to wait. After I graduated my father was very ill by then, and my mom was having a little financial trouble, so I went home. I got a job with the State of California, and lived at home and helped her. I didn't take the exam the following year because of that. I didn't want to leave her right away. But then the next year I applied for and took the exam. I was still living in Sacramento. I passed it, took the oral sometime later and passed it. Here I am.

Q: Do you recall the oral exam? So what were they asking as questions?

MILAM: It wasn't fun at the time. It is fun to look back on. There were three guys in the room with me. One of them was somebody who was fairly well known, but I don't remember who it was. The other two were middle level or perhaps higher level Foreign Service officers. It was very academic. A lot of stuff about current affairs. It lasted for maybe an hour and a half, two hours. I remember once one of the first questions was what have you been reading lately? I had just read George Kennan's book about diplomacy in the first half of the 20th century, "American Diplomacy 1900-1950". So this guy said, "Well tell me what the book was about." So I told him to the best of my ability. He then bore in on me and basically he made me feel like an idiot, because I had missed some seminal points according to him. But then they went on and I answered most of the questions. I always thought that what they really wanted to know was whether I could say "I don't know" gracefully retain my composure and not say something stupid just because I was saying something. I left the room believing I had flunked it, but I passed it. A very interesting thing is one of the brightest guys I knew at Stanford had taken the oral exam a few months before me and had flunked it. I went in there thinking if Mike can't pass this; I know I can't.

Q: Well sometimes, at one point I served as a questioner for the board of examiners. Sometimes the more brilliant people have a hard time because either their mindset or something. I mean they just don't make, they are not able to make that presentation .

MILAM: This friend was very bright, but he was also very didactic. I think probably maybe a little overly didactic for the boards. Anyway, I went into the Foreign Service three months later in early Jnauary1962. That was it.

Q: Had you at all been caught up in the Kennedy phenomenon of working for the government?

MILAM: That was part of it, although my impetus towards the Foreign Service came much earlier than John Kennedy. But I think that had kept me moving and inspired me. Leading up to both the written and the oral exam, when I wasn't sure I was going to pass either, I also had a number of other things in mind. I had considered seriously joining the Peace Corps. I think I decided to wait before sending it in until I found out did on the on the written. After I passed the written, I decided to wait for the oral. I also was thinking

about graduate school in international relations, and had a couple of university brochures kicking about. So I mean my thrust was in the direction of international relations. If I hadn't gotten in the Foreign Service I think I would have done one of those other things.

Q: Had you had a chance to go to a foreign country? Mexico, Canada?

MILAM: No, never. It shows how naïve I was. No I had never been outside of the several states of the west.

Q: So you came in…

MILAM: The first or second day of January, 1962.

Q: You went right up to Washington. I mean obviously you…

MILAM: I took the oral in San Francisco. Yeah but when I took the security interview in San Francisco, and I think what I actually had to wait for was the security clearance which took about 90 days. I suppose we would think that was a record now. And the Foreign Service must have been hurting for people because as soon as I got the security clearance, they sent me a telegram asking if I could come in with the class of January second. I was working at the state of California. I was actually making better money than would when I entered the Foreign Service, but it didn't take me three minutes to make a decision.

Q: What kind of work were you doing for the state?

MILAM: Well at that point I was a management intern, which was supposedly the track to the top of the state civil service system. I was doing management studies and stuff in the department of employment. It wasn't that bad a job, it just wasn't what I wanted to do.

Q: Did you have a significant other?

MILAM: No, I had no significant others until later in life. That left me free, I suppose, to take the offer and move quickly into the Foreign Service.

Q: Well '62, how did you find the big city of Washington?

MILAM: Interesting. I arrived in winter with the weather about like it is now. It was cold and snowing. Do you remember the Roger Smith Hotel? They put me up there. Washington didn't frighten me. It was a very interesting city. I was here for eight months, and I had a great time.

Q: Well you took the basic officer course, the A-100. What was the composition of the class?

MILAM: Well I am going to do a little sort of bragging here. I think we may have had the most interesting and one of the most outstanding A-100 courses ever. Among my classmates were Frank Wisner, Bob Pelletreau, Alec Watson, all of whom went all the way to the assistant secretary level. There must be a dozen others who made ambassador, in a class 40. The strange thing is that I think at least a third of the class left the service after their first or second assignment. So it was a strange mix of high achievers, those who rose right up, and drop outs. Some of us rose faster than others. I was one of the slow ones, but I got there.

Q: What was the feeling at that time, I am just trying to go back, the Kennedy administration had been a year away from the Bay of Pigs and all that. But we were in that rather real confrontation with the Soviet Union, the Berlin Wall and all that. Did you have a feeling that you were going to be in battle almost?

MILAM: No, I didn't come in with that kind of feeling. I can't actually characterize the feeling I had except an excitement, that it was going to be a very new and different and very interesting life. I was looking forward to it. I didn't even have any geographic preferences. You know, it was just for me a very rich experience.

Q: How did you find the training in basic A-100?

MILAM: I thought the A-100 course was pretty well done. It lasted maybe eight weeks. I realize a lot of it was kind of boring, talking head kind of stuff. But it basically gave us a feel for what our lives were going to be about in the service. From the start, I realized that I needed to learn a lot. Most of my classmates knew so much more than I did about the Foreign Service. For me it was a very steep learning curve, so I was just learning constantly about different things.

Q: Did they reach a point where they were asking you where you want to go?

MILAM: Well yes, at some point they did. I can't remember when, but I do remember two things. First when they asked, they didn't do this in some big general meeting. I remember I had to go over and see the personnel people at Main State from FSI. As you recall FSI was in the Arlington Towers basement, actually what used to be the garage. So I went over to the State Department and saw somebody. I don't remember who I saw. For some reason I had developed an interest in Southeast Asia, so I said I wanted to go to Cambodia. I think the reason was that I had checked around and none of my classmates seemed to want to go there.

Q: Cambodia was very much in the front pages.

MILAM: Then a few weeks later somebody from the personnel system comes over to in front of the whole class and starts to read out assignments. Mine was the consulate general in Geneva. So OK. I was going to learn French and go to Geneva. I entered the French course. I was about halfway through the course when I got a note saying somebody from personnel wanted to talk to me. I called him up and he said, "We are

going to have to break your assignment to Geneva. How would you like to go to Martinique?" I didn't remember where Martinique was. I said, "Where is it?" They told me, and I felt I probably didn't have a choice, so I said, "Yes." It turned out that they had made the assignment to Geneva without knowing they were going to close the consulate general. So I ended up in Martinique.

Q: So you were in Martinique from when?

MILAM: August of '62 to November of '64. They held me over. I was supposed to leave in August. It is a long story, but the consul had arrived almost the same time I did. Toward the end of my tour, and the inspectors said you both can't leave at the same time. There were only two officers there and a USIA guy. One of you has to be held over.

Q: Martinique in '62. What was it like?

MILAM: It was idyllic on some ways, both a positive and a negative experience for me. I loved the people; I loved the climate; I loved the place. I loved the food which was excellent. I loved the sand and the sea. I had a great time in many ways. Socially I had a great time. Professionally it was also good in one very important respect, and that is that I was the junior guy. The senior guy didn't want to do anything except political reporting. So I basically did everything else there was to do in a consulate from consular work, admin work, commercial work, and whatever else there is to do. I think I came away from that assignment knowing as much about Foreign Service work as any of my classmates, probably more so. But, in the Foreign Service in those days, places like Martinique were used to deposit problem middle level officers. So neither of the two people I worked for officers I could learn much from. One of them was nice enough, but had a problem with alcohol. The other one just plain wasn't very nice, and worse had a spouse even less nice. So it was in that respect difficult for me. But I don't regret going there. I learned a lot.

Q: You weren't doing political, what were some of the dynamics in Martinique? This was when de Gaulle was coming to the fore again.

MILAM: Yeah, de Gaulle had actually come to the fore several years earlier. De Gaulle visited Martinique while I was there. I got assigned to follow him around and listen to his speeches which was kind of fun. I don't even know why we had the post there. The idea was there was a communist party there. The mayor of Fort-de-France, who was the most important politician on the island was a communist. So the job of the consulate was to report on communist party activities there which were pretty thin, I thought. My job was just basically everything else.

Q: You were mentioning the Cuban missile crisis because you were very close to it. How was that viewed from where you were?

MILAM: We were instructed we should arrange to board and check out the inventory of any Russian ship or any ship that was going to Cuba to see what was on board. We then

had to work that out with the French authorities. The French were quite cooperative. There were no Russian ships, or ships going to Cuba around , and none ever came during the crisis. My memory is, and I hadn't been there very long. While the French were supportive, the local communists made a lot of noise but caused no trouble.

Q: Well de Gaulle was, I think we sent Harriman or someone came and he said, "I don' t need to see your pictures. The president of the United States says we need help, we will give you help." He was very straightforward.

MILAM: It was pretty exciting to be there at that time. There were a lot of other interesting things that happened in Martinique while I was there. There was, about a year after I got there, a very strong hurricane that went right over the island and caused great damage. The consul had a $10,000 disaster relief fund. He decided he was going to use it. He asked the French what they needed. They said they were low on rice which was a staple of the people out in the villages. So the consul sent me to Puerto Rico to buy rice. So I had $10,000 buying authority. I went up there and contacted the right people and found the right kind of rice, and rented a cargo plane to transport it. It took me a couple of days and flew back with an enormous plane load of rice. So that was kind of fun. The other thing that happened to me while I was in Martinique which is my closest brush with fame while I was there was the murder of an American composer named Marc Blitzstein.

Q: Oh yes, "The Cradle Will Rock."

MILAM: "The Cradle Will Rock." You are a very literate person. A lot of people draw a total blank at the name of Marc Blitzstein. I didn't know the name myself when he first dropped into the consulate to register. The consul brought him in and introduced him to me. He said he was there to finish his opera on Sacco and Vanzetti. He had rented a house way outside of the capital city, Fort-de-France, about an hour's drive away. I may have seen him a couple of more times in the six or so months he was there, but hardly got to know him. Then in a week that the consul was on cruise, I got a call from the hospital one day, that there was an American, whose name she didn't know who was badly injured in a car accident at the hospital. So I drove immediately to the hospital to see who it was and what I could do to help. I found Marc Blitzstein lying on the gurney. He said he had been injured in an auto accident and asked if I would get in touch with his family in Philadelphia. I think his family was his sister or his mother. After seeing to his immediate needs at the hospital, I went to the consulate and sent a telegram about the accident to his family. Then, I went back to see him. He wanted me to arrange a full examination to see how badly he was injured. He then told me that he had misinformed me. In fact he had been beaten up, he wanted to report it to the police. I arranged for a full medical examination and for an English-speaking doctor to participate. Then I returned to the Consulate to send a second telegram with the correct facts to his family. I went back to the hospital to learn the results of the examination. The doctor came out of the examination saying, "Well, lots of bruises but he is OK." It seemed a happy ending, and I returned to the consulate to do some other work before the end of the day. I went back to see him about 6 pm and he was talking to the PAO and seemed uncomfortable but okay. I went home and then to dinner at a restaurant at about 8 pm. There, I received

a phone call from the PAO that he had died. Well it turned out he had been beaten so bad he ruptured his liver, and the medics had missed it. It also turned out he was beaten up by a bunch of Portuguese sailors -- at least those were the guys who were convicted, in a homosexual encounter. There was the arrangement to ship his body home and all that stuff. Blitzstein was a major figure in American music. He death the front page of the New York Times, and I made the front page because the Times called me to interview me. As I say, that was my first brush with fame. The interesting coda on that is I had gone and inventoried his effects, shipped the stuff home that I thought should be shipped home. Stuff like pots and pans I sold, and sent a check home for that. But I had found in his house way outside of Fort-de-France as I said, all of this sheet music. I can't read music, so I just dumped it in a box and shipped it home with the rest of the stuff. A couple of months later I get this telegram saying, "Where is the Sacco and Vanzetti score?" I sent a cable back saying, "I sent everything I found." I got a couple of more cables, and obviously they were thinking I had somehow purloined this Sacco and Vanzetti score. I didn't quite know where this was going. And then would you believe it, the New York Times carried an article that said the Sacco and Vanzetti score has been found in the trunk of Blitzstein's car which he had stored somewhere in Brooklyn before he had gone to Martinique a year before. So what is the conclusion? He wasn't there working on the Sacco and Vanzetti score. He was untruthful for some reason about why he had come to live in Martinique.

Q: How did you find the society of Martinique? I mean obviously it is a Creole, we would call it a colored society or something. How did the French, was it a well-integrated society?

MILAM: Well it wasn't that well integrated, but it wasn't Alabama either. Remember, this was in 1963-'64 when very bad things were happening in Montgomery and places like that. We always had this on our minds when we were there. But I thought there were four levels of society. The French who for the most part were pretty open minded and liberal and tolerant, although one of my better friends was the police chief (as a consular officer you want the police chief to be your friend) who was a terrible racist. In fact, I finally ended up in a shouting match with him. He had mistreated one of my local employees, a mixed race woman, a really good employee. But that was a lot later. Then there were what they call the Béké, a Creole word for white I think. These were the planters. These were sort of the aristocracy, a Martinique aristocracy. A lot of them had a little bit of mixed blood in them too, but they considered themselves white. Many, but not all, were racist. Many were not too well educated. Then there was a mulatto class who admitted to being people of color, light color in many cases, a lot of whom were extremely well educated, extremely bright, and had profited from the French educational system and done very well. These were the professional class, the doctors and lawyers and many business people. Then there were working class blacks who were cane cutters and sugar mill workers, service workers and domestic workers, and the like -- pretty hard working people, but who were very poor and were often discriminated against.

Q: Were we under any instructions, restraints or anything like that about dealing with various groups?

MILAM: No, not to my memory. No, I think the consul and I and the USIS guy there sort of meandered through various levels of society. It was hard not to know and mingle with some of the Békés because they were very social and usually nice. You had to stay away from certain subjects. The mulatto community was a little standoffish, with some very attractive young women, and I got to know some of them pretty well. They preferred to spend their time in France, however. I guess I knew fewer of working class blacks. Frankly a lot of them didn't speak very good French, and I didn't speak very good Creole. The French of course, because they ran the island, you got to know them pretty well. I don't remember being under any instructions on who to mingle with or who not to.

Q: How did the civil rights effort in the United States play in Martinique?

MILAM: Well what was happening in Montgomery when Bull Connor was using violence to stop civil rights marches in Alabama stirred up the Mulatto community and some of the working class blacks and reinforced the prejudices that the mulatto class, especially already had about what it was like to be in America as a person of color. So that didn't play very well. I think a lot of our emphasis, this was more the USIS function, was to try to demonstrate that America was really a land of opportunity, and these things that were happening in the south were not universal in the United States.

Q: Did the assassination of Kennedy have any impact?

MILAM: Yes. Kennedy was enormously popular there, as everywhere else. I will never forget the days after the assassination. It was on a Friday. I was due to fly to Barbados on a courier run. We flew a non-pro courier run every three weeks usually to Barbados where there was a consulate general, a bigger post. I usually did this as neither the consul nor the USIS guy liked to travel. It was a good break for me to get off that small island every three weeks. I would usually go on a Friday, drop off my classified stuff at the Barbados CG office and then stay the weekend with one of the consular officers, a guy named Jim Hughes, with whom I had become very good friends. I would usually go back on Sunday, So on this particular Friday the news came of Kennedy's assassination. I said to the consul, "Should I go anyway, or should I stay here." He said, "No you better go." So I got on the plane and went to Barbados. We had a very sad weekend I might add, in Barbados. Then I came back on Sunday, so the first stop was the consulate in downtown Fort-de-France where I would put the classified pouch in the safe. The consulate office space was pretty poor. It was on the third floor, over a department store. There was no air conditioning. It was hotter than hell part of the year. On the ground floor was the department store, and across the street was the USIS building. Each of these had this kind of grillwork that came down at night so that nobody could break in. The assassination had occurred on Friday afternoon. I came back on Sunday afternoon, and it was one of the most touching scenes I have ever seen. The grills on both buildings were literally covered with flowers. People had come in and hung flowers everywhere. When we opened the condolence book we got the usual French and Mulatto signers, but what moved me was that an enormous number of guys who came to sign right out of the cane fields who were wearing a suit they probably had inherited form their father and grandfather that they

hadn't worn in 30 years, but put it on so they could come to the consulate and sign the book. So it had quite an impact, as I think it must have everywhere else.

Q: You mentioned you had problems with particularly one of your bosses. Did this cause difficulty for you doing your work, or was it just unpleasant?

MILAM: It was just unpleasant. I know that as a new officer, I made some mistakes. But it was lack of empathy, the lack of an ability to try to give any guidance, that bothered me. You know when I left Martinique I have to tell you I was thinking of resigning. I thought if this is the way the Foreign Service is, I am not sure I want to be a part of it. I went home. My father had died by then. I went to Sacramento on home leave. I didn't even have an onward assignment. I said to my mother, "You know I am thinking of quitting. It doesn't seem like the kind of thing I need to be doing." Bless her heart she said, "Maybe you ought to give it one more try." So I did, and the rest of my career was a completely opposite experience. I want to tell you about the reason I didn't have an assignment. Among the people in my A-100 course there was a guy named Ralph Gallagher. After 40 years it can't hurt to mention a few names. Ralph was a very bright guy, but evidently unable to learn languages other than English. During the assignment process Ralph got named to the place which was by then the butt of everybody's humor, Ouagadougou. It was supposed to be the worst place you could get assigned to. So Ralph started French with the rest of us. But Ralph didn't make any progress at all, so after four weeks they recycled him. And then after four more weeks they recycled him again. They kept recycling him. So he did not go to Ouagadougou. The rest of us went off to our respective assignments, and Ralph was still there taking French. So at some point they gave up on him. They assigned him to diplomatic security which in those days was called SY. Now Ralph had some talent, including being very adept with mechanical and electronic devices. Now I don't know the full facts on this, but I do know some of the facts. Do you remember in those days, there was a guy who Congress insisted work in the State Department, a guy named Otto Otepka. Evidently SY put a bug in his phone. Ralph was working in SY, I think he did that. So we come up to the Spring of 1964, and I get an assignment cable saying I am going to Tunis as a consular officer. Oh boy I am going to Tunis. This is great. Tunis sounds lovely. I am sure it is. Then a month or two later, I get an assignment cable saying your assignment to Tunis is cancelled. We are sending Ralph Gallagher there. Well I think the Congress had found out about the bug. There was a furor, and if I am right they had to get Ralph out of town. So Ralph was assigned to the first place they could find open. He went to Tunis, although he couldn't speak French.

Q: Just for the record, Otto Otepka was sort of the bête noire of the Foreign Service in a way. He had been the hatchet man I think for Scott McCloud or something of that nature. But essentially he came out of Congress as a staffer and had been looking at files and looking for dirt and all that. He was eventually given an office with absolutely nothing to do.

MILAM: I am sure he was there to spy on the State Department so we evidently turned the tables and spied on him. But anyway I lost my assignment to Tunis.

Q: So what happened?

MILAM: Well I left Martinique November of 1964. The new boss was there. He was sufficiently broken in. My successor as a matter of fact, had arrived. So I took off, and I went on home leave. I stopped by Washington on the way home because Martinique, San Juan, Baltimore was the way you would go anyway. I stopped in Washington for a day. My youngest brother was here at George Washington University, so I wanted to see him. I went over to the State Department. I went into personnel, and said, "What have you got?" They said, "Well we are working on something in Africa, but we don't know yet. So I went on home and spent a month or three weeks there, something. I was due to take the African regional studies course because they were pretty sure I was going to Africa. They just didn't have an assignment for me. I can't remember when I knew this, but at some point either just before I left home or after I got to Washington I found I was assigned to Liberia as an economic officer, which probably was a lot better assignment than Tunis would have been. Nothing against consular work, but as it turned out, as you will find out as we go along in this, my career turned towards the economic function, and I spent about 20 years doing economic work. I loved it, so it was good.

Q: In college had you picked up any?

MILAM: Oh I had studied economics in college. I had done the usual basics. I think I took four courses. The first two courses of micro and the first two courses of macro. So I knew a little bit about economics. I hadn't considered economics when I went into the services. I had done some in Martinique because as I said, all my boss wanted to do was political reporting on the communist party. So I did a lot of commercial work, but I also did whatever economic reporting there was to do there, and I enjoyed doing it. That sort of got me started. I went to Liberia which was a totally different experience. I had a wonderful boss, a very nice man who I was in touch with up until a few years ago.

Q: Who was that?

MILAM: His name was Vernon Merrill. He had begun life, or begun the Foreign Service as an admin officer, but somehow had gotten to Monrovia as chief of the economic section. I learned a lot from him, and working for him as number two was Nancy Rawls who was a super officer, later became ambassador to a couple of places. She died tragically, from cancer later on. I learned from both of them a lot. I really had a good time there.

Q: You were in Liberia from when to when?

MILAM: Well I arrived early '65. I had left Martinique in November of '64. Actually I arrived in Sacramento on the day that Lyndon Johnson was re-elected president. Then I stayed a month or five weeks in Sacramento. Then I went back to Washington for this Africa course, which I think was only a two or three week course. Then I left and went out to Liberia, so I was there early '65.

Q: When did you leave, just to get the date.

MILAM: Almost exactly two years later. January, '67.

Q: How did you find the Africa course?

MILAM: Actually I liked it back then. I enjoyed it. I didn't know much about Africa, and so I enjoyed it. The lady who ran it was really good. She was in INR for years as an Africa analyst. She has always been a good friend since that course. The second time I went to Africa in the middle 80's, they did it differently. You took language, and then every Friday you took the regional course, which I didn't think was a very good idea. I liked a concentrated dose of two or three weeks at the same time.

Q: Well then Liberia in '65. What was it like?

MILAM: Well it certainly was different than it is now. It was typical Africa. I visited a whole bunch of African cities in those years, Abidjan which was a little more built up because of the French. Ghana which was not so built up. It was in pretty bad straits. I was in Bamako in Mali and was in Conakry in Guinea. I don't think I made it to Freetown. But Liberia looked perhaps a little less built up than these other places, but not that much. It was a very strange place in other ways. I mean Tubman was still president. They still wore morning coats for formal affairs. The embassy was enormous. I think it was building up to be what it was later, the largest embassy in black Africa. A large AID mission and NSA presence, and VOA, had a big transmission facility there. The CIA was there too. So it was a very large American community, which was different for a guy like me up from Martinique where there were only three Americans. Here I was in Monrovia where there were several hundred, and all centered in Monrovia. As I said, I had a wonderful boss. Nancy was also very nice. I got along well with the Liberians I knew, and had a lot of friends. Really enjoyed it.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

MILAM: The whole time I was there it was a guy named Ben Hill Brown who was a political appointee, a friend of Strom Thurmond's from South Carolina. A nice guy.

Q: What was the economy of Liberia while you were there?

MILAM: Well it was iron ore and rubber. Liberia was basically a primary product producer. There was the large Firestone plantation, I guess the largest rubber plantation in the world, which was kind of like a state within a state. Very well kept, very well-manicured, with very nice housing for the Americans, a very nice golf course and things like that. You had to go to the Firestone plantation actually to get to Roberts Field which is the airport. Then there were two or three big iron ore mines. One owned by Swedish American Corporation called Lamco. One owned by the Germans called Bong, and one or two other smaller ones that I don't remember very well. I visited all of them. Firestone had taught some of the establishment Liberians, the so-called Americo-Liberians, how to

grow rubber, given them rubber trees and helped them with their trees, and then bought their produce. It was a very cozy. It was a very extractive economy, and by that I don't mean of the natural resources but of the economic rents that accrue to running a country. The majority of people lived in abject poverty. There was a great social divide, because the Americo-Liberians were the establishment. I learned later, because I went back to Liberia as you know, quite a few years later on. The establishment was made up of the people who came from America to settle, descendants of those people, or the people who had been taken off the slave ships stopped by the British navy when they cracked down on the slave trade and landed on the shore either in Liberia or Sierra Leone. The Liberian indigenous people called them Congos because they thought they all came from Congo. Those people were the establishment, and they lived, by Liberian standards, in pretty regal splendor. They divided up the spoils. The indigenous people had next to nothing. It was very much a have and have not society.

Q: What was your impression of the government?

MILAM: Corrupt, inefficient, not very admirable. Tubman was a real autocrat. He tried to buy people off. He preferred to buy the opposition off than to crush them, but he, I don't think he was hesitant to crush people physically and otherwise if they started making trouble.

Q: Was there, you know particularly you being a junior officer and all, often you are able to make contact with what can be called a different ear of the dissidents, the young people who were kind of tired of the way the old guys were running the place, or not.

MILAM: You know it is funny. I knew a few, I didn't know as many as I would have liked to. My job didn't take me into contact with a lot of the dissident elements of society. I was working with people in the economic ministries, mostly the establishment, and with the many foreign advisors who were there advising on economic policy, and the business community, most of which was expatriate. One of my main stops was the planning commission, and one of my friends there was Liberian official named Jim Phillips who was very bright and very modern thinking, but a also a member of the establishment. He was killed on the beach in that public execution that took place 15 years later.

Q: Samuel Doe.

MILAM: Yes. Samuel Doe's coup of 1980. Phillips was one of those killed, even though I thought he was probably one of the more enlightened and liberal of the Americo-Liberians I knew. I was good friends with a guy named Ernest Eastman who was Deputy Foreign Minister. We all thought of him as one of the dissidents, even though he was in the foreign ministry. But it turned out that he was still around when I went back 30 years later. He was not a dissident. He was sort of a yes man to Charles Taylor. So, I don't know. I would say that in terms of learning about the inner workings of a society, because my job didn't take me into that area, I didn't know as much as I learned later on.

Q: In the first place, what the hell would the CIA be doing there?

MILAM: Recruiting agents and getting information, I guess. I think listening to all the stuff NSA was picking up. I don't know what they were doing there.

Q: It wouldn't strike me as being an area that would be at all fruitful.

MILAM: Well there may have been some Chinese diplomats around. I can't remember if there were or not. I don't believe there were any Russians around. I am not quite sure what they were doing.

Q: You know the CIA's main job I think during almost the entire time when the cold war was going on, was trying to recruit other people's diplomats I think.

MILAM: There may have been some eastern Europeans there. That is a good question. I know what the NSA was doing there, because they were listening to all of Africa. VOA was transmitting to all of Africa. The agency was obviously doing some internal reporting on Liberia; I remember that, but I don't really know.

Q: How did you find going out and getting statistics and information?

MILAM: Almost impossible. They had a statistics bureau. I can't remember what the subject was, but I was looking for statistics on trade or something. I was sent to a tin shack outside of Monrovia which is where they kept their records. I went in and I asked for some records. They gave me boxes of stuff. I went through them myself page by page to put together some sort of trade statistics. I met some good people there including some Americans. There was a Harvard advisory team there. In fact this helped me later on. It was connected to the ministry of planning and directed by a Harvard professor named Eliot Berg. I got to know him and the people that worked with him on the Harvard team very well. Eliot, later on was very helpful to me when I went back to school for awhile at the university of Michigan. By the time I was doing that, he was teaching there. So it was a really interesting place in some ways, but I think I learned some things that served me well later on. There was this enormous controversy about a team of economists that came come out from the University of Chicago. This team had published a book called Growth Without Development, in which Liberia was the prime example of a country which was growing, but not developing. In other words, the institutions that need to develop, educational, judicial and many others to strengthen democracy were not developing. The country was growing in terms of its income, primarily boosted by its primary product exports, but not developing the institutions that foster sustainable long-term growth. I think the point was in that book was it was kind of useless to have growth without development because the growth was going to go nowhere. I remember that was a major controversy that my friend Eliot Berg got all worked up about. So if you were an economist there were interesting issues there. But thinking back on it, I wish I had gotten more involved in the social divisions in the society, to have figured out more about the intense pressures building up, what happened 15 years later was the result of those

terrible divisions. The feeling of hopelessness and helplessness on the part of the indigenous people leads inevitably to the rage and violence that destroyed the state.

Q: Were you able to get out, or was there much effort at the embassy, not you particularly, in getting out into I use the term bush. I don't mean that to be derogatory.

MILAM: No bush is correct. I traveled quite a bit in country, to see iron mines, to see rubber plantations, coffee plantations, and other economic installations. I got to know the country physically pretty well. I had actually been in villages and talked to the villagers, but I never got a feel for these enormous social divisions.

Q: Was it Graham Greene who did Journey Without Maps.

MILAM: Graham Greene wrote it. I read it while I was there. I think I read it maybe before I got there. In fact that book was banned in Liberia.

Q: You don't hear about it much, but I read it many years ago, but it made quite an impression on me.

MILAM: It is a good book. I remember reading it and I remember thinking how different things were. He wrote that book in the mid 30's, and I came 30 years later-- the mid 60's. If I remember what I read in the book, there were almost no roads outside of Monrovia, so he had to trek across country, whereas the place was criss-crossed by roads by the time I got there. You could travel almost anywhere you wanted by car. They had all kinds of small planes commuter services to different places where it would take too long to get by car.

Q: Were any of the other, I don't have a map here, the surrounding countries playing much of a role on the economic side?

MILAM: Not in Liberia. The Ivory Coast was, at that point building up a stronger, more diversified economy, but it was a de-facto French colony, even though it was technically independent. Most of its economy was devoted to shipping stuff to France. No I didn't find too much in the way of economic involvement in the other countries. In fact there was a west African trade association or something that was just on paper. It didn't mean anything because none of them traded with each other.

Q: Did you feel a heavy hand from Firestone or the iron…

MILAM: No, I didn't. Maybe my boss did. I remember he was careful about some things that he wrote, or that if I wrote them, he would be careful about what they said. But I didn't feel any kind of heavy hand. Not at all. I thought maybe we were a little more heavy handed about the government. Although I wasn't involved in that, it seems to me in retrospect that we could have had a little bit more to say about the kind of government Tubman was running. The fact that there was very little integration if that is the right word, of the great majority of indigenous people with the establishment.

Q: Well did you get a feeling from say Firestone and maybe the iron extracting businesses, how did they treat their workers, pretty well or not?

MILAM: Well the answer to that is as far as I can tell, these were still pretty low wage workers. They were provided housing, and they made more money than they would have if they had been in growing cassava in the countryside. So I think I would have to say they were treated relatively well, but they could have been treated better. I don't think there was enough of an emphasis on education. Firestone did have a school, but I don't know if it was required the people send their kids to school or not.

Q: Well is there anything else we should talk about?

MILAM: Yes, there is. I would love to tell you about one of my great adventures, my overland trip by land rover camper to Timbuktu and back. When I grew up, Timbuktu was probably the only city in Africa I knew of. It was shrouded in mystery, and often used as a metaphor for the furthest place one could ever go on the earth. I grew up wanting to go there, and my chance came while in Monrovia. I persuaded 4 of my friends in the Embassy to go with me, and I swapped my 1966 Mustang Fastback for a friend's Land Rover camper. (While I got the Mustang back when I returned from our adventure, I sold it when I departed Liberia, possibly my biggest mistake ever. The Mustang Fastback is now a collectible classic car, and I have read that one in mint condition sold recently for $1,000000.) My ambition to explore and learn knew no bounds; my comprehension of the pitfalls and hazards was next to zero. We chose January as the month to make this ambitious voyage; that was the dry season so we wouldn't have to worry about rain -- not that we would have given rain in the Sahara much thought anyway. As the crow flies, Timbuktu is northeast of Monrovia. But while the crow may fly that direction, we couldn't drive that way as there were no roads, and there are mountains in the way. We went east into Ivory Coast (Cote D'Ivoire) and straight North to Mali's capital, Bamako. My companions thought it a good idea that we stop by the US Embassy in Bamako to let them know we were traveling in the country, and pick up any hints about traveling there. The embassy in Bamako was very helpful, perhaps overly concerned about such inexperienced wanderers in their domain. They suggested we find a guide at Ségou where we would cross the Niger and also that we place the Land Rover on a ferry that shuttled up and down the Niger from Timbuktu. We decided to ignore both suggestions. The Niger in the dry season was often too low for the ferry to operate. And why would we need a guide. If we kept the Niger River in sight on our right and the sun more or less straight ahead of us, we couldn't miss Timbuktu. But we had to cross the bridge there as it was the last one for several hundred miles and Timbuktu is on the north side of the river. After we crossed the river, we began to see small groups of the fearsome and colorful Tuaregs, who once controlled Northern Mali. They lived in the 1960s pretty much as they always had, a nomadic life in the Sahara. They were not unfriendly, but their grim appearance and tendency to wave their swords around made them look scary. They normally just stared at us curiously as we passed without friendly signs but without, as far as I could tell, hostile intention. They are often called the "Blue People," because the blue color of the cloth they wear used to turn their skin blue. The Tuareg are fiercely

independent and have resisted control by outsiders for many centuries. We reached Timbuktu in a few days keeping the river in sight on our right. But there was no road, just tire tracks to follow. All seemed generally to be going the same way. I once got nervous about direction and stopped the vehicle to ask a Malian Army truck coming the other way if we were on the right road. The answer: "there is only one road." We arrived in Timbuktu at just the right time -- there was a celebration going on, the occasion being the first stretch of paved road which was about a kilometer in length in that area, and the first telephone connection between Timbuktu and Bamako. We drove into Timbuktu on the paved road. A good many Tuaregs had come to join the fun. During the day, they raced camels up and down the main street, my first sight of a race between those ungainly looking animals. In the evening a great display of fireworks lit up another wise rather dark city. The President of Mali was there to open the road and make the first call; he was to last about another year before being removed by a coup. We followed him around and, thus, got to see a large part of the town. After we left Timbuktu, we followed the Niger down to Gao, another ancient city, neither so large or so well off as Timbuktu. There we were stopped by the police for several hours on some suspicion but finally let go. The only thing I can say about Gao is that while there I saw an ostrich walking calmly down the middle of the only street. Between Gao and Niamey, Niger, we came across a family of giraffe early one morning. When we got out to look more closely they became frightened and stampeded off away from us making a thunderous noise. Our Land Rover broke down a few mile out of Niamey, a broken axle rod which had to be ordered from Nigeria or Ghana, so we had a two-day rest to bathe, eat more delectable food that we had carried with us, and get all the sand off. We got to the Nigerian border and were denied entry because the recent military coup and the ensuing troubles between the Igbo and other ethnic groups -- which later turned into a full scale civil war when Biafra declared independence and tried to secede. Failing to enter Nigeria, we diverted and drove down to the coast through Dahomey, now called Benin, and on through Togo into Ghana where we stopped in Accra to overnight with a former A-100 classmate of mine. The next day we moved on, through Ashanti country to Kumasi, where we were greeted warmly, and on through most of Cote D'Ivoire, skipping Abidjan, before our vehicle broke down again after hitting a ditch that went right across the road. The axle was bent this time, and we basically nursed it into Liberia and found a USAID outpost where we left the Land Rover to be towed while hitch hiking back to Monrovia. An anti-climatic end to one of the best trips and most fun I have had in the service. I shall never for get it.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Bill Milam. Today is 18 February, 2004. Bill, we have you leaving Liberia. Where did you go?

MILAM: Well, in those days, the usual routine for young officers was to start with two tours abroad and do a tour in the Department. So I went to Washington for an assignment there, by way of the Foreign Service Institute where I was in the second batch of the newly-created, six-month FSI economic course. I had to report to FSI in mid-January 1967.

Q: You mentioned before when we were having our tape problem that you had to??? It turned out forever, a special trip you wanted to make.

MILAM: Yeah, that has always been a regret of mine, although the course was wonderful. Because I only found out about the assignment in mid-December, and I had to be in Washington in mid-January, I had to cancel the way I planned to get from Monrovia to Washington. a trip I was going to take on the way out of Liberia, across the Sahara by vehicle, by Land Rover camper. I planned to buy the Land Rover camper we had used to get to Timbuktu and drive it with my wife, and perhaps another couple, from Monrovia across the Sahara to Morocco or Tunisia joining a convoy of supply trucks in Agadez in Niger, the jumping off point of many convoys across the desert. Of course, I was replicating the trip to Timbuktu the memory of which was still fresh and burning in my brain.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the economics course. Who was running the course at that time?

MILAM: A gentleman named Warwick Elrod was the chief administrator. His assistant was John Sprott, who had been an academic. John became a friend of mine. I knew him for years. He lateraled over somehow into the civil service, and later on became deputy director of FSI. Then there were a number of teachers they brought in from the local universities , Georgetown and George Washington mainly, all of whom were excellent. I really learned a lot in that course. I had had the economic job in Liberia for two years and had really enjoyed it. Partially because the people I worked for. Vern Merrill and Nancy Rawls were so good. I was encouraged by them and some other people from Washington to follow the economic career ladder, but I thought that I needed to know more about economics, so I had asked for training, and was assigned to the FSI economic course.

Q: One of the burdens of people who took that was sort of the mathematical side, the statistics. How did that sit with you?

MILAM: Oh I did OK at that. I think the early courses were not as heavy on math and statistics as maybe the later courses were. But I had had some mathematics in high school and had not forgotten it completely. My only problem was that I missed almost all of the middle two months as I came down with malaria. However I struggled through that and finished pretty well.

Q: How many were in the course?

MILAM: Maybe 20-25, not too many. I was the second youngest person in the course. I remember that. The youngest was a guy AID. We were a multi-agency class. There were AID people, and a few from other agencies, and the rest mainly from State.

Q: How did you find by the time things were over, did it give you a pretty good exposure to some of the fields of economics and also vocabulary?

MILAM: I think it gave me a very good exposure, a very good knowledge actually. In later years, I was not sure that I needed any more than that. But, in fact, the course whetted my appetite for more advanced economic training and I determined to apply for

university economic training, which came a couple of years later. But in fact looking back on it, I am not absolutely certain I couldn't have gotten along in the service in the economic side with just what the FSI course taught me.

Q: Was there the feeling when you were talking to people in the economic cone, that in a way the economic bureau was sort of two different things. The people in the field were getting the stuff together, reporting what was happening, and then you had some people with deep economic analysis take care of it in Washington?

MILAM: No I don't think so. In fact I thought the analysis should have been done in the field itself. Then there were some pretty sophisticated economists in EB and INR. But, in fact, I think that if there was a divide, it was between those who wanted to do straight economics and those who had come from the commercial side and wanted to continue that. .

Q: While you were in economic training, were you working with the economic bureau about what is going to happen to you?

MILAM: No, as a matter of fact. I had an onward assignment already in the Bureau of African affairs. I was going to be the economic officer for five countries in northwest Africa. There was at that time a country directorate called AFNW, Africa Northwest, which included five countries, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania. These were later incorporated into AFW. I liked Africa from my Liberian experience. I wanted to combine economics with Africa. I don't remember having any contact with EB while I was in the course.

Q: I was wondering whether you ever ran across Francis Wilson.

MILAM: Later in my career, but not then.

Q: Then you after six months of intensive economic training, you went to northwest Africa.

MILAM: Yes.

Q: Now the countries you named, was there a particular one? Or were they all pretty much…

MILAM: No. None of them were doing very well economically. I didn't stay on that job for the full two years, only for about 6 months. I found that I was underemployed, as there wasn't that much to do with those five countries. I followed IMF programs when they were negotiated. They were all interesting but it was not a full time job. So after a few months I felt quite restless. I had a friend who was the Mali desk officer, who had been in Bamako when I was on my trip to Timbuktu, Charlie Stedman, who decided to take a leave of absence to go and work for the Peace Corps. He did it at an awkward time for the department, January-February when there were no loose bodies around. So they

asked me to take that job. I actually had both jobs for the rest of my two years in the bureau-- Mali desk officer as well as economic officer for Mali and the other four. That was a lucky move because, as it turned out, not too long after Charlie left and I assumed the job, Mali had a coup d'etat and the military took over.

Q: Nothing is better for a young officer than having a coup d'etat. This is a real career builder.

MILAM: This is a terrible thing to say, but it was a very good opportunity for me. I think I did pretty well, and became close to the new ambassador who had been out there only a few months. His name was Ed Clark, and he was such a wonderful man. He and I worked together during the coup. (A year later when my tour was up, he asked me to come out to be the head of the political section in Bamako. I couldn't because I had already accepted the assignment to University Economic Training. But I still wonder what my career would have been like if I had accepted.) For Mali, after the coup, there was the inevitable six months of thaw, when the military government and we were sizing each other up. Then the military government sent a delegation which I accompanied all around the United States. It was great fun. .

Q: Was there a question when the coup, what was the coup about?

MILAM: Modibo Keita was the leader of Mali, ironically the man we had followed around in Timbuktu only a year or so earlier. He was a very well known and respected leader in the fight for African Independence. Like many of those leaders he was well to the left on economics, and the economy of Mali was in a tailspin because of his "Socialist" approach to development. Mali had sunk to pretty pitiful lows in terms of its ability to import consumer goods. The people were very poorly off. So I think the military overthrew him to try to change the course of economic policy, among other things. I am not sure whatever happened to Keita. He probably withered away. But in any case the military was in charge of Mali for many years before they turned the country over to civilian governments. Mali became by the 1990s, o f course, a great success story both economically and politically, a working democracy in the middle of Africa, and a really nice country. The people are lovely there. And I really had a good time as the desk officer on that job.

Q: When you have a coup, what was our attitude, let the chips fall where they may and then we will recognize it, or were we making noises about not recognizing…

MILAM: I think our policy about not liking coups goes back a long way, because at first we were dismayed and put out statements condemning it. But I don't remember that we either ruptured relations or cut off assistance. We weren't too happy on the one hand, but I think on the other hand we hoped that the military government would be both pro-western, be more sympathetic in the UN, which Modibo Keita was not, and perhaps pull the economy back up by its bootstraps.

Q: Were we looking at the French during this time?

MILAM: I think the French were very important in Mali and certainly in Senegal. On many things, we basically followed the French lead.

Q: Who was the head of African affairs at that time?

MILAM: The assistant secretary was Joseph Palmer. I think Palmer left just before I did, and David Newsome replaced him. I left not too long after Newsome took over.

Q: At this time when you were on the Mali desk and doing other things, were you seeing an African core in the Foreign Service developing by that time?

MILAM: It seems to me there was a core of African specialists that was certainly partially developed and was growing fast because most of the people that I knew in the bureau in those days had spent most of their careers in Africa. Even before 1960 when independence came along. You have to remember this is only seven or eight years after independence came to most of the African countries. A lot of those people, the older ones had been into Africa or African affairs before that. The younger people, my age and a little older had an African assignment or two. I think most of them were committed to remaining in African affairs.

Q: Well during this, were there any as the Mali desk officer, were you fighting with other members of your area for resources or not?

MILAM: I don't remember much of that. It seemed to me like the main fight were with USAID. And primarily conducted by my boss on the 6th floor.

Q: The sixth floor being…

MILAM: …being where the assistant secretary and his deputies sat. Though there was an office director who was my direct boss, I worked more with a deputy assistant secretary named Robert Moore who had been ambassador to Mali. Bob Moore directed most of the policy on Mali and on the whole of northwest Africa. I was in and out of his office constantly. If there had been any fights, he would have settled them. We worried more about USAID. I worked closely with AID because we were trying to get them to do certain things, and to do them expeditiously. Our disputes with AID were about what they were going to do with the money they had for Mali and the other countries, and whether they were going to do it quickly or take a long time, which seemed to be their normal method of operation.

Q: Well how long were you doing this?

MILAM: I was in the AFNW office for two years.

Q: That takes you from when to when?

MILAM: That takes me to the summer of 1969.

Q: Then what happened in '69?

MILAM: Well remember I said I had applied to go for university training. I was at that point all pumped up, and by gosh I got it. I was one of the four or five people that were chosen for UET in 1969. So I went off to the world of academia.

Q: At this point did Frances Wilson come in?

MILAM: No, we have to wait for Frances come onto my radar screen.

Q: Where did you go?

MILAM: I went to the University of Michigan. Why ? First, because it is a very good school. Second, because Eliot Berg, who I mentioned having known well in Monrovia had moved from Harvard to Michigan. I wanted to maintain my interest in Africa, while learning more economics. Ironically I found out after it was all set up that he was going on sabbatical that year. So I in my year and a few months at Michigan, I only overlapped with him for a few months. But there was the Center for Research on Economic Development, which Eliot had founded. I spent a lot of time there while I was at Michigan. The other reason I might add was personal. I had been married for a couple of years by then, and my wife was a student; she had gone back to finish her undergraduate education, and we couldn't afford the other choices universities available for my economic training, places like Harvard, MIT, that were really expensive. So we chose a public institution, a state university, which is also very good. I was inclined toward Berkley, but this was right after the free speech movement, and Berkley was ruled out by Warrick Elrod. They may have been afraid I would come back radicalized, as I understand one of those chosen earlier had.

Q: And grow your hair long.

MILAM: Well I did not let my hair grow long. So anyway we ended up at Michigan, which was a marvelous experience. I worked harder, Stu, than I have ever worked in my life. I was more afraid than I have ever been in my life. I was worried that I was over my head as I discovered that not only were all of my fellow graduate students ten years younger than me, but Michigan had chosen mathematicians in preference to those who studied economics to dominate this entering class. The problem with Michigan as a place for Foreign Service officers to learn the kind of economics they needed for State Department economic work was that it had no masters degree program in applied economics. I got thrown right into the Ph.D. program. On paper, I was literally over my head on the math side. But when I knew that I was likely to be chosen for UET I had gone back to school, to George Washington University and taken a few night courses in higher mathematics, second year calculus and things like that. So I wasn't totally out of my depth, but I struggled for air a few times.

Q: Well was there a thrust? Was it just using the tools for looking into an economy or was there any other kind of thrust to the economic train?

MILAM: No, that is the problem I think with Michigan in those days. It didn't have an applied masters program, so you were basically studying with all of the Ph.D. students. They didn't look at things like that at all. They were studying to pass highly theoretical examinations for the Ph.D. So it was a bit abstract. I enjoyed it and I learned a lot. But going back to what I said earlier, I am not sure how much more it would have added to the ability of most State Department economic officers to do their job. But, perhaps, it was good for me, because as we get on in my career, you will see that I had some rather specialized jobs, that required more sophisticated economics. Deservedly or not, I think I had a reputation in the Department, coming out of Michigan of being a relatively sophisticated economist.

Q: You know when you look at the department back in those days, late 60's, did you get any feel for the economists in the State Department?

MILAM: Having worked in the African bureau as an economist, I really didn't know much about the other side of the business. The African bureau had almost nothing to do with EB in those days. We dealt mainly with AID.

Q; To *put it maybe overly bluntly, Africa was sort of a basket case, a charity case, and it wasn't a place to play around with economics except how to keep them going.*

MILAM: I think EB was somewhat badly structured in those days because I think they were trying to replicate other agencies and do things that really they didn't need to do. When I came back from Michigan, I went into EB. That was a whole other world.

Q: Well you came back after a year's course?

MILAM: A year and a summer. In other words not an academic year, but I stayed the whole summer because at Michigan, to get a master's degree you had to take extra courses, including courses outside of economics. So I took some history courses, and a couple of more economics courses. I went a third semester, which Michigan has through the summer and got enough credits for an MA.

Q: How did your wife do?

MILAM: Oh she did fine.

Q: What did she get?

MILAM: She came back to GWU to finish her BA.. After that she got a masters degree.

Q: In what field?

MILAM: In philosophy. Her thesis was on the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre.

Q: Fall of '70. You know all the time you were doing this, did Vietnam cross your horizon?

MILAM: Oh my yes. Well you couldn't be in graduate school in '69 and '70 without Vietnam not only crossing your horizon but looming up big. I had all kinds of discussions with students about Vietnam. Quite a long time before then I had come to the conclusion that Vietnam was a very bad idea for us. In the summer of 1967, after I had joined AFNW, I took home leave and my wife and I drove out to California. We took a rather leisurely trip as AF realized I hadn't been home since 1964. We would talk to people as we went along you know, cafes and cafeterias and wherever we stayed. It struck me then that the war was not terribly popular in the United States. I came to the conclusion that no matter what the arguments were, it was a war that was likely to divide us politically in the United States. I didn't see the objectives we had in Vietnam were worth what we were sacrificing domestically. So I actually turned against the war. Now I wasn't active. I didn't march or anything. I just did my job in the Africa bureau and went along thinking what a bad idea the war was. Then I got to Michigan. You know students are not shy. They grilled me as to my view on the war. Well I was able to answer honestly that my views were that it was a very bad idea, and we shouldn't be there. So some of them argued that if that was my view, why was I still a member of the U.S. government? Why didn't I resign and carry flags and protest. My answer was that I thought that I could probably do a better job of correcting U.S. policy, even from my lowly standpoint, by being inside rather than outside. Strangely enough some of the students agreed with me on that. I struck up pretty close friendships with eight or ten of the students in the class. We hung out together sometimes, having a beer and talking. Strangely enough we never really talked much about Vietnam after those early days. Students even in those days were so focused on passing the next test, getting to the next semester, getting to their objective which was the Ph.D.

Q: Well how was the Michigan campus? Was it in turmoil all the time?

MILAM: Part of the time yes. Perhaps another downside of Michigan in those year was the amount of student activism, and of real turmoil. There were other subjects that were also encroaching upon the our consciousness like the black student movement. There was at some point a black student strike. The whole campus got closed down. The economics department was taken over by the Black students. For several days you couldn't enter the building. So it was a period of some turmoil and disruption. It was not easy all the time to get your work done.

Q: Well then in 1970 you came back.

MILAM: I came back in the fall of 1970. I had been recruited by The Office of Monetary Affairs in EB, supposedly the office that required more sophisticated economists because I now had that image. I started in OMA sometime in September of '70.

Q: You were in the office of monetary affairs from when to when?

MILAM: Well, I have actually served in OMA twice. This first time went from September of 1970 to July or August of 1973. That was when Francis Wilson came into my life, as she did into the lives of all the EB officers. She was very protective and very possessive of EB officers who delivered; it was hard to get out once you got in. Francis remained a fixture in EB as long as I was there, and she was really a grand person. I owe a lot to her.

Q: Ok, we are talking about 1970-'73. What was their focus, their concern.

MILAM: Well in those days, the OMA priority was on European economic issues. Looking back, I now realize that this was wasted effort. But, in all honesty, I found much of it very interesting stuff, and was glad to be a part of it. Because of my training at Michigan, I was considered to be technically sophisticated enough to represent the Department in the inter-agency balance of payments forecasting committee. Remember, Stuart, these were the days of fixed exchange rates, the gold standard, the gold window where theoretically other countries with excess dollars could turn them in for gold. It was a period of constant balance of payments crises, sudden and sometimes disruptive devaluations, some of which were caused by the overvalued dollar and the flood of dollars abroad by an exchange rate fixed at an unrealistic level. The UK was constantly in balance of payment trouble . When I started in 1970, that system was under extreme pressure, and the U.S. balance of payments was under great stress, as it had been for some time. The forecasting committee was headed by a Treasury official, Walter Letterer, who had been forecasting the US balance of payments for 30 or so years. There were technicians from the department of Commerce and from the Federal Reserve Board, as well as Treasury, and me. I think I succeeded Fred Bergsten who rose to prominence later. The committee met once a quarter for an entire day, and produced a forecast of the BoP for the next quarter. It was always a deficit; we didn't have surpluses in those days. After my first meeting, I realized I didn't have much to offer in terms of analysis or knowledge of financial flows that comes from working with the numbers over the years. But I found that the one thing I could to offer was a pretty accurate forecast of the near term movements of the world price of oil. The US was importing large portions of its oil consumption, and the oil price was one of the key components of the forecast, but the other agencies were not good at forecasting it. However the small Fuels and Energy office in the State Department, under Jim Akins always had the best information and most accurate forecast of oil prices in the next quarter. So in every meeting the others looked to me and State, for an accurate forecast of the oil price trend. That kept me involved, and brought me, and State, some respect in that committee. It must have my third or fourth meeting, the committee forecast an enormous deficit. It looked like the bottom was falling out. It was that forecast that led to the decision by President Nixon in August 1971 to close the gold window, and go off the gold standard which effectively ended the fixed exchange rate system. There were many other factors bearing down on the system including countries threatening a run on the gold window and the dollar, but I suspect that forecast of overwhelming looming deficit is what broke the system's back. After that the major financial powers tried for a couple of years to agree on some hybrid

system that would combine the certainty of fixed rates with the ability to adjust currencies quickly and easily, but in 1973 they gave up and moved to a floating rate system which still operates, though with some major problems. It was really fascinating to watch from close up, to have been a small part in such a momentous change in the international financial system as the movement from fixed to floating rates. The other area I worked on in those early years in OMA was a lot of work on fiscal issues. There was a fiscal affairs committee of the OECD which I attended several times a year to assist treasury official who ran the delegation. I wrote several papers on international fiscal and taxation issues. In retrospect, I think that the State Department could have been playing a more useful role in these issues, but I sure had fun being involved in them.

Q: Well I was thinking probably somebody should be keeping track of this from the State Department, maybe not contributing, but to inform the State Department what was coming up. I mean for example, moving off the gold standard, I mean was this something that all of you were thinking about?

MILAM: I think it was clear that the fixed exchange rate system was dysfunctional and likely to implode. I could see that even back in the FSI economic course. At Michigan it became more clear and I became more convinced, and I came out of academia believing strongly in floating rates. So I always thought the answer to our problem was a floating rate regime. What the State Department should have been working on was how to get there without setting the world on fire, as we almost did.

Q: Well in a way, and again I am way over my head on economic matters, but thinking in Japan, going off the gold standard was one of the two Nixon shockers. The other one was the mission to China. But I would have thought the fact that we were going off the gold standard, like most of these you have to keep it very secret or people could make a lot of money off of it playing the market. But at the same time, the State Department has to be preparing its other parts saying something like this might happen, and they should know that this…

MILAM: I think the department at the highest level should have known what was coming. I am sure it did not. But perhaps State could have played a useful role in figuring out he political impact of doing it one way vs. another

Q: Well was it also a matter that if you weren't there, the State Department wouldn't be in on the game?

MILAM: No, I don't think so. I don't think we needed to be in on the game really. What we needed to have a better relationship at the secretary, cabinet level, maybe sub cabinet level in order that our political expertise could be blended with economic necessity. Perhaps the best illustration of that during this particular assignment in OMA is the paper I wrote after we went to floating rates in 1973. The Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, William Casey asked EB DAS, Sidney Weintraub, for a paper on the political economy, or the political impact, of floating rates. He wanted it the next day, and I was asked to do it. This was in the middle of the afternoon. So I went home and worked on

the paper that night. The next morning in OMA we had a very early meeting so everybody could look at the paper, vet it, and suggest improvements. Everyone was helpful, but it wound up mainly as my paper. US Casey liked it and passed the paper to his counterpart at treasury who said that it was the best paper he had ever seen out of the State Department. I was very flattered. But anyway, when we blend our political expertise with technical economic knowledge I think we played then and can play now an important role.

Q: Then where did you go?

MILAM: Before we move on, I want to mention some extracurricular activities during the 1970-73 period that I am also proud of. During this period, I became active in AFSA on the issues of Foreign Service Reform and in the Open Forum Panel. It is the latter I want to record. In the early 1970s, The Open Forum Panel was a very active organization, one which channeled dissent to the leaders of the Department. It became simply a talk shop later on, guest speakers in topics of interest, but when I was active it took a very operational role in questioning policy. Supposedly it had a direct line to the 7th floor policy makers, and not infrequently it exercised this access on issues that the younger officers were troubled about. As you can imagine, there were numerous meeting on Viet Nam war, and once, I remember, a very succinct but devastating memo to the Secretary setting out the reasons that we should end the war. I did not draft it, though I might have added a sentence or two in the drafting committee. We attached a second page for signatures and my signature was the first on the page, not because I had drafted it but because it was passed to me first to sign. It went up to the Secretary's office and disappeared, and I would have forgotten it by now except that several years later, under a new administration and when I was in one of my subsequent assignments in the Department, I received a sealed envelope from the 7th floor one day and inside was that signature sheet, returned to me I suppose because my name was first on the list. I kept it as a memento. I did write a Panel memo to the Secretary on the need to change US whaling policy, and it seemed that the Secretary agreed as over the ensuing decade, it was changed. But the part I am most proud of is my participation on the Open Forum Panel Committee on the treatment of Foreign Service spouses. You remember that spouses were considered as an appendage of the officer and were rated in EERs, when overseas, often required to do donkey do gooder work, and at the beck and call of an Ambassador's wife. But my generation of spouses found such second-class treatment humiliating. It turned out later when quizzed by others, most of us on the Panel (including me) had wives who had said that they would never again go overseas with their spouses if such treatment wasn't stopped. That probably amounted to a large proportion of the officers in my age group. The Panel appointed a committee to take this up with management and I joined 4 or 5 others in negotiating a total revision of the Foreign Service wives policy. The negotiation went on for about a year, and I believe a new and totally reversed policy was announced in 1972. Of course, in those years things were changing rapidly and soon the new wives policy was overshadowed by the reentry of wives that had had to resign to get married into the service, and a much more modern attitude toward women in general. It seems a small accomplishment, but I like to think it broke the dam that had kept a policy in place that should have been discarded 50 years earlier. I was very proud of that.

An interesting coda to this story came almost 20 years later when the American Foreign Service Women's Association invited me to speak to them. I didn't quite know what they wanted me to talk about. This was in the middle 90's. But they wanted me to talk about that wives policy, which by then was, in my book, ancient history. There were still some spouses who didn't like it, because having already been in the Foreign Service for some time at the time the policy was adopted, and who had already suffered through the old system (and I give them a great deal of credit, for what they suffered through when the regime on spouses had been so strict) evidently felt the 1972 policy change had cut the ground out from under them. I was schizophrenic in my response: I felt bad about their suffering, but that it was an idea that was already 30 behind it time. So I did not budge from my view that the wives policy change was one of my real achievements in the Foreign Service. I am really quite proud of it.

Now as to your question of where I went next, I was given a choice that was wonderful. Our embassy in London was adding a Foreign Service position in the treasury office, and there was a Foreign Service officer position in the treasury office at the OECD Mission in Paris opening up. Sid Weintraub told me I could have either one--my choice. I chose London although I can't remember why, but I never regretted it for a moment. So I went to London in the summer of '73.

Q: You were there for how long.

MILAM: Two years. Perhaps, I should have said that the only part I regret is that I often wish I had stayed longer.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MILAM: When I got there it was Walter Annenberg, who was more an ambassador in absentia. He had been Ambassador since Nixon took office, so by 1973 he was spending a great deal of time at his Palm Springs home. The place was actually run by his DCM, Earl Sohm, and the political and economic ministers. After Nixon resigned in mid-1974, Annenberg was replaced Elliot Richardson. And Richardson brought Ron Spiers as DCM. I worked with both a lot for reasons I will mention later. That was a wonderful period. Richardson was a great ambassador. I liked him very much. Being in the Treasury Office, I had pretty much the full macroeconomic range of the British economy as my beat. Since the Treasury didn't want me in that office anyway (although all the other Treasury offices in Embassies had an FSO position), and believing that it was important that FSOs not be let into the international monetary issues, the Treasury Attaché assigned to me to analyze and chart the UK domestic economy. I was really the only officer in the embassy looking at the UK through a macroeconomic lens. There were other officers in the economic wing of the embassy doing small slices of the economy, telecommunications, transport, labor, and other such things. So I had a wonderful two years of being the solo voice in the embassy on the British macro economy at a time when, of course, under Harold Wilson and the Labor party, the economy was spiraling into the ground at a rapid clip, and when attention in Washington had shifted quickly to the UK domestic economy. Inflation was out of hand. The wages/ price spiral was out of

hand. It was a wonderful period to be involved in a real macro situation, and I had a completely free hand.

Q: What was the Wilson government doing from your perspective that was contributing to this?

MILAM: Mainly it had given free rein to the labor unions, which of course controlled the party. The labor unions were advancing wages as fast as they could and prices rose even more quickly and an inflationary spiral threatened to bring the economy to its knees. I don't know if you remember, Stu, but I visited London first on my way to and from Liberia back in the mid-60's. It was then the least expensive economy in Europe. By the time the Wilson government got through with it, it was the most expensive economy in Europe, and it has remained that way to this day, as far as I can tell. I arrived in London before Wilson when Ted Heath was still the prime minister. I hadn't been there very long when the Yom Kippur War started.

Q: The Yom Kippur War?

MILAM: When the Yom Kippur War started, Arab oil producing nations put an embargo on countries that were aiding and were close to Israel. Well it turned out the British got badly affected by the embargo. I don't remember whether the embargo was on them or there was an indirect effect. The oil deliveries to Britain were cut to about half their previous levels as I recall. This was long before North Sea Oil, so they were dependent on imported oil. At the same time, the coal miners decided to take advantage of a conservative government under pressure by calling a nationwide strike I think they thought they had lots of leverage to get a hefty wage increase by striking. Well Heath decided to take them on. As I recall there he called two elections. He barely won the first one, but had to go back to the public again very quickly, and he lost the second. Labor came to power under Harold Wilson. But in any case, in the period between a combined oil embargo and coal miner strike and when the strike was settled, the British economy basically went dormant. I have never seen anything like it. London looked like it must have during the WWII blitz. The light were all out as were the heating units. It sticks in my memory as well as anything. You could walk down Oxford Street. There was one street light every two blocks. The store lights were all out. It was almost pitch black on Oxford Street. There was a cold snap. They had cut off the oil to about half the boilers. I lived in an Embassy apartment block on the seventh and highest floor. I remember one evening the ambassador's secretary who lived across the hall knocked on my door. She was wearing about three coats as I was. She asked if I knew the temperature in my apartment and said it was about 35 degrees in hers. The Embassy had to issue us space heaters. I couldn't even sleep at night it was so cold. That amazing period lasted several weeks. When the Wilson government took over the coal miners went back to work with a big hefty pay increase. And the economic destruction took off-- the labor unions had such power when one union got a raise, everybody else had to get commensurate raises, so all the unions vied with each other to push wages higher and higher. The economy was off to the races, the inflation races. A year or two later, it was so bad that the British had to go to the International Monetary Fund and get an IMF program. The last developed country

ever to have done so [as of 2004; since then the Euro Zone crisis has sent several developed countries to the IMF borrowing window]. Before the British Fund program there hadn't been a developed country go to the IMF for about a decade.

Q: I take it you had colleagues within the British government that you were working with.

MILAM: Stu, that is the other great part about my two years in London. All of my Foreign Service colleagues in the Embassy used to spend half the day n the foreign ministry different issues. I was in the foreign ministry twice in two years. I spent my time at the British Treasury, on the domestic side, and I came to know the crème de la crème of the British bureaucracy. I also spent much time in British economic think tanks and with people in economic think tanks. .

Q: Were you getting from your British counterparts or your British contacts, were they seeing this, the Wilson program saying no matter what your politics were, this is killing them.

MILAM: Oh yes, of course. It was clear what the problem was. No economist who was halfway literate or even less could have missed it. In fact the Wilson government knew what the problem was. But the political power of the unions was such that they couldn't stop them. So they set up these offbeat things like the price commission and the wage commission. All price and wage increases had to be run through these commissions. They did not work because the Labor Unions had political power to override them.

Q: Was there a feeling that Armageddon was going to arrive between the unions and the government in a way?

MILAM: I don't remember that feeling at all. Not under a labor government. That Armageddon came when Margaret Thatcher took power. That phenomenon (Margaret Thatcher) had not yet appeared on the horizon. Thatcher was elected I suppose because the economy got worse and worse, and finally the people turned to a woman who was tough enough to stop it all.

Q: Wasn't this called the English disease or something?

MILAM: Probably. I think so. I think the wage inflation was called the English disease.

Q: Strikes and all. Was there sort of a hand wringing in our embassy about this?

MILAM: Well yes, because the British have always been looked upon as a close ally. We didn't like to see them in such economic straits, and wondered how that would affect their ability to stand up with us. This may have been more evident when Elliot Richardson arrived because he understood what was going on. We had an embassy in which there was a labor attaché and a political officer sympathetic to Labour Party's point of view. But Elliot and those of us on the economic side were pretty clear on what was going on. In fact later when the IMF program came, it was the US that led the charge

and insisted on it, and helped push the British into it. They needed to stop this downhill slide somehow. The program was probably as good a way to stop it as any. It didn't help much, but, I mean it stemmed the bleeding for awhile.

Q: Were you all looking your sort of job in the treasury perspective, looking at the growth of the, I am not sure what it was called then, The European Community. Were you looking at this as being a viable growth situation?

MILAM: I think so. This wasn't my particular beat, but I think most of us thought the British should join the European community, and I believe that US policy pushed that way. There was a referendum on joining the Common Market, as it was called, the US favored. The ayes won the referendum won it wasn't a shoo-in.

Q: Well then you left there '72?

MILAM: No, I got there in '73, and left in '75. I regret to say that career ambition clouded my judgment. I should have stayed.

Q: I was going to say nobody leaves London in mid career in two years. Because I was going to say what had you done? Had you done something in front of the Queen that you shouldn't have?

MILAM: No, as a matter of fact, it was quite the opposite. I was recruited for a very interesting and. I thought, career-enhancing job in Washington. I think that job was a turning point in my career, because I was sort of stumbling along in technical jobs in mid- levels. In FSE, I had the pleasure of working with high flyers and came into the view of pretty powerful high level people, and the path upward seemed to widen. So I got blinded by career ambitions. But as I look back at it and I reflect on the decision to leave London, I wonder if I did the right thing? I just loved London. I just had a great time. Not only a great time personally, but a great time professionally. I think my instincts told me the next two years were going to be about the same as the previous two. I might add, the guy who replaced me who was also a very good economist named Lou Cohen, stayed for five years. His career trailed off and never went anywhere.

Q: But he had London.

MILAM: But he had a good time. I was offered a job in the fuels and energy office (FSE), which after the energy crisis started became a key policy office (inter alia, expanding from 3 officers to about 15 in 2 years). The energy crisis started really in '73. By 75 we were geared up and running full speed. FSE was run by an office director named Steve Bosworth who it was a great pleasure and a real learning experience to work for. He later rose to great heights.

Q: Yeah, he is at Tufts.

MILAM: FSE included such very competent officers as Larry Raich unfortunately deceased now, and Marion Creekmore who also became an ambassador, and a whole bunch of other very good officers. And of course the DAS in charge was Jules Katz, whom I much admired, the Assistant Secretary Tom Enders. So this was a job with a great deal of exposure, and unless you really did something crazy or wrong, you could really be in the limelight.

Q; *Was Jim Akins in this?*

MILAM: No, Jim Akins had gone by then. Jim ran FSE in the days when it was three people and plotted the best oil fore cast in the USG. Later he went out to Saudi Arabia. When I arrived, FSE was running two important efforts--trying to build the international energy agency (later the IEA)a kind of analog of the OECD for energy only. We were setting it up as a way of fostering the conservation of energy and developing alternative energy sources. That is what I did when I first came into the office. I went with Steve on several trips to Paris to help in the negotiations for setting up the IEA. At the same time, The office had the lead on a Kissinger proposal--to try to constrain the oil producers on oil prices by locking them into some sort of multi-lateral agreement on the price. The idea, which the way backfired on us, was to try to get them into a big multilateral conference called the Conference on International Economic Cooperation (CIEC). The oil producers were too smart for us. They immediately insisted that such a conference be a part of the North-South dialogue, and cover all the north-south issues. This turned into an enormous mish-mash, a North-South conference held in Paris. Once a month for ten days, the conference met in Paris. It was to discuss every issue in the North-South agenda from aid levels to commodity issues, to development assistance levels -- and energy and oil prices were kind of an afterthought.

Q: Well you are talking about North-South, you are really talking about the affluent North and the poorer South.

MILAM: Well Yes, if you want to consider Saudi Arabia as part of the poorer South. But the Saudis were one of the ones we needed to rope into this conference, and their price was a full-blown North-South conference. The conference was divided into 4 commissions covering energy, finance, commodities, and development. The conference was greeted with some fanfare as a possible breakthrough on the intransigent issues that troubled North/South relations. Eight industrial (one of the 8 was the EU, so their number was actually greater), and nineteen developing countries squared off to see if a smaller group could do better that the vastly larger North/South meeting held by the UN. I am afraid the optimism with which it began was not borne out by the results. The conference was co-chaired by the US and the Saudis.

Q: Well the whole idea I take it was to dissipate, basically to sabotage a real conference on…

MILAM: Oh yes. The Saudis wouldn't agree to even talk about oil prices and oil production without talking about the entire gamut of North-South issues. For the first six

months in FSE, I worked on the establishment of the IEA. Then I was moved over to the CIEC. I began going to CIEC meetings and my portfolio was basically to be the economist on our delegation to the energy commission. I went almost every month for the length of the Conference which was about 18 months.

Q: It sounded like you know, everybody getting up and asking people to tell their grievances.

MILAM: The delegation was enormous. We had two or three people for each of these commissions and specialists who would come for specific and often esoteric issues. There would be papers prepared while in Washington, debate in the commissions, and attempts to draw up agreed texts on each issue. It seemed to go on and on. But we were working our way toward a conclusion with agreed language on some of the issues and the disagreements narrowed down on others. The end was in sight. A final meeting to work out the remaining problems was scheduled for December 1976. But Carter won the election, and things changed.

Q: It would be the fall of course.

MILAM: Yes. The final meeting was scheduled to take place before Carter took office. The seniors leaders of the delegation went up to see Secretary Kissinger, to get his guidance on what the red lines were in this final meeting of CIEC and where compromise was possible. They were going to have to come to agreement about all the different issues, and give way on some, compromise on others, and hold firm on those on which we had no room for maneuver. Kissinger told them to get the meeting postponed until after the Carter Administration had taken over. He wanted the entire thing left to the next administration. So the final meeting of the CIEC was postponed until the spring when the Carter administration could get its act together and figure out what it wanted to do.

Q: Did you have any personalities or countries stand out either pains in the neck or smart types?

MILAM: Oh yes, lots of them. I was doing some of the negotiating in the Energy Commission, so I only can speak of those who were involved in that commission. I was co-leader for the G-8 of one of the Energy Commission negotiations along with a Canadian diplomat. To tell the truth, I don't remember which energy issue we were negotiating, but I do remember the Canadian who was a good guy. We were up against a representative of one of the oil producers, possibly an Algerian, who led the G-19. There was some language that the G-8 thought vital in the beginning of the draft document we were negotiating, and the other side had rejected it 4 or 5 times. The US wasn't going to give up on this as it was a critical part, so we just kept putting it forward. One morning we started a new session on a new day, and we put the same language forward again. The G-19 leader said softly "okay." My Canadian colleague looked at me in shock, and said, "let's go talk." So we walked back to the back of the room, and he said, "They accepted it." I said, "Yes." He said, "Then there must be something wrong with it." I guessed then that he was preparing to abandon our position, and maybe the G-19 leader sensed this. I

remember the first meeting of this committee that was drafting this document. There was a very senior Jamaican diplomat -- very sophisticated and suave. On the first day of this drafting subcommittee the G-8 put a draft we had worked out among us on the table which had language in the first section that we knew would not be acceptable to the oil producing countries. The G-19 side was relatively disorganized at this point. They didn't like the idea of working from our draft, but since they had none of their own they agreed to start there. The Jamaican looked at me and smiled because he noticed language that was very much in the interests of the non-oil producing developing countries, but anathema to the oil producers. The Jamaican didn't say a word, while we worked through and all agreed on that section. So the next meeting, we handed out a new draft which incorporated the agreed language so as to continue our work on the rest of the document. One of the oil producer representatives raised his head and challenged the agreed language. I said, "Well you accepted this yesterday." He said, "No, no, we didn't do that." The Jamaican said, "Yes you did." So we had the Jamaican on our side at least on this issue. The real truth of it is that in energy the interests of the non-oil producer developing countries were different from the oil producers. I understood this, and we kept trying to drive a wedge in between the two. Well it proved impossible to do back in then, but I managed to split the developing countries group (G-77) some years later. I will tell you about that later.

Q: Well when the Carter administration came in did they have any particular ideas?

MILAM: Well I thought it was much more inclined to give on some of the North/South issues. When we went to the final meeting, the political-level leaders at the final conference gave on some issues that I think the previous administration would not have. Whether that made a difference in the way the CIEC came to viewed is doubtful; it was generally viewed as a failure and a waste of time. So yes, I think the Carter administration came to office with a view to be more accommodating, where possible, to the third world.

Q: Did you have a problem when the Carter administration came in? Did you feel they sort of were giving away the store?

MILAM: My recollection is that I was a little unhappy with some of the positions they took. Now you never know whether this is philosophical or whether it is the result of my investing some of myself in establishing positions they gave away. So I am not exactly sure. You would have to go back and look at the record to see what they gave way on that we would probably not have earlier.

Q: Was there anything else during this period that you were working on?

MILAM: I stayed in FSE until the end of 1977. The CIEC was over, so I worked on other energy issues, generally trying to put together an international energy policy for the Carter administration. At the beginning of each administration you the bureaucracy has to reinvent the wheel, so I helped to draft a lot of policy documents including an international energy policy statement for the new administration.

Q: OK, then just to put at the end here, where did you go?

MILAM: I went back to the office of monetary affairs, my second incarnation in that office. And I found that that things were very different -- its entire focus had changed.

Q: OK we are going to change tapes at this point so we are moving to tape 3. This is tape 3, side one with Bill Milam. Today is 19 March 2004.

Q: 1977 back to monetary affairs. You were saying there had been profound changes. Could you explain what they were?

MILAM: Oh very much so.

Q: In the first place, you were there form '77 to…

MILAM: In '77 I went into OMA as deputy director. In 1980, I moved up to be Director and stayed until '83, so it was a very long assignment. But the focus had totally changed in the five years I had not been there. When I was there as you recall, we were doing balance of payments things, mainly vis a vis the rest of the industrial world because that is where it was thought to count. By the time I got back to the office of monetary affairs, its whole focus had shifted to the developing world, financial questions involving the developing world, IMF programs, debt rescheduling, and other financial issues that were then hotly debated in the North-South context. It seemed that there had been an explosion of North-South forums. Financial issues were all a major part of those forums, as the developing countries believed they were not getting a fair shake in the financial world. By then, a very large part OMA's work was devoted to debt rescheduling, which by then with the developing world had become a full time occupation. The office was staffed with some of the best officers I have ever worked with.

Q: Who were they?

MILAM: Well the Director was Joe Winder who was very good, but who left in six months. Then Mike Ely, a very senior officer, came in to be director. He may be my all-time favorite boss -- a terrific man. We had a great relationship. I worked with him for two years. Then I took over the office myself. There were people in the office during this span such as John Wolf, who is now the assistant secretary for nuclear non-proliferation and, at the same time, our special envoy to the middle east; John Dawson, who sadly just died from cancer while he was ambassador to Peru; Bryan Crowe, who Treasury stole away from us; Tim Hauser, a more reliable and hard- working officer I never met; and Paul McGonagle my deputy whose departure to the private banking sector I still mourn. It was an all-star team, and with it OMA was I think the best office in the building and brought me a lot of kudos I didn't deserve. One of these kudos, by the way was the _____ award as the best FSO class officer of 1981. After I became director of OMA, I took over as the U.S. representative at the Paris Club, the official debt rescheduling forum of the industrial countries. I spent a great deal of time in my last 2 years as OMA

Director on debt rescheduling issues. If you recall, Stuart, at that point we were beginning to get the financial consequences of the oil price escalation of the early and mid-70's. Mexico was going bankrupt. Argentina had a debt problem. Brazil had a debt problem, etc. These countries had borrowed because there had been an enormous amount of what you call petro dollars, dollars that had accumulated deposits of the big international banks the oil producers such as Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, which couldn't spend them. The banks paid a recycling role by lending them to the oil-importing developing countries, but by about 1980 it was clear that these countries had over borrowed (and the banks had over lent).

Q: It was essentially a pile of cash for people to borrow from.

MILAM: Yes, and a lot of it was lent on to Argentina and Brazil because they were borrowing to shore up their budget deficits, but more importantly, to shore up their current account that was getting terribly out of whack because of increased oil prices. But the poorer developing countries were in the same kind of boat, only a smaller and leakier boat. Mexico wasn't an oil importer; it got in trouble for other reasons. So, an enormous amount of my time was spent on debt issues. If Argentina was in a debt bind, think about Senegal. The Africans went really almost belly up, except for a few African oil producers like Nigeria and Cameroon. And most of their debt was to official creditors. So the Paris Club was doing a very brisk business. Now most of the Paris Club rescheduling was with poor countries. Most of these poor countries were rescheduled relatively generously, I think. But we could see it was going to be a never-ending situation like the bulldozer that pushes the dirt ahead of it, as Paris Club rescheduling just pushed the debt out into the beyond years, but didn't in the end relieve the debt burden. The debt just keeps building up.

Q: It wasn't going away.

MILAM: It wasn't going to go away. And the interest rates increased that burden. At some point we began to work on debt relief as opposed to debt rescheduling, relieving some of the poorer countries of some of this debt. Now since I did this job twice I am getting ahead of myself. Much of the debt relief work went on in the latter five years of the 80's when I was doing the same thing as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance and Development.

Q: Well let's talk about the international aspects of this. I mean when we were doing this were we part of a team, western Europe, Japan, or were we each one was sort of operating out of their own?

MILAM: No, we were part of a team, although it depended on the context. But the Paris Club was the usual context, and these were meetings of anywhere form 15 to 20 creditors depending on how many of them were owed money by country X or country Y. As far as I know, all of the poor countries were rescheduled in the Paris Club. It was a very cooperative effort. I might say that basically I think the U.S. was pretty forthcoming on debt, on debt rescheduling most of the time I was there. But of course the reason was that

up until 1990, we didn't have to appropriate for the budget for debt rescheduling. Basically in theory we should have appropriated in advance on some discounted enough to cover rescheduling every fiscal year. But the USG, I include both the executive branch and the congress in this, had a budgetary fiction that served the executive branch well and that the Congress went along with for many years. It was a spurious theory that we didn't have to appropriate as it would all be repaid, so it just was set aside as a receivable. So we could reschedule whatever amount we felt like. That changed after I left in 1990. It is a lot more complicated now. Is an appropriations process and a need to ensure that the Congress appropriates to cover anticipated and not-so anticipated reschedulings. I haven't been involved since this but I understand how it works. So about the time I left it got very binding on us. Until then, which is my good luck, we were pretty generous.

Q: You say we.

MILAM: We, meaning the United States government.

Q: The United States government, but were we lending money?

MILAM: We had lent lots of money through different USG windows to the developing countries.

Q: Yeah, but how about the banks.

MILAM: Oh, I will get to that. The banks are a different story. I am talking mainly about the poor countries right now. Banks don't lend to poor countries, very rarely, so there is very little bank debt in these poor countries. Some of the better, some of the Africans such as Ivory Coast had some bank lending, but in comparison with the large developing countries such as Mexico or Argentina, the banks were minor players in the poor countries.

Q: Well no, I was just asking if the banks played a role.

MILAM: Let me get to that in a minute. Because there were some problems between the governments and the banks, or actually misunderstandings I think. Banking rescheduling with the big countries was very complicated. The banks, of course, had lent the large oil importing developing countries billions of dollars. For the industrial country governments, it was the reverse. Apart from the International Financial Institutions, i.e. the IMF, IBRD, ADB, etc, it was the industrial countries that had been by far the major source of lending to the poor countries. So the governments had most of the debt of the poor countries. The banks had very little of it. In the first tier developing countries, Mexico, Argentina and all of the others, it was the banks that had the great preponderance of the debt.

Q: Let's go to the philosophy or how it worked. If you are lending money to a poor country, they are not going to pay it.

MILAM: Well that is not true. The great majority of them paid their debts. But Many of them ran into serious problems during the oil crisis and were unable to sustain their debt burdens. Of course that is exactly the situation of the large oil-importing countries; they couldn't service the debt they owed the banks. You know the USG lends money to these poor countries for several reasons, e.g. for development AID. Some of the AID flows were loans, long term very low interest loans. And if the country gets into a big problem, you need to reschedule those AID loans. We lend money from EXIM Bank, which finances certain large exports. EXIM Bank seemed to have financed an airplane or two to almost every poor country we ended up rescheduling. Most of these countries had their own airline. These were primarily were internal domestic airlines. To have your own airline, you have to have airplanes. Most, to get airplanes had to borrow from somebody. They didn't have the cash. So when they purchased US airplanes they used EXIM credits. Our Department of Agriculture lends for CCC. These were loans to finance agricultural loans exports. CCC is three year money, expensive money, so countries could import our food, which helps our farmers. That was the primary kind of debt the U.S. rescheduled in the Paris Club. There were also a few OPIC loan guarantees which needed rescheduling. The principle the Paris Club insisted was comparability. The public and the private sector reschedulings had to be comparable in their burdens. This was to protect our taxpayers. Now there were some complications in this principle. The private banks, because of problems with their balance sheets and accounting practices could not reschedule interest. So what they quite often did, strange as it may sound, was to make a loan to cover some part of the interest owed if not all of it. They would roll over the principle of the debt and to the principal a new loan which was to cover interest. The real negotiation between the private banks and the country was how much of that interest the country would pay itself. Well the governments of the Paris Club could reschedule interest and did so as a rule. Governments can reschedule interest as we have a different accounting system. To ensure comparability, we had to make sure the banks were matching our rescheduled interest by more lending. It was always very inexact. And the private banks were always grousing about the Paris Club not rescheduling enough principle, conveniently forgetting that we rescheduled interest. What the banks were looking for was US taxpayers footing some of the bill for their excessive lending during the boom times. But the Paris Club had some tough negotiations with these big developing countries too. One of our most dramatic was the Mexican rescheduling in which I believe the Japanese representative had a breakdown. He really flipped out. He started screaming and shouting and ran out of the room. Because the Japanese were owed a lot of money, and he was under strict instructions not to be generous, and was being dragged beyond his instructions by the other creditors. The US was one of the culprits on the big countries which could have severe systemic impact, we liked to be as generous as possible. We usually wanted to be helpful to Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil. In the case in Brazil, we did an unprecedented thing in the Paris Club at the insistence of Treasury Secretary Jim Baker. That was the toughest negotiation I have ever been a part of. It was tough because I was following my instructions, which were to exclude the usual IMF certificate of approval from the rescheduling agreement. Friends have told me since that had they had such instructions, they wouldn't have followed them. In that case the whole negotiation would have failed. For most of the night, we were isolated among the creditors on the IMF question. None of the creditors, including the French, accepted the idea. The only thing I had going for me

was that the French wanted even more a successful negotiation because they were running it. The French Chairman was scared to death it was going to fall apart. This was one of those few Paris Clubs which I thought had a good chance of falling apart. If I hadn't have pushed real hard, it wouldn't have happened. But I had to push my own side also. We had run into what seemed an intractable impasse. Most of the other creditors were softening in their resistance to leaving the IMF out of this one, but were hiding behind the Germans who were implacably opposed. During a break about midnight, I found my Treasury colleague sitting in frozen silence at a telephone, and took the phone to hear the Treasury Under Secretary shouting at him. I told him to cool his jets and that the trouble was the Germans who were the main problem. In the background I could hear James Baker shouting that he wanted the agreement without the IMF. I figured we were on speaker in Secretary Baker's office, so I said that if his staff (pointedly because this was his Under Secretary's job) had called their German counterparts in Bonn, as they evidently had not done, we might get them to agree. The German rep in Paris had instructions and had heard nothing from Bonn about changing them. Wake the guy up, because we aren't going to get this, without some order from Bonn changing the German reps instructions. Well Treasury Under Secretary Mulford made the call to his counterpart in Bonn and the German rep in Paris got a call to go along with us. We got what we wanted but we had to give something in return -- which turned out to be a sunset clause in the agreement linked to Brazilian performance in meeting obligations to the creditors and the banks. This was the first and last time while I was involved with the Paris Club agreement in which a sunset clause was inserted. I accepted it without seeking instruction as by then it was about 3 am. I had to call back the next morning to say that we got almost everything we wanted, but we didn't get it all.

Q: No, but on this and dealing with these countries, in a way if you have got a big enough debt, you are in control almost.

MILAM: That is right; big debtors have the leverage. Someone once said, 'if somebody owes you ten bucks, you have got him over a barrel; if he owes you ten million dollars, he has you over the barrel. That is exactly right. The big debtors had us, and the banks, over the barrel in the end. But the poor Africans were over our barrel. I always felt extremely bad about that. That is why, later on, and we will get to that later, I was very aggressive in trying to get the U.S. government to agree to debt relief programs for the poor countries.

Q: Well was there a division in attitude between treasury and the State Department?

MILAM: Sometimes. I think the regional bureaus were divided. I was always pretty careful to make sure the regional bureaus knew what was going on and didn't have serious problems with our positions. Sometimes I think EB was tougher minded about big debtors, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico etc. than Treasury was. Treasury was worried about the systemic impact of a default to the banks and to us by one or more of the major debtors. If Mexico or Brazil decides it is not going to pay its debts, there is a cascade through the entire international financial system that treasury feared would bring the whole international financial system down. The big creditors happened to be primarily in

Latin America--they were also our neighbors--and in a political sense, I don't think the regional bureau ever had any trouble with Treasury's generosity. EB being skeptical of the apocalyptic scenario, took a little bit harder line. What bothered me was that Treasury was always totally hypocritical about the Paris Club because, while they talked about the importance of upholding the principles of the Paris Club debt rescheduling, they gave up the principles immediately when a systemically important creditor was concerned but insisted on strict adherence to them for the small debtors. It was an attitude and contradiction that bothered me always.

Q: You know, the attitude is essentially one a little bit of a bully. I have seen this in my interviews about political matters. You know, human rights, they would call, the African bureau would call the ambassador to Guinea Bissau or something, a very small country that had lousy human rights and read them the riot act and really get tough and all this, and yet Zaire with Mobutu, nobody was sent a card. I mean this has often to put it in blunt terms sometimes this has allowed assistant secretaries to show their balls abut say I really socked it to them, picking on some sort of helpless country where the ambassador can't really respond. They really won't go after a major country which is also like South Africa or Israel or Turkey.

MILAM: I agree we had our problems with consistency in the regional bureaus and, I am sure, in EB too.

Q: Could you characterize in the Paris meetings you feelings in dealing with the various countries that are involved, I am talking about the Paris Club, the French, the British, the Scandinavians.

MILAM: Well first of all, the Paris Club could be an extremely tortuous process. When I first started going to Paris Club, it to get the agreement finished by the end of one day, but often it went two as the practice was to end the meetings by 6:00pm. We delegated could actually go have a dinner in the evening. By the time I got back to the Paris Club in the middle 80's, the lineup each month was so long that they would still try to do one country a day, but many times meetings would last until midnight, or even 2 am. I don't know whether it could have been improved or not, but I used to wonder why they did it that way. But the process was that the country requesting debt rescheduling would meet with the creditors in the morning around this U shaped table. It would make the case for rescheduling usually on very favorable terms, and it this would take until lunch usually. The primary focus usually was on the reform measures the government was taking to redress their problems. The IMF was always asked to give its view on the reform measures and the explain it program to support those measures. An IMF program was always required, (except in the case of Brazil, which I described previously). Then the poor country is sent away, usually just in time for lunch. After lunch, the creditors meet by themselves to discuss what terms they are willing to give to the debtor country. A consensus is reached, and the French take the creditor position to the debtor to as a starting offer in the negotiations with the debtor country. The French chair would return after with agreement or a counter offer. So the creditors have to reach consensus on another offer, usually a softer offer. And so on; the process continues until agreement is

reached. It usually took long hours to work out. We delegates learned to eat a very hearty lunch as dinner would be very problematic.

Q: How did the French get this role?

MILAM: I don't actually know. It started a long time ago. The Paris Club has been in existence since the 50's.

Q: Did you feel that the French were adequately representing you, or were they coming back with…

MILAM: Oh I think usually. I really only distrusted the French when one of their Francophone Africans was on the dock. But I actually had very good relationships with the French. Two or three of the finest people I know chaired the Paris Club at different times . Jean-Claude Trichet was one; he is now head of the European Central Bank I remained in touch with him for awhile after he left the Club. The Chairman of the Club before him of the Paris Club was Michel Camdessus, who became Managing director of the International Monetary Fund for a number of years.

Q: What about the Japanese?

MILAM: The Japanese were never very high profile (except for that poor guy who flipped out over Mexico). They seemed always to have a very conservative position going, but the truth is that they were usually very flexible. I don't remember ever, except on Mexico, having a problem with them.

Q: Did the Scandinavians play a role?

MILAM: Yes, depending on who they sent. Sweden in particular was represented for awhile by an extremely able official who later became a Minister in the conservative government in Sweden. He was very influential because he was so good. It was a forum in which to some extent, people with ability who understood what they were doing and could articulate it had more influence. It wouldn't necessarily depend on the size of the country.

Q: Were there treasury types that would sort of get together after hours?

MILAM: I think they talked by telephone. Most of the time, when I went to the Paris Club meeting, there was a junior treasury officer with me. He was fine and very helpful as he was good with the numbers.

Q: During this period you were doing this, this was before the tremendous spurt of open communication, where everybody has a cell phone and can call up their home office and all that,. So I mean when you were doing this I take it that you weren't particularly, I mean you could kind of resolve things there and not everybody having to run back. One of the problems of easy communication is people who are not part of the dynamics can

always take a tougher stand and say do this or do that, and not, and say I said you shouldn't do this. You can posture a lot more easily.

MILAM: I ran into that problem later, in the middle 90's when I was working as a special negotiator for the environment. It didn't happen much in my days in the Paris Club. First of all there the cell phone had been invented yet; and second you had to wait for a break or leave the room during a meeting to use the telephones in the building.

Q: No, the cell phone is a fairly recent phenomenon.

MILAM: Normally, in those days, if anybody wanted to get hold of me they had to wait until I got back to my hotel in the evening, and quite often it was 2:00 in the morning. There were a couple of occasions where I had to phone to talk over a problem, but this was only for issues I thought really important politically.

Q: Well now what had happened? I mean you reach these agreements at 2:00 in the morning or so.

MILAM: Well normally, we would sign the agreement and everybody would go home and get some sleep before we started with another country the next morning. The agreement with Brazil was an exception and led to one of the funniest scenes I saw at the Paris Club. In that case we didn't reach agreement until 5 am. It wasn't signed yet, but the creditors had reached consensus on what seemed an agreement everybody could live with, though almost none of them liked it. The French went to talk with the Brazilians about it. The creditors had been told by the French Chair to wait until he came back with the Brazilian agreement, but all the creditors except us were so disgusted (and quite exasperated at the US) that they all got up and left. I was sitting at the table when the French chair came back and looked around, and saw nobody but me, and he looked like he was going to cry. I told him that they had all they would come back at 10am to sign, because they all needed sleep. They all did come back and we signed the agreement. That was my funniest moment in the Paris Club.

Q: I was going to say what about other, you know I mean there is always this difference between people sitting back essentially Monday morning quarterbacks who are sitting back in the home office and saying we should have been tougher. We told you to do this and you did that. I mean you are sitting down and having to go through the whole negotiation. I mean this is true not only in our system but you know the Japanese, the Germans, the Dutch, what have you. Were there many cases or any cases of going back and having the agreement repudiated?

MILAM: That never happened to me once the agreement was signed. I did this for over six years in two different positions and we never had an agreement that was not adhered to once it was signed. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, you know, there were the agreements with big debtors, like Brazil and Mexico, in which everybody was interested, but the great majority of Paris club reschedulings were the poor countries, African, Central American, or Asian treasury in which there was little interest from our political

leaders in the Executive Branch or the Congress. On those, it was primarily up to the delegation to judge whether it was feasible, would actually work, that the country could service the debt you had left for it to service. I don't believe that anybody ever read most of the agreements once they were finished. They went back to Treasury. We sent them to the hill. I would be astonished if anybody in either place read a word of any of them except maybe Brazil and Mexico.

Q: Just one last question on that, and that sort of covers that period up to '87 or so?

MILAM: I was Deputy Director and then Director of OMA the beginning of 1978 to1983. In 1983 I went overseas again to Cameroon as the DCM.

Q: So when in '83 did you go?

I finally went overseas again in the summer of 1983. Now this long stay in Washington was not necessarily my choice. I had tried to get out of EB a couple of times. The time I remember most clearly is when Bob Leonard who was number two in the Middle East Task Force, that special unit created after the Camp David Accords and run by Bob Strauss, offered me the head economic job in that task force. I was told I could choose either Cairo or Tel Aviv to live. I really wanted that job, and Frances Wilson wouldn't let me curtail. I liked Frances a lot, she was very helpful to me, but this really ticked me off. She was adamant that I was breaking an assignment .

Q: She kept very strict…

MILAM: Well she said that Mike Ely was going to leave in a few months, and I was going to be office director for monetary affairs. I didn't believe her. I didn't think that Mike had any intention of going anywhere. I thought I knew him real well. She was right and I was wrong on that, because she knew that the opening was coming up, and even Mike didn't know the opening was coming up. So she was saving me for something else. But I was really mad at her at the time. So anyway in 1983 I was offered the DCM job in Yaoundé, Cameroon, working with Miles Frechette. He was new Ambassador; I was a new DCM.

Q: I have interviewed Miles. You were there from when to when?

MILAM: I was there for two years only, from 1983 to 1985.

Q: What was the situation in Cameroon at that time?

MILAM: Well before I got there, I thought of Cameroon as one of the oil producers, supposedly doing pretty well financially. As it turned out they weren't doing so well. I left Cameroon in 1985 still thinking that they were strong financially. While there I had been become very good friends with the Minister of Agriculture, a really good guy named Hayatou. A few months after I left, he was made minister of finance. Two years later, who was I looking at across the table at the Paris Club but Hayatou. Because

Cameroon had finally come clean with its creditors and the IMF, and admitted it was broke, had spent all of its oil revenue on prestige projects with no return, it needed to reschedule its official debts. It was very sad. I might add, as another digressive vignette, that Hayatou invited me to lunch after the meeting was over. I thought it was rather symbolic that he took me to lunch at the most expensive restaurant I have ever been in, and he paid for it. So perhaps Cameroon rescheduled its debts so he could spend it on lunch for me.

Q: Who was the leader there and what was the political situation?

MILAM: The President was Paul Biya, who by the way is still President after 21 years. He had recently succeeded Ahmadou Ahidjo, another of those pre-independence leaders who, like Modibo Keita in Mali, Senghor in Senegal, and Houphouët-Boigny Cote d'Ivoire, had ruled Cameroon with an iron hand after leading it to independence from France. Ahidjo, a northerner had resigned and retired a year before I arrived and turned power over to Biya, who had been his number two, was a southerner. There was still great deal of tension between the northerners and the southerners. The northerners are Muslim, but it isn't a religious tension. It is ethnic. After many years of northern control, the southerners were now in control. This is a common problem in this part of Africa, witness Nigeria. After I had been there about six months, there was an Army mutiny; parts of the northern half of the army, primarily that part which happened to be guarding the presidential palace, mutinied. Their objective was to bring back
Ahidjo, and it fact he may have had a hand in it. There was fighting around Yaoundé for about two or three days.

Q: ENE evacuation?

MILAM: The "essential" embassy employees went in and manned the embassy for three days without going home. The non essential workers and all the spouses and children stayed in their houses. It never got dangerous for Americans, although you worried about that sort of thing, and you didn't want them out because there were bullets flying around. Biya was saved by a loyal part of his army, and in a few days things were back to normal. One part of "normal" was the corruption, which was endemic. Still is, I presume, although I haven kept up and this is 20 years ago now. Obviously the oil money was being spent to buy political support. Yaoundé was a very comfortable place because it was about 2,500 feet in altitude thus cooler and dry.

Q: Well you as an economist. You are sitting looking at this oil country. I mean if they are getting oil money in, I mean weren't we trying to figure out what the hell they were doing with it?

MILAM: They had a set of books, and we knew what they were doing on the books. We didn't have the kind of expertise to look at what they were doing off the books. If the IMF couldn't figure it out, I doubt we could have. But when I do management, I do management. I did not try to run the economics section. In fact, I had a really super economic officer named Ken Kolb. I tried to stay out of his way and let him do his thing.

I tried to run an embassy which is what a DCM is supposed to do. That is what Miles wanted me to do too.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Cameroon government?

MILAM: Cameroonians are always seemed to be difficult. The French always said that of all their colonials who were educated in Paris, the Cameroonians were the most difficult. But my memories of Cameroon and Cameroonians are basically pleasant. I made a good number of friends there. I enjoyed running an embassy from the DCM position. We had a pretty good crew on the substantive side, political officers, economic officers were all good. The embassy was, unfortunately, badly served by its administrative section and its administrative officer. So I guess I spent 60% of my time or 65 of my time dealing with admin stuff, try to keep the place on an even keel.

Q: What was the problem?

MILAM: It was a personnel problem. Our chief admin officer was on loan from AID. He worked hard, and he was smart enough. But he didn't take direction very well. He went off and did his own thing a lot. One serious problem I had was that when I arrived, I found that he had contracted for his wife to work in the administrative section. So he was her contracting officer and her rating officer. I took a look at that and realized this was not only a terrible conflict of interest, but it was clearly against the law. We had a terrible time with him and her on that. She was French. She was very aggressive, very smart, but very aggressive. I really had to break some china on that to get them to break that relationship. I don't know whether it was an AID culture or not, but he did things without thinking about the legal or administrative or other implications. He was motivated to do the best he could, but he too short cuts that were just wrong.

Q: You mentioned the political section. I take it this is a one party rule thing or not?

MILAM: In effect, yes. Although it was dressed to look differently.

Q: And what does the political section do in that case?

MILAM: Oh there was a whole lot of opposition to Biya. And remember, Cameroon is bilingual; there was an English part and a French part. The English part was very unhappy with the French, and vice versa. So there was a lot of internal opposition, and there were internal opposition parties. It wasn't such a one party state that opposition parties weren't allowed, but they were kept in their place. Our political officer had plenty to do in keeping up with the opposition and keeping up with what the government was doing. The government didn't have a great human rights record. It wasn't terrible, but they didn't hesitate to throw somebody in jail without a trial and keep him there for 100 years if that is what it took. So the political officers were pretty busy. There was a chief of the political section and a junior officer trainee, a first tour officer There was one economic officer who did all the econ work.
Q: Well in the first place, I don't have a map here. So Bound Cameroon for me.

MILAM: Nigeria is on the west. Then on the southeast, Gabon and that little piece of Equatorial Guinea called Rio Muni I think. Equatorial Guinea sits off the coast; it is an island. We did have an embassy in Equatorial Guinea which was a one or two officer embassy. It was tiny and a very difficult place. We had to give them a lot of support, logistical, stuff like that. Chad and CAR are on the east.

Q: Well what were our interest in Cameroon?

MILAM: I don't think we had great interests. Oil is the major one; some of our oil companies had invested there. Stability in Central Africa I suppose.

Q: Well were the Libyans messing around?

MILAM: No, I don't remember any Libyans.

Q: How about the Soviets. Were they around?

MILAM: They had an embassy there. I think again they weren't a big factor.

Q: Were we going after votes for the UN?

MILAM: Oh we always did that. Every year we did a big demarche on the UN. I remember it because I did it.

Q: Well this was I mean sort of a holding action in a way or a launching brief.

MILAM: Well for me it was a step up in the sense that I had been an office director already so in that sense I had management experience, but I hadn't been overseas in a management role. It was a stepping stone, a chance to cut my embassy management teeth. I think I did a pretty good job. I got promoted while I was there. In fact that is when I made the senior service. I hadn't been overseas since '75, so it was eight years. I was at the max in terms of the window you could stay in Washington. I mentioned earlier my attempts to get overseas. So for that reason and because it was management, it was a good stepping stone.

Q: Well then you came back to Washington.

MILAM: Yeah, that was not my choice. By 1984, the bidding system had been implemented. I had never before submitted a bid list, and in fact, this was the only time I ever had to submit a bid. I bid on 14 overseas jobs--all DCM positions. But before my bids were even considered, the department sent me a cable saying that I was selected for the senior seminar. And the word that came with that cable was, "don't try to get out of it." Well I tried anyway, but I wasn't very successful. I had not been planning on coming back to Washington. The idea upset me. (By the way, I never took the Senior Seminar, but that is another story that I will tell you in a while.) I wanted to stay overseas and go on as a DCM. Two years was enough. But I was looking at some of the bigger posts.

Q: Were these all African posts?

MILAM: NO, not necessarily although I think maybe my best shot was Zaire, because the African Bureau front office called me and asked me to bid on Zaire. The Ambassador there was Brandon Grove. I probably would have been the bureau's choice. I didn't know Brandon very well. He didn't know me well. But before any of this got decided, the Senior Seminar butted in. I think there were a couple of other African posts I bid on, but I don't remember which ones. I bid on the DCM job in Belgrade. Jack Scanlan, who was Ambassador there was someone I had worked with closely when I was in Washington,

I bid on DCM in Islamabad. I had worked in EB with Dean Hinton who was the ambassador there. There were 11 or 12 other DCM jobs I bid on. I don't even remember where they were, but I would have taken any of them.

Q: So what happened.

MILAM: I wrote a letter to the Director General trying to get out of it. Hew didn't even reply. I doubt if he even read it. Up until July, I thought I was going to senior seminar. I was prepared though reluctant. Then Doug McMinn, the new Assistant Secretary of EB called out of the blue and asked if I would be interested in the job of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance and Development. I said yes but that I was scheduled to go to the senior seminar, and that assignment can't be broken. He replied that if he wanted me, he would break the assignment. He asked me to come to Washington so we could meet and talk. So I took a real quick trip back to Washington. The Embassy in Yaounde was being inspected at the time, and I felt bad to leave, even for a few days. In the event, I made the round trip in 4 or 5 days, McMinn and I met on a Saturday morning. I came back before the inspectors left and everything in the inspection went well. I didn't know this at the time, I was not necessarily his choice because he did not know me. But I turned out to be Under Secretary Alan Wallis's choice. When I was running OMA, Alan came was appointed, and we met at the IMF annual meetings in Toronto. He asked me to help him learn about the job and show him around, and we became friendly.

Q: This is tape four, side one with Bill Milam. You were saying Alan Wallis…

MILAM: Alan Wallis, I took him around in Toronto at the annual meetings of the Fund and the Bank. We got to know each other, and worked a lot together until I went to Cameroon a year later. He thought my going overseas at all was a big waste. So when this DAS job came up, came up two years later, I turned out to be his choice. I don't know whether Doug McMinn had a choice of his own or not, but he accepted Alan's word that I could do the job. So a funny thing happened to me on the way to the Senior Seminar; I was offered the job of DAS in EB. Well it was a job that I had always wanted. Ever since my first term in OMA in 1970, I dreamed of having that job. So in1985, I was offered the job that I always wanted; how could I say no. But I was really worried about the warning not to try to break the assignment. Doug had told me not to worry about it. So I show up for the new job around Labor Day. A couple of days later I got a call in my

new office from FSI and someone from the Senior Seminar asked me why I wasn't there. When I said I had been told the assignment was broken, I was told that they didn't know anything about it. I had to call Doug McMinn and get him to go up to the DG's office to work it out. Well it all worked out. I stayed in the DAS job for five years, and it was the best job I ever had.

Q: Well you were a DAS from '85 until when?

MILAM: '90. This is also the longest one job I ever held.

Q: Now the title of the job is Deputy Assistant…

MILAM: Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Finance and Development. I was in charge of 4 offices and about 30 officers and all the secretaries and other staff. One of the offices was OMA, my former office. A second office was the Office of Development Finance. IT worked primarily on World Bank and other development bank issues, EXIM lending, and other such things. The third was the Office of Investment Affairs. Its portfolio was inward and outward investment issues, primarily inward. he final office under my charge, which I had some fun with, was called the Office of Business Practices. It dealt with intellectual property, both copy right and patent law and all of the international patent and copyright things that we are involved in. Anyway so that is what I was in charge of for five years. No, while I was in Cameroon, the Treasury had made a grab for the Paris Club to try to get it away from State. Secretary Schultz said rebuffed the effort, but then decided to make sure that they couldn't complain by sending a higher level officer. So whereas an office director used to be our representative to the Paris Club when I did it, now it was a DAS. So I came back to the Paris Club after a two-year hiatus. I took a lot of my time, and there were many other important issues, but I had a very good staff, so I it worked out very well.

Q: Well it sounds like some of the things like people dealing with investment in the states, have to be very qualified. You know, I mean this is not the sort of thing you jump into.

MILAM: No, for the most part these were Foreign Service officers. With the exception of a couple of civil servants in the Office of Business Practices, they were not specialists. They learned, they were all quick studies. The issues are technical sometimes but all were foreign policy related and required working with the domestic agencies on these issues from a foreign policy perspective.

Q: Well any issues? You have already basically covered the Paris Club type issues. But what about some of these other type issues? Any ones that concerned you particularly?

MILAM: Yes, of course. They would come and go. I think the big issues were a bit different than many of my predecessors had handled because, as you will remember, the Reagan economic team had come it with a lot of ideas about changing our international economic policies. Many of these ideas involved our relations with other countries and had real foreign policy implications. Though Reagan had been in office since 1981, most

of these ideas were still being debated and worked out when I came on the job in 1985. There were policy issues regarding the World Bank. There had been an intensive review of World Bank lending policy when the Reagan administration to power, which had taken a couple of years. When I arrived the Reagan Administration were pushing the Bank toughen up its policies, and this involved us as the foreign policy side of the government. I spent a lot of time on this in the early months. There were also issues of specific Bank loans to countries in which the U.S. had a foreign policy interest. We always got involved with those. The same was true of the IMF. On investment there were also some serious policy differences. For example, I remember once when one of the big Japanese electronic companies wanted to buy out the last American company manufacturing microchips. In this case it was DOD playing the heavy as it believed that our security would be threatened if there were no American companies manufacturing microchips. DOD basically wanted to turn our open and liberal investment policies on their face and keep these Japanese out. For a change, State and Treasury were together fighting this proposition, and we won. These kind of issues consume an enormous amount of time, energy and resources with many briefing papers, interagency meetings up the ladder policy positions, culminating usually in a meeting at the Under Secretary level. The Staff writes the papers. The meetings start at the Office Director level, then rise to the DAS level, then to the Assistant Secretary (to which the DAS has to go also) and then to the Under Secretary (to which the DAS would usually also go). There was one issue which I could not do and which remember fondly for that reason. The State of California had decided it had the power and the legal authority to tax multinational corporations on their global income, and Barclays Bank contested this in court.. My investment staff and the L Bureau got all spun up about this, thinking California's policy on this was unconstitutional. I thought they were probably right. Then, when on home leave, I learned that my brother, Bob, who was the main litigator in the State Attorney General's office on tax and State/Federal issues, was heading this case for the State and preparing ultimately to bring the case to the US Supreme Court. I told him he would lose, but I had to recuse myself from the case, which gave me more time for other issues. I might add that the case came to the Court in 1994, long after I had left the job, but California won. My brother, Bob, was right.

Q: Were you up against particularly India and China?

MILAM: On intellectual property, yes. India and China were certainly two of the problems, but Thailand was also a problem. Some of the other Southeast Asian countries were problems. This was mainly on copyright law. India was a problem on patent law because of the manufacturing of pharmaceuticals.

Q: They took a stand in opposition to almost every other country didn't they? I can't remember what the issues was, but some kind of a, if it was home grown…

MILAM: We had another problem with India, which I think we regarded as an investment problem. One of our big pharmaceutical companies had a large investment in India to manufacture pharmaceuticals there. I think the Indian government was using price controls to keep the price so low it was unprofitable. This was back in the day when

India was very highly regulated economy. This took a lot of time I remember, and I got into an enormous argument with our Ambassador to India, John Gunther Dean. I think we basically won on principle but lost in fact. But I do remember that the guy who had been my main interlocutor with the pharmaceutical company, calling me later when I was going out to Bangladesh as Ambassador just because he wanted to come to my swearing in ceremony as a tribute. But we got into a lot of those kinds of issues. My biggest problem was the enormous amount of travel involved. I had a hard time keeping up with the Washington issues when on the road so often. Not just Paris Club, but to meetings of the IMF and IBRG that were held outside of Washington, to OECD meetings (I had introduced the idea of an OECD investment code, which was a very tough slog and I am not sure we ever won that one.) I think that probably I was only in the office 2 ½ to 3 weeks out of four. So I spent a whole lot of time catching up with what I missed while I was gone.

Q: I would think this would raise hell with your family?

MILAM: No, my family was OK on this. My kids were teenagers then. My wife had a job and she was fine.

Q: How did the EB bureau from your prospective fit with say the geographic bureaus?

MILAM: Well I always tried very hard to keep a tight relationship with the geographic bureaus. Now that didn't mean I would do their bidding, but t it did mean that they understood me and I understood them. I believed the State Department is a foreign policy organization. We ought to be talking to the regional people. I think I basically had a very good relationship with all of them. With AF, there were two basic issues. One was the constant rescheduling of the Africans in the Paris Club. They kept recycling through the Paris Club. But more importantly, I took a very aggressive stance on trying to find measures for the relief of debt of African countries, poor countries generally, really. I kept in close touch with the European Bureau, because they had at that point a number of issues that came to my desk particularly on Polish and Yugoslav debt. This was particularly important to them. On Yugoslavia, we had a terrible time with Treasury because they wanted to take a much harder line. There were 2 or 3 times Yugoslav rescheduling came up, so it wasn't just a one shot deal. On Poland the issues were mainly political, and the trouble came from within State. Latin America was a little different. The debt problems there were mainly with private bank debt problem. My job there was mainly to track the bank reschedulings and match them in the Paris Club.

Q: Well we are really at the end of this particular phase I think.

MILAM: I think so.

Q: If you think of something else we can put that in. So we are going to pick this up in 1990. What happened?

MILAM: In 1990 I went to Bangladesh as Ambassador. I had been in the EB DAS job for 5 years and it was time to move on, professionally and personally. I was nominated for Bangladesh by the D committee, as I understand it with the strong support of Under Secretaries Zoellick and Kimmitt and Deputy Secretary Eagleburger (who also officiated at my swearing-in ceremony). I had gotten to know them all well in my five years on the DAS job in EB. My family met President George H. W. Bush about two hours before Kuwait was invaded by Iraq in August 1990. I was very lucky to have been nominated for my first Ambassador job while he was President.

Q; Bill, today is 5 April 2004. So you are off to Bangladesh 1993, October '93. Before you went out there in your reading, what was the state of our relations in Bangladesh?

MILAM: I think our interest in Bangladesh was and still is pretty marginal. It is a great country, and it is a great post. Bangladesh among starter posts was pretty high up in terms of its desirability. First it is a fairly large post for a, 85 or 90 direct hire Americans including a very large AID mission and a very large AID program--130 million dollars a year, when I was there. There is a good American School, and my kids were still in high school, a club, and pretty good amenities for the staff. A number of the staff had been there for some years. It was a good family post. And enough interest so if something happens, there is some attention given. I really enjoyed it, and I was there during a very exciting time, for me and for Bangladesh. When I arrived, there had been eight years of a military autocracy dressed up as a democracy, the leader of which was a former General Ershad. He had overthrown the elected government in a coup in 1982. Bangladesh history is pretty well known so I won't go into it here; suffice to say that its history since its birth in 1971 had been one of political instability, marked by periods of serious violence and chaos and periods of military government trying to grow into a stable democracy. Ershad had run the country for eight years trying all that time to find legitimacy by civilianizing his administration. None of this was accepted by the opposition and there had been several periods of severe instability as the opposition tried to unseat Ershad. While he effected a series of economic reforms, Ershad was still very much dependent on the Army's support to stay in power. When I arrived in August 1990 he was coming under a resumption of popular pressure to step down. This all came together in September-October of 1990 with a unified, for the first time , push by the whole opposition to topple him. It worked.

Q: This is on your watch.

MILAM: Right at the beginning of my watch.

Q: Well now, when you arrived there, what was the state of play?

MILAM: Well he was in charge, and the opposition was sort of forming up at the time.

Q: Well did we have any, were we complete bystanders? Were we pushing at all?

MILAM: We weren't pushing in the sense that we didn't do anything overtly or covertly to push him out of power. We had always pushed him over the history of our relationship with him to democratize. Because we had a large AID program, the largest of all the donors, he listened, but there wasn't a lot he did. But we certainly were not innocent bystanders in a way that would have helped him; we wanted the country to revert to democracy. Ershad actually tried to use me and the United States to bolster his position. I wouldn't go along.

Q: In the first place, one further question. What about the economy of the country because this is in many ways has been considered at least early on a basket case.

MILAM: Well Henry Kissinger, at least people quoted Henry Kissinger as saying that it was a basket case after his visit there in the middle 70's at some point, not too long after Bangladesh became a nation. Henry Kissinger, by the way has denied he ever said that. And I actually think it was Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson who said publicly that Bangladesh was a basket case. But whoever said it, in fact if you look back at the country in the 1970s, it must have been pretty close to a basket case. Let me just say that Ershad had a lot of bad qualities including being dictatorial and also being corrupt, and surrounding himself with corrupt cabinet. But he had tried to follow good economic policies and follow the example of his more popular military predecessor, Ziaur Rahman. by modifying the naïve socialist policy framework that Bangladesh started with. So just to show that nobody is all bad I guess, the economy was in pretty good shape relative to where it started in 1972. It still was a very poor country, extremely poor, but it was doing much better.

Q: Well when you arrived, how did you find the embassy? Did it have good ties to both the government and the opposition?

MILAM: Actually that leads to a very interesting story. Until about a year before I arrived the embassy was in a very old and dilapidated extremely poor building down in the middle of town--right in the middle of the business area. Every time there was a strike or a demonstration or a flood for that matter, the embassy had to close. Do you remember after Beirut Embassy bombing, Bobby Inman headed a commission that looked into how to protect our embassies better. The commission recommended that whole bunch of new embassies be built with walls set back at least 100 feet. Well now the rest is a story that I probably shouldn't tell.

Q: But do tell.

MILAM: The assistant secretary for management was Bob Lamb. He told me this later. About the time the Inman Commission was presenting its report and Congress was scraping up money to build new embassies, Bob visited Dhaka and was so appalled by the physical premises he put Dacca's name at the head of the list of new Embassies that should be built to Inman spec. This was despite the fact that there was no real security problem in Dhaka. They spent about 35 million dollars building a brand new embassy out of the center of the city. When I got to Dhaka, there was this nice new, bright, shiny,

clean wonderful embassy. It really was a nice embassy. And by gosh it wasn't hard to find. I found the staff to be pretty good and pretty tuned in. Another great thing about Dhaka, at least in my day, it that there are a lot of junior officers, and in those days they got some really super junior officers. So when I arrived there, there was a brewing political crisis and a super team, which was tuned into different aspects of politics as well as I have seen anywhere. I had a very good DCM who had got there only a day or two before I did. He was an old South Asia hand named Lee Coldren. He basically knew how an embassy should work, and got it working just right.

Q: Was Bangladesh part, I mean your embassy was there a discernable south Asian cadre that was being developed, and your staff was part of…

MILAM: Well this was my first experience in South Asia. I had always been interested in south Asia, and I really wanted to go to Bangladesh. The people who were there were generally South Asian, and a few of the junior officers became that too in their careers. Lee Coldren, the officer I chose as DCM was a South Asian hand. I made sure of that. .

Q: How were you received by the government?

MILAM: The Bangladeshis loved Americans in those days. Not so much any more. They were very happy that I was there. Ershad because he wanted to use me I think. But I was welcomed by all parties and all of the actors in Bangladesh politics. Except, perhaps, for the few remaining communists.

Q: Well now when you arrived there, did you want to make it clear where you stood vis a vis democracy, change and so on.

MILAM: Well I think that was made clear by my predecessors. I just echoed their words. The issue didn't come up right away because the opposition that ran Ershad out of office was only beginning to form up and hadn't really jelled yet. When I arrived it didn't look to me that there was any real danger to his position for the next year or two. That turned out to be a really inaccurate assessment because by October the opposition had solidified and was pushing on him. In December he had to resign.

Q: You arrived when?

MILAM: August. I think l had the same talking points as my predecessors. I was very pleased as I think everybody in the embassy, and most of the government of the U.S. was at the turn of events a few months later.

Q: When you arrived there, relations between Bangladesh and India an issue or not?

MILAM: Relations with India are always an issue in either Bangladesh or Pakistan on either side of India. I suppose Nepal and Sri Lanka too because these countries are dealing with the 600 pound gorilla. Each of them deals with it differently, but the answer to your question is they are always an issue. In the case of Bangladesh, there are two

strains of thought, two parties really, and these two strains of thought are captured in the two political parties. The Awami League, the party that brought independence to Bangladesh, and was the first independent government of Bangladesh, has always been much more pro India, particularly since it was the Indians who basically delivered independence in 1971 by going to war against Pakistan. The opposition Bangladesh National Party which is the party of Ziaur Rahman, is more suspicious of India. But these are nuances because no Bangladesh government ever gets up in the face of India. They have to deal with the 600 pound gorilla in more subtle ways.

Q: In a way is the 600 pound gorilla or is there a smaller gorilla being Bengal that is I mean it is the Indian government as opposed to Bengal.

MILAM: It is not a Bengali problem. In fact it is interesting that the Awami league was historically also the Pan Bengali party. It tends to define the nation more primordially, more ethnically. Their slogan, Joy Bangla, means long live Bengal. The Bangladesh National Party slogan is Bangladesh Zindabad, long live Bangladesh. The BNP tends to define the nation as Bangladeshi; it is also more Islamic, less secular. So the Indian problem is always there. But that wasn't a major issue when I arrived. When I arrived Ershad had a relationship with India that didn't seem to bother him too much, and the Indians did seem to be concentrating on Pakistan at the time. So in 1990 the Indians were focused west.

Q: When you arrived there, how effective did you think the government was. I mean did it deliver where it was supposed to?

MILAM: No, these are weak governments, and don't deliver on anything that is halfway difficult. Their writ does not extend into all sectors of society. They have to negotiate with opposing power centers rather than just lay down the law. This is life in the third world. The same is true in Pakistan and even in India, although India of course, is moving beyond that very quickly. Bangladesh is, probably, if you had to rank them from one to ten on the strong or weak government scale, Bangladesh would be pretty far down.

Q: When you got there, were you given by sort of your reading but also talking to your people who served there, a feeling about the power structure. I mean were there different centers of power?

MILAM: You know there are always different centers of power. The way these governments work is to make sure they are aligned with the power centers that count. So Ershad had tried to buy off, in one way or another, the army, the big industrialists, the upper economic echelons of society . Ziaur Rahman tried to make sure that he was supported by the mass of people in the rural areas, and he was. But Ershad had not succeeded in buying off enough support. And he wasn't popular as far as I know out in the countryside, which is where the real power resides if you want to make good in your struggle.

Q: How did things develop when you got I mean politically you said they wanted to use you.

MILAM: The two major opposition parties finally came together to form an alliance against Ershad. The BNP was led by the widow of Ziaur Rahman, the Awami League by the daughter of Sheikh Mujib, who had led Bangladesh to independence. Both of these men were assassinated. In the usual South Asian style, the parties were a family business, and passed the mantle to the next of kin. Both of them being rather opinionated women couldn't stand one another-- couldn't even be in the same room with one another. So Ershad had always managed to divide the two opposition parties in one way or another. He succeeded with that strategy until 1990. When I arrived the two parties were on the verge of coming together, realizing that if they were ever going to ever get rid of Ershad, they had to work together in an alliance. So they did. They didn't even try to hammer out a very extensive program. They had a two point program: get rid of Ershad; free and fair elections afterwards run by an interim, neutral caretaker government. That was all. That was easy to agree on. They didn't have to go into detail on anything else.

Q: So a real system had not jelled yet, whether it was going to be parliamentary or presidential.

MILAM: The Awami League favored a parliamentary as it had started with in 1972 although when things got rough, Sheik Mujib switched to a presidential system, so that he could have even more power. It had been presidential since then. Zia Rahman adapted the Presidential system to make it more democratic, but his party, the BNP, was a great advocate of the presidential system. The Awami League advocated the parliamentary system even though their great leader had switched to the presidential system. Ershad of course felt much more comfortable in a Presidential system because it allowed his dictatorial tendencies to go more unchecked. With the two point program they agreed to, all the other questions were left to later. Starting in October the student wings of the both parties started making a mess of the campuses. This spilled over to the streets, and pretty soon people were in the streets. Ershad came under tremendous pressure. And this time I think he knew he was in big trouble because he knew that both parties were not going to be easily divided although he was still hoping to do that. In November he became desperate. He called the ambassadors of the major donor countries together for a breakfast. Now power breakfasts are not very common in Bangladesh. This was something a little different for me. We were around a small table -- President Ershad, his legal advisor, the British high commissioner, the Canadian high commissioner, the Japanese ambassador, the German Ambassador, and me.

Q: French?

MILAM: I don't think the French were there. They were not a major donor. The President told us that because the street demonstrations were getting out of hand, more uncontrollable, was thinking of declaring a state of emergency. Then his legal advisor held forth for about 20 minutes on the legality of the state of emergency. I don't know why he was telling us this, except that he wanted us to understand it gave the President

emergency powers. I think Ershad wanted us to voice no objections to his plan. I was the junior guy there, brand new basically. So I kept my peace for awhile to hear what the others said. A couple of my colleagues said, "Well you have got to do what you have got to do, "or something to that effect. I was thinking about this and I said, "You know, I think it is a bad idea. In fact I think it is a very bad idea. I think it is going to go down very badly in Washington. People are going to be killed. Right away you will be getting into human rights problems. The real thing to do is to try to work this out with the opposition." And to my surprise, my Japanese colleague spoke up and said, "Yeah, I think that is right. This is not the right thing to do." That is the story really. We left with no consensus in the diplomatic corps as to whether an emergency was right or wrong. Ershad did declare a state of emergency a day or two later, having not paid very much attention to me or the Japanese, the two largest donors. Probably he thought that the Japanese are never going to do anything, and the Americans would not make a big fuss either.

Q: After he declared emergency, I assume you informed Washington of this.

MILAM: Oh of course. I was a good ambassador, and we were a good embassy. We were doing our job the whole time. We were doing a very good job of reporting, and Washington was right up on the curve. I am just giving you these little vignettes.

Q: Was there any thought about doing something about our AID program?

MILAM: Not at this point. Not to my knowledge. Our AID program basically was humanitarian, and humanitarian in a very broad sense. But you don't want to make common people suffer for something the stupid government is doing. So I would probably not have been in favor of any serious moves on the AID program either. But Washington, on our recommendation put out a critical statement after Ershad declared the emergency. But, a few days later the President asked to see me at night at his residence, which was on the military cantonment. So, around 10:00 that night, I went to his house. He wanted me basically to mediate the dispute between him and the parties. He didn't call it mediation, but that is what it would have been. H needed somebody neutral to go and talk to the opposition to encourage them to them to work out a deal. My response was, negative, I told him he had to make his own deals, that I was not getting involved in that. Then I went back to the embassy and I called my bosses in Washington to make sure they didn't have another view on this. They didn't, and so we were OK.

Q: That is a real channel one.

MILAM: Yeah it was. I stayed out of that one, because any intervention with me going, with anybody going to the opposition from Ershad would have been seen as a support for Ershad, and that we were concerned that he was under fire. That was an impression I did not want to portray that. I would liked, actually, to see him go, but I never said that either. I just let it play out. So later on, they made another try through the foreign minister who called me down to his house in the dark of night again to make the same pitch again. I refused again. The state of emergency was on during this time, so there was a curfew, so

at night the streets were totally empty. You could fly down the streets, which I didn't because I didn't care if anybody saw me. One of my dear friends who was one of the leaders of the opposition told me later, that they knew all about it. They were surveilling me even knew I turned him down. Clearly there was a spy on his household staff. The fact that I didn't do anything was also a pretty good indication that I had turned him down. I think one of my predecessors tried to mediate in an earlier crisis and learned what a bad idea that is, and one of my successors tried to mediate between the parties during an election which didn't work out too well either.

Q: Well during this time, what was happening between the two widow ladies?

MILAM: They were actually still cooperating with one another. I don't believe they ever got into the same room with one another or actually talked to one another, but their emissaries were under instructions to cooperate. So they basically had a very solid alliance. During the night it was pretty quiet. I actually went out once with my military attaché and the CIA station chief and we drove all around the city. This was apart form the times I visited Ershad and the foreign minister when I went straight to where I was going. We had a great time, and were out there for two or three hours just driving around looking. There was nobody on the streets except the government goons looking for curfew breakers. They didn't touch us because we had a flag flying and they knew enough not to come near us. On the other hand, the days were pretty rough. The opposition had lots of people in the streets, and the government was loosing control. Reports from the countryside were a little hard to get, but I think they were losing more control in the countryside too. So Ershad decided in early December he needed the army. He sent an envoy who was a serving general officer to the army chief, General Noor Uddin and the Chief of the General Staff, General Salam asking for their help. He wanted the army to deploy on the streets and get things back under control. What they basically replied was that it was Ershad's problem, not the army's and it was not going to shoot Bangladeshis for Ershad. Once they told him that, he knew he was finished. Within a day or two, he worked out with the opposition a constitutional way to resign. (Bangladeshis always find a way to do things by the constitution.) His vice president, Moudud Ahmed resigned. Ershad appointed the opposition's agreed interim President, the chief justice of the supreme court, as the vice president. Then Ershad resigned, and the Chief Justice became acting president.

Q: And he was considered a neutral figure?

MILAM: Yeah. He was a very good man. I got to know him a little bit just after I arrived. This is one of those fortuitous, serendipitous things. We had sent him on an exchange program to the United States. He had been here for two or three months, visited the Supreme Court and other courts and around the country. His English wasn't the greatest, but he was a great man. He was very appreciative of the Americans. We paid his expenses for this trip. But of course, in the usual government style, we sent him a check afterwards for extra expenses. I delivered the check soon after I arrived at post. Wasn't that lucky?

Q: Yes.

MILAM: So I got to know him that way. Then he became acting president, and I swear, I have had very good relations with a lot of presidents over the years, but I think he is the only president I have ever been able to call directly on the telephone and get through immediately. Ershad was arrested a few days later, and with his wife, thrown in jail. There were some things that I didn't approve of. Moudud Ahmed, the vice president who resigned, had to go into hiding. After he went into hiding, his wife and child were in their house when it was invaded by Awami League Goons. They had to take shelter in a shed out back and hide, then they crawl over a wall into their neighbor's house. Their neighbor happened to be an AID officer. He called me the next morning and said he had Moudud's wife and child in his house. I got a van from the Embassy motor pool, put newspaper over the windows, went over to this AID officer's house, and took her and the child to her cousin's house. They were safe and never got harmed. Anyway, the election campaigning started very soon thereafter for an election which was held in February. This was the second part of the oppositions two- point program-- the election. The interim government was there to make sure it was free and fair, and it was. There were a lot of foreign observers including our NDI.

Q: National democratic Institute.

MILAM: And in February the election was held. Everybody expected the Awami League to win big, including the Awami League. Strangely enough, the BNOP won a plurality of the seats. It only won the popular vote by a slim margin, a percentage or two. But Bangladesh copied the British and has a first past the post system, and the way that works is that even as slim popular majority if it widespread can give a party more seats that the percentages of popular vote would indicate. So the BNP had more seats, but not a majority that would allow it to form a government. It had to figure out a way to get a majority. There were 30 seats that were reserved for women and appointed not elected. So it agreed with Jamaat-i-Islami, the major Islamic party to elect 28 BNP women and two Jamaati women. So that gave them with 30 seats and made a majority in the parliament. Now the interesting thing then was they had to decide whether they wanted a parliamentary or a presidential system. BNP had a majority but it didn't have enough seats to pass a constitutional amendment. So it needed the Awami League for a constitutional amendment if they wanted to change the system to Parliamentary. Because they had only received a razor thin margin of the popular vote, they realized that if they went to a presidential election they might lose it. Begum Zia would be the presidential candidate, but she might lose the presidential election. In which case all these lucrative sugar plums called cabinet posts would not be theirs. They would go to the other party. Well, just a minute here. Let's get our priorities straight. So they started thinking about this, and concluded that with a majority in parliament, they would be better off with a Parliamentary system. So driven by something that you wouldn't call principle, they formed a parliamentary committee and worked out a political compromise which probably was the first and last time it has ever been done in Bangladesh. They actually agreed on a constitutional amendment that called for a parliamentary system. One of the provisions she wanted in the parliamentary compromise was the right for the Prime

Minister to appoint to at least 10% of the cabinet openings technical experts who were not who were not elected to parliament. She wanted this because her favorite advisor who had been finance minister under her husband, had not been able to carry his district in Sylhet but she wanted him in her cabinet. Thank God she did, because he was the best thing that ever happened to that government. So she got that provision in the constitutional amendment. This all took four or five or six months, during which nothing got done of any substance by the government.

Q: We are back from lunch. Bill you mentioned before we move on, what about the Gulf War. We are talking about the invasion by Iraq of Kuwait and we were gathering up allies and all this sort of thing.

MILAM: Well I remember yes. I arrived in August as the build up to the war was getting underway. The US was building a coalition. President Ershad, to ingratiate himself to the United States, offered some Bangladeshi troops. They departed to great fanfare sometime toward the end of August. So during all of this turmoil I have just described, the Gulf War was heating up, but the actual hostilities as you recall, didn't start until January 1991, by which time the Ershad government had fallen and the interim government had taken over. The interim government was not there to make any big political decisions. What their proclivities were towards the war I don't know, but in fact they made no move to withdraw the troops or anything. On the first Friday after hostilities broke out, a large crowd came out of a mosque which was about two miles or three miles away from the embassy. This mosque had been built by and was financed by the Iraqis. The Imam or Mullah had whipped up a crowd against the war. I suppose there were a couple of thousand people in this mob, and they had to walk a couple of miles, to get to our section of town. When they arrived at our nice new Inman Embassy they surrounded it but couldn't get over the wall so ended up making threatening noises and throwing their shoes over the fence. A sign of disrespect in the Muslim world.

Q: *It came from the Moslem world.*

MILAM: They threw their shoes over the fence and marched on to the Saudi embassy, which of course was our ally in the war., The Saudi embassy had the misfortune of being just a regular building, pretty close to the street with lots of windows. So the crowd proceeded to break all the windows. They then marched further down the street and came to the American Club, which obviously was one of their targets. They knew where they were going. I had had the foresight to order the club closed a day or two before that. So the club was closed. The Embassy observed the Islamic weekend, so Friday we were off. Normally the club would have been open, but it was closed. There were only a few guards there. The crowd gathered around the club, climbed the fence which wasn't that hard, beat up a guard. The others I think made off to save their skins, and I don't blame them. The crowd did about $20,000 worth of damage to one of the offices, the office where the computers were stored. Either they broke computers or just took them and left. Then I am told, although I did not personally witness this, that the crowd then, or what was left of the crowd headed towards my place, which was very lightly guarded. In retrospect that would have been a big problem because, without my knowing it or even

thinking about it, our kids had invited a number of their friends over on this holiday. Since the club was closed they met at my house. My wife was there watching over them. From the time the crowd left the mosque to the time it got to the club must have been several hours; these are long distances they had to walk. B y then the interim government which had been caught by surprise didn't have police at any of these embassies, didn't have any police near the area where my residence was. But by then, by the time the crowd headed towards my house, they had scrambled a contingent of Border Guards a paramilitary unit, kind of a rough and ready outfit, more undisciplined than the army but also a bit more willing to use force. This unit got to the area just in time to stop the crowd heading for my residence, basically with a few canisters of tear gas. The crowds disappeared fast, and headed toward the Iraqi, which was near the French Embassy. My French colleague swore that the crowd gathered at the Iraqi embassy, and while he was watching it through his window, Iraqi officers were out there passing out money to the crowd. Which doesn't surprise me since Bangladesh often works on what you would call the rent-a-crowd principle. So these crowds were fired up, but primarily by the thought of money. Saddam Hussein became, like in many Muslim countries, a kind of a popular hero for a few days in Bangladesh. The only way that you could tell that is that his face was painted on a number of the rickshaws that ply the streets. But as soon as the war went so badly for him, which didn't take very long, those disappeared. And in fact I have a picture somewhere, of a rickshaw with paintings on it of U.S. Marines and the U.S. flag. Saddam had disappeared, and the U.S. had become the hero.

Q: You were mentioning you wanted to talk about operation angel or something.

MILAM: Sea Angel. The February election was just over. The government hadn't been in power more than a month or two. In April a gigantic cyclone hit the southeastern coast of Bangladesh. Now they get these about once a decade. These cyclones are enormous, and they are really dangerous. This hit near Chittagong, which is southeast 150 or 200 miles from Dhaka. I had been through hurricanes in the West Indies. But they were nothing compared to this cyclone. Of course Bangladesh is an extremely low lying country. There are very high winds and enormous amounts of rain in these cyclones, but the really lethal part is the tidal surge. This cyclone along the Chittagong coast pushed a tidal surge 20 feet over the usual tide level. So the hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis that live on these little islands right off the coast or on very low land along the coast were at enormous risk. The government announced afterward that 130,000 people died in that cyclone, almost all of them in the tidal surge. Some academic work that was done later estimated that the number was closer to 65,000 to 80, 000. Well 60-80,000 is still a lot of people. Not too long this cyclone, hurricane Andrew in Florida caused great damage in Florida. A few people, maybe ten or fifteen or twenty were killed. There was an enormous outcry from Florida about people about governments, you know, federal, state, and local, not being ready for the hurricane. Yet Bangladeshis picked themselves up and went right back to what they were doing. No complaining, just a very resilient kind of response, which is why you have to admire the average Bangladeshi. Fortunately for us, the Gulf war was over, and the troops and the ships were on their way back to home port. We had this interesting dialogue within the embassy between AID and me. I was basically inspired by the military attaché who I thought knew what he was talking about,

and he did actually. AID's response was going to be to spend money the same way they spent money the time before which was to bring in food and temporary shelters, some of which was OK. But I and the military attaché were convinced that wasn't what was needed. In this case, we had tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people stranded out in areas where there was no food, and no water, and no health, sanitation facilities and no medical supplies because they had all been washed away. So what we really needed was to get what you call lift capacity, the capacity to transport goods to stranded people. We had to fight AID all the way on this. And we went to bat with Our two agencies in Washington to try to get the U.S. military in to provide the kind of lift that only it can provide. He worked the Pentagon, and I worked the State Department to try to get one of these naval/marine units that was on its way home from the Gulf War to come help. And we got one. It took a promise from State to reimburse DOD, but a Marine expeditionary unit that was just coming around India on its way to California, was rerouted to Chittagong.

A Marine Major General named Hank Stackpole, assigned to Okinawa, a really fine officer, was put in charge of the entire operation. He arrived as soon as he could get there. The Marines began to arrive from their ships and we had a few other people who came in on other flights and stuff. He put together, working with Bangladeshis a relief operation which was headquartered in Chittagong, not in Dhaka. He established a joint operation in which the Bangladesh Government and military as well as the humanitarian NGOs were an integral part of the planning. It all happened so fast that the new government was caught flat-footed and not sure of how to react. General Stackpole and I spent an afternoon on his first or second day there explaining to a group of suspicious Bangladeshi senior civil servants and military officers the scope and intent of the operation. Some seemed worried about the intentions of the US military, but General Stackpole was the exact opposite of the stereotype US military officer, a soft spoken very persuasive Princeton graduate, and he soon became the most popular man in Bangladesh. He reassured those who seemed suspicious of our honorable intentions and that the marines on shore would not carry weapons. Soon the atmosphere changed to one of smiles and a feeling of welcome relief. After that meeting the General went to work and the operation was a great success, and is celebrated both in Bangladesh and in the US military. It is still held up in the US military as the model of civil/military cooperation in USG rescue operations. General Stackpole's organization plan was a masterpiece. Every day he would meet with the Bangladeshi civil servant responsible for the delivery of food and other needed goods to the Chittagong airport headquarters of the operation, the humanitarian NGOs who we relied on both to tell us where the goods were most needed an to distribute the goods once the US military delivered them, and the marine helicopter dispatchers and naval hover craft dispatchers to plan who would take the relief goods where and when. It was a beautiful thing to behold. In addition to helicopters, the marines had these enormously large hovercraft to take tons of food and other goods inland to stranded populations. Among the most important equipment the Marines brought were water purifying machines. You stick a hose in whatever awful water there is, turn on the machine. It sucks it up, cleans it up and puts it out through another hose as pure drinking water.

Q: Yes, we are talking about something about 12 feet long.

MILAM: Yes, and they are very heavy, and had to be brought in with helicopters in a sling. They put those around where they were needed both in Chittagong and along the coast and on the islands. The food came basically from Pakistani stocks. There was plenty of food on the island. AID had been wrong about that. They gathered medical supplies from the NGO's and the donors like us, and the other countries. There were a lot of other countries that got involved and donated medical supplies and other things including people. The Japanese sent a team I think with a helicopter that they would deliver things with. But you may wonder how did it get named "Operation Sea Angel?" Well the story I heard is that Colin Powell Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was shaving one morning before going to work. He was listening to the radio, and a radio reporter interviewing a Bangladeshi who had escaped the tidal surge inundation asked what the man thought of the Americans? The Bangladeshi responded , "They came like angels form the sea." Powell evidently made up his mind on the spot to give the name Sea Angel to the operation. Sea Angel lasted about a month. After sufficient food, water, and medical supplies were delivered to meet immediate needs, The Marines began also bringing in housing, materials to rebuild victims' houses, and other things needed to rebuild their lives and work. In any case, Sea Angel brought us much good will and how it was conducted was much to our credit. I think probably it got the U.S. more credit in Bangladesh than anything prior to that time in the country's 20-year history.

Q: I am sure it was.

MILAM: And that it took place with a democratically-elected new government just taking power, still trying to get its feet on the ground , helping with the damage from a cyclone the government was totally unprepared for, and didn't have the resources to deal with, was immeasurably helpful to my getting off to an very good start in Bangladesh. But it wasn't the credit we got with the Bangladeshis that was so important. You can't prove it because it is one of those counter factual questions in history, but I think we may have saved about anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000 lives, because those people were scattered about, totally isolated, without food, without water, without medical supplies. A lot of them would have died. That made me proud to be an American.

Q: You know you mention the number 10,000. I wonder if you would talk about family planning, because I would thing this would be particularly you were there during the Bush I administration. Family planning for the United States has always been a very dicey thing because there are strong fundamentalists who don't like family planning. Was that a problem with you?

MILAM: No. It never affected our programs in Bangladesh . Those programs were primarily oriented towards education of women. Not general education, although I would have liked that too, but the education of women as to how you stop having a baby every year or two. And how to use birth control devices to ensure that. By the way we never called it birth control; we called it family planning which I think is one of the ways you

get around some of these objections. In the latter stages of my time there, we were moving towards what they called a social marketing, whereby a Bangladeshi organization markets condoms, at some little price, because they don't want to give them away.

Q: Well one always finds that unless you charge for something they don't get used.

MILAM: Yes, so at some price you find a way to market the condoms, but it is obviously highly subsidized. So we never had a problem with the political anti-family planning folks the United States about family planning. The money continued to come in. In fact, almost routinely at the end of every fiscal year, we would get a cable from Washington wanting to give us leftover funds from other posts or programs for family planning. We always could use them. Now family planning, in my view, doesn't work unless the government is also fully on board and willing, and really means it. A lot of governments may give family planning more lip service that real support. But in the case of Bangladesh, that government was absolutely fully on board. It never had the resources and never really had the capability of doing it by itself, but from the late 70's when Zia Rahman was president of Bangladesh, there had been a political decision that family planning was a vital necessity. Bangladesh couldn't continue to expand the population at the rate it was doing. In the middle 70's population growth was probably close to 3% annually. So the government itself was extremely helpful in all the family planning programs that we had. And I might say we weren't the only organization or government that was involved in family planning. Almost all the bilateral assistance programs had some family planning aspect to them. The World Bank had a family planning program. I don't know about UNDP, but I suspect it must have. There was very good donor coordination on family planning, and coordination with the government. And among other things, one of the necessary things you have to do in a Muslim country is get the Mullahs out of the way because the natural inclination of a Mullah is to oppose family planning. I don't how the government did that because it was done many years before I got there, but they somehow told the Mullahs to back off, that they did. I suspect, and was told by unofficial sources, that there was some transfer of resources from the government to the Mullahs. In other words, they bought them off. So it was a very effective program, and the rate of population growth has come continuously down since the late 70's. When I arrived in 1990 it was still probably 2 ½ percent. But in the last 12 or 15 years it has come down below 2%, according to the Bangladesh government. This probably means that the fertility rate, births per woman per lifetime, is somewhere around two, which is fairly close to the replacement rate. However the infant mortality is still too high. If Bangladesh keeps up this good work, in the next 50 years its population is going to be decreasing again, which is really good news.

Q: Was Islam much of a factor while you were there?

MILAM: No, not very much. It is a much bigger factor now. Bangladeshis are not Pakistanis, so for Bangladesh this increasing piety and Islamic self-aggrandizement is coming much later, but it is coming . This probably explains what happened to the two halves of Pakistan when it was a united country. Bengali Muslims were a much more tolerant culture, certainly in terms of religious inclusivity. That may not be because of the

culture per se, because in fact in other ways, e.g. politically, they are not very tolerant. That is what leads to all the friction and strife in Bangladesh, and the problems they have in governing in a democratic system in which they are now because they don't tolerate the other person's point of view very well, so there are still enormous amounts of friction and strife. We can get into that later if you like. But religiously they were pretty tolerant in my day. I think this probably comes more from the kind of Islam that came to Bangladesh. Their Islam was brought by Sufis. The Sufis are a more mystical, more tolerant, and more syncretic kind of Islam. Among other things, Sufism in Bangladesh incorporated the local customs, including shrines to Saints, and local habits including reverence for "Pirs," religious leaders who stand between the ordinary worshiper and God. This was almost feudal in its characteristics, but it is a religious feudalism, in which the Pirs' sway over a large number of people derives from his being an intermediary between the common man and God. The Sufis were also prominent in what is now Pakistan, but their influence has been overwhelmed by a harder edged, less inclusive bran of Islam. So Islam never was not a factor in Bangladesh when I was there, and did not complicate our work very much. But there were plenty of other factors that made for a shaky situation. The main problem then and now was the political culture. The main idea of do-called democratic politics in Bangladesh is, if you lose an election, you look for the first opportunity to go into the streets and unseat the government with street demonstrations. It is a zero sum culture writ large. Nobody ever thought of trying to unseat the government with better policies. That just doesn't occur to Bangladeshi politicians. So in any case Islam was never a problem. There is a historical problem that was not very visible when I was there: during the war of separation some of the Islamic religious parties did not support the idea of an independent Bangladesh. The main one, the Jamaat-i-Islam, a fundamentalist, but not known as an extremist, party is alleged to have had offshoot groups of assassins who murdered many Bengalis in the pro-independence movement. After the war, the JI was cast into the political darkness for quite some time. It came back in the late 70's and 80's the military rulers of that time sought legitimacy by bonding with the Islamists. They made political alliances with Islamist parties. That was true of Ziaur Rahman and Ershad. It was true of Begum Zia, as I mentioned, when she became prime minister after in 1991. Sheik Hasina has sought such alliances when she judged the political situation called for it. In the context of Pakistan, I have labeled these alliances with Islamists "Faustian Bargains," in other words, deals with the devil. I am sure the Islamist parties would resent this label, but in fact these bargains have actually strengthened the Islamist parties, made them more respectable, acceptable. Given the general tenor of the times we are in, I think Islam is becoming much more of a political factor in Bangladesh than it was simply because Islamism has become more attractive to many Muslims, whether radical or not, all over the Islamic world, and certainly more anti American. But it was not a factor then, and I hardly remember thinking about it.

Q: Well what about were relations with Pakistan, were they important or had their thousand mile separation and all, and also your connection to the embassy in what was it, Rawalpindi?

MILAM: No, Islamabad.

Q: This used to be one of the great stories of the Foreign Service between our consulate general in Dacca and our embassy in West Pakistan. How were things at that time?

MILAM: Of course relations with Pakistan were warmer with a BNP or Ershad government than under an Awami League one. Now I have never been in Bangladesh under an Awami League government. I am just going on things I know from reading. All the time that I was there, the relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh were correct without being warm, cooperative, but neither side has much to offer the other. If anything, the Bengalis, had a lot more to offer Pakistan in terms of intellectual principles. They could have offered the Pakistanis, for example, a method to keep the army out of politics.* Bangladesh managed to do that for 15 years. They could offer the Pakistanis a way to make sure the elections are free and fair and the transition is peaceful, because they have been doing it for 15 years.** And they could offer them a way to develop faster on the social side because they have done so through extensive use of NGOs. Bangladesh really set the example for Pakistan in terms of women's development, social development, family planning. So there are a lot of things Bangladesh could offer

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*This became untrue in 2007 when the Bangladesh Army intervened and threw a BNP government out.**This changed in 2011 when the AL government removed the Caretaker Provision from the constitution.

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Pakistan in terms of just how to run a government or how to run a society, but of course Pakistanis are not the slightest bit interested in learning from Bangladesh or from anybody else.*** But even a BNP government had to tread carefully given the history -- in many ways still an open festering sore because of Pakistani behavior during the war of separation.

Q: Did you have any connection with New Delhi, Islamabad? I mean these are…

MILAM: Well I knew the ambassadors in both places. I had probably had more connection with Delhi because India was really more relevant to Bangladesh , than Pakistan was. I think the only time actions in Islamabad came into play for me was at the opening of hostilities during the Gulf War. In fact the Bureau was pushing me to evacuate the post. I resisted all such thought until that Iraqi mob trashed our club. Then, I called a town meeting to discuss the situation with the entire staff and found that some of the AID families were frightened and wanted to leave. So I finally agreed to declare a voluntary evacuation. Those who wanted to leave could. I think about eight AID families left over the next few days. But the great majority of my staff were dead set against evacuation, feeling that we were safe now that the interim government had its act together. The voluntary evacuation was to ensure those who were frightened wouldn't be spreading fear among the other parts of the embassy. There was no reason to be frightened as the new government had over reacted after it was so surprised by that one mob incident. It put so many guards around American installations you could barely get out and in. I had a whole company of the BDR in front of my house, complete with tents and all their bivouac equipment. But since we were feeding them, they were happy and the

government was happy. Except for Dhaka, and I suppose Malaysia and Indonesia, our embassies in the rest of the Muslim world were being evacuated, including Islamabad. There was enormous pressure on me from the NEA Bureau (Bangladesh, and all of South
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***This may still be true in 2015, but the difference is closing fast.

Asia, was a part of the NEA Bureau at the time) to take the next step which was to declare mandatory evacuation. I refused to do it. The rest of this is hearsay; I only heard about it, never saw the documents. So I don't know again how true it is. I was told that a memo went from NEA to the seventh floor, to Under Secretary Eagleburger that recommended that, over my objections, a mandatory evacuation be imposed. And I was told that the Diplomatic Security Bureau, bless it's soul, put on a paragraph saying he had the authority to do this, but that it would be unprecedented to overrule a Chief of Mission on this. And Eagleburger didn't. So we avoided mandatory evacuation, and that is always a mess. I have done it twice since then, and I hate it. So the only action Islamabad ever took that bothered us was to evacuate and inspire NEA to try to impose it on us too.

Q: Clark?

MILAM: Bill Clark was the Ambassador to India when I came to Dhaka, and his successor was Tom Pickering. Other than Bill's ambition to get an NEA Chiefs of Mission conference, which never happened (because of lack of funds I understood), I had little communication with either.

Q: On the cultural side, was there an overlap from that Bengali culture you know poetry. I mean which is sort of the Indian culture center is in Bengal. I was wondering whether that influenced, was Bangladesh sort of the poor cousin and things.

MILAM: Well the Bangladeshis are very proud of their cultural heritage that Bengalis have, and think of themselves as the poets, songwriters, singers, and historians of South Asia. They have the dominant literary heritage of the region. They are very proud of their language. They are proud of the fact that a Bengali, the Hindu polymath Rabindranath Tagore received the Nobel Prize for Literature 1913, I think. Their national anthem is a song that Tagore wrote. And so is India's. So they are very proud of that. We had a very good USIS office in Dacca, really first rate, run by an old south Asia hand named Ray Peppers He had two or three younger officers working for him, and they were really a whale of a team. But they emphasized the literary heritage of the Bengalis in their programs, and used that to get people interested in the literary heritage of America. We brought a stage group on a USIS tour, and they put on Driving Miss Daisy which you could do because it wasn't hard to follow the English. The theater was absolutely jam packed every night they were there. Even western music, and of course Bengali music, was very popular. The Bengalis consider themselves the musicians of South Asia. We brought in a classical pianist. He was a sell out where ever he went. We brought in classical guitarists. I mean we just had a great time there culturally. The only thing that didn't go over very well was American films. They were too accustomed to Bollywood films.

Q: Well what about '90 to '93, things were changing in the way we conducted relations, or maybe they hadn't changed much. I am thinking about communications, Washington, you know, E-mail, internet, phone connections. Was this changing?

MILAM: No. I guess the communications revolution came to Bangladesh after I left. I just want to speak of one thing more, that is to point out that one of the things that made Bangladesh a remarkable experience for me was this great movement right at the beginning of my tour that overthrew a quasi-military dictator. To me, this was a people's revolution that eventually brought partial democracy. We thought it was full democracy for awhile, but clearly it was an electoral democracy without some of the foundations of real democracy. Remember this was late 1990 and early 199; the Berlin Wall had fallen only a year and a half earlier. . The Soviet Union collapsed a few months afterwards. I felt as if I was part of the great revolution that was occurring in the world where these dictatorial, repressive regimes were being thrown out and people were taking control of their own lives. Now that is more of an abstraction. When you look at the reality, it wasn't quite that clear. You know the political parties were taking control of the country and they weren't necessarily responsible to the people. But it was a heady feeling. I felt really part of a revolution, at least a witness to a revolution. I think that there was a period of time in the early days, right when Ershad fell, and afterwards for three or four months, during the election and the early period of the parliament, when Bangladeshis felt the same way. That is probably what led to that compromise I mentioned earlier on the parliamentary versus the presidential system. They were able to work out a compromise in a democratic fashion through a committee of representatives from every party that they never have been able to do since and were never able to do before. There was just a feeling in the air of let's get on with it. Let's get on with running our own lives. I will never forget that the day after Ershad fell. His resignation was announced fairly late in the evening on an evening. The next day, the entire diplomatic corps was summoned to meet the new interim President. We had to go into the middle of the downtown to the presidential palace. As we get closer to the center of town, suddenly we saw enormous crowds. There must have been hundreds of thousands of people out on the streets. You know, your first reaction is wait a minute; what am I getting in to. But like the Red Sea for Moses, the crowds parted. We crept along at 10 or 15 miles an hour so as not to hit anybody. The crowds were only a few feet away from my car, even closer at times, and there was an enormous number of people. I think there must have been half a million people in the streets, maybe more, I don't know. We went between this sea of people for a long way. They were all very happy, and they were flashing victory signs and thumbs up and if they recognized the flag. The other thing that struck me about it was I didn't see anybody that looked over 25 years old. They were all young. It made us all feel young.

Q: The participation in…

MILAM: Well participation to a very limited extent, but certainly witness to something that might have been small in terms of the history of the world or even the history of those few years of the world, but important for me to see. I wasn't present when the Berlin Wall came down. I wasn't witness to the implosion of the Soviet Union or any of

rise of the Eastern Europe our parents and grandparents knew, an independent Eastern Europe. But I was close hand witness and actually involved to some extent in this peoples' revolution; to the Bangladeshis gaining their freedom, and their respect. So I felt pretty good about that. I still look back on Bangladesh as the best assignment I ever had.

Q: Well then when did you leave Bangladesh?

MILAM: In October, 1993.

Q: Whither?

MILAM: I went back to Washington. I had not tried very hard to get an onward ambassadorial assignment, partially because after the 1992 US election there was an entire new set of political leaders in Washington, and I didn't know them or were to start. And there was another complicating factor. I had been offered a Diplomat in Residence position that covered both the University of New Mexico and New Mexico State University. I was going to o accept it, and then it turned out that my successor in Bangladesh failed to get confirmed before the summer recess , and I was asked to stay on until he got closer to confirmation.

Q: What was the problem?

MILAM: I have no idea. I don't believe it was political because he was a career officer from AID. He actually didn't get confirmed until about March of 1994. I took a long home leave in the summer of 2003 and went back to Dhaka for about three months. I guess I could have stayed longer but in the meantime I had landed a temporary job that I sounded like fun, so I left in late October. Eleanor Constable had been named Assistant Secretary for Oceans, Environment, and Science (OES). After I knew that I would not be leaving post in time to take up the Diplomat in Residence position, I talked to her and she said she could put me into something called a Y assignment, which must mean an over-complement position that counts as regular assignment. I needed this to avoid the Foreign Service Act provision that ambassadors, who have become political appointees must be re-employed within 90 days of leaving their former position or resign. I was having great fun in Bangladesh. I was in no hurry to leave. But Elinor had a specific job in mind for me, and she pressed me to come and start it, so in October I decided I better come back to Washington.

Q: October, '93.

MILAM: October, '93. Elinor wanted me to be the utility infielder, with the title of Special Negotiator for the Environment. For the first year, it was a great job. I really enjoyed it. For the second year, it was a lousy job.

Q: What does this mean?

MILAM: Well for me it meant she wanted me to work on a couple of things that she felt were important enough to get special attention. I was to pick up on some of the environmental negotiations that were underway but not getting that attention because they had so many negotiations going on that they couldn't cover them all. Or if they did cover them all, some poor office director was gone 90% of the time. The original thought was that my main task was to cover the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), a UN commission which had a very splashy meeting every year in New York. It met in two- week session in the Spring with environmental ministers and every environmental NGO imaginable. I was to be the working leader of the delegation until the Ministers showed up, and lead the US delegations to the many preliminary meetings required to get Ministerial wired for decisions. In fact, Elinor wanted me back for preparatory CSD meeting in Colombia scheduled for early November.

Q: Bogotá?

MILAM: No, Cartagena. A wonderful city, by the way. I came back in time to go. That is my only touchdown on the continent of South America. I have never been there otherwise. When I arrived in OES, I asked Eleanor if I could also do the desertification treaty negotiations which I was very interested in. She said she had assigned it to Bob Pringle, and he had already done o a couple of negotiation meetings. I was disappointed, but didn't press it further and carried on with CSD. In December I was in New York for another preliminary meeting for the CSD when a call came saying that poor Bob Pringle had been told by his doctors he had have a quadruple bypass surgery. So his days leading the US in the desertification treaty negotiations were over. I was told I had to take that over too.

Q: Well then we will move on to desertification. Tell me what that means first.

MILAM: Well that dies not mean eating strawberries and ice cream. Desertification is the process in which land slowly transforms from green fertile land to desert. It does this when rainfall stops and quite often when vegetation is chopped down by farmers. In fact, we had desertification problems in the United States. There are people who deal with desertification in the south west of the United States.

Q: Well the dust bowl.

MILAM: Well yes, the dust bowl would be a good example. But it is a phenomenon that strikes in a lot of parts of the world but it is particularly rampant in Africa.

Q: From our perspective today, is this seen as an irreversible…

MILAM: No, it is not irreversible. Otherwise our treaty wouldn't have made any sense. The history of this treaty is that during the 1992 Rio Environmental Summit Conference, with all the heads of government there, in order to get African agreement on something he deemed very important, President George H. W. Bush promised the Africans that the US would push also for a treaty that dealt with their primary environmental problem,

desertification. The Africans wanted this treaty. We wanted it because we promised them we would work for it. The Europeans wanted it because they have a great interest in helping Africa. The rest of the third world didn't care a fig about it. I became very interested in this problem and really enjoyed the treaty negotiations. I found this much more meaningful than the CSD, which was just a lot of flim flam, giving the green NGOS and the political leaders who played to them the chance to enhance their green image. I focused on desertification. That caused me some trouble later on, but we'll get to that later. My work on desertification started quickly as there had been several rounds of the negotiations before I took over. Not very many days after started, and was still reading in, I had to go to Stockholm for a meeting of the major donor for a strategy session. The UN-appointed chairman of the negotiations was a senior Swedish diplomat, Bo Kjellén, who was an excellent at finding solutions to impasses and keeping the negotiations on track and on time. Soon after, I went to the OECD in Paris for another meeting if the industrial countries. Soon I was spending most of my time on this treaty and a lot of time on the road. We had a very long session in Geneva, 5-6 weeks later, and more strategy meetings before the final meeting in Paris. The final meeting took place in Paris in the summer of 1994. This concentration on desertification proved to be somewhat controversial in OES as some of my colleagues thought the treaty was a sideshow although Elinor backed me all the way. I shall get to the fallout on this later.

Q: What were we saying we would do? I take it we were going to give aid?

MILAM: It was an interesting treaty because it was, we were setting up a mechanism by which development assistance agencies could and would coordinate their efforts to try to stop desertification and work together to rescue some of the land. There are some regional organizations in Africa that we were doing something similar on a regional basis, but none which covered the entire continent, let alone the rest of the developing world. The major voices of the South, however, those countries who usually took it upon themselves to speak for the South in the North/South dialogue, India and Brazil, in particular, were not much interested in the treaty except to make it into some sort of a vehicle for the automatic transfer of resources from the first world to the third world. That was anathema to the industrial countries. That is where the battle joined. While we wanted this treaty in workable form for the Africans, we weren't about to give in on a financial transfer. In the end, we got an agreement for a good treaty, and almost pulled off an even bigger coup -- we almost split the G-77. I thought for a while in the tense final hours that the India/Brazil group might try to get the G-77 to walk away, and I was quite sure that the Africans would split from them if that happened. The India/Brazil group went along at the last minute to avoid that split. Now I want to take the story several years out, before we return to the rest of my OES tour. Can I take a leap?

Q: Absolutely.

MILAM: I returned to Washington after the treaty was agreed, really proud of this accomplishment and I immediately asked the OES leadership, to begin with L to do the necessary to send it to the Senate for ratification. Except for Elinor, all of them were political appointees. They and our counterparts at EPA told me that the treaty would

never go to the Senate for ratification. Since the Senate, at that point, was hostile to environmental treaties, the administration was not going to waste its flimsy political clout on the desertification a treaty when it was committed to pursue global warming treaty (which was far from settled then). That was the priority environmental treaty and, it didn't want to overload the circuits with any others, agreed or not. I argued, to no avail that the global warming treaty had no chance of getting Senate ratification, but these were true believers who rejected any such argument. This was some disappointment to me at the time, but there more to come. Leaping ahead 3 years, when I was again in Liberia (more on that later), I attended an African Bureau Chiefs of Mission meeting in November 1997. Assistant Secretary Susan Rice and the other leaders of the bureau were wringing their hands in desperation, saying President Clinton is going to Africa in January and we need some deliverables. (Deliverables are the goodies we can give them, a new assistance program, more resource transfer, or anything like that. Presidents like to bring deliverables along on their visits abroad.) But the Bureau was out of money and nobody knew quite what to do re deliverables. There was this crashing silence. I raised my hand and I said: "Susan, why don't we have the President promise that he will send the desertification treaty up to the senate for ratification." The enormously long silence that followed made me think that it might be a really bad idea. But it turned out that he silence was because none of those Africanists had ever heard of the treaty. So what it was and that we had done specifically at African request but then decided never to ratify it. Susan really liked the idea. She ran it by the White House a few days later, and the White House really liked the idea. My involvement in this ended at this point, but I did inquire about it occasionally. I was told that the guys OES fought it tooth and nail as did EPA, but the White House liked the idea and the President announce it in Botswana to great accolades from the Africans.

Q: Why would anybody hate the idea?

MILAM: Because they really didn't believe the treaty was worth the political effort, and they were determined to get a global warming treaty through the Senate. In 1997 they still didn't have a global warming treaty, (called the Kyoto Protocol) which was not agreed in December of that year. The administration's last minute effort just as it was leaving office to get the Kyoto Protocol ratified was a miserable failure, as most of the realists thought it would be.

Q: This is when Republicans took over and it was on…

MILAM: So the end of the story is that the President took the desertification treaty to Africa as a deliverable. It took about a year of fiddling around, but lo and behold, to the surprise of all my former colleagues in OES, the Senate ratified it. So I think I have some bragging rights here-- not only did I negotiate a solid desertification treaty on its merits, but that treaty is the only environment treaty the Senate has ever ratified. But now back to 1994/95 which was the bad year in OES. While this gratifying drama on the desertification treaty played out, I came a cropper of Under Secretary Worth because I prioritized the desertification treaty over his pet poodle, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). I ran the US delegation in the April two-week meeting until he and

the EPA director arrive for the last couple of days. He didn't like the way I ran the delegation, in particular I think that many of the NGO reps and the other agency members of the delegation thought I should not have followed instructions from Washington on voting so rigidly. In any case, he removed me from the CSD, which didn't hurt my feelings much, but meant that I was not fully employed after the desertification negotiations concluded in July. Well that is not quite true. Eleanor who was still on my side until she got fired later on, used me for awhile as the interim DAS for Science until a new political appointee arrived. She also put me in charge of the delegation that went to Nairobi for the Montreal Protocol meetings. This is the international agreement to protect ozone layer. So I was headed that delegation, and I learned a lot about the Montreal Protocol. I went out to Kenya two or three times including for a board of governors meeting, at which I was basically the head of delegation. Although we had again, a one day visit by a political appointee at the end, when the final deal was cut, she was out shopping. I cut the deal.

Q: Probably just as well.

MILAM: I spent much of my time for the 1994/95 year working on management initiatives that were extra-curricular to OES but kept me interested and active. They were called re-engineering initiatives, and were run by the management bureau. These began in the fall of 1994. Elinor asked me if I would like to go to the early meetings and represent the bureau. I became so interested that I volunteered to be on task forces that were being set up. They set up five or six task forces. One of them was called stakeholders, constituents and stakeholders. I volunteered to be on that task force. The idea was to find out what the stakeholders and constituents of the State Department wanted from the Department in terms of services and cooperation. The task force began as a kind of anarchy, and I ended up chairing it. Although I hadn't anticipated that nor had I wanted it really, everybody else on it had a day job in which they actually had to work, and I had a day job in which I didn't have much to do except once in awhile go off to Nairobi. Who are these stakeholders and constituents? There is a long list: it starts with other agencies which have some hand in foreign relations -- AID, Treasury, Commerce, CIA, EPA, FBI, DOD, and a number of others; the business community and all the business organizations who deal with international business; the Congress, particularly the staffs of the various committees that deal with aspects of foreign affairs; NGOs of every variety, humanitarian, environmental, etc.; and more. Our task, which seemed rather overwhelming at first to the 8 or 9 of on the task force, was go and find out what these stakeholders and constituents wanted from the State Department to do. We divided u[p the all the stakeholder and constituent elements we could think of, and I think we eight or nine interviewed about 20 or 25 people apiece, in other words about 250 people. I set myself out to interview people that I already knew in government. It is easier to do people you know as long as they will be honest with you. I remember for example, I had worked off and on for a lot of my career with the treasury, so I did people at the international side of the treasury. I did a lot of the environmental NGO's because I had been working with those just in the recent past. I did some of the international business community because I knew them from EB days, and others This took several months, and we met once a week to see where each of us stood. We put together a report which was a

coherent summary of what everybody in our group had found. And it turned out that I was the only person on the task force who had time to write a detailed account of our findings and our conclusions. The essence of our findings, unsurprising when you think about it, was that our constituents and stakeholders wanted the State Department to do what the State Department does best, they wanted State to be the information worker of the government. They wanted reporting and analysis from us to provide the insights and understanding of countries and regions, on the issues foreign policy issues that concerned them. Let me put it another way; what they wanted from the State Department was knowledge and expertise. Each of the task forces presented a report to a group of assistant and undersecretaries. When our turn came it was the Under Secretary of Economic Affairs, Joan Spiro, who chaired the meeting that we gave our report to. I limited my presentation to about 15 minutes, which was minimal time to crowd in all the data we had uncovered. After I presented our conclusions, which in summary were that we should do what we were doing, but do it better, there was a resounding silence. Then Under Secretary Spiro said something to the effect that it was an interesting report but not quite what they were looking for. And that was the end of it -- no discussion, no questions, nothing. The report just hung there over the meeting like a fog. I figured out later what they were looking for--a report that said what other people want from the State Department is for us to be the administrative platform for their operations overseas. But that wasn't what we heard from our stakeholders and constituents. That was the straw that broke the camel's back of that re-engineering exercise.

Q: I presume to make sure they came to a…

MILAM: Yes, lets make sure we come to the right conclusion. So we were told the secretary had looked at the different reports and had said these weren't what he wanted. So we started over again.

Q: Who was Secretary?

MILAM: Warren Christopher. And Strobe Talbot was the deputy secretary. The undersecretary for management was Richard Moose. They decided to put a whole new effort together, renamed it, and called in John Wolf who was ambassador to Malaysia, and one of my closest friends to run the new initiative. Again they formed a bunch of working groups. These working groups were to come up with recommendations on streamlining the Department. They were very innovative recommendations. I was on the working group that looked at reporting and recommended quite a few periodic reports that has outlived their usefulness, given the wealth of data not available on line. John fought hard for them and got turned down. He felt very burned. He had left Malaysia early to do this, and nothing came of it. It was a big bust. Months of hard work and very good idea were basically thrown away. Most of our recommendations on reducing the reporting load was accepted, but it was a throw-away. There was nothing innovative about it. The innovative working groups got nowhere.

Q: Was this reflective of often how the government works? The top people want something to just reinforce the way they have been going, and they don't want to sort of take a look and…

MILAM: Oh I guess this is probably quite usual. It is just that I had always hoped that such projects were undertaken with an open mind. That was pretty naive. I suspect they had a certain model for the state department in mind. This model was basically based on the view that the overseas posts should be cut down dramatically in terms of State Department personnel, and serve as a platform for other agencies. As I said, constituents and stakeholders had no such view at all. They didn't want to be overseas. They wanted us to be telling them what was going on.

Q: So you finished this good year bad year. What happened at the end of the bad year?

MILAM: Well you k now, Eleanor got fired. She was the only reason I had stayed on. Actually I really thought of getting out of OES in the summer of '94, but Eleanor was still there, and she still had some things she wanted me to do. I got interested in these management things, so I just hung on. But in the Spring of '95, she got fired, and I began to think hard about getting out of OES. About that time, I ran into a friend of mine who was in the inspection bureau. We were talking and I said I was going to be looking for a another job soon. He suggested I come to the inspection corps. I said I would think about it. Soon after, I was visited by different people from the inspection corps, who came to try and recruit me. I didn't have a lot of other prospects actually, so I agreed. There were, of course, the formalities. I actually had to bid on the job, so I dropped by Personnel and submitted a bid for the senior inspector job. After a few weeks, I switched to the inspection corps. That meant I was working out in Rosslyn their offices were located. I was going to two inspections teams and the first was to be Brazil. It was still about 6-8 weeks off , but I actually started working on the preparations. By the time I actually arrived in the Inspectors' office, there had been a big change. I knew that I would not be there long. Just before I left OES, Dane Smith in the African Bureau called to ask if I would be interested in going as chief of mission to Liberia. .

Q: I was talking to Dane yesterday.

MILAM: Dane is an old friend. I have known him since my days in AF in the 6os. The way Dane put his question, I really felt kind of honored. I know he had heard that I was at loose ends, and he said, "Bill, I really didn't expect to even be talking to somebody like you, but I heard you might be willing to go to Liberia." I responded positively and was immediately plugged in as Chief of Mission in Liberia. I had been worried that I was never going to get overseas again, so I jumped at the chance. Also I jumped at it because I had been in Liberia as you know. I had followed Liberia's trials and tribulations and knew it was in terrible shape because of the war. So I was interested even before I knew it was available. I believe the story of why it came up so fast and at a very inopportune time is that the war was at such a stalemate that the Bureau had decided not to fill the Chief O Mission position after Bill Twaddell, who was there from 1992 to summer 1995, had departed post. Then suddenly there was a breakthrough, or what seemed to be one,

and the peace process was restarted. AF suddenly decided that there had to be a chief of mission in Monrovia, and there were not available senior officers they wanted. Then my name popped up. So I had been in the inspection corps about three weeks I think when I had to go in and tell them that I was probably going to be jerked out and sent to Liberia. They were actually not unhappy. Not because they wanted to get rid of me, but because the inspection corps always likes to see its people -- even those who stay only a few weeks--go into chief of mission jobs. So I was told. Anyway they did not complain and I helped recruit the guy who took over my inspection team so everybody was happy. The D committee took its time approving me, but this was just because it had scheduling problems.

Q: The D committee is the…

MILAM: I am sorry. It is the committee chaired by the deputy secretary who is in department parlance called "D". And he chairs this committee of undersecretaries and the director general and so forth which picks chiefs of mission. They kept postponing their meeting, so therefore I did not become the official selection for several weeks after I informed the inspectors that I was leaving. The inspectors got real nervous because if I didn't leave, they had a problem about who would lead the Brazil inspection as I was encumbering the position. Either I would have to lead it or somebody else had to lead it. They started talking about setting a deadline for the D committee. If I hadn't heard by a certain date, I should go to Brazil. I was not indifferent to this so I called the African bureau and said the inspectors might force me to go to Brazil. The inspector general's office got a call not from the African bureau but from the chief assistant to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs telling them not to send Milam on the Brazil inspection no matter what. I was in the inspection corps about six weeks before the D committee finally acted. Now let me explain why I was called Chief of Mission instead of Ambassador. All Ambassadors are called chief of mission in personnel documents, but an Ambassador has to be confirmed by the Senate and since we did not recognize the government there was no need to send a full-fledged, confirmed Ambassador. The same thing was true at that same time in Belgrade where we also did not recognize the government. We had a chief of mission there, but not an ambassador. If you don't recognize a government, you usually have somebody who was a chief of mission. It was an Ambassadorial position in everything except name. Everybody called me ambassador. None the less, I was a little uncomfortable with this, and I raised it with the Assistant Secretary for AF, George Moose, before I went out, who assured me that if the peace process was serious they AF would want to recognize the government and I would have to go through the confirmation process. Unfortunately the peace process was not serious, and I will get into that later.

Q: That was November of '95.

MILAM: Yes, early November of '95. I spent about 2 or 3 weeks on consultation after I left the inspection corps, sitting in AF and trying to prepare myself for Liberia. Also there was a UN meeting on Liberia in New York that they wanted me to go to. So I went to that meeting, and then I went via Brussels and arrived in Monrovia in November.

Q: Did you go with your family?

MILAM: No, families were not allowed. My children by '95, were in college. But you could not take a wife unless she was an embassy employee. So no I did not.

Q: You got there in November of '95. What was the situation in Liberia?

MILAM: Bad. The situation is generally bad in Liberia. Liberia had a war since 1989. That was the 6th year of the war. The war had been sporadic or I should say episodic.

Q: This was a civil war.

MILAM: Yes. You see, how much Liberian history do you want? You want the five minute thumbnail sketch?

Q: The five minute thumbnail one as it pertains to this period, because I am thinking people will be picking up other Liberian history if they want, but as it impacted on you when you got there.

MILAM: Well, Liberia had had a history of instability for by the time I got there about 15 or 16 years. There had been a coup of army sergeants in 1980, Samuel Doe coup we spoke of earlier. That was a terrible government. There had been a counter coup in 1985. At the end of 1989 Charles Taylor led a ragtag invasion force into Liberia to try to overthrow the Doe government. Doe was killed, and the West African regional grouping called ECOWAS had intervened to stop the fighting. With the Peacekeeping force in place, Taylor was never able to take Monrovia, he controlled at one point most of the rest of Liberia. His success at self-enrichment while in control of territory inspired other rebel factions to rise up and soon there were 3 or 4 factions in control of the territory outside Monrovia from which they were taking resources. There was an interim government in Monrovia, which was about all it controlled, with the support of the West African Peace Keeping force called ECOMOG. Their troop strength was never much beyond three to five thousand. By the time I arrived, ECOMOG had been there for five years. A Nigerian general was in charge, and had mostly Nigerian troops. The Nigerians were not very good or well trained. A UN brokered ceasefire, had restarted a peace process which was sputtering. It involved an interim government run by a council consisting of the three major war lords, a civil society politician held over, and finally a supposedly neutral chairman, a grand old man. When I got there, the chairman was William Sankawulo, who was supposedly a poet and writer. But to my knowledge he had never written anything, either prose or poetry. He was enormously big and heavy, spent most of his time eating and drinking.

Q: We will just finish this part.

MILAM: Monrovia had been before 1990 the largest American embassy in sub Saharan Africa, well over 300 direct hire people. As I mentioned, when describing my previous

tour in Monrovia, a lot of them were not State. It had been had a listening post for NSA, and VOA transmission site for VOA, and was quite a large post. And it was a very comfortable post, lots of good housing, good school, etc. But by the time I arrived in November 1995, all that was gone. Much of USG property, the VOA site, the USAID building, etc was derelict and often occupied by refugees from the countryside who had fled the countryside for the safety of Monrovia. I visited many of these sites over the time I was there. There remained a very good embassy building and compound, which had been expanded by taking over the British Embassy compound which was right next to it, and a housing compound across the street, called Graystone. By the summer of 1990, the war was in the Monrovia suburbs. Most of the post personnel, certainly those of VOA, NSA, and USAID had to be evacuated. This occurred with the help of U.S. Marines who had come by ship and guarded the embassy from being overrun by during the fighting. The embassy carried on after that crisis abated, but with a much reduced staff. When Taylor's onslaught was stopped short of taking Monrovia in the Fall of 1990, the African intervention forces got a peace process going, but Taylor was not really serious about it and was waiting to rebuild his forces and try again. He tried to force the issue again in 1992, and the Embassy was evacuated again, again with the help of U.S. Marines. The second time around, families were not permitted. Monrovia became a danger pay post. The peace process was restored, but by then the post was down to about 35 or 40 people. I must add her, however, that by the standards of many of the African posts, 35 or 40 American employees seemed a lot, because some posts only had 10 or 15 people.

Q: So we will pick this up, you talked about the size of the embassy and the situation leading up, but we are going to really go to '95 when you arrived there. What was happening on the ground? What did you see as your problems? What sort of things were you carrying with you from Washington., and then developments Bill in the first pace you are in Liberia from…

MILAM: November '95, early November until August of 1998.

Q: That is a long time to be in Liberia.

MILAM: Well it was a typical 3-year chief of mission tour. And I didn't even finish up three years.

Q: We will come back on that. So it was '95 to '98. What was the situation on the ground when you arrived? What were you dealing with?

MILAM: I was dealing with an interim government that had been created by the cease fire negotiations that had gone on during the last several years. Actually this was the third iteration of an interim government since the cease fire of the mid 90's. The new interim government I came upon was relatively new. As I mentioned, the Chairman of the provisional council that supposedly ran the government had just been elected not too long before I was assigned to Liberia. I think his primary quality that got him the election was his naiveté, and willingness to dance to the tune of those with the money. And Charles Taylor had the money. He was enormously hungry all the time, for food, booze and

resources that he could put in his pocket. At one point I had to deal with his request to be poet in residence at the University of Kansas. I dutifully forwarded the request and could hear the laughter all the way from Kansas. The "provisional council" made up of 3 warlords ,Charles Taylor, George Boley, and Alhaji Kromah, a civilian politician who was supposed to represent all of civil society, but in fact mainly represented the interests of those who had served the DOE government, and a tribal Chief who represented the indigenous peoples who had suffered most in this vicious war. This government could not have agreed on the time of day and was totally incapable of governing. The warlords mainly fought among themselves, at this point not with guns and bullets but simply words and threats, while the other two sat and hoped for someone to save them. Monrovia, the capital city, was devastated. It looked almost as if it had been situated in 1945 Germany. There were a lot of buildings that had been shot up or blown up. The roofs were off most buildings. Tens of thousands of people were living in the streets, or if they were lucky, in these totally unlivable buildings. Monrovia was very crowded because as the countryside had been emptied of people who fled the war. It was very sad. I guess this sort of devastation is typical of most civil conflicts, and Liberia was a stark example that it is the poor people who mainly suffer. The warlords and their fighters may get shot once in a while, may die occasionally, but because they have guns and because they have an attitude that they deserve all the resources that they can find, they take most of the available food and shelter, and the good things in life. Quite a lot of them like Taylor are able to put plenty of money away or use it to buy more guns. But the poor people just take it on the chin. So there was terrible humanitarian situation which the United States government stepped up to the plate on. We were providing half a billion dollars of food a year to those displaced, stricken Liberians. Our aid when I arrived there was almost totally food aid.

Q: You mentioned something about peacekeeping, but you might want…

MILAM: The Economic Cooperation Organization of West African States (ECOWAS) is the regional organization which started out as primarily economic grouping of West African states. It was supposed to foster trade and economic cooperation between the 15 or so States of West Africa, but economically it had never gotten past the starting point. There is no integration, there are no liberalized trade regimes, no real cooperation. It has slowly become more of a political than an economic organization. Sometime in the Spring of ECOWAS decided, probably encouraged by the United States and the West, to undertake its own peace keeping initiative. They called it ECOMOG. I think it was clear that we weren't going to do it, so they put together a peace keeping force which landed in Liberia in August, 1990, just in time to be complicit in the butchery that attended the capture of Sergeant Doe by a spin-off from Taylor's faction. By complicit, I don't mean it was voluntary, but happened inadvertently because they had screwed up and neglected to provide the decent security for Doe who was visiting their headquarters. The ECOMOG force on the ground stood between Taylor and the interim government and, in theory, also between Taylor and the other factions. The peace keeping force which was supposed to be multinational and include a number of West African contingents was, in fact, primarily Nigerian. The commanding general was a Nigerian. And I am afraid this made a difference because the Nigerians had chosen sides. After this new interim

government had been put together, the U.S. made a decision to be more active in helping the peace keeping force keep the peace and in helping the UN and ECOWAS to try to reach a peace agreement, not only a peace agreement but a an agreement that would allow for elections install a regular government. This started in October of 1995, when I was still in Washington. At the UN conference I mentioned earlier, we pledged $10 million to help with the peacekeeping, which was, I think, the entirety of the available money the African Bureau had for such things that fiscal year. I attended the Conference with the Director of the Office of West African Affairs, also then the special envoy to Liberia, Dane Smith, who I also mentioned at the beginning of this section.

Q: Oh yeah. I am interviewing Dane.

MILAM: Yes. Well I hope you ask him about this too. Before the conference, Dane and I had gone over to the White House to see the then-National Security Advisor for Africa, Susan Rice. She was very interested in bringing peace and resolution to the Liberian crisis. Before Dane and I left for Susan's office, we went to see AF Assistant Secretary George Moose who said we could pledge $2million at the conference. She asked how much money did we have to pledge at the conference, and Dane responded that George had said we could pledge $2 million out of the ten million he has. Susan said that was not good enough. So she picked up the phone and called George and got right through, and she said and this is an exact quote, "George, I want the whole ten." There was some apparent hemming and hawing and then he gave up. So we had ten million to help with peace keeping. We then, when I arrived the idea was to find ways to help ECOMOG. One thing that was soon clear: ECOMOG had no transport. If they went somewhere they had to walk. So the first thing we did for them was to try to find transport. First, as a short term interim measure, we actually a fleet local trucks that they could move troops around in if they needed to. The General wasn't terribly pleased with that because he didn't like getting around in rusty African trucks. He wanted his troops to be in spotless new military trucks that in fact he could take back to Nigeria and sell, which he probably did. The second part of the operation was to find some surplus U.S. military trucks that we could bring down from Europe because we knew, or we thought we knew, that the US had this enormous military storage area somewhere in Italy in which there were thousands of trucks sitting around. So we found as many as we could afford and brought them down, It took months to do this. It was not like an overnight operation. And we had to reimburse the military, which was the rest of the ten million. We got them on a ship. Unfortunately they did not arrive until after breakdown of the ceasefire and the resumption of hostilities in April of '96. But they got there finally. So we were helping ECOMOG be a better peacekeeper and we were feeding the bulk of the Liberian population. Theses were things my staff could do for the most part. My job, theoretically, was to try to help the UN and ECOWAS to move the peace process along, which meant talking to the Liberians to try to get the warlords to agree on certain political things. It also meant working closely with the ECOWAS representative there (a Ghanaian with whom I formed a close relationship) on the political and military side to help them with the Liberians, and the UN political leadership as (a Tanzanian SRSG) as well as the 80 or 90 UN military observers. They were unarmed, blue helmets. With the Liberians we leaned on the relationship we had with the country for over 100 years, on the money we

had for peacekeeping, and on our very extensive food programs to bring what little public pressure that could be brought on the warlords. There continued to be sporadic outbreaks of violence here and there, but the general peace lasted until April although the tension grew from the early part of the year. Madeline Albright, then US perm rep at the UN this came for one-day visit in January, 1996, I had been there only two months. Susan Rice came with her along with Prudence Bushnell who was Principal Deputy in AF. Security would only let them stay from dawn to dusk, and I think the scramble to get on the Defense Attaché's 7-seater plane was intense, in part because several secret service officers had to come with her. Tom Friedman from the NY Times came also, but he may have been on a different flight.

Q: He was a columnist for the New York Times.

MILAM: Indeed, he still is. By January the political situation had become very tense, and there had been at least one outbreak of violence that lasted for about a week. The troops involved belonged to a faction that was not represented on the Council and appeared to be made up mainly of the Krahn tribe. (Samuel Doe had been a Krahn, and had made his tribe the beneficiary of much benevolence when he took over the government in 1980.) The leader of this Krahn group, not the only Krahn group in the mi, was another war lord named Roosevelt Johnson. People think these wars were tribal, and in sometimes they were to all intents and purposes. However, my strong view is that the basic cause is that that they are fights over resources. In many cases you get alliances of tribes, but always of people who they were left out when the pie was divided. Anyway, Ms. Albright came with Susan and others, and her primary objective was to try top calm down the situation by talking to the leaders. I was very nervous about this visit because talking to most of the Liberian leaders was like talking to a ventriloquist's dummy. They never listened, and insisted on talking for hours. However it worked out very well and Ms. Albright gets the credit as she proved very adaptable and patient, as well as alert to nuance. We put on a pretty good visit I thought, and gave her a good day. We took her to see various people who were involved in the peace process. We started appropriately given her position with the senior UN rep, the SRSG, and the senior the senior ECOWAS commander. We toured one of the IDP camps, which was one of the empty buildings that had been badly damage during the fighting, and she was much impressed. We had a lunch at my place for her to talk to the humanitarian NGO's, as she was quite interested in that side of our business. My main memory is of her meeting with the council, because I have related this several times before. I met with them myself on a number of occasions. So I knew the drill. And the drill was that for each of them to get up and give a speech even though there were only two of us in the audience, Ms. Albright and myself. I imagine there was a note taker, so probably three of us. But each member of the council found it necessary to get up and give a speech, and some of them went on and on; they couldn't shut up. Taylor was one of those who couldn't keep his thoughts and words concise, and Alhaji Kromah talked for a long time. George Boley and the civil society politician were, mercifully, briefer. Sankawulo basically grunted and belched. But it was a hell of a meeting, and Ms. Albright was so good. I had not understood how good she could be. She kept her peace. She kept looking at me and asking, "Can I talk now?" I kept saying, "No just wait and I will let you know." I used to go through these meetings by letting my mind wanted off to

something else because what they said was absolute nonsense, letting the note taker take notes, while my mind drifted to happier terrain. I didn't do that this time and I forgot to tell her it would be all right for her to do so. But anyway at the end, after they all had their say, which must have been two hours, she finally got to talk. She was right on point, saying we were trying to bring peace to the areas where there had been fighting in order to de-escalate the tensions that seemed to be growing between the Taylor faction and the Roosevelt Johnson faction. To make sure both sides heard her brief, we had arranged a meeting for with Roosevelt Johnson at the airport on her way out of Monrovia. Well the airport, the building we met in was like all buildings in Monrovia-- no windows. It was very hot inside, although in January it isn't nearly as hot as it gets in the spring or the fall. Right in the middle of the meeting with Roosevelt Johnson, the Nigerians cranked up its C-130 transport, so the noise level exceeded that of a steel mill. If Roosevelt Johnson said anything important, I don't think either Ms. Albright or I heard it. Nor could he have heard her admonitions about the dangers of breaking the cease-fire. But anyway, she had a good visit, and she enjoyed it. As she was riding with me during the day, on our way to visit the refugee camp, she kept looking out the window at all the poor people on the streets, and she said, "Gosh, this is a real job isn't it." However, despite her visit, tensions kept building. I believe they were deliberately fostered by Charles Taylor, as he was working up to another attempt to take Monrovia by force -- his third since 1990. ECOWAS and the UN thought that the latest peace process agreement which put in this new interim council was a step forward because it got Taylor involved in governing the country along with other major war lords and civil society. Supposedly the new arrangement brought some hope to the process, but there wasn't really. In any case, tensions kept building, and in early April of 1996, just after I had returned from a trip to Washington, fighting broke out. Taylor plan to take the Monrovia by force was put into action. I will never be able to prove this, but I believe that Taylor bribed the Nigerian general to get the Nigerian peacekeeping troops to stand aside and let Taylor's forces over run the capital. And they did take a major part of the city, but again they stalled before they could take it all. Another impasse developed this time between Taylor's forces and the forces of Johnson and his allies, and that really wasn't turned around until a good Nigerian general was appointed and he brought strength and discipline to ECOMOG forces. In the meantime , we had three months of urban warfare, taking place right in front of our eyes if we looked over the wall that surrounded the embassy. Now the embassy was safe after the first few days. We called for support form the U.S. military because, since the fighters are basically looking for things they can loot, and the Embassy must have seemed a very rich looting ground, I thought we had to have more protection than the 5 Marine Guards and the unarmed local guards could give us. Forget ECOMOG after its performance on the opening day of the hostilities. We had the EUCOM commanding General' assurance that military assistance would be forthcoming if needed, and we got it rapidly. DOD dispatched immediately a marine expeditionary unit, MEU, from Norfolk which we knew would take about 2 weeks to get there by ship. In the interim, EUCOM dispatched a Special Forces unit from Bosnia which would take about 2-3 days to arrive. In the meantime we were rather vulnerable. But after one probe by some of Taylor's fighters, which was aborted after the RSO, John Freese, told them would bring instant lethal reprisal. The Special Forces unit flew in a big C-5 to Sierra Leone, with two Blackhawk helicopters unassembled inside along with about 100 troops,

I think. The Blackhawks were assembled at the Freetown airport and flew the Special Forces troops down to the Embassy. By April, we had pretty good lift capacity in case we had to run as we also had access to a couple of Russian helicopters for our own use that we had leased for ECOWAS from this $10 million peace keeping money I mentioned earlier.

Q: Yeah.

MILAM: Yes, along with the trucks we wanted to give UN and ECOWAS some lift capacity. So we leased two Russian helicopters. (By the middle 90's, the Russians were busily leasing anything that could fly to foreigners if the Russian military didn't need it for their own uses.) These Russian helicopters, were I think the Model-T of helicopters in the sense that they are pretty bare bones and primitive; there was nothing fancy about them, but in fact they seemed to fly forever. By this time these helicopters had been in Monrovia for three or four months. So that gave us a way to get out of there because these helicopters could fly to Sierra Leone. The Special Forces unit was commanded by a Brigadier General named Mike Canavan. These Special Forces troops were there for about two weeks until the marines arrived and then they left and went back to Bosnia. The MEU came in with many more troops than we needed. There were about 100 Marines on the ground at any one time, and another 900 on the ships who were rotated, 100 at a time, on a daily basis. The MEU was there for three months, so those Marines must have been mighty bored before they left. The interesting thing was that, once the fighting started, and surely after the Army arrived a few days later, the embassy became the safest place in Monrovia, and a place of great refuge. The embassy had been originally an eight- acre compound with a very sturdy wall going around three sides. Though it had been in our possession for about 100 years, the buildings had good setback, and it faced the sea. There was a kind of a cliff at the rear that went down to the sea. So with the wall around three sides of it, you had to climb this cliff to see it from the fourth side. We had a razor wire topped fence at the back that people couldn't get through very easily. Contiguous to it, was the British embassy compound, which the British had abandoned sometime in early 1991, and given to us. The addition of the British embassy compound expanded our compound to 12 acres. Pete De Vos, one of my predecessors, had moved from the Ambassador's residence on the American compound to the one on the British compound. I am glad he did because the house was extremely nice, probably the nicest residence I have lived in during my career in the Foreign Service. There were other buildings on the former British compound that we had converted for administrative use--general services and other things. Most interestingly, there was this little cottage about 100 yards from the ambassador's residence, which the British had preserved because it had been the cottage in which Graham Greene lived when he was writing his celebrated book on Liberia in the 1930's, "Journey Without Maps."

Q: I want to re-read it.

MILAM: Just before I had arrived in Liberia, one of the general services officers, who was very handy and who, using materials he found out and around the city, refurbished the cottage completely and made it really nice. He lived there when I arrived, and when

he left, my secretary and her husband who was the general services officer moved in. In any case, we had these two compounds joined together, so we felt pretty secure. Across the street from the embassy compound, on this area called Mamba Point, there was a large apartment house which most of the staff lived in. Behind that, there was another compound which we had taken over years before from Firestone. It was called Greystone. This 7-acre compound , behind another sturdy high wall, was also fairly safe. When the war started, people came to Mamba Point seeking the safety we Americans could provide. We divided up our two safe areas; Greystone was opened up for Liberians to set up camps. At one point, 25,000 Liberians lived in this seven- acre compound. It was interesting that with 25,000 destitute Liberians living cheek by jowl around them, the seven houses on the compound were never touched. Into the main compound, we brought all expatriates and any Liberian we thought would be a likely target of Taylor's forces. Both Liberians and expatriates started pouring in on the morning of April 6. I believe we got our first refugee in the embassy compound at like 7:00 in the morning.

Q: I like the detail. It gives an idea of how things were. Did we have any way of, I mean why didn't half a million people try and get in the compound?

MILAM: Well I think because they had other refugee camps. They all went to the closest place they found was safe. For those who made the journey across town and across war zones, we let them into Greystone, in fact we couldn't keep them out, and we welcomed expatriates out of the main compound. Nor would we have wanted to exclude either. The problem with the non-American expatriates was with our own military. Once we started welcoming them into the regular compound--within a few hours we had several hundred; after a couple of days there were nearly 700 on the compound -- our US military protectors became nervous. People had wandered into the compound over several days; at times they were cut off by the fighting, and couldn't get to the Embassy compound straight away. April is very hot in Liberia. The rainy season hasn't started yet. On maybe the second or third day of the fighting--this was after the Special Forces had arrived -- suddenly this enormous group of women and children arrived, between100 and 200 Lebanese women and children. Liberia had a large Lebanese population, mostly small retail and wholesale traders.

Q: Lebanese are all throughout that area. They were merchants.

MILAM: There were some men but mostly women and children. They had come out of the center of Monrovia where they all lived because after a day or two, the fighting had reached the center of town. These Lebanese women and children had toiled up this very long, steep hill to reach Mamba Point, where the Embassy was, in blazing heat and high humidity, and asked to be taken in. I took them in. Many of the women were suffering from heat prostration, and once inside they fainted. Fortunately the army medics were there as they had the equipment and the know-how to rehydrate them, so none suffered any permanent damage. For some reason it was the appearance of these Lebanese women and children that started what looked to be an enormous bureaucratic fight with the Special Forces unit and with DOD. General Canavan had his extraction orders which were to evacuate only American citizens. Of the several hundred people then on the

compound at the time, only 50 or so were American citizens. The rest were expatriate nationals of other countries, who in my assessment were at serious risk of getting killed. The General said his orders forbade the evacuation of non-American expatriates. I said that throwing them out on the street was tantamount to murdering them, and we had to evacuate them as we would soon run through our available water and food with so many hungry and thirsty people in the compound. As far as I could understand it, DOD was actually pushing to throw these people out of the compound onto the streets. I would not have done so in any case: even if I had direct orders, I wouldn't have done it. I wrote a blazing cable which said that if these people were thrown out they would be butchered in the streets. I was not going to stand for that or be witness to it. At about that time our communications personnel had figured out a way for me to take part in the daily interagency video conferences Washington -- what they called Civits calls -- a way for the agencies involved to coordinate policy and action over a secure video connection. However in the case of Embassy Monrovia, the only thing they could do was to connect our secure phone to the civits meeting. So on my side of the discussion I was blind as to who was talking, and had to things being suggested without knowing who th suggestion came from. They had these civets meetings every day, and Susan Rice's, chaired from the NSC. The discussions went into very weedy detail, much more than I needed to know. Susan wanted to go into deep detail about everything. Our secure phone was in a kind of closet which got very hot if the door was closed, so I kept the door open which made the call unsecure, of course. But after the first one, I called Pru Bushnell who was the deputy to George Moose, and I said I couldn't spend an hour or so on the phone with a war going on around me and I asked her to get an agreement that I would make whatever report or pitch I wanted to in the first 15 minutes, and then get off the phone. So Pru arranged that. But anyway in one of the first civits meetings I attended by secure phone, and the issue of who we could evacuate had become foremost in my mind -- I think I had sent in the cable I mentioned only the day before, I brought the subject up and someone -- I have always assumed it was someone speaking for DOD, but I will never know who it was for sure, repeated their policy line that we can't evacuate anybody but Americans. I fear that I raised my voice a little repeating the arguments I had made in the cable when all of a sudden this voice came in and said (this is a paraphrase, but is an accurate one) "Thou shalt not overrule the ambassador on who he wants to evacuate." I said, "Thank you, sir. Who are you?" He said, "I am Tony Lake, the National Security Advisor."

Q*: This is tape seven, side one with Bill Milam. .*

MILAM: Anyway, so I felt very good about Tony Lake's vindication of what I wanted to do, and really the only humane thing we could do.

Q: Well did this get action from the military?

MILAM: Yes indeed. We started evacuating everybody. We had 650 or 700 people on the compound by that time. We were starting to run low on water and food. We had to feed these people and water them. We had to evacuate them because we couldn't feed them and keep them watered, so we started evacuating. We evacuated the seven hundred, and more came. Every time we evacuated we got more. This evacuation went on for

maybe a month and a half before it petered out. In the end evacuated close to 3000 people from that compound. All by helicopter. The military set up a very efficient system which was transferred to the Marines when they arrived. The people were loaded on helicopters, 25 to 30 at a time, and helicoptered up to Freetown. The Special Forces Blackhawks could operate at night so they did the evacuations at night while that unit remained in Monrovia. The Marines didn't have the kind of helicopters that could operate at night, so they just did it in the daytime. Only one time, in the early days at night, did we think that someone had tried to shoot a down one of the Blackhawks, but I think it only led to the death of the shooter. Nothing else ever happened. After the people were landed in Freetown, they were immediately transferred to an Army C-130 which flew them to Dakar. We had prevailed upon governments whose nationals we were evacuating, if there were enough of them, to arrange for their evacuation back to their homeland from Dakar. That seemed to work pretty well, and there were so many Lebanese involved that the government of Lebanon basically chartered much of its national airline.

Q: What about the NGO's?

MILAM: Well, some were evacuated, but most of the humanitarian ones kept personnel in Monrovia. Doctors Without Borders, for example, was just down the street from the Embassy and remained caring for wounded and sick during the entire period/

Q: Well who was taking care of the people in the greystone?

MILAM: Well the NGOs that stayed plus the Embassy's personnel saw to that. I had people there who were helping to distribute food and medical supplies throughout the area, sometimes in hazardous conditions, which included Greystone.

Q: Who was your DCM?

MILAM: John Fuhrer was there when I arrived and remained until he had to be medically evacuated in June because of a heart attack. This was after the cease fire had been established and I was out of the country. Fortunately the MEU was still there and had excellent medical facilities. John was taken to the Marine ship hospital and later evacuated to Germany where he spent some time recuperating.

Q: Well then, what happened sort of militarily? We have the forces of Taylor essentially…

MILAM: Taylor overreached. He never had the military strength he thought he did. We had a military stalemate again. After fighting every day for about three months both side remained where they were after the first week of hostilities. One reason was that Roosevelt Johnson's troops, though outnumbered and short of weapons and ammunition were better fighters. These were the Krahn outfits that had made up the best part of the Army and they had American training. In small group engagements, Taylor's troops weren't well enough trained to beat them. After Taylor's first attack in April the fighting settled down to routine engagements until early May when Taylor made a second move

which was also blocked. By then we had the evacuation routine routinized, and I was spending most of my time on cease fire negotiations which the UN and ECOWAS were nominally heading. Taylor probed but finally, after 3 months decided he couldn't win militarily and agreed to a ceasefire in late June. The three months plus of fighting had been punctuated by separate crises; for example early on in the fighting, Johnson's Krahn allies had taken some civil society hostages and this required a separate set of negotiations to free those hostages. After a few days, we got them freed.

Q: Well what was sort of happening to the economy. You have got everybody coming in form the countryside so they are not raising crops.

MILAM: The economy had collapsed early on after Taylor's invasion. We were feeding the displaced people, probably at least ¾ of the population.

Q: Well, is that a problem as far as getting ??? because usually when you have your warlords in Somalia they tried to grab the food.

MILAM: Well that was always a concern, but never became very severe. We occasionally had trouble getting food to some of the camps, but there was never a serious starvation problem or hunger problem. The NGO's and others had worked out pretty good relationships so they could get food through. I had more of a political problem with Washington than a substantive one on the ground in Liberia, because Washington seemed always to hover on the verge of closing the post. One story if I may. Assistant Secretary George Moose visited in late May believing that he might talk Taylor into a cease fire and a renewed peace process. He arrived at the post by helicopter from Freetown. That was the day that Taylor decided to launch his second big push to encircle central Monrovia. The fighting was fierce that day, the worst since that in early April when it had started. George had to stay all day in my office because we couldn't get him out of the embassy and over to see Taylor. I couldn't reach Taylor, who knew I was trying to reach him set up a time to talk to George. He didn't want to talk, so poor George spent the whole day in frustration. He stayed overnight and was spooked by the walk on a very dark path across the compound to my residence. When he left the next morning, George looked at me, waved his finger in my face, and said, "I am closing this embassy." I waited until he got back to Washington and called him. I figured he would have cooled off by then, and manage to get him to change his mind,

Q: During this period, how did you read Charles Taylor?

MILAM: As a man who wanted to take over the country by force. I mean it wasn't easy to read him because he wasn't interested in talking to people who he knew wanted to talk him out of doing it. I saw him a few times, but he was not in the negotiations. These were conducted by lieutenants.

Q: Did we see the hand of Qadhafi in this?

MILAM: No, I don't think so. Qadhafi had trained Taylor and some of his Lieutenants in the late 1980s, and had supplied weapons, so obviously Qaddafi was responsible indirectly, but I think that that connection is about as far as it went. I would imagine that Taylor was a disappointment to all of his backers because he kept overselling his military prowess. He never could deliver on his promises, and all he was really interested in was self-enrichment.

Q: What about the Nigerian force?

MILAM: Well this was a disappointment I think. This is why I have always had very skeptical feelings about what I call regional peace keeping in West Africa particularly with the Nigerians doing most of it. In Liberia, the Nigerian peacekeepers had basically looted whatever the armed Liberian factions did not loot. That goes eve to the copper in telephone wires. There were none of those left when I got there

Q: Were you having any problems keeping people at your embassy?

MILAM: No. My trouble was that I was forced to evacuate about half my staff about 2 weeks after the fighting started. I didn't want to and didn't think it was dangerous for them, but I was told that w couldn't get Marine protection without an evacuation. So I picked half the people and they were evacuated them. But on the more general question of, yes, we had limited trouble recruiting. I found a good new DCM after John Fuhrer's sudden departure, but that was because we could offer his wife a job, so she could come too, We had trouble recruiting at mid-level, such as political-economic officer. At that level we got people who I thought were fairly marginal. But we didn't have trouble recruiting at what I would call the technical levels, communicators and administrators and so forth, partially because the money was so good. If you were in Liberia you earned hardship pay and danger pay. Something like 40% in addition to your salary.

Q: How did you find the support from our embassies in Freetown and Dakar?

MILAM: Well Dakar was only brought into it during this three month evacuation program, and they were superb. I was extremely unhappy with my colleague in Freetown who really didn't want to help us, and complained that he didn't have enough resources. That, I thought was a great disappointment and not a very community-like attitude. I had to put people up in Freetown to make sure that all of the things that were going through Freetown were working.

Q: Just to sort of get an idea maybe to pass on. You had this expatriate community. I take it these were entrepreneurs, you mentioned the Lebanese.

MILAM: Well there were European NGO personnel among the expatriates and Lebanese. There was a sprinkling of others, but not many.

Q: NGO's. In other words this was not a group of farm folk.

MILAM: No. If we are talking about the evacuation, there were also some Liberian-Americans. Liberia has had a long association with the United States, and a number of Liberian-Liberian Americans, with valid American passports, were also evacuated. As I mentioned earlier, we also evacuated Liberians who would have been political enemies of Taylor, or the other warlords so they would not be killed.

Q: With this community you are talking about a fairly knowledgeable community that ended up there. Were you able to recruit within them to sort of self police or find people volunteers to help with the load?

MILAM: Well in a sense the people in the compound awaiting evacuation were not a problem. They policed their own areas. After we got the evacuation process started, the flow-through was pretty fast. They would come in and may not even have to spend one night in the compound. At most they spent one night. At the beginning of course, there were too many people. A lot of those first 700 people had been there for a week or more and a half before they got out. Even that was not a problem; they were well-behaved and followed instructions. The only problem I had was from the Liberian Catholic Archbishop. He was a loud and vocal critic of Taylor and would have been killed had we not persuaded him to come to the compound. But once there, he didn't want to go. He thought he could stay on the compound and be near his flock. Since I knew it would be a couple of months at least, I told him he had to go along with the rest because I couldn't keep him that long. So I persuaded him to get on a helicopter and he went to Rome and stayed, I understand, in the Vatican until he could come back.
Since we are back on the evacuation, I have a story I want to tell. In those first couple of weeks, I was spending about 18 hours a day working on different things that needed doing. Perhaps a week or so after it all started, when the Special Forces were still there, the evacuations were still going full blast, and we still had several hundred people camping out on the compound, I was in my office late one night working and listening to the sounds of human activity from below my window. It all sounded very normal, until I realized that what had drawn my attention was not the sound of people conducting family conversations, or the sound of generators whirling away, but a sound so anomalous in the situation we were in that it took me a moment to identify it, and then I couldn't help but stop and listen. It was the sound of children playing--playing the games that children play everywhere. It struck me so deeply then, and still does all these years later to think of that moment, and that sound -- children playing in the midst of war and carnage, in the safety of the American compound.

Q: Any Congressional interference? Not interference but interest or anything like that?

MILAM: No. I am sure some of the Congress, the black caucus in particular, was interested and kept up with it, but I didn't have anybody wanting to visit Liberia.

Q: How about newspaper people?

MILAM: Oh that was fun. We had a lot of them. They used to fly in on the helicopters, having gotten themselves to Freetown,. The Military of course, is always eager to help

the newspapers and the correspondents. But there was no place to stay, so they ended up sleeping in our swimming pool area on the compound. The weather was warm so they could sleep out at night. There were quite a few of them there in the first few weeks of the fighting, but of course they got tired of it after a few days. By mid-May most of them had disappeared.

Q: Well could they go anywhere?

MILAM: Some probably went out with my people on the humanitarian runs, but the answer is not really.

Q: Did you have, were you people able to get out and around?

MILAM: Oh, the people in that Embassy were out and about all the time, delivering humanitarian supplies, or rescuing folks in trouble. The Regional Security Officer, John Freese, was amazing. He was absolutely fearless, and in the worst times, on the worst days, he would drive around picking up Americans or friends who were stranded. He also formed a very close association with some of the local commanders of the factions. This was particularly important in the Mamba Point area as the Taylor troops came into that area often looking for a fight. He wanted to be able to contact the commanders at night. Taylor's local commander actually helped John pick up one of our people who needed rescuing. If I am not mistaken, John won the award for heroism that year. He deserved it. And much of this the first two or three days before the U.S. military arrived.

Q: How did things develop after sort of…

MILAM: Well in June the stalemate was clear to all, even Taylor, and he recognized that the only way forward was a ceasefire and serious negotiations for a political resolution. The peace process started again, and there was a series of meetings in Abuja, Nigeria. I think they started in July. The peace process negotiations agreed on elections, and set the election on an impossibly hasty and unrealistic schedule of disarmament and demobilization July '96 to June '97. In July of 1997, the elections were held on schedule, despite a rather half-hearted disarmament and demobilization process that left the factions still in place and not really disarmed. Taylor was elected overwhelmingly as president. He was inaugurated in August. I was there for a year under a Taylor presidency. The Nigerians forced this pace and forced through an election that was not in Liberia's long term interest not in that of the US. Truth was that Nigeria just plain wanted out of Liberia, and figured a Taylor government was the best way out.

Q: How did that go?

MILAM: It didn't go. Taylor wasn't interested in governing. He was interested in self-enrichment. Nothing really changed except that instead of an entire council to deal with, we had one very unpredictable and unstable leader running the country. ECOMOG stayed to provide security. The key to a secure peace process had been the change in the ECOMOG commander in mid 1996. General Malu, who was as tough as nails and

honest, replaced the General whose troops stood aside while Taylor's forces invaded the city in April 1996. Malu was great; I liked him a lot, and so did everybody else. The only person around who didn't like him was Charles Taylor because Taylor was afraid of Malu. Unlike the other Nigerian generals, Malu meant what he said. And he was quite a disciplinarian; the ECOMOG troops shaped up, and in Liberia the improved security helped the peace process come together. But the Nigerian political leaders were anxious to get out and were forcing pace. It was, I think, pushed along too fast, and the election was held too soon. So we got a president we didn't want, and what's more, who we knew would ruin the country--which he did. I tried to slow it down and to give it a more logical direction, but my leaders in Washington were on the Nigerian side. Washington wanted to push it too because I think Washington felt dependent on the Nigerians for providing the men.

Q: You had almost a year of Charles Taylor didn't you?

MILAM: Well I really had three years of Charles Taylor because I knew him almost from the day I got there, but I had a year of him as president.

Q: Then all of a sudden I mean this is unofficial. Obviously you must have had issues. How did you deal with him during this time?

MILAM: Well I dealt with him the way I would have dealt with anybody else. I talked calmly to him; I saw him frequently -- to frequently for my taste. I tried to bring whatever influence or leverage felt I had when I needed his assent on something. I think I had Taylor figured out, in one sense at least. First of all, I thought the man was a lunatic, mentally unbalanced. Secondly, I knew that I had to let him have his say first, before I went at him on some issue. Sometimes his say went on for half an hour without stopping: sometimes for several hours. One just had to be patient, but if you let him have his say, he usually ran down. Third, it was better to see him alone because if he had his cohorts with him, he would play to the crowd and you'd never get anywhere.

Q: Were there any particular developments during this period. I mean I am talking after he became president?

MILAM: Not really. There were a number of little dust-ups, but nothing serious. The serious thing that was happening was that he was trying to eliminate opposition, and just when everyone had hoped for peace and tranquility as well as a focus on economic recovery, human right s abuses multiplied. These kept escalating and became much worse after I left, about which I will talk in a minute or two. In any case, it was a year of empty promises. Taylor kept promising the people of Liberia that he was going to bring the country back to normalcy, and of course this was pure nonsense. I remember it was either in his inauguration speech or right after the inauguration in August of '97 that he promised that within a few months the electricity would be restored to Monrovia and we would have city power again. Well, it never happened, not in the year that I remained, and it still hasn't happened to this day.

Q: Why don't we move on.

MILAM: I just wanted to mention one thing. The DCM I picked to replace John Fuhrer was John Bauman, and he was involved in an incident that occurred after I left, but must be recorded somewhere. In September about a month after I left (already safely in Pakistan), Taylor evidently decided he was going to eliminate the group he felt most threatened by, the Krahn faction headed by Roosevelt Johnson. Johnson and most of his people lived, ironically enough, in one little section of Monrovia called Camp Johnson Road. Taylor's paramilitary security unit attacked the Krahns in their homes. Now since I was no longer there, the rest of this is hearsay, coming from John and my former secretary, Judy Copenhaver, who was on the phone to me from Monrovia. She later joined me in Islamabad. Evidently, the shooting went on all night, and was clearly audible at the Embassy. In the morning, Johnson's forces, which I understand were very short on ammunition and arms, were routed and many were killed; Johnson and a half dozen of his guys showed up at the Embassy main pedestrian gate wanting shelter. This was, I am told, a scenario that John and others had foreseen and decided that they could not risk by taking them into the compound, as Taylor would have no compunctions about ordering his troops to storm it and take them out. In fact, not long after the Johnson Group showed up and took shelter out of sight from the street, as about a platoon of Taylor's worst killers, the security forces, had appeared in the street and certainly suspected the Johnson was there somewhere. John felt correctly that the Embassy could not rely on ECOMOG to come to its aid. His only option was to negotiate for the UN and/or the Nigerians to come and take charge of this group of people to protect them from Taylor's people while at the same time not letting the group into the embassy. Under their new General, the Nigerians were back to their bad old ways. They refused to help. The UN had no troops to do it. John was inside the Embassy trying to negotiate a solution with the Taylor government, ECOMOG, the UN, and he did not know that the situation had turned very ugly outside at the Embassy front gate. The Johnson group couldn't hide for long, and the Embassy RSO and two contract security personnel who were outside the gate trying to keep things calm were in grave danger. Finally the Taylor people caught a glimpse of Johnson and his group and started shooting. The presence of mind and bravery of a local guard, saved American lives, as he went out and unlocked the gate in a hail of gunfire, and ducked back in his safe guard booth. The Americans who were outside came at top speed through the gate, but of course they didn't get it closed. Roosevelt Johnson's followed them through the gate. One of the contract security officers was wounded very badly in the upper leg; the RSO ended up with a flesh wound in the arm. Most of the Johnson group got through the gate with minor wounds, but at least one was killed. It was fortunate that Taylor's troops couldn't shoot straight. So the worst of all possible worlds faced John, the Johnson group was inside the compound and Taylor knew it. Could he throw them out when he knew they would certainly be killed. But if he kept them, he was risking the security of his own embassy, and the safety of the Americans inside. All he had for protection was six marine guards and unarmed Liberian guards. John did everything perfectly. He negotiated with Taylor, through his foreign affairs advisor, got the Taylor security unit to go away. Ultimately he got Taylor to allow the Embassy to evacuate Johnson and his people to Freetown. The Embassy evacuated the wounded

contract security officer and the non-essential Embassy staff. There is much more detail to this story, but the upshot is that it all came out very well, considering the odds that it could have been much worse. Yet, ironically, both the RSO who was wounded in the arm, and my former DCM, John Bauman, the reason that all did come out so well, were blamed for the fact that the single gunshot fired by the other contract security officer didn't get reported right away. John was inside negotiating the solution, and the RSO was wounded. Their careers suffered for awhile but they have recovered now; the wounded RSO is now RSO in Kabul, and John, who became Consul General in Karachi is now political counselor in Berlin. But even so the fact they suffered for a time was a very unfair judgment.

And there is more to it than that. I mentioned Taylor's increasing attempts to eliminate opposition, even before I left. In this instance, I suspect Taylor had been waiting for an opportunity for many months to eliminate Johnson and his faction. While Roosevelt Johnson and some of his henchmen got away there were reports that many of the Krahns, and especially women and children, who attempted to shelter in a church on Camp Johnson Road, were killed. A reliable human rights NGO in Liberia reported it had seen several hundred bodies, mainly women and children in the church, but those bodies were disposed of before anybody could actually record the evidence. I do have, however, in my possession photos of many bodies of young men laid out like cordwood which I have been assured are bodies from that same battle.

Q: Did you at any point think, what the hell, let's close this embassy down?

MILAM: No, I never did.

Q: Why?

MILAM; Because it was an embassy that played a vital role, both in keeping the peace process going, and in making the election, its bad outcome notwithstanding. I don't think I mentioned that the US basically set up, provided all the expertise and training, and provided all the equipment for the election. Secondly and more importantly in my point of view, in that kind of a situation we were the island of stability and safe haven for many thousands of poor, innocent Liberians who only wanted the war to go away and their lives back. We provided relief and succor for thousands, tens of thousands of people. Without us, it would have been disaster.

Q: There was no other country that was playing any role?

MILAM: Well, Nigeria, in the ways I mentioned earlier. No other western country. I was the only western ambassador. Everybody else pulled out. There was a Nigerian embassy which was very important because of the Nigerian role. The very good Ghanaian diplomat I knew there was actually the representative of ECOWAS. The rest were marginal.

Q: At that point Sierra Leone was a quiet haven for us?

MILAM: Off and on. Sierra Leone fell completely apart during my stay there. I think it was in '96 that Freetown embassy had to be evacuated.

Q: How did the nomination to go to Pakistan come about?

MILAM: I was actually slated to get another African post. Then, they decided to keep me in Liberia, I guess because they had someone who knew the players and particularly Taylor. But it all became moot after I had put my papers in. The DG called to ask if I would like to go to Pakistan. My "yes" was instantaneous. According to the DG, Secretary Albright had suggested my name, (go back to her visit to Monrovia in January 1996) It drifted for a few months while the White House looked it over, I guess. In early May of '98, however, India tested a nuclear device. I saw the headlines and knew that Pakistan would follow suit, and I began to fear that the Administration would want to put some heavy hitter political appointee in Pakistan, or someone who is a nuclear non-pro expert. But despite my fears, it went through.

Q: How about confirmation/

MILAM: No problem. The Senate was real kind and rushed me through. I came to Washington in July to chair a promotion panel, and used that trip to also get confirmed. .

Q: Well we are close to finishing up this thing. Before you went out , how did you see the situation particularly with nuclear stuff going off and all. I mean did you have a set of instructions, an idea of what to do?

MILAM: Well first of all you have to realize I had almost no time for consultation. I was there to chair this promotion panel. Believe it or not, promotion panels require a lot of time and work.

Q: Oh they do; I have been on them.

MILAM: I had to go back to Liberia and pack out and make my goodbyes, I assumed the Bureau would be ok on a few weeks of consultations and arrival in Pakistan in September or October. That was my plan. I did right back to Liberia with the idea of packing out, and saying goodbye in two weeks and then going back to Washington for consultations. On the day I got back to Liberia, my secretary Judy, was at the airport to meet me with the news that our embassies in Nairobi and Dar had been bombed. I spent the next few days actually packing out and saying good-bye to people. On the next Saturday, I had a call from Rick Inderfurth, the Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs saying that I was going to have to go straight to Pakistan. He couldn't tell me why on the phone, but I guessed. They had decided to kill Bin Laden with the cruise missile attack on his camp in Afghanistan. Of course telegraphed their punch by evacuating our embassy a day or two before they shot the missiles. If Al Qaeda had anybody watching at the airport, it would have been a clear sign that we were planning something, which I suspect was we missed Bin Laden. So I left Liberia on my schedule, but instead of going to Washington, I went to London where I spent a day with Tom Simons and a day in the meetings that Strobe

Talbot had with the Pakistanis on nuclear proliferation. Then I proceeded on to Pakistan. There had been no time to consult or to form any preconceptions. I knew Pakistan a bit because I had been in South Asia. I had done a lot of reading on it. I was aware of what I was walking into. I had been able of course to study up for my confirmation hearing in July. I had been able to access all of the files of the bureau and all the Pakistan desk files, so I had a pretty good idea of what was going on. I guess what I expected to see when I got there was a dysfunctional elected government, which fast was becoming undemocratic, and which had destroyed the economy because of the sanctions put on it after the nuclear test. So what I looked for was a government that wasn't functioning very well and an economy that was going into the tank as fast as it could. Guess what I found: a government that wasn't functioning very well and an economy that was going in the tank as fast as it could. It was in bad shape.

Q: We have got you arriving in Pakistan. You were there from when to when? How did find it?

MILAM: I found it empty. It had been evacuated just before I got there in anticipation of serious anti-US demonstrations as a result of our attempt to kill Osama Bin Laden in a cruise missile strike in Afghanistan that happened a few days before I got there. All the "non-essential" personnel. You know the phrase. So the embassy, which had a staff of a couple of hundred I suppose, was down to about 50 people. There were still the local employees on duty. (I like to joke about my last three posts; I had three evacuations: two of which I presided over myself, and one which happened just before I got there.) The problem with evacuations, other than doing them which is a problem in itself, is trying to get the people back, trying to convince Washington that things are better and they can come back safely. This seems to have become worse over time. I spent a lot of time on that in the first three or four months. The evacuation wasn't lifted until January of 1999, over 4 months after it had been ordered. By the time I arrived the demonstrations were over and the situation had returned to normal, but it took 4 months to convince the Department of that.

Q: Well, who was there, and how were you all reading the situation?

MILAM: Well the situation wasn't hard to read at the time, Stu. First of all my DCM, Al Eastham, and most of the political and economic staff were there. There was a skeleton administrative staff, but the work was getting done. The first things we had to deal with was, of course, a number of formalities to allow you to operate fully. First I had to present my credentials. That took a week or so to arrange, but we got it done relatively quickly.

Q: To whom did you present your credentials?

MILAM: To the President of Pakistan, in a very formal ceremony. Several of the persons I would have wanted at the ceremony had been evacuated so I had to make substitutions. The one I remember best was that in place of the Embassy Defense Attaché who was an

Army Colonel, I his assistant, the Naval Attaché who showed up in his full dress uniform, as appropriate, and with his with his sword. I thought that was a nice touch. .

Q: Was there a real conversation at that point.

MILAM: Yes, we had a short conversation. He gave me the party line on Kashmir for about ten or fifteen minutes. What I remember best is that, absolute coincidence I met two friends there who I didn't expect to see -- one who had been chief of Protocol in Dhaka when I was there as Ambassador was presenting his credentials as High Commissioner from Bangladesh; and the other who had been Pakistan High Commissioner to Bangladesh who was now Assistant Secretary for Administration in the Pakistan Foreign ministry. So I thought that was a good start.

Q: What were you looking at? I mean you and your team.

MILAM: We had several tasks at the top of our "to do" list. One was to get our people back. The only way to do that to chip away at the evacuation list. Make a case that person X is now essential and it is safe to bring him/her back. When the Department says OK, go on to person Y, and so on. There was still the thought we were going to get a presidential visit, and that added to the need to get the staff back. I never believed that there would be a visit, not after the nuclear test. But the Clinton White House would not give us a definitive no. Second, I needed to get around and meet all the players in the shortest possible order -- my own staff, those remained after the evacuation, at least, first, then all the political and economic players, all the people I needed to know in order to operate. The latter took a lot of work and time but is vital. You start, as protocol would demand, with the Foreign Ministry, and then branch out to the other ministries, agencies, etc., as well as the private sector. I tried to meet at least one new minister every day, and sometimes two or three. I think I was still making calls in November. I doubt I ever made a formal call on every minister in the cabinet. There were about 60 cabinet ministers in those days. I probably met them all in one way or another but some I got to know through social occasions. At some early point, I called on the Prime Minister, but I cannot recall when that occurred. In addition to this, I now had responsibilities to oversee the work of three constituent posts, the Consulate General in Karachi, the consulates in Lahore and Peshawar. This was the first embassy I had to run that had constituent posts. I promised myself that I would visit each of those posts at least once every six weeks and spend a couple of days there. In fact, one cannot understand Pakistan or work effectively in it if one does not get out into other parts of the country. I learned more about the country in my visits to the two constituent posts than I ever did in Islamabad. And I made many valuable friends in those travels. In the first three months I was in each of those at least twice. I continued to do that all through my 3-year tour. I spent a good proportion of my time traveling to and visiting these three posts, but I think the rewards were extraordinarily rich.

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Q: The prime minister was…

MILAM: Nawaz Sharif. I came to the conclusion after awhile that this was not only a dysfunctional democracy, that it was a democracy in which Nawaz Sharif was working hard to turn into a one party state. This was consistent with Pakistani history. So after my meeting with Sharif, perhaps by then more than one, and with many members of his inner circle, sometime in October, I wrote a cable which I think was not well received at the top levels of the Department. It said something to the effect of that while I had no idea whether the President is coming or not, I couldn't see why he would come to South Asia to visit India where a fundamentalist Hindu party is wreaking havoc among the secular Indian society, and to Pakistan where Nawaz Sharif seems heading toward turning it into a one party state. I don't think for a minute that the cable anything to do with the President's decision not to come; that I think had already been made, but I think it smoked out the answer I expected all along, that they had made a decision not to come. I was just as happy. I didn't think we were ready for a Presidential visit. What happened was that as sort of a tradeoff, the White House invited Nawaz Sharif for a Washington visit. So in early December, Nawaz Sharif had a working visit to the White House in which he had a couple of meetings with the President. The US agenda really included two major items it wanted to press with Sharif: nuclear non-proliferation including consultation on its command and control for its nuclear arsenal, banning of export of nuclear technology; and signing the Test Ban Treaty: and joint action on Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. The Department also made use of the visit to try to make up for an injustice we had done Pakistan when we had sanctioned the transfer of F-16s and kept the money it had already paid us. It took some artful accounting and use of PL 480 funds but we did accomplish that. The Washington visit was especially well timed for me as it provided me with the opportunity to have Christmas with my kids, to do the consultations I should have done in August and September.

Q: Well on the nuclear issue, what was the line that you were getting?

MILAM: That they didn't have any choice. India had tested some nuclear devices in May. After that they said they had no choice because the popular sentiment in Pakistan was overwhelmingly in favor, which I think probably was true.

Q: What about were you running across at this point or any other nuclear issues of the father of Pakistani bomb?

MILAM: The nuclear proliferation of A.Q. Kahn was a constant question. When I got there he was riding high, but I never met him. I understand from somebody who knew him that he was under orders from the military not to meet Americans. The person who told me this was an American who had lived next door to him some years earlier, and had actually visited A.Q. Khan a number of times and was always signed in as the husband of the Egyptian woman at the door. A.Q. Khan was by that time a kind of institution to himself basically, with control of a lot of resources, and acting pretty independently of the government. He was already selling his nuclear secrets by then quite clearly. You know he traveled in a convoy which was longer than the prime minister's.

Q: It sort of sounds, even today it sounds like selling things particularly to Libya has come out, but was any of this, I mean were we thinking that the Pakistanis were also a source of proliferation?

MILAM: By the end of my third year I was pretty sure they were. I was pretty sure A.Q. Khan was at the center of it. But we didn't have any evidence. He was traveling a lot, to very strange places like Timbuktu. We knew they were having exchanges with the North Koreans because we had, I guess it was only hearsay evidence, but we had been told on pretty good authority that there were North Korean technicians around. We never saw any ourselves. It would be impossible to get close enough to see them. They would have been out in the nuclear labs and stuff, but we knew they were trading with the North Koreans. In fact, when you saw their military parades, there was this one liquid fueled missile from North Korean. So we knew that there had been some stuff going back and forth.

Q: It sounds like you were in a conflicted position to put it mildly in that here you have a state which is not really that friendly to us, and doing things or suspected of doing things that we think are really very dangerous. I mean one, having the nuclear stuff, two perhaps sharing it. Let's take Libya out, but you have got Iran and North Korea. Yet at the same time we saw this as being pretty key to dealing with this threat that we were beginning to be, which we were concerned about which is Al Qaeda.

MILAM: I think in a lot of countries you find yourself in that position. It didn't seem to me to be unusually conflicted, in the sense that I understood the conflicts, the dilemmas. But we have our interests, U.S. national interests. Other countries have theirs. While I didn't always agree with Washington's view of what among our interests should have top priority, I think our problem with Pakistan, was that we couldn't figure out our own priorities on national interest issues. In fact they were all legitimate national interests. You just have to know your own priorities and to work with a government and try to make it understand that we can disagree on some issues and work to together on those we agree on. We certainly wanted Pakistan's help on Bin Laden. From the time I got there, we were asking them to help us convince the Taliban to give up Bin Laden.

Q: What was our fix on Bin Laden at that time when you arrived?

MILAM: Well, we held him and AQ responsible for the Embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. I think that by the time I got there, Bin Laden had been indicted by the New York Federal Court for being responsible. We wanted the Taliban to throw him and his people out. Then it gets a little bit more ambiguous. There were agencies in the U.S. government that wanted the Taliban to give Bin Laden and his people to us so we could try him in court. There are other agencies and other people in the U.S. government who thought that wasn't such a great idea. Maybe we should insist that the Saudis take him back. I don't think we had a clearly defined view on what should happen to Bin Laden except that he should be thrown out of Afghanistan and given to somebody who would put him under wraps, either in jail or try him and convict him. In those days, long before 9/11 he was responsible for the deaths of a lot of people.

Q: Was your office more or less the place that was trying to deal with the Taliban or their representatives? How did this…

MILAM: The answer to that is yes. I still think that I was probably the most frequent and primary interlocutor with the Taliban in the U.S. government. It is not an honor that I am proud of. I would just as soon give it to somebody else. I actually started meeting with the senior Taliban leaders almost as soon as I got to Pakistan. I think within a week or two of my arrival there, I met with Muttawakil, the foreign minister of the Taliban who happened to be in Islamabad. Without fail, every time I met with I met with the Taliban, the meeting began with a warning to them that if Bin Laden carried out any acts of that we would hold them responsible for any terrorism against the US, we would hold them responsible. That was followed by the argument that they should give him up or throw him out. And we made the case that he was a criminal. Their usual response was that the Pashtun code of honor required hospitality for all guests, and they could not throw him out. Moreover, they did not believe the charges we made against him. Such meetings went on for most of the three years I was in Pakistan. After Muttawakil, I met a number of times with the Taliban Deputy Foreign Minister, Jalil, and many times with the Taliban Ambassador to Pakistan, Sayeed. I met the latter usually every time we had an intelligence alert of a possible terrorist attack anywhere. I would be instructed to seek him out and give him the same warning -- that we would hold the Taliban responsible for any AQ terrorist action against us. The last of these meetings with Sayeed came just before I left in July of 2001, and it is possible the intelligence alert I warned him about that time related to 9/11. I left I have to tell you, speaking of the Taliban and Afghanistan, what surprised me about the job in Islamabad was that I actually was surrogate ambassador to Afghanistan. We didn't have an embassy there. So I spent 25%-30% of my time on Afghanistan.

Q: Doing…

MILAM: Oh in addition to these talks with the Taliban, it was analysis of what was going on there, advising the department on what I thought policy should be. I had the help of a political officer on this and DCM Al Eastham, who was an expert on Afghanistan. Another source of information and analysis on Afghanistan was the large group of Afghan political exiles who lived in Pakistan. I spent a great deal of time with them. One of my close Afghan friends in Pakistan was Hamid Karzai, who is now the president. He lived for years in Quetta and though I usually saw him in Islamabad, I met him and his father when I was in Quetta for the first time. His father was assassinated a few days later sadly. There were others I would meet with in Peshawar. .

Q: Well speaking of Afghanistan and then we will come back to other things. Did you find were the Taliban people you could talk to or did they sort of move into mumbo jumbo.

MILAM: I may be celebrated for a quote that appeared in the New York Times a couple of years ago. I think it was Dexter Filkins who worked then for the LA Times who quoted me as saying, "meeting with the Taliban was like walking back into the 14th century." His

quote was accurate, I can't deny saying it. Those that I met didn't seem to be bad. I am sure there were Taliban that were bad. But they were so far away from anything I had ever experienced in a philosophical sense that it was very difficult actually to relate to them or to talk to them. And remember, you are talking to a guy who dealt with Liberian warlords and some really ugly characters. The Taliban I dealt with were not ugly in that sense, but just seemed to be from another planet.

Q: Well did you have any feel for CIA operations in Afghanistan?

MILAM: Yes. We had a big CIA station in Pakistan which was focused mainly by the time I got there, on Afghanistan. They didn't do a lot internally. They were basically focused on the terrorists. I had a meeting almost every day with my chief of station who brought me up to date on things. They got reporting from their agents inside Afghanistan. These are mainly Afghans, inside Afghanistan. So I knew what they were doing. I knew what they felt was going on. I must say I got every day a sheet with intelligence stuff, mainly intercepts and stuff.

Q: Was Charlie Wilson a factor at that point?

MILAM: No, Charlie came to Pakistan once or twice while I was there. We got along just fine. I like him. He is a real interesting guy. But his heyday in Pakistan was over. He was no longer in Congress and was a lobbyist for Pakistan. He had great access in Pakistan. So I was always interested in seeing him. Nice fellow.

Q: What was your reading over the time you were there, of the Pakistani, particularly its military intelligence services' influence on the Taliban and events in Pakistan and Afghanistan?

MILAM: I think the ISI had been a great help to the Taliban. I always looked at the history of their battles. The Taliban would get into a fight with their opponents in Afghanistan. For example the battle for Kabul in '96. I wasn't there in those days but I had read a lot about it. The Taliban were locked up in what seemed a stalemate, until suddenly, out of the blue, they would execute some brilliant strategic and tactical maneuver and win the battle. You would have thought that Napoleon had come back to help them. In fact it was probably some retired ISI officers who were giving them tactical and strategic advice. The ISI was very helpful to the Taliban, and continued to be.

Q: Did you have contact with the ISI, and were you trying to get the ISI to do something about Bin Laden through their contacts?
Zia
MILAM: Yes. First of all, we had a liaison relationship between the CIA and the ISI. So I did not see the ISI at the working level. I had a pretty good relationship with first Director General of the ISI, General Ziauddin who had his 15 minutes of fame when he was named as the new Chief of Army Staff in October 1999 (replacing General Musharraf) when Prime Minister Sharif pulled his own short-lived coup against the Army. Ziauddins term as Chief lasted about two hours before the Army intervened to remove Sharif and

his government and placed Musharraf in control of the state. Ziauddin ended up in his house under house arrest. Where he may still be, I haven't heard of him since then. I had met his successor General Mahmoud, but never got to know him very well. I don't think he liked Americans very much, and this came out after 9/11, but I was already gone. So after Ziauddin, my relationship with ISI basically went through the Chief of Station.

Q: Well did you see them as a problem?

MILAM: They have always been a problem.

Q: I mean in a way having almost their own foreign policy?

MILAM: No, I don't see them that way. The ISI is not a rogue agency. The Pakistan Army is very disciplined and very hierarchical and very top down. So I have always been convinced that ISI was carrying out the policy of the army. I wouldn't be surprised, however, if there are officers in the ISI who have spent far too long dealing with the Afghan situation, using the Taliban as proxies, nurturing the Jihadists who infiltrate Kashmir, and have become shall we say unobjective. These offices may have lost sight of Pakistan's evolving national interests and of the fact that the Jihadists and proxies they created have developed agendas that differ from the Pakistani state. You might even find a rogue officer or two who might do things that the military hadn't told him to do. But in general the ISI is not a rogue organization.

Q: Well what about the Pakistan's your dealing with Afghanistan. The northern alliance was still holding out up in the north. How did we view that?

MILAM: Well, you know, when I first got to Pakistan, the idea was that we wanted to help UN Special Representative Brahimi, now the UN Special Negotiator bring about a ceasefire and a peace process. Despite his best efforts and our attempts to help, that was going very badly.

Q: He is an Algerian United Nations diplomat.

MILAM: Yes. He is now the Special Negotiator for Iraq and was the former foreign minister of Algeria. However, in Afghanistan, the idea was to try to foster a multi ethnic multi party government. Brahimi was trying to set this up. We were in favor of that. In my early meetings with the Taliban I pushed hard on this theme also. They clearly had no interest in this idea.

Q: What about moving around? What, I mean did you feel under threat of attack? How did that…

MILAM: No I never felt very threatened in Pakistan in those days. I had an armored car and a police guard. I used to have escort follow cars when I was in Karachi. But that was the local governor making sure that I didn't get shot on his watch. He didn't want his

copybook soiled by that. But I never felt very threatened in Pakistan. I don't think it was as dangerous as now.

Q: What about Karachi? I mean Karachi is really the city of Pakistan?

MILAM: Karachi is the largest city in Pakistan and continues to grow rapidly. Its services are stretched well beyond their capacity to deliver services. Governance is very difficult in any case, but it is complicated by the criminalization of politics and the partisan violence over resources that have become standard fare. It is the consequence of a weak central government allowing the institutionalization of violent and corrupt patronage politics, and in fact often encouraging it. When I arrived in Pakistan the Governor of Sindh was a retired Lieutenant General named Moinuddin Haider. Because he was Governor I got to know him well very early on. The elected provincial government of the day, which was hopelessly inept and unable to govern in any sensible way, was dissolved by the Sharif government soon after my arrival. "Governor's Rule," which is equivalent to a state of emergency was declared. So Moinuddin Hider became the absolute ruler of Karachi. The more I got to know him, the more I got to admire him. He was tough but he was fair. He tried to promote coming together, sharing of power, and spent a lot of his time talking to the former ruling party, the MQM, and talking to the opposition parties, trying to bring them together and reduce tensions. But, at the same time, he made it clear that if they got out of line and started killing people, he would crack down heavily. Within a few months he brought Karachi around to a kind of cease fire and peace process between the parties, and it governance really improved. However, after about 6 months Sharif fired Haider because he refused to appoint friends of Sharif to positions in the Karachi government. Sharif appointed a former caterer, with no political or military experience as Governor because he had catered meals for Sharif. I think Karachi started to go downhill again. In time, it would have tipped over the edge into anarchy, Sharif was gone soon after, and the military was back in power. Another governor was appointed in Sindh, and under the military rule Karachi stayed pretty quiet for the next couple of years.

Q: Peshawar, how did we see this as being….

MILAM: Well you know it was very interesting. Peshawar was our window on Afghanistan. It was in Peshawar that we got most of our information on Afghanistan. Frankly there were only 3 or 4 FSOs there. The rest of the consulate was agency. I found Peshawar very interesting. I liked to go there, and often took guests there. First of all, Pakistan is really two countries. You cross the Indus towards Peshawar, you are suddenly in central Asia. You are no longer in the subcontinent, culturally, architecturally, otherwise. I noticed the differences quickly on arrival, but became sure of my conclusion after going to Central Asia toward the end of my tour. Peshawar looks more like Bhokara or Samarkand than like Lahore and Delhi. Peshawar was also, as I mentioned, a gathering place for the Afghan opposition leaders. So I saw them every time I went there. Sometimes I visited the refugee camps, but most of the leaders I saw had some sort of income and were not living in refugee camps. They were living in fairly nice houses

Q: Well during this time, I mean the whole time there, were we looking at, and my pronunciation I may have the wrong work, looking at the influence of the clergy. I am talking about the right wing clergy and the madrassa and the schools.

MILAM: Well Stu, this is part of what an embassy does and what an ambassador should be doing. He should poke into all the things that have political, economic, or social meaning in the society--try to understand how all of those things influence what is going on. I met some of the clergy. I toured the Islamic University of Peshawar. I think it is called Islamia. I called on a few other friendly clerics. Yes, we met those people. I didn't go to mosque and listen to the preaching. But we certainly understood what some of the Madrassas were up to.

Q: Well then looking at it sort of in the broad vein, you see Islam as within the Pakistani context as having, being anti American or not?

MILAM: Well you know there are different and often contradictory schools of thought in Islam as in most religions. The greater part of Pakistani Muslims probably follow a tolerant syncretic kind of Islam. This is because much of the Islam that one finds in Pakistan was brought by the Sufis, who are mystical, syncretic, and tolerant, who worship or at least venerate saints and the shrines that have been built to them. Now, things may be changing in the last three or four years, certainly since 9/11. I understand anti-American feeling has grown. I think you will find even some of the more tolerant sects of Islam are becoming more anti American. You have got to be very careful about generalizing about Islam because it is not Islam in general that is anti-American or anti-west, or militant. tolerant syncretic kind of Islam. Now, things may be changing in the last three or four years, certainly since 9/11. I understand that anti-American feeling has grown. I think you will find even some of the more tolerant sects of Islam are becoming more anti-American. You have got to be very careful about generalizing about Islam because it is not Islam in general that is anti-American or anti-west or militant. The Deobandi sect is more anti American, almost by definition, because of its puritanical approach to social relations. There are a variety of Islamic philosophies in Pakistan, some hard-line such as the Deobandi, and the South Asian versions of Wahabi. There are the Barelvi who are mystical and syncretic. There are some others along a spectrum from hard-line to very tolerant. Militant madrassas are really quite a small minority of the overall madrassas. Most of them do not preach militancy and teach Jihad.

Q: How did you see tribalism?

MILAM: Oh tribalism is very prominent in Pakistan, and quite difficult to deal with, and ranging form the tribal areas which are total historical anomalies in the 21st century, should have never been allowed to exist.

Q: These are up in the north.

MILAM: Up north and the west, along the Afghan border. I think Pakistani leaders made some fundamental errors when the country began 55 years ago. One of them was to allow

those tribal areas to sort of get a mandate that they could continue as they were. Then the second part of that would be that the central government did nothing in the 55 years since to try to bring the tribal areas into the nation and into the fold. What I mean by that is they should have been putting schools up there, developing projects, putting in money because that always changes things. But you see, tribalism manifested more widely than that. A lot of what you hear about Islam in the west, about the attitudes towards women, the attitudes towards honor killing, things like that, are I think that was basically tribal culture that are wrapped up by those who have a vested interest in keeping it that way with Islamic talk to make it more justifiable. A lot of these tribal customs are justified by those who claim they are Islamic, but they are not mandated by the Koran.

Q: Was Pakistan's failure to establish a sustainable democratic political system discussed in the Embassy's staff meetings?

MILAM: I think that issue was central to our concerns, and while we discussed and debated off and on other more topical and/or operational issues, we all spent a lot of time thinking about it. Let me tell you a little bit about my approach to running an embassy. First, I like a collegial atmosphere, a lot of debate and discussion of all the issues we are confronting be they theoretical, philosophical, operational, or topical. It helps me sharpen my own thinking. But it also helps all of us to bring these issues together, see the relationships, and the overlaps. Every week the Ambassador has to have a country team meeting. This is not only to foster a collegial atmosphere among the various USG agencies that are part of the country team, and to make sure that all of them are on the same page as the Ambassador on all the issues we are working on, but also to make sure that the Ambassador knows what each agency is dealing with and how. It is a show and tell meeting, but very necessary if the Embassy is to function efficiently. This is not the place for deep and abstract policy discussions. But they are very necessary, and they are much fun. But I also had each week, in Liberia and Bangladesh as well as Pakistan, a smaller group meeting which I called the think tank to talk in depth about the substantive issues analytically and from a USG policy perspective. This meeting would include the heads of the political and economic sections, the CIA station chief, the political analysts in the defense attaché office, the public affairs chief, and other various and sundry officers as necessary who were involved in certain areas of our work. We would usually focus on one issue and try to discuss it analytically from our various viewpoints in order to come to some conclusions on how USG policy should be constructed and implemented.

Q: Was there a tendency to blame Jinnah for casting the government the way it was.

MILAM: No, not at all. First of all Jinnah died the year after Pakistan was born. I think that the blame, even among Pakistanis, is usually more on the Army for perverting the system,. Many people believe that Pakistan would have been different had he lived. But he was an old man already and he was a sick man already. But Jinnah was a great man. I believe he was one of two or three great men of the subcontinent in the 20th century, Nehru and Gandhi being the other two. Jinnah was succeeded by people who just weren't up to his stature and who could not hold it together. It took somebody of enormous will

and enormous vision and enormous respect go hold the Pakistan movement together and bring a new country into being by force of intellect.

Q: Speaking of people, during your time what about the Bhutto factor. Was there a Bhutto factor?

MILAM: Well there was always a Bhutto factor. There will be a Bhutto factor in Pakistan for a long time, and there has been for a long time. Benazir, I met her two or three times before she left. She left Pakistan probably 5 or 6 months after I got there. I had met her two or three times. Actually I have probably seen her more since I have been out of Pakistan than I did while I was there. She left because she was threatened by court action for corruption. Her husband was in jail already, and has remained in jail, still is in jail. But there is a Bhutto factor because the party is still the party sort of a center left in Pakistan. Her father still commands, unjustifiably maybe, a great deal of respect for being a great political leader. The party continues to function on the basis that someday she will come back.

Q: What about Kashmir and the Indian relations while you were there?

MILAM: Well that was probably the biggest issue and the biggest This would entail crisis of my three years in Pakistan. India and Pakistan had already fought two wars over Kashmir, and by 1998 when I arrived both were overt nuclear powers. Prime Minister Sharif couldn't resist the pressure not to test the nuclear weapons we knew they had but he had come to office, I think, hoping to change the directions of Indo-Pak relations, and that required some sort of arrangement over Kashmir. Soon after the tests, Sharif reached out to Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee. Sharif instinctively wanted to get the Kashmir question behind him and Vajpayee was receptive to the idea. We thought it was a very positive act and were very supportive. There were a long series of back channel negotiations that led to Sharif's offer to host a summit meeting of the two leaders in Lahore in the early part of 1999. That seemed to us an enormous breakthrough if it could be sustained and turned into a true dialogue. They met for a day and a half in Lahore and forged the Lahore Agreement, which was basically an agreement of the outlines of a plan to begin a peace process aimed at resolving their differences over time. This would entail a substantive dialogue of a fairly long duration. It could have been a great step forward, pointing the way to some resolution of this 50-year hostile relationship between two now-nuclearized powers. Unfortunately as you know, the military, the Pakistan military didn't like it, was threatened by it, and undercut it completely by the incursion into Kargil. I believe that this incursion began surreptitiously before the Lahore meeting was held, perhaps before it was announced, but it could have been called back easily. It wasn't discovered until April of May. But the Kargil incursion was allowed to go ahead and it totally destroyed the Lahore process. This may have been what the Army had in mind when it didn't pull it back, but the continued rationalization is that it was just one of the tit-for-tat games the two Armies used to play. It took years to get some semblance of the Lahore process back on track, and even now it lacks the spirit that animated the Lahore process and the few months after its birth that it lived.

Q: Well at the time you were there, did you see the Pakistan military as being the thorn under the saddle or the bur under the saddle causing the problem?

MILAM: Oh very much so. The Pakistan military had bought wholesale into a strategy, which was bankrupt. It believed then that it could bleed India to death by getting insurgents into Kashmir and killing Indian soldiers. It did keep the Indian army tied down as somewhere between 400,000 and 500,000 Indian troops were in Kashmir. That may have been the other part of it. It may not have been the bleeding to death, as much as keeping the Indian army tied down.

Q: I would think the Pakistani military was really a professional force. Just by looking at the Indian army and the Pakistani army, they had been beaten like three or four times. What can the Pakistani army hope to do against a real Indian…

MILAM: Well I don't know that they are not planning to fight in a pitched battle. They know that they do not match up in terms of conventional warfare. That was not the point. They didn't plan to fight a pitched battle unless, of course, they were invaded. The idea was, as I said, to keep them tied down and bleed them to death in Kashmir though using proxies to create an insurgency. The idea in Cargill, if that is what you are getting back to, was to take a bit of ground that it thought the Indians would no fight for. They had exchanged positions before along the line of control. Unfortunately among the many things the Army leaders didn't realize was that the Vajpayee government was going to lose a vote of confidence have to run for re-election. I don't see how an Indian nationalist government could run for re-election with a part of the Pakistani Army sitting on some Indian territory, remote and rugged as it was. So the Indian government had to fight. Because of the nuclear angle, it became a big crisis in which we became deeply involved.

Q: How did the coup happen?

MILAM: Well it started with the Kargil incursion, and so I better go back over that first. As I mentioned, the Pakistani Army began quietly infiltrating fighters across the line of control to a place called Kargil which was a strategic spot in Kashmir overlooking an important road in late 1998. It was about 14-15000 feet in elevation, and the Indians had occupied it for a number of years, but they abandoned it every winter and reoccupied it every Spring. At first I think it was proxies they sent but after a while regular Army troops were sent in. They were discovered in April when the Indian troops returned for the summer. News of the fighting started coming in May. The Indian Army mounted an intensive campaign in very tough terrain, and they lost a lot of men, but by mid-June it was clear that it was an embarrassment and the Pakistanis needed to get out. The US and the rest of the developed world put massive pressure on them. Moreover, by then the Indians had begun rolling up the Pakistani outposts and it was clear they were facing a serious loss of men and face. But given the nature of Pakistani politics, neither Nawaz Sharif not General Musharraf felt they could get out without looking like they were kowtowing to the Indians. So they needed some sort of cover. They had a serious back channel process going, and for a while it looked as if they might cut a deal. But that fell apart toward the end. We knew of it, but were not involved in it.

Q: This is between India and Pakistan?

MILAM: Yes. The Pakistanis thought they had a deal in which they would pull out of Kargil, and the Indians would do two things; stop shooting so the Pakistanis could get out without minimum casualties, and more important, that the Indians would agree to restart the Lahore process. I spent much time in those days in the Prime Minister's principal foreign affairs advisor, a foreign ministry officer on secondment who I knew well. So I was pretty wired in on what they were up to. I am convinced that they thought they had the deal. The Indians swear that they never said yes. It could have been one of those misunderstandings where you hear what you want to hear. But the Paks were convinced that in late June they had a deal. Prime Minister Sharif was going to go to China, and on the way to or from China, he would stop in Delhi, meet with Vajpayee, and they would sign this deal. Well just as Sharif was leaving for China, either the Indians reneged or the misunderstanding became clear -- there was no deal. The Prime Minister cut his business in China two days short because he realized he was in a real pickle now. Right after he arrived back, I got a call requesting that he speak to President Clinton on the telephone. Interestingly, to this day I am asked who made the request. The foreign ministry claimed it didn't know anything about it, and I cannot remember who made the request. (I suspect it was Tariq Fatemi but I wouldn't swear to it.) That usually take a day or two but I was able to set it up, and it occurred on the afternoon of the third of July. I was not asked to monitor the call, so I was having tea with a friend of mine when it took place. A few hours later, in the evening, about 8:00 or 8:30 pm I was home reading, and I received a phone call from a Foreign Ministry official I know pretty well who said he needed a visa to go to Washington. I told him there would be no trouble and that he should send his passport over after we reopened on July 5th. He said he needed it that night. It turned out that Sharif phoned President Clinton to say he needed to see him soon, and Clinton had suggested he come to Washington to meet the next day, July 4 (I guess Clinton didn't have much on his July 4 schedule). We ended up giving about 15 Pakistani officials visas that night so they could accompany the Prime Minister to Washington.
Q*: Did anybody inform you?*

MILAM: Nobody in Washington informed me, nor anybody in the Foreign Ministry, but that was not their job anyway, and I don't think they knew for a few hours after the call. The minute after I had heard about it from the Pakistani who had called, by the way, even before I called the consular officer, I called Rick Inderfurth, the Assistant Secretary for South Asia and started yelling at him for not informing me. Rick said, he had found out only two minutes before I did, and please not to shout at him. So this had all been done by Clinton and Sharif, and the only people who knew were the guys in the White House listening in on the call. They hadn't bothered to tell anybody right away. So anyway, Sharif took off for Washington and met with Clinton on the Fourth of July. Clinton spent a long time with him, in what was almost a one on one meeting. Sharif was asked not to bring anybody in the room with him. Clinton had Bruce Riedel, his South Asia National Security Advisor in the room as note taker because nobody trusted Sharif to tell the story straight. I have not seen the notes from the meeting, but I think the substance was that Sharif was desperate for Clinton to do something or say something to provide him

political cover for the withdrawal from Kargil. By that I mean that he wanted Clinton to agree to something about implying (or saying) that the US would help solve the Kashmir impasse. Clinton would only agree to a statement that he would retain a personal interest in Kashmir in exchange for a clear statement by Sharif that Pakistan would withdraw its forces from Kargil. That is the best Sharif could get from Clinton to use as his political cover. Well that was pretty thin gruel. So you asked me about the coup. Well this was all the lead up to it. It really undid the civilian government in the end. It all became extremely controversial. In fact, there were lots of people who were just happy to see the Army fighting India and wanted them to stay in Kargil. But militarily and politically that was impossible, so they had to withdraw under the worst circumstances and without the US cover Sharif had coveted. And when they withdrew there was a widespread sentiment, especially in the army ranks, to know whose idea it was. Sharif publicly blamed the Army, especially Chief of Staff Musharraf, and the military and Musharraf blamed Sharif.

Q: For the actual decision to go in.

MILAM: The actual decision to go in, but more importantly the decision to withdraw. Now a little more background. In June, before the Indians reneged on the deal, General Zinni, the US military commander of CENTCOM came to Islamabad at President Clinton's request to talk to Musharraf and Sharif and try to persuade them to withdraw from Kargil. Both were, by then anxious to find a way to withdraw, but both needed political cover to do so. Both politically and militarily it was time to cut their losses. During Zinni's meeting with Musharraf, it was apparent to me that the General wanted out of Kargil. In the meeting with Sharif -- Musharraf was present an silent -- Sharif after beating about the bush for most of an hour, suddenly agreed that Pakistan would pull out its troops. I feel quite strongly that he believed at this point that he had a deal with Vajpayee as I described above. When that fell apart, he rushed to Washington and got the very limp statement from President Clinton which he hoped would be his political cover. But after the withdrawal, a vicious campaign broke out in the media, fed from both the PM's office and GHQ about whose fault it was, particularly the withdrawal. We were very worried about a coup, because of the mutual implicit threats -- first that Sharif might repeat his action of a year before and summarily dismiss the Army Chief of Staff, and second that the Army would use this as an excuse to take over again. In fact, we were picking up rumors that Sharif's envoys were trying to influence other military commanders, including with money, to stand still if they fired him. The USG made some public statements which contained veiled warnings about our reaction. Then, suddenly, it appeared that this had all gone away in the third week in September, as they seem to have resolved the issue. The media campaign halted abruptly and Sharif appointed Musharraf to a position, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, a ceremonial position that had always gone concurrently with the Chief of Army Staff. I took this as a signal that the dispute was over, and so did Washington, so we stopped worrying about a coup. I actually I gave a newspaper interview in which I said I was not worried about a coup anymore, and I made plans to take my R&R, which I had postponed two or three times. The next day there was the big headline in one of the newspapers saying Milam discounts coup or something like that. I was going to the airport that morning to see off my friend;

the Bangladeshi High Commissioner had been recalled. He was in a mischievous mood, and asked me to up hold up the newspaper with the headline while he took my picture. So, to jump ahead because of the joke involved, he sent me the picture in his Christmas card, well after the coup had taken place.

Q: This is like Dewey defeats Truman, you know.

MILAM: That's right. I actually have that picture in a frame in my home. It is right in front of my desk to remind me that when I start getting too overconfident of my analyses. While I was gone, Sharif suddenly moved against Musharraf who was in Sri Lanka. (Even Musharraf thought it was over and safe leave the country.) Sharif appointed a new Chief, General Ziauddin who was head of the ISI, who was an engineering officer and Sharif's personal favorite.) The plane that Musharraf was on which was a PIA flight was told not to land in Pakistan. When the announcement of his firing was made, the army reacted the army reacted on its own, took over the radio and television station, arrested Sharif, and that was the end of his regime.

Q: And you were in California.

MILAM: I was in California. It was Columbus Day, a holiday in California, I had gone for the traditional family picnic on the Sacramento River. The next morning, my DCM called early to tell me to pack my bags and come right back, That there had been a coup an hour of so earlier (Pakistan time). I got up, changed my ticket and got back on a plane. I was in Washington late that evening and spent the day there before getting back on a plane and heading for Islamabad. The President had announced while I was in the air that he was sending his ambassador back. I arrived back on Friday morning and met with Musharraf a couple of hours later.

Q: What message were you delivering?

MILAM: That the US does not like military coups. You must commit yourself to return to democracy as soon as possible.

Q: Well now, at that time how did you and your embassy evaluate Musharraf?

MILAM: Actually I knew Musharraf pretty well by then. I knew on arrival a year earlier that the Chief of Army Staff was a must if I were to have influence in the country. So after I arrived, I called on Musharraf. He was very uneasy with me the first time or two. I made an appointment to go see him about once a month. So we probably had ten or twelve meetings in the year before the coup. Once he got to know me, he relaxed and seemed, among other things, very pro-American. Of course he has a brother and a son living here We saw each other a couple of times socially, he was very relaxed socially. He actually came to the Fourth of July celebration that year.

Q; So Musharraf is in. What are you doing?

MILAM: Musharraf, well we are trying to work with the Musharraf government to nudge it back toward the electoral democracy the Army had overthrown, and to get done things we want to have to have done, and keep it from doing things we don't want to have done. I think for the most of the two years I was there that Musharraf was in power, we talked primarily about Afghanistan, about the Taliban, about Al Qaeda, about catching Al Qaeda guys slipping through Pakistan to Afghanistan. I went to him several times when we were having trouble with the ISI in getting cooperation on catching Al Qaeda guys we thought were around. I think the relationship was becoming what it essentially always had been and should be, a transactional one.

Q: How did we see this. OK Musharraf is in. ISI has essentially been running the Taliban or at least giving support, and that includes Al Qaeda. Was the ISI responding to say Musharraf.

MILAM: I don't know what Musharraf was saying to them. Nothing much changed in the two years I was there. I understood this. Pakistanis thought that it was in their strategic interest to have an Afghanistan next door that was not hostile to them. They thought that a Taliban controlled- Afghanistan that point would not have been hostile to them. They thought they had influence with the Taliban. They thought that they could pretty much get their way if they wanted it there, because they had been so helpful. And really you know, when you think about where Pakistan comes from, you understand they could not bear to have a hostile Afghanistan on one side and a hostile India on the other. Their eyes started to open about the Taliban in the spring of 2000. What started to open them was the incident where the Taliban destroyed those Buddhist statues. The Pakistanis were horrified by that idea, like the rest of the world. They tried to stop it. Musharraf sent two high ranking emissaries up to see Mullah Omar, one of them being my friend , Moinuddin Haider who had become Home Minister under Musharraf, and the other one being the director general of the ISI, General Mahmoud. I think they went up there thinking that if they asked the Taliban to do something, given their generous assistance to the Taliban, they will do it. Well the Taliban turned them down coldly. I think I started seeing light bulbs going on in their heads that maybe they didn't have as much influence up there as they thought. They were beginning to rethink their relationship with the Taliban. Would it have ever changed absent 9/11? I am not sure. But they were beginning to have doubts about it.

Q*: What about Iran while you were there?*

MILAM: I would call their relationship with Iran correct. They had diplomatic relations, but they didn't seem particularly warm to me. Remember, about 20 percent of the Pakistani population is Shia and 80s and early 90's, earlier 90's a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran was fought in Pakistan between the Sunnis and the Shias.

Q: So while you were there this is going on.

MILAM: Oh yes, this goes on constantly in Pakistan, and was going on at a diminished level while I was there. The military suppressed it pretty much in the first year because

the military hates this stuff. It was getting bad under the last days of Sharif. The Army come down pretty hard on the militant Shia and Sunni groups, and they laid off for awhile.

Q: What about for Americans? Was it dangerous for Americans to be there?

MILAM: No, I don't think so. In my time there I don't think Americans were in great danger unless they did something dumb. There was an American trekker who was killed in the Northern territories just after I first arrived. He was robbed and killed. Other than crime of that sort, I didn't think Americans were particular targets in Pakistan at the time. That has changed now. I didn't think the Pakistani jihads would go after Americans, only after other Pakistanis. Al Qaeda might have gone after Americans, but I believe there was an unspoken agreement with ISI that AQ wouldn't mess around in Pakistan, and the quid pro quo was that Pakistan would not stop them from going back and forth through Pakistan. Al Qaeda had enormous traffic back and forth through Pakistan on their way to Afghanistan.

Q: What about the nuclear thing after Musharraf came into power?

MILAM: That didn't change. The nuclear thing is a military thing to begin with. Nothing changed. We continued to push for them to sign the CTBT, but mainly for the record. That was hopeless.

Q: How did the withdrawal go when they were coming out of Kargil?

MILAM: Well it didn't go well. That was part of the reason things so controversial. The Army lost a lot of men while withdrawing which stirred up the public, but primarily the Army ranks. An easy withdrawal was one of the things the Paks thought they had an agreement on from the Indians. I think they thought they had agreement after the fourth of July that the Indians would stop shooting while they evacuated that little plateau over some fairly exposed territory. But in fact the Indians didn't stop shooting.

Q: Was there sort of a general feeling that Kashmir is going to be settled in a certain way. When one looks at as today the difference between Palestine and the Israeli view. You know for the last four or five years there has been sort of a general consensus what they solution probably would come out. Was there anything on…

MILAM: Most people believe the ultimate solution is to just turn the line of control into an international border and let Pakistan keep what it has got, and India keep what it has got. I suspect that that is a logical way out, but that is not an acceptable way out right now in Pakistan. General Musharraf has said so, and he said it just the other day. You know the Kashmir thing is kept alive by the army for its own purposes. Frankly, even in Punjab, though you would think it would be greater, there is not an enormous amount of interest in Kashmir anymore. It is the Jihadists, the Islamists, the religious parties and the army that keep it alive.

Q: What about turning completely to the other thing you said when you went out to Pakistan you were going to find a dysfunctional government and the economy is going down rapidly. Under Musharraf was anything happening on the economic side?

MILAM: You know that is the interesting thing. I think it was kind of retrospective, but after the army took power, it took them awhile to figure out why they took power. I think they really took power in kind of reflexive move. Sharif went after Musharraf and the army reacted in a reflexive way. But then they began to say they were going to clean the mess up that the Sharif and Bhutto governments had created, and part of that mess was the economic mess. I must say that while Musharraf's government disappointed me in that respect too, their economic reform policies were all talk and no action. The patron/client system of Pakistani feudal politics has prevented the real reform they need badly.

Q: Well were they moving into the technological fields? India of course…

MILAM: You mean the IT stuff. They are trying. I think India is going to dominate that for south Asia at least.

Q: Speaking of, IT means what?

MILAM: Information technology.

Q: Information technology. How did you find did that impact on your mission? You know the cell phone, the E-mail, you know it is a whole new world.

MILAM: Islamabad was the first post I had where I had both classified and unclassified E-mail. It does make things a lot nicer. We had unclassified E-mail in Liberia and unclassified E-mail in Bangladesh although it was just getting started on the State Department side. AID had it long before we did where there was a big AID mission. But classified E-mail has only recently come into being, but I had it there for most of my tour there. The other thing that has been very helpful is this has only grown up in the last decade is the telephone system they have got which is all satellite. I could pick up the telephone and dial a certain set of numbers and the embassy in Outer Mongolia would answer. Most everybody has it now, and it is really great. It is unclassified, but you can also put classified communications on it.

Q: Well how, let's say you are dealing on an issue with the Pakistani government. How would classified, I mean the ability to E-mail and talk on the phone, how does this…

MILAM: Oh it makes it a lot easier. It makes it easier in terms of talking to Washington informally about policy issues. I used it a lot to put forth new and different ideas or to talk to on security issues. I talked to US Pickering about once a week on all kinds of things including Kashmir. But it just makes it so much easier to do this in that kind of real quick fashion. So you could write a quick classified E-mail and send it instead of writing a formal cable. Also it is a lot more how shall I say, private. If I send a classified

e-mail to Pickering, it goes to Pickering and maybe his staff. If I send a classified cable to Pickering, it goes to 14 other bureaus and 27 other people. Too wide distribution.

Q: I know at one time they were saying if you get all these communications it means the embassy will just become and absolute satellite of the State Department. But I have heard other people say Oh no. It means the State Department no longer getting these preemptory cables, do this; do that. You sort of almost have to respond to it. Now you are thinking about it and you get your view in before.

MILAM: I think the latter view is correct. I am very much in favor of as much of this new technology as we can get. It really makes things easier. It made my job in Pakistan much easier. The harder the post, the more difficult the policy issues, the more you need it. I could write classified E-mails to Inderfurth or Pickering or even the desk officer or the country director on policy issues and say I really don't like the way we are doing this. I really think we ought to be doing it another way. I could get in my views before a cable or a policy is set in concrete. You could stop bad cables from coming out, preemptory cables.

Q: I mean there was a lot of apprehension I think, at the beginning, but I hear people really like it because it is putting more input, more collegial.

MILAM: I think it is much better. In Bangladesh, my DCM used to worry because AID which had E-mail, much faster than we did. He was convinced that AID was sending all kinds of policy, aid policy E-mails, and we were never seeing them. He was inclined to ask for a copy of each AID E-mail so that he could see it. Sort of like the DCM sees all cables before they go out. I talked him out of that. It is still true that when you have a formal policy decision, you have to formalize it with a cable. These things don't get formalized in E-mails. So, you know, any time when AID sends the policy cable, and we don't like it, we will stop it."

Q: Did you have any feel from the National Security Council weighing in?

MILAM: Ours you mean?

Q: Yeah. In other words did you feel there was a State-National Security Council not war but conflict going on?

MILAM: Not really. To my knowledge there was always a pretty good relationship, at least in Pakistan, between Bruce Riedel who was head NSC guy on South Asia and his counterpart at State, Rick Inderfurth. Don Camp, from State, worked for Riedel. I would talk to Bruce occasionally and Don frequently as well as my State Dept. contacts. No, I never detected much difference or tension between the NSC and the State Department on Pakistan. I think everybody saw everything pretty much alike. Sandy Berger was in fact quite helpful on a couple of things to the embassy, to me. For example, there were a whole lot of people against President Clinton's visit to Pakistan in 2000, some for political reasons, and some because of the security issues. The Secret Service was hard

over against it. Sandy was for it, and I think he called a meeting of the Secret Service with me so I could put facts on the table that they didn't want to recognize.

Q: What about during your time there, were you I mean was the constant theme when are you going to get back to democracy, or did you feel it was going to happen shortly?

MILAM: I actually was a little too confident perhaps. Musharraf said he was going to return to democracy in three years, and I thought he meant it. Actually he may have meant it in his own mind, but he appears to have had a very dim understanding of what democracy really means. I didn't realize at the time that he had a different kind of democracy in mind than most of us have. Pakistan shows no signs of establishing a truly democratic system. I knew that when Musharraf said he was going to have elections within three years of taking over, he meant it; and he did have elections. It is just that the elections didn't produce much of a democracy. But democratization was a constant theme. I know when the President came out that was one of his themes.

Q: We were talking about Musharraf saying he would have elections within three years.

MILAM: Oh yeah, I knew he was going to have elections within three years. That was not a problem, but what kind of elections and where they would take Pakistan was the problem. We kept asking him for that road map I asked him for on the first day I saw him after the coup. We never really got what I would call a road map. But in fact I think we were all confident that he was heading back towards electoral politics. So when he said Pakistan was going to get back to elections in three years, everybody believed him, and it was true, Pakistan had an election at the end of the three year period he had set out. The election, however, was to elect Musharraf as President.

Q: Tell me about the Clinton visit.

MILAM: It was a circus. I guess all presidential visits are circuses. It lasted six hours. Actually it was supposed to last six hours. I think it lasted seven because my take on Clinton among others is he has a hard time keeping to a schedule. He really is good with people, and so he meets all of these people and he talks to them and just sort of slows down. It was really quite an interesting time. I really enjoyed it. I didn't have to do all the prearrangement work. That is probably why I enjoyed it. Most of the people who were involved in the visit were busy trying to set it up and make sure it went OK, including my poor DCM who I had placed in charge of the administrative details.

Q: Who was your DCM?

MILAM: Michelle Sisson, a very fine officer. In fact I understand she is going to be ambassador to one of the Gulf states, the United Arab Emirates I think this summer. She did a super job, but I am sure by the end of the visit she was at wits end, but I was in great shape. I think it is a good role for the ambassador to be the tie breaker and the knot breaker. Literally every day Michelle called me with a problem between the Pakistanis and the White House advance team. I would have to talk to the Foreign Secretary, or

perhaps even the Foreign Minister, or Musharraf's aide de camp, or his chief civilian political advisor, Tariq Aziz. who happened to be a good friend of mine, to solve the problem of the day. Often the problem was exacerbated because some of these officials wouldn't take calls from Michelle, but they would from me. Sometimes the White House advance team can be unreasonable, and then I would have to talk to their chief. But the team's problem had to be really outlandishly stupid because before I would take up the Pakistani's cause with the chief. When things go really sticky with the Pakistanis, I would usually threaten that the President would cancel his visit, and that almost always allowed brought them around. Unlike my poor colleagues in India and Bangladesh who had to deal with a White House advance team for months, the visit to Pakistan wasn't actually put on officially until about two weeks before it happened. So we only had two weeks of the misery of preparation. The first week wasn't bad because we didn't have any advance people there. It took them a whole week to get out. The advance people were there the second week. They all were very competent, and I have great admiration for them, but they can cause lots of headaches for an embassy, because they want to do things their way, and they know what their way is. I got along with them pretty well, however. Anyway, I spent particularly the last week solving these knotty problems that nobody else could undo -- just the foreign minister and I working together usually. Anyway the visit went very well., There was so much concern about security. I am sure you read that they brought in two planes and one of them had the president and one of them didn't. They had actually a double for him. People still write about this visit as if the president never left the airport. In fact he got into a car and left the airport right away. We went in and he paid a protocol formal call on the president. I told you that I presented my credentials to the president. It was the same president, and I am not sure I had ever seen him since until the Clinton meeting. I went in with the president we called on. I went in with Clinton. That didn't last very long; it was just for protocol purposes. Then we went across the way where he met with Musharraf. He met twice with Musharraf, once in a smaller meeting. I was there with Madeline Albright and Sandy Berger and Bruce Riedel who was taking notes. I guess there were maybe another one or two people on our side, and Musharraf, the foreign minister, the foreign secretary and a few others on his side. That meeting lasted an hour or so. You know the president knew his brief very well; he was a very quick study as you know. The big things on that brief were the nuclear issue, democracy, the Taliban and Osama, and I don't remember in which order these came up. I think actually, I think I had to address this before the 9/11 commission. I think actually Osama was not number one and maybe should have been. He wasn't in those days. This is March, 2000, so it is a year and a half before I leave, and a year and a half before 9/11. I forget, there were other issues, the road map to democracy and so forth. Then I think because Musharraf, to give Musharraf a little bit of he needed something. We had a larger meeting in which Musharraf had most of his cabinet in the room. Then Clinton did something I am not sure to this day was the right thing to do, but he insisted on doing it. He gave a television address to the Pakistani nation. It was kind of an exhortatory speech. The President asked me later on if he had said the right things. I said, "If you are going to talk to them, then yes those are the right things to say." I think they were. It was hortatory, but it was done in very diplomatic and very persuasive ways. Anyway after that, Musharraf hosted a lunch at which even more of his officials could be in great presence.

Q: Were there any development more that you were dealing with before you left?

MILAM: Development is what way?

Q: I mean political or…

MILAM: No I think not. We had the same issues on our plate--Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, the relationship of Pakistan to the Taliban, the crawl to democracy, the road map which had never been produced, the nuclear issues remained at the center of the relationship. All of them were still on the table when I left. Most of them were on the table when I arrived, though not necessarily in the same order, so things didn't change that much in the three years I was there. It was a difficult assignment, but I enjoyed it very much. It was very difficult because the relationship between the two governments was pretty prickly for the most part. It was prickly even with Sharif and at least Sharif was an elected leader. Musharraf took over and continued the same policies generally, plus he had deposed a democratic government

Q: When you left there in the summer of 2001, what did you do?

MILAM: Well I took a couple of weeks leave in France and then I came back here and retired. It was time for me to retire. I took a trip to California which is where I was on 9/11. After 9/11 I got a call from Christina Rocca who was the Assistant Secretary for South Asia. She asked me to come back to work to work on Afghanistan. So when I got back to Washington in late October, I went to see her, and she asked me to come back and work on Afghanistan.

Q: Yes, "When actually employed."

MILAM: I worked on an economic reconstruction mechanism for Afghanistan. I thought we did a pretty good job there. EB had the lead and I was pleased to be supporting them. That worked out pretty well I thought. So when AF, the African Bureau asked me sometime in the spring if I would go out and run the embassy in Bujumbura for a couple of months, I agreed. So I left the Afghan job and went out to Bujumbura for a several months. When I came back I started applying to the Wilson Center where I am now. The last time I worked for the U.S. government was the day I left Bujumbura. I am still on the WE rolls. I still have my security clearance, and they still once on awhile call me and ask me if I am interested in something. Unfortunately they haven't found anything lately that I am interested in.

Q: Bujumbura is the capital of…

MILAM: Burundi.

Q: Anything happen while you were there?

MILAM: No. It was a wonderful few months as absolutely nothing happened. It was a war zone, but a pretty benign one at the time. Actually twice while I was there mortar shells landed in the outskirts of the city and killed some Burundians. Fortunately no Americans were hurt. You could see it building up. About six months later it did build up to some real fighting there, but now they have a peace agreement again. But while I was there, it was you know very peaceful except for those mortar shells.

Q: You are now at the Wilson Center where we are doing this interview. You are writing a book on…

MILAM: Pakistan and Bangladesh, a comparative study. It is an idea that I got while I was in Islamabad. Having been Ambassador in both places, I noted some similarities and a great many differences in the two countries. Of course, they had once been one country, and so the whole sort of intellectual rationale for the book is to find out how two countries which had once been one country, "the homeland for Muslims in South Asia," are faring 30 years after their separation, what similarities remain, and how great the differences are now and why they are so great. I have been working on it now since January of 2003. That is when I started here at the Wilson center. I am about 75% through with the drafting of the book. I have learned a lot about both countries, more than I knew when I was there. I am enjoying it very much, enjoying writing a book. I hope to write more.

End of interview