

IRAN

COUNTRY READER TABLE OF CONTENTS

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| Henry S. Villard | 1929-1931 1931-1935 | Vice Consul, Tehran Persian Desk, Washington, DC |
| Raymond A. Hare | 1933-1935 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| A. David Fritzlan | 1940-1942 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| Clinton L. Olson | 1944-1945 | Office of Strategic Services, Tehran |
| John H. Stutesman | 1946-1949 1949-1952 | Consular/Political Officer, Tehran Officer in Charge, Iranian Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Dale D. Clark | c1951 | Point Four Program, Foreign Agriculture Service, Chief Iran Office, Washington, DC |
| Lewis Hoffacker | 1951-1953 | Third Secretary/Rotation Officer, Tehran |
| Carl F. Norden | 1952-1953 | Consular Officer, Tehran |
| Henry Byroade | 1952-1954 | Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| L. Bruce Laingen | 1953-1955 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| Christian A. Chapman | 1953-1957 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| William M. Rountree | 1953-1955 1955-1959 | Deputy Chief of Mission, Tehran Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Donald S. Brown | 1954-1956 | Administrative Officer, USAID, Tehran |
| Frederick W. Flott | 1954-1956 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| Robert L. Funseth | 1954 1954-1956 | Vice Consul, Tahrán Consular Officer, Tabriz |
| David Nalle | 1954-1958 | Provincial Public Affairs Officer, USIS, |

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| | | Meshed |
| Victor H. Skiles | 1954-1958 | USAID, Greece, Turkey, Iran, Washington, DC |
| Kathryn Clark-Bourne | 1956-1958 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| Murat Williams | 1956-1959 | Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs, Washington, DC |
| George M. Bensusky, Jr. | 1956-1960 | Near Eastern Affairs, Economic Division Washington, DC |
| Robert Bauer | 1957-1959 | Cultural Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Harold G. Josif | 1957-1959 | Consul, Tabriz |
| Nelson C. Ledsky | 1957-1959 | Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Greece, Turkey, and Iran, Washington, DC |
| Burnett Anderson | 1957-1960 | Country Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Isabel Cumming | 1957-1960 | Secretary, USIS, Tehran |
| Fraser Wilkins | 1957-1960 | Chargé d'Affaires, Tehran |
| Franklin J. Crawford | 1957-1960 1960-1962 | Principal Officer, Isfahan Political Officer, Tehran |
| Peter P. Lord | 1958-1961 | Vice Consul, Khorramshahr |
| Maurice Williams | 1958-1960 1960-1961 1961-1963 | Assistant Director, USOM, Tehran USAID, Iranian Affairs, Washington DC Deputy Mission Director, Tehran |
| Myles Greene | 1958-1961 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| Michael Pistor | 1959-1960 | Public Affairs Officer (Trainee), USIS, Tehran |
| John W. Holmes | 1959-1961 | Vice Consul, Khorramshahr |
| Richard Thomas Kennedy | 1959-1961 | Advisor to Iranian Military, Tehran |

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|------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| William Green Miller | 1959-1962 1962-1965 | Vice Consul, Isfahan Political Officer, Tehran |
| Frank E. Maestrone | 1960-1962 | Principal Officer, Khorramshahr |
| Michael B. Smith | 1960-1962 | Generalist, Tehran |
| David Nalle | 1960-1963 | Director of the Bi-national Center, Tehran. |
| Talcott W. Seelye | 1960-1964 | Deputy Intelligence Relations Officer, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Stuart W. Rockwell | 1960-1965 | Deputy Chief of Mission, Tehran |
| George M. Barbis | 1961 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| Carleton S. Coon, Jr. | 1961-1963 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| Archie M. Bolster | 1961-1963 1963-1966 1966-1968 | Vice Consul, Tabriz Consular/Political Officer, Tehran Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Harold H. Saunders | 1961-1968 | Staff Assistant, Central Intelligence Agency, Washington, DC |
| Franklin J. Crawford | 1962-1963 | Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Daniel Oliver Newberry | 1962-1964 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| Fernando E. Rondon | 1962-1964 | Rotational Officer, Tehran |
| Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. | 1962-1966 1966-1973 | Financial Officer, Tehran Country Director for Iran, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Carleton S. Coon, Jr. | 1963-1965 | Principal Officer, Tabriz |
| William A. Helseth | 1964-1968 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| William Green Miller | 1965 | Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Iran, Political Dynamics," Washington, DC |

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|----------------------------|------------------------|--|
| Franklin J. Crawford | 1965-1966 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| Walter L. Cutler | 1965-1967 | Political Officer, Tabriz |
| James E. Taylor | 1965-1967 1967-1970 | Rotational Officer, Tehran Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr. | 1965-1974 1974-1979 | Deputy Detailed Director of Near Eastern Affairs Washington, DC Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Victor L. Stier | 1965-1968 | Iran Desk Officer, USIA, Washington, DC |
| Armin H. Meyer | 1965-1969 | Ambassador, Iran |
| Daniel Oliver Newberry | 1966-1967 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| Lawrence J. Hall | 1966-1968 | Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| David M. Ransom | 1967-1968 | Consular Officer, Tehran |
| Marjorie Ransom | 1967-1968 | Temporary Duty, Tehran |
| Walter M. McClelland | 1967-1970 | Deputy Supervisor of International Relations Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Harold H. Saunders | 1967-1971 | Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Thomas R. Hutson | 1968-1971 | Rotation Officer, Tehran |
| Charles W. McCaskill | 1968-1972 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| William W. Lehfeldt | 1969-1974 1975-1978 | Deputy Principal Officer, Tehran General Electric VP, Tehran |
| Bradshaw Langmaid | 1970-1971 | USAID, Iran Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Michael Metrinko | 1970-1973 | Peace Corps, Iran |
| Charles A. Mast | 1970-1972 1972-1974 | Commercial Officer, Tehran Consul, Tabriz |

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| James G. Scoville | 1972 | University of Illinois Research Grantee, Iran |
| Joseph S. Farland | 1972-1973 | Ambassador, Iran |
| John M. Evans | 1972-1974 | Consular Officer/Special Assistant to Ambassador, Tehran |
| Ernestine S. Heck | 1972-1974 | Wife of DCM/Cultural Affairs Officer, Tehran |
| Andrew I. Killgore | 1972-1974 | Political Consular, Tehran |
| Phillip W. Pillsbury, Jr. | 1972-1974 | American Binational Center Director, Tehran |
| Henry Precht | 1972-1976 | Political/Military Officer, Tehran |
| Walter A. Lundy | 1973-1975 | Economic Officer, Tehran |
| John Ratigan | 1973-1975 | Consular Officer, Tehran |
| Arnold Schifferdecker | 1973-1975 | Desk Officer, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Thomas Stern | 1973-1976 | Political/Military Security Assistant, Washington, DC |
| Gordon Winkler | 1973-1977 | Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Ralph H. Ruedy | 1974-1975 | Rotational Officer, Tehran |
| Shirely E. Ruedy | 1974-1976 | Spouse of USIS Officer, Tehran |
| Archie M. Bolster | 1974-1976 | Deputy Head of Political Section, Tehran |
| Sue Patterson | 1974-1976 | Vice Consul, Tehran |
| Lynne Lambert | 1974-1977 | Commercial Officer, Tehran |
| Roger C. Brewin | 1974-1978 | Economic Counselor, Tehran |
| Lange Schermerhorn | 1974-1978 | Economic/Commercial Officer, Tehran |
| William D. Wolle | 1974-1978 | International Relations Officer, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |

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| Albert A. Thibault, Jr. | 1975 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| John Allen Cushing | 1975-1977 | English Language Instructor, School of International Training, Rasht, Iran |
| Ulric Haynes | 1975-1977 | Manager, Columbus Engine Company, Tehran |
| John D. Stempel | 1975-1979 | Deputy Chief of Political Affairs, Tehran |
| Clyde Donald Taylor | 1975-1979 | Economic Development and Financial Officer, Tehran |
| George Lambrakis | 1976-1979 | Deputy Chief of Mission, Tehran |
| David C. McGaffey | 1976-1979 1979 | Consul, Tabriz Acting Political Consul, Tehran |
| Robert M. Beecroft | 1976-1979 | Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Walter F. Mondale | 1976-1980 | Senator, US Iran Policy, Washington, DC |
| Victor L. Tomseth | 1976-1979 1979-1981 | Principal Officer, Shiraz Political Officer, Tehran |
| Myles Greene | 1976-1978 1978-1979 1979-1982 | Deputy Director, Iran Affairs, Washington, DC Political Military Counselor, Tehran Deputy Director, NEA, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Robert A. Martin | 1976-1978 1978-1982 | Political/Military Officer, Tehran Iran Working Group, Washington, DC |
| David E. Long | 1976-1982 | Director, Near East and North Africa, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Theodore A. Boyd | 1977-1979 | Information/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Lewis P. Goelz | 1977-1979 | Consul General, Tehran |

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|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Jack Shellenberger | 1977-1979 | Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Thomas B. Reston | 1977-1980 | Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Deputy Spokesman, Washington, DC |
| Arthur W. Hummel, Jr. | 1977-1981 | Ambassador, Pakistan |
| Michael Metrinko | 1977-1978 1978-1981 1981-1983 | Visa Officer, Tehran Consular Officer, Tabriz Evacuation, Tehran |
| Hans Binnendijk | 1977-1985 | Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, DC |
| John R. Countryman | 1978-1979 | Deputy/Acting Director, ARA, Washington, DC |
| Cecil S. Richardson | 1978-1979 | Chief Consular Officer, Tehran |
| Kenton W. Keith | 1978-1980 | Special Assistant to Deputy Director, USIA, Washington, DC |
| Harold H. Saunders | 1978-1981 | Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Henry Precht | 1978-1981 | Iran Desk Officer, Washington, DC |
| Nicholas A. Veliotis | 1978-1981 | Ambassador, Jordan |
| Sally Grooms Cowal | 1978-1982 | Cultural Affairs Officer, Tel Aviv |
| Morris Draper | 1978-1983 | Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Walter L. Cutler | 1979 | Ambassador Designate |
| Joseph P. O'Neill | 1979 | Temporary Duty, Tehran |
| Robert S. Dillon | 1979-1980 | Deputy Chief of Mission, Ankara, Turkey |
| John M. Evans | 1979-1980 | Staff Aide to Secretary of State, Washington, DC |
| G. Eugene Martin | 1979-1980 | Staff Secretariat, East Asia-Iran Hostage |

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| | | Crisis, Washington, DC |
| Harvey F. Nelson, Jr. | 1979-1980 | Diplomat in Residence, Arizona State University |
| Robert S. Steven | 1979-1980 | Senior Watch Officer, Operations Center, Washington, DC |
| Stephen Bosworth | 1979-1981 | Ambassador, Tunisia |
| Harmon E. Kirby | 1979-1981 | Deputy Chief of Mission, Khartoum, Sudan |
| Marie Therese Huhtala | 1979-1981 | Line Officer; Staff Secretariat, Washington, DC |
| Donald F. McHenry | 1979-1981 | United States Ambassador to the United Nations, New York, New York |
| John E. Graves | 1979-1981 | Public Affairs Officer, USIS, Tehran |
| Elizabeth Ann Swift | 1979-1981 | Political Officer, Tehran |
| Richard H. Morefield | 1979-1981 | Consul General, Tehran |
| L. Bruce Laingen | 1979-1981 | Chargé d'Affaires, Tehran |
| Russell Sveda | 1979-1981 | Watch Officer, Operations Center, Washington, DC |
| Peter D. Constable | 1979-1982 | Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Wayne White | 1979-2004 | Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Washington, DC |
| Louise Taylor | 1980 | Afghan, Pakistan Desk Officer, USIA, Washington, DC |
| Alfred H. Moses | 1980-1981 | Lawyer, Special Counsel to President Carter, Washington, DC |
| David M. Evans | 1980-1981 | Director, Office of International Security Operations-Iran Hostage Crisis, Washington, DC |

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|---------------------------|-----------|---|
| Michael H. Newlin | 1980-1981 | Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Organizations, Washington, DC |
| Ralph E. Lindstrom | 1980-1983 | Director of Iranian Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| John H. Kelly | 1981-1982 | Executive Secretariat, Washington, DC |
| Edward L. Lee II | 1981-1982 | Chief, Diplomatic Security Service-Iran Hostage Crisis, Washington, DC |
| Richard M. Fairbanks, III | 1982-1983 | Near Eastern Affairs, Middle East Negotiator, Washington, DC |
| Richard T. McCormack | 1982-1985 | Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs, Washington, DC |
| James A. Placke | 1982-1985 | Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs, Washington, DC |
| John D. Stempel | 1983-1985 | Director of Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| Kenton W. Keith | 1983-1985 | Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, USIA, Washington, DC |
| John Whitehead | 1985-1989 | Deputy Secretary of State, Washington, DC |
| Richard T. McCormack | 1985-1989 | US Ambassador to the Organization of American States, Washington, DC |
| David M. Evans | 1986-1987 | Office of Counter-Terrorism, Washington, DC |
| Alfred Joseph White | 1987 | Iran-Contra Task Force, Washington, DC |
| John H. Kelly | 1989-1991 | Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, Washington, DC |
| G. Jonathan Greenwald | 1991-1993 | Office of the Special Representative for Counterterrorism, Washington, DC |
| David E. Reuther | 1992-1993 | Iran-Iraq Desk Officer, Washington, DC |

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| Parker W. Borg | 1994-1996 | Office of Counter Terrorism, Washington, DC |
| Anthony C. Zinni | 1997-2000 | Commander-in-Chief, CENTCOM |

HENRY S. VILLARD
Vice Consul
Tehran (1929-1931)

Persian Desk
Washington, DC (1931-1935)

Ambassador Henry S. Villard was born in New York, New York in 1900. During World War I He served as an ambulance driver in Italy. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1921. He then did graduate work at Magdalen College at Oxford University. His Foreign service career included positions in Iran, Brazil, Venezuela, Norway, Libya, and Senegal. Ambassador Villard was interviewed by his son, Dimitri Villard on July 18, 1991.

Q: Your first post was in Tehran in 1929 in what was then called Persia, now known as Iran. What was the situation in Persia in those days?

VILLARD: It was a very interesting situation indeed. The ruler was Reza Shah Pahlavi, a Cossack officer who had overthrown the Kajar dynasty and assumed control of the government in 1924. He became minister of war and finally crowned himself Shah. His object was to get Persia into a modern frame of mind instead of the medieval status it had been in. He literally dragged Persia into the twentieth century, opposed from all sides by the mullahs, the clergy, who at that time were very powerful and are today even more powerful.

I was appointed vice consul in charge of the consulate general in Tehran and arrived at my post in September 1929. One of my predecessors, Robert Imbrie, had been assassinated in the streets of Tehran and people were still talking about the Imbrie case. It was not a very encouraging start to living in Persia.

Q: What were your responsibilities?

VILLARD: As officer in charge of the consulate, which was entirely separate from the legation, my responsibilities dealt largely with visas for the United States, passports, protection of American citizens, notarial services, promotion of trade, invoices for Persian exports to the U.S., and so forth.

Q: What were the major United States concerns in Persia at that time?

VILLARD: The main concern as far as the United States went was the construction of Persia's first railroad that the Shah had undertaken. His idea was to link up the north and the south of his country in a direct rail line. A German consortium was given the northern section, from Tehran north to the Caspian Sea and an American outfit, Ulen and Company was given the southern section, from Tehran to the Persian Gulf. These two groups worked together until, because of various unfortunate incidents, the Americans were thrown out and the Germans finished the job. But as long as I was in Persia the building of the line on the American sector was our most immediate concern.

Q: Charles C. Hart was the ambassador at that time. What was your impression of him at that moment?

VILLARD: Charlie Hart was a shirt-sleeved diplomat, a former newspaper man from Oregon. He was a political appointee, of course, but he was also one of the most capable persons I have ever met in the line of diplomacy. He had no foreign service training whatever. He had been minister to Albania before he came to Tehran, but he had no other experience in diplomacy. He was a straight-shooting, sincere, blunt speaking man; he brooked no antagonism towards the United States and stood up for the United States and its values at every turn. He had a great sense of humor. He was so humorous in some of his dispatches, in fact, that they were sometimes given to the Secretary of State to read as a relief from the ordinary dispatches that came in from the field. He was a man who could not be fooled, he could see through anything. He was hard boiled, but also compassionate. I would rate him very high, especially as a political appointee.

Q: Did we have an embassy or legation in Persia?

VILLARD: A legation. There were very few embassies in those days, most posts were legations.

Q: What was your impression of the legation itself?

VILLARD: The legation was well run. It was a small legation in a primitive country. It was an unhealthy post. Of course, there were no women assigned to the legation. The clerks were either Persian, Assyrian or Armenian. They were all very loyal to the United States.

Q: How did you view the role of the United States in the Middle East in 1929?

VILLARD: When I was assigned to Tehran most of my friends pitied me. They said, "What a shame that you are going to a part of the world where nothing ever happens." To a certain extent that was true, American interests were not so very important in that part of the world at that particular time. We were observers and reporters rather than participants in the scene.

Q: The time you were stationed there was the beginning of the great depression in the United States. Can you tell us what were your impressions of the effect of that on the Foreign Service?

VILLARD: Well, at the beginning the effects in the legation and consulate in Tehran were not yet noticeable. Later, in Washington, I was furloughed for one month on a payless furlough, and

economy was the watchword. I was not stationed abroad during a large part of the depression.

Q: In 1931 you returned to Washington for an assignment to the Department of State. What were your duties at that time?

VILLARD: I was assigned to the Persian desk of the Department for a period of four years. My other countries were Afghanistan, Turkey and Iraq. At my level, the lowest level, I handled the relations with those countries.

Q: During that time there was a change of administration with Hoover out and Franklin Roosevelt elected to the presidency. What was your impression as a young Foreign Service officer to this event?

VILLARD: It did not affect me personally because as a career Foreign Service officer my allegiance was to the United States regardless of the name of the incumbent or the political party in power at that time. I served my government impartially. Therefore the change of administration had no effect on me personally.

Q: Do you feel that Roosevelt had a different view of the role of the United States in the world than his predecessor?

VILLARD: Roosevelt was very much his own master as far as relations with the rest of the world were concerned. He had very little use for the State Department or the Foreign Service, but a more global aspect on foreign affairs than his predecessor.

Q: How was the State Department run in the 1931-35 period?

VILLARD: By and large the Department was run by the geographic divisions, by the assistant secretaries, by the Under Secretary and of course by the secretary of state himself. Cordell Hull was the object of great affection by his staff. He was easy of access and it was very much a family affair to discuss problems. One could hardly imagine today a small group running the Department as in those days. But Roosevelt regularly by-passed Hull in favor of Sumner Welles, the Under Secretary. Hull was particularly concerned with reciprocal trade agreements and with the advancement of commerce.

Q: The State Department was then located in the old executive office building next to the White House.

VILLARD: That is right, a gingerbread-type structure with high ceilings in every room, mantelpieces, huge windows, marble decorations, swinging doors in each room like an old saloon.

Q: How would you rate the competence of the Department's staff at that time?

VILLARD: In general I would rate the staff very good, especially the heads of the geographical

divisions.

Q: What were the major concerns of your job?

VILLARD: My major concern was always Persia and Persia's concerns with the United States. At the particular time I was desk officer we had the problem of the Ulen case, Ulen was the company that was thrown out by the Persians on the alleged ground of breaking their contract for the construction of the railway. There were many angles to this and the case dragged on for years. The Persians sued the company and the company sued the Persians and it was deadlocked the entire time of my sojourn at the Persian desk.

We also had another kind of problem with Persia. For example, the day that the housekeeper of the Persian legation came into my room unannounced with a baby in her arms which she deposited on my desk. She said, "What are you going to do about this?" and explained that the infant was the child she had borne for the chargé d'affaires of the Persian legation who had since returned to Tehran. It was one of the problems to collect from the Persian government money to support the charge's child in the United States.

Another example of the problems I had - there was a famous air race from London to Melbourne in Australia. One of the entrants was an American who was forced down over the southern coast of Persia. Whereupon he was promptly arrested and put in jail by the Persian authorities. My problem was to get him out of jail in time so that he could continue in the race, but it was a hopeless game.

Q: Did you have any problems in Afghanistan in that particular period?

VILLARD: There were no particular problems in Afghanistan. It was an extremely primitive country. Assassinations were frequent, changes of government were frequent. I remember accompanying the Afghan ambassador to call on Secretary of State Cordell Hull and guiding him through the interview that followed. He was totally lost in Washington and appreciated any help in finding his way around diplomatic circles.

Q: What can you tell us of your impressions of the working habits of some of the senior members of the Department at that time?

VILLARD: Well I can immediately think of my chief in the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Wallace Murray. He was probably the best chief I could possibly have had, but he was a martinet. He was tough, incisive, extremely able, shrewd, astute, never spared his men in any way, extremely hard working, but a person from whom one could learn an enormous amount. I think if we had more of his ability our record in the diplomatic field would have been improved.

Q: That period of time was before the invention of air conditioning and can you tell us what it was like to be in the State Department in the middle of summer?

VILLARD: We pulled down the shade and put an electric fan on the floor so that it would play

on your feet, took off your coat, rolled up your sleeves and perspired. That is the way it was and usually when the temperature reached ninety-five degrees the Department was dismissed for the day. We would all go home and try to keep cool.

RAYMOND A. HARE
Vice Consul
Tehran (1933 - 1935)

Ambassador Raymond A. Hare was born in Martinsburg, West Virginia on April 3, 1901. He received a bachelor's degree from Grinnell College in 1924. His overseas posts included Egypt, France, Greece, Iran, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, and Washington, DC. During his career, Ambassador Hare served as ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Egypt, Turkey, and the United Arab Republic. In Washington, DC, he held the positions of Director General of the Foreign Service, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern South Asian Affairs, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs. Ambassador Hare was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1987.

HARE: We hadn't been at Beirut very long before I learned that I was being groomed for the job of desk officer in the State Department for several countries, including Turkey, Lebanon and Iran. It wasn't long then that we were transferred from Beirut to Tehran. My wife was pregnant by then, which didn't deter us from starting across the desert for Tehran in our car. There was one bus line, run by a Britisher (called Nairn) but there was no road, only tracks and certainly no markers. Travel in the desert has its problems. As people pass along what seems to be a proper path the sand is churned up. Seeing this "mess," travelers try to bypass the churned up part thus creating an ever widening set of tracks. The story goes that some people, in trying to circumvent these churned up paths found themselves ending right where they started. We got lost several times, even though we had an experienced driver with us.

We spent one night at "Fort Rutbah" in the desert before reaching Baghdad. From then on I drove myself to Tehran. It was early winter and the roads were rough going and icy. We had to pass over some high mountains. The road was precipitous and we often found ourselves skidding and looking down into a deep ravine way below. That was no fun. Finally we pulled into Hamadan where there was an American missionary station. If ever it has been blessed it was blessed that night by us.

In Tehran my work was largely consular and not particularly worthy of mention. What was interesting, however, was that this was the era of Reza Shah, the late Shah's father. He was a tough man and ruled the country with a rod of iron. I remember that he was particularly anti-clergy, which kept them very much out of sight. I don't recall even having heard the word "Ayatollah" though they must have existed. I do recall that there was this religious area of Qom, which was sort off limits to us. We would detour around it. That is about the only impression I have of what is now this tremendous impact of the Shia, their terrorism. You just didn't go to

Qom, that's all.

Reza Shah, like Ataturk, was a very dominant personality. He was also in a sense a revolutionary in that he wanted to modernize Iran. But while he wanted certain assistance, especially construction firms from the West, he did not want any foreign influence of any kind. We, as foreigners, were not allowed to associate with Iranians except for a few people in the Office of Protocol in the government. We would be invited to the palace for a New Year's Day reception, but there was no meeting otherwise. I recall that when Rives Childs was transferred to Tehran from Cairo he was traveling with an Iranian diplomat friend who was also being transferred to Tehran. On arrival at the border, his friend said, "Well, goodbye, perhaps I won't see you again," and he never did.

Once I was invited to play tennis at the American Elburz College in Tehran and I happened to meet two young men from the Bakhtiari tribe in southern Iran, who had been in school in England. Forgetting such restrictions, I invited them to tea; they came and were taken by several policemen when they left and warned never to do so again.

A. DAVID FRITZLAN
Vice Consul
Tehran (1940-1942)

A. David Fritzlan was born in India in 1914 to American missionary parents. He received a bachelor's degree from Northwest Nazarene College in 1934 and a master's degree from the University of Kentucky in 1936. He joined the Foreign Service in 1938. Mr. Fritzlan's career included positions in Naples, Baghdad, Tehran, Basra, Tangier, Barcelona, Alexandria, Salonika, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on May 29th, 1990.

Q: We'll move on because I want to get your focus on things. You went to Tehran where you were from 1940 to '42. What was the situation in Tehran in that period?

FRITZLAN: It was very dicey. The German and Italian agents were roaming around the country, and undoubtedly they were preparing the ground for some kind of takeover, as they had been active in the southern part of Iran during the First World War, and caused a lot of headaches and damage to British interests. The ruler was the old Shah, the father of the Shah who died a few years ago. He'd been in a Cossack regiment raised by the Russians in the '20s, made himself Shah; a man barely literate, unscrupulous, ruthless, and you might say by 1940 openly pro-Axis. We were expecting trouble, and, of course, it did come. When Hitler invaded Russia in June of 1941, Russia then became an ally of the British, and they and the British concerted on plans to get rid of the old Shah, and get rid of the Germans and Italians in Iran. This was an area of vital interest to both countries.

Well, in September '41, the Shah was told by the British and Russians about these Axis agents,

and that if he didn't start getting rid of them, arresting them and getting them out of the country within 48 hours, there would be demands made upon him to abdicate. In effect this ultimatum was presented, but it was presented after a long period of efforts on the part of the British--even before the Russians got into the war--to get the Shah to face up to the fact that his country was being used by the Axis and putting him in a non-neutral position. He would never accept this. He would say, "Of course, what you're saying is untrue, and I know better than you, and such people don't exist." In the end he was faced with an ultimatum--do this, this and this, within 48 hours or else you must abdicate. Well, he didn't do it. He was forced to abdicate, and moved out and eventually ended up in South Africa, and his son--a timid, weak, a colorless figure, appeared on the scene as the new Shah. Nobody had any high hopes of him. We thought at best he could be persuaded by the British and ourselves, to appoint reliable, responsible men into his government, and let them get on with things, which is pretty well what he did.

Q: What were you doing at the Embassy?

FRITZLAN: Legation, as it was then.

Q: This was when?

FRITZLAN: I got there in November of '40, a year later we were in the war. In that year I was again doing consular work, some commercial work. We had quite big commercial deals with Iran at the time, steel shipments, and that sort of thing. Protection of American citizens was also an important function. One traveled a bit here and there; it was difficult to travel, you had to get permits. Naturally, Tehran was a very important listening post at that time; I picked up pieces of information here and there which we made available to our Minister. But really nothing exciting. After we got into the war it was another matter, of course. Then Iran became the route through which most of our supplies to Russia came. I realized immediately what the purpose was when I got a request to go to the British and others to get all the details about the railway from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian, the gauge, the bridges, the height of this, the width of that, and rolling stock and all that sort of thing. So we sent that in. Of course, in the next year things began to roll and we got a lot of equipment by this route, and later I was sent to Basra for a couple of years.

In this period, acting upon requests of the government, we brought in a number of financial advisers, someone to advise on police reform, and an agriculture adviser.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the United States was beginning to supplant the British? Or was that indeed the case?

FRITZLAN: The British thought we were. The British were highly suspicious, and resentful of any kind of intrusion, or what was thought to be intrusion on our part. In effect they used to tell us, "Look, we know the Middle East. We know this area. We've been here for many, many years, we know the Arabs and all the rest of it. Why don't you just help out with money because we're short of money, and let us get on with it, and you back us up every time anything arises in the way of a crisis." Well, we weren't buying that and they became aware of that in due course. But

we did try, and to a large extent we succeeded in our efforts to form a kind of harmonious relationship with the British and on the whole we worked together and not at cross purposes.

Q: Did you find that your greatest diplomacy in you yourself was in dealing with the British?

FRITZLAN: Oh, almost you could say that. You could just about say that. They felt they could be frank with us, and we felt we could be frank with them, and all the same one had to be diplomatic. But we could be franker with them perhaps than we could with anybody else. At the same time we were well aware of the great strength, militarily and commercially, of the British in the region.

Q: What sort of feelings were you getting from our people at our Legation, and where you were American officers, about the role of the Soviets? Because they had also moved in, and this became a matter of great concern in Iran at that time.

FRITZLAN: At that time the Soviets were a problem in a sense. We didn't know what they were up to, what their mission was, what their policy was except to win the war, of course. They were in a large compound with high walls and you never saw them except on very formal occasions, and then there was never any kind of--even though we were allies--any kind of a relationship, except with respect to Chiefs of Mission who would meet and exchange pleasantries. But that was about all there was to it, nothing more. Certainly we weren't surprised when after the end of hostilities in Europe, the areas of Iran that the Russians occupied contiguous to Russia in the north, in particular Azerbaijan, was not evacuated when the Iranian government asked them to do so. And it took, of course, concerted pressure on the part of the British and French, and ourselves--through the UN--to get them out. This was one of the first early victories of the UN.

CLINTON L. OLSON
Office of Strategic Services
Tehran (1944-1945)

Ambassador Clinton L. Olson was born in South Dakota in 1916. He moved to California when he was 15 years old. He attended Stanford University for his undergraduate and graduate work, but was called into active duty as a Reserve Officer in the U.S. Army in 1941 before receiving his MBA. In addition to Nigeria, Ambassador Olson served in Russia, Iran, Austria, Martinique, England, and Sierra Leone. He was interviewed on April 17, 1996 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: So you were two years in Iran. From when to when?

OLSON: It wasn't two years, it was from the summer of 1944 until December of 1945. I left in December.

Q: While you were there, was the Iranian Government more or less bypassed?

OLSON: Yes. We were occupying it, for all practical purposes. I was OSS in those years.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

OLSON: I was in Secret Intelligence, SI.

Q: Against whom?

OLSON: Against the Russians. Supposedly, I was looking for Germans in Iran, but most of them had been eradicated and so what I ended up doing largely was Economic Intelligence in Iran. I was undercover part of the time. I had a cover job, as Fiscal Advisor to the Persian Gulf Command.

Q: What were you looking at in Intelligence? You say economic intelligence - whose economic activities and what sort of things were you looking at?

OLSON: We were just looking at what the Russians were up to, primarily. Spying on the Russians's activities.

Q: Was there concern that the Soviets were going to take over Northern Iran?

OLSON: Oh, yes. Very definitely. They were building bases, not physical bases, but they were establishing a foot hold all around the Northern Persian area.

Q: Could you get in there?

OLSON: I was in the North a couple of times and it was always a little bit "hairy" to get in there. They didn't like that and you were likely to be picked up. I didn't do too much prowling in there. I was staying in Tehran most of the time. I was assigned to Baghdad also. It wasn't very successful, actually.

JOHN H. STUTESMAN
Consular/Political Officer
Tehran (1946-1949)

Officer in Charge, Iranian Affairs
Washington, DC (1949-1952)

John H. Stutesman was born in Washington, DC in 1920. He graduated from Princeton University with a degree in history in 1942. During World War II he was stationed in Italy. In 1946 he entered the foreign service. He was stationed in Shanghai, Tehran, Paris, La Paz, and Washington, DC. Mr. Stutesman was

interviewed by William Burr in June of 1988.

(Note: This is a copy of a transcript done by the oral history program of Columbia University and the Foundation of Iranian Studies. These institutions have given permission to use Mr. Stutesman's transcript. Any citation should include Columbia and the Iranian foundation.)

I asked to be assigned to the Far East, which I'd never seen, and was sent to be a vice consul in the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. In 1949, I was chased out of China by the communists, and returned home and asked for an assignment to the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, because I had developed an interest in Central Asia.

One of the problems with America's perception of Iran, in my opinion, is the generalization that it is essentially like the Arab nations of the Near East. In fact, historically it is on the warring frontier between the eastward pushing Arabs and the southwesterly drive of the Aryan and Turko peoples. I thought then of Iran as essentially a Central Asian country, and I still think it can be described in those terms.

I also wanted to get out of the consular work, which I'd been performing in the great port of Shanghai, and it is significant that Tehran is 1,000 miles from any port. I also married at that time, and so in mid-1949, I took a bride from San Francisco to Tehran.

The U.S. embassy was then functioning in the old German Embassy on a main city street near the British and the Russian compounds. The ambassador, John C. Wiley, was a subtle, experienced, superb diplomat, but he never came to the embassy. His entire tour in Tehran, he never entered the offices of the embassy. He remained at his residence, where he established his personal office. His secretary and his senior staff would join him there every day. I was present one time when he told a bemused security officer that his poodles would take care of any intruders.

The staff, at the time of my arrival, was very small, headed by Ambassador Wiley, who is no longer alive, and the DCM, Arthur Richards, who is alive, in Washington. An adjutant named Joe Wagner, a gentle administrator, long dead, had been brought by Wiley from their last post together in Lisbon. The economic commercial officer was John Ordway, who is still alive in Seattle. The political officer was Gerry Dooher, long dead, a charming Irish type, loved to play at intrigue, and joined with Ambassador Wiley in a variety of bewildering and generally unproductive games. The CIA chief of station was Roger Goiran, still alive in Florida, an experienced and deft professional. John Waller, who recently retired from one of CIA's most senior positions, Inspector General, was one of his assistants.

I was the junior officer, and therefore, despite my longing for a change, I was put in charge of consular affairs.

So began my involvement in Iranian affairs in mid-1949. It would last five years, except for a brief break of a month's home leave. The first half of that time I was at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, moving from the consular to the political section in 1950. I served three ambassadors there: John Wiley, Henry Grady, and Loy Henderson. The second half of those five years was

spent in Washington, where I became the Iranian desk officer.

In those five years, I was a close witness to the rise and fall of Muhammad Mossadegh, the fiery nationalist leader. I was in Iran when he came to power and drove out the British. I was in Washington when he was overthrown and the young Shah established a power base and friendship for the West which would last another 20 years.

I became a joyful admirer of the Persian people. More than most people, they are affected by their place on earth. I do not mean this in environmental terms as the jungle affects the Bantu or the desert affects the Bedouin; I mean their geographical location. They live on a bridge across which conquering hordes have moved since the beginning of martial man, yet they survive, and the present boundaries of Iran are astonishingly similar to those of Cyrus, who brought together the Medes and the Persians and set the stage for expansion west and east. The language of Iran today bears close resemblance to that of the Indo-European ancestors who rode in from the steppes of Russia.

The record of the extraordinary resistance of the Persian people to successive conquests compares to the Indo-European people who held the Anatolian plateau for 1,000 years until the Turks came. Then everything changed there--language, race, religion. But in Iran, there remains a remarkable similarity to the ancient past. The Arabs conquered Iran. In consequence, the Arab courts became glorious centers of Persian influence, reaching with the Islamic conquests into Spain, and ultimately to South America, where I was aware, when I was at an arid post in the Andes of Bolivia, that their Spanish colonial artifacts bore the clear impression and influence of Persian art.

Another characteristic of the Persians which has always delighted me is that a Persian will never "lie"; he believes absolutely sincerely in everything he says. The wise foreign correspondent Georgie Anne Geyer was astonished that Khomeini would tell her things that he would contradict completely in an interview with another correspondent shortly after. This is as natural as breathing to a Persian. It's like dealing with a flowing stream. I mention this because I think this is pertinent to any view of Mossadegh and his attitude toward negotiations with the West.

One other characteristic: the Persian feels the unseen hand in every moment of his personal and national life. This is not superstition, it's a palpable fact. Mossadegh rose to power on a wave of anti-British feeling, yet many--and perhaps even he--believed that he was a British tool.

In the last years of the Shah's reign and today, it is the American who is that unseen hand, and I don't think it would be hard to find a Persian today who could explain Khomeini in terms of his being a tool of American policy.

That's the sort of introduction that I had in mind, and now I am open to any questions that you have.

Q: That raises more questions in my mind that we can discuss as we go along. You mentioned Ambassador Wiley. What kind of relationship did he develop with Iranian officials or the Shah,

for that matter, as ambassador?

STUTESMAN: I think John Wiley's attitude toward the Shah was deeply marked by the difference in their age and their experience. I won't say that Wiley scorned him, but I think Wiley looked on him as simply a young and uninformed man. On the other hand, Wiley always dealt with him properly in terms of diplomatic deference. There is a dispatch in the files of the Department, which is a very famous one, in which Wiley cut out from a Life magazine article pictures of the French comedian Fernandel, who bore a remarkable resemblance to Wiley. Wiley illustrated a report on an interview with the Shah with these pictures. It's a charming report to read, but it reflects the basic attitude of Wiley, which was that the Shah was not a significant person.

Wiley, on the other hand, maintained very good relations with senior advisors to the Shah, and he entertained them and developed an intimacy with them and, of course, with other members of the diplomatic corps.

Q: Do you recall any of the names of the Iranian officials?

STUTESMAN: The names elude me now. There was a doctor. No, I can't.

Q: I have some questions about American policy towards Iran at this stage, around 1949, 1950, the time you arrived in the country. How would you characterize, as you understood it, the Truman Administration's overall approach to Iran at this stage?

STUTESMAN: Without any doubt, the attitude of the Americans at that time was that Persia was a part of the British responsibility in the world.

Q: So they assumed that the British would more or less stand guard over various Western interests--oil, resources, and so forth?

STUTESMAN: Yes. They not only felt that the British would protect Western interests, but, in my opinion, they felt that it was not part of our responsibility to buck the British in Iran.

Q: Some of the documents I've seen suggest in some way that policy-makers at the time, the State Department especially, saw Iran as sort of a buffer between the Soviet Union and oil fields on the Arabian Peninsula. Was that a commonly held view?

STUTESMAN: Yes, in strategic terms. It seems to me that the phrase always was, going back to Peter the Great, who, I think, wrote a letter or wrote a memorandum or did something in which he made it clear that he was anxious to reach the warm waters on the southern shore of Iran. I think that was more cliché than a very serious bit of policy thinking, but essentially, the Americans viewed Iran as a strategic factor in the world, in my opinion, rather than a source of oil.

Q: When you settled in Iran in 1949, where did you live? What headquarters did you have?

STUTESMAN: The first house we had was a two-room mud structure right across from the American embassy compound. We moved into it because the man I had replaced expected to return, and we simply were filling his house for that period.

Then we moved to a larger house near the Russian embassy downtown, where, on a memorable moment, if I can just pause, my son was one month old, and my mother-in-law was there, and my wife was there suffering from violent malaria, which she'd gotten in a blood transfusion. We celebrated my son's first-month birthday, built up a large fire, and the house burned down.

We then moved into the home of a fellow Foreign Service officer, Walter Howe, and stayed with his family for two months. To my great delight, I have just recently married his widow, Margaret Howe.

Then we rented a place up in Golhak, up high on the flank of the mountain, a lovely garden and very comfortable house. That's where we remained the rest of our tour.

Q: What was Tehran like in those days?

STUTESMAN: When I arrived in Tehran in mid-1949, camels were still moving through the streets, the entire city. While I was there, the city closed off access to camels and kept them in the lower section. The taxis were about equally motorized or horse-drawn droschkis. The water system was the famous jube system, which remained in effect while I was there. The great northern flank of the city rising up the mountain was essentially open ground, except for summer places. The southern part of the city was swarming slum.

Q: Did you do much traveling around the country during your three years in Iran?

STUTESMAN: Yes, I did. I went to Meshed, went up to the Caspian, went to Tabriz, and then I flew to Hormuz and drove a truck back from Hormuz all across the desert, up through Yazd and to Tehran and of course, I frequently visited Shiraz and Isfahan.

Q: What were your impressions of the conditions in the countryside outside of Tehran during that period?

STUTESMAN: I'd been familiar with western China and the Central Asian look of that part of the world. So psychologically, I was quite prepared for the misery and unclean conditions. The Persian villager struck me as somehow more passionate--it's the only word I can think of, intelligence isn't quite the word--than the Western Chinese. The trucks and buses moved through the communities, so they were not as cut off from the world as the Chinese of Central Asia, in my opinion. Radios were, of course, in constant use all through the villages. It was a country that had not moved much from medieval times.

Q: During this period, what was the extent of the non-official U.S. community in Tehran, maybe Iran generally? Were there many American businessmen there, educators, clergy?

STUTESMAN: The non-official American community was dominated, in my recollection, by the Presbyterians, who were educators and medical people and had a couple of missionaries who were extremely courageous men, who would literally go into these small villages and preach Christ to these Muslims. Astonishingly, while I was there, none were attacked or killed. The teachers were much revered, much appreciated. There were very few businessmen. There were a few American women who had married Persians in the United States and then gone with their husbands, back to Iran. But it was not a very large community. When we gave Fourth of July parties, there would be a few Americans who would come and who, I believe, were deserters from World War II. There was a black man I remember, and we were all very careful never to pursue them, and to welcome them, indeed. But it was not a large community. The British was the dominant Western community.

Q: You said that during this period, 1949 and early 1950, you were consular officer at the embassy?

STUTESMAN: My first job there was to run the consular section. There was a vice consul and myself and an American secretary, and we were very active--visitors' visas for Iranians, and then a large number of Russian Dukhabour types, strict Baptists and so on, who had fled Russia, and some Poles left over from the Polish encampments there during the war, who were seeking emigration visas.

Q: You worked in the embassy proper, or was there a separate section for the consular?

STUTESMAN: We had one of the large rooms, the old ball room, in the German embassy, and it seems to me access was straight off the street, past a receptionist. The political and economic sections were on the second floor, and the administrative section was also on the ground floor, as I remember.

Q: Was there much social interaction between the various officers of the consular section, on the one hand, and the political section or the economic section?

STUTESMAN: We're talking about only five or six officers, and we all were close friends. We were all professional Foreign Service officers. Oh, yes, there was a very close relationship.

Q: Did you become a political officer in 1950?

STUTESMAN: 1950. I was about a year in the consular section and moved to the political section. When John Wiley left, Henry Grady came in. He was a much more organized man in bureaucratic terms, and the embassy took a more formal shape as sections developed. Before, as I say, Wiley and Dooher ran sort of a political section, but there wasn't any real sense of a section. Under Grady it took the shape, and I was the junior officer in that section. Roy Melbourne was my chief.

Q: During the period that you were in Iran, did you see the Shah at close range at any stage?

STUTESMAN: The Shah and I were about the same age. He and I were in school at Switzerland at the same time, not at the same school, but we had that common experience. My French is very good. And I was married to a very beautiful woman, so we were frequently invited to very informal parties where we played Blind Man's Bluff and musical chairs, and where the Shah and his sisters and Miss Cote d'Azur and others all joined in. So my personal relationship with the Shah was a very friendly one. As I say, we were of the same age, and we both had an appreciation of beautiful women.

Q: What impression did you pick up of him? How would you characterize the Shah as you saw him?

STUTESMAN: While I was in Tehran, I wrote a dispatch on the Shah, which was classified. I have no idea if it's been declassified or published or anything, but it was a long dispatch describing in great detail aspects of the Shah's character and attitudes and his family. It was a dispatch which was much read. I also wrote a long dispatch on Mossadegh "The Rise of an Iranian Nationalist," which also has been much quoted. I recommend both of those to anyone interested in that period.

My own feeling about the Shah was then, and still is, although I was not involved with Iranian affairs in his latter years there, that he was a gentle person, a person of very good intentions, a person much influenced by the Christian European experience that he had as a boy. Also he was much influenced by his dominant father, both for good and for ill.

His attitude toward the West was, I think, very sincerely favorable. After all, his father had set the pattern. His father was a great admirer of Ataturk, and the father had set the pattern of trying to work Iran toward modernization. He didn't get as far as Ataturk did, but he was working in that direction. The Shah, I think, always felt that he was carrying forward some of his father's banners. He was a decent man. His interest in women sometimes got in the way. His twin sister certainly had an undue influence on him sometimes.

Q: Ashraf.

STUTESMAN: Yes, Ashraf. But his own personal instincts were decent and conformed very closely to general attitudes that a young man born and raised in the West had. This is my general appreciation of his attitudes. As I say, my dispatch, which is a rather lengthy one, goes into a great deal more detail, but comes out with that conclusion.

Q: You suggested earlier that Ambassador Wiley did not have a serious attitude towards the Shah, or did not take him very seriously. Did Grady have a different attitude towards the Shah?

STUTESMAN: Grady reluctantly was forced to concentrate on Mossadegh, and his attitude toward the Shah, I believe, was that the Shah was a secondary factor, Mossadegh was the person to deal with and to influence if he could. I don't think he scorned the Shah, but I just think he had to concentrate on what he thought was the main objective.

Q: After 1953, when the Shah's position was restored and Mossadegh was overthrown, there was a developing view in the U.S. State Department and elsewhere, that the Shah was like a linchpin of stability in Iran, that his position had to be supported as such to keep Iran politically and socially stable. To what extent was that view held in embassy or elsewhere in this period during the very early 1950s in Iran?

STUTESMAN: When I was in the political section in the embassy in Tehran and wrote that dispatch on the Shah, which, of course, had to be cleared up through my masters, it came down with a very solid conclusion that the Shah was worth supporting. I certainly didn't use terms like "linchpin," but that he was the best of known hopes for the future.

When I was on the desk in Washington, the decision was made that Mossadegh should be overthrown and the Shah should be brought to a firmer status of power. I think rather like what happened in Vietnam, once you have a hand in overthrowing somebody the way Kennedy killed Diem, then you become much more committed to the person who comes in. I don't remember, while I was in Washington, policies being built upon the feeling that the Shah was a linchpin. I think, more, it was a sense that, well, he was the best there is, and he was a legitimate ruler and that he was a popular ruler, which I think he was when I was dealing in those things.

Q: That's interesting. When you became political officer in 1950, what were your responsibilities? Did you have a specific assignment?

STUTESMAN: When I went into the political section, at that time in the embassy none of the officers spoke Farsi, nor did I. Gerry Doohar had spoken sufficient Farsi to get along, but certainly was no linguist, and he was gone by that time. Perhaps in the CIA units there were some serious Farsi speakers; that's possible. But they were not being used publicly for the ambassador.

About the time I came to the political section, Mossadegh was becoming increasingly a figure. Grady could not speak Farsi, and Mossadegh did not speak English, but Mossadegh refused to have an Iranian in the room. The embassy had traditionally used a very fine, very honest and reliable man named Saleh, who spoke excellent English and was an Iranian, was the senior Iranian in our embassy. Mossadegh refused to allow him to participate in any of these intimate conversations, because he distrusted any Iranian. Therefore, they turned to me. I spoke French. Mossadegh had been educated in Neuchatel back in the late 1800s, and his French was not bad, although he used college expressions which would be sort of like "23 skidoo" and "cat's pajamas," which would pass right by me. But basically, for a period of time, Grady and Mossadegh had personal conversations with me acting as interpreter in French. It was not the best way to deal with very high policies, but it was the way we did it.

Q: So that was one of your responsibilities. Of course, you monitored the internal political scene, as well.

STUTESMAN: That's right.

Q: Did you develop contacts routinely with local political figures in the country, in Tehran?

STUTESMAN: Of course, some. But a broad range of contacts in the Iranian political community. I was still a fairly young man, and the Iranians place a great stress on age, and I did not speak Farsi. I think mainly I was engaged in, as I say, this concentration, this constant concentration on Mossadegh, and writing up the memoranda, the telegrams, reporting these conversations, preparing for them. And I did, as I say, some traveling around the country and did some reporting there. I can't remember anything else.

Q: How would you characterize the political climate in Iran during the first year or two that you were in the country?

STUTESMAN: The rise of Mossadegh was the dominant feature. I knew Razmara a little bit, and my wife was in the bazaar the day that he was killed. When she came home that day, she told me that she had been in this great, teeming bazaar with a friend, and all of a sudden everything became very quiet, and that they became alarmed, these two women, and they left and came home. Razmara was killed shortly after that. Mary always felt that the bazaar was well aware that Razmara was going to be assassinated, and indeed, I've had Persians say to me about that time, that Razmara himself had a sense of martyrdom and that he thought he was going to be killed that day. This is all Persian. Then as history shows, there were a series of efforts by the Shah to avoid having Mossadegh come to power. As I remember, Ala became prime minister for a while. I can't remember the details, but in any case, Mossadegh came to power in this great surge of nationalism, anti-British nationalism. That's what dominated the period that I was in Iran.

Q: While you were consular officer in October of '49, the middle class politicians organized the National Front, I guess initially to protest the lack of free elections. That's what I've read recently. Then they went on to the oil issue as they progressed politically. What was the embassy's attitude towards the National Front in the early 1950s, late 1940s?

STUTESMAN: I really don't know. You've got me on that one. I think I was punching visas, basically.

Q: Again, you may not have been close to this question, but you mentioned General Razmara. I've read recently that embassy officials, especially Gerald Dooher, believed that the Shah needed to be backed up by a strong military figure like a general. Were Dooher's views very influential?

STUTESMAN: Dooher's views were very influential on John Wiley. The two of them, in my opinion, were like boys and games. For instance, they invented a fictitious major, Major somebody or other, who was an American agent riding with the tribes in the mountains, and they leaked this news. It even got in American newspapers. These were joyous people. Personally, I think Wiley was taken in by Dooher, who I don't think was a very serious person. But Dooher had influence on Wiley, and Wiley, therefore, had influence on Iran. But I really think that the Americans at that time were not being taken too seriously by the ruling class of Iran. I think Mossadegh took the Americans more seriously than his predecessors.

Q: There's a new book on Iran by James Bill. Dooher played an important role in convincing Wiley to urge the Shah to appoint Razmara as prime minister in 1950. Do you know much about Dooher's role in this episode?

STUTESMAN: I would say that's right. I think Wiley and Dooher thought it was a good thing for Razmara to come to power, but I don't have any more details.

Q: Of course, one of Razmara's biggest opponents was Mossadegh, apparently. You said you were translator between the conversations with Ambassador Grady and Mossadegh. What were your impressions of Mossadegh?

STUTESMAN: I was very fond of him, and he was fond of me. It was almost like a grandfather-grandson relationship. I don't think he ever felt that he could influence American policy or even Grady through me. Nonetheless, I felt always that we had a personal relationship and that he was always pleased to see me. We'd have a little bit of genial chat when we worked together. One time he accepted an invitation to lunch at the residence. This was a great concession on his part, and it was Grady's effort to have him talk directly with the British ambassador. I remember Mossadegh said he would come only if I were present and would handle the translation, which really shook the British ambassador, I was expected to translate Mossadegh's French, which, of course, the British ambassador understood perfectly well. (Laughs) And the British ambassador would reply in French, but Mossadegh would wait for me to speak. It was part of his constant effort to distress the English.

Q: Any more comments you want to make about Mossadegh as a person?

STUTESMAN: For one thing, he was an older man. I mean, my God, I don't think anybody ever knew exactly how old he was, but he was a very elderly man, and he was a very, very successful speaker and whipper-up of emotion. I don't think he had the slightest intention of coming to terms with the English, and I think he had a great abiding belief that America would eagerly replace the British and, therefore, replace the British on his terms. I think he was truly stunned that the Americans and the British hung together.

In addition, I think that Mossadegh was a man who really did not have a constructive program. He had a program of driving out the British, but I don't think he had a very clear idea of what would come next.

Q: How much contact did embassy political officers have with the National Front politicians besides Mossadegh? The later foreign minister was Hussein Fatemi. Did you ever meet him? Did other people deal with him?

STUTESMAN: Fatemi was a rather slick man with very good family connections out of the Qajar aristocracy, which, of course, had an abiding hatred for the Shah. Mullah Quashani was a different quality. I think Gerry Dooher played games with Quashani a certain amount. I don't remember ever meeting Quashani. My guess is that CIA had some better knowledge of Quashani

and his entourage than I did. I don't remember the names of the others, but Saleh's brother was very close to Mossadegh. Saleh was the senior foreign national in our embassy and had two brothers, a doctor and a nationalist.

Q: You suggested that the CIA might have had contact with Quashani. Did the embassy have any contact with other clergymen?

STUTESMAN: As I remember, we had nothing but a sense that the Mullahs represented the past, and that the whole trend of events would move away from them. That was our basic attitude toward the tribes, despite the fact that there was a great deal of American interest in them, Justice Douglas came out and rode the mountains with the tribes, and Gerry Dooher was interested in the tribes, nonetheless, I remember John Wiley once saying that centrifugal forces such as the tribes were doomed, that everything was going to move toward the center, and Wiley, was wise in a very sophisticated sense. At the same time, he loved playing patsy with these tribal leaders whose father had been killed by the Shah's father, and who had an abiding hatred, of the Shah.

John Wiley once made this comment, which I've often remembered, he said, "Americans think that foreigners are Americans who wear funny hats." Of course, therein lies our continuing tragedy in foreign affairs, where so many Americans, including our highest policy makers, time after time really think that they can deal with some alien on terms which make sense to them as Americans. Of course, the alien looks at them through entirely different eyes. I remember going into the villages in Iran, and I had frequently the sensation that people there would feel that if they stretched out their hands they would pass through my body, that I was as ethereal as though I had fallen from the sky. The tribes had their own interests, which were not entirely consistent with ours.

Q: The nationalization of Anglo-Iranian oil company became a central goal of the National Front by 1950-51. How closely did you follow petroleum politics in Iran in the political section?

STUTESMAN: Really very little. Indeed, this just may be my memory, but I don't think that Mossadegh and the majority of the Persian people who supported him were that concerned about the oil. What they were concerned about was throwing off the British yoke. The oil apparatus was the first thing to strike at, was the clear thing to strike at. Clearly there had to be an economic element to this, but again, time after time, it seems to me that the Americans--for instance, the fatuous Mr. [Averell] Harriman, whose ridiculous mission worked on the principle, as I remember, that the Iranians had to have an understanding of the oil and had to have a recognition that they couldn't just sell oil on the corner--was dealing with people who just didn't think in those terms.

Mossadegh, I believe, expected to be rescued by the Americans. I don't think he expected to be left alone. He thought that he could drive out the British, that the Americans, like any respectable competitor, would welcome that, would happily move in and sell his oil. We didn't do it, and he fell.

Q: You suggested that the oil company was a symbol of British power and for the nationalists, it

was a means towards an end, driving out British political influence and social influence. Did you get a sense of how the oil company operated, the AIOC, operated in Iran during this period?

STUTESMAN: Yes. I knew the Tehran hierarchy of the AIOC, and, of course, I knew the British embassy people. Some very dear friends that I still have, Nicholas Lawford was the DCM in the British embassy, he now lives in Long Island; John Briance was one of the senior intelligence officers, he now is living in London. These are people I knew well socially, and also we talked, obviously, about current affairs. The AIOC was absolutely hand-in-glove with the embassy people. In fact, I think it would be fair to say that the AIOC had a much more dominant influence on British policy in Iran than the diplomats in the embassy.

The AIOC used money, used old connections, they used them brutally. I don't mean physical brutality, but just without much deftness. And the British embassy pretty much followed in their wake. This began to change as it became clear that the AIOC was simply incapable of handling the political difficulties. But for instance, there was the senior man, they called them Oriental Counselors, named Lance Pyman. He spoke absolutely fabulous Farsi, he had been involved with that country for many, many years, and he, as I remember, did not have any particular sense--he certainly had no prescience on the possibility and the probability that the Persians would break the concession and drive the British out. Nicholas Lawford had a much more clear view and, indeed, resigned while he was there and left the British foreign service, partially out of frustration with policy.

Q: You mentioned that Grady became ambassador and took over Wiley's position. I think this was around July 1950, according to my notes here. How sympathetic was Grady to Mossadegh and Mossadegh's purposes?

STUTESMAN: First of all, Grady came to Iran from India, where he had been a very important ambassador in a very important country. Before that, he'd made his reputation in foreign affairs in Greece, and, of course, before that, he'd been a very successful, prominent businessman in the San Francisco area. I don't think he was thrilled about being appointed to Iran. I think he felt that he had taken a step down. I have no idea what his preferences would have been, but I clearly got the impression when he first arrived that he felt that he had moved from the center court to a smaller court. However, he was a very decent man, a very hard working, honest man, and he identified the problems as he saw it, and went to work on them. He was, however, more at ease in economic policies, the use of aid, the development of economic relationships, than he was in the Byzantine intrigues or the diplomatic side of things.

Again, looking back on Wiley and Doohar, those two men loved the intrigue. They moved through it like fish in water. Whether they had more impact, I don't know. I think there is always a danger of an American becoming too adept at the local game, rather than simply representing a kind of an American attitude. But there was no question that Grady was well wired into the authorities in Washington, that he was a distinctly honest American representative, and I think he was a good ambassador. I don't think any U.S. ambassador could have stopped the rise of Mossadegh or prevented the British being driven out, all things considered. But it was a great change from Wiley. When Loy Henderson came, he changed the involvement of the American

ambassador into a much more subtle and diplomatic kind of a relationship than Grady played.

Q: During this period, Grady's first half-year late in 1950, the British and the Iranians were trying to negotiate a settlement over the oil prices, oil revenue going to Iran. AIOC's share of the take was being discussed. The British were taking an obdurate position in the talks with Mossadegh and the Iranian Government. Did Grady make any efforts to convince the British to take a more flexible approach to the Iranians?

STUTESMAN: Grady would just groan when he would be writing his reports and talking with us. He would groan at the obduracy of the British, the blankness of their minds when it came to dealing with Iranians. I would say he was probably much more angered and frustrated by the English than he was by sweet old Mossadegh. (Laughs) Although Mossadegh was a far more dangerous foe.

Q: You mentioned General Razmara's assassination at a mosque in the bazaar. This happened a few days after he spoke out against nationalization, which was becoming a rising demand of the National Front. Shortly thereafter, the majlis passed a bill to nationalize AIOC. Within a few months, Mossadegh became prime minister, May of '51, something along that line. I've read that policy makers in Washington worried around this time that successful nationalization would have sort of a demonstration effect, that if I encourage or inspire other governments with oil resources to nationalize foreign holdings, for example, Saudi Arabia or other Middle Eastern countries, or perhaps Venezuela in Latin America. Was there much concern at the embassy about this issue?

STUTESMAN: I have no reason to doubt you're right about what was going on back in the United States. As to the embassy, I have no doubt that there was that general concern, but the embassy, as I remember it, and like most embassies, was really concentrating on the local scene.

However, the house that I then lived in up in Golhak was part of a garden in which there was another house, and in that other house lived a man named Max Thornburg. Max Thornburg was a great buccaneer in the oil world, who had been very successful working with the Sheikh of Bahrain, who, indeed, had given him an island. In any case, Thornburg was up in Iran, living there during this time. Now, I have absolutely no evidence or proof of this, but I believe that Thornburg had lines of communication with the National Front.

Thornburg once told me one evening, just sitting around, having a drink, he told me that if you drew a graph--I remember this so clearly because I thought it was so perfect--if anyone draws a graph showing the life of a foreign concession--he meant oil concession--in any foreign country, the graph rises slowly in terms of profits. The graph rises slowly as the investing foreign firm develops and then begins to make money and it rises up. Then there is always, inevitably, an abrupt fall as the concession is closed down. He considered that to be a force of nature, and I do, too. I think he was proven right. I don't really think it's just some kook who decides to throw the foreigners out. It's as inevitable as the sun rising. So the British, in my opinion, were struggling against a force of nature, as well as Mossadegh-led Iranians. And I doubt very much if officers of the American embassy thought that the British could remain in control for the next hundred years

or even 20 years or even two years.

Q: How would you describe the British response to nationalization? What did you think about the way they conducted themselves after the majlis passing a law nationalizing the AIOC?

STUTESMAN: I don't think they were very smart. I don't really have a great remembrance of details, but they began to send in some very, very powerful intelligence officers--Woodhouse, Briance, men of great experience and real ability. I have read that they mounted a coup which didn't come off. I'm not really sure about that, but I do know they had absolute ace personnel in there working on the subversive side, the clandestine side.

They didn't change the quality of their embassy people much, but it sure got better than it had been before, and clearly, the British Government was taking charge of things, and it was no longer just being run by the company. But if you ask me details of what they did and so on, it's too far away from me now.

Q: These details might have escaped you, but I read that even before Mossadegh became prime minister, the British had their alternative candidate for prime minister, Sayyid Zia Tabata'i. They wanted to find ways to overthrow Mossadegh and install Sayyid Zia as replacement. Did you know anything about this planning?

STUTESMAN: I certainly didn't know about any of their planning, and I don't remember Tabata'i as anything more than just a face at a social function.

Q: While the British were developing their coup plans, some of which you mentioned yourself, the Truman Administration was trying to find ways to settle the dispute by finding a basis for compromise between Mossadegh and the British Government and the AIOC. Did the embassy staff play any kind of a role in the efforts to settle the dispute?

STUTESMAN: Yes, of course. I think the air was filled with Grady's telegrams and certainly his constant efforts to negotiate. We'd get an instruction to take something up with Mossadegh, and we'd make an appointment (Laughs) Grady and I would go see the old man lying in his bed, in his pajamas, and then we'd come back and send off a telegram. I don't think Grady ever despaired, but on the other hand, realistically, there was very little likelihood that Mossadegh would come to an accommodation with the British on any terms that the British could accept. That's about it.

Then, of course, when the Harriman mission came out, typically Mr. Harriman had nothing to do with the embassy and thought in three days or ten days, whatever it was, he could solve these issues that these "small people" had not been able to deal with. And he and Walter Levy, who was a remarkable man--I hope you get his views--and, of course, Vernon Walters was the interpreter. Vernon Walters, with his extraordinary ability, he learned enough Farsi in a few days--I mean, two or three days--to be able to translate to some degree in Farsi before he left. He's a linguist of extraordinary genius. He remembers those days. He and I have talked about it.

But the mission was doomed. It was all a part of a policy, I believe, directed from Washington, which, in my opinion, did not take true account of Mossadegh's intentions.

Q: So Harriman's party totally avoided the embassy, basically?

STUTESMAN: They couldn't do that, but certainly they treated us--I mean, Harriman sort of blew in, established himself, and it's not uncharacteristic of other special envoys. The American embassy in Iran has suffered special envoys long past Harriman's time. I happen to have a particular aversion to Mr. Harriman, who I think is one of the great disasters in American foreign policy, with the Geneva Accords being his greatest contribution to our tragedy.

Q: Apparently when Harriman met with the Shah, from what I've read, he discussed with him the possibility of replacing Mossadegh as prime minister. Do you know if he would have cleared that with the ambassador before bringing it up with the Shah?

STUTESMAN: I have no idea. It would be perfectly in tune with his character if he didn't mention it to the ambassador. I don't think Harriman would do that sort of thing without having at least some clearance in Washington. That's all I know.

Q: Was there much discussion at the embassy during this period, 1951-52, of the idea of replacing Mossadegh?

STUTESMAN: You know, that's a good question. I hadn't thought of that. Now that I do think about it, my answer is no. But I left Iran well before Mossadegh fell. I was desk officer. I came back to be desk officer when Acheson was still Secretary of State. Truman was still in power. So I was desk officer when the decisions were made in Washington to dump Mossadegh. But I don't personally remember anything like that being discussed when I was in the embassy. Remember I was a fairly junior officer, and that kind of discussion, by its nature, would be held in the highest circles.

Q: In an interview that Grady gave shortly after he left Tehran, he argued that the main obstacle to a settlement with Mossadegh was the nationalists' fear of future British political manipulation in Iran. For example, one of the sticking points in the negotiations was whether British technicians should help run a nationalized oil company or not. I think Mossadegh's supporters objected because they feared any future British role in the country at the technical level or the managerial level. How accurate do you think Grady's appraisal was of this problem?

STUTESMAN: Again, I'm speaking in very general terms and, you might say, unprovable terms. My own personal feeling is now, and was then, that Mossadegh had absolutely no intention of settling with the British on any terms that the British could accept, despite his several offers of such settlements. I don't think that Mossadegh ever wanted to do anything except give the British a bloody nose and, along with it, went his abiding assumption that the Americans would take care of him.

Q: Yes. While the U.S. engaged itself in a discussion over a compromise of some sort, the

administration back in Washington supported international boycott of Iranian oil. The idea was to prevent Iranians from enjoying the fruits of nationalization without compensation. Compensation had not been arranged at that stage of the game. Do you know if Ambassador Grady supported this program of a boycott against oil exports from Iran?

STUTESMAN: I don't. I have a feeling that he simply received information on that sort of thing. He may have commented. But I do remember when I was desk officer, I was at a meeting in Secretary Acheson's office. I was by far the most junior person there, and sort of sat off to one side, but I do remember they were talking at that moment about two tankers that were en route from, it seems to me, South America, en route to load Persian oil delivered by the Persian-run company. And there was a great deal of alarm and concern. I remember sitting there in a rather bemused condition, thinking, "Two tankers? Who the hell cares?" But there is no doubt in my mind that the senior policy makers in Washington were very, very alert to preventing the sale of Iranian oil to private entrepreneurs.

There was a man named Jones of City Service, the American oil company. Alton Jones?

Q: Alton Jones. He was a friend of Eisenhower's.

STUTESMAN: Alton Jones was a name that kept coming up. He was clearly prepared to buy Mossadegh's oil. I think Thornburg and his associates, whoever they may have been, would have been prepared to move some of that oil. Again, I come back to my feeling that Mossadegh was encouraged by channels, by connections that I know nothing of, to believe that the Americans would take care of him. You could never persuade me that there were not people who would buy Iranian oil; there obviously were. Mossadegh, in other words, may have been working on a perfectly reasonable assumption, except for his misunderstanding of the American-British relationship.

Q: That's very interesting. Do you recall if any U.S. oil company representatives passed through Tehran during this period? You mentioned Thornburg.

STUTESMAN: Thornburg was living there, and he was not, as far as I know, representing an American company. He was a buccaneer.

Q: Was he advisor to an American consulting firm working with the Iranians?

STUTESMAN: Perhaps so.

Q: But besides Thornburg, were there any other people that passed through Iran that you know of?

STUTESMAN: I know Jones came through, but I couldn't tell you when. And I couldn't tell you whether I was in Washington or in Iran at that time. I have no doubt that others came through, but I don't know.

Q: Did you get a sense, when you were in Tehran or back at the country desk in Washington, whether U.S. oil firms had much interest in taking part in the long-run development of Iranian oil resources?

STUTESMAN: I've thought about that a lot since those days, partially because of historians like you. It's an amazing coincidence that the Americans were able to move in profitably, but claim that they had nothing to do with Mossadegh coming to power. However, my personal opinion, based on what knowledge I have, is that the American major oil companies did not in any way suggest to Mossadegh that they would pick up whatever Mossadegh could drive the British off of. So I stand on my belief that the American oil companies did not mount any kind of conspiracy to get the British out of Iran. I do think that Mossadegh expected them to take care of him.

Q: He felt that they would encourage them to take over from the British?

STUTESMAN: Mossadegh worked in the belief that the Americans would not allow Russia to control Iran. The Americans were the new power and owed nothing to the British, Mossadegh felt that if he kicked out the British and threatened the Americans with Russian hegemony, that we'd rush in. He wasn't that far wrong; we did in the end. But I don't think that there was any kind of American oil company conspiracy. It was just a remarkable stroke of luck for them.

Q: Yes. In September '51, Loy Henderson replaced Henry Grady as ambassador. You talked a little about Henderson earlier, but how would you characterize Henderson?

STUTESMAN: First of all, I have to make clear that my personal involvement with Loy Henderson extended over a number of years. I served with him in Tehran on his staff, and I was desk officer while he was ambassador, and then a few years after that, I was stationed in Paris at that time, he called me back to be one of his special assistants in Washington, and I served him for three and a half years. So I'm not only a great admirer, I also am very fond of him.

Having said that, I go back to when he arrived in Tehran, he was a complete, really a dramatic change from Mr. Grady, without in any way trying to say one was better than the other. The fact is, without any question, that Mr. Henderson was a more certain person in dealing with the quagmire and walking across the bog of Iranian politics. Mr. Grady had laid the groundwork. Grady had done a great deal of hard honest work, trying to negotiate with Mossadegh.

By the time Henderson came, it had been clear that almost all avenues had been exhausted. So Henderson came in, in my view, with an instruction to do what he could, but mainly to set up lines of communication to Mossadegh and to the Shah, upon which we could build something new. Of course, that's what he did. I don't think he had instructions when he arrived, to develop an overthrow of Mossadegh; I really don't think that. Your records perhaps could show that I'm wrong, but I don't think that's what he came instructed to do. I think he came instructed to try to restore some steadiness to a situation which was a very difficult situation.

Q: That corresponds to what I've read, that there was no aim at that point. How effective was he in working with Iranian officials, with Mossadegh or the Shah, among others?

STUTESMAN: Loy Henderson was one of the great classic diplomats of all time. He was a man of astonishing honesty, sincerity, gentleness, and a wonderful mind. He was just an extraordinary man. He treated the Shah with absolute sincerity and respect. He never gave the Shah any sense of looking down on him, nor treating him as a less than emperor of emperors.

In his dealings with Mossadegh, one of the first things he did was to drop me as the interpreter and persuade Mossadegh to have Saleh accompany him, so that the negotiations could be in Persian. We still did not have a Farsi speaker on the regular embassy staff, although CIA had several.

Q: How did he manage the embassy compared to Grady or Wiley?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember exactly when we moved from the old German embassy. In any case, a building was constructed in the embassy compound, which was given the name of Henderson Hall. It was a very unoriginal architectural creation, but Henderson worked in that office and his staff was in that building. He was a fine leader. He had very good relations with the CIA chief, Roger Goiran, usually. I'll tell you one story to illustrate that. In order to soothe Mr. Henderson's deep suspicions of the CIA, which any sensible ambassador would hold, the people in Washington said to him, "Loy, any time you want, you can call for the 'chron' file of our telegrams." This is a tremendous concession to a State Department officer. He accepted that as a very fine gesture of respect and confidence. One day months later, he didn't have much to do, and so he called for the file.

Q: What was the file called?

STUTESMAN: The chronological file, the "chron" file of telegrams of, say, the past couple of months. So the secretary in the CIA office, which was in the same building, knowing the standing instructions, simply trotted it down. Mr. Henderson began to leaf through it, and about the fifth or sixth telegram was one saying, "Don't show to Loy." (Laughs)

Anyhow, he had excellent relationships with all the people on this staff. He had inherited a Point IV program run by a remarkable man named Bill Warne, who came out of California. He may still be alive, I don't know, and who, I think, had been brought in by Grady. Grady had been very active in developing aid programs. Bill Warne and the ambassador got on. And then I know this happened. Warne wanted to do something--I don't remember what it was, some program--and Mr. Henderson wouldn't say no, but he did point out several potential pitfalls, some problems and let Warne make his own decision. Warne went ahead and did it, and it turned out to be a disaster--a small disaster, but a disaster. Of course, ever after that when Mr. Henderson made a suggestion or a comment, Warne paid a great deal more attention. That's the way that Mr. Henderson ran things. He was an autocrat, a very definite person, but he would always give you a long lead and let you work on your own. A wonderful man.

Q: At this stage, the embassy staff was expanding considerably.

STUTESMAN: Oh, God yes. By then, when I was desk officer, I couldn't even guess how many Americans were there. We had military missions and aid missions. And the staff was just blossoming. I would say the political section had at least four people in it, and pretty soon they began to have Farsi speakers.

Q: What accounted for the expansion of just the embassy staff, leaving aside the Armish-MAAG and so forth?

STUTESMAN: The embassy staff expanded in direct correspondence to the interest of Washington in Iran. In 1949, as I say, Washington really felt, "Let the British run it. We've got much bigger things to do. We have Europe and the Far East and so on."

Q: You were a junior officer at this stage, but did you get a sense of what Henderson thought about Mossadegh in the nationalization issue generally?

STUTESMAN: Of course, by this time I was looked upon as somebody who had a real working knowledge of Mossadegh.

Q: That's right.

STUTESMAN: So I have a distinct memory of sitting in the office when Mr. Henderson would make his report. He'd come back from working with Mossadegh, and he'd make his report both to us and to Washington. He did it frequently in the form of dictating a report, and as he dictated, we could ask questions or make comments. My recollection is that Henderson's first attitude toward Mossadegh was one of treating him openly and continuing to try to work out some negotiated settlement with the British which would meet British and American concerns.

It seems to me I was either in the passage of home leave and going to the desk as Henderson's attitude changed. I don't remember the exact date of my moving to the desk, but as I say, I was on the desk while Acheson was still Secretary.

The decision to overthrow Mossadegh was made, I believe, by [Walter B.] "Bedell" Smith, who was then Under Secretary and who, as you know, had come from the post in CIA, and who had been Chief of Staff to Eisenhower, so that you had a very tight family relationship there. You had Eisenhower as President, John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State, his brother Allen as the head of CIA, and Smith having been the closest associate of Eisenhower during the war and having been the deputy in CIA, now as the deputy in the State Department. So when "Bedell" spoke, he spoke not only with direct instructions, but also with a deep understanding of what his principals were thinking. I certainly was not present, but I've been told this by someone who was present, that CIA officers were in his office discussing Mossadegh, and "Bedell," who had a very bad stomach problem, may have clutched his stomach and groaned, or he may have said, "Dump him." (Laughs) But I have a feeling the decision was made that easily and that quickly, and then CIA went to work.

Now, they obviously did not work without involving Mr. Henderson. They changed the chief of

station in Iran. Roger Gorian, I think, objected. In any case, he was transferred.

Q: That's interesting, because from the records I've seen, he left in the fall of '52 before the AJAX plan was even--other people have said that same thing, that he objected. But I'm not sure.

STUTESMAN: What did he object to?

Q: I don't know.

STUTESMAN: I don't have it from his mouth, so maybe it's better if I don't even mention it. He's certainly worth talking to and, as I say, he's healthy and sharp down in Florida.

But they changed the chief of station. Henderson, I believe--now I understand there have been interviews with him on this general subject.

Q: Yes.

STUTESMAN: But I believe that Mr. Henderson had a deep reluctance to have a covert operation displace a chief of state. I think he had a long-term reluctance and a long-term sense of uneasiness about what this might do to the future. At the same time, I think that he faced a situation where there was very little alternative to the departure of Mossadegh.

I was on the desk, and as you probably know, I'm sure you know that you have the desk and then you have GTI, which is Greece, Turkey, and Iran, and the head of that was Arthur Richards, who had been my DCM in Tehran and now was my chief again in Washington. Above that you have the Assistant Secretary for Middle East Affairs, who was Hank Byroade. Then directly above that you have the Secretary of State and to the extent he involves his top people, under secretaries. The line was drawn at the assistant secretary level in terms of discussions of plans to overthrow Mossadegh. I think at a stage, Arthur Richards was informed, but the line was clearly drawn at the assistant secretary level and never got down to me. However, I don't tell you this to protect myself.

I don't tell you this to protect myself, but to add that being an alert person, it became easily apparent to me that something was going wrong in Washington policy circles and, to some extent, in our actions in Iran, which could only be part of a program to become increasingly offensive to Mossadegh.

There was a very fine man named Joe Upton, who was in INR, which is the intelligence and research side. He had worked in Iran as an archeologist, I believe he had perhaps been involved in OSS during the war, and he was a very wise and thoughtful, gentle person, unhappily long dead. I sat down with Joe Upton and said to him--and I don't recollect the details, but basically I said to him, "Joe, obviously something is going on, and I have an uneasy feeling that if, indeed, there is to be an overthrow of Mossadegh and the development of a new government, no one is putting any attention on what we do then, that the work right now is all, as far as we know, on the issue of how do you overthrow Mossadegh."

So he and I sat down and drew up what we called a "what if" paper. What if Mossadegh fell? What would we do then? What would be required? We didn't do this in an attempt to smoke out our superiors, but more than that, we were concerned that, in fact, something could happen and then everybody would stand around with their thumbs up their ears and say, "Oh, well, what now?"

Q: And for some consequences.

STUTESMAN: Yes. I have no idea what happened to the "what if" paper in terms of Department's archives, but it was a formal paper which we submitted to Arthur Richards and which went on up the line. Indeed, after Mossadegh fell, I was present at a meeting in Dulles' office, the Secretary's office, and at that time he had Phleger, who was his legal counsel, and Dulles didn't do hardly anything without the legal counsel involved. And Byroade, I remember, and Arthur Richards, and the policy people.

Q: The policy planning staff people?

STUTESMAN: There were, I'd say, ten people. They were sitting around and, indeed, they were working to some extent from my paper. I remember there was some discussion. Dulles was not very interested, in my recollection. But the question was how much money to give to Zahedi. I think Byroade asked for, say, 20 million, and somebody else said, "Oh, God, we don't have that. We don't have anything."

So Dulles said, "How about 10 million?" And everybody said okay. So you have these, to me, not atypical decisions. I think that "Beedle" Smith decided to dump Mossadegh in a brief interview with some CIA officers, and I think that Dulles decided to start passing money to Zahedi in a very casual meeting. That doesn't mean that a whole lot of people weren't working constantly, like me, but again, I come back to these concerns that there was some very carefully calculated policy. I really don't think that our policy on Iran was worked out, certainly not on the basis of any conspiracy, but on the basis of sort of, "Well, Jesus, what do we do now? Oh, okay, let's get rid of him. Now--oops, well, now, okay, we've got to give him some money. Well, why don't we give \$10 million. Okay." And then the workers go to work, Henderson and some of the others.

Having said that I believe he was deeply reluctant, Henderson's role was nonetheless to carry out policy, and he very carefully developed an attitude and helped to sponsor an attitude in Iran that Mossadegh was leading the country to ruin and to Communist control. Whether Henderson believed that or not, I don't know, but that's certainly the way he worked. He did it, including removing himself from the scene. I don't remember the exact timing, but it seems to me that he was out of Iran.

Q: On vacation, I think.

STUTESMAN: Yes. Of course, it's so unlike Henderson to take a holiday right in the middle of a crisis. All of these things were worked out. I don't think these were things that he and [Kermit]

Roosevelt cooked up in a back room; I think these are things that Mr. Henderson and Roosevelt and others worked out. But there was no doubt in my mind that there was a carefully developed, coordinated State Department-CIA plan leading toward the eventual overthrow of Mossadegh.

Q: This all raises a lot of questions, but I want to back up a little bit. In the period when you were still in Tehran, 1951-52, how much concern was there in the embassy about the influence of the Tudeh, local Communist Party or movement?

STUTESMAN: A great deal. In a curious way, more when I first arrived than when I left. Because in 1949, when I arrived, it was very fresh in all our minds that the Communists, Russians, had attempted to hold on to Azerbaijan after the war, and that it was only through a struggle in the United Nations that they were forced out. In my dispatch on the Shah, I have as an enclosure a letter written by Ambassador George Allen that letter is a marvelous description of how the Shah reached a point where he took a decisive action which led to the fall of Qom, which had an effect on the Azerbaijani problem, and which supported the idea that the Shah could be a reliable leader and a reliable pro-Western leader.

So that when I arrived in '49, the Tudeh was still viewed as a danger, because it had been damn near successful dismembering a part of Iran. Whether that was an accurate appraisal of the actual strength of the Tudeh, I don't know. I remember that when the National Front came in, there were concerns that the Tudeh was an influence within the National Front, then there were concerns that the Tudeh was in opposition to the National Front, then there were concerns that the Tudeh would be the heir of the National Front. I don't remember any serious details, certainly not scholarly study, of those issues. There may be some in the CIA files, but I don't remember any in the State Department.

Q: One document I've seen referred to was an October '52 CIA analysis estimating that the Tudeh lacked the capacity to overthrow the government.

STUTESMAN: Oh, yes.

Q: That was a commonly held assumption?

STUTESMAN: Oh, yes, at that time.

Q: Historians have argued that the embassy tended to overestimate the Tudeh's strength in the country, and also overestimated the degree that at some stages the Tudeh was cooperating implicitly or tacitly with National Front. Was the Tudeh's strength overestimated in some ways in reports back to Washington?

STUTESMAN: As my last comment indicated, I don't really remember the embassy being especially concerned about the Tudeh after the National Front came to power, except for the sense that in a complete disarray, the Tudeh could become heirs of power. But there I think the concern ran more to the Soviet neighbor and the Soviet influence than it did to a serious nationwide deeply ingrained Tudeh force. That's my feeling.

Q: From what I've read in this article which I'll show you later, apparently the CIA had penetrated the Tudeh party at the very highest levels. Was this something that you knew about?

STUTESMAN: No, I didn't.

Q: In the fall of '51, Mossadegh had about six weeks in the U.S., where he represented his case on nationalization to the UN and met at great length with Acheson and George McGhee to continue discussions on the oil question and work out a basis for compromise with the British, and the newly elected conservative government in Britain rejected the compromise that McGhee and Mossadegh worked out back in Washington. They were staying at the Shoreham Hotel and many discussions were being held there. I guess the British rejected the compromise because it still left nationalization intact, and the British Government rejected any prospect of agreeing on the question of nationalization. Do you know if Acheson tried to apply any pressure on Eden and the British conservatives to get the British to accept some kind of a compromise plan that would be worked out in Washington at this stage?

STUTESMAN: I have no personal knowledge of that. I may have been aware of it, but I don't remember anything like that. I don't remember preparing any papers which he would have used in talking to Eden.

Q: Apparently by around January 1952, from what I've read, Acheson was concluding that it was likely that no settlement would be reached with Mossadegh. Was the thinking at the embassy around this time, early '52, pretty much on the same lines, that it would be very likely that there would be no settlement?

STUTESMAN: January, 1952? When did Eisenhower come?

Q: This is still a year before the Republicans coming in.

STUTESMAN: When did Harriman come out?

Q: 1951. So this is seven months later, I guess.

STUTESMAN: Again, my recollection, without any reference to notes or anything or a chronology, is that Acheson and his senior advisors, Nitze was one of them, they never quit trying to negotiate with Mossadegh. That's my recollection. Again, it's possible that I'm looking back with a long telescope, but I recall my feeling that it was almost pathetic, these very senior men, they got so excited. They were all like children and they'd get all excited, wonderful, you know, and they'd be out there, gonna solve a world problem. Again, I may just make this up as I think back, but my own recollection is that they were pathetic, these men, compared to someone like Henderson, who was so steady and so long-term. If Mr. Acheson did feel that it was a useless proposition, he certainly, it seems to me, did not stop his people, Hank Byroade, whom I like. Hank Byroade was a good chief. But these guys would get together and they had a thrill. It was like fighting the war for them.

Q: I read that also around the same time, late '51, early '52, that Ambassador Henderson was trying to get the Shah to replace Mossadegh with someone who was more readily agreeable on a compromise on the oil question with the British. Did you know about what Henderson was thinking at this stage?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember that. I think it's very natural that Henderson would have discussed with the Shah the possibility of getting somebody in. Does it say who his candidate was? Was it Zahedi then?

Q: No, it was easier. It was somebody else. Hussein Ala, I think.

STUTESMAN: Everybody loved old Hussein Ala. He was a sweet man and had done such a good job on the Azerbaijani issue. Anyhow, my answer is that I don't really have the knowledge of it.

Q: When did you leave Iran for your assignment in Washington?

STUTESMAN: It had to be in '52. I was there nearly three years, mid'49 to early '52. In any case, I was in Washington on the desk while Acheson was still Secretary, so it had to be in '52 at the latest.

Q: So you returned to Washington to serve as desk officer? Was that immediate?

STUTESMAN: I was transferred directly from Tehran. I had home leave, and then went to the desk, where I held the great title of Officer-in-Charge of Iranian Affairs.

Q: Who else worked at the desk? Did you have an assistant?

STUTESMAN: Yes, there was somebody in the economic section. And there was somebody else who was in my own office. I'm ashamed to say I don't remember any names. But looking upwards, it was Arthur Richards who was my boss. The partnership between me and Arthur Richards had been formed in Iran and just kept on going on the desk. I don't think I had much of a staff. There was an economic section in GTI, and there was a man in that section who dealt with Iranian affairs. It seems to me his name was Bernie Crowl.

Q: Around this time, '52, early '53, who were the other agencies working on Iranian issues? For example, the Defense Department, Treasury, or Justice, because they had an interest in the question of anti-trust and oil companies. Or CIA, for that matter.

STUTESMAN: At my level, desk officer, my partner in INR was Joe Upton, and, of course, INR is direct liaison with the intelligence community, the CIA. Nonetheless, at the same time I had both old friendships and also official relations with Roger Goiran, who was then the CIA director for Middle East covert action, and John Waller, who was his assistant, dealing primarily with Iran. I knew Kim Roosevelt, but I was in no way involved with him at that time. So informally, I

would be in touch with the two CIA principals at my bureaucratic level, and also socially I saw them.

You asked about the military. I don't remember having much in the way of a connection to Defense Department people. They certainly were represented from time to time in large groups, but in terms of day-to-day or even weekly contacts, I don't remember picking up the phone and checking in with somebody in the Defense Department. Obviously, Henderson had military attachés and there was a military mission.

Treasury, again, I don't remember any particular involvement with Treasury at my level, although at very senior levels, obviously, there would be representatives from Treasury, particularly when you were talking about oil.

The Justice Department, the only time that I saw a direct involvement--and I have no idea of the date--there was a summons by the President, and I think by this time Herbert Hoover, Jr., was Under Secretary, so I'm talking about that time. Anyhow, there was a gathering of senior representatives of American oil companies in the State Department, and they met in a conference room up in the Secretary's area, and I was present. I know that there was a great deal of prior clearance with the Justice Department, which had to be satisfactory to the oil companies before they stepped in the same room. That was done, but that was not done at my level.

Q: How would you describe your responsibilities as a principal officer?

STUTESMAN: Desk officer.

Q: Desk officer.

STUTESMAN: Principal officer would be a term for somebody overseas. I was officer in charge.

Q: That's what I meant, exactly.

STUTESMAN: First of all, it meant that that's all I thought about, aside from my family. It meant that on a daily basis I dealt with all reports from the embassy, all requests for response from the embassy, and all directives sent to the embassy, either by doing them myself or by clearing them. It meant that I was a source of information to anybody senior to me in the Department, which included most of the Department, although by then I had risen rather quickly in the Service, but I was still a desk officer. I was the source of information to people in the Security Council. They'd have meetings in which they would work on the Iranian policy issue. I would be called to supply papers and to provide information to people working at that level, or I would be constantly summoned up to the Secretary's office.

Then, of course, during the night, in those days what we had in the State Department were watch officers. A telegram would come in, which the watch officer would think was significant enough to call me and waken me, and I would get in my car and drive down and read it. If I thought it was important enough, I would even wake a senior officer up, but generally I wouldn't. I would

then go to work on it first thing in the morning. That's what I did.

Q: During this period, the CIA wrote estimates on the Iranian situation. I have one here, a Xerox copy, "The Prospects for Survival of the Mossadegh Regime in Iran," dated October 14, 1952, produced, I guess, at their offices in Washington. Do you know who wrote the estimates, who on their staff would write these? They're called national intelligence estimates, NIEs.

STUTESMAN: No. I wasn't on distribution.

Q: You weren't? Who in the State Department followed closely the oil policy issues?

STUTESMAN: I think, for one thing, Walter Levy was on a continuing consultant basis. For another thing, of course, the very senior people such as Phleger, who, after all, had been the legal counsel for Sun Oil here, maybe Standard of Cal, and then the economic section, the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. Those were people who dealt with that sort of thing. I don't remember any oil company officer either calling me or coming to see me, but when they had their meetings and when we worked out policies, I would, of course, be informed, or any instruction that went to the embassy, I'd get a copy or indeed it would pass through my hands.

When I talk to you about not being on the distribution list for CIA data, that's not unusual. The CIA, after all, supplies its information, first of all, to its own principals, but then through controlled channels to the State Department. So there would be a senior officer in the INR, intelligence research area, who would then presumably make the decision whether or not it would reach me, I guess.

Q: Maybe Upton would see it, perhaps, because he was in INR.

STUTESMAN: Perhaps, although not necessarily. I'm not saying I didn't see some of their stuff, but I certainly was not on a routine distribution. In other words, it wouldn't come direct across to me; it would pass through their controlled channels, which I think is correct.

Q: Do you recall who Iran's ambassador in Washington was at this stage, when you were desk officer in 1952?

STUTESMAN: I don't.

Q: Did you have much dealings with their embassy?

STUTESMAN: I remember social relationships more than I do official relationships. Yes, of course we did. We had all kinds of conversations, but not on policy issues. I don't think that we, the State Department, used the Iranian ambassador much as a channel to Mossadegh.

Q: Mostly just through Henderson?

STUTESMAN: It was through Henderson, yes.

Q: In February 1952, the World Bank vice president, Robert Garner, headed another attempt to reach a settlement on the oil issue, and he traveled to Iran and met with Mossadegh and the embassy staff, and tried to reach a compromise. Do you know how closely Garner coordinated his efforts with the State Department?

STUTESMAN: I don't know. Was Grady still there?

Q: It would be Henderson in early '52.

STUTESMAN: Henderson. Again, knowing Mr. Henderson, he would not have let Garner just travel around loose. He would have been closely involved. But I don't remember any particular experience that's worth telling about.

Q: During this period, the U.S. was still providing to Iran Point IV technical assistance.

STUTESMAN: That's right.

Q: Plus Military Assistance Program, MAP aid, as it was called then. But there was no general-purpose economic assistance, no balance of payments support or whatever. Did Mossadegh make many requests for aid to the U.S. for general support?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember any. I have no idea. Again, I just keep hitting this drum, but it's basic to all of this, in my opinion. Mossadegh wasn't counting pennies; Mossadegh was counting on the United States to buy his oil, to protect him from the Russians, and to kick the British out. I'm just convinced of that. But whether the old man ever said, "I'd like to have another 10 million to build roads," or something, I don't remember anything like that. His people may have mentioned it. Certainly he had around him some pretty grasping types who may have wanted money, but I don't remember Mossadegh really discussing seriously with us economic aid.

Q: By June of '52, from what I've read, Henderson was giving quiet support to Ahmad Qom as replacement for Mossadegh.

STUTESMAN: Yes.

Q: Would it be fair to assume that he was doing this with the full knowledge of the State Department, the higher-ups like Acheson or Acheson's deputies?

STUTESMAN: Oh, certainly. Henderson never made a significant move without having it either cleared in advance or informing them. But again, I don't remember. I was startled when you told me that Qom was even in the play then. He was an old geezer by then.

Q: You had had contact with him when you were in Tehran?

STUTESMAN: Yes, socially.

Q: In July of '52, Mossadegh had a struggle with the Shah over control of the military. Mossadegh briefly resigned as prime minister and was temporarily replaced by Qom for five or six days. Qom was only temporarily in power, because there were massive street protests in Tehran, forcing Qom to resign, and Mossadegh was put back in power, reappointed. Again, this might have been at a higher level of discussion at this stage, but did the U.S. Government have any plans or proposals to support Qom politically or financially so he could keep his power as prime minister?

STUTESMAN: As far as I know, there was nothing in place.

Q: During the early 1950s, maybe in the late 1940s, the CIA had a covert program in Iran called BEDAMN, which the article I gave you by Gasiorowski discusses. Probably the basic purpose of BEDAMN was to counter the influence of the Tudeh and the Soviet Union in Iran. Did you know about this program's existence? It's only come to light recently, apparently.

STUTESMAN: No, I did not, but I did know, of course, that there were American intelligence personnel in Iran. I also knew then, and still know, that a good deal of our work in Iran was really directed north to the neighbor there. One of my great happy memories is that there was a man, an Army officer, but on the intelligence side, named Alex Gagarine. I think he's still alive, but I think he's in Brazil, an American out of a great Russian family, of course. He retired. He lived in Washington for a while. They gave a Russian Easter party, and Archie Roosevelt was there. He's the man whose wife was or may still be Chief of Protocol in the State Department.

Q: That's right. Selwa.

STUTESMAN: At one point during the rather bibulous occasion, Gagarine and Archie Roosevelt put their arms around each other and sang the Azerbaijani "national" anthem, remembering their happy days when they were intelligence officers, American officers, up there in Azerbaijan, helping to get the Russians out. So sure, I knew of American intelligence operations in Iran, but as I say, I always thought of them, except for the business with Mossadegh, I always thought it was primarily concerned with external affairs. And certainly while the British were running Iran, the American intelligence agencies were not, I am convinced, were not trying to overthrow or control any governments in Iran. The British would have squashed it.

Q: Apparently, after the British were forced out in late '52, their embassy staff had to leave Iran, their intelligence people had to leave the country lock, stock, and barrel. By this point, by the fall of '52, apparently the BEDAMN program also started to target the National Front. The idea was, so I've read, to create or exacerbate internal divisions in the Front, to separate its leadership from its mass social base, and the ultimate goal apparently was to undermine or destabilize Mossadegh's government. Was there any word in Washington about this kind of a program?

STUTESMAN: I wasn't personally familiar with it. It makes sense to me. I think it's very reasonable that what you've said is true, but I don't know.

Q: In November '52, C.M. Woodhouse, whom you mentioned earlier, of the British SIS, was sent to Washington to seek U.S. support for a tentative plan to overthrow Mossadegh. He discussed this in his memoirs. Apparently Woodhouse met with some State Department officials. Would this again have been with the people at the assistant secretary level that he would have met with? Did you know about his arrival in Washington?

STUTESMAN: My guess is, in his memoirs, when he says State Department officials, he means CIA.

Q: He discusses it as a separate category from CIA, so I guess he went to the Department offices.

STUTESMAN: Because it's like Kim, you know. Kim Roosevelt had to withdraw the first run of his book because the British objected to some of his references. My answer is no. I knew Woodhouse in Iran, and I may have seen him socially when he came to Washington, although I don't remember it, but certainly I was not involved in any negotiations or discussions.

Q: Around this time, before the British were expelled, they were working with the Rashidian brothers and General Zahedi in a plan to overthrow Mossadegh. The British had this ongoing circle of people that they were working with, with the aim of overthrowing the prime minister. Did you know the Rashidian brothers when you were in Tehran?

STUTESMAN: By name. They were merchants in the bazaar and they were known as influential people, but no. Again, you're asking me about things which had to do with covert activities, and believe me, junior officers in an embassy don't...

Q: They were not in the loop, as they say these days.

STUTESMAN: No, and they shouldn't be.

Q: In January '53, there was a final effort to work out a compromise. This effort had been made under Acheson and was presented to Mossadegh early that year as one of the last acts of the Truman Administration as it was leaving the scene. Mossadegh turned down the plan which the U.S. had offered. Apparently, one of the reasons that Mossadegh turned the plan down was that the British insisted that compensation for nationalization would take into account not only the value of AIOC's properties in Iran, but also the future earnings that AIOC would be deprived of through nationalization, future profits based upon its long-term contract with the government of Iran. Was this question discussed at the desk, this question of the compromise plan and the British insistence upon future earnings being compensated for?

STUTESMAN: I'm sure it was. That's not the sort of thing that would have been kept in a special category. But I don't remember.

Q: Did you do any work on this compromise plan yourself? Would you have been involved in drafting it?

STUTESMAN: Yes.

Q: Putting it together?

STUTESMAN: I suppose so, but I don't remember. Day-to-day work would range from the most pedestrian thing, like somebody trying to locate an American child taking a bus across Iran, to working on National Security Council issues. But I just don't remember.

Q: At the time that the Eisenhower Administration was coming into power early in '53, how would you characterize the approach that Eisenhower and Dulles took to Iran in this very early stage?

STUTESMAN: I've already indicated one specific thing. If I can reduce it to the question of attitude toward Mossadegh, rather than attitude toward Iran, I can speak with some authority. There, as I indicated, I believe that the decision was transmitted by "Beedle" Smith to the CIA officers in an official fashion in "Beedle's" office, to dump Mossadegh, and that Smith was at that time speaking for not only his President and his boss, but also his former boss, Allen Dulles.

Q: How would you explain the basis for this hostility to Mossadegh?

STUTESMAN: I think two bases. One is a more realistic, at least in my opinion, a more realistic assessment of whether you could negotiate with Mossadegh, or whether you had to just sweep him off the board. That's one aspect. Another aspect is the Republicans who came in, I mean, Foster Dulles was one of the most disagreeable, tough-minded people I've ever known, and I knew him pretty well. I delivered the top-secret morning report to him. This is when I was in his Secretariat. Every morning I would hand it to him personally for a year, and he never said "good morning" to me or anything. I might have been the air. Many other people have made these comments. This is a man who was a very realistic, a very cold fellow. And Allen Dulles, who had a lot more charm, nonetheless was also a very cool customer. And President Eisenhower, after all, commanded one of the great coalitions in military history and, despite his grin, could be a very tough boy. Those men, with "Beedle" Smith, those four men, those are very tough customers. They're a quantum leap from people like Nitze and Byroade, who just loved the excitement. The world was their playpen, and they were so happy just moving things around. That didn't happen again until Kennedy brought in his crowd of young people, and they treated the world the same way, with equally--no, more--disastrous results, because I would say Acheson's work stood to the test of time very well. So that's the other basis.

We had in charge of foreign policy some very tough customers who did not think of the world as a playpen; they thought of the world as a very serious place, and if somebody was giving you trouble, you knocked him off one way or another. Those are the two reasons.

Q: How did fear of communism enter into their calculations about the situation in Iran?

STUTESMAN: I don't think a lot.

Q: They were not that concerned about the Tudeh party?

STUTESMAN: I don't think Foster Dulles or Eisenhower gave a damn about the Tudeh Party. They were conscious, of course, of strategic and global considerations, naturally, but I think they were just fed up with this guy Mossadegh. You know, "Push him aside." They didn't want to kill him. "Push him aside and let's move on. Let's stop all this crap."

Q: To get to the oil business.

STUTESMAN: Yes, okay. I'm sure the oil business was an element. Also, Eden and Acheson didn't get on at all well, but Eden and Dulles got along wonderfully.

Q: I thought Eden and Acheson got along well, because I've seen their correspondence at Yale, and it seems very friendly in its tenor. Maybe later on, they...

STUTESMAN: I don't think so. I think they had a hard time with each other. In any case, the British and Eisenhower got on just fine. After all, Eisenhower spent four rather significant years working very closely with them. So I would say the British, probably by this time, they also had more realistic people in charge of those affairs, and I think it was just a concatenation of people who were prepared to take a new and realistic look at Iran, and they saw Mossadegh as a problem.

Q: In his memoirs, C.M. Woodhouse discusses his visits to Washington, which I mentioned a few minutes ago, and he played up the anti-communist aspect, fear of communism, with the CIA people and State Department people in order to get them to take a stronger interest in the British plan to overthrow Mossadegh. Does that make sense to you that the British might have played up the role of anti-communism to encourage American interests, to support their goals?

STUTESMAN: Sure. Americans in those years twitched when you said the word "communist," and with some good reason. Certainly the Eisenhower people that came to power on an expression of, almost a suggestion that, the Democrats had been traitors at Yalta and so on, so that sure, that was a good button to push. But again, I'm speaking without any personal knowledge of these men's thinking, but my feeling is that the main thing that happened was you had a whole new crowd in, and the top men were very tough, very realistic, and did not want to play games with the world, and the other is they faced a table loaded with failed negotiations of all kinds, of good-faith negotiations, and they just didn't want to do any more of that. So the two things came together. The communist element, sure, it was part of it, but I think it can be overexaggerated.

Q: You mentioned earlier that you had gotten a sense that something was going on in terms of American planning to overthrow Mossadegh, and you prepared a paper, a sort of "what if" paper. Do you recall the date?

STUTESMAN: No. When did Mossadegh fall?

Q: *In August of '53.*

STUTESMAN: This would have been in mid-summer of '53, I guess.

Q: *That you did this paper?*

STUTESMAN: Yes. And I don't mean that I embarrassed my chief, Arthur Richards, by insisting on being informed, but I must admit I would say, "Come on, is something going on that I don't know about?" And men like Jack Jernegan and Byroade were both friends, as well as superiors, and they wouldn't say anything to me.

Q: *Richards wouldn't tell you anything either?*

STUTESMAN: No, no. It was part of the rule. I mean, the line was drawn at the Assistant Secretary, and then it shifted down eventually to the office director, and that was it. But on the other hand, it became increasingly apparent that something was going on. Fraser Wilkins, he's still alive in Washington, who was then an officer in the policy planning council, and he felt that something was going on, and he leaned hard on me, which was his mistake, and I kept saying to him, "Why don't you talk to Jack Jernegan?" who was a personal friend and contemporary colleague. Fraser has never forgiven me for not telling him, and I keep telling him, "Fraser, I didn't know." (Laughs) Anyhow, that's when Upton and I decided that something was going on that could lead to a change of government and somebody ought to be thinking about that.

Q: *Some months before you got wind of the possible coup plans, the spring of '53, Mossadegh wrote to President Eisenhower, requesting U.S. financial assistance. Eisenhower turned the request down, saying that there would be no aid to Iran until settlement of the oil issue had been made. Who would have drafted Eisenhower's reply? Would you have worked on it at the NSC level or someone in the White House?*

STUTESMAN: I suppose I would have worked on it, but I don't remember. Is this when the argument was, "How could the American people understand our giving you money at a time when you have great resources that you could turn into money?"

Q: *That's exactly the tenor of his letter, yes.*

STUTESMAN: I think probably I had a role in it.

Q: *His response suggests in some way that the oil issue had great bearing upon his basic attitude towards Mossadegh.*

STUTESMAN: I understand.

Q: *I have some questions about the development of the coup plans which have come to light in Roosevelt's book and some of the articles I've given you, but you've already answered them to*

some extent when you discussed your non-relationship to the principals involved in this. I guess I can ask you this, though. What were your impressions of the political situation in Iran, based on your reading of the cables coming back from Tehran? What was your impression of what was going on during the months before Mossadegh was overthrown?

STUTESMAN: You are asking me to be pretty precise about something a long way ago. My feeling is that, first of all, and the men I worked with had complete confidence in Mr. Henderson and his staff in appraising the situation and in reporting on it. I think probably we felt that Mossadegh was losing the confidence of a lot of Iranians, but that's about as far as I can go now.

Q: From what I've read in Roosevelt's account and elsewhere, when Mossadegh arrested Colonel Nassiri, when Mossadegh learned that he was about to be arrested or overturned by Zahedi, and when this first coup plan failed, the Shah fled the country to Iraq, I think.

STUTESMAN: And then Rome.

Q: And then Rome. That's right. Do you recall this turn of events, what your reaction was when you heard about this effort to oust Mossadegh?

STUTESMAN: No, I don't. I obviously was informed. That sort of thing I would have been informed on. Just a story. The poor Iranian ambassador at Rome was a man who had been the chief of protocol of the court, and he had received instructions from Mossadegh not to meet the Shah, so he didn't meet the Shah. But a young business man there who was an Iranian, just a very nice fellow, went out to greet the Shah. After the Shah returned to power, that little guy in Rome was given a high position at the court.

Q: When the first effort failed, the CIA people regrouped, in their efforts to work with their contacts in the bazaar and elsewhere to develop crowds that would take a role in moving against Mossadegh. I guess they went to the military, to Zahedi and his people, and they were able to implement a successful coup which led to the overthrow of Mossadegh. After this had happened, did you learn more about the CIA's role in this episode in the following months or year when you were at the desk?

STUTESMAN: Oh, yes, it all opened up a good deal, and also the CIA withdrew from at least visibly active involvement. What happened after the coup, after Mossadegh fell and the new government was formed was an intense concentration on helping the new government to get established, giving the new government a chance to breathe and, as I say, an instant supply of money, and giving the Shah support, and then also working on them to develop ways to get income from the oil.

I realize I seem to be describing the oil settlement in terms of providing income to the Iranians, and you, it seems to me, generally are suggesting that the Iranian oil settlement was a way of supplying profit to the oil companies. Both points of view are correct, but my feeling is the American Government at that time was primarily concerned with supplying income to the Iranians.

Q: As a basis for stability.

STUTESMAN: Yes, and less concerned with making a deal for the oil companies. The two are inextricably connected, but if you have to give way to one side or another, my recollection is that the weight ran more to, "Okay, Mossadegh's gone, there's a new government there, there's a new chance. Let's help it work." Of course, also they could pretty much push the British to the side. I mean, we were in the lead now.

Q: I want to take a few steps back to the question of the coup and the CIA's role in the coup. On the basis of the information that you had been able to get at the desk in the following year or two, could you say how important the U.S. role was in the overthrow of Mossadegh was? Was the U.S. role decisive or incidental? How would you characterize that?

STUTESMAN: I've heard it described in a number of different ways by Mr. Henderson, by Kim [Kermit Roosevelt], by others. I believe that its success is evidence that it was based on natural forces. There were broad forces which supported the idea of a more stable government, a government which could open up connections again to the West, and the Shah was popular. I do not think, however, that it would have happened then without outside instigation. And the two go together.

Q: A few months after the coup, Vice President Nixon met with the Shah in Iran during the course of a long trip through Asia.

STUTESMAN: I'd forgotten that.

Q: Did his visit have any special political significance, the Vice President stopping to see the Shah during the course of a tour of the Near East and the Far East?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember that at all, but I think it's a good idea, and certainly the Shah must have gotten a good deal of self esteem out of it.

Q: A show of political support by the U.S.

STUTESMAN: Oh, yes. A senior official. I mean, the President's the only next one in their eyes.

Q: A number of historians and analysts have argued that during the years of '53 into the early 1960s, that the Shah and Iran were in sort of a tutelage relationship with the United States. The U.S. was sort of like a tutor in terms of developing Iranian institutions, sort of a subordinate relationship between the two countries. From your vantage point in the State Department, how true was that, that Iran was kind of a client state, was in a subordinate relationship with the United States?

STUTESMAN: I think that client state description is exaggerated.

Q: *Okay.*

STUTESMAN: Both the best and the worst of American foreign policy involvement came into play here. The best is, of course, the generous, idealistic American attitude toward helping other people. The worst is the sense of assuming responsibility for whatever happens. In other words, the sparrow falls in the forest it's our fault and our responsibility. The vast aid programs which developed in Iran, in a sardonic way, I would say that they had very little effect except in one regard which they were not proposing as an objective. What they did was, they employed at middle management levels young men and even some women who were educated and who were honest and who were thereby protected from the corrupting influences of regular Iranian society and Iranian government, and were allowed to grow and to develop and also worked toward idealistic objectives. I don't think of that as making Iran a client state at all. I think it may have developed, long after I'd left the desk, into false relationships between us and Iran.

But while I was on the desk, our involvement with Iran was extraordinarily idealistic. It was a desire to help, and in the helping, we used these really good young people who otherwise might have been damaged or wasted. Am I sounding passionate? Anyhow, I feel that way.

Q: *That's interesting.*

STUTESMAN: I also think you have to be careful to divide the first years of the Shah's accession to power after the fall of Mossadegh from what happened later. It's a progression, and there's a connection, but the first years, there was no secret police of any significance, there was no serious repression that I knew of, at least of political opponents. It was a halcyon period.

Q: *One of the main goals of the State Department after the coup was to settle the petroleum dispute. You mentioned earlier the basic goal was to provide Iran with income as a basis for a more stable political situation and also a way to tie the oil companies into managing resources in a way that would provide income to both parties. The first step of this process were Anglo-American discussions during the fall of '53. They were designed to lead somehow to settlement that would work for all parties concerned. Did you take part in any of these discussions?*

STUTESMAN: Yes. Herbert Hoover, Jr., as you know, was brought into play by Eisenhower. Mr. Hoover was a man of great distinction in the oil community. He had a reputation for absolute probity. His firm--at least I was told the story--his firm was so trusted by the oil companies that two competing oil companies would both contract with him to perform surveys in the same general area. He was a man much affected by his own experience as the child of a prominent person. This caused him, among other things, to be deeply suspicious of anyone getting close to him. But at the same time, it meant that he could move easily in the world of power. He had grown up in it and he was used to it. I think he was probably a much better single person moving as an independent consultant and working on individual things as a person than he was as an Under Secretary of State, where he had to deal with a great organization.

While I was desk officer, he was hired to be the catalyst and the leader of the American

negotiations, which were successful in his point of view and, as far as I'm concerned, my point of view. Then he became Under Secretary of State. When he got settled he found himself surrounded by the Secretariat, and Mr. Hoover said, "Well, now, who are these people who are reading my mail and are around me?"

"I don't see anybody like, say, well, like John Stutesman." Of course, they didn't know who in the hell I was.

The next thing I knew, I got a phone call from somebody, saying, "We'd like to have you transferred to the Secretariat. Mr. Hoover has expressed an interest in you."

I said, "Okay." And that was that. I was shifted off the desk and put up in the Secretariat.

I tell you all that partially because it amuses me how life is affected by things, but also to show you that Mr. Hoover and I worked closely together and I had a close involvement with him.

Now, how involved was I in the negotiations? Well, I was as involved as a staff officer can be with the additional responsibility of running the Iranian desk. Did I understand major world oil policy? The answer is, no, certainly not. Did I spend a lot of time worrying about whether Texaco and Standard Oil of California were able to get together? Not at all. But I was present, as I told you, when this group of senior people were placed in a room after the attorney general cleared it. Brownell, was he the attorney general?

Q: That's right. Herbert Brownell

STUTESMAN: These names come back. I didn't travel with Mr. Hoover. He didn't take people with him. He was a very private person. But I carried his bag a great deal in Washington for him going from here to there.

Q: Was Howard Page of Standard Oil of New Jersey, I think, involved in the discussions?

STUTESMAN: Perhaps. I don't remember.

Q: You don't remember him at all? Did Loy Henderson play a role in the outcome?

STUTESMAN: Certainly, working from the Tehran point of view. I don't remember Mr. Henderson being called back. The records would show if he was. My own feeling is that he ran the show in Tehran. He and Mr. Hoover got on very, very well.

Q: In terms of the issues, how difficult was it to convince the British to yield their position running Iranian oil through AIOC and accept a multinational consortium where they would only have a share? Was this a typical problem?

STUTESMAN: Of course. Yes. And Hoover did a splendid job. Looking back, I would say that the main stick we had was the British Government, which really overwhelmed the AIOC and

forced the AIOC to come to terms. The range of reasons for that range from the British diplomats who probably resented the old AIOC control over their policies in Iran, to a very sensible realization that the oil company could not return to its old situation, and that the thing to do was get the best they could out of it.

Q: Interesting. How was it that the French and Dutch companies were also brought into the picture? The French company and Royal Dutch Shell also had a share in the consortium.

STUTESMAN: Well, clearly, the reason was that the Iranians had to have less than 50% English, and the Dutch were brought in because Shell is a Dutch company, or was a Dutch company, but also the British influence was considerable within it, I think. So that the Iranians who, believe me, were never fooled by any of these things, the Iranians, nevertheless, clearly were willing to put across to their people the idea that the British had been reduced to less than 50%, whereas the English were able to say, "Well, okay, maybe, but in fact, we have more than 50% of a hand in this." I'm looking way back and I haven't thought about these things in a long time. I don't study the literature on it. But that's my reaction to how the Dutch--and who else?

Q: Also the French.

STUTESMAN: That's funny. I don't remember the French being in it at all.

Q: They had a minor, small percentage of the consortium.

STUTESMAN: I don't remember that.

Q: According to some declassified NSC documents from late '53, early '54, the Department of Defense was taking the position that if the British had not come to a settlement with Iran on the issues we've talked about, that the U.S. should act independently in Iran to reach a settlement on the oil question, ignore the British, basically. What problems would have led the Pentagon to take such a position? Does this ring a bell?

STUTESMAN: It doesn't ring any bell at all, and I find it very foolish. Herbert Hoover, Jr., would no more have allowed that to happen than he would have fallen out the window.

Q: Of course, there wasn't, but that was the Pentagon view, apparently. It was thrashed out at the NSC level.

In early January '54, the executive secretary of the NSC, James Lay, Jr., NSC executive secretary, presented a report to the council on U.S. policy towards Iran, which was called NSC 5402. It discussed issues such as economic and military aid to Iran, the oil settlement. Various parts are still sanitized, so I don't know what else was discussed, probably the CIA role in the country, intelligence issues. I'm not sure. Were you a member of the working group that would have drafted this report to that council?

STUTESMAN: I would have been, and I don't remember that particular paper, certainly not by

number. Many days I would spend sitting in the outside room of the NSC. The men I went with were Fraser Wilkins, and there was a red-headed Foreign Service officer, I can't think of his name now, very good, very effective, and another man. In any case, I would frequently be the first point for the development of a new paper. In other words, the request, the decision for a revised paper would start with the desk. That's typical. The council discussion would always start at staff level. I'd sit behind the State Department principals, and frequently speak. Then I would be asked to leave and they would deal with, say, the CIA paper or something like that. So what I'm trying to describe to you is there was always a break off at my level of separate arguments.

Then I have a feeling that there might well have been times when they'd bring in the specialist on the oil, maybe, or something, and whether I was there or not would not have anything to do with secrecy; it would have to do with whether I'd go on back about my business. Chances are I would stay.

But if you ask me about a particular paper, the answer is I don't remember.

Q: But you played a role in drafting on a routine basis.

STUTESMAN: Yes, routine. Routine, yes. I mean, that's the basic way. As I say, I distinctly remember day after day going with these fine officers from the policy planning group and, for that matter, before going, sitting down and working over the papers with them.

Q: Were these meetings of the Operations Coordinating Board, the OCB, that you would have been going to?

STUTESMAN: Yes.

Q: That was like a subgroup of the NSC, the technical level, I guess.

STUTESMAN: Yes. Then I can also remember--I hadn't thought about this--at that time in the Department, the U.K. desk, which had another name, I've forgotten, but anyhow, the director.

Q: British Commonwealth office? European Affairs, something like that?

STUTESMAN: Hayden, was that his name? Anyhow, there was a man there who was almost notorious for his insistence on being involved in any policy paper or, for that matter, even instructions to the field which related in almost any way to the British interests. Well, of course, the British interests were so extensive, so pervasive, that it meant that this guy was constantly getting in your hair on things that really were not of great consequence to the King or Queen of England. So he was a thorn, I remember that. He was a problem in getting papers up to the Secretary or to the NSC in regard to Iran, because, as I remember, he took a sterner view of British interests in Iran than even the British Government. That's an aside. But I do remember actively being involved in development of policy papers which went all the way up to the NSC.

Q: According to one of the updates of this NSC report, it was updated on a quarterly basis,

perhaps, every three or four months, from April '54, which I've seen, Herbert Hoover, Jr., and Loy Henderson were trying to educate--that's the word that's used in the document--trying to educate Iranian leaders as to the realities of the international oil business. Do you know how they went about this educational mission? It's briefly discussed in this document, but not really described.

STUTESMAN: My answer has to be, no, I don't know specifically, not because I was cut out, but because I don't remember. But both of those men, whom I knew so well, their view of education always was to be persuasive. They were never patronizing, either of those men, to any Iranian or to other people. Both of them believed that successful negotiations depended on mutual trust and on honesty, basic honesty. Many times I've been involved with both of those men when they would tell the other person things which showed up weaknesses on our side of things that the other person should be concerned about dealing with us. Never, of course, betraying, but making clear that a proper settlement had to be based on understanding and trust. So I think that's what they mean by education. But in terms of what papers or what techniques, there wasn't anything covert about it, I'll assure you that.

Q: That same month, April '54, the U.S. and British began negotiations with the Iranians over the consortium plan. The talks were held in Tehran. Did you go to Tehran any time for this in '54, '55? Did you return to the country for any meetings or discussions?

STUTESMAN: I did go. As desk officer, I went back to Iran on at least one occasion, and I couldn't tell you the year, but it had nothing to do specifically with negotiations. It was simply going back and working on the ground with people about a myriad of problems. William Rountree was DCM then, I remember that. Henderson, of course, was ambassador.

Q: So Henderson and Hoover did go to Tehran to meet with the Iranians and discuss the consortium question. Ali Amini was the head of the Iranian negotiating team. Had you met Amini in Tehran?

STUTESMAN: He was another member of the Qajar aristocracy which had survived the Shah, had an abiding hatred of the Shah in terms of family relationships. But he was a very, very good representative of his country and very knowledgeable.

Q: He became ambassador shortly after the consortium question was settled. Was this while you were still at the country desk?

STUTESMAN: I don't know. Now that you mention it, I do remember that Amini was eased out of the country, given an embassy, the way we occasionally do with people the President doesn't want around, given an embassy to honor him and to move him the hell out of the country so that he wouldn't be there in the carrying out of the settlement. I don't remember why. I don't remember if they were concerned he would be an impediment.

Q: In any case, I think the Iranians, from the Shah at the highest level down, did not like the consortium arrangement because it still left control of oil in the hands of foreign countries.

STUTESMAN: Oh, sure.

Q: How difficult was it to convince the Shah and Amini, as well, to accept the consortium arrangement?

STUTESMAN: I don't think it was that difficult. They struggled, but the actual progress of the negotiations was, of course, difficult, but I don't think the Iranians thought they could do any more than get the best they could. I don't really think that the Shah or Amini or anybody else thought that they could get anything resembling a non-foreign control. They did, however--and you have to tell me if I'm correct--get in that agreement some kind of understanding that it was a contract with a term.

Q: I think you're right.

STUTESMAN: And after all, what's a couple of years, ten years, whatever it is. I've forgotten. Whereas the negotiation of the AIOC agreement of--what was it, 33 or something, was going to hold them for another 50 years or something. (Laughs) So I think the Iranians were going for a settlement. They knew they had to get a settlement. Two, they were going for as much money as they could get; and three, they were going for a term. And they got it.

Q: They could change the rules later on.

STUTESMAN: But I mean, weren't the American companies literally going to be moved out after a period of time?

Q: I'm not sure. It was sort of an open question, I think.

STUTESMAN: In any case, it was an open question. At a minimum, it was not conclusive. Anyhow, that's my reaction looking back. I could be mistaken.

Q: Shortly after the talks ended, the U.S. gave the Iranian Government another grant in aid, some time in the fall of '54, the summer of '54, perhaps. I'm not sure. To what extent did the U.S. link acquiescence to the consortium plan with additional assistance?

STUTESMAN: I have no idea. I don't know.

Q: One of the last issues to be settled was a question of which U.S. companies would play a part in the consortium. The smaller companies, independents, originally wanted, I guess, a 33% share in the consortium on the grounds that they had supported the boycott of Iranian oil for the most part, and they should be rewarded for their observation of the international boycott against Mossadegh's oil. How much support did the independents have in the State Department? Was there much sympathy for their position at State?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember. I just don't remember.

Q: Apparently, Ralph K. Davies played a major role in getting the independents some share of the consortium.

STUTESMAN: Did he, really?

Q: It was a minor share, but they got a share, like 4% or 5%, something like that.

STUTESMAN: Was Alton Jones around there? Why am I so familiar with that name? Was he involved with this? He was an independent, certainly.

Q: I think he might have had a share of the share. I'm not sure. Did you know Davies or have contact with him?

STUTESMAN: No.

Q: You just know the name.

STUTESMAN: I know the name.

Q: After the consortium agreement was reached late in '54, the Shah came to the United States for a state visit, to meet with Eisenhower and Dulles, among others. What was your role in the preparation for a state visit? What kind of role did the country desk play?

STUTESMAN: I'll answer it by telling you a story about when the Shah came, not incognito, but not on a state visit. He and his new wife, the German girl, the Bakhtiari girl, I can't think of her name, a beautiful woman, they came and they had a good time up in New York (Laughs). He walked into one of those big car sales places up near Columbus Circle. He's not a very impressive-looking man in civilian clothes, and he had a rather shabby-looking aide with him. The salesman didn't even come over for a while. Some salesman came over, and the Shah, by this time, had looked around the showroom enough, and he said, "I'd like that, but in a sort of orange color, and I'd like two of those." (Laughs) And then he got arrested, speeding on the New Jersey turnpike, and we had to fix that up.

Then he came to Washington, and there were no particular plans. Of course, I was involved with meeting him. He said, "I'd like to ride." So he and I rented some horses at Rock Creek Park, and went riding in Rock Creek. Christ, when I think about it today, the Shah of Iran and the terrorists and all this stuff, here the two of us were, just riding along in Rock Creek Park, chatting away.

I took him dancing. My wife and the Shah and Soroya, that was her name, we went dancing in one of the big old hotels there. All I did was call up and got a table. I didn't tell the maitre d' who was going to be there. Soroya dances very well, I'll tell you that. It was all very cheerful. Kim Roosevelt got very upset, because he felt that we ought to be doing more. So he got Herbert Hoover, Jr., to have a little soiree. When I think about it, it's all so pastoral, so halcyon.

Q: A level of informality that wouldn't have existed 20 years later.

STUTESMAN: Oh, my God. As to the state visit, the formal visit, when you have a formal visit, the desk is involved in writing toasts and, of course, position papers, but the actual ceremonial stuff is handled by the protocol office and all of that. Frankly, I don't even remember it. I doubt very much if I was much involved. As I say, when he was there informally, he and I rode together and danced, you know. When he was there formally, he was the Shah of Iran, and I doubt if the desk officer even got invited, except to a large throng or something like that. (Laughs)

Q: Did you do much work on the military aid program?

STUTESMAN: No.

Q: After the coup in '53, the CIA worked closely with Iranian military. I guess the Tudeh Party had a fairly large presence in the Iranian Air Force and the Army. They had their own people working covertly in the armed forces of Iran. The CIA worked with military intelligence in Iran to purge these people out of positions. Did you know much about this effort?

STUTESMAN: No. I remember once getting a phone call from, I suppose, the Air Force. I'm not sure, from one of the armed services, either Air or Army, saying about a couple of young officers on training in the United States that information had turned up about them, and the government of Iran wanted them returned promptly. This Defense Department person said they felt they had to have State Department clearance. I said, "Ship 'em back," and hung up.

Years later, somebody in the State Department came to me and said, "We always remember how clear and firm you were on that." I had forgotten all about it. "And how that sort of thing today would be bucked all the way up to the President of the United States and the ACLU would get involved in it."

I said, "I don't know. I thought it was a clear question and I answered it, and that was the end of that."

But nobody said to me, "Prove that they're Tudeh," or anything like that. Maybe they were. Maybe they were just stealing money, for all I know. Anyhow, that's about all I know. That's a long answer to your question.

Q: You said earlier that at this stage the SAVAK had not been created. They weren't created until '57, I think.

STUTESMAN: It was not a police state when I was involved.

Q: But do you know if there was any liaison between the CIA and the Iranian military intelligence or connection being formed that would have led to SAVAK being created later in the fifties?

STUTESMAN: I really don't. The first mission we had there was to the gendarmerie, which you can argue is a police force, because it was concerned with internal controls, and we sent General Schwarzkopf there. Then they squeezed him out, and the gendarmerie was still going when I was there, but that closed down. I'm quite sure they were more in the role of highway policemen than they were secret police. Perhaps it was tied into intelligence in the long run, but it was simply not a police state when I was involved with Iran.

Q: I understand that some of the nationalist politicians, like Fatemi, were executed months after the coup. There was some repression.

STUTESMAN: Fatemi--that's not repression exactly, is it? I mean, Fatemi called for the death of the Shah, and I think when the Shah came back to power, he killed him. And Mossadegh was tucked away in his farm and kept under police control. I don't think of that as being in the category of a police state controlling its population by police forces. I think the Shah killed, as far as I remember, only one man. He only killed Fatemi, didn't he? Did he kill others?

Q: There might have been some executions among the Tudeh officers that I mentioned earlier, but beyond that, I'm not sure.

STUTESMAN: But in terms of National Front, he certainly didn't molest Saleh or Kashani. In fact, some of them remained in the Majlis, didn't they?

Q: I'm not sure. In negotiations with the Soviet Union during '53 and '54, Zahedi and the Shah moved away from Mossadegh's policy of neutrality, in terms of the Cold War. In negotiations with the Soviet Union, they were accused of making concessions over issues such as the territorial frontiers and World War II debts. In part of the NSC paper that I've seen, Iran had taken a "provocative" approach towards the Soviet Union, in terms of taking a much more hard line on these questions of borders and war debts and so forth. To what extent did the State Department encourage Zahedi to take a tougher position in these negotiations? Was there any encouragement at all?

STUTESMAN: I don't remember, but I can say that Loy Henderson, whose memoirs, you know, have recently been published, but they only deal with his experience in Russia, Loy Henderson was a very clear-eyed man when it came to the Soviet Union. Loy was very clear-eyed in regard to the Soviet Union, and would never miss an opportunity seriously to encourage people to be cautious about the Soviet Union and stand up for what they considered to be their rights.

Q: I should have asked you about General Zahedi earlier. Had you known him or met him in Tehran before he left?

STUTESMAN: I knew his son, Ardeshir, who was then one of these young men being given work in our aid programs, and he was a cheerful fellow, not much different in age from me, a little younger, I guess, educated, of course, in the United States. I knew the father socially, but that's about all.

Q: In the mid-1950s, the Eisenhower Administration had a strong interest in developing a regional military alliance system among the so-called northern tier countries, Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, and so forth. That interest led Eisenhower and Dulles to support the Baghdad Pact which came to fruition in the fall of '55. How much interest did the policy makers have in Iran to join such a pact?

STUTESMAN: Mr. Dulles is, to me, a perfect example of why you should never have a lawyer as Secretary of State. He was actually stuck on the question of alliances. A man of his experience and knowledge should have realized that getting a foreign state to sign a contract was very different from getting another merchant to sign a contract to sell you goods. But somehow, it became terribly important to him to have these alliances and pacts. My own personal attitude then, and still is, is that it was not a very useful exercise, and that the people being cajoled went along primarily because they thought, "Well, I can turn this into some profit, getting more arms or something." But the Iranians and the Turks had no particular desire to be in alliance, and the thing, as we know, fell apart. The same thing out in Southeast Asia.

Also, of course, this terrible effect that the reconstruction of Europe had on us, which I hope has passed, but the idea that we were responsible for the return of Europe to prosperity, of course, has perverted so much of American doctrine. We weren't. We provided the defense of Europe and we provided some seed capital, but it was the Europeans who created the miracle; it wasn't the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan was an essential element, and you see these poor saps in the Kennedy Administration going down in South America, going to Bolivia, where I was assigned, and deciding that if you just put enough money in and aid programs, that the Bolivians would become a new Puerto Rico. Well, they didn't. And the same thing--I'm digressing a lot--what happened with Dulles and his alliances was, I think, just a lot of hot air and a good deal of expense to us, but it satisfied some inner need of Foster Dulles.

Q: My impression is that as the Baghdad Pact planning was proceeding in Washington and the Near East, that the Shah announced his decision to join the pact before Dulles was quite ready for Iranian membership.

STUTESMAN: (Laughs) That's wonderful!

Q: Did you get a sense that Dulles wanted the Shah to move a little slowly on joining a pact?

STUTESMAN: I don't have the slightest memory of that.

Q: Again I've read that he was concerned that they joined the pact too quickly, that the Soviets would see this as provocation.

STUTESMAN: I see.

Q: In terms of a country on their border joining an unfriendly alliance. Again, this might have been as you were leaving the Iran desk.

STUTESMAN: I just don't remember. I remember being essentially scornful of these pacts, but that's all, for the reason I gave.

Q: Some of the NSC papers that have been declassified from this period make the point that internal social and political reform was a condition for long-term stability in Iran. What kind of reforms did the U.S. have in mind? Do you recall discussions of the need for reform in Iran as a basis for stability?

STUTESMAN: I don't. Partially this is because I didn't then and still don't think that reform is an essential element of our involvement with a foreign country, because so frequently our idea of reform is casting them in our image, which is a terrible way to treat other people. So I don't really remember that.

Again I come back to my point of employing fine young men and women in Iran at a time when they would not otherwise have had this kind of employment, and directing them toward idealistic goals. But certainly I don't remember any instructions to Henderson to go down and tell him to let women vote or take the chadors off or anything like that. I don't remember anything like that.

Q: It might be more like administrative reforms, budgetary policy changes and things like that.

STUTESMAN: Oh, sure. Anti-corruption. Sure, I can see that. I remember more discussions like, well, should we build railroads which run from India towards Iraq, or railroads which run from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian, that kind of thing I remember being involved in. Those are long-term considerations. I don't remember the discussion of whether or not to send the village boys to school or not.

Q: In early '54, a new majlis was elected, and apparently the vote was manipulated in some way. The outcome was there was a Parliament that was controlled generally by landlords and old aristocrats, the more conservative supporters of the Shah. Was there much concern about the political election of the Parliament, that a very conservative Parliament might cause problems in the long term?

STUTESMAN: I imagine there was. I don't remember. Roy Melbourne, of course, would be a terrific source on that sort of thing. He's down in North Carolina now.

Q: That's right.

STUTESMAN: He was chief of the political section, and he's written about it. He's a very scholarly man and probably has kept some notes.

Q: During the year or two after the fall of Mossadegh, when you were still at the country desk, how strong was the Shah's position in Iran? To what extent was he ruling as opposed to merely reigning?

STUTESMAN: My first statement is that he was unchallenged, and my second statement is that

he was growing in self-confidence. And a leader who lacks self-confidence ain't much of a leader, so he was developing his self-esteem and his self-confidence, and he was beginning to take actions that he could carry through. I don't want to put down the British ability to control. They certainly proved their ability to do that. Nonetheless, I think the British treated the Shah, when he was a youngster--after all, they put him on the throne--they treated him almost in schoolmasterish ways, and he couldn't do things that he should have been able to do. The British would say, "Oh, you shouldn't do that." And we had a certain schoolmasterish attitude, too, I think. But by the time I left the desk, the Shah was in command, and whether he was making mistakes or not, I don't know, but he was in command and he certainly built on that.

Q: For example, in April of '55, he fired Zahedi as prime minister and put his own more compliant person in. He put Hussein Ala.

STUTESMAN: Sweet old boy. That goes to my point, at least. That proves it.

Q: Yes. At the time you left the Iran desk in the summer of '55, according to the chronology I've seen, what was your outlook on the political situation in the country?

STUTESMAN: I wouldn't say I felt relaxed, but I don't remember that there was any threat to the Shah nor threat to our negotiated oil settlement, and certainly no Russian threat, no external threat. I must say I had the feeling that I was leaving the country when it was getting less and less interesting. (Laughs) I'd been there in the real excitement, and we'd come to a conclusion which I thought was beneficial to both Iran and to the United States.

Q: You mentioned that at the Iran desk, you went to the secretariat at the State Department. Did you do any work that related to Iran in the following years?

STUTESMAN: No. In the secretariat, you just focus on the Secretary.

Q: But in terms of subsequent assignments?

STUTESMAN: No. While I was in the secretariat, after four years, you generally go abroad again, and I went to see a man that I'd known in China, a senior man who was Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, [Livingston] Livy Merchant. I called and went down to see him. I said, "Livy, I did China and I did Iran and the desk, been promoted, and I've got a wife and two children. I've done well, I've served my country well in these tough places. Now do you think there's any chance--I speak bilingual French--do you think there's any possibility of being assigned to a post where they speak French, perhaps in Western Europe?"

And he said, "John, I'll look into it." So I was assigned to Paris and I was there two years, and then Loy Henderson called me back to Washington to work as special assistant, but not on Iranian affairs. So I never had any further involvement with Iranian affairs, nor with the Middle East, for that matter, somewhat to my disappointment, but I never did.

Q: Any comments you want to make on what happened in Iran in the following 25 years in terms

of the consequences of the coup of '53 and its implications for U.S.-Iran relations?

STUTESMAN: The only thing that comes to my mind is that I became very troubled--I'd already retired--when there were strong arguments in the press and among people in the United States that the Shah was a bad person and was bad for Iran, and that we had, as the United States, made a terrible mistake in supporting him. I realized then that I knew very little about what had happened in Iran since 1955 which led to such an unsavory situation. But I still believe that we did the correct thing, both for Iran and for our own world interests, by helping the young Shah to re-establish his power when Mossadegh fell.

The question of the overthrow of Mossadegh, and in this paper that you gave me, the one you sent me...

Q: The article David Painter wrote.

STUTESMAN: He makes clear that there was a progression in the United States Government policies based upon the experience in Iran, and that Guatemala came along soon after and eventually, to our utter horror and dismay, the Kennedys killed Diem. Even though we did the right thing by supporting the Shah, I cannot lose a deep, lingering doubt, which I know Loy Henderson had then and always had, that it was unwise for us to intervene clandestinely, and I am confident that it was unwise for us to make that a shining example of how we could handle the world for the rest of time, because obviously you can't. Guatemala worked, and that, again, substantiated the idea that if you had the proper people in, you can fix things up. Of course, it doesn't work that way. So I have those two reactions.

But in terms of the Shah specifically, I think the Shah was a good thing for Iran, certainly while I was there. I think he worked toward good long-term objectives. Obviously he lost that ability toward the end, but he was a good bet, and it did last 20 years.

Q: Thank you very much for your time.

DALE D. CLARK
Point Four Program, Foreign Agriculture Service Chief, Iran Office
Washington, DC (c1951)

Mr. Clark was born and raised in Utah and was educated at the Universities of Utah, Columbia and Harvard. After service in the US Navy during World War II, he worked in Germany in the Office of Military Government in Germany. He later was professor at Harvard University. In the late 1940s and 1950s Mr. Clark worked in the US Government's Point IV program, dealing primarily with agricultural and self-help programs, primarily in Europe and the Middle East. He was also active in promoting cooperation between the US Government and religious, non-profit organizations. Mr. Clark was interviewed by Robert Zigler

on October 14, 1998.

CLARK: The crisis came in Iran. It was in that area that East-West confrontation, the Cold War started. In 1951 I was put in charge of the Iran Office. It was not a division, the Iran Program. It's very interesting from an organizational perspective that in the State Department there were offices for countries and also for functions. Up to this time the various programs in Point Four were run from the offices of the State Department. The Iran crisis changed this. Iran was the first case where, because of its importance as an international crisis point, it became the "Iran Section." I was put in head of it. Dr. Bennett, who was the former president of Arkansas State University (the agricultural university there), was put in as administrator.

Along about Christmas time of 1951, Dr. Bennett and his party of advisors were making a trip around the world looking to the installation of the Point Four offices and programs in virtually each capital. As their plane went in to Tehran, there were bad conditions and a wet field. The plane crashed and everyone was killed.

An interesting incident occurred when I was walking down the hall and somebody almost fainted, and then said, "You?! Still alive?!" It was the first time I realized that I was supposed to have been on that plane.

Plans were made quickly for Stanley Andrews to complete the trip begun by Dr. Bennett. Stanley Andrews had been personally designated by President Truman. The President insisted that this former All-American tackle from the University of Missouri be put in that program. Andrews had been a fighting editor for farmers' rights in the South. He was a great choice. Stanley took me with him. We both had been in military government in Germany.

Q: What countries did you stop in then on that Stanley Andrews trip?

CLARK: We stopped at Rome, the Food and Agriculture Organization; at Malta; the string of countries along North Africa, Cairo, and Lebanon. We went on to Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan.

All the time we were traveling, I thought I was kind of brainwashing Stanley Andrews on what I had learned in the Department of Agriculture about group participation. I particularly mentioned the M. L. Wilson philosophy that the peace groups, the rural groups, could make a contribution. They were very well organized. They had already had great experience overseas. I should have known better than to belabor Andrews because Stanley Andrews himself knew all about these people I had been talking about.

So by the time we arrived at Afghanistan, a program had been formulated. It was decided I would go back to Tehran to try to organize a pilot project using private groups to mount a voluntary program. There was a particular reason for this. If you're going to start a grassroots program, the standard doctrine in all the lectures to follow for years and years was that you've got to have good local leadership.

At Jericho, Jordan we had gone out to the Musa Bey Alami Project. We immediately recognized in Musa Bey Alami a marvelous genius of a leader. He had been the number one civil servant in the old Palestine, scheduled to be Prime Minister with the victory of the Israeli army. He had gone out to the desert there outside of Jericho and started an orphanage. He was having a hard time getting it started. We were so impressed with him that the beginnings of a movement could be built around him. This presented a challenge which we discussed as we traveled.

So by the time we got to Afghanistan it was decided that I would go back to Tehran. The Point 4 Program in Iran was the first, and it had been staffed by a group from the three Utah universities: Utah State, University of Utah, and Brigham Young University. BYU was headed by Franklin S. Harris, who had headed two of these universities. Because of his pioneering prowess, he had been sent by M. L. Wilson and these people who shared this agricultural doctrine. He'd gone over to work on the resettlement of Jewish people in Azerbaijan. So there were two leaders. There was Musa Bey Alami in Jericho and there was Franklin Harris in Tehran.

So I went back to Tehran and a meeting was held. I made the motion that a private, voluntary, non-profit organization be founded. The initial project would be to assist Musa Bey Alami on this Boys Town effort that he was making. Incidentally, it is now said that 6,000 orphan boys have passed through that school and it is still going.

Q: Now, I understand that there were some other things that happened to you, that you did when you were in Iran that had to do with your relationships with the people and the government and things like that. What can you tell about that?

CLARK: Yes, let me talk a little bit more about the Iran situation. I was called in to a strange meeting that was held right at the temporary offices of the Point Four program that we shared right on the mall where we were then located. Reeseman Fryer, who was my superior, said, "Somebody's got to go out to Utah and recruit those three universities and get some contracts and get some people over to Iran, and we want you to go." I said, "When do you want me to go?" and he said, "Yesterday. There's a situation there that demands immediate action." We knew that it was where the Cold War really began. The Russian occupation and withdrawal of their troops and the threat that they might be returned to Iran again.

It was perhaps fortuitous, that a locust invasion threatened Iran. The locusts were on the way from Africa and they had to be combated. We would go in with dusting and spraying airplanes and insecticides. Its very interesting what you can do in a time of crisis and how much fun it is in a time of crisis. There was absolutely no paper work. We called up by telephone chemical places in Denver and told them of the urgency. They put chemicals on airplanes and they were off to Iran without any papers, any signatures, nothing signed. That was the situation.

So I went out to Utah and started with the Brigham Young University because contracts were being negotiated with the land grant college association. This involved, let us say, a little procedure and, perhaps, a little discussion as to who was going to get what. And there was no time for that. Cy Friar, who had preceded me, had gone from Logan, the agricultural college,

down to Brigham Young University, said, "We want six men," and before he could get to Washington, we had the names of those six men.

I was told to write a contract by the end of the fiscal year which was virtually on us. Taggart said, "It'll help you if you take a copy of the legislation." I didn't know how to write one of those contracts. I would have done it but the legislation I had helped. I sat down with a little typewriter leaned on a suitcase and typed off a contract. Ernest Wilkinson, president of Brigham Young University, signed it and I took it back to Washington. I made the deadline, just barely. There was an airplane strike. I couldn't depend on airplanes so I took the train a couple of days earlier. When the airplanes resumed, the first airplane to fly, the one I was ticketed for hit a mountain peak, bounced over a mountain peak, and they didn't find it until a year or two later. So I was lucky. I arrived in DC on time with the contract. The Legal Department, I could see, was amused that I had come back with a handmade contract. I was too inexperienced to know that the model contract had been worked over for about a year.

Q: This was in Washington?

CLARK: This was Washington, yes. They were surprised and amused. They polished it up a little bit. However, according to Stanley Andrews, this was the first contract ever signed in this new era of university contracting. Very shortly, the contract for land grant colleges had gone through the necessary levels and concurrences. So, three Utah universities were there. Franklin Harris flew from Tehran to help set up the program pursuant to the contracts. We flew out to Salt Lake City and met with the three college presidents. I learned that they have politics, even in universities. They debated about which institution was to do what. Utah State took agriculture, the University took health and medicine, and BYU took education. And that's the way Gaul was divided into three parts.

Iran was the main focus of this trip. When we arrived at the Iran airport, there were a considerable number of people waiting to greet us. After all, the college contract program had been introduced in Iran and recruits had arrived in Iran from the three principal universities in Utah -- University of Utah, Brigham Young University, and the Utah State Agricultural College. Photographs were taken as we stepped from the airplane, and then we were put in the hands of Ardeshir Zahedi and Dr. Franklin S. Harris, chief of the American team of experts serving in Iran. Harris had been the president of two of the universities, Brigham Young University, and Utah State Agricultural College. He was a man admired by M. L. Wilson because he was a genuine pioneer. He had pioneered in the early colonies in Mexico, as a very young man. His parents had taken him there to live. He became an educator and an administrator who had come under M. L. Wilson's attention years earlier. One of his several assignments was to survey of an area in Asia Minor which might be considered as a location for the resettlement of Jewish people.

Now, when I got to Iran, there are some interesting things there that I think have some significance. The communists were, of course, opposed to this intervention. These three universities had covered every province in Iran. They were all over the place, enough so that they could hold church services in Tehran and all over the country. This became a very visible thing.

Stanley Andrews and I were at a reception. William Warne had now arrived on the scene. He was the new man who would represent the State Department replacing Franklin Harris who was there under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service.

At this reception, we were mysteriously called aside and we were told that a death threat had been made, an assassination threat. There had been an assassination, about a week earlier, of a very high level official, I think it was a cabinet member. So we were advised very soberly. Then, it developed that this news of a threat upon our life had come from five different sources. The way it was put was that the communists (or Tudeh Party) had decided that this would be a good time for an American to be assassinated. "An American" -- not two Americans -- and so Stanley Andrews and I just stood there and looked at each other. We didn't know who, but it was soon made evident a day or so later. Ardeshir Zahedi brought me a little news sheet, a revolutionary kind of newspaper, a publication from the communist party. He translated. According to this paper, Dale Clark had given Madame Chiang Kai-shek three million dollars. (Laughs) I had just won a popularity contest. It was a type a compliment that I had never had before.

In Tehran, Stanley and I had conferences with some of the economic planners who were trying to usher in a new day for Iran. One thing I remember clearly was that they had paid a great sum for a five-year plan. It was showed to us. It seemed like a whole shelf of bound volumes. I always wondered as I saw these magnificent studies whether I had a little parlor game wagering with myself or anything nearby, whether any of these books had ever been opened. This was the same in Washington and all over. If the administrator were to call you in and say, I want you start a program and get it going, you would be hard-pressed to know what to present in the way of progress. The easiest thing you can do, and it was very often the case, would be to hire one of these studiers of studies to produce a volume for you. Anyone who then asks you, "Have you got started on your program?" you could answer, "Yes, we have a fine group of experts making a study for us." I have talked to the heads of some of these research institutions and they have admitted that in some cases the purpose of a study is for a hard-pressed bureaucrat to gain some time and have some excuse for his existence until he can get his bearings and find out what his job really consists of.

Q: Can you tell us a little about Mr. Zahedi, too?

CLARK: Well, Mr. Zahedi's dad had been the key Iranian general in the revolution that brought the Shah to power. The general had cooperated with a CIA representative over there, who'd engineered the coup that brought in the Shah. Ardeshir, the general's son, had been trained at Utah State University. He had known, of course, President Harris who was now in Iran. Dr. Harris had been advisor to the earlier Shah and was chief of party advising the present Shah. Ardeshir married the daughter of the Shah. He later became the Iranian ambassador to the United States in Washington, where he was quite a notable figure.

The Utah universities personnel were scattered all over Iran, and from everything I've heard they did a remarkable job. They had habits of abstinence that elicited the admiration of the Iranians. They were highly regarded. Yet, there was revolution, and they were kicked out. But the personal

relationships have remained very cordial. This group were so taken by the wonderful experience they had in Iran that they have been meeting for 45 years in monthly dinners where they have continued that Iran friendship.

Q: Does that meet up until now?

CLARK: That is up until now and I'm going to interject here something that may belong somewhere else, but the flow probably demands it. The current president of Iran has been indicating through the press that it was time to break down this wall of mistrust between our two countries. I thought that these Utah university people may be a good place to complement him for this move toward friendship that he was taking. I called and was invited to their next meeting. They passed a unanimous resolution to express friendship to President Khomeini and admiration for his stand.

I communicated this to President Khomeini. After all, he addressed not the government but the American people, and I am part of the American people. I sent the letter and received a telephone call from the Iran Mission to the United Nations. Some of those private voluntary agencies such as International Voluntary Services and Heifer Project have been advised.

Q: This was in 1998?

CLARK: This is right now. In fact, the correspondence and the telephone calls are going on at this time. (1999)

Q: Now, there's one thing that we could do on Iran. Do you remember about how many people were there in the 50s? How many are in this group that still meets once a month, the Iran friendship group?

CLARK: I don't remember how many were there, but age has thinned the group out. There are about fifteen in the group around Provo that meet regularly. There are many more up in other areas of the state and in California.

Q: Well, let's go on now to the creation of this non-profit voluntary organization. Maybe you ought to get that on the tape at this time. So, as I remember, you got the idea originally in Iran. Your proposal was to assist Musa Bey Alami there in Jericho, Jordan with someone. Can you talk a little bit about the creation of the organization, how that started and the name of it?

CLARK: Now when I returned from this trip with Stanley Andrews, I felt that I had the go ahead on the voluntary service approach. When I was getting started somebody at Point Four said, "Hey, Clark, these guys that you have been looking for were here." They were identified. I said, "Where are they? Let's find them!" I was afraid I'd missed them, but they were tracked down. It was the Mennonite and the Brethren representatives William Snider and Harold Row and Ben Bushong. I set up a meeting with them with Reeseman Fryer who was a powerhouse, the most dynamic man in the organization.

LEWIS HOFFACKER
Third Secretary/Rotation Officer
Tehran (1951-1953)

Ambassador Lewis Hoffacker was born in Pennsylvania in 1923. He received his bachelor's degree from George Washington University in 1948 and then his master's degree from Fletcher's School of Law and Diplomacy in 1949. He then served in the US Army from 1943-1946. His career has included positions in Tehran, Istanbul, Paris, Algiers, and Leopoldville and ambassadorships to both Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Ambassador Hoffacker was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 17, 1998.

HOFFACKER: We went from New York to Beirut with our old Ford and drove the Ford across the Syrian Desert and up over the Persian hills to Tehran. Henry Grady was ambassador.

Q: *You were in Tehran from -*

HOFFACKER: '51 to '53.

Q: *And you were third secretary.*

HOFFACKER: The only third secretary. And that's where I met John Stutesman. I replaced him.

Q: *What was the situation as you saw it in Iran at that particular time?*

HOFFACKER: Well the Shah was on the throne. It was rather shaky because Mossadegh, the Prime Minister, was hanky-panking with the commies. And we, Uncle Sam, could not tolerate any of that. Iran was too important. And Mossadegh was vulnerable. He thought he could contain the communists, but they were all over the place. So our goal was to support the Shah and to try to contain Mossadegh, who had certain crazy qualities, or what some people would call crazy qualities. He was unbalanced, to say the least. Loy Henderson, who succeeded Grady, was the greatest ambassador. So I was lucky working under him. It came to the point where the CIA became very prominent in the process of supporting the Shah and of containing Mossadegh. Mossadegh exiled the Shah and the Shah had to come back.

Q: *You were there at the time.*

HOFFACKER: Not at that particular time. I left just before the Shah, but I had two years there watching all this ferment and the riots and the Iranian court and all the other things that were happening.

Q: *What were you doing?*

HOFFACKER: Well, I had a traditional job. In those days we rotated from one specialty to another in the training process. I don't know whether that's the case now, but it was a good idea. I started out as a consular officer, and I was given in addition the protocol job. I did that for a year, and then I moved over to the political section, continuing my protocol work. So I was political and consular in my first assignment, and my next assignment was economic, which made sense. That was Istanbul. We were able to travel a little in Iran, and we were able to see many of the Tehran leaders. There weren't many mullahs around; in fact, I don't know whether I ever met a mullah. But I guess the mullahs were busy. And the Shah was a gentle man, very gentle. We called him a "weak reed" because he needed a lot of guidance.

Q: He was pretty young, too, at that time, wasn't he?

HOFFACKER: He was my age, which would have been - maybe 30? Thereabouts. And he needed a lot of help, and we helped him, gladly. Of course, he changed to something different later on, and that was a problem, in a way. He was talking about creating a "white revolution," trying to bring Iran into the 20th century with heavy foreign aid. And we were heavy in foreign aid and heavy in military aid. I thoroughly enjoyed those two years.

Q: Were you, while you were there, aware of the work of the CIA. For example, was Archie Roosevelt there at the time?

HOFFACKER: Yes, he was there, in his own way, but he wasn't stationed there. He was working out of Langley, or whatever it was. But he was very prominent in the planning and the operation. He was a big factor in the game that was being played. But as a third secretary I wasn't in on all of that sort of thing. In those days, in the early '50s, we as a government were able to do these things without any problem. There was no problem with the CIA trying to bring down a government or bringing in a government. We did that more or less routinely; this was the pattern in Iran. And it was easy to justify, because you couldn't give Iran to the commies, who were there already. The British were kicked out, and we were filling that gap. I was there when the British were kicked out. It was during that great petroleum crisis.

Q: This was when Mossadegh nationalized oil.

HOFFACKER: Yes, he nationalized oil, and we were caught in the middle of that. Averell Harriman came out, and everybody was trying to set up the consortium and so forth. So that was fun to watch. I was still a young third secretary.

Q: What was the feeling among the people you were talking to in the Political Section about Mossadegh?

HOFFACKER: Well, there was sort of a joke: we said he was a *personne alitée*, a 'person in bed'; he sometimes received the Ambassador and other ambassadors lying in bed in his pajamas. And he had other peculiar characteristics. He risked Iranian security. We knew best; we knew the commies better than he did. We had to put our foot down. And he wasn't very easy to deal with in that respect. The Shah, of course, was amenable to all these things we had to say, and so the

Shah was our man, and Mossadegh was counter to the sort of Iran we were trying to save.

Q: How did Henry Grady operate from your perspective?

HOFFACKER: He was a political appointee. I should say at the outset, I have nothing against political appointees. They don't have the background of a Loy Henderson, for example. Henry Grady had been a decent ambassador to India, and I think he was in Greece, too.

Q: He went to Greece later maybe?

HOFFACKER: Or was it before?

Q: He was there before, during the Civil War.

HOFFACKER: He was really quite good, but I was there just a short time with him. Arthur Richards was the DCM and I worked most closely with him.

Q: Important places, and those were important times.

HOFFACKER: Grady was a big man, steady, knowledgeable, and so forth. He had a dynamic wife, who added a lot of glitter to the Embassy. And then Loy Henderson also had a wife who added her unique personality to the scene.

Q: She was very difficult, wasn't she? Or at least I heard so.

HOFFACKER: Well, yes, she was regarded as difficult by most people, and I, as protocol officer, had to work with her. You can't dislike a person you're working for; you'll adapt to her. But she had ideas which bothered some women in the embassy - and some men, too. She was very authoritarian with regard to what the wives were supposed to do. That's not the pattern now, but in the old days, wives were working for the Ambassador's wife. Women's lib has put an end to that. But she had her own personality problems, to the point where it was sometimes awkward. But we were working for Loy Henderson and we were very glad to be working for Loy Henderson - put it that way.

Q: How did he operate?

HOFFACKER: Very smooth. Old School. He'd had a lot of experience on the Russian side, the communist side. He'd served in that part of the world. So he was very knowledgeable as to what the threat was, and he was able to interpret the threat to Washington in an articulate way, so that he wasn't just trying to alarm Washington. He was logical, you might say.

Q: The Shah had not been bounced out while you were there.

HOFFACKER: Just after we left.

Q: Was the embassy seeing Mossadegh and the Shah sort of running on a collision course at that time?

HOFFACKER: Yes. There weren't many secrets. A republic could have happened any day if Mossadegh had insisted on it - not an Islamic republic, but a republic. By the way there was a seminar down at the University of Texas some years ago with an expert on Iran who ran a scenario on what if Mossadegh had prevailed in that situation, what would Iran look like? It was a very good exercise. But we, Uncle Sam, were not willing to take that chance. I can't argue with that, in the light of the commies coming down there, heading for the Persian Gulf.

Q: It was less than ten years before when you arrived there, certainly, and it's only been less than six years before that the Soviets occupied the upper half of Iran.

HOFFACKER: And the Azerbaijan crisis was a very serious one.

Q: And they didn't leave gracefully.

HOFFACKER: I think the atomic bomb had something to do with our clout. I admire the way Harry Truman and the others decided to draw a line in the sand: Greece, Turkey, and Iran would hold. And all three were threatened. Greece was wobbly; Iran was wobbly; and Turks are never wobbly but they were certainly exposed. [*Laughter*]

Q: How did your wife like it there?

HOFFACKER: She was born in Beirut when her father was consul there.

Q: She was a Foreign Service brat.

HOFFACKER: Yes, he died when he was ambassador to Pakistan. I never knew him. That was in '49 or so. So she knew the Service, and she adapted quite well. It wasn't quite as hard for her. It was a continuum with a husband.

Q: In 1953, you left Tehran. Where did you go?

CARL F. NORDEN
Consular Officer
Tehran (1952 - 1953)

Carl F. Norden was born in New York on January 22, 1908. He attended boarding school in Switzerland where he became bilingual in English and German. After graduating from Dartmouth College with a Bachelors degree, Mr. Norden took the Foreign Service Exam in 1932. He then went to Harvard, where he earned an M.A. in political science and economics. He entered the Foreign

Service in 1938 and was stationed in Berlin. He served in Yugoslavia during World War II. He subsequently served in Prague, Paramaribo, Bari, Havana, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Caracas, Madrid, Tehran, Paris, GATT (Geneva), and Caracas. He was interviewed by Ambassador Horace Torbert on May 2, 1991.

Q: Well, is there some more on Buenos Aires? How did you happen to get to Tehran? That's quite a change in area.

NORDEN: Oh, who was that fellow? One of the old-timers.

Q: Loy Henderson was the ambassador.

NORDEN: Yes, but he had a friend who was looking for staff for him. He traveled around Latin America looking for people he could use. And I happened to be one of the people he liked. Derby.

Q: Derby, oh, yes, I knew Derby well.

NORDEN: And it was just the time when Mossadegh and the Shah were spitting. I had an economic counselor, but I did my own thrust, pretty much. And I wrote my first despatch, I'll never forget it, everyone had said, "Beware of Loy Henderson. If he gets mad at you, God help you." So I had hardly gotten there than the damn phone rings: "This is Loy Henderson. I want you to come up and see me a minute." And I thought, "Oh, Jesus, I've been here about a week and I'm being fired already." I had written a paper, which was based on the obvious.

Q: When you've only been in a place a week, that's about all you can do.

NORDEN: Exactly. All these people in the World Bank, all these experts, were writing stuff about Iran. They were all talking about imminent economic collapse because the oil wasn't being sold. And in my paper I said, in effect, it was all bullshit about imminent economic collapse; ain't gonna be no economic collapse. Ain't gonna be no economic collapse because the Iranians haven't started to print money. And after they print money, they can do things for a long time. I had just been in Latin America where they are so damn good at this.

Henderson looked at me and said, "Did you write this?"

And then a small voice comes up, "Yes, Mr. Ambassador."

And he said, "First financial report I have ever been able to understand."

I felt better.

And on the strength of that, I had it made. Because this hit Washington, where all this stuff had been coming at them about imminent economic collapse, you see; we were worried about that damn thing. And, of course, the Russians had a guy in the midst of that Cabinet and so forth. So I

said forget about it, you know, and in Washington, they saw this, "Well, my God, if there's not going to be any economic collapse, we've got to change our policy. We've been banking on this economic collapse, and Carl says there isn't going to be one." So they argued this out, see, because I had a pretty good reputation as a financial mind, probably the best in the Department at that time.

So we changed the policy. We stopped going along with the British on the oil blockade and so forth, and we sent a Point Four mission. Remember old Point Four?

Q: Oh, yes.

NORDEN: And then we larded the mission with CIA types. In other words, we decided to act politically and not economically.

But, anyway, I made my reputation in a week.

Q: I bet you didn't coast from then on, however.

NORDEN: Oh, no, no. I loved Iran. I thought Iran was the most interesting damn place I'd ever been. They were all such liars. I've never met such a bunch of liars.

Q: Loy was a pretty good man, wasn't he?

NORDEN: Oh, Loy was a great man, yes. Looking backwards, I am not sure that he didn't put too much of his influence, too much of his cash, as it were, on the side of getting rid of Mossadegh. Because all we got was the Shah, and he was no... And Loy knew this, that I didn't trust the Shah either, that the man was weak. I was not sure we could build on him. But the other guy, of course, was suspected of having Russian sympathies. I'm not sure he ever did. I think that was a mistake of judgment.

Q: Was Mossadegh a man we could have actually dealt with, do you think, in the long run?

NORDEN: He was so bloody slippery I'm not sure we could, but we probably could have. We probably could have, but it had a Russian label on it. And in those days we were awfully blind when we saw a Russian label, you know.

Q: And particularly Loy, of course.

NORDEN: And Loy particularly, yes. That was his weak spot.

HENRY BYROADE
Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1952-1954)

Ambassador Henry Byroade was born in Indiana in 1913. He graduated from West Point in 1937 with a Second Lieutenant appointment and bachelor of science degree and then received a master's degree civil engineering from Cornell University in 1940. Ambassador Byroade served in India, China, Egypt, South Africa, Afghanistan, Burma, and the Philippines. The interview was conducted by Niel M. Johnson on September 19, 1988.

Q: Well, on this oil crisis in Iran, the nationalization of the oil and Mossadegh replacing the Shah, it is well-known that the CIA helped stage street demonstrations to get Mossadegh out and get the Shah [Mohammed Reza Pahlavi] back in. Did you feel that the situation there was kind of out of control, or did the Americans have any firm control on what was going on in Iran? I guess we're talking here about 1952.

BYROADE: Well, in a way, we had no control at all. The oil fields, of course, were under the British. Our concern was the supply of oil, and to try to keep a dangerous situation from flaring up. The Communist Tudeh party was rather strong in Iran. And, of course, Iran was right on the border of Russia. We wanted to do everything we could to dampen this threat as we saw it, so we worked very hard with the British in trying to find a solution of the Iranian oil problem. We had it, I would say, 80 to 90 percent worked out, when the Administration changed. Then we lost months, really, because when Eisenhower came in, he put Herbert Hoover, Jr. in charge of the Iranian oil problem. Herb, you know, was a good oil engineer and a nice fellow, but was rather a disaster in foreign affairs, in my opinion. He wouldn't even look at what we had done. All the work we had done with the Justice Department through Dean Acheson, and so forth, went out the window. It started all over again, and as I say we lost six to nine months until they got back to trying to form a consortium like we almost had worked out under Acheson. Eventually, of course, it got solved. In the meantime, the Shah came back and you know the history.

Q: Did you meet the Shah in this period?

BYROADE: Oh yes, I met the Shah many times in this period, and I met Mossadegh.

Q: What was your impression of these two?

BYROADE: Well, Mossadegh--I only saw him once really.

Q: Was that when he came over here?

BYROADE: No, in Tehran. I went there on this problem and I wanted to see Mossadegh, and he received me in his bedroom. He was in pajamas in bed. The interpreter got lost and my French wasn't good enough to talk to him in French, and we had a tough time for a while. I told him how good he looked, which he didn't like, because he was in bed. He didn't seem too sick to me, although he was rather feeble. And I got absolutely nowhere. I was trying to sell him on the proposition of leaving enough British technicians in there to make sure things worked, and the world gets access to the oil. He said, "Well, if you're a Muslim and you're against drinking

alcohol, one drop is as bad as a gallon, so not even one Britisher can stay." I got absolutely nowhere.

Q: In other words, you were willing to accept nationalization as a principle?

BYROADE: With compensation, providing there was continued access to the oil. It was a very complicated problem. We couldn't even get our own oil companies together on the problem because of our anti-trust laws. They couldn't meet together except in the presence of Dean Acheson or myself. Then we would go and try to sell the proposition to the Justice Department. What we were trying to do really is to set up a big cartel which is contrary to American domestic economic policies, but that's what we thought the foreign affairs of the United States required. So it was very cumbersome.

Q: In other words, something like OPEC, but American style?

BYROADE: Yes.

Q: What were your impressions of the Shah?

BYROADE: The Shah was quite young when I first met him. I liked the Shah; I was impressed with the Shah. I saw him mature throughout the years. I watched him grow up. Among the last few times, I saw him one time on a very close basis. Prime Minister Ali Bhutto of Pakistan asked my wife and I to go with the Shah and Farah Diba down to his country home in Sindh Province of Pakistan for a weekend. The Shah had become much more regal; I felt he might be getting a bit out of touch with his people. Yet, in some ways he was a joy. He was a very strong advocate of strength against Communists, which was a good thing. I was in Iran shortly before he fell; actually, I was on a skiing trip.

Q: You're talking about '78 or '79?

BYROADE: Yes, probably '78. I wouldn't have guessed that Iran would go so quickly the way it went. I think that had I been American Ambassador there, I doubt if I would have sensed that we were that close to tragedy.

Q: You didn't realize he was that unpopular with the masses?

BYROADE: No. Well, it's hard for a visitor. But, no, I didn't think so.

Q: The Point IV program was going to Iran. Did you have much contact with the Point IV personnel, for instance with William Warne, who was head of the Point IV in Iran, in the early '50s?

BYROADE: On some of my trips, I'd go to Point IV headquarters. I remember going out to some projects, maybe one or two like a visitor does, but on a daily or weekly basis, no, I wasn't that close.

Q: Well, there was a problem, of course, with the land tenure system. There were a lot of absentee landlords, huge estates with absentee landlords, and neglectful landlords, landlords who apparently took their rents and didn't do anything to help the tenants. There was a certain amount of resentment building up among the poor and even landless peasantry, and the Shah was supposed to do something about this, institute some land reforms.

BYROADE: He gave some of his own land away.

Q: Did you ever feel that land reform, or that social-economic reform was even close to adequate in Iran?

BYROADE: No. But you run into a very difficult problem, and I don't know the answer to it. Of course, I was no longer there. I was Ambassador to Pakistan. I didn't realize the feeling had grown to the point that it had, but even so, what has to happen before you walk into the Shah and say, "Look, you're not running Iran properly; you've got to do this differently and we'll tell you how to do it." That is not easily done, because we were in many ways dependent on the Shah. In the Middle East, we saw Turkey on the one hand, and Pakistan on the other, and each was fairly stable and with some strength, and Iran was in the middle. That was our picture of the Middle East; so Iran was very important to us. It was the soft underbelly of Russia.

Q: Did you realize at the time the importance of the Mullahs, the local Mullahs, and their influence on the attitudes of the masses of Iranians?

BYROADE: Well, you've got to realize that I stopped being Assistant Secretary responsible for that area in 1956, and up to that time, no, I did not. I did not have any knowledge to be worried about the Mullah situation.

L. BRUCE LAINGEN
Vice Consul
Tehran (1953-1955)

Best known as the highest-ranking officer during the Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981), L. Bruce Laingen was born in 1922 in rural Minnesota. He served in the U.S. Navy during the World War II. During his career in the Foreign Service he had assignments in Hamburg, Tehran, Karachi. He also had a stint as the Pakistan-Afghanistan country director at the State Department in the early 70's. He was interviewed on several occasions by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992 and 1993.

Q: When you move to your second assignment...this was to become sort of a theme that was going to be running through out your career, the Iranian theme...

LAINGEN: Stu, that was a quirk.

Q: I was going to ask how that came about?

LAINGEN: I was assigned as a junior Foreign Service officer and then and now I believe that you go where you are assigned, particularly in your second tour. You don't expect to dictate that.

Q: You don't negotiate.

LAINGEN: You don't negotiate that. If you do and succeed you are exceedingly fortunate.

I got my assignment in Hamburg in the middle of 1953 to go as a consular officer in Kobe, Japan. I looked at my orders Kobe, Japan and said, "Well, why not? That sounds exciting. I'll go there." I had never been to Japan but near it in the Philippines in World War II. I sent off my effects to Japan--still unmarried at that time so I didn't have much of personal effects. I got on the liner America at Bremerhaven. Had another splendid return home as we were able to do in those days traveling American liners in first class. I did my consultations in Washington and went on homeleave to my farm family in Minnesota.

Five days short of going to Kobe, Japan, I got a telephone call at that farm in Minnesota from the Department of State saying, "You are not going to Kobe; you are going to Tehran." And I went to Tehran.

My orders were changed because I was, if you will, accessible, available, dispensable as a single officer. The Embassy in Tehran was building up after the overthrow of the Mossadegh regime and the restoration of the Shah to his throne at that critical juncture in Iran's postwar history. The Embassy under Ambassador Loy Henderson felt it needed greater staff. I and several other officers, two of them in particular, who were also single, travelled on the same plane arriving in Tehran that summer in August. This was my first exposure to Tehran by a quirk of fate.

Q: To get a little feel of the situation, a single officer was considered a much more moveable commodity and in effect was, particularly in those days. There was a real differentiation made between single and married officers. A single officer could be put somewhere where a married one would find it a little more difficult.

LAINGEN: Yes. I think that was true. I still think that is sensible and practical. Certainly at that point all of us felt strongly that we were a disciplined Service, that we were subject to orders, particularly as junior officers. We went and were expected to go where the Service needed us. I was fascinated. I looked at the map. I had never been to Tehran before. My farm family was certainly fascinated to know that I was going to that distant place. I remember at the time looking at the list of posts that we had in Tehran at that time, including several consulates and consulates general. One of them on the map was Meshed. Of course I didn't know how to pronounce it and said, "meshed." Eventually I served there.

Q: You arrived there when?

LAINGEN: It must have been in August, 1953.

Q: *This is a very interesting time. What was the political situation at the time of your arrival?*

LAINGEN: I got there I suppose within weeks, at most a couple of months, after the rather tumultuous events surrounding the collapse of the Mossadegh regime and the seizure of power by Zahedi.

Q: *He was a general.*

LAINGEN: General Zahedi was in power--with certainly the support, and in the view of a great many people, the active involvement of the CIA in facilitating the overthrow of the Mossadegh regime, the return of the Shah from Rome where he had fled several weeks before that, and the beginning of a very different relationship between Iran and the United States. The larger picture, of course, involved Iran's rather difficult postwar history involving the Soviet occupation of a province of Iran, Azerbaijan. And our active involvement at that time through the United Nations and seeing the Soviets eventually forced to withdraw their presence, and more significantly, their influence. It was a time, also, affected by the oil nationalization program that had been carried out by the Mossadegh regime and the difficult relationship that then ensued, particularly between the Iranians and the British, but since we were a major participant in terms of oil, involving us as well.

Loy Henderson was our Ambassador at the time. Herbert Hoover, Jr. was a frequent visitor to Tehran at that time, leading the American side in discussions relating to the oil nationalization issue.

Q: *He was Under Secretary?*

LAINGEN: Yes. He was designated to deal particularly with this nationalization process and turmoil involving American, Dutch, British and other oil companies that ensued thereafter.

I was a junior officer assigned to the economic section. I served under an ambassador whom I will always regard as one of the giants of American postwar diplomatic practice. That was Loy Henderson. He had his critics as well, but I will never be among them, at least in respect to the way he treated junior officers in the Foreign Service. I was a lowly FSO-6. That was the lowest rank at that time. I was on my second tour. I had a strong sense of respect, having been a naval officer before that, for authority, and I certainly felt it towards the Ambassador at that point in a large and growing Embassy.

It was a very large and powerful Embassy in Tehran at that time. And yet, Loy Henderson was the kind of Ambassador who was capable of reaching down to the lowest ranks of his staff and showing respect and regard for them in allowing them to participate as backbenchers, if you will, in his staff meetings. I wasn't an active participant in those meetings, but I was allowed to sit in on them and listen as other officers were. I thought that was a real credit to him and certainly a contribution to my capacity to serve effectively there as a junior officer in the economic section.

Q: One does have the feeling in interviews, that Henderson more than anybody else did look upon the Foreign Service as a Service and had a regard for the training and assignment of junior officer looking ahead to the future of the Service.

LAINGEN: He did. I had a high regard and respect for him. He had a wife who was one of the dragons of the Foreign Service as we used to call a wife who threw her weight around a little bit. But that didn't trouble me too much because I was a junior officer without a spouse and therefore was quite prepared to be used, if you will, and she certainly used junior officers in a protocol sense.

Q: To give a little feel for this, how would she do this?

LAINGEN: The Embassy in Tehran then, as it is now, is located in a large compound...27 acres...then on the outskirts of the city, today in the heart of the city. An Embassy presence, a foreign presence, an American presence loomed very large in those days, so there was a good deal of social life in that city in the diplomatic corps. Outside power, foreign political influence was sort of concentrated in the American Embassy and the British Embassy. So Ambassador Henderson did a great deal of entertaining with political purposes in mind. That required, as it does today, I think, the active participation of the staff in support of an Ambassador who does that kind of diplomatic representation. Mrs. Henderson had no hesitation of ordering us around as junior officers to be here, there, in the protocol line, ready to translate, ready to pick up at her command a personage from the receiving line and take him off somewhere to the buffet table or get him into the conversation. She was very tough on that and expected me and other officers and their wives to be available at her whim. Not only at those parties, but sometimes at other more limited circumstances in the Residence to be there, to be helpful. As I said, I was single, and assumed that was sort of natural in the Foreign Service. Others who had been their longer, not least spouses, began to chafe at that, did chafe at that, although much less than they do today. But there were plenty of people in that Embassy who were restive with that. There was irritation at times contributing to this image of ambassadors' wives who were known as dragons.

Q: What was your economic job?

LAINGEN: I suppose I wrote one of the most definitive studies of the Iranian cement industry that was ever produced. I recall it was a 20 page despatch. I wasn't an expert on cement, but it was one of my assignments early on when I first got there to do a report on that in a despatch. In those days all reporting didn't come in by cable as it does today. Much of the reporting in any depth went in by despatch by pouch.

I had a variety of assignments as a junior officer in that section. Most of it focused not so much on oil but on other Iranian small industry. Most of the time it was an assignment under an economic counselor who used us as sort of errand boys to go off and do specific things.

Q: Who was the Economic Counselor?

LAINGEN: A man named Bill Bray, who is since deceased. I did not know him after that tour.

Q: What was your impression...here you were a junior officer for the first time in this area...of the Shah?

LAINGEN: Our impression was that we were on an upward roll. Things could only get better. The Mossadegh regime was behind us. We had a regime in place under General Zahedi which was very responsive to American interests. An oil settlement was eventually worked out. It was a very optimistic period in terms of American interests in that part of the world. The Shah was still, at that point, rather a young monarch and in view, I think, of most of the rest of us, susceptible to American interests. Malleable, if you will, in terms of insuring that policies of his government and of Zahedi under him, would be responsive to American concerns and interests. The United States was a very large player in Tehran at that time. It was the player.

Q: This was the time that the American and the British views were beginning to diverge, at least it is my impression of this, getting it a little bit later in Saudi Arabia. That we were going along with the idea that as long as the oil was coming out and a sufficient profit was coming through it didn't have to be a complete American monopoly. It could certainly be in the hands of the local regimes. The British still had a strong proprietary feel about it. At least that was my impression where I was in Saudi Arabia. How did you see it?

LAINGEN: I think it was a period of decline for the British paramountcy in Iran. From that point on they had to share their political presence in Tehran and in the area generally with us in ways that they never had to do before; they had to share with American oil companies in ways that were not the case before.

Q: Were you getting emanations from your British colleagues about this?

LAINGEN: I didn't personally sense it much at my level. Our relationships were very cordial, very good, very close. The British, I suppose not least in the atmosphere of diplomacy were circumspect to how they reacted to us. I did not sense that kind of conflict at my level.

Q: How about your contacts with the Iranians? Were they the professional, upper class Iranians?

LAINGEN: We had a lot of contact with the Iranians, but largely with the upper class--the westernized, English speaking element. I was not a Farsi speaker. I and others assigned at that time immediately began Farsi training. My Farsi competence never evolved to the point where I could carry on much of a political dialogue. It was largely kitchen Farsi, but it gave me enough to suggest to the Iranians that I was interested and fascinated by their language and culture and was prepared to learn a little bit. Most of our contacts were those who were the product of an intense Embassy representation program with upper class Iranians. I didn't talk with many rank and file Iranians. I saw a great many, of course. Tehran then, too, was a big city. We travelled around in it with ease and without any concern, including the bazaars.

It was a fascinating time, particularly for a single officer available to go do your thing and travel a great deal. We travelled a lot around Tehran and other cities on both personal and representational trips. I also served, as did others in the Embassy, particularly single officers, as discussion group leaders in the Iran-America Society, the binational center that was beginning to grow at that time and would eventually, by the time I served in Tehran the second time, become one of the largest in the world.

I remember in those discussion groups, where I would meet rank-and-file ordinary Iranians who came to these discussion groups to strengthen their English capability, getting into a lot of discussions of political issues at the time. I remember how impressed I was, and I have recently been rereading some of my letters written at that time, of how despite the Embassy's conviction, the official American line that the Shah was in good shape, that his regime was responsive to the interests of the Iranians and was doing well in terms of winning support of the Iranian people, that this wasn't necessarily totally true. Many of these young people were critical of that regime in ways that at the time the embassy did not fully comprehend.

Q: Did Ambassador Henderson or the political counselor make any effort to sort of tap...the fact that you had these junior officers out there...a good place to take a temperature reading of what's happening?

LAINGEN: Oh sure. I think they did. Not only Henderson, but the political counselor, the DCM. We were encouraged to get out there and report. But I think a lot of it got lost. A lot of it wasn't listened to. We didn't want to listen to it. When I say "we" I mean the American government beginning in Washington and extending out to the field. It was a time when so much confidence and hope and conviction surrounded the return of the Shah and the belief that this was a trend responsive to Iran's own needs. We didn't listen much to what we were hearing. It didn't register very strongly, looking back on it now.

Q: What was your impression about this post-Mossadegh feeling toward the Mossadegh government, both within the Embassy and also from the people you were talking to?

LAINGEN: He was a populist and a great orator. Looking back on it today, I think one must conclude that we were not very perceptive at the time. You see in Tehran you can get a crowd for almost anything at any time. By the time I got to Tehran, several weeks after the overthrow of the Mossadegh regime, the crowds were on the streets shouting their praises of Zahedi and the Shah. Looking back on it I think I too was overly awed by that apparent support of the mass for the return of the Shah and an end to what seemed a pro-Soviet, leftist leaning, Mossadegh regime. We brought ourselves to believe that that regime was out of line, out of touch with Iran's larger interests and the interests of the rank-and-file in the streets.

We were wrong. At least history tells us we were wrong if events since that time is any indication of that. As I indicated before, looking back on it and on what I wrote at the time, I was hearing different signals from at least those young people in the Iran-America Society. But I apparently didn't listen sufficiently, it didn't register strong enough. The total effect of that in terms of reporting to the Ambassador and up through the ranks wasn't having enough effect.

I would have to reread the files, I was not a political reporter at that time, to find out how much of this we were reporting to Washington. I wouldn't be surprised if there was a good deal of reporting of this other view on the part of some people that the Shah and Zahedi were also out of sync with a lot of their people, but as often is the case, reporting of that kind isn't carefully read in Washington.

Q: Even if it is, what do you do about it? This could be true of almost every country.

LAINGEN: Right. The later revolution, of course, I can speak volumes on.

Q: We will go into that later. Part of this is by the year 1992 we have seen the dissolution of the Soviet Union so looking for people who are looking at this period at a later time, what was the feeling there of the Soviet threat and internal communism?

LAINGEN: The threat loomed large. The Soviet Union was the big bear to the north. And, of course, it was. It had been a big bear for the Iranians in Czarist times. The Iranians and Russians had fought wars. Iran had lost territory, its integrity was often threatened. There was the Azerbaijan affair after World War II. It was the height of the period of concern worldwide on the part of the United States for the Soviet threat. The beginning of serious Soviet threat in the aftermath of the Truman Doctrine, the Korean concerns and all of that. And, of course, the Soviet Union and the Communist Bloc were immediately there to the north. It was close at hand. It wasn't far away. So there was a lot of concern about that and, not least, the concern, in the largest strategic sense, of Soviet access to the warm waters of the Gulf to the south and control over the oil of that region. There was a big concern at that time.

I don't recall dealing with any Soviet diplomats at the time. We had very little contact with them. The Ambassador saw them, senior officers saw them I think at diplomatic functions. They were not far away physically in that city. Tehran is a city that has a very large diplomatic presence, not least a physical presence. The big powers in Tehran have large compounds reflecting the roles that they have played politically in that country. The Soviet compound in the city of Tehran is an enormous place and smack dab in the middle of the city, always was there. The British compound is even larger. Both of them have not only downtown compounds but separate compounds in the upper suburbs of the city where it is cool and they can go in the summer.

I mention these because the physical presence of these embassies in itself is a very interesting indicator of political history when outside powers have intruded upon Iran, both geographically, on the part of the Soviet Union and the Russians before them, and the British, and politically by the Russians, the British and by us. Eventually, serving in Meshed, as I did for about five months as the acting consul in that city up near the Soviet border, I felt and sensed the Soviet Union even closer because the only reason for that little post being in Meshed at that point near the Afghanistan and Soviet border was a listening post, intelligence wise vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and the Soviet threat. The results of the Soviet threat implicit in the body politic of Iran through the Tudeh Party, which is the Communist Party of Iran. It is still extant, although illegal today under the revolution. At that time it had a very active presence, but also illegal at that point.

Nonetheless, a very large threat in itself.

Q: When you engaged Iranians, particularly the younger people, in political discussions, did they all go under the assumption that the United States put the Shah back in and gave you a wink about the CIA really doing all this? Was this sort of accepted among those young English students?

LAINGEN: We didn't hear much about that. It was an accepted fact, as you said, that the Shah was back on the throne and the official line was that the mass of Tehran had come to the conclusion that Mossadegh was wrong and that popular sentiment and political powers within Iran itself had restored the Shah to his throne. The role of the CIA was not very well known at that time. There may have been an assumption on the part of a lot of Iranians, saying it was there, but that didn't really become, I don't think, a large factor in Iranian thinking about the United States until later.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm it seemed and I think a lot of it was genuine popular enthusiasm that with the Shah restored to his throne there was a different and hopeful direction in Tehran. And, of course, the United States also benefitted from the fact that among a lot of Iranians the United States was a "good" outside power compared to the Soviets and the British.

During earlier years, in contrast to the physical intrusion on the part of the Soviets and the British, the Americans had been there in humanitarian terms, in education and philanthropy, in hospitals and schools. Much of it done through the extensive work of American missionaries, religious missions. Although these missions were designed to convert people to Christianity, most of them, I think, recognized that they weren't going to be converting many people, but they were very active in education and medicine. And I think even today Iranians remember the United States best because of our presence and contributions in those private ways. There were streets named in memory of missionaries who had been active in education. There were still schools in 1953, '54, and '55 when I was there, run by them. And hospitals run by them. This sentiment that America had been active in those fields was very strong among a lot of Iranians. It overshadowed the suspicion or anger, if you will, to the extent that it was there, about American intelligence activities messing around in the politics of Tehran.

Q: Did you feel that the Shah, when he came back...his secret police was really operating heavily at that time or was it still a sort of honeymoon period?

LAINGEN: It was very much a honeymoon period for the Shah. It was an upward roll on the part of all concerned.

Q: You didn't feel that the secret police was a major factor?

LAINGEN: No, that didn't begin really until later. That sort of presence and feel of the secret police, didn't exist at that time.

Q: What about the Iranian as a political animal? How did you see him or her at that time?

LAINGEN: The Iranian was not much of a political animal. There wasn't much politics in Iran in terms of a majlis, parliament, that was of any power. It was seen dominated by a military regime under General Zahedi and the Shah. There wasn't much politics to be seen. There were all kinds of feeling on the part of the average Iranian that the real politics were in the embassies of the big powers. They were the ones who were running things. There was that belief, that acceptance, that sentiment, on the part of most people--and yes, the elite as well. They seemed prepared to live with it. On the part of the mass, if they thought about it at all, sort of an assumption that that was a given. It had always been that way in the recent history of Iran.

This also relates to the escape goat syndrome that looms so large in the Iranian psyche. A product of historical experience. As I said, foreign powers had always been intruding in modern times in Iran...the Russians, the British. That was largely to be accepted as a given. And when things went wrong, Iranians would point to them as being responsible much more than they would examine themselves. That is what I mean by the escape goat syndrome. They would look to others as being responsible for their ills, not surprisingly perhaps, given the way outsiders have intruded on them in their history.

The point, however, is that that scape goat syndrome is so considerable, or was then and still is, as to cloud the vision of Iranians about what they need to do themselves to clean up their own act.

Q: This does run through some other countries. Greece has it, the Middle East,...

LAINGEN: The American factor in Greece is a very strong and powerful one. Not surprising given the Greek presence here. But the foreign presence virtually behind every tree in Tehran is a powerful influence.

Q: These huge foreign compounds at a certain point become a real detriment don't they because they are much more of a symbol than an ordinary embassy which is just a nice looking building.

LAINGEN: Detriment to whom?

Q: The power owning it.

LAINGEN: Well, I feel that way. I hope and pray that when we resume relations with Iran, which we will someday, that by that time our compound will have burned down and we will be forced to go to smaller quarters somewhere. When we bought that compound in Tehran in the forties and built a chancery building...which, by the way, we called "Henderson High" because it was red brick and architecturally unattractive, not unlike a suburban American high school...it was still part of the syndrome that a foreign diplomatic presence had to be big--and we were big then in terms of numbers too. It's true that we did build it on the outskirts of the city at that time. This was at least a gesture towards some degree of awareness of Iranian sensitivities. But by the time of the revolution in 1979, of course, it had been absorbed into a much larger city and was smack in the middle of that larger city. It is a detriment, I think, in today's world, because it is a kind of

red flag to politically sensitive Iranians.

Q: You had an assignment from 1954-55 for about four or five months in Meshed?

LAINGEN: Five months in Meshed.

Q: As a listening post. This is one of these terms that is used again and again. But you as a young officer going up there, how does one run a listening post? What do you do?

LAINGEN: Well, we didn't do much, frankly. We let the CIA presence do most of the listening. We were a very small post, but we had a CIA presence and that was its real function. I was there to preside over a very small consulate for a short period of time. We had, I think, five Americans at that post. It no longer exists. I was there periodically to report to Tehran, which then was rather distant. There was no airline. There was occasional air traffic in a DC-3. No railroad connection. There were no paved roads to Meshed. It was a two day drive, at least, to get there.

It was a distant outpost of American influence and presence in Iran as well as being a listening post. As consul, I was that "presence". We regarded that kind of presence in the outback as important in our larger political interests in Iran. So I reported also my impressions of that place to Tehran. About how we were seen and regarded there. We were well regarded, at least by the establishment. There was little indication on the part of the rank-and-file in that place that there was any political concern about the United States--the people of that city being largely religious oriented...there is a major religious shrine there that preoccupied the Iranians. Much of that is still true today.

Looking back on it I think my presence was inconsequential. This was evident in the fact that at one point the lock of my safe...I had a large safe...jammed. We had a one-time pad in terms of reporting classified information and I couldn't get to it and report any intelligence even if I wanted to. It took about five weeks before I could get the damned safe open with the help of a security officer coming up from Tehran. I guess American interests still survived despite the fact that for five weeks there was no "listening" that I know of nor any reporting from Meshed.

Q: Were you picking up that the Soviets were mucking around there at all?

LAINGEN: I would assume they were. I never sensed that, however. We didn't see them. There was no Soviet diplomatic presence. The British were no longer there. They had a consulate general complex that was very splendid, but closed because of the consequence of the oil nationalization program and not reopened. The only consular presence were the Americans, the Afghans, the Indians and the Pakistanis. A very active consular social set. I am convinced that I picked up my hepatitis, which I suffered from there for some weeks, by eating things at the Afghan Consulate General on their national day which I probably should not have.

I traveled occasionally with my agency presence outside of Meshed, along the Soviet border, to observe--he presumably doing his own observing with his own contacts among tribal elements in those areas. We did not have, that I know of, any of the intelligence listening capability that we

had developed by 1979 when they were very important in terms of watching Soviet satellite capability from listening posts in that part of Iran. That didn't exist at that time.

It was listening in terms of recruiting agents...agents in terms of reporting capability, I suppose, in large part, and observing visually.

Q: Would you walk by the local religious shrines and see if the people were jumping up and down?

LAINGEN: We did, but they weren't jumping up and down politically at that time. It was a very quiet place during my time there. There certainly weren't any anti-Shah disturbances. This was in the short term aftermath of the Mossadegh overthrow and nobody was going to put his neck on the line too far in terms of major disturbances against the regime. That is a very conservative corner of Iran anyway where liberal elements were not very strong. It is a major religious center. It is a very prosperous area of Iran and always has been because of its agricultural strength. That, I think, also left it a much less politically active corner than for example Isfahan and Shiraz and cities like that in the south.

Q: Which were also religious centers but...

LAINGEN: Much less so.

Q: On the religious side, did you have any contact with religious leaders?

LAINGEN: Oh, very little. I don't recall at the time at least in my contacts, observation and experience, that the clerical community was playing any serious role at all. They certainly were not a threat. There were the senior clerical leaders that the Shah was beginning to attempt to recruit, to win over, if you will. I don't recall ever meeting the senior religious figure in Meshed, except as I dealt with the civilian governor general who in Meshed is also the overseer of the shrine and in that sense a kind of religious leader himself. I saw a lot of him. Talked a lot with him. We had a very good social relationship. A very dignified individual. But I don't recall ever talking with a cleric directly. Islam was not seen in those days as a large political factor.

Q: You are a farm boy from Minnesota who probably hasn't had much exposure to Islam and you are put there. Were you given any sensitivity courses?

LAINGEN: No. I was not given any sensitivity training in terms of the role of Islam in Iran. I don't recall that any of us had that. I don't recall that we thought much about it. Most of us thought about it simply in the context of an appreciation that they were Muslims. We didn't think much about the distinction between Shiite Islam and Sunni Islam--as that affects the way in which the clerics play a political role under Shia Islam. Frankly, about the only thought we had for Islam at the time was a respect for it. We knew that we could not go into the shrine in Meshed as non-Muslims, as Christians, because that would have been seen as intrusion of the worst kind. We respected that. We didn't think much about it politically. It was not seen and felt a political force.

We respected it not least because in Meshed at the time there had been an incident just before I got there where the daughter of the AID director...we had a large AID program in Iran which got even larger after the Mossadegh regime was overthrown...who had put on a veil, a chador, and gone into the shrine. Someone had discovered her and there was a great tumult over that although there was no physical hurt to that person. I'm afraid our thoughts about Islam were largely devoted to photography of their magnificent mosques.

Q: Did our policy towards Israel intrude at all?

LAINGEN: No, not that I recall. It certainly wasn't yet a big factor politically.

Q: Having served slightly later in Saudi Arabia where Islam was so all embracing. Everything was run by religious leaders, practically. Israel was such a factor and got thrown into your face again and again. But you were somewhat insulated from this?

LAINGEN: Yes. I don't recall that being a subject. Let me clarify that I was an economic officer and not that active in terms of political reporting or observation. I probably should have done more than I did. But I don't recall in talking with my colleagues in conversation in that Embassy that the Israeli factor was all that large. It became one over time. Today it most assuredly is. It may have been then in ways that I did not sense.

Q: One last question on this. What about corruption? As an economic officer working on things like cement, etc., was corruption a concern?

LAINGEN: Sure. We shrugged our shoulders and smiled. We assumed that was part of the Iranian psyche, a characteristic of the Iranian scene, how things were done. We didn't think much about it. It was there. Baksheesh and all that was rampant in the bazaar. It was a fact, we knew it was there. As I've said, I was assigned in my first days and weeks of my tour in Tehran to the office of the AID director, the one who ran the Point Four Program in Tehran at that time, as a flunkey--mostly running errands before I went over to the Embassy and the economic section. I mention that because at that same time another relative flunkey in the office was a young Iranian called Zahedi, the son of the General who was running the place. Zahedi eventually became the last Iranian Ambassador to the Shah in this city. He and I worked together in that office. There was, I am sure, if one were to study the AID program in Iran which became increasingly large in the years that followed, you would find a lot of corruption. But I can't identify it or recall any specific instances of evidence of it at the time.

Q: Were there any events that happened while you were there?

LAINGEN: No. We travelled a lot in Iran to the cities of that country. It was a great time to get around that city. We enjoyed it. It was a great assignment. Not least because of an Ambassador whom we all respected. His Minister, Bill Rountree, was another senior diplomatic figure in our postwar diplomatic history. Exciting because of the politics of the time, the aftermath of the Mossadegh regime. The beginning of what became a very large and eventually disastrous American-Iranian relationship. It began in those years that I was there and culminated in the years

when I served there a second time.

I came down with hepatitis, which regrettably, spoiled a lot of my time in Meshed. We had a reasonable amount of medical attention, happily, because of Presbyterian missionaries. I can't over state my own view how Presbyterian, Catholic...particularly Presbyterian in the northern segments of Iran...played such an important role in affecting Iranian views of the United States. And it is not only in that country; there are other countries, I think, that you can identify in that part of the world where that was a factor too. But it was very large in Iran because of the role those missionaries played in the beginning of effective education, not least for women, and good medical facilities. I am still of the view regarding future Iran-American relations that that sentiment is not gone--certainly not among older Iranians who still remember that good side of the United States. A powerful influence which I greatly respect and admire.

Q: In the Middle East so many missionaries did turn to education and medicine because conversion has been most ineffective.

LAINGEN: Even though they felt that by indulging in those fields that was one way to achieve conversion.

Q: Well, in a way it did in that it showed the good side and a residue of goodwill.

LAINGEN: Yes. I don't know how many the Presbyterians converted, but I suspect it would be less than fifty, and that is probably an exaggeration.

Q: You left Tehran in 1956 and came back to the State Department where you served for four years. What were you doing when you came back?

CHRISTIAN A. CHAPMAN
Vice Consul
Tehran (1953-1957)

Christian A. Chapman was born in France in 1921. He graduated from Princeton University in 1948. Mr. Chapman served in the army from 1941 to 1945 and joined the foreign service in 1950. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Lebanon, Iran, Vietnam, Laos, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, Cyprus, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 3, 1990.

Q: What was the situation in Iran at that time. You were there from 1953 to '56.

CHAPMAN: Three years exactly. It was a very interesting time in that it was just after the overthrow of Mossadegh and the return of the Shah from exile. It was a time filled with hope for that country. We had very large aid missions- both economic and military- and we were prepared

to make a major effort to help the Shah modernize his country. Iran was still largely in the middle ages. There was a big gap between a very thin layer of exceedingly rich people and the great mass of very poor and very ignorant people. Villages thirty kilometers from the capital had not changed in any significant way in the last 3,000 years since their creation. The houses were built of mud and straw, the plows were made of wood, the winnowing was done by throwing the wheat in the air; twelve, thirteen-year old girls wove rugs in very dark rooms filled with dust. There was of course no electricity. The major families still measured their wealth by the number of villages they owned. It was an extraordinary experience. You really stepped far back into history.

Q: What was the feeling in the embassy about the overthrow. Were we uncomfortable about this?

CHAPMAN: I got there afterwards with a new group of officers who had also arrived recently. We therefore had rather limited knowledge of the past events. Still there was a consensus that the Tudeh Party (Iranian Communist Party) was the most coherent force in the opposition to the Shah, and would have eventually overwhelmed Mossadegh. There very much was the sense that the Shah represented stability and that his heart was in the right place. We were prepared to help him move the country forward. However, all of us became increasingly concerned by the Shah's inability to deal realistically with his budget and establish true priorities, and with the general lack of responsibility on the part of the ruling class. They apparently felt no obligation towards their society. They were out for themselves and for their families. Corruption was wide-spread. While every society is corrupt up to a point, there it was so rampant, it was damaging. For American observers, it really rubbed the wrong way.

Q: You were doing economic work?

CHAPMAN: I was first Special Assistant to the Ambassador, Loy Henderson. He was one of the great diplomats of the post-war. His wife was a problem for everyone including himself. But he was very attached to her. Part of my job was the care and feeding of Mrs. Henderson, which was not easy.

Q: I wonder if you could explain, since this is now history. From the view of: what happens when you have an ambassador's wife who is a real problem.

CHAPMAN: As in so many things, you try to support and protect the Ambassador, and try to absorb some of the difficulties created.

Q: In what manner? How does one work under these conditions?

CHAPMAN: I think you accept more unpleasantness than you would normally. You try to handle each difficulty as best you can without bothering the Ambassador. Help him keep his peace of mind kind-of-thing. She dealt with the whole staff, both junior and senior officers, in a very insulting fashion. She was very socially inclined, loved the beautiful people. The fact that I was accepted by the beautiful people, (because those were the people with whom the ambassador had to deal - the Shah and his whole family and their entourage) I got off relatively lightly.

She was a curious person. Not well educated. She liked gossip, dancing, men, parties, fun in the worst Persian sort of way. She was impressed by wealth. She was quite insensitive. But the Ambassador was very attached to her. She was Lithuanian. They were married when he was serving in Moscow in the 1930's, before the war. The story was told that his friends at the Embassy strongly disapproved of this marriage and did not attend the wedding ceremony. It was further said that he never forgave them.

Q: Could you talk about Loy Henderson, one of our great ambassadors.

CHAPMAN: He chose Bill Rountree as DCM. He had great confidence in him and Rountree was a very competent, well organized, clear headed person, who ran the Embassy. Loy Henderson operated from a very conservative philosophy, profoundly anti-communist, anti-Soviet, and somewhat suspicious of anyone who was not WASP. He had been very harshly treated by the Jewish lobby in the US, when he was Assistant Secretary for the Middle East, and as a result was very suspicious of Jews and Jewish activities. We had excellent relations with the British Embassy. Iran in the view of the Ambassador, and indeed of virtually all of us, was the key country in the middle east at that time; it was the most significant barrier between the USSR and the Persian Gulf. This, I believe, is still true today. Geopolitically, Iran is one of the most important countries in that area, and indeed in the world.

He was very, very conservative, with some biases of his generation. He worked very hard to support the Shah and to effect a reconciliation between the Iranians and the British. Henderson had been in Moscow in the '30s. His experience there formed much of his outlook- as indeed it did others who lived there in those bleak years. He was a major player in bringing the British back and arriving at a settlement of the oil problem. That was the most important issue with which he dealt. And he dealt with it with Rountree without anyone else being involved. He held all the negotiations on oil very tightly, so I never really followed the discussions on how the agreement was reached.

He was a man of great charm, of great dignity. A great presence. The very personification of a diplomat. Straight out of central casting. He didn't speak any other language except English. He didn't speak much Russian, and no French or German. He was very highly regarded. He had considerable political imagination to find solutions to problems and he had a very precise mind. He was truly a diplomat's diplomat and a man who imposed respect. Everyone had taken their measure of Mrs. Henderson but it did not affect his position or reputation.

Q: Special assistant to ambassador allows you to see the whole operation. From your viewpoint, how was the embassy run?

CHAPMAN: Henderson had that rare ability of keeping a broad view of the situation, and at the same time a keen eye on all elements which he considered important. On these he had precise and detailed knowledge. He had an excellent memory. Perhaps from his days in Moscow, he had a very strong sense of security. On the most important issues- oil negotiations, relations with the Shah- he operated very close to his chest. I believe he shared these questions with Rountree who

had his full confidence and ran the Embassy, but with Rountree alone. For instance, all the files on the oil negotiations were kept in Rountree's office.

Q: *What about the corruption?*

CHAPMAN: We had other issues to worry about. There is very little one country can do about corruption in another society. I think one of the great myths that has been allowed to flower in this country is the degree to which we have control over other countries. Americans hold themselves responsible for everything bad that happens in the world. Yet one conclusion I have carried away after 30 years in the foreign service is how remarkably little direct influence we have in fact on the functioning of another society. They have their own values and their own ways of working. You just don't change these. Particularly by moralizing.

Q: *We weren't moralizing then, were we?*

CHAPMAN: The AID people were those who had to deal with the problem and were always fighting and trying to get the leadership to recognize how much it hampered programs. But it was a very difficult matter. You had the Shah's sister and his brothers who were involved. Later after I left, I was told you couldn't build a factory without paying off Abdor Reza, the Shah's brother.

- . ROUNTREE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tehran (1953-1955)

Ambassador William M. Rountree was born on March 28, 1917 in Georgia. He joined the Foreign Service in 1942 as a Foreign Service Auxiliary Officer. He served in Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, the Sudan, South Africa, and Brazil. Ambassador Rountree was interviewed by Arthur L. Lowrie in 1989.

Q: *Next you move on to Iran to serve in all three of these countries in the field as Deputy Chief of Mission at an extremely interesting time in Iran. And, of course, I refer to the Mossadegh Revolution and the aftermath of that. Can you tell us something about the revolution, the US role and the oil companies?*

ROUNTREE: During my earlier period as Director of the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs, Mossadegh rose to power. The political situation in Iran had been very shaky for several years. You might recall the unsuccessful negotiations between Prime Minister Razmara and the British, with the Iranians endeavoring to amend the terms of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Agreement. Finally, the assassination of Razmara added to the turmoil within Iran. A series of Prime Ministers were appointed by the Shah, including his closest confidant, Hussein Ala, but none succeeded in establishing stability and an atmosphere conducive to successful negotiations with the British. During this tumultuous period Mossadegh, who had always been in opposition and never in power, attracted an increasingly wide audience and supporters. The Shah finally felt

compelled to turn the government over to Mossadegh, and I think it was the Shah's general expectation that Mossadegh's inability to come to an agreement with the British or to organize the economy would bring about his early departure. This was not to be the case. Mossadegh's hostile attitude toward the British was manifested in many ways. His unwillingness to meet the British half way became evident. We became increasingly concerned over events in Iran and endeavored in every possible way to be instrumental in bringing about a resolution. President Truman asked Averell Harriman to go to Iran and try to serve as a catalyst to bring about a resumption of negotiations between the British and the Iranians. I went with him and we spent several weeks in Iran, during which he held many talks with Mossadegh. He finally persuaded Mossadegh to receive a British delegation, which was promptly dispatched to Tehran. Various proposals were discussed but all were unacceptable to Mossadegh, who seemed quite adamant in his position that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company would not return. So the Harriman mission left without any substantial progress. The Iranian economy continued to deteriorate. Continued sporadic efforts to find some means of resolving the problem were unsuccessful and it was in this atmosphere that Mossadegh came to Washington for a series of discussions with the President and other officials in Washington, but they also were without concrete results.

Shortly after Mossadegh's visit to Washington, both George McGhee and I left for Turkey. While I was in Turkey various interesting events occurred in Iran, one of which was an effort to unseat Mossadegh, in which CIA was involved. This failed and the position of the Shah became untenable. He was forced to leave Iran for Italy. After his departure, however, an almost spontaneous revolution occurred on the streets of Tehran. It began with a public demonstration by a health club--or exercise club--lifting barbells and chains and that sort of thing. These clubs often demonstrated on the streets. But on this occasion they began shouting anti-Mossadegh, pro-Shah slogans and proceeded to march through the streets. Many others joined them, and soon there was a substantial demonstration in favor of the Shah and against Mossadegh. Shouts of "Long live the Shah" spread throughout the city and the crowd went in the direction of the building housing the Mossadegh cabinet. Meanwhile General Zahedi, who had been one of the principal figures in the earlier attempt to overthrow Mossadegh, came out of hiding and he and other military officers gave leadership and direction to the mobs on the street, and they succeeded. I might say, parenthetically, that one of the reasons for the relatively easy success was that Loy Henderson, who was our Ambassador in Tehran, had complained bitterly to Mossadegh about harassment of Americans on the street by communists and other of his followers. He said that if this continued he'd have no alternative but to order the evacuation of Americans from Iran. This Mossadegh did not want and he instructed his people, including the communists, to stay off the streets. After this tremendous demonstration had gained momentum it was too late for the communists and other Mossadegh followers to offer any effective opposition. The result was the success of the pro-Shah, anti-Mossadegh demonstration, or revolution, and the members of the Mossadegh cabinet were seized. Mossadegh himself, after initially escaping the crowds, was seized but treated far more gently than his associates.

At this point a situation was created in which the Shah could return. He did so, and appointed General Zahedi as Prime Minister. This created an entirely new situation in Iran. I was asked to transfer directly from Ankara to Tehran and become Deputy Chief of Mission under Ambassador Henderson. I think this was because of my previous experience as Director of the Office of

Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs in which position I handled various matters relating to the problems of Iran. Ambassador Henderson's former Deputy had recently left, and I was delighted again to be working with Loy, who had become my close friend as well as mentor.

The main objectives when the Shah returned were to reestablish order, get the economy going again and, very importantly, effect the return of the British Diplomatic Mission, which had been expelled by Mossadegh, and the beginning negotiations which would permit the resumption of Iranian oil production.

Q: Before we get on to that, if I'm understanding you correctly, what you're saying is that the CIA has gotten a lot of undeserved credit for bringing back the Shah and that they really didn't play a significant role.

ROUNTREE: Oh, I don't think it was undeserved. The CIA did remarkably well in creating a situation in which, in the proper circumstances and atmosphere, a change could be effected. Mind you, they had been working with General Zahedi and his people. Quite clearly the matter did not work out as they had anticipated, or at least hoped, but it did work out in the end, and I wouldn't deprive them of credit for playing a major role if indeed they sought credit. However, it is clear that the responsibility for and the success of the revolution are due to Iranians. Our people could only supplement the efforts of others with the approval of the Shah, and could not replace such efforts.

Q: What about Turkish attitude toward Mossadegh at the time?

ROUNTREE: I don't recall any notable aspect of Turkish attitudes toward Iran during this period. Relations between Turkey and Iran during the period were acceptable and the Turks continued to work with the Shah in the context of the Baghdad Pact, but I don't recall any particular demonstration of favorable or unfavorable attitudes at the time of the counter-revolution which effected the Shah's return.

Q: What about our American thinking at the time? Was the Mossadegh nationalization and his alliance or use of the Tudeh party, was this Iranian revolution seen primarily in the context of the Cold War and a possible Soviet encroachment into Iran or was the Iranian nationalist movement seen as the primary force? How were we looking at the Iranian revolution at that time?

ROUNTREE: From the outset there was no hostility by the United States toward Mossadegh. We were not fundamentally opposed to Mossadegh. We were, however, deeply concerned by his inability to work out an agreement with the British, and get the oil revenues again flowing. We were concerned about the state of the Iranian economy, the extent to which Mossadegh had resorted to the printing press to meet all financial needs. There had been predictions early in his administration that the Iranian economy would collapse within six months. Well, it didn't collapse, and it probably would not have collapsed in a considerable period of time because of the unique character of the Iranian economy and the ability to survive in circumstances which would have been catastrophic for many other countries. There was a reversion to a primitive type

of economy. We actually undertook various types of programs to help the Iranian government under Mossadegh. This included a Point Four Program and a willingness to provide Export/Import Bank loans. We were anxious to avoid an economic catastrophe in the Mossadegh regime.

I think most people recognized that the situation in Iran would be highly precarious until Mossadegh or someone could find a means of resuming oil production in conditions acceptable to the international oil market. Even if they could produce the oil, companies and not countries are for the greatest part the customers, and so long as Iranian oil was produced under the onus of expropriation, big companies which would normally provide the markets for the product were unwilling to take it; thus the economy suffered. We made every effort through the Harriman mission, through discussions with Mossadegh when he came to Washington, through continuous efforts of our Embassy under Henry Grady and, more recently under Loy Henderson, to find the means of rendering the sale of Iranian oil acceptable to the international community. But all of these efforts failed, and it seemed to us that stability in Iran would require a change in government; that Mossadegh simply should not continue indefinitely.

Q: What about the role of the American oil companies? Surely they were very upset by the precedent that Mossadegh's nationalization set in Iran and what it would mean for their concession throughout the Middle East.

ROUNTREE: They were indeed upset. American oil companies were initially unwilling to even consider replacing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This was a matter of principle. It was a matter that concerned them as businessmen. They were also aware of the likely effects which the successful expropriation of oil facilities would have on their own interests elsewhere. After the Shah returned it was clear that there was no possibility of a return to the status quo ante, that is the return of Anglo-Iranian. It became increasingly clear that the best alternative would be an international approach to the operation of the Iranian oil industry under arrangements acceptable to the British. American firms were not waiting to jump in. The first step in the world's most complicated business negotiations was to achieve the agreement of the American firms among themselves to become a part of an international consortium. You can imagine the difficult negotiations involved in even this one of many steps.

Q: Were the British quite willing to accept them?

ROUNTREE: The second aspect was discussions and agreement between the Americans and the British with respect to the circumstances under which Anglo-Iranian Oil Company would relinquish its claims in Iran. Negotiations between the five American oil companies and the British, Dutch and French companies were held to complete the international consortium. In order to preclude the appearance of unfair practices, a percentage of the consortium was made available to smaller American oil companies. My recollection is that this amounted to five percent.

After completing their negotiations, the consortium then sat down to negotiate with the government of Iran. We were very fortunate in many respects, one of which was that Loy

Henderson was an excellent negotiator in setting up the arrangements for the consortium meetings with the Iranian negotiators. Secondly, the Administration obtained the services of Herbert Hoover Jr. to help facilitate the negotiations. He came to Iran and remained throughout the negotiations. He was invaluable. Thirdly, the negotiating team designated from the consortium members, was excellent, and was headed by an official of the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, Howard Page. Page represented the consortium as a whole--at least he was the principal consortium representative and was surrounded by many officials from other companies. He proved himself to be extraordinarily able. Finally, the Shah and his government desired to find a reasonable and politically acceptable solution which would permit the early resumption of oil revenues. After a period of a good many months this rather incredible agreement was reached, thanks to the outstanding qualities of the negotiators.

Q: Was the US Government role in all of this a promotion, I mean a normal kind of promotion, protection of American interests, in the interest of American oil companies? Or were there serious differences of opinion between the US Government and how it saw its larger interests and the American oil companies, or were they basically together in negotiating with the British and with the Iranians?

ROUNTREE: The US Government role in this matter could best be described as one of facilitating agreement among the various parties concerned. Naturally, our interest in the protection of American firms is always there. Once the momentum was created and the basic decisions made, once it became clear that the US companies were comfortable with their prospective roles in the consortium, among themselves and with the British, Dutch and French firms, then special interests were substantially lessened. To a much greater extent the negotiations were between the consortium and the government of Iran, and whatever arrangements they were able to make would likely be agreeable to the United States Government. Throughout this whole process we had the advantage of having Herb Hoover there to help, to advise, to assist. He was very helpful.

Q: Was there, as in the early days of dealing with OPEC, the early 1970s, was there at this time a waiver of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act for the oil companies to work, collude together?

ROUNTREE: I don't remember the exact legal framework in which this was done, but, yes, this was always borne in mind. I don't remember what instrument was issued or what policy statement was made, but at no time were the oil companies operating contrary to US law or contrary to any established policies in the US Government.

Q: During the remaining period of your tour in Iran through October 1955, what kind of relationship, if any, did the Embassy have with the religious establishment in Iran--relations with the Ulema, if any?

ROUNTREE: Our relations were limited, although we did make an effort to keep in touch with all elements in Iran, particularly the leaders of various groups. I met on several occasions with religious leaders. Separately and always quite privately, other members of the Embassy staff did so on a more regular basis. At that time, the importance of religious leaders in Iran was extremely

limited. The Shah was at times rather undiplomatic in his relations with the religious leaders opposing his regime. Iranian authorities left no doubt in the minds of the diplomatic corps that they felt the religious leaders presented no present or potential problems in Iran. In retrospect, the Shah clearly underestimated this aspect and did far too little to understand the hopes and aspirations of religious elements.

Q: Is there anything else about your service in Iran I haven't asked about that would be of interest?

ROUNTREE: It was one of the most interesting assignments that I had in my Foreign Service career. Most of the efforts of the embassy during my period there, either as Deputy to Ambassador Henderson or, following his departure, as Chargé d'affaires were concentrated on economic matters, the resumption of oil revenues, the implementation of development programs, including our extensive Point Four Program, and, generally, efforts to undo the vast damage that had been done to Iran and the Iranian economy under the Mossadegh regime.

Q: What was your impression of the Shah at that time?

ROUNTREE: The Shah was, during that period, filled with renewed confidence. He felt that he had the backing of his people. He displayed a new determination to carry out his development programs formulated over a period of years with the help of a group of American specialists. The Shah was a courageous man, and his intentions were superb. But as one of our previous Ambassadors to Iran commented: "In Iran good intentions sometimes pave the road to hell". His capacity to organize the government to carry out programs, and to choose the right people for the right jobs, was obviously limited. As a result, much of the progress that could have been made faltered. Later, the Shah concentrated heavily upon military matters and, in the opinion of most, expended far too much of Iran's resources on the military. Apart from that, on the whole, Iran had a leader that in the right circumstances could have brought the country forward from their economic depression. He made a lot of progress, but obviously not enough.

Q: What about corruption? Was corruption a problem? This was before the big oil money had started to pour in.

ROUNTREE: I think there is no doubt that corruption in Iran was one of the major problems that the Shah should have coped with but did not.

DONALD S. BROWN
Administrative Officer, USAID
Tehran (1954-1956)

Donald S. Brown was raised in New York. He attended Cornell for a year and then attended Military Officer Candidate School. He finished his undergraduate degree at Antioch College. In addition to Algeria, Mr. Brown served in Iran,

Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Egypt, and Zaire. He was interviewed on December 4, 1996 by W. Haven North.

BROWN: We found Iran to be a fascinating first field assignment. We arrived shortly after Shah Reza Pahlavi had been restored to power following a CIA organized coup d'etat which overthrew the Mossadegh government - a regime then considered dangerous to Western petroleum interests. It was considered an important part of American policy to support Iranian development efforts to demonstrate the validity of the Pahlavi regime. As a result, the Point 4 (TCA) Mission was enormous, over 200 Americans, 10 field posts, a relatively large budget, and strong influence on governmental developmental (and, indirectly, political) policy.

In the first year I worked as Special Assistant to Director Bill Warne, a wonderful, thoughtful, very politically attuned activist, a former Director of the Bureau of Reclamation. A close colleague and friend, also a Special Assistant to Warne, was Reza Ansari, who much later became Prime Minister of Iran. We lived an often contradictory and fascinating life - as the youngest and most junior staff member, my wife and I were relatively free to wander around Tehran and to meet a wide variety of working and middle class Iranians. At the same time, because of my close working relation to Warne, we were often invited to dinners and receptions given by high level Iranian officials. It was not unusual to spend a day poking around nooks and crannies of Tehran and then that night go to a gala dinner at the home of the Minister of Planning or the Minister of Court. It was a heady mixture.

We also had freedom to travel extensively-privately and on USOM business, often accompanying Bill Warne. When he first asked me to go on a trip, he recalled his own first trip with a senior, one-armed Bureau of Reclamation official. When Warne asked that official what should be his functions, the official pointed to his missing arm and said "carry my bags". In a sense, that was my role working with Warne-seldom directly involved in decision making, I was working so closely with him and his immediate associates that I had a wonderful chance to see how that process was carried out. I would note that Micheline and I had the great pleasure of seeing the Warnes again many years later when he was in Egypt on an assignment with the International Executive Service Corps.

When I first arrived in Iran, Lucy Adams was head of the Isfahan field office. Her idea of a vacation was to accompany Isfahan tribal groups on their annual trek from the mountains to the plains. After my first year, Lucy became Program Officer and asked me to join her there. This gave me good experience in watching the program formulation process. Again my work was essentially routine as such, although I did have an important role in better organizing and chronicling what was done as part of the historical record. However, I was engaged in all the key meetings which Lucy chaired or attended. It was a wonderful working with someone like Lucy with her dynamism, charm and gracious manners.

Still, some of the senior staff were rather fuddy-duddy. A sign of this was the comment by one senior mission official who objected to the lack of clarity in dinner invitations calling for informal dress - he noted that things were clearer when he was young, when informal meant black tie.

It was clear from our range of contacts with Iranians that Islam-Shiite Islam-played an important part in the lives of many. It was also obvious that poverty and misery were wide spread. At the same time, however, the Shah and his government initiated extensive land reform measures which were bringing significant improvements to at least some small farmers and these efforts were firmly supported by the Point 4 Program. However, they raised strong antipathy among the clergy and the landholding class-the clergy, since some religious lands were affected. I must admit, however, that, despite what had already happened in the Mossadegh period, we did not foresee the kind of changes which took place in Iran several years later-though on reflection they were not totally surprising.

Certainly, in the short run, the TCA program achieved many of its prime objectives-a certain amount of political stability, the beginning of important agricultural changes, a vast program of education and training, including sending thousands of Iranians to the US for training. But perhaps it laid some of the seeds of destruction of the Pahlavi regime by supporting change which was imposed and sudden, by the exposure of thousands of Iranian students to democratic regimes which contrasted sharply with that of the Shah, and by an overly close association between the US and Iran-an association which became even closer in the decades which followed.

A great event during our stay in Tehran was the birth of our first son- Alain Bahram Brown-whose middle name derived from a close friend who later became Minister of Health, Bahram Farmanfarmayan.

While life in Tehran was fascinating in many ways for the reasons already mentioned, it was not always easy. Water was a major problem. There was no central water supply and the bulk of our water was delivered by "jube"-the open gutter through which water poured down from the mountains and then was distributed throughout the city. While we were better off than many, living at a higher point than much of the city, we carried the smell of Iranian jube water in our linen and clothes for a long time thereafter. It is maddening when you have to boil all water, even the baby's bath water. But the fascination of Tehran outweighed the difficulties for both Micheline and I.

FREDERICK W. FLOTT
Political Officer
Tehran (1954-1956)

Frederick W. Flott was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1921. He graduated from Carleton College with a Bachelor's Degree. He served in the U.S. Army from 1942 until 1946, when he entered the Foreign Service. His career included assignments in France, Iran, Germany, Switzerland, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Mr. Flott was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: *And then your next assignment overseas was to...?*

FLOTT: To Tehran...

Q: *...where you served from '54 until '56?*

FLOTT: Yes.

Q: *What were you doing there?*

FLOTT: My assignment was made about the time of the August, 1953 coup against the Shah, and when at first Mossadegh prevailed, the thought was that the Russians' influence in Iran would increase. So I was sent there probably because I spoke Russian.

Q: *You were ready to greet the Russian troops!*

FLOTT: They figured they'll send a guy, who, in case the Russians came in, could deal with them. But then the counter coup took place, most of the pro-Russian elements were thrown out, and there suddenly emerged what could be described as a very promising environment in which to resist Soviet encroachments. The government of the returned Shah worked very closely with us. Junior officers tended to divide their tours. I spent one year in the Economic Section and one year in the Political Section. I tended to deal with anything concerning the Soviet Union, economic, political, or consular.

Q: *Did we feel that the Soviets were involved in the Mossadegh business or were they just taking advantage of it and the aftermath?*

FLOTT: I would say the Soviets took advantage of it, as they would take advantage of anything that served their purposes. I do not think for a minute that Dr. Mossadegh was pro-Soviet. In fact, he did some wonderful anti-Soviet negotiation in the brief time that he was in power. There was an old institution in Iran--the management of the Caspian Sea's caviar product--it was called Iranryba, up on the Caspian Sea. It was on Iranian territory, but in effect it was run by Russians, traditionally, since the Czar's time. It was an anachronism and a niche the Russians had had there for a long time. While Mossadegh was making all of his strident noises about nationalizing oil and throwing out the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and all, he also went to the Russians, who were courting his favor. He said, "Now look, I'm certain you would agree that there are certain anachronisms that have to be removed. At the same time that we throw out the oil company, I think my position in the world would be much better if we ended this little Soviet caviar concession monopoly on the Caspian". The Russians, in an opportunistic way, went along with that. So Mossadegh gets credit for throwing the Russians out of the caviar business in Iran! He did have a popular base. He was perhaps incapable of governing. If he had stayed in power, he might have produced disorder that the Russians would have taken advantage of much more dramatically, but they never really got around to it. As you might imagine, we wanted to watch them very closely.

Q: Did you have the feeling that they were messing around in things?

FLOTT: Yes, they were always looking for angles to pursue their interests and confound our politics.

Q: What was, during this time from 1954-56, your impression and those of the people with whom you worked, of the Shah? He'd come back--he had fled--he was pretty young at the time.

FLOTT: Yes, he was quite young. At that time, the impression of him was that he was a team player; his heart was in the right place; he wanted to modernize and improve the country. The excesses that later became part of the public record and all, were less apparent at that time. We certainly had no major differences with him in 1954. He wanted to defend his country against Soviet encroachments of all kinds--ideological, military, commercial, everything, and so we were natural teammates. I would characterize him at that time as a team player. I had a couple of meetings with him to brief him on the Soviet threat and help prepare him for his first official trip to Moscow.

Q: What about the contacts from our Embassy? Were these able to get out to "the people"--beyond the upper class?

FLOTT: The American Embassy in Tehran was later accused of failing to have broadly-based contacts. At the time I was there that certainly did not seem to be the case. But the Embassy, after all, was accredited to the government of Iran, and inevitably it dealt with the people in the government to which it was accredited. The Embassy was concerned about former "Tudeh" elements, the former Communist Party of Iran. We were very much against them and tried to keep track of them, but so was the government of Iran. The best way to fight the Tudeh and fight communist incursions was to be cooperative and reasonably loyal team players with the government, which, after all, had the same objective.

Q: Selden Chapin was the Ambassador?

FLOTT: Yes. I was very impressed by him. He was a wonderful man. I should say that right at the beginning of my tour Loy Henderson was still there as Ambassador. I served in Paris under him in 1947. He was from Chicago; his wife was a Russian from Lithuania. The Hendersons left a month after I got there. I worked very closely with Selden Chapin. He put me in charge of Soviet matters. His wife had lung cancer, or something pretty debilitating, and spent most of her time in bed. So at six o'clock in the evening, after work, he would have a small staff meeting around her bedside, just so she could know what was going on. There was really no reason not to do it that way. As a result, I spent many pleasant evenings with them talking. He was interested in sharing with her, in a very good way that certainly didn't hurt in any way what the Embassy was doing on various subjects. These informal sessions offered a good way to get the Ambassador's undivided attention on some issue.

Another example of my work with him--I got to Tehran in January of 1954 and in early August of 1955, Supreme Court Justice, William O. Douglas had been giving some law lectures in New

Delhi. It was an annual forum. He had a visa to go to the Soviet Union and he was going to be joined in Tehran by Robert F. Kennedy, who was then a 28 year old lawyer on the Senate Government Relations Committee. Douglas had tried for several months to get a visa for an American interpreter to go with him. He knew he didn't want to be totally dependent on the Soviets for interpretation, both for the credibility of what he did and for getting the straight story. But the Soviets never granted a visa for any such person. But Douglas raised the question with Selden Chapin when he got to Tehran. He asked, "Do you have in your Embassy someone who speaks Russian who could go in with Bob Kennedy and me?" Ambassador Chapin asked me if I'd be willing to do it, and I said, "Yes, I'd be glad to." So I was so ordered. I would spend a little over a month in the Soviet Union. All of which is written up in Arthur M. Schlesinger's biography of Bob Kennedy--"Robert Kennedy and His Times."

Q: What was your impression of Robert Kennedy?

FLOTT: He was certainly a very committed anti-communist, which was good. He was, of course, younger than he was later. He could be characterized as a little bit brash, a little bit take-charge; and often unnecessarily offensive to the Russians. Justice Douglas, on the other hand, could learn what he wanted by being less outwardly offensive, even though we were all equally anti-communist. But Bob was a good loyal fellow and I enjoyed my friendship with him, which went on as long as he was alive.

Q: Well, I think we might as well move on to Bonn. Or were there any other incidents that happened?

FLOTT: No, the high point in a way during my Tehran tour was the trip into the Soviet Union. So I came home, home leave, and was assigned to Bonn in January, 1957.

ROBERT L. FUNSETH
Vice Consul
Tehran (1954)

Consular Officer
Tabriz (1954-1956)

Robert Funseth was born in Minnesota and raised in New York State. He was educated at Hobart College, School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and Cornell University. After service in the US Navy, he joined the Foreign Service and was sent initially to Iran, being posted in Teheran and Tabriz. He subsequently served as Political Officer in Lebanon at the time of the US Marine Corps landings in Beirut after which he served in the Department dealing with United Nations Affairs. He also served as Consular Officer in Bordeaux. Mr. Funseth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: So you went out there in early '54?

FUNSETH: Early '54. I went to Tehran first and spent most of the summer there working on projects. That was good because I got to know Tehran. Had an opportunity, with the encouragement of the office, to get around Iran. I went to Isfahan and Shiraz by bus. Went by Chevy Van out to Mashed, where a friend of mine, Bruce Laingan, had been assigned as Consul. And then I went to Tabriz. I want to add what the real opportunity was that I had the occasion to meet Loy Henderson, who was my first Ambassador. I must say, at least for my generation, to have Loy Henderson as your first Ambassador: he looked like an Ambassador, he talked like an Ambassador, and was considered certainly Mister Foreign Service.

Q: I don't know if he was considered that yet...

FUNSETH: Well, he was certainly well respected in NEA for his work of putting together in NEA the Truman Doctrine. And to go to his staff meetings, it was a real thrill for me to sit and listen to him talk about what the issues were. When I went to Tabriz, he visited us in Tabriz for several days. So, it was very, very interesting. It was an interesting embassy. William Rountree was the Deputy Chief of Mission. There were some junior officers who have remained my friends. Maybe there was something about a first post special memories about that first assignment: Bruce Laingan, Grant Mauser, Chris Chapman were at the embassy and friends in the U.S. Information Service. David Knoll went to Mashed and opened an information and cultural program there.

My recollection, the real priority, was of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. I subsequently had occasion in '76 to meet the Shah for the first time. He even remembered, he claimed of asking for this program--because it was just shortly after Mossadegh and the Soviet Union was strongly supportive of the Tuda Party in Iran. Azerbaijan, you may remember, and Kurdistan had been set up as puppet republics by Stalin. They speak a different dialect from Iran. They speak Azerbaijani Turkish. So there was always a separatist feeling there and there was a strong Tuda underground party. It was conducting propaganda and a hostile campaign against the Shah and against the United States. So he asked Loy Henderson to open a discreet information and cultural program to counter that in Azerbaijan. That's how I was assigned there.

Q: What was the situation while you were in Iran? I mean, you were a junior officer, you're kind of a fly on the wall in absorbing things. How did we view the Shah and his government and the situation at that time?

FUNSETH: Well, in 1954, the Shah was a symbol of reform in Iran. It was shortly after Mossadegh. The Russians were still very active there. We were then embarking on what became after Korea, then surpassed Korea, as the largest Point Four Technical Assistance Program in the world. I've always regretted that someone hasn't written a story of that period because that program (ironically it may have contributed to the counterrevolution), but at the time it certainly made a lot of sense and this was a period when we really thought we could create a network of countries and governments that were becoming increasingly democratic. A Point Four Program introduced agricultural extension in Iran, public health, modern public education across the

board. It was a very good program and it was situated out in the provinces. So when I went to Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, what we were trying to demonstrate was that the United States was supporting this modernization effort of the Iranian government.

Q: When you went to Tabriz, Tabriz covered both Kurdistan and Azerbaijan.

FUNSETH: And Azerbaijan.

Q: What was our post like at that time?

FUNSETH: Well, Tabriz, first of all, Azerbaijan was the largest and most important province of Iran because it's located up in the Northwest corner. It's fertile. It supplied a lot of grain and fruit. From the Turkish conquest of Tamberlane, it still spoke a Turkish dialect and in the 19th Century and earlier the Crown Prince was always resident there because there was always concern about it. We established a consulate there before World War II or in that period to protect the American missionaries. American missionaries established a Presbyterian mission there in the 19th Century. It was a mission initially to the Nestorians, the Assyrian, Aramaic speaking people, who go back to the early schism in the church over doctrine. A patriarch named Nestorius was sent there. So they had these missionaries and we established a consulate to protect them.

Then there were periods when it was closed between World Wars I and II. Then the post was reopened there during the war as a listening post.

There is a very interesting story about the Tabriz Consulate that I used to use when I was recruiting. There was a Junior Vice Consul there named Bob Rossow. The issue of Azerbaijan is the first item on the Security Council agenda, and is still on it. It's never been taken off. The Russians had agreed to withdraw their troops after the war. So the Iranians registered a complaint with the Security Council. Vishinsky [USSR Foreign Minister] denied that the Russians were not withdrawing. Well, here's this Vice Consul sending in messages on a one-time pad on a Morse Code telegraph system from Tabriz to Tehran and then to Lake Success where Secretary of State Burns is getting these messages that the Russians not only weren't withdrawing, but in fact they were advancing! Based on that one Foreign Service Officer's report, and over the protestations of our allies who didn't want to get into a major confrontation with the Russians, Burns, on behalf of the United States, pressed the Russians very hard.

Suddenly they started withdrawing their troops. They didn't want a confrontation with us. So it was very much a listening post. It was in an old compound adjoining the American hospital. The building was in a former stable, a mud-type building. I lived in the last relic of the former great days of Tabriz. Tabriz had been visited by Marco Polo. There was a huge building called the Arc; and I lived in a house that was near that arc and learned after I'd moved into it that it had been the first American Consulate in Tabriz. We had this compound with a gate and a wall around it, and we had three Vice Consuls and a Consul. The first Consul I served under was Norman Hanna. The second was Robert Greeson, both Near East hands at that time.

Q: What was your main job?

FUNSETH: That was what was fun about the job. I sort of was sent up there and they said, "Do it." "Do what?" "Well, do what you think needs to be done." Some of it, it was obvious to me, like putting press releases in a Persian language newspaper in which most of the population was illiterate, wouldn't get you very far. I did a lot of things. I was invited to teach English at the University of Tabriz, which ironically was founded by the Russians as part of their separatist movement. I went into the College of Arts and Sciences and discovered that most of the students were studying English, but there weren't any native speakers. But I didn't want to be just sort of a native speaker like we have at FSI. So I got the idea, I said, "I'll teach, but let me teach a course in American Studies." That resulted, I learned that was probably the first course in American Studies ever taught in an Iranian university.

We did a lot of audio-visual. We placed 16mm projectors in theaters all over Azerbaijan and Kurdistan and had newsreel-type films; U.S. information films that were shown. We gave them the projector free and the film free. We developed a wall newspaper which was a huge, sort of enlarged poster that came out every week with photographs of what we were doing to help modernize Iran.

Instead of opening a library that someone could throw a brick through, I opened an American corner in the Tabriz public library and in the University of Tabriz Library and gave them books, encyclopedia, dictionaries, reference books, periodicals. To succeed me, we sent a young Iranian professor to the United States to study American Studies, to come back and teach. Also, I identified and sent the first Kurd who'd ever come to America under our Leader Grant Program.

I felt it was a very rewarding experience and it was quite different assignments. I literally taught; I had hundreds of young students I had taught in the university. I had a class for high school English teachers. So I had a lot of friends and it was a very interesting period.

I traveled. I wasn't married then, and I had a car and driver and an Iranian assistant and traveled all over those two provinces. Went into villages where I was the first American that they'd ever seen. I remember I went into the ancient capital of Iran called Ardiviel, a very holy city. In that building in the mayor's office, there were two pictures, one of the Shah and one of Abraham Lincoln. I don't know where he'd gotten that latter one. Not from me.

Q: What was your impression dealing with the local government officials,?

FUNSETH: Obviously, they were all loyal to the Shah or they wouldn't be there. Most of them were friendly, but I also was sensitive to their own feelings. They tend to be xenophobic. It's an isolated part of the country. They're a very proud people. We had to be careful that even though we were playing a very dominant role, to be sensitive to their feelings of pride. One thing that was interesting - and I remember when Khomeini came in and I'd remembered at the time - the one group of people that we never succeeded in having contact with were the mullahs. They just were not reachable by us. They didn't want to have contact with us. We would, on national days or feast days, meet one or two religious leaders in the city. But by and large, we did not have

contact with them. They did not want to have contact with us.

Q: At that time, was there a feeling that one had to be very careful about religion?

FUNSETH: You had to be very sensitive about it. The religious issue out in the provinces was very sensitive. You had to be very careful about photographing. They had in the Shiite faith, as practiced in Iran, developed rituals and traditions. One of them, called Mooharan, is sort of a period of penance, like Lent in the Christian faith. But it can become very bloody and a period of fanaticism. You had to be very careful about that. There was a curfew in effect. There was a Russian Trade Minister ostensibly in Tabriz at the time. No foreigner was allowed to leave the city without permission. Every time you left the area of Tabriz, you had to get special permission from the Governor General wherever you went. Always received it. They were sensitive about the border areas. We were 40 miles from the Iron Curtain.

Q: What was the view of the people you talked to, both officials and the private, of the Soviets?

FUNSETH: I don't every recall meeting anyone who said they were pro-Soviet or pro- Pishi Bari, who was the name of the leader. There was certainly a provincial pride as Azerbaijanis. I remember the Director of Provincial Education was an Azerbaijani. The government in Tehran was gradually bringing in more Azerbaijanis into positions of responsibility.

Q: Why?

FUNSETH: I think they were sensitive to that, but I think the main thing was people--the whole idea of getting an education. The Shah had followed his father's practice of liberalization of women. They didn't have to wear the veil anymore, although many did. This was an issue that brought a lot of criticism of the Shah and opposition from the conservatives and from the mullahs.

Iran was then in a transition. There was land distribution going on. I'll always remember when I first came to Tehran, the former colonial British Club had been taken over by the Iranians, and it was called the Tehran Club. I remember the first or second week I was in Tehran, someone introduced me to an Iranian who said, "Oh yes, his family owned 100 villages in Azerbaijan." That was a concept I hadn't realized, that you still had a feudal society. If not legally owned. They "owned" the land. But these people were almost indentured. They lived as sharecroppers. As I recall, there were four divisions of the crop: Twenty-five percent for the land, twenty-five percent for the water, I think; twenty-five percent for tools and twenty-five percent for labor. So most of these people would stay in the same village for generations. Centuries perhaps. But they got a limited amount. With modernization and land distribution, we supported that effort to get people their own land and to get them productive and self-sufficient.

Q: Did you have any feelings about the CIA, at that time was "messaging around"?

FUNSETH: There have been lots of accounts published since then about the whole role of the CIA, and we certainly had an intelligence presence in Iran.

Q: Did we have listening posts in that area or not?

FUNSETH: I'm sure we had an intelligence presence in Azerbaijan.

Q: How about corruption? Was this a problem for you?

FUNSETH: I never encountered it, but there is what we call corruption, I've learned in a lot of societies is sort of accepted depending on to what extent it is carried out. But there certainly was corruption in Iran. I didn't personally observe it, but I'm sure it was going on. There's always concern when you have a big aid program, but this wasn't that apparent out in the provinces because there wouldn't be much money going out there.

I think, if you look back on that period, this was before we had some of the tension between the Shah and the United States at the end of his reign. In that period, we had enabled him to come back. We were a strong supporter of his modernization policies and I think if you go back in the reporting at the time by the press, I think most of the press reported favorably of what he was trying to achieve. There was always a debate, I suppose, within the government, had we made the correct assessment in not supporting Mossadegh? To return to that period, Mossadegh was not an easy person to negotiate with. And a very hard person to assess as to where he was really heading.

Q: How about the modernization? Was it making many inroads?

FUNSETH: You saw it all over! First of all, you saw young women were able to go to college. They were able to enter into professions. You saw new schools being built. They were small schools; in fact our provincial education adviser was a black educator from Virginia. His experience had been with rural black schools in Virginia, so what he was trying to do was not build something that was unrealistic, but taking what they had and making a curriculum that made more sense.

Public health. We introduced public health. Public health clinics, pre-natal care. The infant mortality rate in Iran was amazing. In that period, we succeeded in vaccinating the population against smallpox. I remember when I was there, there was an epidemic of smallpox which, even in the 1950s, was unusual.

But we succeeded in addressing that and in agricultural extension. There was a lot. Transportation. Infrastructure. All kinds of things that our aid program did. The modernization of the armed forces of Iran at that time.

Q: You left there in 1956?

FUNSETH: Yes.

DAVID NALLE
Provincial Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Meshed (1954-1958)

David Nalle was born and raised in Philadelphia. He attended Princeton University where he majored in English Literature. He graduated in 1948 because of his service in World War II. In 1951, Mr. Nalle entered the USIA. In addition to serving in Iran, he served in Afghanistan, Syria, Jordan, USSR and Washington, DC. Mr. Nalle was interviewed in April of 1990 by Dorothy Robins-Mowry.

NALLE: Well, you know, one was very young. I got another message like the original one. "Would you like to go to Meshed, Iran?" That was next door, in effect. It was just being reopened after the reinstallation of the Shah of Iran, the ouster of [Mohammed] Mossadegh, because all those things, ours and the British, all the consulates had been closed at the end of the Mossadegh government. Then in late summer of '53, I guess, they were opened up again. I think I have the dates right. Anyway, I was the first USIA person to go there after the interruption.

Q: Had there been somebody stationed in Meshed before?

NALLE: A fellow named George Naifeh had been there during the Mossadegh period. I think he was the first USIA person, and he must have been there when I was in Kabul. Then he had to leave when the town was all closed down.

Q: Did you have home leave between Afghanistan and Meshed?

NALLE: Yes. It looks to me as if I went there in early 1954, and left in '56.

Q: So you went, really, from one very primitive post to another, and all of them in the Islamic world.

NALLE: Yes. It was in Meshed that I learned Persian. That was not because the Agency taught it to me. I should say, in response to your comment, that Meshed was considerably more developed and civilized and sophisticated than Kabul was in most ways.

Q: But it's a very conservative Islamic city, isn't it?

NALLE: As those kinds of cities are, usually, there was a religious section of the city and there was a secular section of the city. It was a fairly big place, so you could find all kinds of people there. You couldn't find many people who spoke English, though. We figured at one time there were 50 people in the city that we knew about who spoke English or French. So if I wanted to communicate with anybody, I really had to learn Persian. Indeed, I did that in the best kind of learning situation, because a large part of my work was publicizing the US AID program. It was called the Point Four program. That meant I had to go to meetings with both the local Ministry of

Agriculture, the development people, and the Ministry of Education. All these meetings were conducted in Persian, and it would get boring with an interpreter all the time. So knowing the context and being in a meeting, you get to know the words and you get to acquire them quite easily. It's not a very difficult language. I wish I had learned it in Afghanistan. Same language, essentially. But I did learn it in Meshed, and that was very useful. Of course, it greatly expands your ability to communicate and understand what's going on.

Q: Did you just learn spoken Persian, or did you also begin to cope with the Arab script?

NALLE: Both.

Q: I found in my brief encounter with the Persian language at FSI, one of the things I liked about it was that I had the feeling it was very like my Latin background, that there was a formation of--I don't know how much Latin you've had, but it seemed to me there was-a familiarity in Persian because of Latin, and I found it very delightful for that particular reason.

NALLE: Yes. I had studied Latin all through school. I think that helps you as a background to learning language. Persian, fortunately, is not really an inflected language; it's much easier than Latin. So it's easier to acquire.

Q: Did you get any training at all before you moved, when you went home on leave? Was it just leave, or did you have any training to go to Iran?

NALLE: Only home leave.

Q: No training?

NALLE: No. I arranged lessons in Meshed while I was there.

Q: But I thought maybe something else.

NALLE: No.

Q: What did you do in Meshed?

NALLE: A large part of the job was publicizing the AID program, which was a very interesting thing to be thrown into, because it was a tremendously ambitious and largely effective program, really a program designed to help the ordinary Iranians live better, improve their standard of living, and become more prosperous. In many ways it helped accomplish that, I think. My job was selling a product that I could be proud of, and I was like a reporter, photographer, writer. I would go out and cover projects that were being implemented, and I would go into the schools where they were doing practice teaching and training teachers and so forth, take pictures and write up stories. USIS headquarters in Tehran would incorporate those into a magazine that they put out and distributed all over the country.

Q: Which magazine is this?

NALLE: I forget what it was called now, but it was a USIS-Tehran magazine. Of course, all of this was a little paternalistic, because they not only put out a magazine, they did radio programs, they put out a wall newspaper which I had to get posted in villages and things like that. It was in some ways an oppressive relationship because America was all over Iran, and everybody knew that these slick magazines and so forth didn't come from an Iranian source; they came from the Americans. But that takes nothing away from the fact that the experimental farm they established outside of Meshed was the first one ever. It did some great things in improving crops for the area. The trench silos that got dug under their direction were a vast improvement over anything that had ever been there in recent times, and helped people.

Q: was there much of an AID staff out there?

NALLE: Yes, quite a large one. It was a big program. It was also the time of trying to make a real impact on Iran after the debacle of the Shah being, as the Iranians saw it, really placed back on the throne by the Americans and the British. That left a bad taste in their mouths and made them less trusting of us than they had been previously.

There was something called the Impact program, which was an overlay of money for the USAID program, to make an impact, to do things that would be visible, and would show Iranians that it was a good thing to be allied to the Americans because they would help you. And it meant building a school, for example, or building a dam, or building this or building that. Not always the best conceived projects, no, but more dramatic than helping them train teachers.

Q: In how many locations were we located at that particular point? Did they grow in numbers subsequently?

NALLE: Meshed and Tabriz and Isfahan. I think there was somebody in Khorramshahr in the south. I don't think it ever got any bigger than that.

Q: Not Shiraz?

NALLE: In Shiraz there was a binational center.

Q: Who was running the program in Tehran?

NALLE: Bob Payne.

Q: I'm interested. Were you under a lot of heavy directives from Tehran, or did you do what seemed best for the situation in Meshed?

NALLE: I only occasionally heard from Tehran, and I did what I thought best. They did send me some things, like they sent me, for example, an art exhibit, which the agency had done on metal panels. It was really very nicely done. It was a retrospective of American art, so it went from that

picture of Jefferson and everybody at the Continental Congress right up to Arthur Dove and beyond. So I put that on in the public library in the heart of Meshed. I think it was the first art exhibit that had been held in Meshed since the 15th century, probably, which was, of course, the period of the peak of the Titurids. And until they got to modernists, it was very popular with the visitors. They felt insulted by John Marin and Arthur Dove and people like that. "Why are they putting this kind of nonsense in front of me?" But it was a great success. That was a lot of fun. We did get a few things like that.

I must say the most memorable communication I got from Bob Payne was when William Warne, who was head of AID, came up from Tehran to open a community development project in a town outside Meshed. As a reporter, I had to report on this. I got Mr. Warne's speech and sent it back to Tehran, and the speech of the local Point Four director, and sent that back to Tehran. I was having the Persian speeches translated, which took an endless amount of time. The message I got from Bob Payne was simply, "What did the Iranians say?" Because I had first sent him just the American side.

Q: It's really kind of fun when you have a place which is your own and you can do what you think the situation demands in order to accomplish certain kinds of goals.

NALLE: For example, I became the first English instructor at the newly opened University of Meshed. I taught a class of about 20 young people there, which was rewarding, because this was the whole spectrum of society, people who were educationally upwardly mobile, including women, as well as men, which was very exciting for them because they'd never been in a coeducational situation. I had one mullah in my class, also, who was a lovely fellow, not very good in English, but a nice fellow. As is often the case, the girls were the best in the class.

Q: Did the girls wear chadors?

NALLE: Not at all.

Q: The Shah had already started this?

NALLE: It had been that way for some time, and at that time it would have been regarded as against the principles of the higher education institution to have women in chadors. They came in modest dresses, very proper. I used to have conversation teas at my house. I had a very pleasant house with a garden, as most Iranian houses had at that time.

Q: It gives you a chance to get close to the people with whom you are working, doesn't it, this kind of thing?

NALLE: Yes. Of course, it's terribly satisfying to one as a person to be in that sort of situation. Here you are, particularly if you're in USIS instead of the embassy, you're accessible and you're moving about in the community, and you have things like English teaching that you can do, or bringing in exhibits or whatever it is, or get them in line for a Fulbright exchange grant or things like that. You really become a member of the community.

The question comes up, I guess, if you compare it to later jobs as one becomes more senior: which really makes more impact?

When you pass out 7,000 copies of something or other that nobody's going to read? Or when you spend time at conversation teas in your house in Meshed and really get to know people?

Q: I think a lot of people in USIA feel that this is what makes the job so special in the Foreign Service, that if you like people and you're interested in other cultures, this is what--

NALLE: This was true, again, when I served in Moscow, because there, being in cultural work, one could have many more contacts than anybody else in the embassy could, because the Soviets could say to their people watching them, "It's culture and we're cultural, so we can talk to these people." Some of the most satisfying experiences we had in Moscow were as a result of our knowing people there.

In Meshed I did another thing which was rather interesting. I was on Meshed Radio. I had an English-teaching program on the radio, which I wrote and voiced myself, with the help of some other people. I'm sure it was dreadful, pedagogically speaking, but there was nothing else available, and we could do it in English and the local language. So we did that. I often wondered whether in the Soviet Union anybody learned English from Radio Meshed, because Meshed was the American diplomatic installation closest to what we called then the Iron Curtain. It was only 40 air miles from the Soviet border. Surely they could hear Radio Meshed.

Q: These days, to have access to a radio show, a national venture, and put on your own radio show, is really kind of fascinating.

NALLE: Not quite the way it should be, and it wouldn't be anymore.

Q: What was regarded as professional in terms of quality then would probably be very different now. Everything was much more in the early stages of development.

NALLE: Yes. The colonial attitude, a special variation of it in Iran, then permitted that sort of thing. It would not, obviously, today. A foreigner would not have such access to their radios today.

Q: You've said the living conditions, however, except for the fact that there were fewer foreigners, were better in Meshed than in Kabul, the sanitary conditions.

NALLE: Yes, ten years, at least, better, maybe 20, 25. I had a house with a small garden, a few fruit trees, and so forth. I had a bicycle and rode around on my bicycle. There weren't many cars. We had an office car. I hired a small staff, a driver and a cultural assistant.

Q: You were the only American for the Information Service?

NALLE: Yes. It's maybe of interest that at first, the consul was Donald Webster, who was a

former professor, particularly in Turkish studies. He knew about Islam, uniquely, I think, on the staff. A very nice man, an older man, married. He was succeeded by Bruce Laingen, whom you know.

Q: Yes.

NALLE: Also a fellow named Tom Cassilly. I forget who came first, Tom Cassilly or Bruce Laingen. They were both single. We had one CIA person and one or two American administrative assistants.

Q: So you were a very small community, even yourselves.

NALLE: That's right. And the British were not allowed to come back, or did not choose to come back to their consulate. There was a Pakistani consul and not much else. A wonderful climate, beautiful fruits, cherries as big as golf balls, absolutely beautiful. An idyllic spot, in many ways, to live, which most people don't realize, or didn't realize.

Q: It's high. It's pretty high, isn't it?

NALLE: It's not terribly high; it's just a favorable climatic position.

Q: So it was a high plateau. Well, from Meshed, you did what?

NALLE: Then I came back to Washington and went to work in the Voice of America. I, first of all, was in charge of the Iranian service, the Persian service, and then I became branch chief for Greece, Turkey, and Iran, which meant largely being referee between the Greeks and the Turks. I was kind of acting deputy for the Near East Division, because there wasn't anybody else there. That was a fascinating learning experience, also. We did, I think, some really exciting programming for the Iranians. For people interested in that particular subject, Iranian-American relations, that gave me a good perspective many years later when the question came up of should we have a Persian broadcast, the service having been suspended, I guess in the late '70s. We were deciding should we have broadcasting in Persian because of what was then going on in Iran.

But, while I was head of the Persian service in the Voice of America, Bob Payne was still in Tehran, I think, and we used to get these rockets saying the Shah had objected to something the Voice of America said. We had this awkward situation where the Shah didn't expect the Voice of America to tell the truth about Iran, so he would call the ambassador and say, "Look, this is what the Voice of America said in Persian last night to my people." Of course, the embassy would react, saying, "We must tell the Voice of America."

Q: What kind of things were you saying that the Shah would--was this editorialized?

NALLE: No. It was news.

Q: Straight news.

NALLE: Somebody was killed, or persecuted, or this or that happened, or something about Ayatollah Kashani, I guess it was then. Or something that an Iranian expatriate in America said that had enough significance to be broadcast. It was, in my judgment, even more impossible in the later situation in the '70s--it would have been more impossible--to put an honest Voice of America broadcast on the air, because there were so many things that we would have had to say that would upset the Shah, that it just wouldn't have been worth it, because also at the same time, people would not have believed your broadcast if you didn't cover everything that was newsworthy, favorable to the Shah or not. I forget why they took the Persian service off the air. I think maybe it was just budgetary, but certainly a contributing factor was the fact that the Shah didn't like it when VOA broadcast the truth. It was a dilemma created by the "special relationship" with the Shah, who regarded VOA as the voice of the U.S.

Q: That's interesting that they would react that way because of the Shah. I can't imagine that we would do anything of the sort in recent years. I mean, I'm not talking just about the Shah, but anybody else.

NALLE: It's a very difficult job to be an ambassador to a country like Iran was at that time, or like Jordan was when I was there, because the ambassador must have a good relationship with the King. You can't exist as a successful ambassador unless you do. And if you do, there are certain commitments you make in maintaining that relationship, if only the commitment to argue with Washington if Washington's doing something that the King or the Shah doesn't like. If it's Voice of America, then you get into this credibility question and all that. If it's an autocratic ruler, VOA broadcasts aren't the only area where it comes up. There was an ambassador in Jordan who didn't see it as the exclusive responsibility of his job to get along with the King, and he shortly was asked to leave.

Q: I was going to say, I can't imagine he lasted very long.

NALLE: No. And he was well equipped, objectively speaking, as an ambassador. He was very well thought of.

Q: How long were you in Washington at the VOA?

NALLE: A little more than two years. About two years, I think.

Q: This was 1955 to about '57?

NALLE: Yes.

Q: Did you find coming back home very difficult, after living the kind of life you obviously had in both Kabul and Meshed? Were there cultural problems of readjustment?

NALLE: I suppose there were, but I didn't recognize them.

Q: It didn't bother you?

NALLE: I was happy to be back. I'd lost my first wife, and I think I was eager to get back into American life. I don't remember particularly any re-entry problems.

Q: That's good. You were at the VOA for two years.

NALLE: Yes.

Q: And then?

NALLE: Then I got married again to Peggy, my present wife.

Q: You went on your honeymoon to Damascus.

VICTOR H. SKILES
USAID, Greece/Turkey/Iran Division
Washington, DC (1954-1958)

Victor Skiles was born and raised in Idaho. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1940. After graduation, his favorite professor helped him obtain a fellowship with the National Institute of Public Affairs. In 1942, he entered the Navy and was stationed in Berlin. His assignment to the military government operation was that of assistant to the head of the Food Distribution. He has also served in Germany, Israel, Afghanistan and Italy. He was interviewed by John Kean on December 4, 1995.

Q: That was a two-year stint in a somewhat different environment than your Israel experience. We had I guess, a dwindling program in Greece, a vigorous program in Turkey, and a very vigorous program in Iran, of major proportions by world standards, as well as NESAs standards, right?

SKILES: Right. I'm not sure I would characterize the Greek program as dwindling at that stage, although in some respects it certainly was. At least it was not expanding. A large part of mission responsibility was in terms of what had been going on from '47 onwards.

Q: The insurgency was behind us. It was coming around to being a more normal kind of economic assistance, technical assistance program.

SKILES: Yes. Greece was much more on its own feet, in terms of the AID program. We were talking earlier about the 1948-49 period, when I was out there, and at that time the U.S. was providing a bulk of the foreign exchange available to Greece as a country for imports of any kind.

Q: Because it wasn't generating much foreign exchange on its own.

SKILES: And by the mid-50s period, it was doing much better in the international economic arena. Iran, I think you've characterized well.

Q: Okay., Vic, we're going to turn to Greece, Turkey, and Iran to follow where we just left off, and we will perhaps spend a little time talking about the issues and problems in the three countries: Greece, Turkey, and Iran.

SKILES: Right. One of the reasons it was interesting and rewarding to me to move into that area is that it put me back in very close touch with some old associates. Raymond Berry and Bill Rountree had both been special assistants to the ambassador in Greece at the time that I was special assistant to the ECA mission chief, then were running GTI at the Department, although Raymond fairly quickly moved up to the next higher level, as did Rountree subsequently. In the meantime they had not been completely out of my circle of acquaintance. For example, in the early days of Point Four, while I was doing the regional coordination job, Rountree had come to me with a proposal that we do something about the locust threat in Iran, which at that particular moment seemed to be the country's most serious problem. They did indeed have a locust scourge, and as I learned more about it, I discovered that this was an old problem, but usually not so much in Iran as it was a bit further south, on the Arabian Peninsula, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and so on. But what Bill was interested in, was whether the U.S. could in some way involve itself in a locust eradication program, and frankly, my reaction was not too optimistic, because it seemed to me precisely the kind of thing that Point Four did not want to get into at that time, but I agreed to try to pave the way with the Administrator, and set things up so that he, Rountree, could come over and make a personal pitch, based on a very good understanding of what was required, and I must say a knowledge of what the real problem was. So this happened, and somewhat to my surprise the Administrator said, "Sure, go ahead."

So we launched a locust control program in Iran. Fairly expensive; we hired some light planes to go over and serve as crop dusters, the crop being these hordes of locusts which really cleaned the landscape, and obviously this had to be done in a hurry. Now I say, "we" did this. Actually, I didn't have a whole lot to do with it once it got started. At that point operational responsibilities were in the functional divisions, and the agriculture people did most of the work in getting that project, which essentially was an aerial spraying operation, rolling. Eventually, this became something else. The United Nations FAO became interested in organizing a locust control program for the whole of that area, headquartered in Addis Ababa, and we contributed a great deal to the formation of that project and continued to make financial contributions to it for some years.

The Greek supply mission was run by a couple of old Greek friends, one of whom had married the American nutritionist in the U.S. Mission in Athens, and by two first-rate American women who had run the office in the U.S. Mission in Athens that I was initially in charge of, before it (and they) transferred to the Greek trade mission.

GTI had its share of problems, and there were knowledgeable people in State as well as

elsewhere, not only knowledgeable, but people with whom I felt that I could work without a lot of preparatory endeavors. Unfortunately, Iran, the first year or so that I had that job, was consumed, or at least our division was consumed, largely in a defensive position in a battle which had been launched by Congressman Hardy, who was head of one of the subcommittees, and apparently, an arch-enemy of our mission director from earlier times, particularly when Bill Warne, the mission director, had been the regional director, I think it was, of the Bureau of Reclamation, out west. Acrimonious relationships had developed. Hardy had called Warne on the carpet to account for the Iran program, and an awful lot of time was spent that year, I'm tempted to say virtually the full time of the Iran desk officer, in researching records, trying to help find out how these problems got from A to B, how they became issues, and so on. It was not all that pleasant a period, and yet we had a big mission, a big program. Things just had to keep going forward, despite the diversion of a good deal of our manpower to the protective side of things. In Greece and Turkey it was quite different. In a sense, our problems there were more internal. A) in terms of trying to continue to get adequate budgetary levels for some very significant programs, and B) because there are other units of government, other than the mutual security program, that had big interests there, and C) the mutual security program. This was an area where we were involved in military forces as well as economic development. These not only had to be kept in mind, but had to be coordinated with defense and other interested parties. General Reilly, who previously had been Mr. Stassen's Assistant Director for Management, was our mission director in Turkey at that time. Here again, we had a large program and were involved in some activities that were certainly not usual to a Point Four kind of program, but much more common in a Marshall Plan kind of approach. We were heavily involved in reforms that would get the mines into greater production, for example. Heavily involved in transportation, even railroads, to move goods around. A number of things like this internally, as well as a major focus on balance of payments problems, and the need for financing for what we jointly regarded as essential imports. To a large degree the same was true for Greece. A smaller country, more concentrated resources and problems, A) because it was a smaller country, and B) because the government had its fingers into more things in its representation. Both countries had supply missions in the U.S. and both were quite effective.

Q: That is to say, the government was involved in what way?

SKILES: It was still controlling imports and exports, for example, though not nearly to the degree as at the time I had been out there, but it was still not an open market, as far as importers were concerned.

Q: And it would have been our view that it would be a better situation if the free market was allowed to operate.

SKILES: It would be a better situation when the free market was allowed to operate, yes. But I don't think it's fair to say that we were arguing for an opening of the floodgates at that point. Partly because it was largely our money we were talking about, and we were not adverse to making sure it was getting into the channels that we wanted it to be in, or spent for the things we wanted it spent for. And, as I suggested earlier, we had military assistance programs in both of those countries. The approach to the countries is what made things really different for us, and as

I've indicated before, you can't really be concerned, be involved in what is essentially a balance of payments kind of program without having the country as well as the individual segments as your major concern. Therefore, we had to get into country balance of payments problems. The causes, the cures, the wherefores, along with demonstrating a concern for people problems. In Greece the per capita national income was still only about \$300 per year, which was not nearly as low as some of our customers, but still very low.

Q: Low by European standards.

SKILES: Certainly low by European standards, and Greece gradually was becoming a member of the European community. Security concerns are obvious: not only the internal war that they had been through, but the fact that it borders on the Eastern Bloc a good deal of the causes of the war were inspired by the "other side." We had substantial military representation there and worked very closely with the Greeks in this area. At home you were much more involved in interagency considerations. We became concerned, for example, along with various State Department elements, the Treasury Department, Agriculture, and so on, in getting up and doing country evaluations, balance of payments assessments. In a sense macroeconomic approaches which TCA certainly had not been doing, which we had tried to some extent in Israel, but it hadn't become an art in TCA. I suppose those were the main differences.

The organization was not so terribly different, although at the time we had a layer between the desks or country branches and the Assistant Administrator of the Agency, who was in charge of the region. That had not been the case earlier, and it became the case when we got things such as GTI, the Office of Near East Affairs, South Asia Affairs and Africa, on a combination basis. But at that office level, in a sense, I became the point between the country desk and the regional administrator, and of course we had an additional layer "upstairs" in the form of the Deputy Director for Operations - Dr. Fitzgerald. Generally speaking, he had to resolve disputes between the staff offices - let's say the Office of Food and Agriculture - and the Regional Office. It's impossible to define when "the buck stopped here" - at the office level - and when it didn't. Some things we knew for sure. For example, I mentioned earlier that the basic commitment of funds in terms of messages to the field, not only had to go to the assistant administrator, they had to be cleared at the administrator's level. But there were a number of things that we would have to determine or just work out on the basis of trial and error, what the regional office had to be involved in, and what could be finally dispatched at the office level. And this changed with people.

I remember when Jack Bell came in to be the Regional Director. We had lunch shortly after he arrived, and he was trying to explain his method of operation, which was based substantially on the fact that he was a very inquisitive guy and liked to be in on everything. As he put it at one stage, "I don't want to be just a layer between you and Dr. Fitzgerald." To which my response was that I fully appreciated that and that I didn't want to be a layer between him and Carter Ide, either, Carter Ide being the Iran desk officer. So it was the sort of thing that you worked out and yet you never worked out. When I got a call from Dr. Fitz, which was not infrequently, then believe me I felt that I had to respond, and did. I got more of a flavor of the problem, before Jack arrived, I suppose, because for many extended periods I was acting deputy regional administrator.

When the regional administrator or his deputy were out, then I was called into the front office to man that chair until both of them were back on the job again. And I found it very difficult to articulate a dividing line. I found out another thing, which I had always suspected, i.e. that was really a niche too high to be in the organization, if you were interested in and wanted to be involved in the real formation and administration of the program. You had to pay much more attention to the up and out framework -- the upstairs and the outside, and were far less involved in the individual country activities. Domestic politics also were of much greater concern.

Q: This was in the period when Turkey and Iran were members of the Baghdad Pact, which meant that military considerations were of major concern, and the strength of the economy was important to the defensive posture of those two countries, as was the military capacity that they had. So we were right in the middle of economic and social issues, and political-military issues.

SKILES: Correct. I'm the wrong one to talk about the Baghdad Pact, partly because personally I'd never had any real enthusiasm for it, but in a sense it wasn't my business to be either for it or against it. It was outside the framework of our responsibility, to make decisions on regional security pacts.

Q: Sure, but nevertheless, we had things going on in those countries.

SKILES: We had to take as a given that this either exists or is going to exist -- the U.S. is going to try to make it exist, so we work within the framework that is required by that relationship. Having said that, I don't think in my own mind, that Iraq ever became, or ever could have become a very significant part of that organization.

Q: And of course, they fell out in 1958, yet the Pact continued as the bulwark against the southern flank of the Soviet Union, with just Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. So we were, in any case, continuing to be involved in issues that spilled in both directions. If we were dealing with balance of payments, didn't you find that we were as much concerned with undergirding the military with undergirding the economy?

SKILES: Yes, of course. Increased military activities certainly have an immediate effect on competition for resources which otherwise might be available to go into development, and which then would not require as much augmentation as when you're going to do both things.

Q: Did you have any occasion to be much concerned, for example, with Turkey's capacity to become grain self-sufficient?

SKILES: Concerned and interested, yes - but I can't say I had much to do with it, especially the longer term aspects with which the Mission was seized. This was partly a matter of timing, and the desk officer was an enthusiastic participant. Arrangements already had been made for an outside consultant whose findings, incidentally, were to the effect that Turkey could once again become a major producer and exporter given the right policy and investments. This brings me back to the shorter term which was just the opposite, that is, that Turkey was very deficient in grains and a major importer. In addition to the assistance program, Turkey had been the first

country signed up for the PL 480 program in December 1954 and this program was just getting underway in 1955. So a lot of money was going into grain imports and I would have been a supporter of any good schemes to help redress the balance. A lot of influence (and help) could have been in the employment of counterpart funds from the aid program and the local currency for which the grain was sold, but I frankly don't remember whether this was done effectively or not. It almost requires effective participation in a development budget. From a policy viewpoint steps would have been required to try to make sure that the imports did not act as a disincentive to local farmers' production, and this gets into the price area as well as physical support - technical assistance, availability of fertilizer, seeds, etc.

Q: Interestingly, in Turkey, the mission formally interacted with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which, from the point of view of the government as a whole, wasn't in a very good position to deal with domestic issues. How did you see that from Washington?

SKILES: I'm afraid I don't have much of a recollection of that, John. I just don't know. It may have been somewhat a reflection of the character of the man himself. General Reilly was, in a sense, a representation man, who liked to deal at the highest levels, and let somebody else take care of the rest of the problems.

It is true that the head of the supply mission in Washington reported to Essenbel, who was in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and he came to Washington fairly frequently; but the finance/economic people came as a small inter-ministerial team. I believe Mostar was from Foreign Affairs, but the others were not. Also I seem to recall spending quite a bit of time with the IMF on a devaluation program and that certainly would have required the participation of Finance and probably Economy.

Q: Without getting into your story, but just mention that issues of foreign exchange and inflationary pressures within the economy were constantly on our minds in the mission, but because we were dealing officially as the prime point of contact with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and the other ministries, such as Economy or Finance, didn't feel that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very much involved in this, we then, inevitably, but informally, got involved in dealing with them.

SKILES: Sounds rather awkward - but essential to have those contacts

KATHRYN CLARK-BOURNE
Vice Consul
Tehran (1956-1958)

Kathryn Clark-Bourne was born in 1924 in Fort Collins, Colorado. She received a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Washington. She later received a master's degree in mass communications from the University of Minnesota. Ms. Clark-Bourne's career included positions in Iran, The

Netherlands, Nigeria, and Cameroon. This interview was conducted on August 2, 1995 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: *You were in Tehran from when to when?*

CLARK-BOURNE: '56 to '58. It was during the time of the Shah, during the time of Soroya. He was still married to Soroya.

Q: *This was Mrs. Pahlavi.*

CLARK-BOURNE: By the way, I had to fight to get into that job, because the Foreign Service did not think women should go to Islamic countries. I must have been difficult enough that they decided I could go. I was at the bottom of the totem pole in the Political Section. I was the only woman officer, not only in our embassy, but in the entire Diplomatic Corps. The only one.

Q: *Talk a little bit about, as you saw it at that time, in 1956, about women officers in the Foreign Service. How did they treat you? I mean, you've already alluded to part of this, but maybe you got even more coming in and the whole thing.*

CLARK-BOURNE: Well, not when I was coming in. In the Civil Service, of course, there was no problem. This was the first inkling I had that there was discrimination against women, and I fought it. As we go along, I'll tell you the experiences. I have run into a lot of them. But let's keep it in chronological sequence.

Q: *Yes, absolutely. To start this off, could you tell me, who was the Ambassador and how did he operate?*

CLARK-BOURNE: The Ambassador was Selden Chapin. Selden had his ward there, Hope Cooke, who became the Maharani of Sikkim. Hope was in high school, just finishing up. As the only woman, I sort of ended up a lot of the time as Hope's nanny, if you will. Being the only woman had its good points, too. The Iranian men are very gallant. They're sort of the Frenchmen of the Middle East. In no time at all, I got to know a lot of them. The Ambassador was very shrewd: he saw that I had entree that the men officers did not have. I would go to the US and European office in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and there would be two or three Ambassadors sitting in the waiting room. I would not even have an appointment but when the head of the office would open the door and somebody would walk out, he'd say, "Kay, come on in." I'd go in and deliver my message. I had absolute entree. Two of the other junior officers, the one in the Egyptian Embassy, the one in the Indian Embassy and I formed a Junior Officer's Club. They were all men, except me. We had meetings once a week and we also met with various friends we'd made in the Foreign Ministry and the other ministries. That helped broaden my contacts also.

Being a woman there in other situations, of course, I did not have the entree that men had. Such as, for instance, visiting a mosque. One of my good friends was the wife of a member of the Parliament and we soon solved this. She'd been educated in Russia and Europe. I borrowed a

chador and slippers from my housekeeper and I'd go with this lady and her friend. We'd go into the mosque or wherever I wanted to go. They always said, "Keep your mouth shut and don't talk with anybody" because they'll find out you're a foreigner. But these gals would be wearing regular saddle shoes and bobbie socks, so everybody thought they were the foreigners. The whole thing was quite amusing.

Q: What was the political situation at the time? What were you and the Political Section interested in?

CLARK-BOURNE: For me, it was a tale of a thousand nights. It was fantastic. We were very friendly with Iran. We had a huge Armish-MAAG set up there. I at one time had a lady visitor who was an American foreign correspondent, and the two of us were allowed to go with a Armish-MAAG battalion on a two-week trip out to the northern part of the country, where we camped out. They gave us our own tent and let us go off and do our own thing. That was interesting.

The first week I was there, it was just unbelievable. There were many social events. That week, Adenauer and a son or daughter came to visit the Shah.

Q: He was the Chancellor of...?

CLARK-BOURNE: West Germany. They invited the Diplomatic Corps to all receptions and they often would be followed by dinners (at 10 o'clock at night) for the Ambassadors and the big shots. And it was practically every night. I had not received all of my air freight and did not have a long dress. In those days, you wore long dresses. So, from the Ambassador's wife's secretary, I borrowed a dress. She was a little bigger than I was and, as it was strapless, I had to pin it on. The first or second night I was there, we drove to the downtown palace which was walled in. There was a big, circular drive in front of it. We entered the gate and the entire drive was covered with Persian carpets, so you drove over the Persian carpets up to the front door. Then, when you entered, there was a circular staircase that went up to the second floor, to where the peacock throne room was. The reception was held in the peacock throne room, which was about a block long, covered with a carpet that had been specially woven for that room. All of the walls were covered with pieces of mirror and there were huge, gorgeous crystal chandeliers from Europe. At the far end of the room was the peacock throne, covered with gems, and two smaller thrones, one on either side. This was where we were served drinks.

While this was going on, the Chief of Protocol came up to me and said, "I understand you've just arrived. You should be presented to their Royal Highnesses." So, I put out my cigarette, rolled down my gloves, and trotted down the hall after him. He took me into a room first where Soroya was sitting, surrounded by young courtiers. I was introduced and I knew I had to curtsy, so I grabbed my dress at the top and curtsied. She looked at me disdainfully and turned to one of the young men beside her. She never said a word. So, then I was taken down to another room where the Shah was, who was perfectly charming. We must have chatted for 20 or 30 minutes about all kinds of things. His English was excellent. He was a very, very nice person. We just talked about things generally--about where I was from, etc.

It was either parties down there or parties up at his summer place in the foothills in Shimron, where I had my house, or at all of the various embassies. It was something continuously--all the time, morning, noon, and night.

Q: As a political officer, what were your responsibilities?

CLARK-BOURNE: Mostly, at first, when I was assigned there, I was supposed to be the Biographic Officer. I was supposed to collect all the information on 100 big families, first families, and write reports. But as soon as the Ambassador discovered that I had entree to everybody, then my job mostly was, when he wanted to give them information or wanted to get information, to go back and forth between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and then writing the reports.

Q: The Mossadegh period was over by that time?

CLARK-BOURNE: Oh, yes, that was in '52.

Q: So, we're really talking about the aftermath of this. What was the impression that you were getting from the other officers in the political section and what you were observing about the stability of the Shah?

CLARK-BOURNE: At that time, he seemed to be fairly stable. His twin sister, Ashraf, was thought by everyone to be quite venal. According to the rumors, she took 10 percent from any foreign business person who wanted to do business. She got 10 percent of the profits.

He, however, turned over a lot of the Pahlavi lands to villagers. In other words, at that time, he was thought to be quite good. The women, a lot of them, seemed to have more freedom. They were driving, some of them. Not all of them were wearing the chadors all the time. We in the Diplomatic Corps were often invited to affairs that the Shah had out in the desert, such as horse racing. He had a large stable of Arabs and he allowed us to ride them all, to keep them exercised. So, very often, I went riding out in the desert on one of the Shah's Arabs.

A friend of mine, as I mentioned before, was a member of Parliament, and his family owned a village south of Tehran and we often went down to the village. Every time they'd go, they'd take piles of gifts. When we arrived at the village, the elder would be sitting in the center of the square with all of his people behind him, and the member of Parliament would be there with the elder and would be passing, as people came by, out the gifts. We were allowed to see all of this. It was quite benevolent is what I'm trying to say. I did not feel that there was any rancor against the Shah or the Pahlavis at that time.

Q: Did the political section have any connection with--I've never served in Iran, but I've heard about it--what was sort of the Bazaar class, the merchants?

CLARK-BOURNE: I think some of the economic section people did. I don't know whether I

should say this one or not. We had a large CIA Section.

Q: At that time, particularly after Kermit Roosevelt and all that, Iran seemed to be a place where the CIA had a great deal of influence.

CLARK-BOURNE: We had a big section. There was a Colonel in charge. I don't remember his name. It was an East European name. They had contacts with all of the tribes such as Bakhtiari and the Qashqa'is. The Colonel would ask me, as the only woman officer in the Embassy, often to go with him to meetings with the Bakhtiari in their tents, where sometimes they would sit around smoking opium pipes. I've never used drugs in my life, but as part of my job, I had to participate in this. I'll never forget that. After we left there, I was walking down the street and everything was sort of hazy!

Q: I'm just trying to catch the atmosphere. Were the Mullahs anybody that we targeted as far as trying to get information?

CLARK-BOURNE: Not that I know of. As far as the political section was concerned, I don't think so. What CIA was doing, I don't know, other than contacting the tribes. They may well have been targeting Mullahs.

Q: During this time, '56 to '58, it was what one would call a rather tranquil time?

CLARK-BOURNE: It was quite tranquil, yes. We could get around quite easily. The Shah had a ski area in Ab Ali, which he let us use. When he'd come out to ski, everybody was forced off the slopes. He was a fantastic skier. He'd only stay about 30 minutes or so. He had a lodge out there that he stayed in. Then we'd get back on the slopes.

We were allowed to drive all over the country. I remember driving south to Isfahan and Shiraz, although there was hardly any road across the desert. There were military checkpoints and the Ambassador told us to always stop and check in at every military checkpoint. At the time I was there, there were some AID people who were lost or stranded in the mountains. I remember that, but I don't remember much about it. I do remember once driving south with a friend in the embassy and his wife and little boy. We got down to Shiraz and there was a tomb out away from the city we wanted to go see. I was driving--it was my car. When we arrived at the tomb, the wife said that she would sit in the car with the little boy and Dick, my friend, and I went over to see it. But in no time at all, she was there with the little boy and it turned out that she had locked the car doors and I'd left the keys in the car. Here we were, out in the middle of the desert. But we had passed a Qashqa'i encampment, so my friend Dick hiked over there to see if he could get an implement of some kind so we could jimmy a window open and get into the car. Well, he did and all the Qashqa'is followed him back. We got into the car and when I got back to the Embassy, I told the Ambassador about our experience. He said, "Kay, do you know what you just did?" I said, "No." He said, "You just taught a whole tribe of Qashqa'is how to come into Tehran and rob all the cars!" But they were very friendly. It was a peaceful time.

Q: What was the feeling there at that time towards the Soviet Union?

CLARK-BOURNE: By the Iranians?

Q: *And by the American Embassy.*

CLARK-BOURNE: By the American Embassy, there was obviously a certain tension. The Russian Embassy had a huge, high wall around it. I can remember, at that time, a son of one of our officers, a high school kid, climbed over that wall. The Ambassador sent the entire family out within 24 hours, as fast as he could. So, you can see that there was some tension.

I probably was the only person in the Embassy who ever got inside that compound because of our Junior Diplomats Club. We took turns hosting and they did once, so I got inside then. I can't tell you anything about the Irani-Soviet relationship.

Q: *In '56 to '58, did the Israeli-Palestinian business impact at all? There was the Suez Crisis during this time. Did it have any reflection in Iran at that time?*

CLARK-BOURNE: Within the country itself, I don't remember. As far as we were concerned, in traveling in and out and getting around, it was a problem. I had taken a trip at one time, I think over to Bahrain, and bought a chest. I brought it into the port in Iran, in the Gulf, and decided to leave it there until I left, to have it shipped out when I left. I remember having horrible problems with that. I remember that, by plane, sometimes we'd have to go round about to go home. But, as far as the Iranians themselves were concerned, among my immediate friends, I never heard too much about it.

Q: *You left there in 1958, right?*

MURAT WILLIAMS
Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs
Washington, DC (1956-1959)

Ambassador Williams was born and raised in Virginia and was educated at the University of Virginia and Oxford University. After serving in the US Navy in World War II, he joined the State Department, serving in Washington, D.C., where he worked with the Refugee Relief Program, and abroad. His foreign posts include San Salvador, Bucharest, Salonika, Bern and Tel Aviv. Mr. Williams served as U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1961 to 1964. Ambassador Williams was interviewed by Melvin Spector in 1990. He died in 1994.

Q: *After the Secretariat, where did you go?*

WILLIAMS: I went to the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs. I was sent there mainly because I had had considerable dealing with the problems of Cyprus when I was Consul General

in Salonika. I knew pretty well what problems Greece faced. Some people questioned whether our relations with these three countries should have been brought together. It didn't seem that the problems of Greece had anything to do with the problems of Iran, although ancient Greece and ancient Persia had a great deal to do with each other. Somehow those three ex-empires, Greece, Turkey and Iran were engaged in affairs which were of particular interest to us and were different than the affairs of the Arab world. They were neighbors of the Arabs but, themselves, were not Arab. I think Iran had a fair number of Arabs; the Turks had a small number of Arabs, but their problems were really different.

At the time that I was in that Office...

Q: Which is 1956 until 1959?

WILLIAMS: Yes. At the time that I was in that Office more than half of our time, I believe, was devoted to the question of Cyprus because Cyprus was keeping the Greeks and Turks at odds with each other and interfering with their participation in NATO. I, with my colleagues Ben Wood, Bruce Laingen, who were working mostly on Greek matters, developed a proposal for the independence of Cyprus. We pushed it quite a lot. We had colleagues in the European Bureau who thought that might be the best idea. The Greeks, themselves, wanted all of Cyprus; the Turks wanted Cyprus too. They, the Turks, had a large minority of Turks residing in Cyprus. But we were able to take initiatives which later developed, with the help of some of our friends in the European Bureau, into the final solution. I remember very well the Assistant Secretary for the Near East at that time, Bill Rountree, telling us that we should go ahead and work on it, but he didn't believe the question of Cyprus would be solved until a lot of blood had been shed. In the long run we know that there was a good deal of violence and even in recent years there has been trouble in Cyprus. From the standpoint of NATO it was better to put this at least to the side so that it wouldn't interfere with what Greece and Turkey did in their NATO roles.

Turkey wasn't an enormous problem in those days. Turkey was developing and getting along pretty well, as I remember.

But Iran also took a lot of our time and attention. In those days we were, it seemed to me, almost wholeheartedly in support of the Shah. The Shah had a very close relationship to Mr. Henderson when Mr. Henderson was Under Secretary of State. The Shah was very young when he ascended the Peacock Throne and Mr. Henderson had a strong personal influence over him.

Q: Had Mr. Henderson been ambassador to Iran at the time the Shah ascended the throne?

WILLIAMS: I am not sure exactly then, but when the Shah was a very young man.

The Shah cooperated with us in many, many different ways. One of the most significant as we look back was his effort to provide us with all the intelligence that he felt we needed. I am afraid that it was a mistake for us to base our policy so much on the intelligence that the Shah provided. His intelligence service, SAVAK, was a very serious organization. I am not sure we would have condoned all the measures it took to extract information from people. I believe in the long run it

was a mistake for us to depend as much as we did on the Shah. We probably underestimated both the importance of nationalistic feelings and the depth of the hostility to the Shah that existed in Iran. We should have, looking back of course, emphasized more our own systems of collecting intelligence; developed our own specialists and not depended on the Shah.

I wasn't very deeply concerned in Iranian affairs during the whole period of time that I was in GTI (Greece, Turkey and Iran). But I did feel that we made a mistake in depending so much on that one man, the Shah. I think that had we not interfered, and if Iranian nationalism had developed from Mossadegh on we would be in a better position than we were when Iran fell into the hands of Khomeini and his people. It may be a lesson to us of the importance of not relying on the intelligence of an interested party even if he is the monarch of a foreign country. If we relied more upon depth of historic knowledge and intimate knowledge of the people of a country, that is much more important than taking as we seem to do most of our intelligence about a country from the intelligence service of that country. I wish I knew more about Iran, but I have not been able to follow it recently. I left that office in 1959.

Q: May I ask you if you can recall in that particular office any broad policies you were trying to follow or implement?

WILLIAMS: Yes, we were trying to strengthen Iran financially, economically and militarily. We extended a good deal of financial and military aid to Iran.

Q: This was true of Greece and Turkey as well, wasn't it?

WILLIAMS: Yes. They were our supports in that part of the world and we felt that Iran was a bastion of support for us with its long border with the Soviet Union and with its influence in the Persian Gulf states.

Q: This was part of our containment policy of the Soviet Union.

WILLIAMS: Yes.

Q: At that time was there in place a regional security organization? Was SEATO in existence?

WILLIAMS: It was the Baghdad Pact CENTO that was the regional security alliance.

Q: Do you recall what CENTO stood for?

WILLIAMS: Central Treaty Organization, I believe. Sometimes I used to think it was largely the product of Herman Eilts' typewriter. Eilts was a very important figure in Middle Eastern policy, especially in building up the defenses of our friends there. I remember once going to see Mr. Dulles to get his approval of a \$25 million dollar aid package for Iran and made as much of a case as I could for it. I believe the answer came back from Mr. Dulles that he was very much in favor of it, but some of his senior colleagues said that they wanted to give even more to it. \$25 million dollars doesn't seem like very much these days, but it was a lot at that time and meant a

lot to the Shah.

Q: Speaking in today's, 1991, dollars we are talking about at least \$250 million at least. In your work of strengthening these three countries, would you say a word about other agencies that were involved, such as the Foreign Assistance Agency?

WILLIAMS: The Foreign Assistance Agency, was it AID then or still FICA?

Q: Well, in those days, I think it could have been either the Foreign Operations Administration or later, the International Cooperation Administration, ICA.

WILLIAMS: That agency had extremely able people concerned with it. I remember quite well, I believe it was Robert Herder, who was one of our representatives out there. I can't remember where Len Saccio was?

Q: Len Saccio was with the aid agency in the late 50s.

WILLIAMS: We had very capable and able people working in the aid agency. It was natural because it was such an important part of our policy.

Q: I think within the State Department you also had a coordinating mechanism, Douglas Dillon, who coordinated aid as well – the military with the economic.

WILLIAMS: I think it was a good period as far as aid programs were concerned. The pity is that our total intelligence wasn't as good as it should have been. Also our senior officers at the Secretary level didn't pay as much attention to, or weren't supplied with the necessary intelligence, and made decisions that could have been better. I'm sorry I can't offer you a good example of that right now.

Q: But this is your general opinion and your observation.

WILLIAMS: It is. There were too many of us, I suppose, who followed a policy without ourselves understanding it, but simply because we understood that that was what the Secretary wanted us to do; and that was what the President wanted us to do. We did things that looked as if they would satisfy our people from above and maybe we didn't dissent enough. What I mean to say is that we could have, if we had known more ourselves, we could have objected. An important matter put to an officer such as myself, who knew only a little about it would soon find himself involved with decisions and actions that might be done better by someone who had spent more time on the problem and had a deeper understanding. Maybe this is a reason for not moving people as often as I had been moved – and many of us were moved. Mr. Fulbright often said that if they left us in the same place a little longer we would produce better ideas and have more information.

Q: That has been a problem over the years with the Department where you had before Wristonization desk officers and office directors who were civil servants who stayed in those jobs

and became experts on the area. But they also became rigid in their views of the area.

WILLIAMS: Yes, that is true.

Q: You have this problem.

WILLIAMS: The generalist and the specialist.

Q: You say that perhaps you took too literally the orders from above and perhaps there wasn't enough dissent from the bottom. If you had dissented, how do you think that would have been received by the layers above you?

WILLIAMS: In the case of Iran at that time, the layers above, namely Mr. Henderson more than anybody else, would not have been happy because his knowledge was considered to be the best we had. One had such respect for him, for his knowledge of diplomacy and his knowledge of the area. It would have been very difficult to dissent. I can't remember anybody dissenting, although some of the people in the intelligence agencies might have known enough to dissent, but they didn't.

Q: Was CENTO a very strong organization?

WILLIAMS: It is ironic today that CENTO was also called the Baghdad Pact. An American security organization which developed first in Baghdad.

Q: Speaking as we are in January 1991.

WILLIAMS: At that time we had the illusion, I suppose, that those countries were strong supporters of ours. It was a good idea. Mr. Dulles had that idea of surrounding the Soviet Union by pacts – we called it pactomania I believe at one point.

Q: I had never heard that. Very good.

WILLIAMS: There was NATO, and SEATO and with CENTO in between we had a legal structure for containment. But that proved false – or rather an illusory sense of security came from it.

Q: Again the policy was mostly aimed at containment of the Soviet Union and communism in general.

WILLIAMS: I think someone ought to do a paper on the Baghdad Pact, CENTO, and how it looks from the distance of January 1991.

Q: You know right now they are talking about some kind of a Middle Eastern Pact when this war is over with Iraq.

WILLIAMS: This is a Middle Eastern conference which will be very difficult.

GEORGE M. BENNSKY, JR.
Near Eastern Affairs, Economic Division
Washington, DC (1956-1960)

George M. Bensusky, Jr. was born in Hickory, North Carolina in 1923 and raised in Georgia and the Washington, DC area. He served in the military during World War II. Mr. Bensusky received a bachelor's degree in foreign affairs from George Washington University and a master's degree in international studies from the University of Michigan. His career included positions in India, Lebanon, and Peru. He was interviewed on January 19, 1993 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What were your concerns?

BENNSKY: My concerns were the concerns of embassies and AID missions about the financial situations in their Middle East countries. We traveled all the time. There were three of us there for my first two years and then it came down to two of us and then finally I was the only one left, I closed the office in February 1956.

We went where we were needed. Usually we received a telegram from the economic section of an embassy or from an AID mission to come in and help them because they were working on a certain problem and wanted a Treasury Rep to do the balance of payments, the foreign exchange, the trade and/or the budgetary aspects of the work. I spent a lot of time in virtually all the Middle East countries. I was out of town perhaps 75 per cent of the time.

There was a period when I spent weeks and months at a time in Iran. That was after the Shah came back.

Q: This was after Mossadegh...?

BENNSKY: After Mossadegh was out the Shah came back.

Treasury people were up there all the time because Henderson wanted somebody in Treasury up there all the time...

Q: This is Loy Henderson, who was our Ambassador.

BENNSKY: ...Because of the fact that we were providing a lot of financial aid to Iran to support the Shah. The US was trying to help Iran overcome the tremendous financial and economic mess from the Mossadegh period. There were lots of financial problems to be assessed and responded to. I used to go up there and stay for two or three months. It wasn't a pleasant place to stay back in those days, either.

Q: What was your impression of Loy Henderson?

BENNSKY: He was a very professional diplomat, no doubt about that. He and Bill Rountree, his deputy, managed a very strong Embassy and one that I think did a commendable job.

Q: It must have been a difficult period because we were apparently supplanting the British as far as being the prime movers and shakers as an outside influence in Iran. Did you have that feeling there?

BENNSKY: Yes. But the British had sort of moved out anyway. I mean, they had decided they couldn't handle this Greek-Turkish-Iranian thing back in Truman's days. But they still had a big embassy there, so did the Russians. These were massive compounds. They looked like they had been there forever. You went into the British compound and felt you were back in England again. The Russian compound, which I never got into, had a big wall around it and looked like you would expect it to from the outside. Yes, there was a lot of concerns about Iran. We weren't that far away from the time when they were down into the Kurdish part...

Q: The Russians...

BENNSKY: Yes, the Russians. I'm talking about 1953-54.

Q: I think it was 1946 or 1947 when we finally got the Soviets to pull out of northern Iran.

BENNSKY: We were very serious about that. I had gotten involved with Iran back when I first went to work at Treasury. In 1951 Iran was having a knockdown drag out with Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. I spent an interminable amount of time at the State Department going to meetings on that problem alone, trying to figure out what we could do to influence the situation, which was very little. I always felt back in those days, and I still feel today, and I gather from some of the things I have seen and read, that the British just never figured out...they kept missing the trains and they could stay at that station all they wanted, but the train was never going to come back to that station. By the time they were willing to make any kind of concession, it was too late. But those were rather exciting days even in Washington.

Q: When you were in Iran did you deal with Iranian authorities?

BENNSKY: Oh yes, especially with Iranian officials from the central bank, from the oil company and from the other finance and economics ministries.

Q: What were the issues you were concerned with?

BENNSKY: The financial and economic problems and requirements of Iran as they related to the US assistance program - its planning and its utilization.

Q: What was your impression of how aid was being used? When you think of Iran, or any place

in the Middle East, you think of corruption going into the coffers of the wealthy as opposed to getting out to the "people" and all of that. What was your impression of how it was being utilized?

BENNSKY: I don't really recall too much on that. That was always an issue with aid any place. I don't recall that it was an issue I dealt with much.

We would be sitting in a room, a number of us from the Embassy, AID Mission and from Washington, trying to put together a telegram back to Washington indicating how much was needed to meet the situation as we saw it over the next year. This determination of amounts and types of assistance was the consuming thing as I recall. Or there would be some issue with regards to Iranian exchange rate or monetary policy that the US was concerned about and the Embassy and/or AID Mission wanted us to spend some time looking at and reporting on. Those things I remember.

It was a combination of functions, reporting, analysis and assessment and policy advice on the Iranian financial situation and its needs in terms of financial and economic aid. Sometimes an expert would come out from the US to help us decide, for example, how to provide financing in the hinterlands for people who wanted to open up businesses or farm better. For example, I participated in a trip around the country with the expert assessing the needs and prospects for providing financial assistance to small businesses and to farmers.

Q: Was anybody sitting there and taking a look and saying, "If we do this it will have this affect on the Iranian culture," or anything like that?

BENNSKY: I doubt if there was too much concern about cultural effects. Back in those days we were focused on finding ways to solve problems of an economic or political or foreign policy nature or a combination thereof. After all by its very nature economic development meant modernization and change in outlook, conditions and way of life.

Q: Part of this interview is to catch the spirit of the times, and this is true in many things.

BENNSKY: It was an intense period. That country had been under great strain because of the Mossadegh period and the strong nationalism was still there. The Shah was back, of course. We didn't gain too much in terms of most of the ordinary citizens' love of us because they felt they knew who got the Shah back in there. It is just that Iran was so key to our whole Soviet containment policy. It was this policy that drove us all the time. And it drove us to the end, really. It drove us all the way to being so careful with the Shah that we let him do his own self in.

Jumping ahead, I sat in meetings with Harriman, and Averell felt he was the only one that really knew what the Shah was and why the Shah was so important. This was when a number of us were very concerned because the Shah kept seeking to drive the price up of oil and to change income sharing relationships with the oil companies. This was during another iteration of my career when I was in the Foreign Service and working in the Middle Eastern side of State.

Q: This was in the early sixties.

BENNSKY: Right. You couldn't get anywhere questioning our Iranian policy because we were fixed on a strong line that we needed Iran and the Shah was our person. The idea was that we should maintain a very strong Pact--the CENTO Pact. The trouble with the CENTO Pact was that we lost Iraq very early and it was never popular with the area's people and politicians. The CENTO Pact idea was that we were going to sit there underneath the Soviets soft underbelly and keep it from doing anything. I am not too sure that was necessarily bad, we just couldn't control the elements and events, which is not surprising.

Q: What was our feeling about Egypt at that time? We had already moved out of Egypt. You left just prior to the Suez crisis or were you there then?

BENNSKY: I was in Washington and working at State in Near Eastern Affairs. But let me talk a little more about the Middle East. In the Middle East there were other countries besides Iran. Jordan was a big issue.

ROBERT BAUER
Cultural Officer, USIS
Tehran (1957-1959)

Mr. Bauer was born in Austria. During the Nazi period he was a devout anti-Nazi, and worked with the French in providing anti-German broadcasts to the world. He came to the United States in 1939, working initially in Cincinnati broadcasting to Europe, and subsequently with the USIA and Voice of America. During his career with USIA Mr. Bauer served in Vienna, Teheran, and Paris, and in Cairo and New Delhi he served as Cultural Affairs Officer. In Washington, he was the first Director of USIA's Foreign Press Center. Mr. Bauer was interviewed by Cliff Groce in 1989.

Q: Let's talk about Teheran. Tell me about your work, what you did.

BAUER: I was in charge of the binational centers there. Burnett Anderson was my PAO, and Martin Ackerman the CAO. My achievement was that I established the Iran-America Student Center. We set it up because we knew this was where the main thrust of anti-Shah feeling was, among the university students. It went very well. They came, and we had interesting programs. Of course we had a big English-teaching program, and a library. The main thing, of course, was that we built a new Iran-American building. It was a joint enterprise. The Shah, the Persians, gave us the land, and we had PL 480 money with which we built it. I was just there two years, and in those two years the major achievement was the beginning of the new building, plus the Student Center, which was considered to be a very good thing for our purposes. I got a nice special commendation for that.

HAROLD G. JOSIF
Consul
Tabriz (1957-1959)

Born in Burma in 1920 to American Baptist missionaries, Harold G. Josif graduated from the University of Chicago in 1941. Josif served in the Army Air Corps during World War II, received a M.A. from Tufts in International Relations and entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His overseas posts included Pakistan, Portugal, India, Iran, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka, Somalia, Libya). Josif also served as an instructor at the Air War College. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

JOSIF: In 1957, I asked the Iran desk officer if possibly there was some consulate in Iran where I could serve and get some experience as officer in charge. I felt that I needed that type of experience. He got me the most important consulate in Iran, I would say: Tabriz. I was asked to arrive in May. This meant taking our daughter out of school a little early. As it happens, when we left the post two years later, we were asked to stay on through an inspection. So, we didn't get out until August. It was a direct transfer to another post, but meanwhile, we had home leave in Washington. So, we put our daughter back in the school where she had been. We felt this was a great idea. She came back in tears the first day. Nobody recognized her. You know how kids are. Two years is an eternity. They had already made new friends and they didn't recognize her. She was really devastated. On top of that, she became deeply worried about how she was missing school at our new post.

Q: I always found in our moves, the hardest ones have been when we've come back to Washington. The kids don't really adjust very well.

JOSIF: I don't know if a study has been made of this, but there is some feeling in the Foreign Service that our kids don't turn out as well as kids generally. I don't know if there are any statistics that would support that. But there have been many cases of kids who have had a lot of problems adjusting.

Q: Let's talk about Tabriz. You were in Tabriz from 1957 to 1959. Talk about Tabriz.

JOSIF: I was the consul and principal officer there under Ambassador Selden Chapin first and then Tom Wailes. Like the other consuls (There were consuls in Meshed, Khorramshahr, and Isfahan, too.), we worked under the chief of the Political Section in Tehran, John Bowling, who was very good.

Tabriz was a listening post during this period. It was an important post. Azerbaijan was the most populous region of Iran because of its agricultural production. It had the largest minority problems. The whole population was a minority - mostly Turkish or Kurdish. Then there was the nearness to the Soviet Union. That was a feature shared with Meshed. It was only about 50 miles

from the Soviet border, which made it of special interest in some respects. Then there was this history of opposition and separatism. Tabriz has a record in this century of being the leader, or one of the first leaders, of opposition to whatever government is in Tehran. So, it was a place to keep in touch with. There was also the role of protecting local Americans. There were some missionaries in the compound right next to ours. There were some travelers. It's surprising how many people try to go overland from Europe to India, let's say. Some of them are Americans. I did a lot of traveling there. I felt it important to tour my consular district, including the Kurdish areas, some of the Kurdish leaders, for instance. In Tabriz itself, which was a Turkish or Azeri area, it was important to know local leaders including the governor general, the chief of the military, and the religious leaders, Muslim and some Christians.

We had some interesting visits while I was there. One was from Justice William O. Douglas. On one of his many travels, he came through overland by car from Iraq. I went down to the border and met him at the pass. I stayed with him the whole time. He had his own contacts already with some of the Kurdish chiefs. He was a man with a common touch. He would have made an excellent politician. His wife at that time was a lady named Mercedes. She was his auto mechanic among other things. As soon as they stopped at our house, where they were to stay, she got out and checked under the car. But later, he traded her in for another model.

Q: Much younger.

JOSIF: Yes. I went with him right up to the Turkish border when he went through. He was given the royal treatment there. The Turks turned out the border patrol for him to review. Mount Ararat glistened beyond.

Another visitor we had was Senator Ellender of Louisiana. He made a career in the Senate of traveling abroad. He took extensive notes. He was serious, but he had certain peculiarities. For instance, he wanted to know whether or not a post was self-supporting. He asked how much we collected in visa fees, which was practically nothing, of course, in a place like Tabriz. Another of his pet subjects was the wastefulness of USIS libraries. He asked if we had one and wanted to know all about what USIS was doing. He had just come from the Soviet Union and was very proud that he had been the first person from the Congress to travel through the Soviet Union and cross the border into Iran directly. I had to go up to the border to meet him. It was an unusual event. The Soviets made him carry his bags across the bridge across the river. I met him at the Iranian side and carried the bags back to our car.

Regarding his plans, he said, "It would be nice to fly down to Tehran." I said, "Well, there is no scheduled flight." He said, "How about the attaché plane coming up and getting me?" I said, "It's possible. I'll ask the Defense attaché. It depends on the weather." The attaché agreed to come up, but sure enough, that morning, the weather closed in and he wired, "No, I'm sorry. It's too dangerous. I can't make it." The senator wanted to get to Tehran badly, so I said, "You can take a consulate car and I'll ask the embassy to meet you halfway down there with their car." The embassy then balked and said in effect that they could not afford this arrangement. It was now about midnight. I sent back a very curt reply, saying, "Senator Ellender is departing Tabriz by consulate car at 4:30 a.m. I suggest you meet him half-way to Tehran," which they did, of course.

By the way, he stopped for refreshments at a local tea house and ate a melon, then came down with this terrible case of tummy trouble which laid him low the rest of his stay in Iran.

Tabriz was an interesting post. Before I left, I asked the Department's Historical Division to write a history of the post because of the fascinating stories I had heard about it. They agreed, but I don't know if they did it or not. Let me tell you just one of those stories.

The post was opened in 1906. The first consul was a man named William F. Doty. He was sent there because there were a lot of American missionaries and they were being threatened (In fact, one of them had been killed recently.). They were traveling around the country and it was insecure. While Doty was there, a constitutional crisis arose. Tabrizis, as usual, were leading the resistance to the Shah of the period. In the local mission's boys' school, there was a young American teacher fresh out of Princeton named Howard Baskerville. He was very interested in the local situation. When the Shah's army besieged Tabriz in 1909, Howard Baskerville decided that he should help these poor people. Tabrizis were beginning to starve under the siege. So, he took some of his students and started training them to be a military unit. He was required by the mission to resign because he was doing something out of line. The consul was even more agitated. He went down to the local square, the parade ground where troops were training, and from horseback told Baskerville, "I've warned you publicly that you are not to interfere in the internal affairs of the host country and you should cease and desist." He cautioned him that it was dangerous, too. Baskerville refused to desist, as a matter of conscience. He went out on patrol shortly thereafter and was shot dead by a sniper. Howard Baskerville became an instant hero to modern-minded Iranians because he was a foreigner who took the constitutionalists' side. These constitutionalists were opposed to the Shah, but the Shah of the day was of a different dynasty than the Pahlavis. At the suggestion of John Bowling at the embassy, I and my public affairs officer arranged a whole day of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Howard Baskerville's death. The ambassador came up from Tehran, as did the chief of USIS. Local officials spoke. A hall in a public school was named for Baskerville. We made a big thing of it and got away with it.

The post was hard on my family. For instance, there was no school for my daughter. She was school-age. My wife had to teach her at home with the Calvert system, which was a common solution. There were only a few other American kids in town.

I mentioned this inspection. It was done by an administrative inspector. The team split up in Tehran. I happened to get the administrator. He found a number of minor administrative faults. I was upset. In a huff, I submitted a letter of resignation from the Foreign Service. The routine was, you sent it to the ambassador. The terminology then for formal correspondence was, "I have the honor to..." I was upset with this inspector because he had, for instance, quizzed me at length about a coin worth a fraction of a cent that he found missing in an account that I was responsible for. Of course, when I got down to Tehran on my way out, the ambassador persuaded me to withdraw the letter.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

JOSIF: Tom Wailes was the ambassador at that time.

Q: During this time, what about relations with the Kurds and their relations with us?

JOSIF: This was a sensitive subject. The government in Tehran was very suspicious of any interest shown by a foreign power, particularly any major power, in any of the minorities. Of course, Iran is rimmed with minorities. There are not only the Kurds, but Azeris and a whole series of tribes. It was part of our job, I thought, and certainly the embassy was interested in what was going on among the Kurds. The Russians had during the Second World War set up a puppet regime among the Kurds. The leader of that regime was still around, actually living just across the border in Iraq. He was basically a Kurdish nationalist. Later, he worked with us actually. He was just playing the field. One of the things I did was to visit his village and talk to some of his sons, one of whom is the leader of the Northern Kurds now in Iraq.

I always made a point of calling on the local governor, and the local military commander. In Kurdish areas, they could be edgy. I remember one commander saying to me, "You're beginning to play with fire." I was just too interested in what was going on among the Kurds. It was a period when the Shah was very strongly motivated to work with us. We had helped save him in 1953 against Mossadegh. He was feeling his oats again, but he hadn't committed some of the excesses that brought his downfall later.

One of the problems we had, I thought, was that there were so many Americans running around. We had a big AID mission, USIS, a huge military aid mission, and whatnot. We were pressing for a status of forces agreement that would protect our military in case of local crimes or alleged crimes.

Three non-commissioned officers in the American military mission in Tabriz were riding in a Jeep in a bazaar area. Unwittingly, the driver, an American sergeant, went down a one way street the wrong way. This caused a commotion. When he got to an intersection, a policeman tried to remonstrate. The driver panicked and started to drive off. The policeman threw himself on the hood of the jeep, and the driver drove that Jeep with a policeman on it right up to the consulate. He was followed by a stream of hundreds of irate Tabrizis. I was having lunch with my family and went out to see what was going on. Here this Jeep came bouncing across the almond orchard between our house and the consulate. The crowd pressed close around me. Somebody interpreted for me. I finally got an agreement that I would report the incident and our own military would discipline the American. Would everyone please leave now? They started leaving, but one of them hauled off and socked me on the jaw, not too hard, to show his resentment at our presence.

Q: What was your impression of the writ of the Shah? I don't know if the White Revolution had started by this time. But here is something on the fringe... I imagine you were watching this.

JOSIF: Yes. I think his revolution had started. He had not called it the White Revolution yet, but, for instance, he had expressed ideas about land reform - he would take land from large landowners and give it to the peasants. This was certainly a major problem. We had landlords in our district who owned several villages. He also had started spending more money on education

and on health. He had started a literacy program, for instance. So, he had some good ideas from our point of view, but the lack of follow-through by his underlings was appalling. He visited Tabriz once while we were there. Everybody had to come out in tails. He was like an icon, unbending. He had no warmth. He had a presence, but no warmth. I think he was basically a weak man who was in it over his head.

Q: His father was a huge, rough, basically Cossack type who had a presence.

JOSIF: That's right. His father had commanded a Cossack regiment. This man wasn't a military man, but he loved to play that he was a military man. A major reason for his downfall later was that he ordered so much military equipment from us. That meant that we had to send so many people there to show him how to use it and maintain it. There were over 40,000 Americans, many running around in places like Isfahan and Tabriz, which are very traditional still. Down in the bazaar, they never see women in halters and shorts. But when American technicians arrived by the thousands with their wives, I understand this happened. There was a reaction.

Q: How did you find the importance of the Bazaaris there, the merchant class?

JOSIF: Very important, partly because they had the wealth, and because they were religiously motivated. They were conservative, Muslim traditionalists and very nationalistic. It was important that things not go too contrary to their interests or their way of looking at things. The Shah eventually tried to suppress the religious element. That was a great mistake. The thing that started the Khomeini rise to power was that, in 1964, the Shah rammed through parliament a Status of Forces Agreement for us. That was when Khomeini started to go public and things went from bad to worse.

Q: During the 1957-1959 period, were there any repercussions on your side about the events of July 14, 1958 in Iraq?

JOSIF: Well, yes. The effect was on the Kurdish population. The Iranian Kurds were in close touch with the Iraqi Kurds. The border meant nothing to many of them. It was the same tribe on both sides and so on. I think the first reaction was to wait and see what this meant for the Kurds. They began to become more suspicious of Iraq when they saw that the leadership was so predominantly Arab nationalist. They felt that Kurdish interests were not being fully met.

Q: Were the Soviets doing much down there? Were we concerned about the Soviets fishing in these potentially troubled waters?

JOSIF: Yes. Azerbaijan was a contested area between Iran and Russia for a period of 100 years. The Russians got the northern half of it and the Iranians the southern half. During World War II, the Russians set up a puppet regime in Tabriz. One of my predecessors, Bob Rosso, was there in 1946 when the Soviets were answering our criticisms in the UN Security Council that they were interfering in Tabriz. While they were denying it, he was radioing, "I have just seen Soviet tanks running through the streets here." My tenure there was relatively quiet, but of course we kept the potential for further expansion from the north well in mind.

Our second consul in Tabriz was a man named Gordon Paddock. He was there from about 1911 to 1920, a period of several Russian interventions. Once, a Russian circus came through town and went broke. He got to know the personnel to some extent. As a matter of fact, he wound up marrying the lady bareback rider.

Gordon Paddock features in another Tabriz story. He finally got home leave after the war and reported back to Washington, to the receptionist in the old State building. He said, "I am Gordon Paddock reporting back from Tabriz, Iran, where I was consul." The receptionist said brightly, "But, Sir, we don't have a consulate in Tabriz."

Q: Back in the 1920s, wasn't one of our consuls killed there? It's on the plaque that somebody was killed in Iran by a mob.

JOSIF: I don't believe it was Tabriz. Actually, the post was closed for economy reasons during the 1930s. It was reopened during the war in 1942.

Q: When you left Tabriz in 1959, where did you go?

NELSON C. LEDSKY

**Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Greece, Turkey, and Iran
Washington, DC (1957-1959)**

Ambassador Ledsky was born in Cleveland, Ohio and was educated at Case Western Reserve University and Columbia University. After serving in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1957, serving in Georgetown, Guyana; Enugu, Nigeria; Bonn and Berlin, Germany and in the State Department in Washington. In his various assignments he was closely involved in matters concerning the status of Berlin and West Germany as well as on the persistent Greece-Turkey conflict over Cyprus. Among his other assignments, the Ambassador served on the Department's Policy Planning Staff. Ambassador Ledsky was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2003.

Q: Looking at your bio, I have to assume that you did not get assigned to any post that you had listed on your preference questionnaire.

LEDSKY: It is true that my first assignment was to a Washington position. I asked to go overseas and was assigned to INR. This was toward the end of 1957. I don't know why I was chosen for INR; I was never informed.

I became an analyst in the Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs (GTI). I was located in the Department building called SA-1.. I guess that was partly the Middle East. I was perfectly happy with the assignment since it allowed me to live a little longer in Washington, which we

had not done. We had rented an apartment on the assumption that it would be a very short term lease; we turned it into a long term one since I was supposed to be in INR for at least two years. Not ever having been overseas, I had no tremendous urge to go; I was happy to stay in Washington.

I had no idea what INR was, nor why I was not going to work in Main State. But that didn't bother me; I was all too new for that. In fact, I liked the assignment very much; I was happy in INR. There were three or four wonderful people in the office. They were primarily civil service. Harrison Symmes, a Foreign Service officer, headed the office. He hated his assignment, since it was viewed as being out of the "main stream." He later became ambassador to Jordan. He was very nice to me and we quickly became friends. One of my colleagues was a man of Turkish origin, Karim Kee, a long time INR staffer. He died recently. Ashley Hewitt was also assigned to this office. We worked together on adjoining desks. Ed Freeman was the Iranian analyst; the Greek analyst was Charles Lakadagos. He served in INR for something like thirty years. Each of the senior analysts had a civil service assistant. The two junior officers were there in addition; we may have been the first junior officers to be assigned to that office. There were a number of us scattered throughout INR. Andy Steigman was one of them. I also first met Bill Lewis there when he worked in INR. He was in the office next to ours working on North Africa.

I was to help the civil servants in their research and to write papers. The civil servants had the reputation of being very good researchers, but not good writers. I spent much of my time editing the papers written by Kee and Lakadagos, to make them desirable products. As time passed, I became interested in Iran. Ed Freeman took me under his wing and helped me to learn about the Iran of the 1950s.

GTI was a bustling office. The three countries it covered were always in the news. We essentially had two tasks: to write quick, short notes for the daily briefing given by an INR officer to the secretary and to the undersecretary, and secondly, to write analytical papers. It was fun. The building was terrible. It was not air conditioned, which made the summers something less than pleasant. The equipment we had to use was very out-dated. However, as I said, I was very content. The work and the atmosphere were not too different from my Edgewood Arsenal experience.

Q: Did you begin to understand how the Department worked?

LEDSKY: Yes, even though we were physically quite removed from the main parts of the Department. I did not relate our physical remoteness to our status in the Department. There were many offices that were not in main State; there were lots of temporary buildings around the Washington Mall which were occupied by one or another State office, so I was not troubled by being away from the main building. It was a little curious to be working on Iran without ever seeing the desk officer face-to-face. It was a big excursion to cross Connecticut Avenue to get to the main building.

I was well treated. I recognized from the start that I was far away from any decision-maker. I also recognized that "serious" Foreign Service officers did not want to be in INR. That was quite

obvious. INR was not an assignment that would lead to further promotions. But for me, it was great. I spent two very happy years in that GTI office. I learned a lot about the three countries and particularly Iran. I learned a lot about how to write for senior State officials. Harry Symmes was a terrific boss.

I met a lot of very smart, very nice people – really high caliber people. For example, in addition to the people I have already mentioned, I also met Helena Kitchen – the wife of Jeff Kitchen, a well known State expert in politico-military affairs. She edited a weekly newsletter about Africa. She was enormously impressive – smart, nice, friendly, competent. I used to go to lunch with a terrific bunch of people; we used to see each other in the coffee shop as well. So I was greatly impressed by the quality of the INR staff. It is true that we didn't mingle much with people from other bureaus; the physical separation was just too great for me to get to know people in Main State, for example.

Within INR, I did meet a lot of people. I met the director, Hugh Cummings, who often attended the morning briefings before going to brief the secretary and other senior State officers. He was impressive if somewhat forbidding. I met Mr. Baum, who was in charge of African affairs and who was very nice to me. Irv Cheslaw was there. As I said, INR was well staffed with talented, personable people. A lot were later "Wristonized" and I would work with them later in my career.

It is true that some Foreign Service officers were quite frustrated by being assigned to INR – people like Harry Symmes. For them, the assignment was demeaning and they worked very hard to be reassigned to the "main" stream, e.g., the regional bureaus. But I was not concerned; I loved what I was doing and I didn't understand the Foreign Service well enough to be bothered. I must say that at that stage of my life, I was lacking in ambition. I really didn't give promotion much thought. I was just happy to be employed in a job that I liked. I didn't aspire to be the secretary of state, or anything else for that matter.

BURNETT ANDERSON
Country Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1957-1960)

Burnett Anderson was born on in Wisconsin on July 13, 1919. She attended the University of Rochester and in 1940 he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Economics. He joined the USIA in 1952, after working in Stockholm. Besides serving in Iran, Mr. Anderson was posted in France, Germany, Great Britain and Washington, DC. He was interviewed on January 5, 1990 by Jack O'Brien.

ANDERSON: The next assignment was Iran. The fact was that I considered my stay in Washington temporary. I had gone overseas because I wanted to see the world, I wanted to work overseas, and I saw people constantly rotating. From time to time, personnel or an area director had approached me for an overseas job, but when Hunt Damon came along and, in effect, offered

me Iran, that really ...

Q: Let's identify him.

ANDERSON: Hunt was Assistant Director for the Near East Area at that time. That one really excited me. The offer coincided with a trip I had to make to Manila, where the Press Service ran a printing plant, and to Beirut, where we ran another one, which was part of my operation involving several hundred people. The trip gave me a chance to stop in Tehran and have a little look at it. I had never been in that part of the world before, and once I had spent a couple of days there and gotten a feel for what was going on, I decided I really wanted it. My wife, who was a veteran of the Swedish Foreign Service, that's how I had met her originally, was all for it. We had two very young sons, but they were old enough to move anywhere, and we decided to go and were very excited about it.

In view of what has subsequently happened, I have often thought of a conversation I had with a counselor of the Iranian Embassy before I went to Iran. I had arranged to meet him to pick up some background and so on, and one of the things he did was trace Iran's history of relations with various other major countries. As I recall, he started with Russia and the problems with Russia, and how Iran now had no time for the Soviet Union, and then how they had had a love affair with France, and how that had gone sour. Then the Germans rose to be friend number one in the 1930s, as I recall, followed by the British, who put the young Shah back on the throne early in the 1940s, and how that had gone wrong. But he said, "We don't have any reason to hate the United States yet." Well, a few years later, they found some reasons, apparently.

In any event, Iran was fascinating at the time. We did have very close relations with the Shah. Even I, with the rank of counselor, dealt directly with the prime minister, the foreign minister, the minister of court. We were personal friends. They were in and out of our house from time to time, and one really felt close to the people you were working with.

It was a challenging time, both in terms of living conditions and so on, but I thought a very rewarding one.

Q: What were our major activities at that time? We had a Fulbright program?

ANDERSON: We had a Fulbright program. In fact, I think we started the Fulbright program there. Martin Ackerman, another colleague, was my cultural affairs officer. I really got involved with students there, because I thought it was the upcoming generation that was going to be the important one, and if I accomplished anything major, I think it was actually being able to penetrate into the University of Tehran and establish a full-time Student Center, which drew very well. Obviously no results of it are visible today, but we made the effort. We also had an extremely thriving Iran-America Center, and I was able to raise the money and break the ground for a beautiful independent building, which, of course, went with everything else when we got thrown out of there.

But as I say, a very rewarding time, so much so that in 1959, I was offered an appointment to the

War College and I asked to postpone it for a year, and they said, "You can't do that. You've got to take it or turn it down and then take your chances in the next year's competition."

I said, "Well, I think two years is too little for what we've got invested in me here, and I'm going to take another year." But happily, a year later the appointment to the War College came through again and I came back to the States in the late spring of 1960 to spend a year at Fort McNair.

Q: That brings us up to your assignment after the War College. Will you proceed with that, Burnett?

ANDERSON: Fine. One of the many, many people who came through Iran--I'd like to digress here and talk about a presidential visit.

Q: Sure.

ANDERSON: Because it may also be *à propos* and I feel kind of strongly about it. Eisenhower made a tour. I think it was in December of 1959, going to several Near East points and, I think, a couple of European stops. Anyway, he had half a day in Iran. We had to prepare to receive him. The advance party at that time consisted of Jim Hagerty and a communications expert. They came in, spent some time with us. We laid out the details, figured out the parade routes and so on.

Q: Let's identify Hagerty for the newer generation.

ANDERSON: Jim Hagerty was Eisenhower's press secretary, a great and well-known veteran of years of writing for the *New York Times*. That was the advance party. The communications guy arranged to increase temporarily the number of lines of communication with the world. I think at that time the total was one full-time telephone line and one teletype circuit out of Tehran. That was our electronic link to the world. [Laughter]

That visit went flawlessly in every respect, and I like to think back how it was handled then with a couple of people coming out from the White House, and the embassy doing the job it's supposed to, as compared with the imperial advance team and the pre-advance team. Now a pre-advance team goes out from the White House and makes sure everything is ready for the advance team when it comes in, and these are full-time positions. I shudder to think of that layer upon layer of stuff there.

Q: Do you have any observations on the caliber of our local employees, either there or in other posts where you've been?

ANDERSON: I think we've been very lucky in the caliber of employees we've been able to get everywhere. I've always had many very good ones, a few real duds. You sometimes get a kind of distortion. In Iran, for example, they sometimes referred to the American Embassy as the Armenian Embassy because we had such a high proportion of Armenians on the local staff. But I had absolutely marvelous support, people who were working for minimal salaries, but who were

maybe carrying doctoral degrees or had the qualifications that would have made them top-level executives in any Foreign Service anywhere in the world.

Q: Do you suppose that any of them were abused or suffered later when the Iran Government took over our embassy?

ANDERSON: I have no news of that. I would like to know. There are many people whom I remember fondly. I do know that some of them got out. One is, or was until recently, employed by the State Department here, an extremely talented man, a responsible and civilized person. The Iranians, it seemed to me, produced some of the best and most civilized people I've ever dealt with, as well as this incredibly frightening fanatic wing that eventually seized power.

ISABEL CUMMING
Secretary, USIS
Tehran (1957-1960)

Isabel Cumming was raised in Boston, Massachusetts. She joined USIS in 1957 and served in Iran, Korea, Sweden, Poland, Italy, Japan, Yugoslavia, Germany, and Washington, DC. Ms. Cumming was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.

Q: Which year was it that you went into Tehran?

CUMMING: In 1957, in May -- actually May 1, 1957.

Q: This was about two years after the Shah had been reinstated basically at the courtesy of the US government. What was the main thrust of the US Information Agency program -- USIS program in Tehran at that time? Can you give us some idea of what was going on, what we were trying to do, and how successful, from your viewpoint, you thought we were?

CUMMING: We did a lot in the information business. By that, I mean USIA -- USIS in Tehran was a very large post. We had two motion picture officers. We had, I believe, three cultural affairs officers. We had an Iran- America Society director.

Motion pictures was a big program because we had a production officer who made a film -- a newsreel actually like the old RKO newsreel, and actually it was the RKO because he had a rooster crowing to start with.

So we had a newsreel. We did a lot of distribution of American films. films that the Agency was making of course. Culturally, we had exchange programs with -- I don't believe we had -- we didn't have students, I don't believe, in those days. But we did -- oh, we had cultural programs come in.

I remember one thing we had was that the Air Force band came down and played. The Iranian Air Force band leader was invited, the Iranian Air Force -- the whole band was invited to come, but the leader got up and led the Americans in the Colonel Bogie March, which the Iranians loved.

I remember when the Shah had divorced and married Farah Diba, she came to an opening when we had Red Nickels and the Five Pennies, and that was one of the cultural events we had.

But we were doing a lot to build the country with our newspapers. The Iran-America Society was very busy in teaching English and just giving the Iranians a little bit of Americana.

Q: Were you in any way - you say supporting the Shah - were you trying to do an information program which would more or less sell the Shah and his government to the Iranian people? Was there any aspect of that in the program that you were undertaking?

CUMMING: Yes, I think so. The Shah was trying to get the country back - get the women out of purdah, and get the country back to modernity-- he was giving back to the people a lot of his land that his father had taken away from the Iranian people.

I remember when I first went there, we had a field media trip on the Iranian railroad for the Americans, and we went all the way down to Khorramshahr. I was invited to go on this trip. There was the PAO, the motion picture production officer, the information officer. We had a radio officer also, because we did a lot with radio, and our librarian. We stopped on the way down to Khorramshahr into these different towns to see what was happening in the country. We took pictures of them, and wrote stories that we could send back so that people could see what the Shah was doing for the people in the countryside.

Q: Was any effort made to justify or to publicize his land return program? The reason I ask this is that I gather later on in the Shah's incumbency, toward the end when he was on the verge of being ousted, that he had not only returned some of the former lands that his father had taken over for the crown, but he also had broken up a lot of the landed estates and had returned some of that land to the people. That, of course, had gained him a large number of enemies among the elite class. I gather he hadn't done anything like that at the time you were there.

CUMMING: To my knowledge, I can't say that he did. No.

Q: But were you publicizing his land reform efforts, or was much being done about that?

CUMMING: I can't honestly say because I can't remember, really.

Q: The motion picture program that you spoke of - you said that these films were being shown, both those that were produced in-country and those that were being sent out by the agency. How was this done? Did you have a field program, or are these things taken off to various field posts or --

CUMMING: They went right into the - we were able to put them right into the movie houses.

Q: Oh, I see.

CUMMING: The movie houses themselves. Then, of course, we did send them out to the branches because we had branches in Tabriz, Meshed, Khorramshahr and Isfahan, as I remember it.

Q: But you didn't have the equivalent of a mobile unit program that --

CUMMING: We very well might have. I think we did. It seems to me we did, but I can't say for sure that. I think we did, though, at that time. That's back in time -- '57 to '60.

Q: Yes, I know. What was the utilization of the - what did they call it? What is the official name of the binational center out there, which is --

CUMMING: The Iran-America Society.

Q: Yes. What kind of clientele among the Iranians did -- except for the English-teaching program -- did you have at that time? Was it ever used?

CUMMING: It was the upper-upper people who came. Yes. I remember the English teaching because I taught English myself there.

One thing we also did, which I forgot to mention -- it is just coming to me now. We had a building, a very small building and it was like a storefront, but it was maybe three or four stories high across from the university. We had a marvelous exhibit officer who would put exhibits in the storefront. This building was used for the students to study because in those days they didn't have study rooms or study halls, as we know them in our colleges, and you'd see the kids just walking around the street with their books.

We opened this building for them. This was used as a study hall, study rooms for the students. It was open all day and up to a certain hour at night, I don't remember the hours now. It was manned by an Iranian.

Q: Was it pretty heavily used?

CUMMING: Yes. It was, very much so. We had wonderful exhibits in the window which caused people to stop -- a lot of people to stop and see.

I remember one distinctly was when Hawaii became our 50th state, and our exhibits officer had made a book the pages of which turned by using his tape recorder-- and which was playing music very softly so you could hear it as you went by -- Hawaiian music. But he used all his own equipment, because in those days we didn't have the sort of equipment they have today to do that kind of thing. They were things that he and his exhibit section made.

Q: I ask this question about the America- Iran Society and the utilization of the library in the main building because Gordon Winkler, who was the PAO there many years after you and Burnie Anderson were there, said that whenever he went into the library he never saw more than maybe a half a dozen people at any one time, and that most of the people who came to any kind of a cultural exhibit or cultural program seldom came to the center to see it.

They came to the Cultural Exhibits that were put on in the Iranian performing arts areas and, he had great reservations as to whether or not the center was worth the money that was being expended upon it. I was just curious to know what kind of utilization it enjoyed when you were there.

CUMMING: This is the Iran-America Society itself. Well, then it was downtown -- they built a new one just about the time that I was leaving, and I never did see that one finished. But the one downtown was used very much when I was there. It might have been in the time when people were interested in learning English because I was there '57 to '60, and I think Gordon was there later.

Q: He was there much later.

CUMMING: Yes.

Q: I think that was his last post.

CUMMING: Because the people were just -- English was just becoming sort of a second language when I was there. It was French before that and, of course, the people would go back and forth to France all the time. But the English -- American English, not English English, was becoming the second language, and I believe they were teaching it in the schools.

Q: Gordon was there in the last part of the '70s. I have forgotten whether it was '75 to '77 or '78 or whether it -- I think it was '75 to '76 or '77. Something like that.

CUMMING: The new America Iranian Society was further up the hill. Up toward Shimeran, I think it was called in those days. But in my time it was downtown.

The USIS was really right down in the heart of Iran when I first was there and the Iran-America Society was not very far from us. But then we had moved our office up closer to the Embassy and to the university -- in my time.

Q: The one and only trip I made to the post out there was in 1971. You were pretty close to the embassy at that time.

CUMMING: Yes, at that time we were. Right.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to say about the Iranian period before we move on to

your next assignment?

CUMMING: It was an exciting assignment. It was my first, and of course I guess, my true love of all my tours.

Q: Where did you go from Iran then?

FRASER WILKINS
Chargé d’Affaires
Tehran, Iran (1957-1960)

Ambassador Wilkins was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at Yale University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1940, where he became a specialist in Middle East Affairs. His overseas posts include Halifax, Baghdad, Tangier, New Delhi and Teheran, where he served as Minister/Counselor. In his several assignments in the Department of State in Washington, Mr. Wilkins dealt with Middle East matters. He also served on the Policy Planning Staff and as Inspector General of the Department. In 1960 he was appointed Ambassador to Cyprus, where he served until 1964. Ambassador Wilkins was interviewed by Peter Jessup in 1988.

Q: Now, who was ambassador in Iran, when you got there?

WILKINS: Selden Chapin. And he only stayed a short time. As a matter of fact, he left and I was chargé a good part of the time. I happened to be chargé on July 14, 1958, when the King of Iraq – King Faisal – and Nun Said were murdered. The American embassy was the only American office in the Middle East that had communications with Baghdad. July 14 was Bastille Day, and the French were having their usual celebration. As chargé, I had an opportunity to talk to all the different people; and was thus able, when I got back to the embassy, to send telegrams giving the reaction to what was happening in Baghdad.

Q: Speaking of Iran, do you remember a book that was written back around 1912, by Morgan Schuster, called The Strangling of Modern Persia?

WILKINS: Yes, I do.

Q: Was that read in the State Department?

WILKINS: Not as late as 1957.

Q: It was sort of a pioneer work, wasn't it?

WILKINS: The history of Iran is a fascinating subject. You know, the Iranians are the cleverest

people in the Middle East. They can run circles around the Arabs, any day. They haven't lately, but they did before. For example, in the time of Philip II. Philip and Iran were great powers; it was called Persia then. I think it was [inaudible] dynasty, in Persia.

And when the ambassador of the King of Spain arrived in Tehran – this is a well known diplomatic incident – the Persians didn't think that he would give due credit to the Shah. So they – at the time he presented his letters of credence to the Shah – lowered the doorway, because they feared that he would not prostrate himself three times in the usual fashion. They thought by him lowering his head at the doorway it would give the appearance of prostrating. But the Spanish ambassador pulled a fast one on the court. After he made the usual ceremonial remarks, when he withdrew he presented his backside when going through the door.

There's another famous story about the father of the last Shah, Reza Shah, who was an illiterate army sergeant who came up through the ranks, and took over from the deteriorating Qajar Dynasty. His minister in Washington, in the late '20s, early '30s – this is another story around town – was driving up through Elkton, Maryland, the marriage center, with his mistress; an American lady I used to see at the diplomatic functions here, when I returned in '46. He was not driving very well and was stopped by a local policeman. The local policeman said, "You're driving very peculiarly. I'm going to have to take you to the station."

This infuriated the American lady, and she hit the policeman over the head with her parasol. And she said, "Why, he's the minister from Persia. You can't take him to the station."

And the policeman replied, "But he hasn't got his collar on backwards." That's on a par with the other incident. But it shows their attitude. Now in that case, the Persians did not break diplomatic relations, but they withdrew the minister, if I'm correct.

Q: What were the influences of the Russians in the years that you were there, in Tehran?

WILKINS: Well, the first time I went to Iran was when I was stationed in Baghdad. I made a trip in 1943, by car, with a British major named Satow. His father was a famous British diplomat, and wrote books about British diplomatic and consular practice. I've lost track of him.

But the British, you see, were in force in Iraq; and also in Iran. Actually, American and British forces had more or less divided Iran in 1943. Those were the years when we were sending supplies to Russia, through the Persian Gulf.

Q: There was a regular Persian Gulf command.

WILKINS: Yes, it was called Pifors. Actually, when I went up to Tehran in '43, with Satow, I met my colleague Van Ferguson who was working there; and also Arch Calhoun, who was later ambassador in Tunisia. We were all about the same age.

Q: Now the name you were going to recall was Louis Dreyfus?

WILKINS: Louis Dreyfus, and his charming wife. They were living in what had been a legation, in front of which was a huge basin for a water tank. That is now the foundation for the present embassy. But they still have there the picture window that was in the old legation – the same kind of picture window – in the new embassy. Because, I went there when Julius Holmes was ambassador, Also, when I was Inspector General.

I was going to tell you that Ferguson, Calhoun, and I drove in his car, with my wheels, because his wheels had been stolen. Tires were worth a \$1,000 a piece in Iran in 1943. So we drove down to Isfahan, and saw the sights there – which I won't describe, because Isfahan is half the world away, as they say. And it's been well described by many. Also, we drove down to Shiraz – Persepolis – and back. And we had quite a journey, sleeping outside of Chihanas, and teahouses; and breaking down, and seeing the tomb of Cyrus the Great. It's a fabulous country, with its blue domes.

I was down again when I was stationed in Iran, in '57- '59, to Qum, where Khomeini now hangs out. Naturally, driving south from Tehran you pass through Qum, which is a very sacred place, where Fatima is buried. We, of course, couldn't go in there; we just drove straight through the town until we came to Isfahan. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Hamilton Brown, was visiting my wife and me at that time. And we went on down to Shiraz, and visited Persepolis. And for the first time in 13 years, the whole area was covered with snow. I've never seen a more beautiful sight, than Persepolis, and Shiraz, and especially Isfahan in the snow, with those blue domes. A miraculous sight!

Q: What's the altitude in those cities?

WILKINS: Tehran itself is about 5,000 feet; and as you go south, it gradually slopes off. In the plateau of Iran, between the Elburz Mountains on the north, and the mountains between Iraq and Iran – it slipped my mind, for the moment. There are a number of passes; I've driven, as I told you, from Baghdad to Tehran. The way you go is up through Qum, to Hamadan, through Kermanshah. I tried in '43 to go back. Oh, I forgot to tell you something about the Russians in Tehran.

I wanted to go back to Iraq, by way of the Rawanduz gorge, of northern Iraq. To do so, I would have to drive up through Tabriz, up through northern Iraq, and down Baghdad, through Sulaimaniya, and Kermanshah. But Colonel Schwarzkopf, who was famous in the Lindbergh kidnapping...

Q: Yes, Norman Schwarzkopf of New Jersey.

WILKINS: Yes, he was in charge of the gendarmerie during the war of '43. And he said, "No." I couldn't go. He said, "You'd probably get captured by the guerrillas up there, and put me to a lot of trouble to get you out. I just won't give you permission."

Meanwhile, I'd gotten permission from the Russians, because they were in charge of that area. I'd gone to the Russian embassy, and they looked at me in a very peculiar way, and said, "What

does this American want to go up into Tabriz and over into the Rawanduz gorge for?" They must have thought I was a spy or something. Because even then, you know, we had German spies being dropped in northern Iraq.

As a matter of fact, in Baghdad, in 1942 and '43 – when I was there – before Montgomery was successful in the western desert, we had swastikas on our gate every morning. It was only after Montgomery was successful in the western desert, did the sentiment of the Iraqis change. It again illustrates the flexibility of their mind – to put it politely.

They were not especially friendly when I arrived, but they became very friendly when they saw the allies were beginning to win the war. That was the same year in which we – being successful in North Africa – set up an American intelligence agency in Cairo. That greatly affected the activities of the American legation in Baghdad, at that time. Did I get off the track?

Q: We were covering the role of the Russians in the '50's, when you were there.

WILKINS: Well, the Russians had no representation in Baghdad, but they did in Iran at that point. Then, of course, it culminated in the Azerbaijan crisis of 1946, with George Allen under Secretary Byrnes as the moving factor. That was the reason he eventually became the youngest ambassador – at the age of 43 – in the Foreign Service, when he was sent to Iran. I later knew George Allen when he came as ambassador to India, in 1953, after Bowles had left.

First, Loy Henderson was there when I arrived; and then Bowles came in '51. He thought he'd be continued by Eisenhower, but wasn't. When he returned to Washington George Allen took his place, briefly. And then I left. I got to know Bowles quite well. To such an extent that we became close friends. He invited me and my wife to go sailing with him the year I came back from India, in '53.

FRANKLIN J. CRAWFORD

**Principal Officer
Isfahan (1957-1960)**

**Political Officer
Tehran (1960-1962)**

Franklin J. Crawford was born in Ohio in 1927. After earning both his bachelor's and master's degree from Ohio State University in 1949 and 1950, respectively, he received his law degree from George Washington University in 1974. He also served in the US Navy from 1945 to 1946. His career has included positions in Hong Kong, Izmir, Isfahan, Tehran, and Colombo. Mr. Crawford was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in January 2002.

Q: And then you got an [onward] assignment to the Iranian area, to Isfahan and you went out as principal officer. How large a post was that?

CRAWFORD: Not very big. We had three vice consuls, one was from the [Central Intelligence] Agency, one man from USIA [United States Information Agency], and one vice consul who did consular work and other stuff, and myself. I think that was it.

Q: How far is that from Tehran? Is it south?

CRAWFORD: It is south of Tehran. It must be 250-300 miles. It was a long day's drive.

Q: Did you find the local Iranians easy to work with?

CRAWFORD: Yes. They were very nice. I love Iran. We had a great time there. We were there for five years. And three of our children were born in Iran, one in Isfahan and two in Tehran. I found it to be a lovely place. The Iranians were very accessible and we were in Isfahan for three years, and after three years you've sort of been through the routine. I wasn't sorry to be transferred to Tehran.

Q: Where were other consulates in Isfahan?

CRAWFORD: There was a French consular agent who was really a businessman, but he did some consular work. There was a Soviet consulate in Isfahan, but they closed it at the time of Mossadegh's fall. I think it was closed then. They had a caretaker there. I think he was Russian. Occasionally somebody from the embassy in Tehran would come to Isfahan to stay at the consulate. I don't know what they went there for. I never encountered any Russians in Isfahan. It was just something I heard through the grapevine.

Q: The British didn't have a consulate there?

CRAWFORD: Not then. They did, later, after we were there for a while. They opened a British Council office and they had an operation there. I think there was a British Council operation in Shiraz. But when we first got there the British didn't have anything.

Q: What were some of the problems you faced in Isfahan, if there were problems?

CRAWFORD: Depending on what the political coloration was (and everybody on the spectrum was represented), they would ask, "Why was the United States treating Iran the way it did?" The National Front group, the pro-Mossadegh group would say, "Your people did this terrible thing to our country and the National Front wants to come back and we need your help." I heard this all the time I was in Iran. That was part of the on-going conversation. And the members of the establishment would sometimes gripe that economic aid to Iran wasn't enough or it wasn't well thought out and they would have all sorts of suggestions and gripes about it. I wouldn't say it was a major problem. We had an Iran-American society in Isfahan that was open when I got there.

Q: How would you measure the size or the influence of the National Front versus the pro-Shah party? Were they about equal in sentiment?

CRAWFORD: No. The National Front had not much support. The National Fronters were well educated, modernized, westernized, but they wanted somebody else to do it for them. They wanted the Americans to go tell the Shah to do this, that and the other thing. I don't think they had widespread support. There was a lot of griping about the Shah. That was a constant wherever you went. The officials didn't really gripe about the Shah except indirectly sometimes. They'd complain about Tehran and how they weren't getting enough support. But when I was there, at least when I was in Isfahan there was a sort of passive attitude. There had been a lot of dislocation, a lot of psychological and political damage done, during the Mossadegh era and in the effort to overthrow Mossadegh. So Iranians had gone through several millennia of invasions and disasters and so on, so they were very good at deciding about whether this thing was going to last or not and where their interests really were. And their interests were primarily with their families and with the clans and with the tribes and with their neighborhoods, not with any national entity.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

CRAWFORD: The first ambassador when I was there was Selden Chapin, and his place was taken by Tom Wailes. Wailes came while I was still in Isfahan, and was still ambassador when I got to Tehran. And then Julius Holmes came.

Q: Did you get to Tehran often?

CRAWFORD: Fairly often.

Q: Did those ambassadors visit Isfahan?

CRAWFORD: Yes. They all came down. The attaché had a plane and so the ambassadors would come and mostly spend the day. Sometimes they came for a couple of days, particularly if they had visitors and they wanted to show them Isfahan and Shiraz. So I got hooked up with those visits.

Q: How large was your consular district?

CRAWFORD: Enormous. We had Isfahan, up as far as Kashan and down to the Persian Gulf. It included Shiraz. We had Bandar-e-Abbas and Kerman and everything east to the Pakistani border.

Q: And you got to move around there?

CRAWFORD: I did, yes. That was our job, really. Finding out where these places were and writing reports. We took trips, particularly with the [Central Intelligence] Agency man. He and I took several trips. I went to Shiraz fairly often, because that was an easy flight down there. We went to Kerman and Bandar-e-Abbas overland. It was a long, long trip. I think that both times we managed to get a flight back. There was another time that I went to Kerman and then to Zahedan,

which is near the Pakistani border, near Quetta. And then down along the Pakistani border to Chabahar, which now is a sizeable port city, but then it was a tiny little town that didn't have any piers or docks. It was the farthest reach of southeastern Iran. Then I think the ambassador might have come in an attaché plane and picked us up in Chabahar and we went to Bandar-e-Abbas and then back to Isfahan.

Q: So you did get to get around at this time?

CRAWFORD: Oh, yes. And then we'd write reports on where we went and whom we'd met. I'd like to read them again. There were a lot of interesting encounters. You would also pick up a certain amount of flavor.

Q: President Eisenhower visited Iran during that period. Did you have anything to do with that trip?

CRAWFORD: No, I didn't. I knew he was coming, because that was in '59 and he was on his way to Tehran, then on to Afghanistan, where I think he had a stroke, or heart attack. Charlie Stelle, who was political counselor in Tehran, was home on leave at the same time. We came back on the same ship to Naples. Charlie had to rush off to get back to Tehran for Eisenhower.

One nice thing about Isfahan, we had lots of visitors. The German Chancellor [Ludwig] Erhard came. Lord [Louis] Mountbatten came. I'd always get invited because they were looking out for someone who spoke English, or instead just some presentable foreigner they could invite to the governor general's lunch. The governor general usually didn't speak anything except Persian.

There was a man who was in the Iran-American Society who taught English. His name was Terrence O'Donnell. Funny fellow, nice guy, but sort of eccentric. He wrote two books. One is a wonderful book about Iran. It's called *The Garden of the Brave in War*, published about 1980. He wrote another a book, a series of sketches, called *Seven Shades of Memory*. He's done one of these oral histories for somebody, and I mention this because I think it would be a good cross-reference for somebody. He described our time in Isfahan, he knew us. This was another perspective of me and my wife. He told me that he described us and what our household was like. His books are very good for that period, for looking at the flavor of the place.

Q: Now, you had spent some time in Khorramshahr.

CRAWFORD: I went to Khorramshahr for about three weeks, because the consul there was due for leave, he was going to Europe. So my wife and I got sent down there. We spent three weeks there, and then went on to Isfahan.

Q: No problems in Khorramshahr worth talking about?

CRAWFORD: No. I mean, it was hot. And, it was an introduction to the oil business.

Q: And right across from Iraq.

CRAWFORD: Iraq, Basra. We did go to Basra. The consulate had a boat. We took the boat up to Basra one day.

Q: Then in 1960 you were transferred to Tehran. You went there in the political section?

CRAWFORD: Right. I did the domestic politics for Iran. It helped, having been in the provinces, to come to Tehran. I knew people from Tehran and had some notion of what was going on. It was a wonderful assignment.

Q: How large was the political section?

CRAWFORD: I think we were maybe five or six people. The counselor for political affairs, a man named Harry Schwartz, was probably the best boss I ever had, irascible as hell, some days, but really a fine person.

Q: Of those in the political section, how many were language officers?

CRAWFORD: At some point there were two others who were language officers, and one I remember who wasn't. A fellow named Joe Lorenz was a post language officer, and Pat Mulligan. He was Persian language.

Q: Did we have contact with the opposition at that time?

CRAWFORD: Not very much. That was always a sore point within the embassy and between the embassy and the government. I was in Isfahan and sort of out of it, but I heard a lot. A fellow named John Bowling was the effective head of the political section. He was aware of this conflict and the need to find out about what was going on, but also of the great reluctance on the part of the embassy to do anything that would upset the Shah. One of the stories that was told (I heard this from John), was the man who was the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] before I got there had a slogan. If anybody started criticizing the Shah or raising questions about the opposition, his mantra was, "Be a booster, not a knocker." That was supposed to be the message for everybody. This kind of contact was discouraged. The assumption was that if it needs to be done, the [Central Intelligence] Agency would do it.

Q: I guess that sowed the seeds of later trouble.

CRAWFORD: It certainly did. When I was there, it was very different. They (senior embassy officials) certainly weren't actively involved. Tom Wailes was a very nice man, but not very interested in the politics of it all. He told me once, "Let Stuart do it." (Stuart Rockwell was the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]). He said, "I'm an administrative type. I prefer that sort of thing."

Julius Holmes was completely different. He was a wonderful man, I thought. He came to Iran, and there was all this in the background about supporting the Shah and not dealing with the

opposition. But, he recognized that a certain amount of this was necessary. He didn't encourage us to go out and cultivate the National Front, but he was aware that that was the sort of thing that needed to be done. He always applied the test: whatever we're going to do, is it in the national interest of the United States? It was a test that hadn't been applied before. The test earlier was, "Let's not upset the Shah," and not whether it's good or bad for the United States.

When I was in Tehran, I knew a lot of National Front people, because I was a good friend of somebody in the [Central Intelligence] Agency. We used to entertain back and forth. We'd have people at one another's house, had lunch with these people. They were all nice, good people, international types, well-educated, spoke English and French. Through my friend, who is unfortunately deceased, I met a lot of them and got some flavor of what they were into. Some were more radical than others.

Q: Did we have any military program with at that time?

CRAWFORD: We had two programs. One was called "Armish MAAG," which was the military assistance group, which was headquartered in Tehran. At one point in 1958, when the king of Iraq was overthrown, we had a big military buildup. That was a potential problem we had in Isfahan, because suddenly we had three or four dozen American soldiers coming into Isfahan, staying at a hotel downtown. I was scared to death that we'd have some incident. I kept fussing with the colonel who was in charge of all of them, about not doing this and not offending the populace and so on. Fortunately, we never had any incident. I attribute that to the fact that I was such a nag. Whether that's true or not, I don't know. Anyway, they came in and were spread throughout the country. In Tehran, there was a big presence. They were mostly working with units of the Iranian military, both the army and the air force and the navy. Then we had the Gendarmerie mission. Schwarzkopf was there; he went in the middle of the war, about 1943. He established the Gendarmerie mission, which still existed. Actually, his son, the one who was the Persian Gulf commander, Norman, Jr., was there as a child or as a young man.

Q: He was. I know that because, Steve Palmer, unfortunately deceased, told me one time that he was a teacher before he joined the Foreign Service, and he taught in Iran, and young Schwarzkopf was one of his students.

CRAWFORD: Anyway, that was the military operation. And of course there was an enormous economic assistance program, which I said something about once when I was traveling around in one of the districts and (they were AID programs, we'd call them "Point Four") and hear a certain amount of complaint about that. That prompted me (when I was in Isfahan) to write a dispatch, which I thought would get me dismissed, because the question I asked was "what use is this economic assistance? Does it accomplish anything or does it cause more trouble than it's worth?" Anyway, my dispatch didn't upset anybody. Everybody I heard from said, "Oh. That's terrific. You've raised a lot of interesting questions here."

Q: "Now go away." [laughter.]

Well, those are very interesting years in Iran. Any further comments about your time there at all?

CRAWFORD: No. I think we've covered it pretty well.

PETER P. LORD
Vice Consul
Khorramshahr (1958-1961)

Peter P. Lord was born in Italy in 1929. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1952 he served in the US Navy from 1952-1955. Later on, he earned his master's degree from Columbia University in 1965. His career has included positions in Khorramshahr, Caracas, Arequipa, Lima, Bridgetown, Lusaka, and Yaoundé. Mr. Lord was interviewed by Lambert Heyniger, in April 1998.

LORD: My first assignment overseas was to Khorramshahr, Iran, which, of course, I had never heard of. This was somewhat of a disappointment for someone who had studied modern European history and had been working on Overseas France. With the help of my office, a request went out to personnel saying that I was needed urgently in the office and they couldn't afford to release me right then. But, I ended up in Khorramshahr and found it to be an interesting and enjoyable place after all. It was a small consulate which has been closed now for a number of years. It was located at the confluence of the Karun river and the Shatt al Arab (the Tigris and Euphrates), which forms the boundary between Iran and Iraq and flows down into the Persian Gulf, which is maybe 20 miles to the south past Abadan Island. Khorramshahr was then the major port of Iran. It is also across the Karun river from Abadan Island, which is not so much an island, really, as part of the mainland but separated by some small waterways. Abadan is where at that time the oil refinery belonging to the international consortium was - American, British, Dutch and French oil companies. It was the major refinery for Iran and an important source of petroleum for Europe and the United States.

Q: Was it a two or three person office?

LORD: We had a consul, Jack Bowie, two American vice consuls, an American admin assistant and a USIS office with one American in it.

Q: What were your responsibilities?

LORD: My responsibilities the first year were somewhat unique in the Foreign Service. This was a period when we had a very large AID program in Iran, which was then modernizing under the Shah, and the volume of imports through the port of Khorramshahr for the AID program and the huge American mission in Tehran and elsewhere around the country warranted special attention because the port was antiquated, overloaded, and a lot of these official shipments were stuck there, disappearing or just piling up when they were needed elsewhere. So, the embassy decided they needed to have an FSO in charge of official imports. I became in a sense a port officer with that general responsibility. The embassy did have a contract with a Lebanese freight forwarder,

which was a new contract. My job was to work closely with this freight forwarder, supervise the contract, ride herd on them, coordinate priorities with them, making sure they found this cargo and getting it promptly cleared through customs and on to trucks to make the long trip up to Tehran.

I did that for a year. It was kind of fun, actually. The freight forwarding office was run by a young Lebanese fellow. He and I were about the same age, and we got along very well. He had a staff of local Armenians, primarily, and it was a very congenial group.

Q: It is always useful in the Foreign Service to have a real chance to get out of the office and into the field and deal with local people and observe situations first hand and this was a good way of doing that.

LORD: This wasn't so much in the political sense, which perhaps is what you meant, but it was an opportunity for contact with a certain function, mainly the port and the people that were associated with it.

The reason we had a consulate in Khorramshahr was because the area had been one of significant unrest during the Mossadegh period. Mossadegh had been moved out about 1954, if I remember correctly, and the Shah picked up from there. So, it had been an area where the embassy felt we should have a listening post, which is why the consulate was there. The unrest had threatened the oil refinery, the main American interest there and the American citizens working there.

Q: This was sort of the oil center of Iran and a very sensitive area.

LORD: Yes. It was a very important European and U.S. interest. I only mention this because I was there the two years from 1958-60 when there was no political unrest. Things were politically very quiet. The Shah was firmly in control, riding high. The degree of discontent with the Shah's regime which developed later on in the '70s didn't exist back then in the late '50s.

Q: What did you do your second year at Khorramshahr?

LORD: The second year I rotated into the job of the senior vice consul who was responsible for consular affairs and also for the limited general political and economic reporting.

Q: Were there any particular characteristics in doing consular work in coastal Iran? Did you do a lot of crew list visas? Did you have a lot of problems with American seamen?

LORD: It was an easy consular job in that there was not a great volume of any aspect of consular work there. There were some crew list visas, some services to American citizens working at the refinery in Abadan, and there was a certain amount of visitors. I handled just IVs; I think all NIVs were issued by Tehran. So, it was a relatively simple consular function there which left some time for general political and economic reporting - a quarterly report, as I recall, about developments that were taking place. A good part of that was monitoring the development effort with AID support in Khuzestan Province.

Q: Did you at all function as a field officer for the USAID mission in Tehran?

LORD: Not really. They had people who would come down and work on some of the projects. One of the large projects that had American financing was the major dam that was being built outside of Ahvaz. American contractors were involved and I would go up there on a regular basis to keep abreast of whatever problems they were facing, and I did some reporting in that respect.

During the time I was in Khorramshahr, the border between Iran and Iraq was closed because they were arguing over where the boundary line actually went along the Shatt al Arab River. That is where I learned the word “tallweg,” which I think is the word that is suppose to describe where the deepest part of the river runs. It may not necessarily be in the center or on either side, but it is where the current runs deepest.

Because of this border dispute, you could not drive or fly to Basrah, which was too bad because I understood just before I got to Khorramshahr that Basrah was a nice change of pace for a visit. It was a little more developed than Khorramshahr.

Q: About the same time you were in Khorramshahr I was in Jordan and one of the most enjoyable things to do was to go out in a landrover and see what you could see in the desert. Was there any opportunities to do this?

LORD: Yes, I can remember a nice trip up into the interior of Khuzestan province, the southwestern province which is part of the Tigris/Euphrates plain. It is flat and the population is ethnically more Arab than Persian. The upper reaches of the Karun river are quite pretty and the British consul, who was quite a character in the sense of old British tradition would go up there hunting. One time he invited two of us from the consulate along. We had gun bearers to carry our rifles - a nice little safari to a lovely area.

Q: That sounds like a lot of fun. How long was the trip?

LORD: That was probably just a weekend. Another time an up country trip was organized by the Italian honorary consul, a shipping agent and, again, a colorful person. He also liked to hunt. On that trip was the Lebanese freight forwarder, a very attractive young French woman who was visiting a friend of the Italian consul, and I don't remember who else. We camped in a very appealing area.

I also visited Bushehr, an old, virtually abandoned port south along the east coast of the Persian Gulf. I just read recently that Bushehr is the location of a nuclear reactor that Iran is developing and is a source of controversy between the United States and Iran at the moment. So, Bushehr has obviously modernized since I was last there. On that same trip to Bushehr, a colleague came down from the embassy at Tehran. We flew to Bushehr from Khorramshahr and the embassy sent a vehicle down to Bushehr to pick us up there. The idea was to drive back to Tehran using the road from Bushehr up to Shiraz and through Isfahan to Tehran to see what that would be like for accommodating freight shipments. I remember not so much about the road, which was not paved,

but the visit to Persepolis, which is just outside Shiraz, which, of course, is one of the great historic ruins in the world, an ancient Persian site and home of Darius the Great. In those days, you could just walk into the ruins and pick up pieces of fluted columns. I have some as bookends at home now.

Q: Had Alexander been through that area at all?

LORD: Alexander the Great had been through, I'm sure, at some point.

Q: But you didn't see any Macedonian coins?

LORD: No.

Q: With the benefit of hindsight I want to ask you a couple of questions. In view of the whole Mossadegh business, was there a great deal of concern in Iran at that time? Did you have contacts with security people or secret police or anything like that with regard to concern about a communist takeover?

LORD: Not down in Khorramshahr. Any of that would have been more Tehran-oriented.

Q: Were there labor unions in the refineries?

LORD: There were, but their contract and conditions were not a source of trouble during the time I was there. If there were labor negotiations and contract renewals going on they were handled without strikes and upsets.

Q: Did you at that time notice any particular Islamic unhappiness with the Shah? Were there mullahs and ayatollahs who were muttering and making speeches in the mosques about how Iran was straying from the Islamic path?

LORD: As I mentioned earlier, I think, back in the late '50s none of this opposition to the Shah or the American influence had developed to a serious degree. It was there in a latent sense, I'm sure, but there were no restrictions on traveling around the country, no hostility. On that same trip from Shiraz on up to Tehran, we stopped at Isfahan, which is where some lovely mosques are, perhaps the loveliest in Iran, and there were no problems going around to look at them. So, as I say, it was a relatively benign period, ideal for traveling around and exploring the country.

One other memorable adventure was the climbing of Mt. Damavand, the highest mountain in Iran, which is, I think, a little over 18,000 feet. It is not far north of Tehran and some people from the embassy were planning an ascent of Damavand. Since I was interested in mountain climbing, they asked me to go along. My problem was to adjust to the altitude. In Tehran one was living at 5,000 feet, whereas I was living at sea level at Khorramshahr. I did go up for one practice climb, which helped, but adjusting to the altitude at higher levels on Damavand was very difficult for me, more so than for them, but we all did make it to the top, and it was a memorable experience.

Q: The climb must have taken several days.

LORD: No, we drove to the site, climbed part way, rested at night in a sleeping bag in a camping area and then the next day made the ascent and came back down, sliding down snow fields on our butts!

Q: They didn't have camps or hostels?

LORD: No, there was nothing there to help you. It wasn't a tourist pilgrimage the way Mt. Fuji is in Japan.

Q: Okay. We wrap of this tour in the Middle East and you are then assigned back to Washington. Why?

LORD: Well, my next assignment was to Caracas, Venezuela, which was not on my preference list, but certainly sounded better than Khorramshahr did when I was first told about that assignment.

MAURICE WILLIAMS
Assistant Director, USOM
Tehran (1958-1960)

Iranian Affairs, USAID
Washington, DC (1960-1961)

Deputy Mission Director, USAID
Tehran (1961-1963)

Maurice Williams was born in Canada in 1920. At the age of five, Williams and his family moved to Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating high school in 1939, Williams attended Northwestern University. He was drafted into the army before being able to finish at Northwestern, but only to receive his Master's Degree in 1949. Upon graduation, Williams had accepted a position with the State Department in Washington. He has served in Iran and Pakistan. The interview was conducted by W. Haven North on May 15, 1996.

WILLIAMS: In response to the competition with the Soviet Union, the Eisenhower administration expanded the Point Four technical assistance program of President Truman to include military and capital assistance in support of defensive alliances against Soviet expansion. U.S. alliances with developing countries extended from Greece through Turkey, Iran, Pakistan to East Asian countries. To emphasize the security thrust of the program, the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) was retitled the Mutual Security Agency (MSA). Countries allied with the United States received large-scale economic and military assistance; those not

allied received technical assistance.

In 1958 I went to Tehran as the Assistant Director for Program with the U.S. Operations Mission (USOM). It was a large mission administering annually some \$10 million in Point Four-type technical assistance, \$40 million in budget support with a staff of about 300 Americans - both direct hire and contract - organized in major functional divisions: agriculture, community development, education, health, industry, public administration, and media communications.

Iran had high political priority for U.S. foreign policy, but the aid program was in serious trouble with the Congress. Investigations by Congressman Porter Hardy had turned up many program failings and weaknesses. The U.S. had allocated large aid funds to Iran largely on the political criteria of bolstering the Shah and economy following the 1953 collapse of the Mossadegh government. As prime minister, Mossadegh had nationalized the huge foreign oil holdings in Iran and almost succeeded in deposing the Shah. U.S. political intervention had succeeded in putting the Shah back on his throne and reversing the nationalization of the oil investments of British and American companies.

However, the collapse of a popular nationalist movement and several years without oil revenues created a political crisis and economic recession. In these circumstances, the large aid mission and much economic assistance had been justified as a means of building political support for the Shah. But the important political rationale for aid allocations had overridden concern about economic feasibility, and hastily conceived and unfinished projects were spread throughout the country even as late as 1958.

Q: How was our program to achieve that political objective?

WILLIAMS: One means was by a high profile American technical assistance presence throughout the country, backed up by fairly substantial capital transfers, as well as military equipment and a large American military assistance group. Given the overriding political priority, we applied every instrument we had. There were American advisors at the side of every economic minister and large aid offices in the nine provinces or ostans, including Tabriz, Meshed, Sanandaj, Isfahan, Shiraz. The Mission was deeply involved in working with the government at all levels.

There was a kind of pump-priming process by rapidly funding projects and activities through a special funding arrangement, a Master Joint Fund, which I gather was adapted from earlier aid experience with servicios in Latin America. The monies we had put into the Master Joint Fund were jointly controlled by a special USOM and Iranian committee, outside the financial systems of either government. Hence, there was great flexibility in the use of the funds with limited accountability.

Q: It had its own rules, personnel policies, etc.-a form of shadow government?

WILLIAMS: It was in fact a shadow or separate government with flexibility to hire its own personnel, provide budget support to ministries, or whatever else was believed to be useful.

Q: There were a large number of Iranians employed by it?

WILLIAMS: There were about a thousand Iranian employees of the master joint fund.

Q: Why was it felt necessary to create this Master Joint Fund?

WILLIAMS: I believe it was a device which provided flexibility and speed in fund allocations, given the political priority to demonstrate immediate activity. You could support the large technical assistance type programs with a lot of capital assistance. You could build up staffs in the government ministries like agriculture, launch an entirely new Ministry of Health, as well build-up the governors' offices in the provinces. It was quite an operation.

However, the system was in trouble when I arrived on the scene because so many projects had been started, so much equipment had been shipped for them, and as I mentioned many of these projects had not been completed. Congressman Hardy made a big thing about "the road that went nowhere", about over-equipped vocational training facilities without any hookup to electric power or trained staff to run them. Things were done rapidly for political impact using aid instruments and budget support through the Master Joint Fund. The whole process had been under aid mission direction with too little regard for the role of the Iranian ministries, which admittedly were not very efficient.

My instructions in Washington were to do what I could as mission program officer to get all this straightened out.

Q: Who was the director at the time?

WILLIAMS: Harry Brenn, a retired colonel, who had made a reputation for himself in the Philippines as Director of the ICA Mission. When Magsaysay came out of the jungle in the end of the war, Harry Brenn was there on military assignment and befriended him. President Magsaysay was strongly pro-American. Brenn had been a highly successful aid mission director in the Philippines, and on this basis was sent to Iran. However, Iran was a totally different situation and culture from the Philippines.

Q: How did you go about the task of reform?

WILLIAMS: I only speak of my instructions. The Program Office I headed had never been very involved in program direction. It had been more of an office for economic reporting and compiling the program requests of the functional technical divisions, each of which had its own program officer. Consequently, I did not have a position of much influence in the Mission; the real power was exercised by the Assistant Director for Operations under the oversight of the Mission Director. It was structured as an operations mission. I didn't get hold of the program very quickly.

However, I became well acquainted with the Master Joint Fund and gradually assumed

responsibility for that shadow government as it affected the mission programs. And I began to assess priorities. My background in CIA policy assessments was helpful because there were major policy issues underlying the Mission program and U.S. relations with the Iranian government.

My basic assessment was that U.S. policy over-emphasized the military building of the Iranian armed forces to the extent that it was undermining the economy. The Iranian Government was highly compartmentalized and with the recovery of oil revenues, increased resources were going mainly to the military and to large infrastructure projects. The USAID Mission was over-exposed in activities which were normally those of the traditional Iranian ministries but with minimum involvement on their part, financially or otherwise. Without more direct Iran Government involvement, the USAID program was largely failing in its mission to build public support for the Shah and his government.

I began to write some of this into the program documents and I also sent my assessment of the political situation and the role of the aid mission by personal letters to my good friend, Jim Grant, who was in the State Department as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Near East area (NEA). I later found that my letters were widely circulated in State, and to the White House, Budget Bureau - and eventually to the U.S. Ambassador in Iran.

Ambassador Julius Holmes was a career diplomat who had been General Eisenhower's political adviser in the North African campaign and was well connected politically in Washington.

The Ambassador called me over and said, "I see you have been writing letters to Washington". I acknowledged that I had been writing to my friend Jim Grant about things that Washington needed to know and that couldn't be easily expressed in formal program documents. The Ambassador said he found my letters "fairly interesting"; he would instruct Harry Brenn, the USOM Mission Director to bring me to the Ambassador's staff meetings.

Q: That was a positive reaction; not a typical response in that kind of situation.

WILLIAMS: I believe the Ambassador decided to co-opt me. I could have been in real trouble. Apparently he had a complete set of my letters and he may have known that they were well regarded in Washington - as I learned later. Also, the political situation in Iran was difficult and tenuous. The fact that the aid mission was spread so widely throughout the country provided a basis for political and economic assessments which the Embassy staff lacked.

Whatever the reasons, the Ambassador brought me into his inner circle of advisors. From that point on I was a member of his senior staff, included in the weekly luncheon with the heads of the different U.S. missions: military, information agency, USOM and his senior officers. This group was known as the country team.

Q: Were there changes that began to evolve in the program along with this interaction with the Embassy?

WILLIAMS: It strengthened my programming role within the aid mission. Also, inclusion in the Ambassador's Country Team gave me a different perspective of the Shah and his inner circle. The Shah's moods of deep depression were a continuing concern of the ambassador; at country team meetings he spent a lot of time talking about them. This was a totally authoritarian government with an unstable leader. I gained the impression that our ambassador had an important role in helping to maintain the Shah's equilibrium. Or was it possible that the Shah was play-acting to manipulate the ambassador?. The Iranians are a complicated and clever people with a culture quite alien to our own.

Shortly thereafter the Ambassador asked me to accompany him to Washington on a mission to renew Iranian budget support which had been running \$40,000,000 annually. He had the political influence in State to get it over the opposition of the Mutual Security Agency. Since I was with the Ambassador, it appeared that I was supporting him when in fact I had been coopted, There was deep criticism of continuing budget support to Iran in the aid agency. However, Doc FitzGerald, who was the operational deputy of MSA announced they wanted "Maury Williams protected from this criticism" since the decision had been forced by State.

Q: You were under fire from some of your other colleagues, I imagine?

WILLIAMS: Exactly. Ambassador Holmes got his way because the political priority was very high. And it probably made a difference that he was a friend of President Eisenhower.

Q: What was the core of the issue?

WILLIAMS: I suspect the Ambassador had been leveraged by the Shah to continue the annual level of budget support despite the recovery of Iran's oil revenues.

Q: This was a direct grant, a transfer of funds?

WILLIAMS: A direct cash transfer.

Q: No policy reform measures?

WILLIAMS: Nothing! Nothing at all, beyond political criteria. The MSA agency was very unhappy with this given the need for program reform and continuing Congressional attacks on the Iran aid program. And I had been totally coopted by the Ambassador. But the fact that FitzGerald, as the deputy of the aid agency, sought to protect me, that really impressed me. When you have support like that, you can be bolder on reform issues.

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles visited Iran during my tour. He spent 40 hours in Tehran and made a commitment for a further \$40,000,000 which MSA had to cough up, this time for the military budget. I was asked to work out some justifiable attribution for these funds in the military budget. In the Iranian Defense Ministry I located their budget officer, a Colonel Goofuri who claimed that there was no approved written budget but that he could relate orally how their funds were being spent. It was like a housewife speaking of household expenditures, and I

couldn't make heads or tails of it.

I reported to Washington that this aid would simply have to be attributed as "general troop support", and that before any U.S. funds were released we should insist that the Iranian Defense Ministry produce a written budget, with our technical help if necessary. This was done.

Q: On the economic side was there an attribution at all?

WILLIAMS: No, the grant went directly to the Defense Ministry.

The economic situation in Iran at that time was that oil revenues were flowing again with the reestablishment of Iran into the oil markets after the reversal on nationalization of oil. But the flow was slow relative to budget needs which kept growing. In terms of budgets Iran had three governments: the traditional economic ministries which USOM dealt with; the security ministries which the Shah looked after directly (armed forces, intelligence and foreign ministry). And then there was the Plan Organization which was being set up as a result of U.S. pressure on Iran allocate a percentage of the oil revenues for development. That arrangement had been negotiated by World Bank President Eugene Black.

The intention was to build competence for development in a separate Plan Organization because there was limited competence in the traditional economic ministries. The Plan Organization would have a central planning unit largely staffed by American- trained Iranian economists, assisted by an American Harvard Advisory Group, all of whom had arrived in Tehran about the time I had. In contrast to the relatively insulated Plan Organization, the US Operating Mission worked directly with the traditional economic ministries.

Q: Did the Plan Organization have any influence over the traditional ministries?

WILLIAMS: No, there was great rivalry between them. The Plan Organization built its own technical capabilities, largely with contract groups, and ignored the regular ministries because they didn't want to put money through that rat hole, they said. That was some of the dynamics of the situation.

Q: Was there mainly a macro economics focus.

WILLIAMS: No, you couldn't do much macro economics: there weren't enough statistics available. One of the aid mission's projects was directed to developing statistical systems. The Iranian economy comprised an oil-based enclave, traditional peasant agriculture, some very rich landowners, a mercantile bazaar class, minor manufacturing and traditional crafts such as weaving wonderful Persian rugs. Oil provided a resource potential with continuous political wrangling among the Shah's Court, traditional economic ministries, and the security agencies over oil revenue allocations.

Q: How would you characterize the development thrust of the program in terms of the more traditional development objectives and the effectiveness of the program? What were we doing or

what were we able to accomplish?

WILLIAMS: The aid mission focused on technical assistance projects with major American staffs and ambitious programs in agriculture, health, education, and public administration. There also were projects in community development, industry, labor, and communications. The mission program spanned all the economic sectors and ministries. There were large training programs, although the effects were not immediate. The programs were heavily rural and agriculture based, working through provincial offices.

Mission assistance in public health was outstanding, building a health ministry from scratch, rural health clinics and staffing a major hospital complex in Shiraz. Important assistance was being provided in education including primary education, technical vocational training, and a major agricultural college.

Q: In agriculture, was this a time when the major emphasis was on wheat production?

WILLIAMS: No, it was before the green revolution technology was available. Agricultural extension was important but the results were not dramatic, compared with what would come later. Rural credit and water management were the pillars of the agricultural program. Community development did important work in village organization and sanitation. And the public administration program focused on training managers and providing advisory services at all levels.

Q: This was one of the largest public administration programs we've ever had.

WILLIAMS: It was indeed

Q: What was your assessment of that program?

WILLIAMS: Despite a comprehensive effort in public administration, the program on the whole was not very successful. Our advisors were up against traditional interests. There were great tensions within government agencies between the newly trained modernizers and the overwhelming mass of traditionalists. Iranians who were trying to do things in a new way were at risk in their own establishments and the support of foreign advisors was not always helpful to them. Inducing change in a traditional society is a slow process.

Q: Was the government particularly supportive of the rural orientation of the development activity? The issue of poverty, was that an issue of concern?

WILLIAMS: That was a central objective of the USAID program. One of the projects was for the redistribution of the Shah's crown lands. Agricultural and community development programs were naturally concerned with rural change and development. Community development, however, was part of the Interior Ministry which also had security responsibilities. Our public administration program sought to decentralize authority to the provinces and to the cities and significant progress was being made in encouraging local autonomy, until the Ministry of Interior

concluded that this was dangerous; at the stroke of the Shah's pen all the progress that had been made in local autonomy was wiped out. Such a large and widely engaged American aid mission had a modernizing influence certainly, but the Iranian officials while cooperating with us, were quite selective in taking what they thought was helpful to them.

One of the U.S. objectives was to bolster the Shah's weak political support and to direct the aid program to that end. Our analysis was that people were truly interested in the health and education of their children, and in improved nutrition. It was also helpful to encourage the redistribution of lands which were held by very large landowners including the crown. One of the Shah's ministers, for example, had holdings as large as [the state of] Switzerland. We were trying to push reforms through these kinds of efforts.

Q: Was there any progress made in the crown distribution?

WILLIAMS: Yes, there was slow progress. We would provide technical support for distribution of some of the crown lands and periodically there would be a redistribution ceremony. But all authority was centralized with the Shah. This is where the ambassador's relationship with the Shah, and my relationship with the ambassador proved helpful in terms of what progress could be encouraged in getting the Shah to understand that we were really trying to help build his political support. But then there was the question of the Shah's moods as to how much progress could be made. But if we could get the Shah to issue the instruction, then crown lands could be distributed, and various other things could be done.

Q: The government responded to the Shah's commands?

WILLIAMS: The government would respond to the Shah's commands, and the Ambassador's influence with the Shah was helpful. There were advantages and disadvantages to working with an authoritarian government. When you got the autocrat to agree your program moved forward. When you couldn't get his agreement, nothing happened. There is not much political development in that situation.

Q: How would you characterize what you learned from that very interesting time?

WILLIAMS: I certainly was fairly critical of American foreign policy for being so militarily oriented. If popular support was to be built, it required a more economic development focus and less on supporting the Shah's military aspirations. Some of this got back in my letters to Washington.

Q: Do those letters still exist?

WILLIAMS: I don't have them, and don't know whether they exist or not. I didn't keep record, maybe I should have.

Q: Very historic letters.

WILLIAMS: Their significance may have been to contribute to a reevaluation of U.S. foreign aid policy toward Iran. It was said that the letters were well regarded in Washington and later proved to be in line with the reappraisal of aid policy by President Kennedy's administration. Even before Kennedy was elected President, there was a consensus in Washington that our policy toward Iran was in need of major revision.

I was recalled to Washington at the completion of a two year tour. It seemed to me that my contribution had been minimal, the work was exacting but with very limited progress. At every turn one was battling strong division chiefs within the mission, entrenched interests in the ministries, political foreign policy "imperatives." What I concluded is that you needed enough political priority to get the aid money and a low enough political priority to be able to allocate it sensibly. When the political priority was too high you had much less influence over how the aid was allocated. And that was pretty much the situation in Iran.

Q: If it wasn't high enough, you didn't get the money.

WILLIAMS: When you have a large mission of Americans overseas it becomes a community in itself, highly visible and somewhat insular with a lot of socializing. When I first arrived in Tehran I made an informal survey of what had brought Americans to Iran in the aid program, why they thought they were there.

I found that they divided into three general categories. There were the missionary types, people who had joined the aid program to do good works. There were straight adventurers who were there for the excitement of being in a foreign country. Then there were what I call the escapists, people who had problems at home and were escaping from them. Most dramatically this was illustrated by one person's response to my question, "What brought you to Iran with the aid program?" He said "I found my wife in bed with another man, beat him up, and joined foreign aid." So for some aid was a kind of a foreign legion. While I didn't work out the proportions exactly, it seemed to me that the groups constituted rough thirds.

Q: What was your view of the competence of these people in their work in development?

WILLIAMS: They brought real skills from the American experience. They were competent in their respective fields, having been hired as such. Generally, they were not very competent in cultural understanding. Of course, Iran was a rather difficult culture, a very old culture, a very unique one, as inscrutable as the Chinese in many ways being such an autonomous and ancient culture. We were not well equipped to deal with that, neither myself nor others of the mission.

Q: Was there any attempt to compensate for that or address that situation?

WILLIAMS: No, not really. That would come later, cultural orientation. I had a week's briefing in Washington prior to being sent into the program job with instructions to "straighten up the mess."

Q: Did you have much contact with the Iranian people? Or did the Mission people have contact

with them?

WILLIAMS: As I mentioned, we had American advisers at the side of every minister and deeply involved in government ministries and provincial offices, so our advisors had a lot of contact. We were far better off in that respect than the State Department Embassy people since we were really embedded into the Iranian structure institutionally.

Q: What about social relations?

WILLIAMS: Somewhat formal and based on working relationships. The close relationships that I had were with the new team of Iranian officials who had been educated in the United States, who came into the Plan Organization and some other agencies. A number of them had American wives. These became close friends and associates; they were people like myself trying to deal with a rather difficult situation in a programmatic sense.

The Mission was very much oriented toward operations, and the rivalries within the mission were strong. The division chiefs were like dukes of Burgundy, more powerful than the king of France, or in this case the mission director. In terms of program functions, there was an internal struggle between myself and the assistant director for operations, which gradually eased as I gained influence in my relations with the Ambassador and the Mission Director.

Q: I think that's very helpful. It gives an interesting picture of the era when there were big aid missions. Well, is there anything more about the Iran experience that influenced your view of the development process and the aid business?

WILLIAMS: Certainly it deepened my experience in dealing with a society in transition. I learned how tough, how difficult development is with the instruments that we had. The Iranian experience may have misled me into thinking that the way to get progress was to have somebody in a position of authority to order it, because so much of what we were able to achieve in Iran was through persuasion of highly authoritarian government officials. For example, I learned that you used as many channels to the decision maker as you could, to get the decisions you wanted. Not a very democratic process, but one that met American interests.

At the end of two years, I was called back to Washington in the summer of 1960, before the presidential election. I became the program officer for the Near East and South Asia in the Mutual Security Agency.

Q: This was just before AID was formed?

WILLIAMS: Yes, reassessments were being undertaken even before Kennedy was elected. After the election, I became very much involved in the redirection of the aid Program.

WILLIAMS: Iran was still politically a high priority country for the United States. President Kennedy had set up a Task Force specifically to review our policy toward Iran; as a member of the Task Force I made a number of recommendations. As a result I was sent back as deputy

director of the USAID Mission.

Q: I see. Who were you working for at that time? Who was the mission director?

WILLIAMS: Harry Brenn was still there but he was at the end of his tour. Robert Macy, who had been head of the Budget Bureau, was scheduled to become Mission Director.

I found myself back in Iran with a good deal more authority than I had the first time around; it was more urgent than ever to reshape the program according to the new criteria - not entirely easy with such a large technical mission deeply embedded in on-going activities and unfinished projects.

Nevertheless, I began to reshape the technical assistance projects, sorting out which we would write off and which we would make a major effort to integrate into the Iranian Government, given their substantial oil revenues. It was essentially sectoral reprogramming since we were not going to put capital assistance into Iran. The objective was to scale back the Mission, lower its profile of involvement in the Iranian Government structure, and focus on fewer clear priorities.

Q: Did you make some decisions about the Master Joint Fund at that point?

WILLIAMS: We terminated it as we sought to reduce our operational involvement. There was a lot of sorting out with the Iranian Government, pressing them to take over important projects in the social sector, terminating others, and bringing down the size of the technical mission substantially. It did not make me popular, but finally I had the authority and experience to do what I believed needed to be done.

Q: What were you trying to do apart from bringing down the size? What was the developmental orientation you were trying to bring about?

WILLIAMS: The capital development was now with the Plan Organization so we were working very closely with them. The political priority was to integrate the populist elements of the USAID program into the Iranian government in what we jointly agreed was "the Shah's white revolution." The white revolution involved stepping up the distribution of crown lands, dealing with rural development in a more populist way, getting to the smaller farmers and peasants, and improving their access to health clinics and the educational programs. Basically the thrust was the white revolution were the populist elements of the U.S. program integrated into the Iranian agencies.

Q: Was there a lot of emphasis on decentralization and the decentralized programs?

WILLIAMS: No, there was no opening for it. So we stayed with the priorities I just stated.

Q: Did you still have the regional offices?

WILLIAMS: Yes, because they were completing projects that needed to be completed. While

their operations were cut back, we kept the structure of the regional offices to get the kind of turnaround we wanted in the program.

Vice President Johnson came to visit the aid mission in Iran. That was one of the high points. He cabled ahead of his arrival that he wanted to see villages before development had touched them, and after they had been improved by aid programs, so that he could see what progress was being made in the rural development. I went to the Minister of Agriculture, whom we worked with closely, and told him of this requirement. He replied "I can't show your Vice President areas that are totally undeveloped. I would lose my job if I did that."

Vice President Johnson demonstrated to the Iranians a new style of political campaigning, by mingling with the crowd and shaking many hands. The security people were not too pleased with that, but it was very effective and popular. If you ever encountered LBJ personally, you could feel his magnetic presence when he shook your hand.

Q: What were his comments about some of the things he saw?

WILLIAMS: He realized immediately that the villages he visited were not what he had asked for; too much white wash, potted plants, and ceremony. He didn't spend much time with that.

Q: Did he make any comments about the program generally?

WILLIAMS: Iran was a high priority for the U.S. and his interest was on the political side, commenting favorably on the Shah's white revolution and the importance of building popular support. There was an Iranian election coming up and LBJ's style of reaching out to people was much admired. Iranians spoke of "electioneering LBJ style". Iranian politicians took to waving to crowds and shaking hands; for awhile it was something of a cult.

We supported a change of prime ministers and there was a liberalizing influence at that time for the Shah's government, with land distribution, and more emphasis on development through the Plan Organization. And the emphasis on a white revolution had brought aid priorities to the fore.

Q: What happened to the public administration program? Was that continued?

WILLIAMS: It was cut back dramatically as a result of our assessment of which programs had taken hold and which hadn't.

Q: What would you say was taking hold? Which ones were making some impact?

WILLIAMS: Clearly those that were identified with the Shah's white revolution, particularly in public health and education.

The mission's public safety program also assumed importance since there were security problems in Tehran with sporadic mob demonstrations against the Shah. It was an uneasy political situation. In an earlier period the American aid office in Tehran had been wrecked by mob action.

Consequently, contacts between the American public safety division with the Iranian security forces were maintained. There were periodic alerts for American families and school children to stay out of the central city. In one instance, a mob was moving on the American school and a force was dispatched to evacuate the children. These were trying times.

Q: But there was a ferment evolving in the country which manifested itself later.

WILLIAMS: There was a ferment developing in the country. The Shah was not popular despite our efforts with the white revolution, and the political and security situation was tenuous. But, serious manifestation of this did not emerge until much later.

Q: Were we providing balance of payments aid or PL 480 assistance?

WILLIAMS: We were providing PL 480 but not balance of payments assistance. Our military assistance was still a factor with the Shah. And a new approach was to engage the Iranian military in development projects. As part of the white revolution, military personnel, mostly young recruits, were sent to villages to teach literacy. The Shah fully backed the literacy campaign, but it is difficult to know its effect. At any rate, it was an effort to popularize the Shah and his army.

Q: Were there a lot of institutions that you helped create at that time?

WILLIAMS: It was a period of consolidation, of turning facilities and programs over to the Iranians.

Q: You mentioned agricultural colleges?

WILLIAMS: Yes, there had been important aid contributions to an agricultural college and an agricultural bank, as well as health clinics and hospital facilities. These were initiatives which continued to serve Iran well.

Q: Any of the institutions that were particularly strong and lasting?

WILLIAMS: We completed the many projects begun, strengthened some projects institutionally, and progressively integrated them into Iranian institutions. This constituted reasonable progress.

When you ask about "lasting" institutions, you seek a perspective that extends beyond my time, for I left Iran in 1963. The aid program had equipped schools, clinics and other facilities, but real strength and continuity depended on the quality and numbers of local personnel trained. It is here that we made our most important contribution, particularly in health, agriculture, education and perhaps public administration.

Q: Did you have a sense of communist threat to the country from outside?

WILLIAMS: There was said to be a communist party; it never seemed very strong. It seemed to

me that the real threat was from the younger people who were educated, nationalist and who found the Shah's form of autocratic government objectionable.

There was a tendency to continue to see communism as a threat in Iran. Under the earlier containment policy, Iran had been encouraged to join CENTO and U.S. policy had done a lot to link Iran, Pakistan and Turkey militarily. Decisions were still made on political criteria, despite the development emphasis fostered by AID. One example was the CENTO railroad to link Turkey and Iran, a project which the State Department pressed entirely on political grounds despite its poor economic rationale. State officers persuaded Secretary Dean Rusk to override the AID objections and AID funded the CENTO railroad.

Q: It was built?

WILLIAMS: It was built. I don't think it was ever meaningful in economic terms. But it was built on security grounds that I didn't think made much sense. Assistant Administrator Bill Gaud and I unsuccessfully opposed it.

Q: How long were you in Iran?

WILLIAMS: I was in Iran from 1958 to 1960 and from 1961 to 1963. The year in between I was in Washington as NESAP program officer during the redirection of the aid program. In 1963, I went to Pakistan.

In summing up on Iran, I had made a reputation, in part, by recording my opposition to the U.S. policy of placing so much emphasis and resources on the Shah's ambitions for a large military establishment. That became the view of the Kennedy Administration.

Q: Why did you say we shouldn't be building up the Shah militarily? What was your reasoning for that?

WILLIAMS: An awful lot of resources were wasted on a military establishment that didn't have much purpose. Iran had tremendous human and economic potential which could have been realized. The combined economic programs of the Plan Organization and the USAID sponsored program in health, education, agriculture and rural development had tremendous approval from the Iranian people and could have stabilized the country if they had received appropriate support. For a time it looked promising, but the Shah essentially gutted the development effort in favor of continued rearmament and related heavy industry.

The Shah believed he was divine, "the king of kings, the light of the world", these were his formal titles. Few people could influence such divinity. The American Ambassador, Julius Holmes, had a sense of what it took to influence the Shah, and to maintain a balanced supporting programs. Unfortunately, later U.S. ambassadors and administrations found it easier to pander to the Shah's military ambitions.

Q: This was because of Iran bordered on the Soviet Union?

WILLIAMS: No Iranian army was going to withstand a Soviet invasion, which in any case was unlikely. No purpose was served in overemphasizing arms at the expense of development.

An Iranian I admired was Abol Hassan Ebtehaj, the head of the Plan Organization. Ebtehaj objected strenuously when the Shah reduced the funds available to the Plan Organization in favor of the military establishment. That took courage; Ebtehaj was jailed for his efforts.

When I first met Eptahaj, he asked about my background. I said I had studied at the University of Chicago and was a development economist. He observed "How fortunate your country was to have developed before there were development economists." He was not only a man of principle but also of wit and humor.

MYLES GREENE
Political Officer
Tehran (1958-1961)

Myles Greene was born in Georgia in 1925. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946, Mr. Green received his bachelor's degree from Yale University and his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Mexico, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey. Mr. Greene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2002.

Q: The summer of '58 and then what?

GREENE: There was then what was called the April Fool's form. I had expressed myself again for the Middle East, having in the meantime passed the Spanish exam. I was assigned to Tehran which was fine with me. I believe it was my first choice or second choice after Beirut. It's amazing to look back now at the size of the embassy. The political section in Tehran then was like seven or eight honest FSOs. What in the world everybody did is beyond me.

Q: Yes, particularly under that type of government.

GREENE: Yes. Anyway, arrived with another guy; we were the two junior members of this group.

Q: Yes, yes.

GREENE: My job involved miscellaneous things which I don't think anybody paid any attention to now. I was the biographic officer, the photographic officer, various things to do with the internal justice system. I remember my temporary boss, John Bowling, wanted everyone in the political section to be working on some background airgram or dispatch, which it was called then, looking into some institution or aspect of Iranian society. I did two things. One was the

ministry of interior system and the other was the Jewish community of Tehran. I got to see a couple of senior rabbis there and I wrote my report. Whether anybody ever paid any attention to it I have no idea, but it was interesting. So, I had these miscellaneous duties, it was okay, but not as exciting as the consular work in Mexico. My wife had a hard time there. It was a difficult post for her. Tehran was still, well, not quite primitive, but very much a backward place at that time. There was no embassy housing. We stayed in one of Tehran's finer hotels which wasn't very nice to say the least and while I was working it was up to her to be with these two children, one of whom contracted measles while in the hotel, and find us a place to live. You had to fight through the embassy motor pool to get somebody to drive you around to look at houses. This was during the winter by then and there were not too many choices of food. I'll never forget we, early on, we were invited to, the political counselor was away, to his wife's house for lunch and my wife, Tina, was chatting away. "Gee it's going to be wonderful to have something other than potatoes and carrots," but we had potatoes and carrots, which was all they had in the way of vegetables there. Anyway, it was hard for her. We eventually got a place to live, which was okay. Everything was, what we would now say fairly primitive living. There was a guy there in another agency who was very wealthy and he got a house that had linoleum. It was considered an absolute sensation in Tehran to have someone with linoleum floors. My wife took some classes and got involved in the Iran-American Society and fought her way through several maids trying to find one that would work out. We had various things stolen from us by a couple of them. In the neighborhood she sometimes wore shorts, a no-no. She didn't like it. Let's put it that way. In those days Foreign Service efficiency reports mentioned wives and my report said my wife was unhappy and uncomfortable in the place. I'm not sure uncomfortable was correct, but she was unhappy and it was hard on her. As the years have passed and people have asked about the Foreign Service, I have said that I have had a lot of good experiences, but it's very hard on the family. It certainly was there at that time.

Q: Who was our ambassador at the time?

GREENE: His name was Wailes. Old-line good Foreign Service guy and Frazier Wilkins was the DCM at that time. They lived not too far from us and we liked them. Although Wilkins later went elsewhere and Stuart Rockwell became the DCM, a very stiff guy to say the least. We didn't like him much. Wailes was fine, but you know he was the ambassador and we were lowly political officers there. I'll never forget one morning he came into my office for some reason and he said, "What a night. I was invited to seven parties last night and got to only five." I thought oh, that's the life of an ambassador.

Q: With seven political officers, what the devil?

GREENE: What did we all do?

Q: Yes, I mean, you know, particularly at that time, there really weren't political parties.

GREENE: There were political parties, there was something called a Mardom party which was the Shah's party in effect. Well, we had the counselor and his deputy. The deputy did a lot of so-called political reporting. It was at one point Bob Schaect and another point was Frank Crawford

whom I mentioned. We had one guy whose main job was protocol officer, to meet and greet people. We had duties that I just described for myself. The protocol officer once had a message from Eisenhower to the Shah which he forgot where he put. He couldn't remember where it was and it hadn't been delivered. His career didn't last very long. We also had a CENTO officer. There was a Central Treaty Organization at that time in which Iran was a member. We also had a political military officer. That later became a separate section for political military. That's more or less everybody I think.

Q: When you got there you were sort of the new boy looking at this. What was the impression you were getting from your fellow officers who had been there longer of the Shah?

GREENE: With one exception they all followed the party line, the U.S. policy, namely he was a valuable ally and we would stick by his limitations that he placed on our activities. Once in a while the Shah would say to our ambassador, "What was that guy from your embassy doing talking to so and so?" Obviously following us. So, we were very much under clamps.

Q: So, in many ways you weren't, I mean this is a theme that was followed up through 1978 or so?

GREENE: Yes, I will have something more to say about that later, but I want to tell you about Tehran later.

Q: But you were aware of that even then? When you were doing the ministry of the interior did this include SAVAK?

GREENE: No, definitely not. We had CIA there at the time.

Q: Okay, so.

GREENE: Yes, there was something else I wanted to mention about Iran. Despite this very positive experience in Mexico, I really had not been in the Foreign Service. Mexico was an unusual place on the border there. In Tehran, I was not given much guidance, to put it mildly. The head of the political section, whose name I can't remember, I met him briefly once, was a great expert on disarmament and had been called to Geneva to be the deputy head of our talks on some disarmament issue and was gone for months on end. By the time he came back he had been reassigned, so we never really had a full time head of the section there. John Bowling, who was acting and was a real expert on Iran and that whole area of the world, was a busy guy. He took some time to take me to a few of his meetings with senators or whatever just to see what it was like. Nobody ever said, "Okay, Myles, you're new and these are some things you should do or pay attention to." Nobody really said whether the biographic files were good or bad or incomplete or what should we do. I was surprisingly much on my own and partly because of the lack of time for a head of the section. Then Harry Schwartz came along as the head of section after this nameless man, who I can't remember, the disarmament man left. Harry Schwartz was much more hands on, but by then I had settled into my own routines and didn't really need his guidance so much.

Q: What was the situation with the Jews in Iran at that time?

GREENE: The Jews, the situation was really amazingly good as a matter of fact. They had two guaranteed places in the parliament which of course didn't have much power. They ran a number of the really big businesses. Many of the rug shops were Jewish owned. I remember when I was there later at the time of the revolution and a lot of the Jews were leaving to go to Israel because the Shah had fallen and Khomeini was coming. I went around to see if I could find some rug bargains as the shops were breaking up. No way, they were going to take it all to Israel with them. They were not reducing prices at all. They were generally accepted. Some of them were quite prominent, and there were some senior people around the Shah who supposedly had been Jews at one time and had declared themselves Muslims. So, I would say, considering the glass ceiling in some American companies on women, that for the Jews who did not want to become prime minister or something really senior, it was a pretty good life.

Q: Did you see corruption around, was that a problem?

GREENE: Well, I didn't, to tell you the truth, no. I'm sure it was there. There was this great project going on to build what was known as the royal country club and the guy clearly paid to get the contract happens to be a very prominent contractor here in town right now. Yes, but honestly I was not aware of that. When I would do a biographic report on someone about whom nothing had ever been written, I would go around to people in the American community, the official American community usually and ask them what they knew about this man and this sort of thing. Some of them did say, yes, he's corrupt, but in terms of details, I didn't know.

Q: Was there any stirrings of political life there?

GREENE: Iranian political life?

Q: Yes.

GREENE: This was only '58. Some of the Mossadegh officials who had been overthrown, with our help, were still around. There was a junior FSO in Isfahan who was the outstanding person in the FSO community saying that, "You know we should find all these pro-Mossadegh people. We should support them. That was a big mistake on our part to help overthrow this man.

Q: Who was this?

GREENE: Bill Miller. He later became ambassador to the Ukraine, after quitting the Foreign Service and coming back in. Bill Miller was not popular in the FSO community because he was so against the system and so pro the previous system that we had helped to overthrow. But most FSOs accepted the system. It was a big deal to go to the Shah's birthday every year. A certain number of people at the embassy would get to go and we all passed around the few white tie and tails that were there which you had to wear for this occasion and that gave you a buzz to do that. The Shah was remarried while we were there to Farah Diba, who remained his wife until his

death. The wedding procession and the Rolls Royces all went right in front of the American embassy. That was something that we all remember. So, I guess we were just fitting into the system as spelled out by the administration here. This was a friend of ours, a valuable ally, and we should do business with him.

Q: Did you ever have anybody in the political section say, "Well, we don't want to report on that?" Or something, "That's kind of disturbing" or something of that nature?

GREENE: No. I remember a few occasions where there was some subjects, I don't remember what they were, and somebody like the DCM would say, "Oh, let the CIA handle that." That was a way of saying, don't get into that whatever it was. Some of my best friends I might say, since I mentioned the CIA, were in the CIA. I used to say that Iranians surely knew the difference between us and them because they all had drivers, which we did not have. We drove our own cars. Two or three of these people, one just died recently, are good friends of ours.

Q: Did we have any monitoring of the religious life there at the time?

GREENE: Not really. I'll answer that better when I mention my next tour in Iran, which was some years later, but basically this is the kind of thing that if somebody from the embassy called on a mullah or any ayatollah and eventually the Shah would know about it. We didn't do that sort of thing. So, no, as we learned 20 years later, we did not know much about what was going on in the religious community. At that time there was one FSO who happened to be unusually fluent in Farsi who had some religious connections, I wasn't there when he was there. During the months before, during and after the Shah fell, this guy, Stan Escudero, was brought back from his Washington assignment to reestablish some of his contacts.

Q: Anything happen while you were there? Turmoil, presidential visits?

GREENE: Oh, yes, Eisenhower came. That was turmoil enough. As somebody in his party, in Eisenhower's party, said, "Well, this is the third embassy in a row that we've torn apart." You know how it is when a presidential group arrives. Yes, Eisenhower came, that was exciting. I had fairly menial duties to do with members of his party although I did shake the great man's hand, but he was mostly with the ambassador and then with the Shah. Years later, well, not too many years later as a matter of fact, I came back with one of these groups myself on the other side with then Vice President Lyndon Johnson, I could see how we tore the embassy apart.

Q: In '58 whither, where did you go?

GREENE: I had filled out the usual April Fool's form and had asked for a couple of other places in the Middle East and also asked for Arabic training in Beirut and was accepted for that. We came home on home leave. Both our families lived in Florida, so it was a very pleasant home leave and then we went at the very beginning of '59 to Beirut. My wife, it's hard to say, I'm not a psychiatrist, but really had a breakdown growing out of her unhappiness in Tehran and without going into the details of her illness, this greatly complicated my assignment to learn Arabic. Eventually the wise people in personnel back in Washington decided I should break the

assignment and come back, which I did. My wife was put on what was then called, some designation like A or B or C hat meant you couldn't be assigned back overseas without medical approval. Anyway, so I wasn't in Beirut very long, seven months or so.

Q: So, then you came back to Washington?

GREENE: We came back to Washington unexpectedly, and I had the marvelous good luck of encountering one of the greatest bosses I have ever worked for, Bob Minor, who was then the director of what was known as Greece, Turkey and Iran. This was the so-called Truman Doctrine era of our interests overseas; and John Bowling, who I mentioned had been in Tehran with me for awhile, was the Iranian desk officer. So, I helped John while people tried to figure out what to do with me and Bob Minor one day came in and said, "Would you like to be the number two person on the Turkish desk?" This is the way it happened. I said, "It sounds really good. I've never served in Turkey." He said, I'll never forget it, "Oh, it doesn't matter, as long as you know your way around this building here." So, I became the number two and often the number one on Turkish affairs within this office of Greece, Turkey, Iran and Cyprus. For three years and it was a very good assignment. I enjoyed it an awful lot. Many things happened. I went to Turkey several times on business. The Cyprus war broke out while I was there.

Q: You were there from '59 to '60?

GREENE: Well, no, no, let's see. '60 was the year when I really didn't have an assignment, I was helping out on the Iran desk. So, basically I was the number two on the Turkish desk from late '61 to early '65. It was three full years. The Turkish desk at that time was made up of three people, the desk officer, political officer and an economic officer. I was the political officer, which was normally considered the number two job, although the economic officer outranked me in terms of Foreign Service rank. I spent an awful lot of time with cables back and forth to Ankara and other places in Turkey. I got very involved with military affairs in Turkey because it was a NATO member of course. We had a large military involvement with a status of forces agreement which resulted in all kinds of problems with American soldiers who got in trouble there. I also wrote endless position papers for higher levels of the State Department to use when they saw the foreign minister or ambassador or whatever. I will never forget one occasion with Dean Rusk. I don't know why he decided to have breakfast with the Turkish ambassador, but I sat in with the two of them for breakfast; I didn't eat much. At the end of the breakfast, Secretary Dean Rusk said, "Well, there's the sofa, come on over here." He whipped out this paper from his briefcase, which was my briefing paper, classified secret. He said, "Let's read this together and see what we're supposed to talk about." So, the two of them, the Turkish foreign minister and our Secretary of State, went through my paper and decided what they should say on each subject. That was enlightening to me. But I did a lot of that sort of thing. I became very involved with the people in the Turkish embassy here in town. They had a very generous ambassador who didn't mind the fact that I was not the senior officer and saw me and invited me to events. It was fun. I enjoyed it.

MICHAEL PISTOR
Public Affairs Officer (Trainee), USIS
Tehran 1959-1960

Mr. Pistor was born in Oregon and raised in Arizona. After graduating from the University of Arizona and serving with the US Army, in 1959 he joined the United States Information Agency. He served as Public Affairs Officer in Teheran, Kampala, Douala, London and New Delhi. He also held senior positions at USIA headquarters in Washington before being appointed Ambassador to Malawi in 1991. Ambassador Pistor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: You were in Iran from, I guess, '59 or '60.

PISTOR: '59 and '60; for about 10 months. Eisenhower was President. The august Julius Holmes was ambassador, and Stewart Rockwell was the DCM. I don't think I ever saw the ambassador, maybe shimmering away in the distance, but certainly we saw quite a bit of Rockwell.

Q: What was your impression of our operation in Iran at that time?

PISTOR: It was enormous enterprise. AID seemed and was a separate organization altogether. Not only AID but there were big construction projects going on there with dams and roads and all kinds of stuff. We were into everything.

USIS itself occupied-- to the brim-- a seven-story building with a large printing plant in the basement, where we turned out a monthly magazine and all kinds of pamphlets and periodicals. On the top floor were recording studios where Iranian actors and directors and script writers put together two popular soap operas boosting our aid projects. We had 11 railroad cars fitted with movie projectors, small exhibits and portable libraries. USIS Tehran was enormous. We produced the Iranian government's official newsreel.

As a junior officer I was able to voice the English version of the newsreel, talk on the Voice of America, tie the ribbons on programs for a big film that USIA produced called Legacy of Cyrus--huge-- all of this to shore up the Shah at this very delicate time and, I think, to help push along the white revolution so that this huge economic and political bet we had made on Iran was going to be rewarded with some prosperity and stability. How successful these efforts ultimately proved to be is doubtful, I know, but it certainly was a wonderful place to learn the techniques.

One thing I was able to do while I was in Tehran -- I'm giving myself a pat on the back-- was that during that time, the American radio officer left on leave and I was put in his chair for a couple of weeks. I had the Press Office translate the Radio Iran program schedule that our radio people were providing me so I could have a cross reference. It turned out that the two schedules differed widely. We discovered that the senior local radio man was also producing at our expense a third weekly program with the same actors and script writers. Our senior radio local-- a talented man-- pocketed the money. This wasn't American propaganda; it was just a soap opera. There's a

lesson there about Persian entrepreneurship. And a much more important one about the need for language capability on our part.

Tehran was a very interesting place to be, and socially I must say Shirley and I mixed not only with the American community but with the British and other embassies. It made the Foreign Service seem about the most glamorous life you could lead: parties in the evening with carpets and candles and trays of food. Just a dazzling picture. But over time the atmosphere felt darker. You could sense the tensions affecting even the well to do and the well connected. Maybe *especially* the well to do and the well connected, because that's whom we saw.

Q: What was the impression that you were getting about the Shah?

PISTOR: Just before we got to Tehran, maybe five or six months earlier, Edward R. Murrow had been in Iran and USIS had helped him set up. The resulting CBS special was titled, accurately, Iran, Brittle Ally, which mirrored the unofficial assessments of the embassy officers. If people would ask, "How long do you think the Shah will last?" I could say truthfully, "Anywhere between two weeks and twenty years. You just can't tell."

A look at the villages showed the wretched conditions of these poor people in these stony, rocky places trying to eke out a living, and you'd think, somehow somebody's squeezing enough money out of those people to live in royal style, which the big landowners did, so you got a real sense of the great chasm between the rich and everybody else.

The American view, just the dinner party view, was that the revolution would come from the left if it came, (and it probably would), and that the people were going to stay in their pitiful villages and city slums, prey to the mullahs who were venal and backward, and whom everybody was trying to shake off, the Shah on one hand and the Left on the other. Of course, we turned out to be dead wrong about who was going to end up on top.

Q: Did you have much connection with Iranian society at all, or were you pretty far down the line?

PISTOR: I was far down the line, but I got a chance to see more Iranians than other junior officers because I spent a good deal of time at the Iran America Society. There were some intelligent things being done there, and Shirley and I had the chance to see some students, some young journalists. But we were really just scratching the surface and you couldn't tell exactly who you were talking to and why they were talking to you. I had a good friend, Sean Sweeney, who had been a student at Harvard and was recording poetry recitals and storytelling sessions in the cafes for the Widener Library, and he got much closer to the "real people". One of Sean's friends was Galway Kinnell, who is today one of America's major poets.

By 1959 Kinnell was already making a literary reputation. He was handsome in a movie-star way and crumpled, always had a button off his shirt, and women just wanted to sew that button. He was just amazing, a magnet. He didn't speak Farsi, but he spoke very good French, and so the Iran America Society people held a poetry evening in which Kinnell translated his poetry into

French Then the young Farsi poets who knew French but no English translated their Farsi poetry into French, and they met to discuss the works. It was very effective device, and made for a memorable evening.

This was the only time you got a chance to see people whose knuckles had been smashed by Savak, the Shah's secret police. We were seeing real political activists who could come, take the risk – because their names were being written down – take the risk of coming into the Iran America Society for an evening of this kind, poetry. So I think we had some contacts. Whether we were able to do anything with them was something else.

Q: Did you have any thought about where you wanted to go, or was that in the laps of the gods?

PISTOR: It was kind of in the laps of the gods. We enjoyed Iran because it was so exotic and so interesting. The first post, you know how it is– just wonderful. When the time came, we got a telegram that said we would now be going to Kampala, and I said, “Well, that’s either in the Far East or in Africa,” and discovered immediately that it was in Africa. I know that all of our friends in Iran just blanched and thought this was just going to be a terrible place, it’s awful, and “What are you going to do?” But we went, Shirley and I and our little baby, and Shirley was pregnant with our second child, whom we had in Uganda. We moved from a very large, sophisticated operation to a very small two-man post.

JOHN W. HOLMES
Vice Consul
Khorramshahr (1959-1961)

John W. Holmes was born in 1935 and raised in Quincy, Massachusetts. He graduated from Columbia in 1957 with a degree focusing on European Cultural History. He served in Iran, Italy, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and Italy. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on March 18, 1996.

Q: You left there in 1959?

HOLMES: I left there and in the gap until my time to go overseas took French training. I had taken French in school and college and was one of the last candidates for the Foreign Service to take a written language exam, in my case in French, and I got a good score on it. But I had never spoken much French. So I took French at FSI. Then a bunch of us at FSI were told what our next onward assignments were. I remember that the personnel officers called me aside, gave me special treatment, and sought to reassure me that my assignment was meant kindly and not as a signal that I should leave the Foreign Service. All this because I was assigned, to what was then one of the worst posts in the Foreign Service, a consulate in Iran in the town of Khorramshahr. This was, mind you, before we opened a lot of worse places. I had never heard of Khorramshahr until that moment and very few people have heard of it since.

Q: You were in Khorramshahr from when to when?

HOLMES: I arrived there in October 1959 and stayed there until 1961.

Q: We probably talked to each other. I was with the Dhahran Liaison group down in Dhahran. We used to try to raise each other by radio at one time or another. I was there from '58-'60.

HOLMES: We used to have emergency drills involving single side band radios and all that sort of stuff. I remember that but what I remember even better about the area was that we were very close to the Iraqi border. In fact you looked across the river and that was Iraq. By land, Iraq was only a few miles away. And we were not many miles from Basra, the second largest city in Iraq. But, relations with Iraq, both between Iran and Iraq and the United States and Iraq, were extremely bad. This was about a year or two after the revolution in Iraq.

Q: July 14, 1958.

HOLMES: We never set foot in Iraq. The few times we tried to make telephone calls to Basra, the phone would get disconnected after a while.

Q: We talked about life in the Khorramshahr, and then what our policy was, as you saw it, in Iran at that time?

HOLMES: Iran had passed through its first time of troubles under Mossadegh in the early 1950's. When I arrived in Iran, the Shah had been re-established on his throne for a few years. The price of oil was still pretty low although Middle Easterners were starting to rattle their cages about that. One of the interesting things about Khorramshahr was the presence of a Italian oil exploratory group from Agip. Agip--the Italian state oil company led by Enrico Mattei--was seeking to break into, or break up, the oligopoly of the Seven Sisters by offering much bigger shares of revenue to Middle East countries. The Khorramshahr consulate really should have been in Abadan, the nearby, very much bigger city which was the site of what was once the biggest oil refinery in the world. It was the traditional capital of the Iranian oil industry. In my time there, the newly created Iranian oil consortium--essentially a consortium of the Seven Sisters--was running the oil business which prior to Mossadegh had been the sole possession of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which was later renamed British Petroleum. The Italians at Agip regarded us American officials as inextricably linked to the Seven Sisters, as, in effect, the agents of their commercial enemies. (This attitude was not limited to Agip. Officials of Standard Oil of Indiana, not part of the Consortium, regarded us as essentially under the control of, if not in the pay of, Esso, then the dominant company among the Consortium group.)

Q: Well, were you catching from the Iranians or the non-Iranian oil people any reflections of the Mossadegh period and the nationalization of the oil company and all that?

HOLMES: Yes. Although it was guarded. There certainly were people around who had been Mossadegh supporters. But they were careful about what they said because the Shah had the lid on. Also, I think they probably suspected Americans of being in the same camp, indistinguishable

from the Iranian government or from Sadak, the Iranian secret police. But yes, there were certain guarded expressions of nationalist feeling; you could hear things that were less political. Like...our oil is being exploited, we should be getting a bigger share...a milder version of the Mossadegh line.

Q: Were there any feelings that you were getting towards Irredentism as far as Bahrain and the Persian/Arabian Gulf or anything like that?

HOLMES: A little bit. Bahrain was sort of a forbidden place. As a practical detail, we used to import liquor, canned goods and so forth from Grey MacKenzie, an old company operating in the gulf area. It had its warehouse in Bahrain. But we had to make sure the invoices said that these were direct shipments from the UK, because Bahrain was claimed as part of Iran. The Iranians and the consortium were starting to exploit places within the Gulf like Kharg Island where an oil loading dock and facilities were built during my time. But I don't think that irredentism was a big issue. I think the Shah had too recently come back from the brink for that. There was trouble of a different sort with Iraq. There was one period when the Iranians moved military forces to the border, and the Iraqis did likewise. And we were on the border. Nobody thought that either side would actually go to war but they came close; it was a situation in which a mistake might be made.

Q: Also, did you get any feel about the Embassy? At least at other times, one got a very definite (it wasn't an impression) but basically a fact that the Embassy did not want ill of the Shah's government reported. This was maybe a later period. Did you have any feel about the Embassy and reporting and all?

HOLMES: I think you're probably right about that. You know it's clear that the United States was responsible for the Shah being back in Iran and having accomplished that we weren't about to see him thrown out. I think there were people, I think there were a few people in the Embassy who had fair wide ranging contacts and who would occasionally write things that would show people who weren't completely satisfied with the new status quo in Iran. There was a man named John Bowling, I remember from that time, who had good contacts, though I'm not sure what use he made of them. There usually was or were two or three people like this in the Embassy. Only a few, only a handful. Otherwise I think you're probably right that the Embassy was there in really a more pro-consular role than in as a diplomatic mission.

Q: Did you ever find yourself being "sat-on"? Saying that we don't want to talk about this or report of this or that or anything?

HOLMES: No. But I'm not sure that aside from occasionally expressing skepticism on some of the economic development projects and alluding to the corruption of local officials--and people weren't blind to these things--I doubt if I tested the limits of freedom.

Q: Sometimes you know it's an interesting dynamic in the Foreign Service, officers come in and particularly in out-lying posts not as cynical or world weary or whatever it is and injustice as they see it gets played up and the Embassy doesn't want to have that.

HOLMES: There were a couple of people who did things like that in my time. One who was older and not so junior was Bill Eagleton who was the Consul in Tabriz and who was perhaps the world's greatest expert on the Kurds. He wrote immensely long dispatches about his travels in the Kurdish country and even retrospective, historical pieces about the Kurdish Independence-Democracy movement of the 1940s. This was implicitly a bit heretical. There was a much younger fellow, a vice consul in Isfahan named Miller who got to know many bazaar merchants--"bazaari." They were particularly significant in Isfahan and their class later played an important role in the Islamic revolution. Miller wrote some interesting reports, more sociological than political, that gave one a different sense of what people were thinking than did the mainstream Embassy reporting.

Khorramshahr was sort of the end of the line even from the Iranian standpoint. It was not a political center. Most of the Iranians there were not from the area because Khorramshahr was historically inhabited by Arabs. Although theoretically part of the Persian state It was run by the Sheikh of Mohammerah until the 1920's when Reza Shah managed to take it over and rename it Khorramshahr. It wasn't a very typical spot. Not a very good place from which to generalize about Iran. The neighboring city of Abadan had been a center of nationalist agitation during the Mossadegh period, but those involved were not local people, and that sort of agitation was kept under tight control in my time.

RICHARD THOMAS KENNEDY
Advisor to Iranian Military
Tehran (1959-1961)

Ambassador Richard Thomas Kennedy was born in New York in 1919. After receiving bachelor's degree from University of Rochester in 1941 he served in the United States Army. His career has included positions in Tehran, the NSC, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and was the US Representative for the International Energy Agency and the International Atomic Energy Agency. Ambassador Kennedy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 1995.

KENNEDY: My wife and I sat down and talked about it and said you know, if we ever want to go to Hawaii, we'll go, but if we ever wanted to go to Iran we wouldn't. Why don't we go to Iran and see what--you know--it's a fascinating part of the world--going back to my economic worries days. It's part of a whole world of oil, and it's an area in which there is a great contest among the powers, and I said it should be excitement. Something we've never done, never, never seen. So she said, "I'm game." So we went.

Q: *I have you there from 1959 to 1961?*

KENNEDY: Yes, about three years. What did we do?

Q: First place, what was our presence there at that time and what was the view that you were getting from people in the military, our military, your reading of the situation in Iran at that time?

KENNEDY: Well, the situation from a military point of view, the situation was that--you remember the Russian's had at one point attempted to take a piece of Iran.

Q: Yes, this was the first sort of "pull back" right after the war.

KENNEDY: The actual time that I went was immediately after the Shah's return from--he was in exile so the military was engaged in what was a major build-up of Iranian forces. The old--I was assigned to the ARMISH--which was the old, there were two old, old missions--the oldest ones of anywhere. GENMISH which was the arrangement Norman Schwarzkopf created the Gendarmerie mission.

Q: His father, the father of the...

KENNEDY: That's right, he was--Norman Schwarzkopf was the hero of the New York State Police.

Q: New Jersey State Police.

KENNEDY: Maybe. Yes, that's it. So he was the father of the GENMISH, following which was the ARMISH--which was the Army mission of only about 80 people all together. And they were actually integrated into the Iranian Army. I was Senior Lieutenant Colonel of the Iranian Army. I wore the Iranian Army patches on my shoulder. The military's attitude was...

Q: You're talking about the American Military?

KENNEDY: Yes, the American Military's attitude was gung-ho, get this job done because we've got to be in a position so that the Iranians can successfully at least delay a Russian assault. Remember the old concept of the Russian great desire to have warm water ports. The idea was to, as I say, position the Iranian Army in ways to prevent a major Russian--Soviet push to the warm water ports, the Persian Gulf. And that was the name of the game. Now, I was there because Eisenhower had promised the Shah not just a major increase in the military establishment, lots of tanks and equipment, but as well-- and I can't remember the precise amount now but it seems like--22 or 26 million dollars in cash. Now that doesn't sound like much but, again, in those days it was a lot of money and this was cash; this was cash money and it did not go into the General Accounts of the Iranian Treasury. It went directly into the Iranian military. Now anybody who knew anything about Iran might not know very much, but I did know that the basic theory is that everybody skims something somewhere along the line. My objective--the reason they created the position was to try to instill a sense of financial responsibility and to do everything I could to assure that the money was reasonably disbursed and used, as well as to do everything I could to see about how we could get out from under this by rearranging their whole budgeting structure

and so on. When I got there, or very soon thereafter, the guy who was sort of the programmer for all of the military equipment got sick and left--so I got that job too. Before I had gone I had been quietly asked to see Orrie Taylor--Morris Taylor, who was then Deputy Assistant Secretary, no he was the Economic Counselor of the Embassy. I was asked to go and see--I can't remember who they were now--privately. The military didn't like this.

Q: These are Embassy Officers?

KENNEDY: No, no. They were State Department Officers, they asked me to come in and they wanted me to sort of establish a close working relationship with Taylor, who was the Economic Counselor and then he had an assistant who came a little bit later who later was the Senior Executive Secretary, was an Ambassador, I don't remember, in some Middle Eastern Country someplace. Irish name. Nice young man. They asked me to sort of speak, because there was a clear split between the Embassy, on the one hand, and the MAG and mission business, on the other--not an uncommon situation. I, being of unsound mind, undertook to go over very soon after my arrival, a matter of days to introduce myself to these people. And I came back later that afternoon--as I came back a fellow by the name of Hardenburg who was the Executive Assistant to the Deputy Chief of the MAG, Colonel Kuhn, whose claim to fame was that he was the guy who commanded the troops in Little Rock.

Q: During the desegregation crisis in 1958 or something.

KENNEDY: That's right. When they called up the federal forces. Anyway he said "Colonel Kuhn wants to see you." He's shouting out of the window," so I said "All right, I'll come up." So I came up and the Colonel says "Now, I thought I told you that any relationships between this organization and the Embassy would be handled by my office and by the General." And I said, "Yes, you told me that," and he said "Well, what were you doing over there?" and I said "Doing my job." he said, "You have no business doing this." And I said, "Excuse me, Colonel, let me be sure we understand each other" (as I said I was a Lieutenant Colonel, and I was some real hot-shot. I didn't know what the hell I was doing.) I said to him "Colonel, please I know how to do my job, I know what it is. There is no one else here that does, or there wouldn't be any need for me to be here in the first place. So either I'm going to get to do it or I'm going to go home. I don't care which. We brought nothing with us my wife had the clothes on our backs and a couple of suitcases--that's it. We've got nothing--we don't even have a place to live yet. So I can leave tomorrow. It's okay with me." That established a working relationship in due time. I would never do that again. I don't know what prompted me to do it, but I did it.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting of the military group towards the Shah? It had just been restored.

KENNEDY: Strongly supportive. No question about it--strongly supportive.

Q: What about the Iranian army? How did they feel about it?

KENNEDY: Well, they had a long way to go, believe me. And that is what these guys were working very hard on--they worked very hard. Really hard. There was one difficulty and that was the financial one. The guys in the MAG--the mission who were engaged in planning big training programs--failed to take into account that it was going to cost money to do this. And the money was going to--a lot of it was going to have to come, not all of it I mean the Americans put up a lot of it--out of the Iranian military budget. And where the heck was it going to come from? I remember having this debate with them. I said "Look you can't, you just can't have field exercises of this magnitude all year long." You just can't do it. You couldn't do it at Fort Benning. But we got to understand each other very well, and by and large, the whole thing worked out very well and there was a relationship established between us and the Embassy which was very different that had been the case before. Where there was--they were sort of at war with each other quietly.

Q: What were the problems between the Embassy and the American military at that time?

KENNEDY: The Embassy had concerns about the general economic situation. They were being largely guided by the AID mission people who saw great problems in the economic field and that the military build up was something that was causing great economic strain and would cause even greater economic strain as it continued. And the concept of you have to do this if you're going to create a kind of buffer in between the Russians and the Caspian Army and between the Russians and the Persian Gulf was something that they didn't particularly buy because the military was just a drain on the economy. My position was somewhere in between that, that you've got to do the right thing with the military but you've got to do it in some economic way if you can--some economical way if you can. So, I used to sit there and cast up budgets all of my own and try them out on the Iranians, and by and large, we began to see ways in which things could be done. I taught school everyday about modern financial management methods. I'll never forget that because they kept saying "Why don't you give us your manuals," and I said, "Look, I'm not even sure the manuals are any good for us, much less you. But what we've got to do is you've got to design a system which you understand, which is associated with your activities--we'll talk about how to do that and you'll write the manual." That worked very well. A young man, Ali--I can't remember his name--he was Ali, a young major who was my interpreter who was very good, very good. So the difficulty, the difficulty was the age old difficulty of the drain that the military was causing against the economy. Well, ultimately, that was not the case because when the Shah undertook his white revolution who do you suppose knew that beforehand? The military. The military provided the cadres to go to villages to set up little medical aid stations, where there never were any. The military provided school teachers. They would bring into the military by conscription young people out of high school and turn them into school teachers and send them as sergeants or corporals out to be school teachers in villages where they didn't have schools. So you had to look at the culture and the culture involved a very important component.

Q: We're talking about money and resources, and part of the culture there is, as you said before, everybody takes something off the thing. Now how, with the American system up against that system, how did you work within that system?

KENNEDY: Well, I concluded, I think in a very pragmatic way that for me-- well for the Americans in general--to overcome several centuries of inbred culture would be foolish. You

couldn't do it. So what you wanted to do was create a system which made it more difficult for that sort of thing to happen. But don't concentrate on that--concentrate on a system which is dedicated to providing the resources necessary to do the job. Then any major funneling off causes the job to not get done. And that causes problems for the management. That was the concept that I developed. As I said, if you go looking at the 25 cents, nickel and diming that was going on all of the time, you'd be a total failure. I said don't do that--focus on how do you get the job done, what resources does it take to do it, define the resources. We had a very elaborate way to do that--well, not so elaborate, not really. We developed a whole new chart of accounts, which made the Finance Ministry crazy. They were just upset as hell. I said "Look, we can do this because this is managerially organized. When we have to report to the Finance Ministry, here's a cost-cutting arrangement. We drew these things and combine them in different ways and report to the finance ministry in the codes they want. But meanwhile, we'll run the business this way." The military liked that. Now I don't know--well all I can say is that by the time I left we weren't providing anymore cash number 1, and number 2, the military budget was almost stable--slight increases--increases that were clearly defined. I can sit down and figure out--I knew how much hay it took--what hay, that was oil (laughing). Animal feed was another one, because they had all these animals. Anyway gasoline was the biggest problem, and of course, they had two or three armored divisions consuming gasoline like it was going out of style. It was a simple managerial approach to getting the job done and making sure that accountability rested on the senior commanders to get the job done, so that if someone was stealing very much they wouldn't get the job done. There wouldn't be enough matter, there wouldn't be enough gasoline. And if you had calculated in the beginning the amount of gasoline it was going to take--the room that there was for major syphoning off was dramatically short, that was the whole point of the exercise. But don't go out and try to get every nickel and dime--you won't do it. You couldn't do it with a police man lurking outside my house--if I didn't pay him he didn't look after my house.

Q: You left there in 1960, how was the Iran when you left, in your opinion?

KENNEDY: Well, I thought it was going extremely well. I thought it was doing extremely well except that--and this was my own view then and I've never changed my view--except that the Americans with their ever-willing desire to see everything change--were persuaded to push the Shah into--in my judgement--into a lot of changes that were actually good--but too soon and too fast. You're trying to change not just social level, you're changing an entire culture. The whole social system was being changed. The Shah went too fast and lost control of it. And I've always thought that the Americans were in some--they can't be blamed for it, I mean the Shah could have said no--but he was being pushed constantly and execrably by the Americans to do more--beyond what I think was sensible. He alienated much of the landed class who, after all, were his principal supporters. He began alienating some of the military--that's the reason I went back there later--he began alienating some of the military because we were taking irrational views when the Shah came and looked MacNamara in the eyes and said "No thank you very much, I'm not interested." That shook MacNamara up.

Q: He was not interested in what, more military assistance?

KENNEDY: No. MacNamara was going to tell him how he was going to substantially cut the military and certainly that he didn't need any frigates for the Persian Gulf. I was brought into that exercise...

Q: *This was during the...*

KENNEDY: This was 19--what year did I come back 61?--it was 1962. I was brought into that exercise by--I was back in Fort Monroe, was Chief of the Management division for that command and I was ordered to Washington to participate in a Joint Chiefs of Staff planning group to go to Iran. The name of the game was we would do a joint planning exercise with the Iranians from which would emerge a force structure and then from that we would determine the level of military assistance. Julius Holmes was there by that time as the Ambassador. I did get to know the Ambassadors personally--each one of them well. Which sometimes irritated my seniors because they felt that somehow or other I might be somehow disloyal to them--I was not, never. That didn't bother me any. I guess I had undertaken a world unto myself. I was engaged in this exercise--we were there for more than a month--longer--I can't remember now. We wrote up a very, very extensive study showing the forces that it would take to stop a major incursion through Meshed coming down through the plain into the desert, or down through Azerbaijan through Tabriz and what it would take to do all that. And I said "But gentleman, none of this has anything to do with anything. If you don't give the guy his three little frigates you aren't going to get anything, he's not going to agree with you. And if he doesn't need the god damned frigates then it's irrelevant, it's absolutely irrelevant. He's got those Admirals that he's got to take care of. He's got to take care of those guys. And if he doesn't, all the game playing we've done here is useless." To make a long story short--I will tell a secret I suppose--General Twitchell was the chief of this exercise--we had gone back to try to get the Shah to agree to all of this. After it had been agreed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff--got back and there was General Twitchell, me, Eddie Brusard--Colonel Brusard had been the Chief of the Arab mission--and Ambassador Holmes quietly said "Come in for a minute please." So I went in and he said " Now I don't want you to be disloyal, I'm not asking that, I simply want an answer to a question." He said " If I ", well he told me that Grace and Yatsevitch had already been up to talk to the Shah and the Shah said "No. Thank you very much, but I'm not interested in that proposition." So he said [Ambassador Holmes], " If I were to send a telegraph back saying I must have the three frigates that the Shah has requested included in this package--without it we will not have an agreement, with it we will have an agreement exactly in the package as it was produced by the team and by the Secretary of Defense--how long would it take me to get an answer and what do you think the answer would be?" I said "Mr. Ambassador, if you phrased it clearly in the terms that you just put it--my guess is you would have an answer in about 72 hours and the answer would be affirmative." He sent that telegram totally back-channel obviously--directly to the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense and I was wrong--he got the answer in 48 hours and the answer was affirmative. And that was the end of the exercise--that's all the Shah wanted--and I told them that, I told them that before we ever went over there. I said " Look, this is all foolish, the key to this exercise is the Shah wants those three frigates and if he doesn't get them he's going to have a problem with his Navy. And those Admirals they don't look like much to you--but they are powerful political figures. You've just got to satisfy them."

Q: This often is one of the things one has to realize--where power is and how you keep them happy.

KENNEDY: And all the hard logic in the world isn't necessarily the answer--you go through all of the hard logic and say this is ridiculous. But then ask yourself what does it cost to get what you want. Is it worth it? Ultimately it was clearly worth it.

Q: This often depends on equipment that we have in the United States. Logic says we should get rid of this airplane or something, but the logic is that the airplane is produced in Senator so-and-so's back yard.

KENNEDY: Whatever reason. Whatever good reason. In any case, I got through with that and, when I got back, I was then assigned--instead of going back to the beautiful place--the Continental Army Command at Fort Monroe. Had a lovely little house...

Q: In Norfolk, yes.

WILLIAM GREEN MILLER

Vice Consul

Isfahan (1959-1962)

Political Officer

Tehran (1962-1965)

Ambassador William Green Miller was born in New York in 1931. He earned his bachelor's degree from Williams College in 1953. His career has included positions in Isfahan, Tehran, and an ambassadorship to Ukraine. Ambassador Miller was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2003.

Q: Well, this might be a good place to stop, I think. Cause I'd like to stop with the time. OK, well, we're going to pick this up in 1959 when you were off to Isfahan. You were there from when to when?

MILLER: I was there from '59 to '62, and then from '62 through the end of '64 in Tehran.

Q: For a first assignment you really got a dose.

MILLER: Oh, it was wonderful.

Q: I would think so.

Okay, today is the 3rd of March, 2003. Bill, Isfahan. What did you know about Persia or Iran before you went out there?

MILLER: I knew very little. What I did know came from my friend who I met at Oxford who was a Persian. Hossein Mahdavy is his name. He was at Christ Church, when I was at Magdalen. We became good friends through an Egyptian, Adel Serafim, who was also at Magdalen with me, and was a cousin of his wife-to-be. A complicated marriage – Christian and Persian Muslim, but it's something that has lasted. The wife-to-be, Noveen, is a very good friend, a beautiful Copt French woman, and the cousins, the Seraphims were Copts, too. My Magdalen friend is professor at MIT and the other is a very successful financier in Houston now. And with their many other cousins – you can imagine what the network of Middle Eastern connections is. So I knew a little bit about Iran from him, and we had seen and met Iranians – that is Suzanne, my wife and I, had seen young rich Iranians in Geneva where they were called “oil wells” by the Smith girls. Suzanne, my wife, was in her junior year abroad there at the University of Geneva. These were interesting times being in Europe under any circumstances, but as students from the United States it was eye opening to say the least.

I knew a little bit about Persia from English literature – Milton, the references to Persia in his poetry, a little bit from Greek plays, and Greek history. One could say I knew virtually nothing, except the phenomenon of Mossadeq, as reported to us by the New York Times and Time magazine, and the very fascinating complexity presented by two very different Presidents and administrations – that is Truman who looked on Mossadeq as an interesting fellow, but he didn't see anything wrong with him, certainly not enough to support an overthrow, then Eisenhower seeing Mossadeq as a problem for his great wartime ally, the British. I knew a little bit about that and the oil controversy from the papers and discussions at the time, but nothing at firsthand. So in training and preparation for going to Iran, I asked for Persian language, and they said, “You won't need it.” So I was assigned to German language, which I already knew, for three months, until we went out to Isfahan. We traveled to Iran in the old way, we took a month getting out there, stopping in the major cities of the Middle East on the way. It was a wonderful introduction as a gradual...

Q: This dating again when you went out was '59, is it?

MILLER: Yes, '59, in the fall of '59. So we stopped, of course, first in London, Paris, Rome, and then Athens, Cairo, Beirut, Istanbul, Baghdad.

Q: Were you getting any rumblings when you went to Beirut about our going in there the year before?

MILLER: Yes, I had friends who were teaching at AUB like Malcolm Kerr.

Q: American University Beirut.

MILLER: Yes, and so we talked about the changes taking place throughout the Middle East, and change was very evident – but it became increasingly evident that the tensions, in many ways, and the changes taking place in the Middle East, certainly in Cairo, where the military presence of the new regime was evident, (this was the time of Nasser). Although Nasser's Arab nationalism didn't in any way impinge on the romantic character of Cairo and environs. We had

a wonderful time staying in ancient Cairo hotels such as the since destroyed Semiramis, with its twenty-five foot ceilings and the floor to ceiling windows, from which we would watch the kites flying overhead, and to hear the wonderful sounds and smell the exotic smells of Cairo.

Q: Kites being the birds.

MILLER: Yes, great hawk-like predators, a raptor. Yes, not the other kinds of kites that fly over Tiananmen Square or even Washington.

Each of these stops was further evidence of change, and of a kind I that I knew I had to understand in some way, and that I didn't understand at that point, the military character of these new regimes, the alienation from the British or French colonial backgrounds of the immediate past. Suzanne and I had a wonderful time on the trip to Iran, it was just the best of Foreign Service notions coming to reality by way of not only traveling, but the freedom to explore and learn and experience. So we arrived in Tehran ...

Q: Just one other thing. In Baghdad, was Qassem in?

MILLER: Yes, Qassem.

Q: Were there any aftermaths from just a year before when...

MILLER: No, only that we found it was the most guarded place we encountered. There were more military in evidence and Baghdad was a less prepossessing city than any of the others. In this atmosphere of military coup and military – I won't say occupation – military governance, it was a less than open atmosphere, although it's a very interesting city, and birthplace of many of the world's great cultures and of course has wonderful museums. At that time of year it is very pleasant.

We arrived in Tehran late at night, at about midnight or so, and lo and behold no one's there from the Embassy to meet us. We had no real grip of the language, no money, barely knowing the address of the embassy, just orders to report with a note saying, "You'll be met at the airport," but there was no one there. Our plight was overheard by a British business man, I think an MI5 person, named Michael Collins. He very kindly took us in his car and lent us some money, and we got to the embassy, the embassy apartments, and all was well. So we were there at temporary apartments for a few days and we met the ambassador and the members of the Embassy staff.

Q: Who was that?

MILLER: Ambassador Edward Wailes. He was a very nice man. The political counselor was Harry Schwartz.

We then went down by plane, Iran Air, to Isfahan. This was a one hour flight, over deserts and rugged mountains; a very dramatic flight. The airport at that time was set in between two very

high mountain peaks, so it was a dangerous and interesting approach. The skies being clear as they normally are, one could see the beauties of the Zayandeh river valley coming down from the snow covered Zagros mountains, snaking through the piedmont, so to speak, and into the desert plain, and here's this green oasis that extends all the way from the mountains to the great desert, and shiny domes, but not of gold, it's the wonderful green and blue and yellow tiles of Isfahan. The arrival in Isfahan was very different than Tehran. Frank Crawford, who was then consul. We were met by the vice consul who I was replacing, John Exum.

We went into a temporary apartment in a hotel quite near the consulate which was right at the heart of the old city, of the 16th century city, next to the Bridge of 33 Arches, *Si-o-Seh Pol*, as it's called. At the entrance to the bridge there's a square that had a statue of the shah. It's called Mojasemeh, which means "Statues Square." The hotel, conveniently, was called the Isfahan. It was run by an Armenian with a very un-Armenian name, John McDowell, who took very good care of us in those early days. We later found an apartment right on the Mojasemeh Square in a second floor apartment over a bicycle store that was owned by a Bakhtiari Khan, Yahya Khan Bakhtiar, who was one of the Bakhtiari tribal leaders, unfortunately, an opium addict, but a very charming fellow. His apartment was available as he was going off to tribal lands. He very kindly agreed to let us rent the apartment.

It was most exotic apartment fully furnished in the Persian style, gloriously decorated with Persian artifacts, and in his taste of dark velvets, tribal carpets, and Persian prints. It was a wonderful place to be because all of the noises and sounds, of ordinary life were there – the radios, the shouts of the workers below and all of the traffic going roundabout the square and across the bridge of 33 arches. The consulate was only one building away – just a few yards away.

Q: Let me stop.

[END TAPE]

Q: This is tape two side one of William G Miller.

MILLER: The building was only – the consulate was only one block away, and it faced the Mojasemeh, and bordered on the north by a small stream which was dry part of the year, but was part of the irrigation system, they are called *mahdis* in Isfahan and the mahdis are part of some comic events later. This was a feature of Isfahan, that it had canals, so to speak, for irrigation. From the Zayandeh Rud River, the main stream that comes down from the Zagros Mountains. The word Zayandehrud means "the living river," which it literally is, it gives life to that whole part of Iran.

So the consulate was on one side and the bicycle shop was under us and next to us on the other was the home of an Armenian, doctor/antiquarian named Doctor Caro Minassian, who was one of the few good physicians of Isfahan. He was a leader of the Armenian community, and an extremely learned man. We became very good friends. He introduced us to the world of archaeology, antiquities and learning in Isfahan. He cared for us medically on occasion when we

were in need of help. He and his wife were very, very good friends. He gave us an introduction to the art and literature and history of Isfahan from the 16th century to the present day. He himself was living example of a descendent of those Armenians who came in the time of Shah Abbas and prospered in this Persian landscape.

He also kept various animals in his garden next to ours, including, as I recall, two enormous land tortoises. They were the size of coffee tables. They were enormous. They were delight for children who would ride them. He had desert birds and so on. He was a wonderful, wonderful man – a kind of Dr. Doolittle.

The consulate itself was made out of a 19th century building that had been a merchants residence. It was basically an entry hall with one or two offices on the ground floor for the Iranian staff of which we had three, not including the guards. The senior Persian assistant was Baquer Dehesh, a courtly, very handsome well educated well respected citizen of Isfahan. Mr. Dehesh, whose polite manners exemplified the best of Iranian culture was educated in Tehran at Alborz College under the legendary Dr. Jordan. Alborz College, a Presbyterian missionary college which educated many of Iran's leaders during the 20s, 30s, 40s, and fifties. Mr. Dehesh was well known to all the key officials, bazaari, clerics and tribal leaders of Isfahan and it was through Mr. Dehesh that I met all the key leaders of Isfahan and was able to learn about many of the particular ways of Isfahan. He and his wife made our entry into Isfahani life an easy transition. There was also Khalil Ghazagh, who was a jack-of-all-trades administrative assistant – he translated, he was the receptionist, he typed unclassified material. He was an access to places and people that we needed. Then there was a man named Sayed Soroosh, who was a university professor, but was the assistant to the USIA, USIS person. He, of course, knew the university people, and many of the learned of Isfahan.

Then there was a third Persian named Abol Hassan Sepenta, a brilliant poet and filmmaker who worked for the Americans because he needed money. He was also a newspaper man, he was the editor of a one man Isfahan newspaper Spenta. He became a very good friend right to the end, right to his death. He really knew the country and loved its history and was a patriot in the full sense of the word. He was a part of Persian history, certainly Persian cultural history, and was very sensitive to current political movements and attitudes. Being a poet himself, he was closely in touch with the fellow dissident poets, the poets of the left, who tended to write what they called the “new poetry” – that is, they created new forms of poetry, writing not in the *ghazals* and the formal structures of the past, but free verse, so to speak. The subject matter was very direct and contemporary, a kind of realism at work. Through Sepenta I met the poets and antiquarians and historians, politicians, and musicians, and those in the theater of which there was a very interesting kind in Isfahan, as well as many of the religious people. I met most of the leading *mullahs* (Islamic clerics) in Isfahan, of all kinds, ranging from the most conservative to the various Sufi sects.

In fact, one of the very first official occasions I attended in Isfahan at the suggestion of Sepenta was a funeral in the mosque which was down the street from the consulate on the Chaharbagh, the main, ceremonial street of Isfahan. The Chabar Bagh (four gardens) was built in the time of the Safavids, in the 16th century. It has water courses down the middle of a broad avenue, with

eight rows of *chenar*, which is a kind of plane tree, ancient plane trees including some that were planted in the time of the Safavids, a very beautiful avenue. The funeral was for a poet who had just died. He was a reformist poet. I can recall it very well because I had no idea what to expect. It turned out to be a most courteous moving event at which I was given a place of honor, served a cup of coffee, bitter coffee, and a cigarette. The *mullahs* were reciting *suras* (chapters) from the Koran, Sufi poetry, and declaiming about the life of the deceased poet. It was an auspicious beginning I thought, this very first official act I did in Isfahan. The word got around Isfahan that I had gone to the mosque. Sepenta knew what he was doing in suggesting going to events like this funeral. It was clearly the right kind of introduction, the right first step.

Q: I'd like to step back. Where in 1959 did Isfahan fit into the Iranian body politic, and what was going on in Iran at that time?

MILLER: Well, Isfahan is in the middle of this very large country, Iran. Tehran is up in the north, eight hours by car. It's about 500 miles, one hour by plane. It's the second city in size in Iran – it was then, and it is now. It was the capital from the 16th century until the 19th century, and anyone with any sense would still put the capital there, in the center of the country rather than Tehran. It has sufficient water and the climate is excellent, ideal, but for political reasons the Qajars, the successor dynasty to the Safavids, established their capital in Tehran, to the north.

At that time, Iran was organized into ten *ostans* as they were called in Persian, ten states. Each state was governed by a governor called an *Ostandar*, and each subsection of states, several counties or the equivalent would be under the governance of a *Farmandar* who reported to the *Ostandar*. Then there was a mayor, *Shahrdar* in the case of Isfahan, who was elected. This was from the time of the Constitution in 1905. The mayors were elected. This was an understanding in the 1905 group and really, from that time on, that the people, or the major interest groups of the regions, had to be given some authority. This was about as much electoral power as they would permit in local elections. So mayors were elected, even though the shah played a very significant role in selecting those who would be allowed to run for the position. If necessary, he'd step in to assure or prevent – just as the *mullahs* are doing now in some of the similar political situations.

Isfahan was a very powerful place – it was still a tribal center – that is, of the Bakhtiar and Qashqai, who to some extent, had their influence in that region and in the country. It was the largest industrial area at the time. The industry was mostly in textile factories: weaving, cotton and silk and wool goods, as well as the old style of manual manufacturing – that is what we would call handicrafts, but they called essentials, the things of everyday life actually made in the bazaars. So the bazaar was still the economic center of manufacture, finance, politics, economy.

Q: The Bazaaris are a distinct political group in a way?

MILLER: Well they were the urban elite. They were the businessmen, those who had money and economic power. The bazaar was the center of all Iranian cities, and it still is. The Bazaar contained within itself, the heart of religion of religious belief. Many of the older mosques originally endowed by the *bazaari* were in the bazaar. The bazaar was a way of life – restaurants,

baths, as well as shops, and places of manufacture, schools, seminaries, and residences. It was the physical and cultural core of the old cities of Iran, as it was for much of the Middle East. Cairo has somewhat similar structures, at least from Islamic times, and even from before Islamic times. Isfahan, being an old city, one of the oldest in Iran; it is an old city that goes back to about the 5th century before the birth of Christ. Isfahan was the largest city in the Middle East and – much larger than London and probably any other city in the world at the time of Shah Abbas around 1600. So it has visible accretive remains from the earliest times, from pre-Christian times right to the present. The sense of a nation and a people with a very long history is something you see every day, any Isfahani knows this. He sees it in the buildings he lives in, and works in, and walks by. Isfahani neighborhoods are defined by the established – established over millennia - economy, and even Isfahani ethnic backgrounds, were defined thousands of years ago. Its Jewish center, for example, has been there from pre-Christian times. The Armenians come late into the 16th century; they are there from Safavid times. There are regions of Isfahan that are even now called Arab and Turkmen and Afghan dating from the invasions of centuries past. Understandably Isfahan is very complex architecturally, and even linguistically. Within the city there are distinct dialects of language based on the great movements of people caused by the invasions of past centuries.

Q: When was the overthrow of Mossadeq?

MILLER: 1953.

Q: Was the shah really in power, particularly from the Isfahan ...

MILLER: The Shah was never accepted by the Iranian peoples as a whole as the rightful leader. The shah was always seen as illegitimate, as imposed by the West, certainly from the time I got there. The Iranians believed that he had been imposed by the British and by us, particularly the British. The line of agreement that Iranian nationalists used when I arrived in 1959 was that we Americans were manipulated by the hidden hand of the British. It was explained to me by Iranians who had witnessed the events in great detail how the overthrow took place. The role of Kermit Roosevelt, and Ambassador Henderson, and Shahban the Brainless were all related by my new Isfahani friends who had lived through all of the coups and had created a mythology, as well as a documented history and a body of poetry of the event. The story of the 1953 coup was a favorite subject matter for declamations. They saw to it that I was carefully educated in what they regarded as Persian realities. Indeed I was educated, because I was given full documentation, newspapers of the time, and met the personalities who had been in prison, tortured. The American spies at the time were all identified. I was actually asked, “Did I know so and so and so ...”

It turned out that the governor, called in Persian, *Ostandar*, of Isfahan, a man named General Abbas Farzanagan, had been the “bag man” for the coup, a fact that he was pretty proud of. Farzanagan told me in detail his direct role in all of these events. We became very good friends. I was very interested in him. He was very pro-American, obviously, and very close to the Shah, but incredibly corrupt, as I learned in watching him at work as governor. So the gap between the governors of the shah and the shah’s rule and the people of Isfahan, where I was living, was

evident almost from the beginning. There was little respect for the shah among the Isfahani people.

Q: Was it the shah himself rather than his father?

MILLER: The father was looked on with more respect, because he was a relatively independent, self-made man. He was very tough soldier. He did his own thing. He resisted cooption by foreign powers till the end, and of course was deposed because of his recalcitrance, although he was a brutal dictator and ignorant in the minds of many of the nationalists, and in their view not fit to be a great king. Although they did accord him respect for the reforms he carried out such as building railroads, and roads, airports, and the beginnings of a new system of justice even though it was abused by him, used by him, for control rather than justice. The path of change instituted by Reza Shah was seen to have possibilities by the nationalists. For example, the new school system of course, and universities, were seen as a plus. The beginnings of modern economy created by the use of oil revenues from the oil fields in the south all took place under the shah's father.

Shah Mohammed Reza, the son, was seen as weak, as a puppet of the Americans and the British, particularly the British, and not worthy, and certainly by his own example he did not do noble things. The nationalists who were the remnants and successors to Mossadeq were the strongest most popular and respected political groups in Iran.

Q: How was Mossadeq viewed?

MILLER: As the greatest of the Iranian leaders of the early 20th century, because he came from a noble background and devoted his life to Iran and its people. He was a Qajar, a prince, from a distinguished princely family. He was well educated in Iran and in the West as a lawyer, was considered by all as a patriot, was a nationalist who resisted British and Russian, and Reza Shah, went to prison for it. Mossadeq was a land owner, who treated his villagers humanely, a reformer, and a democrat. He believed in democratic institutions, constitutionality, and legal reform. He understood the nature and history of Iranian civilization. So he was thought by Iranians to be a great man, unfairly and unwisely removed by foreign influence. It was a big mistake, in my view, for the U.S. and Britain to have undertaken the 1953 coup.

His group was called the National Front, *Hesba Melli*. It was a coalition of interest groups and proto-political parties that reflected the whole spectrum of Iranian society from the religious right to the Marxist, on the left, but it was put together with a Persian perspective. The National Front Party was the biggest political group in Isfahan. There were Communist elements within the party, but they were a minority. The communist party, the *Tudeh*, were well organized and well under the influence of Moscow because their leaders had been educated in Moscow and their funding came from Moscow. Their social causes had resonance – the urban poor, the exploitation of the masses were real issues. They had some influence in the labor unions in the textile mills of Isfahan where conditions were far from ideal. The *Tudeh* had no appeal in the villages, which was – at that point 70% of the population who lived in the 50,000 villages. The communists were an urban phenomenon.

So I was familiar with all these groups, the Communists, the Tudeh party, and certainly the National Front people.

Q: Tudeh was the Communists?

MILLER: The Communists, yes. I also knew the SAVAK (National Organization for Intelligence and Security) people who were hunting them down, arresting them and killing them.

Q: How efficient – and appreciated is really the wrong word – was the SAVAK, or present at that time in Isfahan?

MILLER: It was a very big presence, partially because SAVAK at that point was led by a Bakhtiari General. Timor Bakhtiar was head of SAVAK, and he came from Isfahan or in the mountains near Isfahan. He was a Bakhtiari. Yes, General Timor Bakhtiar was head of SAVAK and he was considered a rival for the Shah for power because he was a player and could easily have deposed the Shah, given certain events and the attitude of the Americans and the British. The Americans and the British kept very close touch with SAVAK since they were the main training group for the secret police and supplied their equipment. We had a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) officer in Isfahan.

Q: Well, now let's talk about the consulate, not consulate-general ...

MILLER: There were five consulates.

Q: ... in Isfahan, at that time, because our reporting out of Iran has been very, has been criticized, that sometimes were too much this way or that way, you know. When you arrived what was sort of the attitude and what was the task of the consulate?

MILLER: The consulate was really a kind of a – the consul was a pro-consul, in many ways, because there was a huge economic and military assistance effort, Point Four and ARMISH-MAAG effort underway.

Q: Begun in the Truman administration.

MILLER: Yes, it was. Point Four was the forerunner to USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development). The Point Four Plan, of course was, developed in the time of Truman, for assistance to Greece, Turkey, and Iran – Egypt, as an emergency foreign policy and security tool. That took the form of technical assistance, largely in agriculture, health, and water projects, airports, infrastructure, and there were quite a few aid technicians who gave, in many cases, extremely effective help, particularly the doctors in the universities and hospitals. The development assistance of Point Four was extremely helpful to Iran.

Then we also had a very large ARMISH-MAAG (US Army Mission Military Assistance Advisory Group) contingent. ARMISH-MAAG was the military, the military security assistance.

It was under the command of a general who wanted to assist a military academy in Isfahan, particularly giving access to artillery and tanks. We had a large military training component, a feature that lasted until the revolution in 1979. At the end, in 1979 they had air force training in Isfahan, and of course Bell Helicopters was building helicopters in Isfahan, and communications factories.

Then there were training and technical programs in all of the structures – the police, the gendarmerie, doctors' education. So the consulate was in formal charge of all of this. As vice-consul I was in charge of all of this when Frank Crawford was on leave.

Q: There were just two of you?

MILLER: There were two Foreign Service officers.

Q: And the CIA.

MILLER: The CIA station chief, the USIS officer, later Bill Meader and the Point Four head, Harvey Coverley and John Holligsworth, our administrative assistant and code clerk.

Q: Did the CIA officer perform consular functions too?

MILLER: Reluctantly. He was a good man. We went on many field trips together. He was helpful. I learned much from him about CIA, and the mentality of those engaged in covert activities.

Q: How about just the mundane – but Iranian students were the bane of most consuls existence in Europe and elsewhere cause they were all over the place looking for visas. Did you have that?

MILLER: I had to issue visas. It was my first post, I expected to issue visas. I issued about 50 a year.

Q: That's not many.

MILLER: No, and I even issued four passports, two of which I mangled in the seal embossing machine. We had a malfunctioning hand crank machine. I couldn't get several of the passports out of the machine. It was a rather comic scene.

Q: So then mainly your work was ...

MILLER: I was the political officer, I was the economic officer, I was the coordinator of our mission and I was the deputy chief of mission, and I helped in communications. I did everything. I encrypted, decrypted, acted as a courier as way of getting to Tehran and so on. There wasn't any consular function I didn't do. I buried the dead. I picked up pieces of Americans who crashed themselves into the top of mountains, put dead bodies in embalming fluid and then put them in caskets. I got American travelers out of jail. I went to the ports to handle shipping.

Q: How did people get in jail there?

MILLER: The normal ways, traffic accidents, or theft ...

Q: Was drugs a problem at that point?

MILLER: No, not noticeably. You have to remember this was really and still is a very remote part of the world. The only people who came through were the most adventurous and of course, there were those who were often traveling on 50 cents a day of their own and ten dollars of someone else's money a day. Some travelers proved to be burdens because they expected to be put up in your house or your apartment. Most travelers to Isfahan tended to be wonderful people like Agatha Christie, otherwise known as Mrs. Mallowan and her archaeologist husband. There were people like Anne K. Hamilton, the quiet Persian scholar who was a British Political officer during the war. Also Lawrence Lockhart, the art historian and historian of the Safavid period; Donald Wilber, and Cuyler Young and his archaeologist son, T. Cuyler Young, Jr. came.

Q: He was an archeologist.

MILLER: Yes. Another extraordinary person was Wilfred Thesiger, a great explorer, and of course all the archeologists in the region like Ezatollah Negahban, many of whom are now gone, but some of them are still alive and working, like David Stronach, who was head of the British Institute and is now at Berkley in California.

Q: With these connections you were developing, in the first place the language. I imagine this was a hot house for getting into Farsi and Persian.

MILLER: Yes. Well, immediately upon arriving I had a tutor, several tutors. Since there were very few people in Isfahan who spoke English or any other foreign language, you had to learn Persian. It was a wonderful obligation and necessity. The atmosphere in Isfahan was such that the rhythm of life and the language fit it. It was a good place to begin to learn a language as subtle as Persian. The pace of life allowed me the luxury of having tutors during the day in the office. I rarely sat for a whole day at the desk. The paper work was minimal since we were a consulate in a very remote area. The traffic of consular work wasn't, even in the embassies, anywhere near the scale we have now. It was expected that my job was to learn about Iran, so I was on the streets of Isfahan every day. Two weeks of every month I was on the road in other parts of Iran. Over the five years that I was in Iran I visited every part of Iran. I've been to every city, most towns, and there is no region that I haven't visited, and almost every archeological site, every mosque. I met every major religious leaders, every political leader throughout the country. So I knew the country backwards and forwards.

Q: Were there any restrictions or no-nos? For example, you said the governor was incredibly corrupt, though he was a nice man. Was this a matter of reporting all the time?

MILLER: How did I know that?

Q: How did you know that and also were you reporting that?

MILLER: Oh yes, I was reporting the issues as I understood them. Yes, I reported on corruption and popular discontent with the Shah's regime from the outset. To do so wasn't a problem for political officers in the field. It did get to be a problem for me in Tehran. I'll tell you about that later.

Q: I am trying to pick up now because our work in Iran later on, particularly in the 70's, was renowned for restrictions put on our officers about reporting. What about then?

MILLER: No restrictions. The only curbs on one's writing were technical considerations of formal style, punctuation, and normal editing.

Q: They were done mainly through dispatches?

MILLER: The major reporting form was the "dispatch", and "official informal" letters. The major security categories for reporting were "limited official use" or "unclassified", because we didn't want to go through the very onerous, time-consuming task of encryption – using one time pads. Any messages that required one-time pads really had to be a sensitive issue. Everything else was understood to be normal discourse in Isfahan: such matters as so-and-so is corrupt, that the SAVAK killed so-and-so – were reported in unclassified form. The only thing that might have been put in classified form would be a comment on the event that was being reported, for example. Security regulations required that our classified material had to be sent by courier, hand-carried. Getting classified material to Tehran was not a problem, but every encryption certainly was.

Q: What about your contact and all with the mullahs at that time. How did this come about? Were the mullahs sort of – were they open to a young kid from the American devils or something, coming around and talking or not?

MILLER: Well, after all the *mullahs* were and still are, by and large, and certainly in the cities, among the most educated. They're the brothers and cousins of people who were leading politicians and businessmen. The mullahs were supported by the others in society in the same way we support our pastors and priests here in the United States.

Q: So this was not really a class apart.

MILLER: No, the mullahs were an integrated part of everyday life. It is a mistake, to look on mullahs even in contemporary Iran as a class that is somehow alienated. What's wrong or different for the clergy to be doing in contemporary Iran as compared to the traditional Iran that I knew is that the clergy are now doing functions that they normally don't do. The clergy are running the government, but the clergy come from the same families whose secular members ran the Shah's government. They are relatives of the politicians who were in power at the time of the shah.

Q: How did you wife find life there?

MILLER: Suzanne found it completely open. Perhaps because we were young and naïve, we felt no isolation or alienation. The people we lived among were interested in us. We had our first son born in Isfahan, in a simple but well run hospital there. She had a normal birth with a mid-wife. It was the Christian hospital run by the Christian Church. The hospital was made of mud – mud brick, and it was very primitive in its appointments, but had extremely able doctors and nurses. No, Suzanne had a wonderful time. There was no restriction on dress, but she was careful about what she wore. She would wheel a baby carriage, with our son, Will, down the main streets. Isfahani women would stop her and chat about the baby and the normal events of ordinary life.

Q: Great opener isn't it ...

MILLER: Oh yes. We would go on picnics in the mountains, find a deserted place and almost by magic tribesman would come down from the hills and surround us, inching up closer and closer with when we were having a picnic, and if we had enough food, we'd share it with them and they'd squat and look at our baby and ask questions like, "how did we get so far away from America?" "What is America like?" they were always courteous and respectful and genuinely curious about us.

Q: With our military mission there, did that cause problems? Sometimes you take young American soldiers, and they've got spare time, and sometimes it goes bad.

MILLER: A little bit. They usually went up to Tehran or out of the country for a change and for recreation. The social life that went on was open enough. The Iranian military was there too. The American advisors were a tiny part of the much larger Iranian military force of several divisions. The Iranian military as a whole were seen as somewhat parasitical on the society, as were the police, because being poorly paid, they did put pressure on the ordinary people and extract bribes. The military weren't always of the finest type, but they functioned in Isfahan in a situation of normality, I'd say. You asked the question about *mullahs* – I was very interested in them because they knew a lot about their country, were generally well educated and well read and the best were well informed about events in the world. And they were political leaders. They were political in the sense that they were aware, remembered the recent past, and were related to people who were political. They had admirable moral attitudes, and some were highly civilized. It wasn't difficult to get to know the clergy. If you were interested in them, they were interested in you. If you treated them with respect, they treated you with respect.

Q: What about the land owners? Had the White Revolution started at that point?

MILLER: No, the White Revolution took place later when I went to Tehran. So-called land reform was the biggest part of the White Revolution. This big issue in the World Bank at that time was assisting land reform program. Land reform in the early 1960s meant land distribution. It didn't mean necessarily improving the agriculture, it meant democratizing by parceling out equal plots to the peasants in the minds of Western, or at least foreign, economists.

Change in the patterns of land ownership had already begun in Iran as early as the '20s, because owning villages and peasants was no longer a benefit. Land ownership for thousands of years in Iran was seen as a prestige, power, and it was clearly in 1960, ceasing to be that. The big land-owning families, the so-called "1000 Families" of Iran, who typically would own 10, 20, 50, or even 100 villages, were selling their villages and going into manufacturing or investment. There was a very famous family called the Farman-Farmians in Tehran descended from the Qajar princes. In the generation I knew, there were 36 children from one father and four mothers. 32 of them were PhD's. The Farman-Farmians were a huge land-owning family, but at that time in 1962, they reduced their holdings to just two villages where they had homes they used for vacations and hunting.

Q: When they sold their villages, would it go to somebody else?

MILLER: Yes, the villages were sold in the bazaar, and rich merchants who were rising and wanted villages as prestige bought them. The process of change was slow.

The decision to sell or keep a village would depend on the quality of the village, whether it was profitable, very often there was prestige to own a village particularly in the marginal areas. Agriculture itself as an economic force was changing. Certainly, the methods of agriculture were changing. Typically water was the limiting and governing principle or, in the areas of rainfall, predictable rainfall, where wheat could be grown without fear of drought, or rice would be grown in the north, where there was plentiful rainfall for ice and for crops like tea, or fruit orchards. Water was a key determinant. If you bought a village you'd have to know how much water came with the village. Water would define how many people could work and how much land could be planted. For thousands of years in Iran, the measurement of work was by how much land could be plowed by a man and an ox in a day. Land divisions, so-called, were based on that man-ox scale of measurement. With mechanization, in the twentieth century, the nature of plowing and land division and irrigation was changing. Land reform did not significantly affect overall output, really, but it was driving people off the land. The traditional agriculture was a form of intensive farming; so-called land reform, actually drove half of the village workers into the cities unnecessarily, unnecessarily because they were living quite a reasonable life in the villages. If better education and health were provided to the villages you would have had a much better situation.

Q: What with the clearances _____...

MILLER: Yes it is. It was something like that, not intended with that in mind. This class of people driven to the cities were called *Khoshnashin*. They were the so-called "landless." They were the workers in villages, they were the ones who didn't have land tenure by family inheritance because they had ploughed the same plots for hundreds of years, but were otherwise involved in harvesting and planting and did other jobs in the village. It changed the nature of villages, so-called land reform. Land reform as conceived in the 1960's was an inappropriate idea imposed by Western land reform theorists who tried to apply methods used elsewhere on a very complicated traditional land system.

This is how Mossadeq come back into the picture. Mossadeq was deeply interested in land reform. He was a big landowner, and understood well the complications. He said, "First step for reform of Iranian agriculture was to make a national cadastral survey. It was necessary to determine what kind of land Iran has, then determine how can it best be farmed, how many workers would be able to usefully work on it. What about village schools, and social infrastructure once provided by landlords." If the land is to use machinery what would be the optimum kinds of tractors, combines, etc. Mossadeq asked, "What have you got in the villages before you change them?" The Shah's White Revolution, was led by Minister of Agriculture, Arsenjani, who was the real architect but didn't know a damn thing about agriculture. He was a city, urban type, a journalist actually, who was drafted by the Shah to be Minister of Agriculture. Arsenjani bought the World Bank theory which had little to do with the agricultural and social and political realities of Iran.

The landowners over the last several hundred years represented a significant part of the ruling elite. In the last 50 years of the twentieth century, ownership of land meant far less, and in the last 10 years before the revolution land owners had very little direct influence. It was those who had factories and had invested in banks – and those who were making modern mechanical things – cars and the machines of the new world.

Q: Was the feeling on the American side and the diplomatic service that Mossadeq was a bad guy and were we looking for another uprising and overthrow of the shah? Were we looking for revolutionary elements, even the Tudeh?

MILLER: We were helping the Shah to suppress the Tudehs. We were trying to root them out. All opposition to the Shah was suspect, even democratic nationalists. This was our policy towards Iran from the time of the overthrow of Mossadeq in 1953. It was certainly a major policy concern in the Eisenhower period. In the Kennedy period – when I was in Iran, the question of crushing the opposition was open. The idea that a democratic nationalist opposition was positive and should be supported was left open. After I left, starting with Nixon, our policy changed back to total support for the shah at all costs. In the period from Kennedy through Johnson, we placed high value on building democratic government and institutions, supporting democratic government with all the confusion of ignorance of the regional realities and history, and our inabilities in many ways, but the issue of governance was open and the American government was listening to nationalist expression, cooperatively at least, in Iran, Turkey, even Egypt and other places. We had in fact, a sort of schizophrenic policy. On the one hand we were supporting SAVAK, the secret police, to keep the shah in power, and supporting brutal police tactics, supporting undemocratic brutality; on the other hand we were urging Iranian judges to follow a democratic system of rule of law and to hold free elections. Election would be held by the shah. They were rigged. They weren't free, and to our credit, we condemned them. The Shah would hold elections again. They still weren't free. The shah was under tremendous pressure from us to allow the national democrats to have a role in government for about four years, during the time I was there.

President Kennedy, Attorney Bobby Kennedy his NSC (National Security Council), and his State

Department regional bureau, NEA, all were in support of the nationalists, perhaps because the Iranian nationalists were American-educated and a known quantity. They were thought to be the best elements within Iranian society and they came directly to us for help. They said, “We believe in you. You should believe in us.” There was a policy battle between the supporters of the Shah’s absolute rule and those who wanted Iran to have a constitutional democratic monarchy. The battle for policy went on until a decision was made in the time of Prime Minister Ali Amini, on the question of an IMF (International Monetary Fund) debt repayment. It was an amount of debt something like \$20 million, which, if we had given him a delay on debt payment, Amini would have survived. The decision was made not to support Amini’s request, but rather to support the shah, so the shah became the “linchpin of stability” at that point. That marked the end of independent, democratic parties. The shah, from that point on, put in place a shah chosen one-party system. There were elections for the representatives of one party. The nationalists democrats were prevented from that point on by the shah from holding office.

Q: When was this?

MILLER: 1963, ‘64.

Q: So while you were still there. I think probably this is a pretty good time to stop.

MILLER: Well, we haven’t gotten very far.

Q: Well, we’re moving, it’s all right. We’ll pick this up really when you went to Tehran, and we’ll pick that up in 1961?

MILLER: Sixty-two.

Q: There might be some more ...

MILLER: There’s a lot.

Q: Do you want to put down, here, some of the other things, here, so we won’t forget that you’d like to cover them?

MILLER: The importance of field trips. The value of mentoring by senior ambassadors. The great utility of well trained, able locals. The work of the diplomat in such places as Isfahan.

Q: And also, I didn’t really go into how we viewed and what was the Tudeh party at the time.

MILLER: Yes, and other countries’ influences like that of the Soviets and the British.

Q: Today is April the 25th 2003. Bill, let’s talk a little bit about – you said you wanted to talk about, particularly the work of a consulate and all, about the value of field trips.

MILLER: There is some present day relevance to the pro-consuls that are in place in

Afghanistan, or are being put in place in Iraq. Isfahan was not a primitive place. It was a highly cultured city with a thousand-year history or more and a population that knew that history and behaved in customary ways that were reflective of a highly civilized society. What I mean by that is that the daily courtesies of life were highly stylized. Greetings were expected and formalized, whether on the street or in arranged or formal meetings – passing by on the street with strangers, comment on the weather. The discussion of everyday events was carefully considered through formulaic language, which, when fully understood, wasn't simply a matter of rote, but could subtly convey very accurate and direct feelings.

Q: Could you give sort of an example of this?

MILLER: Yes, a very popular thoroughfare in Isfahan was called the Chaharbagh, the Place of Four Gardens. That's what the word means. It was then and still is, as I saw when I returned a year or so ago, a street several miles in length in which there are four rows of plane trees, sycamores to us, London planes, to the British, some of which are hundreds of years old. It's a place where people promenade, really. In Persian it's called *gardesh mikonan*, "we will take a walk," and people go in one direction or the other and when they pass each other they nod heads and they have a salutation of at minimum, "Al-salaam Alaikum, to your health," comment would than follow on the weather, politics, the health of family and friends and perhaps more. These are the patterns of daily ordinary walks. Then there were conversations in the market if you're buying fruit or vegetables. At the other end of the scale of commerce, in antique or rug stores, for example, there is a formal language, and patter that reflects not only the occupation of the day and the feelings towards individuals or even countries.

This is a way of saying that Iranian society is very complicated. The language is very precise and learned. There is a lot of room for discussion, not only banter, but deep discussion within formulas. So for diplomats the use of language is ideal because you are already working within mental frameworks – rules of the game.

Q: Did you have a problem beginning to pick up the nuances of this?

MILLER: No, and here is the importance of local staff who, in this case, were like Oriental secretaries in the British sense. Our local staff were people of great standing in the city, in this case, Isfahan, because of their family and educational background and learning. They saw their jobs as being a host for the city; to the Americans in a way, and as teachers to the Americans. So every step, particularly in the early stages, everything was explained, what these encounters meant, what the meaning and intentions of the linguistic back and forth was, what the depth of the bow or the rising or falling if you are sitting on the ground, and hand to the heart and the stroking of beards – in the case of the religious who were always bearded meant. Those clues to behavior were very important for me.

Mr. Dehesh, Baquer Dehesh, was the principle senior assistant in the consulate, along with another person named Abdol Hossein Sepenta, who was a poet and a filmmaker, and a journalist – I spent a lot of time both of with them. They took me to see their circles of close friends as well as those in official circles. In the official circles were the governor of the *ostan*, *Ostandar*, the

mayor, the *Shahdar*, the various heads of ministries in the governor's and the mayor's office, then the leading clerics, university professors, teachers in the schools, artists. A list of the hierarchy of important people, was drawn up. All consulates and embassies have a list of key personalities and their biographies – contact lists they are now called. In the case of Isfahan and Tehran, the personalities were divided into the appropriate classes of society, not in the Marxist way, but in the Persian way which was in the form of a list of those who were the worthies, who were the land-owners, who were the factory owners, who were the intellectuals, artists, athletes, actors, etc. The initial analysis of society was carefully done and reflected not our perception of society but our local staff's perception of their own social structure.

Q: A worthy being whom?

MILLER: A “worthy” would be, so named for one of several reasons. A worthy would reflect power, that is, be a representative of the shah's regime, the appointed governor, in the case of Isfahan and the elected mayor, the head of the gendarmerie, or the head of the secret police. Then there were the families of the existing dynasty, that's the Pahlavis, and then the Qajars, who were much more numerous, from the previous dynasty, and in the case of Isfahan the Safavids from the time of shah Abbas, that great Persian dynasty. There were even some Afshars, the dynasty from Shiraz, and there were some families of the Afghan conquerors of the 18th century, and so on, and there were Jewish worthies, Christians. There were also the leaders of, the various modern oil dynasties, or the present political system, the religious structure, the intellectual structure. Then in Isfahan, because it was always an artisan city, the artists, the most honored miniaturists, tile makers, and in the time I was there, the sculptors and the oil painters or water colorists. All of the artists – from metal work to textiles to bookbinding – these were all very important.

Q: There were no strictures within the Shiite religion about portraying human people, the humans?

MILLER: Only in the mosques.

Q: Only in the mosques, but you know in the Wahabi and all this, there is none of that?

MILLER: No, in fact, in a number of the great mosques, even the shah mosque, now called the Imam mosque, there were representations of animals and humans in some of the back areas of the mosque. Usually there is a distinction between the mosque and outside, but outside it was rampant, figures and animals.

Q: I may have asked this before, but how strong was the writ of the shah at this time? How much were local authorities doing what local authorities do, and how much was it deferring to the shah?

MILLER: The hierarchy of power was at the head was the shah, the shah made the claim, and of course, his entourage and many throughout the country believed, that Iran was the shah, that he owned the country, but in the vibrant urban life of cities like Isfahan and Shiraz and Tabriz this

dominance was contested by those of great wealth and long held social position. They thought they also had a piece of the country to which they had claim. The shah needed them as well to stay in power. That vitiated absolute power to some extent. The clergy were always split on the question of loyalty to the shah as the “Render unto Caesar...” was a reality and the spiritual life didn’t belong to the shah, he had to belong to the spiritual life as a kind of defender, or as more accurate, in his case, persecutor of the faith.

There was a well known hierarchal list of power of so called “1,000 Families” who were the great land owners of Iran. Many on the list were from the previous times – Qajars, Safavids or the great bazaar merchants, Isfahan of course having the most extensive and complicated bazaar. These bazaar families were extraordinarily important. They were the financial support necessary for the regime. They were also the support for the clerical establishment through charitable contributions on the *vaqf*, the inheritance, and they were political powers in their own right. Of course, commercial activity was crucial to the society as a whole.

Those were the worthies. Isfahan was a wonderful place for anyone interested in learning about the complexities and richness of Iran, particularly one from the United States. A diplomat at that time was welcome. I learned about Iranian society in ways that were much superior to the method imposed upon embedded journalists, for example, now.

Q: When you got outside – talk about consulate trips, too. When you got outside going into your area, which is quite an extensive one, how did you feel about what you were picking from this?

MILLER: It was a huge consulate district. It extended to the Afghan border on the east, included the religious city of Qom in the north, it went to the Iraqi border on the west, the Persian Gulf to the south, and everything in between. It was a vast piece of territory, with huge variations of kinds of life.

Typically, I would spend at least a week or two every month on the road. The trips were primarily by jeep, because the cities and the settlements and villages were great distances between each other. The distances between settlements were due to the largely desert character of the plateau. Villages existed where there was water. The roads were very difficult; at best they were corrugated dirt roads. Travel anywhere meant adventure.

So I would have our great driver, Khachik, and one of the Oriental secretaries would often go along. A good example would be a trip to Yazd, which is to the east of Isfahan and over a range of mountains to the edge of the desert, Dasht-e Lut. The trip to Yazd would take about five or six hours. Yazd, itself had an extensive bazaar, several important mosques, seminaries. It had a full government structure. It had a governor, a mayor and an apparatus that was similar to Isfahan but smaller, and of a different ethnic composition. These trips would be prepared in advance, notice was sent from Isfahan’s governor that an American diplomatic official was coming, and the governor requested “would you meet, and prepare all necessary meetings.” There would be meetings with the worthies of the city. First, in that case, there was the meeting with the governor and then the mayor, and other city officials. We had “Point Four” an aid mission there, so it was necessary to visit the Point 4 projects. Then I’d go to each of the main mosques and meet the

chief clerics, the *mullahs*. In each of these places there would be at minimum, tea, and very often dinner, lunch and dinner. We'd stay in a guest house, usually in the compound of the richest worthy in town. They would lay out the carpet, literally. The guest house usually contained a courtyard, a house with a big room with carpets, and padded mats, which we slept on, and servants would bring food and water. There would be a shower. Jeep trips through the mountains and deserts on very dusty roads found us covered in dust from head to toe. Showers were a blessing. A bath in a *hammam* – a clean bath house, was even better. Then we'd have dinner at the host's house and with his guests.

We'd spend several days in a city like Yazd, carrying out formal visits to the formal governmental and social structures of the city. Then we'd go touring. I was and still am an insatiable amateur archeologist, so every mound that we'd see from the road, I would ask that we'd stop so I could gather shards and check the shards against the examples showed in the various manuals that I had brought along. In the case of Yazd, we went up into the mountains to the west of Yazd, and visited the Zoroastrians who lived in villages outside of Yazd, the surviving indigenous Zoroastrian community that goes back over thousands of years. We visited the religious center – the fire temple – we were invited to a Zoroastrian religious service which was quite an honor. The religious precepts were explained, and the life of the village was described. They even took us to the Towers of Silence.

Q: Where they put the bodies.

MILLER: The Towers of Silence are the stone structures where they exposed the dead bodies of the Zoroastrians faithful to the elements and the carrion birds. There were also tribal groups nearby, so we paid a visit to the tribal leaders. The Yazd trip was one typical trip. Another kind of which I made several would be to go all the way to the Persian Gulf. This was a three week trip through Shiraz and through Qashqai lands and further in Arab tribal country. In this first case, the purpose was to meet with the leaders of the Qashqai. The Qashqai were one of the two most important tribes in Iran. The Bakhtiari who lived in the Zagros Mountains north of Shiraz up to Khorramabad was the other main tribal group.

Q: When you say tribes, were these, would you call them, I mean – these were – one of the terms I use is Arabs or Persians? Were there any Arabs per se?

MILLER: Only near the Shat-al-Arab River near Khorramshahr were there Arab tribes, and along the Persian Gulf there were – Arab tribal groups which were called Bandari (along the shore), which were – part of a separate Persian Gulf culture. The Persian Gulf was very different than mainland Iraq or Iran. They were inhabited by different kinds of people. There were obviously also mixtures of Arabs, Indians and Pakistanis who plied the coastal waters of the region.

Q: The dhow trade and all that.

MILLER: There were at that time dhow shipyards. They were still making wooden dhows by hand.

Q: I used to see them when I would go to Qatar in the late '50s.

MILLER: Exactly. One trip, I took – a very long difficult one along the Persian Gulf started in Bandar-e Abbas, and then we went on running along the coast in a jeep. It was very difficult, very difficult. We went all the way to Chahbahar in one direction (to the east) and to Bushire, to the west. There were still pearl fisheries, working with great heaps of oyster shells in evidence. There were wonderful crafts evident in the buildings of the Gulf towns, the ornamented wooden doors that were carved out of teak. They brought the teak from India and further east. There was a very different feeling in the Persian Gulf from the rest of Iran. The Gulf was really the Ali Baba kind of world. Do you remember the huge pots in the stories about Ali Baba? There they were, these huge pots, filled with water in the basements. The Gulf people used to go into the water pots to cool off, when it was an unbearably hot day.

On several of those trips I went out to the islands by dhow. There are dozens of islands that lie off the coast, and several of them were then used as fortresses and prisons including prisons for political prisoners and there were also mines, for iron oxide and various salts. The mountainous islands were made up of spectacular colors – red, yellow, pink, great veins, of different colored rock. The volcanic and violent nature of the area's geology was very evident. We'd get out there by dhow. We'd hire a dhow and sail and shove off into the very blue waters of the Gulf sailing before the wind under the characteristic rig of a lateen sail. It was really a great adventure. I can remember a very hot day when we sailed out to Hormoz Island. Hormoz was used as a prison for political prisoners. It had been an important Portuguese port, and a commercial center, in the 17th century, of the Portuguese Empire. The Portuguese fort was still there – a very handsome ruin, a lovely, spectacular place. The sea around Hormoz was alive with fish. I remember going swimming right off the shore by the fort. It was very hot and it was wonderful to be able to go swimming. There were oyster beds right underfoot. So I picked the oysters, and even though they were forbidden for the Muslim pious, I found them delicious.

Q: While you were on these things was there a different view – did you have a feeling that the further you got away from the centers like Isfahan and all, these communities were running by their own writ and the shah was – and higher government was less important?

MILLER: Oh yes, very definitely, but the network still was always evident even if distant. The sense of Iran as a nation was something that you began to understand, how the country fitted together even though the vast distances and isolation, and the autonomies were very evident. A good example of this is, again, in the tribes – I went on one occasion, on a tribal migration with the Bakhtiari. I had friends in Isfahan who were living there as exiled tribal chiefs, Bakhtiari chiefs. They were not allowed to be with the tribes, because ...

Q: The Bakhtiari were located where?

MILLER: In the Zagros Mountains from south of Kermanshah all the way to Shiraz, and then the Qashqai lands begin in the Shiraz area and go south to Firuzabad. The Bakhtiari were divided into various clans that were loyal to different tribal chiefs. The main clans were called Haft Lang and the Chahar Lang, that's "seven" and "four." The clans would wear a typical canvas woven

tunic above their *shalvar* (wide, broad trousers), shirts that button up to their necks and who wore a distinctive domed hat, black hat made of goat hair. They were stripes on the tunics: four stripes for the Chahar Lang and seven stripes for the Haft Lang. The two main clans got along reasonably well except for occasional disputes along the migration routes and where the sheep would graze on to disputed grasslands and domestic conflicts would emerge.

The migration trip was hosted by a Haft Lang family whose lands extended from the north near Khorramabad across the Zagros Mountains down to Masjed-e Soleyman in the flat lands near Iraq, which is where the oil fields were in Khuzestan. This migration was a three week trip on horseback. It was a marvelous, absolutely marvelous experience. The host was a *Kalantar*, a tribal leader of several families. A *Kalantar* is a second level retainer to the *Khan* who is the leader of the tribe. There were about eight families who were traveling with their flocks of sheep along with the *Kalantars* group. The migration follows at the pace of the sheep. The families travel only as far as the sheep could go in a day. Then they'd stop and eat and set up their black tents, cook dinner and would remain for a few days during which they would go hunting, engage in story-telling, and feasting, of course until the sheep were ready to move again to new pastures. We followed that pattern of travel over three weeks. Up and down mountains, swimming across rivers with the sheep, back up the mountain and down again.

Q: What you are doing, you are talking about probably a wiser, certainly more indulgent, Foreign Service then we have today, where they can allow you – essentially it was invaluable as far as making you aware of the world which you were dealing with.

MILLER: I was learning about an important part of Iran and I hope I was also making friends. As far as establishing a relationship with people of another country, this is a very pleasant way to do it. It's a great privilege to be invited to live for a time with the tribes, particularly if they have invited you to come as their guests. We were welcome. It was an ideal time for us, as Americans. Americans were then believed to be the real friends of Iran and its independence despite the 1953 coup. For the Iranians, Americans were thought to be relatively innocent, even naïve, to the Iranians, the British were "the hidden hand". The British were always suspect, although much respected for their power. The Russians were long perceived as an enemy not to be trusted from the earlier times of Russian expansion in the early 19th century. The Soviets were certainly believed to be an enemy. The U.S. was 10,000 miles away so we were believed to have no direct territorial interests even though we had overthrown Mossadeq, their beloved, popular leader. The Iranians tended to blame that action on the British having duped us because we were naïve and the British, of course, were always thought to be highly intelligent and conservatively devious.

Q: In all this, both in Isfahan and going out, how would you describe the power of the mullahs because we are comparing this to today where apparently the mullahs have seized control of most elements of government. How did you find it at that time?

MILLER: The *mullahs* were, at that time, an integral part of society. They had a normal role, not unlike the role of religious people in our own country. Most Iranian families had relatives who were clerics. It wasn't the first profession. It was not the last, but religion was always seen as a matter of personal faith that should be removed from political society, let's put it that way. The

mullahs were always thought to have at least some learning, even in the villages. They were until recently the teachers of the children, particularly in the villages. They taught in the *maktabs* (schools) up to the third grade. That's why so many Iranian in the remotest places could read and write, because of the *mullahs* who lived there. Of the 50,000 villages I'd say at least 2/3 had *mullahs* in 1960.

Q: We didn't see them as a potential threat for us or anything like that?

MILLER: Some did, yes. I had a colleague who was fascinated by the *mullahs*. He made following mullah activity his main work. That was what he was really interested in. He came to this interest from the time of the assassination of Prime Minister Razmara by the Fedayeen in the 1950s, the *mullahs* who were violent, who were the assassins, who were the vengeful "jihadists" as we would now call them, were the most irrational and potentially dangerous. In the time I was in Iran I, met some of the Fedayeen remnants.

Q: What does Fedayeen mean?

MILLER: It means "warriors of God."

Q: "Warriors of God," is that it?

MILLER: Yes, or Fedayeen. They believe themselves to be the soldiers of the faith. They were of course a minority among the clergy but they were fanatically convinced of their convictions. Extremism of the kind used by Fedayeen was always a fringe element of the religious community and a very small part of the religious structure. I made a point of meeting every cleric that I could simply because they were an essential part of society and I was interested in them. Many of the religious leaders became friends. I would see them in normal circumstances, and it was perfectly acceptable for us to be friends.

Q: If I recall, going back to my Foreign Service history, I think we lost at least one consular officer in Iran, by a mob, who made the wrong kind of gesture – not necessarily a rude gesture, but some how got a mob incited.

MILLER: Yes, we had one officer who was murdered by a mob. The Russian emissary was torn apart by a mob in the early 19th century because he was rumored to have defiled a sacred place. It was long before the Bolsheviks. If Russians had listened to their Oriental secretaries they wouldn't have gotten into such a dangerous fatal situation.

Q: Keep from making the wrong kind of gestures at the wrong time.

MILLER: Most clerics were and are perfectly normal people. In Isfahan, which has hundreds of mosques, I, because of my interest in Iranian architecture, went to every one. I photographed them all and described them.

Q: You didn't have any problem going in or anything like that, because –

MILLER: No, I was always welcome in the mosques and holy shrines, but I was always very careful to have a clerical host. This was made clear to me by my Persian mentors that I was coming into another man's house. I was told, "He will welcome you as your guest, but he has to welcome you." Visits to the holy places were easily arranged.

Q: I think back to my time slightly before this, '58 to '60, in eastern province of Saudi Arabia where the Wahabis, you just steered clear of the religious side because these were not friendly people.

MILLER: Field trips were also a way of getting to know and work with other parts of our government. I would take – I took a number of trips with spooks.

Q: You might explain, for the non-initiate, what spook is.

MILLER: An employee of CIA, usually a case officer. A characteristic of embassies and consulates symptomatic of the structure of our foreign affairs in the 60's, was the extensive CIA case officer presence within embassies and diplomatic establishments. It was – this is a reflective, after the fact thought that such a presence was a mistake, because most of the case officers were doing things that political officers of the Foreign Service should normally do – that is, make contacts and friends. The CIA approach was to buy informants and information from among their contacts, which I thought was a huge unnecessary mistake since Iran was an open society. If information was needed, it was only necessary to ask.

Q: It's ephemeral, anyway.

MILLER: Very ephemeral. It's only there as long you are tolerated. There were a number of occasions where I had friends who were being pursued by case officers in order to put them on the payroll of the case officer. It was proprietary distinction made which I thought was unseemly and unnecessary.

Q: Well, I would imagine that at a certain point just to get a feel for this, within a bureaucracy, that if you took a case officer with you, you'd be reluctant to bring them up against one of your friends or a good contact because you're afraid – they could poison the well.

MILLER: As it happened, no. That was certainly always a possibility, but the Iranians knew who the spooks were. There was never any question in their mind and they saw the United States government as a whole – whether you were a diplomat or a spook, it was the United States. It was only after that was understood that they made a distinction about individuals as friends or assets, and these distinctions about individual Americans were, in the end, the most important.

Q: What about the – we're showing an awful lot of concern, I gather, about the Tudeh Party, being the Iranian Communist Party. How about your time in Isfahan? Did this ...

MILLER: I knew all the Tudeh leaders that weren't in prison. The shah and SAVAK, the secret

police, trained by CIA and the Israelis, and connected to other security organizations, had the Communist movement – movements, which were several, more or less under control. Yet, there were respected politicians who were either present Tudeh, or lapsed Tudeh. In Iran there was debate at the highest intellectual levels on the burning questions of social justice. They were asking, “What’s the best way to organize our society?” Even in Isfahan there was extensive intellectual discussion about the strands or variants of communism. There were the Chinese strands, Indian strands, there was the Soviet version, and then there was an indigenous Iranian strand that came out of Gilan, near the Caspian, where there was an uprising of Communists. The Communists tended to be in the factories there, the new spinning mills and mechanical fabrication places and where there were modern assembly lines. The new factories had networks that could be organized in trade union kinds of social-political structures. Factory based communist cells were most evident in Isfahan where there were thirty-two spinning factories.

The cell structure of militant subversives was the main target of the secret police. The trade unions were difficult to deal with because they were transparent and acceptable to the public. Trade unions were expressing their sense of social value legitimately. For the worker, Trade Unions were a form of organization that brought them better wages and working conditions. I knew the trade union leaders, many of whom were of tribal origin. They were tribal leaders who could no longer lead tribes so they were leading unions. They were people who understood the social problems of the workers many of whom were tribesmen. This was so particularly with oil workers who were recruited from the tribal regions where the oil fields were. As part of the intellectual firmament about the organization of society, and among the intellectuals, the socialist approach had a certain appeal for the Iranian intellectuals. The main issue about the needed organizations of Iranian society was democracy versus the thousands of years of royal rule by military force. How to bring democracy to Iran was the core of the debate. How could the change to democracy be done? Mossadeq, of course, was the hero, because he came out of traditional society, who was definitely a bona fide nationalist who highly valued Iranian language, culture, and had great respect for traditional Iranian social life, and religions. He had championed a view of society in which the lowest in society had a place, and was not simply a possession owned by someone else.

Mossadeq and his followers expressed the democratic beliefs in formal terms, in their party organizations that later came into play, as the National Front. They also expressed their feelings in poetry, which was the most effective means for Iranians of communication. It was amazing to me, a society in which poetry was the most important way you could express political views as well as emotions.

Q: Of course in a way, not quite – the Russians have some of this.

MILLER: The Russian Intelligentsia. Not to the extent of the Persians. As much as I loved the intellectual life I led in Moscow and in Ukraine, they are primitive in some ways in comparison to the Iranians, certainly if you value the subtlety of their mind. The Iranian intellectuals do not have the ferocity of mind which the Russians have in larger measure than anyone else, but for precision and subtlety of thought, the Persians surpass all others.

Q: Were you seeing anything that, I think, I suspect, became a major phenomenon later, but the time you were in Isfahan, of the Iranian students who went to the United States and came back?

MILLER: Oh yes, there were many. The first Iranian I met, I think I mentioned earlier, was one of these. Hossein Mahdavy and I met at Oxford. We were together for five years in Iran. Then we met again at Harvard, not long later in graduate school. Many of the Iranians of my generation who were well educated were like Hossein. My closest friends in Iran were people of similar background to that of Hossein.

Q: How did they fit in in the early 60's?

MILLER: It was normal, not unusual. The western educated intellectuals fit in to the Iran of the 1960s – they were the heart. Even the shah's entourage was the same. The "1,000 Families" sent all of their talented children to universities in the West. The Bazaar class and their extended families and the leading religious people sent their children to the West. Everyone who was affluent and able went abroad. It was normal, it was like the great tour of Europe that the English took in the 18th and 19th century. It was a finishing of their education. It enabled them to understand how they fit into world civilization.

Q: Well, then maybe we should move on to the time you went to Tehran. You were in Tehran from when to when?

MILLER: 1962 until '65.

Q: When you went up to Tehran, what job did you have?

MILLER: Isfahan was my first post in the service. Then I was assigned to go back to Greek training in Washington. However, the ambassador in Tehran, Julius Holmes, asked that I stay to be his assistant. So I went up as a political officer and as ambassador's aide.

Q: Was Julius Holmes there the entire time you were there?

MILLER: No, Wailes was there when I first arrived in 1959.

Q: Would Julius Holmes, who is one of the names that one thinks of being one of the major figures in that great time – how did you find him? What was his method of operation as a person?

MILLER: This is a very typical foreign service staff. One of the people in my class, A-100, was Allen Holmes. Julius Holmes was his father. I met Julius Holmes on a number of occasions when we were in A-100 course. Julius – Ambassador Holmes and his wife Henrietta had us to dinner a number of times to their home in Washington. Allen and I were good friends and still are. Ambassador Holmes had come to Isfahan a number of times and I had helped him with his official trips. He had read my dispatches and liked them. He thought I could be useful. I was very happy to stay. Suzanne and I were very delighted to stay. We were given huge latitude by

Ambassador Holmes. My beat, so to speak, was the opposition, which meant my friends, really. I was allowed to continue to travel, even in my new post in Tehran, to keep that pattern up, and given all kinds of freedoms. For example, I found, a house near the embassy that I was allowed to rent. It was a lovely house with a big compound two blocks from the embassy right in the middle of Tehran. This 19th century compound had a water storage pool called a *hoz*, which we made into a swimming pool. It also had a lovely orchard which included persimmon trees with abundant delicious fruit that ripened at Halloween. We used to carve the persimmons into pumpkin faces, jack-o'-lanterns.

Q: How did your wife find the difference between Isfahan and Tehran?

MILLER: We just continued our life that we had had there. Our first child was born in Isfahan, Will was born in the Christian Mission hospital there. She had many, many friends who were also the wives of my friends. She was never isolated in the sense of being a foreigner. She had no difficulty taking Will in a carriage down the Chaharbagh. The Iranian women would look in and say normal things. She fitted in very well. In fact, we have a Persian friend from those days visiting with us now.

Q: Did you find working at an embassy, that the attitude or something was different than working at a consulate?

MILLER: The scale of things in the embassy was much bigger. I had a wonderful political counselor, a fellow named Harry Schwartz, who was a great help to me, a good friend and mentor. Did you know him?

Q: No

MILLER: Harry Schwartz was a Princeton graduate. He married a Spanish woman of great distinction, a lovely woman with lovely with red hair, who was from Jerez. Her name was Maria Gonzales of the Gonzales sherry family. He was a saturnine, grouchy, wonderful person who had very high standards of reporting. He detested the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), they were constantly in battle.

Q: Who was the DCM?

MILLER: Stuart W. Rockwell. They were very different in personality.

Q: Stuart Rockwell was very urbane. He's a Europeanist, I would say.

MILLER: Yes, and a little aloof, but very able.

Q: That's what I mean when I say Europeanist.

MILLER: The political section, consisted of officers – most of whom were Persian language officers. They were interested in the country. Everyone had a lot of work to do. There was a huge

AID mission, a huge MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), there was an enormous CIA station with a spectacularly flamboyant station chief, Gratian Yatsevich, who wore a monocle and carried a sword cane. He was the closest most congenial American friend of the shah. He would often be invited to be with the shah, much to Julius Holmes's anger. Julius Holmes said, "Look, I'm number one in this place." The shah had to resort to subterfuge to meet with Yatsevich.

Q: There were several countries that had the reputation in the Foreign Service of being CIA counties. Iran was one. South Korean was another.

MILLER: But Holmes being the consummate bureaucratic warrior that he was, he knew this game. He made it very clear to Yatsevich that he was in charge, that he had the authority, and that if Yatsevich crossed the line that had been drawn by Holmes, he was out. Holmes could deliver on his word. Holmes was a real pro of diplomatic life. He had had so many professional experiences that were appropriate, and relevant to the problems we faced in Iran and he had always wanted to go to Iran as ambassador. His appointment had been delayed in this because of the war. After the war there were inquiries in Congress about his shipping interests in the post-war period. As one of his assignments, he had been chief of protocol, among other things, so everything was in the old style and was done right. As ambassador's aide I was tutored not only by him but by Mrs. Holmes, who made sure I understood how to set a table, that I put the right people next to each other, and to be sure guests were well cared for. It didn't hurt to have to do these things. And, of course, there were many funny encounters along the way.

Holmes liked to travel, but more comfortably than I was used to. He had a DC-3. So he would fly all over the country. His children visited him, all of whom were interesting. Allen came, and his sister, Elsie, who was an archeologist. These trips were their first to Iran, and since we were all good friends we traveled throughout Iran together. So it was a very happy situation. The residence was still being furnished and landscaped. They allowed me to help them with getting trees planted. We planted several thousand trees in the compound. We got them out from the Ministry of Agriculture, through the aid program. As it turned out these trees had grown to such a height and density of cover that they would have prevented helicopters from coming in if that was attempted after the seizure of the embassy and the taking of hostages in 1979.

Q: Wasn't there – the Iranians coming from an arid based country, trees are very important in the culture.

MILLER: Sacred! If a mayor planted trees, he was said to be a good mayor.

Q: Isn't there a Persian proverb, "Your life is successful if you have a son, plant a tree and write a book."

MILLER: If there wasn't such a proverb they would have created it. It was certainly apt. They did plant all the time. The water courses were all lined with trees and gave pleasure and beauty in a very arid landscape.

Q: Did you sense yourself, or within the embassy, any disquiet about the huge American presence there, or the aid, the military, the CIA and all this?

MILLER: Yes, there certainly was unease about that. It also created a great sense of generosity on our side, we were at the height of our generosity, that is, the amounts of aid and the benign character of it, I would say, even though it was complicated by the support of the suppressive organizations like the secret police, and the support of the shah without temperance, and the bringing Earl Warren to speak on the rule of law to a group of judges and lawyers that was doing the opposite.

Q: Earl Warren being at that time ...

MILLER: The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. You can imagine the resonance of that kind of ...

Q: Was is Sharia law or was it shah law in Iran?

MILLER: In Iran, it was shah's law. The Iranian legal system was a mixture of Zoroastrian principles with Islamic and European additions. At that time, 1962, the entire legal system under Reza Shah had been codified into a European structure of law, although the code incorporated family law principles from the Sharia. There were exceptions such as the movement in the direction of equal rights for women. It was an evolving legal system, and the Justice Ministry, judges were going on exchanges in Europe and the United States, and bringing back ideas that were changing the nature of Iranian justice. Many of the law makers, for example, from the National Front were educated in the West, and helped pass laws that were more democratic in character. So the legal system was alive, formally a mixture of Zoroastrian, Islamic and Western law, and evolving, but it was clearly shah-dominated and not a rule of law.

Q: What about, say in foreign policy – I know from the Saudi perspective when I was in Bahrain we covered the crucial state as well as all the Gulf states except Kuwait. There was real concern about the shah – well, the Persians are moving in. They didn't like the name Persian they much preferred it to be called Arabian Gulf. Was this an expansionist – from the Tehran point of view how did we do?

MILLER: The only issues that were faintly expansionist – of course the Iranians didn't regard them as expansionist, really, but they had no doubt about who owned the disputed islands lesser tombs and larger tombs, which are only dots in the Gulf. They basically scoffed the notion that the Persian Gulf could be referred to the Arabian Gulf.

Q: In Iran, in Bahrain, there was a feeling that this is very typically Middle Eastern, that there was a plot to infiltrate all sorts of Iranian workers so that eventually they would take over the island of Bahrain.

MILLER: Well, certainly the oil workers throughout the Gulf were and are heavily populated by Iranians. They knew how to do it, but no, there certainly there wasn't a plot that I was aware of. It

was just normal historical pressures of peoples in an area where boundaries come together.

Q: As you were part of the political section, was there any tension between the political section and the CIA station there on reporting, and all that?

MILLER: Yes, constantly. This was a normal feature of the time in all significant embassies. CIA had large stations, many of their officers were buried in the political sections, and the distinction between assets and contacts was – when it became an issue, would be decided by the ambassador. I had many contacts that they wanted to have as assets, and there were occasions when I went to Julius Holmes and said, “You know, this absolutely crazy. They don’t need to do this.” He always supported me.

Q: Wasn’t there, just in the bureaucratic sense – there was pressure on the CIA officers to sign up as many assets, whether it made any real sense or not. I mean, they wanted to show that they were ...

MILLER: No, I don’t think so, not in Iran, because, on the whole, they were very good. The CIA had superb people that I have kept in touch with over the years from that time, who I still see now, such as George Cave.

Q: I just know the name.

MILLER: He was their number one Iranian expert, and probably still is, even in retirement. He was very sensible, spoke excellent Persian and in fact was a Muslim. Yatsevich did the police jobs himself. He worked with the shah to the extent Julius Holmes permitted it, and worked closely with the chief of the secret police, Timur Bakhtiar, later Pakrahvan. Yatsevich had a circle of friends at the shah’s court. He was the designated person to do that. He liked being at court anyway.

In reflection, I look on Julius Holmes as a super-ambassador, almost a viceroy. In this circumstance, and time he had that kind of power and influence, because both Washington, and the shah understood that, was a viable style and Kennedy made clear that Holmes had his personal support. Holmes knew Johnson, too, pretty well and the shah and his entourage understood that reality.

Q: Were there any, while you were there, any visits, by president, the vice president, or...

MILLER: Kennedy didn’t come. Of course, he died in ’63. No, he didn’t come, but Bobby did, and Justice Douglas, and a lot of the people from the NSC – Bill Polk, I don’t know if you know that name.

Q: Well, I know the name, but ...

MILLER: Bob Komer, with DOD (Department of Defense). So the key players in Washington came frequently, and Johnson came, and I was one of the control officers for Johnson’s visit.

Q: First, how did Bobby Kennedy visit and then we'll talk about the Johnson visit.

MILLER: Well, he wanted to go to visit the tribes. He went to the tribes. He had a message from the shah, but his interest was Justice Douglas-driven. Douglas had great admiration for the Bakhtiari when he visited. Bobby Kennedy was a hero to many Iranian democratic nationalists – particularly those who studied in America.

Q: How about Johnson, when he came?

MILLER: Johnson was spectacular. He came when he was vice president, after visiting Pakistan where he was given a white camel, something he mentioned several times with some irony, but he was definitely liked. He came with an entourage – Lady Bird, Lynda Bird, a masseur Liz Carpenter and Bess Heel. It was a big visit, a full plane load.

Anyway, he arrived – I remember that Harry Schwarz went to Istanbul to accompany Johnson and his party. He didn't want any mistakes made. Every minute was scripted, but Johnson did violence to any script. Johnson didn't like the air conditioning in the palace so new air conditioners were put into the marble palace where he was staying, and holes were drilled into ancient walls. He wanted to go out and see the night life. His masseur had to be closer, in a nearby room to work on him, I guess. Johnson was rather grumpy at first.

And then he said, "Let's go outside of the city. I want to see the country." So we tumbled into a convoy of – we were running along the desert at high speed and then Johnson sees an excavation, one of a series of donut shaped holes in the desert. He asked, "What are they?"

I tell him, "These are the *qanats*, where the ancient water system flows underground, sometimes 20 to 30 miles from the mountains. They first dig down and clear a way a sloping channel through the earth. The channel is lined with clay cylinders, baked clay cylinders, that reinforced the long, hand-dug tunnels that are about the height of a man. This is an ancient agricultural practice." He was very interested in this. It seemed to him like West Texas, this arid desert countryside – this reminded him of his home. He said, "Let's get out and see this." So we get out of the cars and come up to a *Qanati* – Moqani, a worker cranking a windlass coming up with a bucket full of loose earth and rocks from fifty feet below.

Johnson said, "Is someone down there?" I said, "Yes there is someone digging a water channel down there fifty feet below." "Tell him the vice president of the United States brings his greetings." "Brings his greetings!" I say, "He maybe is a little intimidated by this awesome presence." The peasant at the windlass blinks somewhat incomprehensively and then sends down the message from the vice president. Silence. "Tell him again!" the vice president said. Still more silence, then after a long pause a distant voice said uncertainly, "Long live the shah!" Johnson laughed heartily at the answer as we all did.

So he was that way. Impulsive, forceful, demanding. He was very interested in Iran and in an intelligent way. He asked about Iran's politics and whether the shah was loved by the people, did

he have the people's support – the key political questions. Could the shah control the opposition?

Q: When these questions came, how did you talk about the opposition at that time?

MILLER: Well, I was clear in expressing my views to Johnson about the political situation. I thought the shah was losing his absolute control. I thought he had lost his chance for legitimacy – he never had gained legitimacy after '53. He was ruling by force, not by popular will. I thought that the best people in the country were the Nationalist Democrats, the followers of Mossadeq, and that there was no way that the shah could sustain his absolutism. That was my view. That was an argument in Washington as well at the time, and the policy assumption was that the shah was the linchpin of stability. He said, "How can this be, in the face of popular opposition and no reliable popular support?" Johnson took it all in, asking intelligent questions at every point.

The Shah had the levers of power, and therefore we should deal with him our Washington policy makers said. The economic transformation of Iran, which the plan organization was producing and there was no doubt Iran was being transformed. Iran's economy was growing at a fantastic rate of growth and infrastructure was being put in place, paid for by the oil revenues. The economy was progressing mightily. The main policy view was that economic transformation would lead eventually to political transformation.

Q: This was the take-off period?

MILLER: Yes, the take-off period, written about by Johnson's NSC advisor, former MIT professor, Walt Rostow. Iran had reached the stage of take off already, and in due course it would evolve, Rostow and others said. The contrary theory – well, there were two opposing theories. One was, because of a ruling military, it will always be a royal-military kingdom as it had been for thousands of years. The second opposing view was the theory that I held, which was that the shah would be removed if he didn't evolve with the democrats. They were the future.

I told Johnson that. I gave him the spectrum, and when he asked where I stood, I said I thought that we should support the democrats.

Q: It shows an aspect of Johnson that often gets misplaced. He gets forgotten, and that is – one talks about his demands on all these trips, but here is a man that is asking the right questions, wasn't he?

MILLER: Yes, but one thing about him that I know, that I haven't seen later, over the years, that I know from his Senate colleagues, and friends of many years who worked for Johnson, was that it was hard to be certain that he'd be in a listening mode. One friend who worked for Johnson said to me, he would listen to you so that he would be able to dominate you, and you will do what he says. Johnson already knows. He doesn't need to hear anything else." In this case, I think Johnson was listening. I suppose the reason was that his key staff had told him that I was worth listening to, that I knew more than a little about Iran.

Q: During the time you were there in '63 to...

MILLER: You mean in Tehran? '62 to '65.

Q: Were there any major developments?

MILLER: Oh yes, many.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about some.

MILLER: The most important event – no, there were two important – even pivotal -events. Ali Amini was the Prime Minister. He was a clever, extremely able experienced politician of Qajar origins.

Q: Qajar being?

MILLER: The previous dynasty that ruled Iran from the late 18th century until the takeover by Reza Shah in 1921. Amini was very courtly and popular. He had been an ambassador in the United States, had dealt with the oil nationalization issues, was extremely bright, very funny, appealing to many, but he had been in so many battles that he was distrusted by everyone to some degree. But he was astute and thought that the young nationalists were the future, that we should move in that direction. The shah, of course, distrusted them and him. The shah made that clear to Julius Holmes, and the American government, that this issue was an indication of whether the U.S. supported the shah or Amini. The Shah told Ambassador Holmes that Amini had to go.

The outcome of the control issue turned on a loan. This loan referred to 20 million dollars to finance a roll over of debt to the IMF, for a loan to handle a difficult time in a transition budgetary process. We didn't support Amini's request for a rollover loan, so he fell. From that point on, the shah was absolute ruler. He would from that point on dictate all matters in the Parliament, the budget. He ran the government, he chose the ministers, he prescribed the elections, he made the election lists. Iran became an absolute monarchy, and abandoned any thoughts of evolution towards a constitutional monarchy, and it was a conscious decision on our government's part. It was a battle that the policy makers in NSC and Defense Department lost, and of course the people that held my point of view lost in Tehran. That was one issue. The other was...

Q: Before we leave that, those supporting the refusal of the loan and the American government, where were they coming from? What was the feel?

MILLER: Well, they were known as "Shahparast". It was a term that was used for "shah-lovers." The issue of support for the shah was partially resolved, by extremely successful Iranian diplomacy, that is, they had ambassadors in Washington who threw the biggest, elegant, lavish parties. They were civilized, charming and able, well-connected in Washington circles and worked the newspapers, the CIA, and the lobbyists very effectively. They worked hard and well. The shah, himself and his wife Farah was very attractive too, many at that time. In Washington they did the job of persuasion very well.

The policy approached that were future oriented were viewed as too risky, too speculative, and I suppose, the philosophy of a bird-in-the-hand is better than two in the bush governed. The Shah seemed to have all of the trappings of power. He commanded a modern military, he was buying new equipment, he would develop the military using our technical assistance and the secret police, and he had the army so he ...

Q: Coming from the world's major exponent of democracy, was there any sort of misgiving about supporting an absolute monarch?

MILLER: That was the debate, of course, at the time. For me, it was a major disappointment. It seemed to me that our policy was not only a loser for the long term, and certainly violated our own principles, and certainly violated the view of George Kennan, that our strongest diplomatic weapon is to live as democrats abroad, as we do at home, that we shouldn't have a schizophrenia of purpose abroad. Iran's policy was a supreme example of that mistake. It was a bitter experience for me to see this decision made. I was very disappointed in a number of my colleagues who understood, but didn't want to take the risk by speaking out. Holmes, I think, was one of them, really. He talked to me a number of times about this when I brought it up with him. He said to me, "I don't see the Shah losing now. Not in my time."

Q: He was right.

MILLER: However, he could have been right the other way, as well, depending on the decision. To Holmes credit, he always heard me out and always insisted that my views be known and reported. Ambassador Holmes supported me when I got into direct difficulties with the shah. I saw the Shah, the queen and chief courtiers on many occasions. I had a lot of contacts and friends in the court including some of the sons of the Shah's sister. We often played tennis together. One of them was a particularly odious type, for example, he used to sell antiquities from the recent archaeological finds on the market, rather than putting them into museums, a practice many Iranian friends found offensive.

It came to the shah's attention that I was spending a lot of time with his opponents. So he told Julius Holmes this, and Julius Holmes said, "Don't worry. We need to know what is happening with the people who oppose you. It's good that we know and, in fact, we will, of course, tell you what I understand was happening. Don't worry. He's a young officer. He'll be all right."

Q: You mentioned, you say there were two major things that happened.

MILLER: The other major event was Khomeini, the emergence of Khomeini.

There were discussions at that time about reforms, some of which were put into the five points of the White Revolution – land reform, emancipation, more rights for women, and a number of other reforms that all were actually from the program of the opposition National Front. In Qom, religious people were upset about land reform, about immodesty of women, and changes in the law of inheritance. Land reform affected the *Waqf*, the giving of bequests of land to the religious

establishments. The reforms were contrary to the normal laws of inheritance. The National Front was opposed to land reform because they believed that land distribution should be based on cadastral surveys; on first determining what were viable pieces of land, and how could you create land holdings large enough for individuals to survive under the new circumstances. That was the Mossadeq point of view.

In Qom a number of the clerics made speeches against one recent law that had been forced through the majlis by the shah, which the United States wanted, which was the so-called Status of Forces Agreement. The nationalists generally opposed this law because it was understood to be a “concession”, an abridgement of Iranian sovereignty, and the religious people took this sensitive nationalist issue up as a cause along with the others. The shah, after hearing that sermons had been given in the mosques and Qom, sent down paratroopers, and killed, brutally, a number of the mullahs in the mosques, in one instance bashing their brains out against the walls of the mosques. The paratrooper attack was an atrocity. So a *jihad* (holy war) was declared. There was a march from Qom of the religious, dressed in white shrouds. They really were profoundly affected on a deeply felt jihad. No one expected this. The nationalists had no idea that this issue would create such a huge popular uprising. Tens of thousands, came from Qom, hundreds of thousands gathered when they came into Tehran, and in the end many hundreds of thousands rioted.

The shah sent the troops into battle, in American tanks of course, and killed about six thousand people, six thousand on their approach to Tehran and then the battle in Tehran itself. I was in the midst of some of these battles, observing, and I was almost killed in one case, around the university.

Q: What happened?

MILLER: Well, the Shah’s troops were machine-gunning at the people in the streets.

Q: Was there much opposition?

MILLER: Yes, everyone.

Q: Well, I mean opposition in that these were armed people shooting at soldiers or was this pretty much ...

MILLER: No, they were unarmed. They had no weapons. They were being shot down. They were just pressing forward in their frenzied lunatic way. Bullets were firing everywhere, and the mob came very close to where I was standing and there were bullets firing very close to me. So Khomeini emerges for the first time. I reported this, at this time, about this unknown clerical leader. Khomeini was taken prisoner and sentenced into exile. The importance of the uprising was that in the absence of anything else, that is the nationalist opposition, the religious people had this force to bring the populace into the streets. This astounded the nationalists, astounded the shah. We were somewhat shocked by it at first and then it slipped out of our political consciousness as other events took precedence, as they exiled people and cleaned out, they

thought, the religious opposition. I can remember at the time, my good friend Hussein Mahdavy telling me that this was a new force, that we all have to take account of it.

Q: What about – I realize this wasn't your beat, but you must have been talking to other people about the army. It's not that easy to get an army to shoot defenseless people, particularly religious people. Was the army a different breed of calf than – was it ...

MILLER: I think the uprising was so sudden and so violent that it seemed to the military that criminal elements were in the street. I know that the scale of the disorder was terrifying. It was premature to connect the uprising with solely the religious leaders of the country. There were divided views about everything, and religious leaders were way down on the list of significant opposition to the Shah. Religious leaders were not at the top of the agenda; they were near the last. The clergy was the last structural organization in the political system. There were many viable secular structures in between. First were the democratic nationalists than there were Communists, after the Communists the religious structures were of least importance, at that time, 1963.

Q: And of course, putting the mob into Tehran really was going right at the jungle of the Bazaar ...

MILLER: Yes, loyalties.

Q: They were going to rip up the shops.

MILLER: No, no. The mob wasn't going to destroy the bazaar; after all many were from the bazaar. They were after the shah. The bazaars, they would never touch them, because that's where they come from. The bazaar and the religious people were and are almost an identity.

Q: When you were talking to the – how long were you there after this ...

MILLER: This event? '63? Two more years.

Q: Was this something that was – that came to dominate the thought of the opposition?

MILLER: They thought this was a phenomenon that they had never believed could happen – it happened. They began to take account of it. They had religious people involved in their nationalist politics -- they always had religious people among their ranks. This was religious extremism that arose as a result of an extremist action on the part of the shah. That was the new equation, that nationalist drew up at the time. At the time, the National Front couldn't do anything about it. They didn't take charge of it. They had to step aside. The uprising was understood as a signal that in the absence of institutions in-between, the religious structure would be there unless they too were destroyed. The shah's thinking was he could take care of the religious unrest. He would wipe them out. What stands in the way, is the growing international and internal power of human rights, which if applied, would limit the ability of the Shah to exterminate the group. The transparency of the society, the growth of a free press and more open

comment, education, travel, the desire to have the respect of the West, a longing to be regarded as a positive world force in the circles of international power, particularly at the enthronement of the monarchy, the celebration of 3000 years of monarchy in Persepolis in 1974.

Q: Did that happen while you were there? When was that?

MILLER: No. That was afterwards.

Q: Did you find while you were there – did you find sort of – were you up against the Washington establishment? With the government becoming the hand-maiden of the shah...

MILLER: Yes, that was at the core of the policy and the intellectual debate. On the desk, at the Middle East bureau – were real policy pros, and they understood what was happening. Kay Bracken was the desk officer, John Bowling and John Stutesman were in the NEA Bureau as were David Newsome and Richard Parker. I'd say the issue of the shah versus democratic opposition was a permissible debate within the Department. In the Kennedy years, and into Johnson, the NSC was more important than State covering Iran, but not elsewhere, because of the quality of the Arabists and their domination of the policy debate. Iran policy was an issue in the White House. It was also an issue in Congress. Iran policy was a big issue in the lobbying community. The Iran lobbies had a very powerful impact in Washington. After the Israelis, I suppose, the Iranians at that time were the most active, and spent the most, and got the most out of it. Policy debates about Iran among the academics, was very lively. Certainly the opposition point of view was very strongly held in universities where the students were almost without exception part of the democratic nationalist opposition.

Q: And demonstrating from time to time.

MILLER: Repeatedly, as the end came near. The Iranian students were of course engaged in their own politics.

Q: Who were some of the dominant figures in this Iranian connection in the NSC?

MILLER: At that time?

Q: Yes.

MILLER: There was Walt Rostow and the superb Middle East scholar, Bill Polk, who were the most important, and Bob Komer in the Defense Department, called by his allies, a very brilliant bureaucrat but called by his enemies "the Hammer."

Q: Or, "the Blowtorch." Polk, is he still around, or is he ...

MILLER: Polk is in retirement in south of France at Mougins. He has a lovely house there. Suzanne and I have visited him there a number of times. He is still writing articles and books about the Middle East.

Q: About this time you ...

MILLER: There were other people, in the universities that were important – Cuyler Young at Princeton. People like Herman Eilts, and Richard Parker. Nikki Keddie was very good on Iran.

Q: Did you get any feeling for NEA (Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs)? Were they, as so often happened, so enmeshed in the Israeli cause, one way or another that this was – you were sort of a sideline?

MILLER: No, at that point Iran was a major issue. It was also White House issue. Therefore, it was a major policy issue for the whole government. It was also a Hill issue, therefore it was a major policy issue of national importance. The shah, of course, had good relations at that point with Israel. The Israelis had an agricultural mission of sizable proportions. They were also giving technical assistance and training to the SAVAK secret police, on communications, techniques, and sharing intelligence on the Arabs, and on the Soviets. The Soviet factor was important at that time.

Q: Was the Soviet factor important in that it was always a concern that it might extend its influence, and so you had to ...

MILLER: There were several reasons. Yes, one was the possibility that the Soviets would extend its influence again – an influence that receded after the 1953 coup and the removal of, in our minds, of Communist political structures from Iran. The Soviet factor was the reason for the need for bases, listening posts for watching missile launches up along the northern boarder, particularly at sites close to Turkmenistan, on both sides of the Caspian, east and west and even south. These bases were very important to us from the point of view of watching Soviet missile activities.

The strategic missile, nuclear aspect of our Soviet policy was very important at that time. I should mention that. There was a bill passed in the Parliament in 1964 which forbade the placement of foreign missiles on Iranian soil which our government did not like. I remember going to see the shah with Julius Holmes on this question. It was a very sensitive discussion, but it was a practical matter. From a strategic point of view, we didn't need the emplacement of missiles in Iran, particularly after Cuba. The removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey made very clear that we were now in the age of long range missiles, ICBMs, submarines, and bombers even though coverage of the Soviet Union from Iran could be done, with shorter range missiles. That was one aspect. The Soviet question was always a major concern for American policy. The shah used this American policy imperative very successfully to his advantage.

Q: What about the issue of corruption during the time you were there?

MILLER: That was always an issue. It was always an issue, but it was understood in Washington as a normal feature of governments in that part of the world and not treated with more than mild regret, as long as it didn't interfere with major U.S. business interests or government policy,

which it didn't.

Q: Did you feel that the shah, particularly the shah's family and the court, was getting greedier and greedier?

MILLER: Yes, the family was. I did considerable reporting on that, and others in the embassy did as well. Corruption and greed and the odiousness of the royal family and the court were frequently reported subjects. Corruption didn't seem to matter as long as the shah supported us. I suppose by comparison to the other states in the region, Turkey, Iraq and the Gulf states, Iran did look like the most stable state in the region. It is still the most stable state in the region even if we are not friends at the present.

Q: Were there any opponents or proponents of the shah's regime in Congress that particularly stand out?

MILLER: Yes, one of the great proponents was Richard Helms. Helms was a very strong supporter of the shah and he influenced many key congressmen and senators about Iran.

Q: He was the head of CIA at that time.

MILLER: Helms, the head of CIA, was a school mate, actually, of the shah's in Switzerland as a boy, at Le Rosey. They went to the same school. They had grown up in a similar world and had a shared view of Europe. They shared the same anti-Soviet perspective and had some sense of solidarity that came from that shared understanding. The CIA welcomed the operational convenience that the shah offered. A lot of the influence Iran had in Congress came from that arrangement. Iran had a very positive image that was conveyed to them by the top CIA officials. Of course, Kim Roosevelt had carried out the coup which was then viewed as a great success of policy. Congress had many who believed in the utility of the covert actions of that time. Senators like Stuart Symington and John Stennis, and Richard Russell were great supporters of the shah.

Q: He was from Kentucky was it?

MILLER: No, Stuart Symington was from Missouri. He was a Truman democrat and was once head of Emerson Electric in St. Louis, and was the Secretary of the Air Force. Symington was one of the key people in Congress on defense and foreign policy matters. Senator Fulbright was an anomaly. He listened to the Iranian students and believed they were right. The majority in Congress, however, saw the shah as an ally in the Cold War. The Cold War was the test of loyalty to the United States. The Iranians had good relations with India and Pakistan, and relatively speaking, fell on the right side of the Cold War equation. Increasingly, as the Iranian students demonstrations had their presence felt, there was some change in attitude in Congress, the dominant view was determined by the Cold War equation. The nationalist aspirations and the democratic movements were secondary to that first concern, right up to the end, right up until the revolution, which took place in 1979, well before the period of perestroika between 1985 and 1991 – the Gorbachev era – and before the formal end of the Cold War.

Q: I'm looking at the time and this is probably a good place to stop. Should we move on to what happened when you left Iran? You left there in '65

FRANK E. MAESTRONE
Principal Officer
Khorramshahr (1960-1962)

Frank E. Maestrone was born in Massachusetts in 1922. He received a B.A. degree from Yale University in 1942. He was a First Lieutenant in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946. He joined the Foreign Service in 1948, serving in Austria, Germany, Egypt, Kuwait, and the Philippines. Mr. Maestrone was interviewed by Hank Zivitz in 1989.

Q: None whatever. Moving along, as a sidebar to the recent Iran-Iraq war, I know that you were consul and principal officer in Khorramshahr in 1960-62, when the oil terminal was constructed on Kharg Island. Was there any indication at that time that this remote area would become the focus of a bloody war?

MAESTRONE: Well, when I was in Khorramshahr, we had two crises that occurred between Iran and Iraq. Both of them were over the question of how the boundary line that was set along the Shatt-al-Arab River. The Shatt-al-Arab is formed, as you know, by the confluence of the Tigris and the Euphrates and then flows past Basra in Iraq, and past Khorramshahr and Abadan in Iran into the Persian Gulf. These crises concerned the question of the boundary line as I have mentioned--namely, that in 1913 a boundary commission accepted the boundary between Iran and Iraq at that point at the low water mark of the Shatt-al-Arab on the Iranian side.

Q: Boundary commission made up of whom?

MAESTRONE: The boundary commission was made up of the Ottoman Turks, who were then in control of the other side of the Shatt-al-Arab, what is now Iraq. The Russians and the British, and I think the Iranian government was also represented there, but in those days the Russians and the British pretty much ran Iraq.

Q: Iran, you mean.

MAESTRONE: I'm sorry, Iran, and the British were particularly influential in southern Iran.

Q: Did this dispute result in violence?

MAESTRONE: What actually happened was the Iranians were shipping so much oil from Abadan and also from other ports to the major international oil companies. I think the seven sisters, so called, were almost all involved in the Iranian consortium. It was operating the Iranian oil production at that time. The Iranians felt that this would be a good time to establish their

claim that the dividing line between Iran and Iraq should run along the median line or the middle of the Shatt-al-Arab River, which is the normal way boundary lines are set when bodies of water, or particularly rivers, divide two countries or states.

Therefore, the particular thing that bothered them was that every ship coming up into Abadan and Khorramshahr had to have an Iraqi pilot, since the waters were Iraqi territory. They felt that this was very demeaning for ships to come up to the great country of Iran with an Iraqi pilot leading them into Abadan and Khorramshahr, which were their major ports in those days. Therefore, they decided that they would no longer accept any ship which had an Iraqi pilot aboard. They thought that the Western countries would want their oil so badly that they would send their ships up anyway and the Iraqis wouldn't dare challenge the Western powers. Well, in fact, the Iraqis moved artillery down along the banks of the Shatt-al-Arab and said that any ship coming up without an Iraqi pilot would be shelled. So captains of oil tankers were not about to run their ships up the Shatt-al-Arab under that sort of a threat. So nobody came up the river.

The Iranians expected the Western powers to exert pressure on Iraq to force them to make this change. The Western powers had no intention of doing that, and eventually, after about a month, when all their tanks became filled, and they were starting to cut back on the refining of oil in Abadan because they had no place to put it, the Iranians finally desisted and gave up their...

Q: Who was the ruler of Iran at this time?

MAESTRONE: The Shah.

Q: The Shah, the Pahlavi, not the father.

MAESTRONE: No.

Q: What was the American official government attitude in this controversy between Iraq and Iran at that time?

MAESTRONE: Well, our attitude was one of being completely neutral in this. This was a local affair in which we were not interfering.

Q: Did the British exert any influence?

MAESTRONE: No, they took the very same position. All of them took the same position. As far as I was concerned, I talked to the people who were responsible for this down in Abadan and pointed out to them that their case was hopeless if they expected the Western powers to come to their assistance. But they refused to accept my advice, and finally, had to give in. This not only happened once, but it happened twice. The next year, at the urging of the new Abadan port director, who was, incidentally, a very cultured, well-educated man. He had been educated in Switzerland and Belgium, spoke fluent French, excellent English. At his urging, the Shah, I guess, authorized their undertaking the same effort again, which resulted in the same failure, and my good friend, the port director, ended up in jail in Tehran.

Q: Was this before the United States began to arm and support Iran as one of our bulwarks in that part of the world?

MAESTRONE: Yes, this was, in one sense, this was before we began making major arms shipments to Iran. Although we were supplying them with military equipment and we did maintain military advisory groups, MAG groups, there. We had a small one in Khorramshahr, at the Navy base there. A couple of naval officers were there helping with training and handling some of the technical aspects of the equipment, the way they were being supplied. We had a MAG group up in Ahvaz, which was the capital of Khuzestan, the major province of my consular district, from which most of the oil came. They were helping train the Iranian Army. But the training was more basic at that point.

Later on, as the Iranian Army improved its general capabilities, the decision was made in the time of President Nixon and Henry Kissinger that the Shah would become our bulwark in the Middle East. They supplied him with all sorts of very sophisticated arms, and it was a different situation to that extent.

Q: One more observation on Iran before we move to another part of the world. Could you at that time assess the attitude of the Iranian people toward the Shah, and perhaps, to project what ultimately happened in Iran?

MAESTRONE: I was, perhaps, not in as good a position as others in Iran, those in Tehran and other consulates, because my consular district had a population which was about 75% Arab. The Iranians who were there were pretty much the managers, supervisors, etc., of the operations, particularly the oil operations that took place there, or business people, all of whom were very supportive of the Shah. But even the Arab population, the Arab-Iranians, if you can call them that, were all very loyal to the Shah. There were some who were unhappy when he dropped Soroya and got his new queen, Farah Diba. For quite some time there were stories of some of the bazaaris having pictures of the Shah and Soroya still hanging in the backs of their shops, whereas, they should have been hanging up a picture of Farah Diba, which was passed around, of course. But many of those shopkeepers tended to be Iranians and particularly Bakhtiari, from which tribe Soroya originally came.

MICHAEL B. SMITH
Generalist
Tehran (1960-1962)

Ambassador Michael B. Smith was born in Massachusetts in 1936. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1958. His Foreign Service career included positions in Chad, France, and Iran. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 25, 1993.

Q: So much for "rotation." What was the situation in Tehran and in Iran more generally? We're talking about 1960, when you got there.

SMITH: Right. Tehran was the focal point of our Middle East policy. We massively backed the Shah. The Embassy was the fifth largest Foreign Service post in the world. We had 44 U. S. Government agencies represented in the Mission and 5,500 official Americans assigned there [including dependents]. We had agencies ranging from the Department of State to the Bureau of Public Roads. I know all of this because I was the "E&E" officer.

Q: That was the...

SMITH: Emergency & Evacuations Officer.

Q: So you had to keep the Emergency and Evacuation Plan up to date...

SMITH: On how in hell we were going to get these 5,500 official Americans out. We had an American School which was gigantic, plus major U.S. companies, like Morrison-Knudsen. We were building big dams. We had a huge aid program. Iran was overrun by Americans. You may remember, this was about four and one-half years after Prime Minister Mossadegh had overthrown the Shah and, in turn, was overthrown himself. We backed the Shah massively.

Since I was in the Administrative Section, I only picked this information up by osmosis. I never got out of Tehran in the two and one-quarter years that I was there.

Q: You were trapped.

SMITH: I was trapped. I was an administrative person, and my job was staff assistant to the Administrative Counselor. I ran the Commissary, was secretary to the Commissary Board, secretary to the [American] School Board, E&E Officer--you name it. I got my share of cleaning out toilets, and was Acting GSO [General Services Officer]. For a time, I ran the Motor Pool. There was an FSO assigned to Tehran as Motor Pool Officer.

Q: In running the Commissary, did you have a problem of corruption?

SMITH: Oh, did we ever!

Q: I speak as somebody who ran a commissary myself.

SMITH: Oh, we had these 5,500 official Americans. We had our own Commissary, which was in the Embassy compound--a huge area. A famous compound in later years. It was known as "Henderson High," by the way, after Ambassador Loy Henderson, who was not an admired figure, but it was really his wife who was at fault.

Q: She was one of the "dragon ladies" of the Foreign Service.

SMITH: Is she still alive?

Q: No, she's not. The best-known "dragon ladies" were Mrs. [Douglas MacArthur [III]], Mrs. [Henry] Tasca, and a few others.

SMITH: Anyway, "Henderson High" looked like a high school. It really looked like an American high school of the 1930's.

I reached Tehran on February 4 [1960]. Cappy Cappella was having a Commissary crisis. We worked at the Embassy in Tehran, Monday through Thursday, took Friday off, worked Saturday, and took Sunday off. I went to the office on Saturday. I'll never forget that as long as I live. I walked into the office at 4:00 PM, when I was told to be there. Cappy ran out of his office and upstairs to the Ambassador's office. A Marine Guard had just accidentally discharged his pistol while cleaning it and shot an Iranian. That was my introduction to Cappy. Cappy was a short guy, has a vicious temper, but was regarded as one of the administrative geniuses of the Foreign Service. He knew every short cut there was.

To get back to the Commissary, we were in the process of building a new Commissary. We had it in an old building. In 1960 we were running a \$6 million a year operation. We had a German national as the Commissary Manager. We had Commissary Board meetings every month. Under the Foreign Service Regulations the Commissaries are chartered in such and such a way. We had bonds, and all that sort of stuff. Well, it turned out that this German Commissary Manager, Klaus whatever his name was, pocketed about \$300,000. Obviously, we had to fire him. We called in the bond, but the corruption was endemic. The groceries came in to Bandar-e Bushehr or Port Sanaa on the Persian Gulf and had to go 3,000 kilometers by rail to get to Tehran. Well, you can imagine what the pilferage was. Ever since then I have never bought a can of "White Rose" brand anything, because that was the brand we were mostly using.

To show you how undistinguished a Foreign Service Officer's life can be, this Commissary which we were building was going to be a refrigerated Commissary. So we were going to have all these dairy boxes, [display] cases, and coolers. You know, no Iranian had ever seen one. So we hit on the idea of going to Germany and hiring an American who knew about those things and flying him down. It became my job to feed, entertain, and otherwise occupy him. There is just so much you can say to a guy who installs dairy cases. He was there for a month. I was also down there, sweating, with the pipes, and so forth...

Q: This is what a Foreign Service Officer does.

SMITH: So we hired an American Commissary Manager. It turned out that he was just as bad as the German. We fired him after he had absconded with funds. So I became temporary Commissary Manager for about three months. In those days a \$6 million operation was pretty big. Of course, we were trying to satisfy 44 agencies, all of their wives and children, and so forth. Inevitably, we'd be "fat" in one product and "zero" in another. The crucial things were evaporated milk, because of the babies--we had to have evaporated milk. We had to have diapers. We could do away with almost anything else, but diapers and evaporated milk were absolutely essential.

Anyway, the Commissary was built. It was really a showpiece, a case of the tail wagging the dog. When I left Tehran, the Commissary was turning a profit. Now, that wasn't because of me. It was because they had put in a new Board, with Cappy there and a really good accounting system. I learned a lot about retail stores and how to market products. Of course, we were required by federal law and all these federal regulations not to make a big profit. You had to cover expenses, pay off loans, and things like that. But there were no shareholders. It was a fun time.

Q: Well, the responsibility, of course, is probably the greatest that you had...

SMITH: That I ever had in the Foreign Service. Let's see. In 1960 I was 24 years old. Here I was, running this big operation. I had another responsibility, maintaining the entire E&E Plan, which involved all of our officers. Well, the Administrative Section, in a way, had the major responsibility. But I had more fun and learned more about a complex Mission. You know, the U. S. Agencies were spread all over the town. In those days we had E&E funds. Do you remember that? I remember to this day how much money we had.

Q: Did this include gold coins?

SMITH: Gold coins.

Q: Oh, yes, "Napoleons" [French gold coins from the time of Napoleon III], wasn't it?

SMITH: We had Napoleons, sovereigns [British gold coins], and gold eagles [U. S. gold coins].

Q: Part of the time you were there I was in Dhahran [Saudi Arabia]. I remember having to count these coins...

SMITH: Counting them and putting them in little brown bags, sealing them up, and putting the seals on, up in the Code Room. I can remember to this day how much money we had. We had \$88,401 in sovereigns, gold coins. We had about \$250,000 in "green" [U. S. paper money]. It was all bound up in wrappers. You were supposed to count it. That was the law. These were big, rectangular bundles of dollar bills, bound with wire strapping. Well, heavens, you aren't going to take those things off every month. So we just said, "Well, it looks the same to us," and put it back in the bag. [Laughter]

We had this big ceremony every month. I finally said, "We don't have to make this so serious. Let's bring some champagne and we'll have a little party." So we would dutifully count all of the sovereigns, break the seals on all of the packages, open the bags, count all the coins, put them back in the bag, and put the seals back on. Then we had to send in a report by OM [Operations Memorandum] and by telegram, that we had made the count. I often wondered if anyone ever lost any E&E money. What would have happened? Would they have gone to [the federal prison at] Ft. Leavenworth?

Q: It used to scare me. I would just think of that stuff and say to myself, "Oh, God."

SMITH: I often wondered what happened to all of that E&E money, when the Iranians took over the Embassy [in 1979]. By the time I was in a more senior job in the Service, assigned to the Consulate [General] in Strasbourg, they'd done away with the E&E program money. So I don't know whether our Embassy [in Tehran] had any money like that [when it was taken over by fundamentalist Muslims].

Q: They may have had money like that in some of our smaller posts. I mean the posts where the money "spoke" or might have made a difference.

SMITH: After careful, arduous discussion of the E&E Plan our first recommendation was, "Don't." That is, don't evacuate, as there was no way to do it. We felt that we couldn't get 5,500 people out of Tehran. Well, that wasn't acceptable, obviously. People back in Washington said, "You've got to get them out." We said, "Well, what do we do? We're 2,000 miles this way and 2,000 miles that way. No gas. How the hell are we going to get them out?"

I had two great Ambassadors during my tour in Tehran. The first one was Tom Wailes, who was considered one of the founders of the post-World War II Foreign Service. The second one was Julius Holmes. So, I'm sure, they looked at this eager young officer who came up and said, "Hey, there's no way that we can evacuate these people." The CIA contingent at the Embassy, of course, had its own E&E Plan. They wouldn't talk about it with me. The CIA Chief of Station in the Embassy was Colonel Yatsevitch. He had a posture like a ramrod. It was such a farce. The CIA people worked in the Embassy as FSRs. You'd go into their office--if you could ever get in--and all of their secretaries--different from our secretaries in the regular Embassy--had these very conspicuous paper bags marked, "Burn," sitting on the top of their desks. They all associated with each other, had their own warehouses, and all of that. Well, of course, they were doing a lot of things up on the northern border of Iran [with the Soviet Union].

I was in Tehran when the U-2 crashed [near Sverdlovsk in 1960].

Q: This aircraft was flown by Gary Powers and caused a crisis between the Soviet Union and the United States.

SMITH: All hell broke loose. Anyway, it was a great experience to serve in the Embassy in Tehran. We had a major league baseball field behind the Embassy--it was that big.

One of the things that I was in charge of was the Iranian-American Fair. The ambassadors and their wives were big on this kind of stuff. The USIS [United States Information Service] had this institution called the Iran-America Society, and everyone was supposed to--i.e., was virtually forced to--do their share. I was in charge of all the arcades and amusements. The Iranian-American Fair, held outside of Tehran. There were thousands of Iranians there. About 120,000 people attended. It was the major fund-raiser. We had worked for months, building dartboards, bean bag boards, and all of that. Of course, the Iranians were not the most orderly people. The fair always took place on one of those hot, dusty days. I remember that at the end of the day at one of these events my voice was completely gone, but we had made a lot of money.

We made something like \$70-80,000--maybe more than that. But that was something I did as a junior officer. I was the most junior officer in the Embassy.

Q: It's an interesting thing that your real responsibility is often at the junior officer level. A couple of things. One was, what was your impression--obviously, you were off to one side--of the two ambassadors you served under in Tehran? How did they operate?

SMITH: They were great men--very kindly. Their office was on the second floor. If you ever had to go to the Ambassador's office, you were just in deep trouble. Ambassador Tom Wailes was sort of a grandfatherly type of guy. I think that his wife was named Cornelia. Ambassador Julius Holmes' wife was named Henrietta. They were both sort of stately women who did traditional things. They would say, "The wives will be at the..."

Q: With gloves...

SMITH: You're damned right. I loved it, and the women loved it. There was no bitching about it. There was a discipline which is sorely lacking now. If the Ambassador was holding a reception, we showed up 15 minutes before and were briefed by the Ambassador's wife. Cornelia Wailes would say, "I don't want to see the two of you [i.e., my wife and myself] talking to each other at this party." As you recall, your efficiency report referred to the conduct of your wife. There was a rating on the wives. Ambassador Wailes was a very kind man, a beloved figure. He was gentlemanly. I never knew what was going on. He chaired the Country Team meetings [attended by Agency heads or their representatives in the Mission]. I never sat in on one of those meetings. I saw Ambassador Wailes only in passing.

The DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], in my view, was one of the most unpopular figures who was ever in the Foreign Service.

Q: Who was he?

SMITH: Stuart W. Rockwell. His wife was named Rosalyn.

Q: He was a very dignified gentleman, I believe.

SMITH: Yes. He was a consummate, English-type diplomat, but just as mean as could be. He looked down at everybody. He was a boy wonder, a "wunderkind." But he came a cropper in Tehran and after that his career sort of went downhill. I really don't know why, but I heard lots of stories. I've nothing personally against Stuart. He and I have since talked about various things. But he was so dignified and so aloof, compared to the average FSO. He just wasn't friendly. People didn't like him.

People liked Ambassador Wailes. Ambassador Holmes was a thin, short guy. He had formerly been a brigadier general and head of the World's Fair [in New York]. He got caught up in some sort of quasi-scandal involving freighters and stuff like that after World War II. He was a great guy. I remember that when my father died in the U. S.--I was in Tehran--Ambassador Holmes

sent me the most beautiful letter of condolence. He said, "It's better that you can't go back. I've been through this myself and know what it's like. If you need to talk to me, please come and talk to me. My heart's with you." It was a hand-written note. Here I was, 8,000 miles from home. My Dad died, I was an FSO-8, and how the hell could I go back for the funeral? In those days we didn't have compassionate leave [for family emergencies of this kind].

Both Ambassador Wailes and Ambassador Holmes ran very tight ships. We were inspected once. I never saw the portion of the report dealing with any other area than the Administrative Section, but apparently both Ambassadors got top marks. In those days an inspection meant something. Now they're not worth a tinker's dam. Formerly, the Inspection Corps was not used as a place for "parking" people [while awaiting another assignment].

Anyway, [the American Mission in] Tehran was like a big American city. My reaction to Tehran was that I really never knew that I was overseas. Part of that was a function of my job, since I never left the Embassy. I never dealt with anyone, other than Americans. I didn't deal with Iranians, except in the sense that they were building the Commissary or something like that. But I had no official contact with the Iranians, with the exception of one story, which I'll tell. I went from cocktail party to cocktail party--lots of parties, all the time. We had a "badji" [servant] who took care of our child. Our baby was born on the same day that the Shah's son was born, at the Ivory Hospital. We would go out but tended to see only Americans, although we knew some foreign diplomats. We largely stayed in our own section. We tried to break out of that and met with the Economic Counselor and were successful in that. A lot of the staff never broke away. It was like a big family, a very big, American family, sitting out in the middle of nowhere.

Sundays were great. We'd go down to the bazaar. There was no feeling that you were going to get mugged, or anything like that or concern that you were going to be "ripped off" [robbed]. Things might be stolen from you, but you weren't going to be mugged.

I remember Christmases there. It was cold, yet the Iranians were obviously catering to the foreigners. They had all sorts of Christmas trees for sale. We bought our rugs down at the bazaar. I liked Tehran. In hindsight it was a dictatorship and all of that, but we were not worried about that. That was for the Ambassador and others to worry about. We were concerned about servicing the other Americans.

The only contact I ever had with Iranians was actually with the Shah and the Empress. In 1961 Louis Marx, of Marx Toys, had been sent out as sort of an Ambassador to promote the New York World's Fair of 1964-65. When he came to Tehran, the Ambassador took him to see the Shah to urge the Shah to build a pavilion at the fair. At the time Marx Toys owned Lionel model trains. As a gift, Marx brought this incredible Lionel train set. I didn't know anything about it.

I think that, at that time, Jim Magnus was the Administrative Officer. Jim was told, "Please come up to the Ambassador's office." The next thing I knew, I was also asked to come up to the Ambassador's office. So up I went. The Ambassador looked at me and said, "You have a new project."

Q: You were saying that the Ambassador said that you had a new project?

SMITH: He said, "The Court Chamberlain just called and said that the Shah has this beautiful train set, and he'd like it to be set up." Down in the Crown Prince's Palace. There were three palaces: the "Papa Shah" Palace, the "Mama Shah" Palace, and the "Baby Shah" Palace. So I had that to do. "Yes, sir," I said.

I went down to the "Baby Shah" Palace, with security people all over the place. We saw this massive collection of boxes of Lionel trains. You remember, they used to come in orange boxes. Those were the big ones. This setup was "HO" gauge, I think. To make a long story short, two people from the Code Room, the chief of the Communications Section, a guy named Chalmers Pittman, and I spent three months down at the "Baby Shah" Palace. This was the biggest train set you ever saw. It went around the "Baby Shah's" nursery, which was 10 times the size of this room. It even had a fairly large tree.

Q: You're showing me a tree whose branches are a yard in diameter...

SMITH: Going right up to the ceiling and out to the open air. We built a platform like these bookshelves, around three sides of the room.

Q: About 2 ½ feet high, eh?

SMITH: We made paper-mache villages and all of that kind of stuff. I think that there were something like 20 engines in the box. I couldn't do the electrical wiring. It took the three other guys from our Communications Section to wire the whole thing up. Anyway, we'd go down there every afternoon. It took us three months. We became familiar with and "old pals" of the security guards. We would go into the "Baby Shah's" nursery.

Finally, when we were all done, the "Mama Shah," Queen Farah Diba, decided to have a little tea for us men. She was going to have an afternoon tea, to which the Ambassador, the Ambassador's wife, and I can't remember whether, by that time, it was still Ambassador Wailes or Ambassador Holmes. We had almost, if you will, a ribbon cutting for this incredible train set. The Shah came in, they took us in to see the "Baby Shah," where, I guess, they dressed him and fed him, and had a big bassinet, with a crown at the top. It was just like a Cinderella fairy tale. It turned out that the "Baby Shah's" Palace was about half a mile from my house. Of course, now he's 33 years old and lives in McLean, VA. [Laughter]

I've never asked him--I don't know him--whether he played with the train set. And God knows what happened to it. That was the only time I saw the Shah. The Shah's sister, Princess Ashraf, (she was known informally as "Princess Ashcan."), attended the Iranian-American Fair. She was a bitch on wheels.

Q: Was she a twin sister of the Shah?

SMITH: Yes. She was the sort of woman who wore fur coats in the summertime. They would

turn up the air conditioning. She would make her imperial presence known.

When you went to court--a formal "levee," so to speak--on the Shah's birthday or Iranian Independence Day, or whatever, the Ambassador always rotated the officers who went. I went once. You had to get white tie and tails. I'd never worn white tie and tails before--nor since. Of course, you borrowed them from somebody else. I had pants that were too short, the coat was too long, and all that. That's the only time that I met the Shah. He was a little, short guy. They never allowed him and Empress Farah Diba to be photographed at the same level, because she was taller than he.

Q: I wasn't aware of that.

SMITH: He was always sort of put on a pedestal of some kind. I remember that you had to go up to the Shah and shake hands. Then you had to back off. I always thought that that was wrong for Americans to do, but you couldn't turn your back to the Shah.

Well, I didn't do very much at the Embassy, but it was fun. I went from the fifth largest [American] Embassy in the world, with 5,500 official Americans, to say nothing of the 20,000 non-official Americans, to my next post in Chad [Central Africa].

Q: I was going to say that you were in Chad from 1962 to 1964. What a contrast!

DAVID NALLE
Director of the Bi-National Center
Tehran (1960-1963)

David Nalle was born and raised in Philadelphia. He attended Princeton University where he majored in English Literature. He graduated in 1948 because of his service in World War II. In 1951, Mr. Nalle entered the USIA. In addition to serving in Iran, he served in Afghanistan, Syria, Jordan, USSR and Washington, DC. Mr. Nalle was interviewed in April of 1990 by Dorothy Robins-Mowry.

NALLE: Two years, yes. Then I went to Tehran to be head of the Binational Center.

Q: What year was that?

NALLE: We must have gone there at the end of the summer of '60.

Q: Did you request this post?

NALLE: I don't think so.

Q: You sort of never requested anything for an assignment. [Laughter]

NALLE: No. No, not at all.

Q: But obviously you were moving up.

NALLE: I'll tell you how I got to Moscow later. But that was a fascinating job in Tehran, really. You mentioned Bob Lincoln. Well, I guess I'm getting ahead of myself there.

Anyway, I was head of the Binational Center. Bob Bauer had been head of it before me. Do you know Bob?

Q: Yes.

NALLE: A very difficult act to follow, if only because Bob has a wonderful story for every occasion, and I don't. So I'm sure I disappointed many of the people in the Binational Center because I wasn't as well equipped as Bob was in that regard. But Bob raised the money to build a new center, so I got there and spent most of my stay there, I guess, as head of the center in its old building downtown. Then we moved up the hill to Abbasabad. It was only towards the end of my stay, actually, that we moved, as I remember, because I spent very little time actually working in the new building.

Q: Who designed that big new building, the set of buildings?

NALLE: Two American architects, Brown and Daltas. They were Americans who were doing business in Iran.

Q: But the basic concept of what the Center was supposed to be all about, this is what's so unusual about that Tehran Center, is the series of buildings, the kind of facilities it has.

NALLE: As far as I know, it was done largely by Bob Bauer. The important thing is that the Binational Center in Tehran really was binational. The majority on the board was Iranian. They had to approve the design, as well. They were usually quite tolerant of what the Americans wanted to do, because the Americans put the money in. It was a considerable amount of money. A lot of people criticized the building, but I think it was done in the right way. The Americans consulted the Iranians and got them to go along, and consulted the architects, who were Americans, told them what the function was supposed to be. Of course, they could see the old building and the old operation and they knew what it did. They designed this building, which was supposed to reflect the Iranian approach to architecture, as well as the American approach to using the building and the function. As I say, I never really worked in it, but I liked it.

When I later became head of the area, I went back there often to see it, and I thought it had great potential. It was something which was used. It had a wonderful stage in the middle, which could be opened to indoor or outdoor seating.

Q: So what kind of things were you doing at the Binational Center when you were there?

NALLE: At any given moment there were 5,000 Iranians on our campus studying English. Except maybe for Thailand, I think it was the largest English-teaching operation that the Agency had. We did our own books, because the Agency didn't provide decent books.

Q: You mean you published books in English-language training?

NALLE: Yes. We hired a trained English-language professional and had her write the books, and we published them, paid for them out of income and so forth. We paid for most of the cost of running the center's cultural program. We also ran something that started under Bob Bauer, a Student Center across the street from the main gate of Tehran University, which was run by Mokhadereh Ziai, and was, to some extent because of her strength of character, autonomous. We tried to involve Americans there in conversation teas and things like that as much as possible, and it was, I think, a very useful center. I think, in a way, she was right in wanting autonomy. There was more success with less American participation than with more, because the students were, by that time, by 1962-63, beginning to be severely disaffected. There had been, not long before, an attempt on the Shah's life. For students, being associated with the Americans was not a popular thing by that time. This was still quite some time before the revolution.

Q: Why was this so? Do you remember, David? How did this disaffection arise--was it because of U.S. relations with the Shah? Where was the basis for the disaffection, as you saw it at that point?

NALLE: As I saw it, I think, and as I've talked to people about it subsequently, I do not think it was religious, by and large. I don't think religion was a real factor in the minds of the young and politically active. In fact, I think, the majority of them paid no attention to religion. They were essentially Muslim culturally, but secular, otherwise. I think it was nationalistic, politically speaking.

The removal of Mossadegh was, in my estimation, a tragic mistake on the part of the United States. We caused, in effect, the Khomeini revolution by doing that. There were additional causes added along the way that made it turn out the way it has turned out. But essentially, the seeds of that revolution were planted then, because we insulted the Iranians nationally, as a nation.

Who knows what might have happened had Mossadegh stayed on, if we and the other forces that removed him had not come into play? It would have been a mess, because Mossadegh really didn't have control of the country or its various economic problems. But it would have been an Iranian mess, rather than one we created, and they would have worked it out in some way. It's a very sophisticated country in many ways. It was then and still is. They would have worked out a path to being a modern country, which they have not become. It might not have pleased us, and they might have been--although I don't think so--more friendly to the Soviet Union than we would have liked in the Cold War, but they are much more afraid of the Soviet Union than even we are, for good reason.

So we interrupted the normal course of Iranian history. Iran would have gone its own way, and we would not have become the scapegoat, the great Satan, or whatever.

Q: In those final months of 1978, when I was in Tehran, any number of people at parties and other places would talk to me about U.S. removal of Mossadegh, and I often thought, subsequently, whether they felt that maybe we could also remove the Shah and do something to correct the situation. When I tried to say that the United States did not have that kind of power, of course, nobody believed me. They thought I was just making conversation or throwing it off. But this combination of references came up regularly, so that what you're saying about Mossadegh seems to me very appropriate over this long haul of our relations with Iran.

NALLE: I think none of us recognized what was coming in Iran. I think one of the reasons was that, paradoxically, Iranians, so often when they would take you aside, would say things like that. They'd say that the Shah, and, especially, his family and the court were corrupt. They didn't often get specific on the corruption issue, but they would say, "The Shah uses Savak to oppress the people," and so forth. They said it so often and they said it really so freely that you began to tune out, you began to disbelieve. "These people are just talking. They don't really mean this. That's their way of expressing themselves. It doesn't really mean that they're against the Shah, or want to do away with him."

Of course, by and large, most of the people, I think, that the Americans were in contact with, while they didn't like the Shah's way of ruling and the corruption and the policies he imposed that didn't agree with their view of the way things should be, I think, none of them wanted the mullahs to take over. I've discussed this with others since. My distinct impression from living there for five years was that just about everybody was contemptuous of the mullah class, not necessarily all the Ayatollahs, but the mullah class, in general, was the object of derision, rather than respect, the cause, in the eyes of most people, of the troubles of the country, in the area of education and so forth.

So it was a mixed thing. We got tired of hearing this over and over again, hearing them say this, and obviously never seeing them do anything about it. So we discounted this, said, "That's the way they talk. They don't really want to get rid of the Shah." But there again, you have this peculiar psychological point--I don't know whether anybody's analyzed it--that our reimposing the Shah on the country, a King, when kings are no longer fashionable in the modern world, was, in effect, putting them down, was castrating them, in effect. I think everyone resented it one way or another, consciously or unconsciously.

Q: So you were there for a five-year stint?

NALLE: I had been there two-plus years in Meshed and two and a half years in Tehran.

Q: When you became director of the Near East, South Asia area, this was in the late '70s.

NALLE: Early '70s first. I was twice director of the area.

Q: So you visited Iran. What I'm trying to say, in the course of your career, you were in and out of Iran for longer periods or shorter periods over a period running from the '50s into the late '70s.

NALLE: Yes.

Q: So it's 20 years of observations we're talking about here.

NALLE: With time out for being in Moscow, where you never heard much about the outside world, so I didn't know what was going on then. Most of my career was associated with Iran in one way or another.

Q: Did you find an evolving situation? You were talking about Mrs. Ziai at the Student Center and the beginning of student disaffection. Were you aware, over this whole period of 20 years, of very much of a change? Or did it occur very slowly? How do you evaluate the relations with the United States? Was there disillusionment, or was it all still based on our earlier action?

NALLE: Meshed was sort of an idyllic situation, and it was still far enough away physically and close enough to the Mossadegh overthrow that it had not hardened into any political expression that was clearly discernible--to a foreigner, at least. But I was surprised when, later, I was working in Tehran and would go to the Student Center, and I would try to mix in with the student visitors. I found, to my surprise, there were people, students, who would not speak to me, or people who would speak, turn away, and leave, apparently not desiring to speak to an American, which is something I had never found anywhere in Iran--and didn't find with the older people in the Iran-America Society downtown. There was obviously a serious disaffection among the young.

I used to go occasionally to the classes at the IAS Language Institute, where they were studying English. I found there also there was not the same kind of open welcoming that I had been accustomed to finding when meeting a group of Iranians. Especially when I spoke Persian, Iranians before would open up and be forthcoming. But that became less so. Certainly with a significant segment of the young population, there was a turning away from America, a turning off. Again, I think it was largely nationalistic, because we were seen as what the British had been. Of course, even after the British were no longer a significant player, there was the lasting impact of the hundred years of British imposition of their will on Iran, and Iranians couldn't let go of blaming the British--but we Americans were out front and we were doing the things that were contrary to their expression of their own national will, so to speak.

And the fact that religion came in later was partly because of what we see all over the Muslim world now--and in other cultures--where religion can be used as a tool if you have a political objective. If you want to express yourself politically, one of the tools you have is your religion. You may demonstrate in a religious way, but your primary objective is still political. This, I think, we'll find coming up in Soviet Central Asia, where it's not so much that they're "fundamentalists" and want to turn their area into a religious republic, or whatever Iran is, but it's that they find it a convenient tool to express themselves with.

Q: Would you say that the Ayatollah (Khomeini) was, in the first instance, political because of his relations or his hatred of the Shah?

NALLE: Absolutely.

Q: Then he used his religion.

NALLE: Yes. I think he used his religion, maybe unconsciously, but to get back at the Shah for having kicked him out and having been disrespectful to him and to the religion. Obviously, he was a serious, religious man, too. But by and large, the public--there's a very interesting book I've read recently that reports conversations with people in villages in this period after the revolution. They say exactly what I expected they would feel, but it still surprised me that they would say it. They were saying, "This guy, he's using religion. He's just like the mullahs we have around here, who get paid, don't do anything for us, make us listen to their sermons, don't do us any good, and aren't really religious. They're just living off the fat of the land, and we're the ones doing the work and have to pay for it." That's still going on in Iran. There is this whole body of people who are sensible, practical, and not necessarily anti-American.

Q: What did you find were the most successful kinds of programs you put on at the Center, besides the English, obviously?

NALLE: I suppose I'd have to say good speakers from outside if we could get them to the Center.

Q: Americans and foreigners?

NALLE: Americans. We hosted a party for Lyndon Johnson at one time, which was one of the most interesting, when he was vice president and came through.

Q: That's when he got involved with a camel driver.

NALLE: In Pakistan. There are a lot of interesting stories, and I won't go into them. But I suppose the Student Center and English-teaching were the most important things we did, but the cultural programs that we put on that were well designed and of interest to the intellectuals did bring them in. Poetry readings, for example, just reading Iranian poetry or American poetry, were a respectful effort to communicate with Iranians, and were greeted that way. Just taking poetry as an example, that's something they prize and value. People who would not otherwise deal with Americans would come to the Binational Center to take part in such a program. They might not be gracious about it, because they didn't want you; they wanted the program. But they would come.

We didn't, obviously, do the things that the information officer was doing, because that wasn't our function. It wasn't our cultural function. After the big building was built and running, they, the IAS, put on a lot of good theater.

I must say for the record that one of the programs that I was there to put on at the new Center was the visit of Edward R. Murrow. I guess he was within four or five months of his death then. It was an amazing performance. That was the inauguration of the new IAS. We moved up the inauguration to coincide with it his visit.

Q: Was he head of the Agency then?

NALLE: Yes. It coincided with the time he was on a trip and we could get him to come there. He came, and somebody had written a nice speech for him. He was obviously unwell. In fact, he had to be taken from the reception to where he was staying, to lie down, because he was beginning to fail. But he got up in the big outdoor theater, with inadequate light on the lectern, and he read his speech--but he edited it as he went along. He obviously felt he couldn't read through a whole 45-minute speech, and he edited it down to about 15 or 20 minutes. I was the only person who knew, because I had read it beforehand, that he wasn't giving the full speech. It was a most amazing performance. I've tried to do that myself subsequently, and it's terribly hard, as you know, to edit something while you're up there, trying to speak, without revealing that you're leaving vast parts of it out. Nobody knew he had cut it in half. It sounded like a great speech. Very impressive.

Q: Do you have any special or further to say about Edward R. Murrow during his visit? He was very well received, I take it. He was a big name.

NALLE: Yes, at that time. Actually, I don't think his name was terribly well known in Iran, but we had a very good turnout for it. The fact that the Americans thought he was very important made it important to the Iranians. That's true of any nation that had, obviously, great national pride.

Q: Perfectly true. Anything special about that Lyndon Johnson visit that you want to just throw in before we move on from Tehran on this go-round?

NALLE: No.

Q: Did he do any programs, or did he just visit the Shah and ride around?

NALLE: Yes, and he would jump out of the car and shake a lot of hands, which would drive the Savak people crazy, because, "Obviously, these terrorists are going to kill the American president right here on my watch."

No, there are a lot of stories. One was at the reception at the foreign ministry. The ambassador asked me to interpret for Johnson. I'm sure my Persian was not good enough to interpret for him if he had been having a diplomatic discussion with the prime minister. But this was informal, so I did. I got beside him. He was an enormous man. I got beside him, and we started to go into the reception. An elderly gentleman who happened to be a member of the Binational Center board of directors was there and stuck out his hand. This man started to speak, and I started translating. Johnson turned and said to me, "Don't bother to translate, sonny. That's just the same kind of bull

shit I hear in America." [Laughter]

Q: Oh, dear. [Laughter] Where did you go after Tehran?

TALCOTT W. SEELYE
Deputy Intelligence Relations Officer, Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1960-1964)

Ambassador Talcott W. Seelye was born in Beirut, Lebanon of American parents in 1922. He received a B.A. from Amherst College and served in the U.S. Army during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service in 1949 and during his career served overseas in Germany, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. He also served as Ambassador to Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria and in several capacities in Washington, DC in the Office of Near Eastern Affairs. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: How did the Kuwaitis look at the Shah and Iran?

SEELYE: Kuwait has an element in its population of Iranian extraction that goes back a hundred years or more. It came down from southern Iran, which is known as Khuzestan, which was more Arab than Persian for many years. So many of these Iranians who have been in Kuwait for a hundred years are of Arab stock. Nevertheless, they are known as Iranians because they came from Iran. I sensed in Kuwait an anti-Iranian sentiment. While many of the Kuwaiti merchants of Iranian origin were successful and wealthy and seemed to be accepted, nevertheless, if you talked privately to a Kuwait from the old stock, he would grumble about these "ajamis." "Ajami" in Arabic means foreigner, but in Kuwait it meant Iranians. So I sensed then an anti-Iranian sentiment there which I am afraid remains.

Also, Iranians came in illegally to be used for unskilled labor. They did a lot of the dirty work. The British, who were running the show, were pro-Shah. I didn't sense among the Kuwaiti officials any resentment or antipathy against the Shah. The Kuwaiti anti-Iranian sentiment was directed at the people.

STUART W. ROCKWELL
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tehran (1960-1965)

Ambassador Stuart W. Rockwell was born in New York on January 15, 1917. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University. His Foreign Service career included positions in Tehran, Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Morocco. Ambassador Rockwell was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on

October 5, 1988.

Q: I'd like to move on to your time from 1960 to '65 in Tehran. You went out there under the Eisenhower Administration. The ambassador at that time was Edward T. Wailes?

ROCKWELL: Yes.

Q: Had he asked for you?

ROCKWELL: No. I don't believe he had. I think that the person who assigned me out there was Loy Henderson.

Q: In these interviews, I keep running across references to Loy Henderson running into people on the way to the men's room or walking down the corridor or something, and saying, "Where are you going?" They'll say, "I've been assigned to such and such." He says, "Oh, you don't want to go there." Apparently, he kept a very close eye on assignments and was always sort of moving out of the system. Did he ask you if you wanted to go or get involved in that assignment at all?

ROCKWELL: As I recall it, he merely told me that that's where he wanted me to go. So it sounded like a good place to go.

Q: What was the situation in Iran? We're talking about the period of 1960 to '65, when you went out there as deputy chief of mission.

ROCKWELL: That was the period when the Shah started his so-called White Revolution, when he had achieved victory over the oil companies to the point that Iranian revenue from oil was greatly increasing, and when his ambitions for modernizing his country were at their height, and when his own position within the country as a result of the prosperity that was beginning to be felt throughout, was at the highest. So although there were problems, he didn't really permit any kind of full-fledged free political participation. The secret police were always to be thought about if you did criticize the regime too strongly.

Nonetheless, it was a good time for most Iranians and certainly for educated ones, because the country was booming.

Q: Moving to the operational side, each ambassador uses his DCM in a different way. Was there any difference between the way Wailes and then later, Julius Holmes, who took his place, did they use you in about the same way? They were both career ambassadors.

ROCKWELL: Julius Holmes was much more directly involved than Tom Wailes was, so under Holmes, there was less substantive work for the DCM to do than there was under Wailes.

Q: What do you mean when you say "substantive work?"

ROCKWELL: I mean that Julius Holmes was an interested formulator of policy and somebody

who desired to be directly involved in dealing with the Iranians at a high level, whereas Tom Wailes was much less vigorous in that sense, and really preferred to have things brought to him and form his own views and make his comments on the basis of what he was given.

Q: What would Holmes do with you, then, when he was your ambassador?

ROCKWELL: He would rely on the DCM principally for the administration of the embassy. At that time, we had the other elements there, like the Armish MAAG and the mission to the Gendarmerie and the economic aid mission. There were constant meetings and Country Team meetings and that kind of thing.

Q: What was our interest in Iran at the time?

ROCKWELL: It eventually became strongly political and strongly economic, as well, because Iran became one of our best customers for many, many things. But we had, of course, a long history of involvement with Iran, going back to the time when the Shah came back from exile and to our role in the Azerbaijan crisis, when the Russians wouldn't leave Azerbaijan after the war and tried to set up a regime there. Iran seemed to be an important Middle Eastern country which was not involved in the Palestine crisis, and which seemed to have interests which paralleled ours, particularly as regards the Russians, under the monarchy, of course. Then of course, there was the oil, which was of interest, too. So we had major stakes in Iran.

Q: You could view this from both the Washington perspective and out in the field. Was there a difference between the approach to the area between the Eisenhower Administration and the Kennedy Administration?

ROCKWELL: Yes, very decidedly. The Kennedy Administration was much more concerned than the Eisenhower one about the political regime and the political situation in Iran, in the sense that the Kennedy Administration thought that American influence should be directed toward influencing the situation in Iran in the direction of a more democratic administration.

Q: Looking at it now from the perspective of at least 20 years-plus later, there have been arguments saying that the effort to bring reform in essentially a very conservative country created resentments which led to the eventual overthrow of the Shah. As far as the embassy was concerned, was anybody saying, "Wait a minute. We better not be doing this." At least sponsoring democratic reforms?

ROCKWELL: Quite the contrary. If there was any objection within the embassy, it came from people who felt we weren't doing enough. In effect, we really weren't doing very much, especially when I was there, because nobody had any idea that the Mullahs--in fact, I don't believe that the Mullahs had any influence or were organized at all at that time. But in any event, nobody on the Iranian side and nobody on the American side paid any attention to the Mullahs. Things were going so well for the average Iranian, as long as he could overcome his aversion to working with the regime, that there were no real centers of opposition to the regime. In fact, the regime, during the time that I was there, really took over of its most vocal critics who were lured back to the

country from critical exile by the new jobs that were created.

So if anybody says that we did too much and that had much to do with what eventually happened, I certainly don't agree with that.

Q: What were we doing, just expressing our hope that things would get better?

ROCKWELL: Especially under the Kennedys, the ambassador was instructed to talk to the Shah about the need to create a bridge to the middle class and to relax the controls that he was exercising on the political process. We also kept in touch discreetly with the opposition, such as it existed at the time. Later on, after I left, especially under Henry Kissinger, the orders were to stop interfering in the Shah's business.

Q: There is some bitterness about the fact that we deliberately cut ourselves off from any opposition movement. Traditionally our role is to talk to everybody, at least everybody who is halfway legitimate.

ROCKWELL: That, of course, is the way it should be. The problem in Iran was that the Shah was paranoid about anybody, especially American diplomats, talking to the opposition. He certainly was able to find out rather quickly whether there had been any such talk, and he left no doubt that he was not pleased, and if this continued, that the people involved would be asked to leave the country.

Q: But at the time you were there, you could talk?

ROCKWELL: You could up to a point, but if you talked to somebody like Ali Amini, for example, who was one of the better of the politicians, from our point of view, but whom the Shah did not like because he was jealous of him and thought that he wasn't loyal, if you talked with him, it soon got back to the Shah, and the Shah let it be known that he didn't wish this to continue, or else there would be a request for departure on a non grata basis.

Q: When you were there, was the Shah very much in control of everything?

ROCKWELL: Oh, yes.

Q: It was the Shah, not advisors.

ROCKWELL: That's right. Nobody counted for anything but the Shah.

Q: The Shah was calling the shots. How did you find the embassy staffed? Was it a good operating staff?

ROCKWELL: In any group, some are better than others. We had some outstanding people and we had some mediocre ones.

Q: Going back to the time you were there, did you find that the American presence was overwhelming, as happened later on when we were putting so much military equipment in?

ROCKWELL: No. It was not overwhelming when I was there, but it became so later, I understand.

Q: What about our military involvement or military aid? Was this a major program?

ROCKWELL: Yes, it was a large-scale program.

Q: Was it at about the level that you felt was correct for the situation?

ROCKWELL: As far as I could see, it was correct. We were constantly involved in trying to curb the Shah's appetite for new equipment, but insofar as the military presence was concerned and the kind of training that was done, it seemed quite appropriate.

Q: Were there any splits on how to deal with the Shah regarding his desire for military equipment? Was the American military trying to sell more to him and the State Department side was holding back, or vice versa?

ROCKWELL: It wasn't the military so much as the civilian manufacturers of various things like airplanes that were causing most of the trouble, because they would whet the Shah's appetite in sending out people and giving him demonstrations and whatnot. I think our military was thoughtful enough to realize that you couldn't overload the circuit. They didn't feel as strongly as the State Department did, though.

Q: This is an unclassified interview, but how did you find the CIA there? Was it an effective instrument or was it too much in bed with Savak? That's the secret police.

ROCKWELL: The CIA was certainly closely involved with Savak. I didn't feel that they were doing anything in their daily operations that was inappropriate. I never was sure just what they were doing. In the sense that I know they're supposed to tell the embassy everything, you never know for sure that they are. Certainly when Yatsevitch was head of the CIA there, he had a relationship with the Shah and the royal family that was extremely close, and I felt inappropriately so.

Q: How did this translate as far as you were concerned?

ROCKWELL: It translated into sort of back-channel messages and meetings with the Shah without the presence of the ambassador, which I didn't think was right.

Q: How did the ambassador feel about this?

ROCKWELL: Wailes didn't seem to mind. Holmes did mind and put a stop to it as far as we knew.

Q: How about the information that was shared with you from the CIA? Did you find CIA was giving you a different perspective than, say, the political section? Or were they duplicating?

ROCKWELL: No, they seemed to be pretty much in tune as far as local developments are concerned.

Q: As you say, at the time, the local scene was not unfavorable to what we wanted.

Then we move from 1965. You came back to Washington and you served in NEA as the Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA, which stands for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. What were your responsibilities?

GEORGE M. BARBIS
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1961)

Mr. Barbis was born in California and raised there and in Greece. He graduated from the University of California and served in the US Army in WWII. In 1954 he entered the Foreign Service and was posted to Tehran, Iran as Economic Officer. His other overseas assignments included postings in Thailand, Korea, France, Belgium and Greece, primarily in the Political and Economic fields. Mr. Barbis served on the US Delegation to the United Nations (1973-1975). His Washington assignments involved him in Southeast Asia matters and the US military. Mr. Barbis is a graduate of the National War College. Mr. Barbis was interviewed by Mr. Raymond C. Ewing in 1996.

Q: You experienced Greece at a very difficult time and then you were in Korea during an immediate post-war period and you saw some difficult times in Tehran.

BARBIS: Well, nationalism was asserting itself in Iran for the first time and that led to the nationalization of the oil fields and evicting the British who had dominated or had great influence in Iran over the centuries.

Q: When you were drafted and went into the army, where was your service?

BARBIS: Well, I was inducted at Camp Beal, outside of Sacramento and then went to Fort Ord, [California], but was shipped to Fort Lewis in Washington state for my basic training. When I completed basic [training], I was offered the opportunity to go to OCS [Officer's Candidate School] at Virginia, Fort Belvoir, to get a commission in the engineers. I asked them [if I accepted] what my [full] obligation was. They told me I would have to sign on for two or three years, so I turned it down. [Static] ...anyone who had had a semester of college before he entered the service could leave the service with honorable discharge after 12 months and I left after 12

months and nine days. I went right back to Cal and stayed through the spring of 1950. I actually completed my AB [bachelor's degree] in January but stayed on for a semester in graduate school and then moved to the School of Advanced International Studies [SAIS] in Washington, DC, which had just become affiliated with Johns Hopkins. I spent a year and a summer at SAIS and earned my masters degree.

While I was a student in Berkeley, I guess it was during my senior year, I took the [written] Foreign Service exam and did not pass. So I was determined to try to get in. I didn't take the exam again and I don't know why, but at SAIS I was studying Turkish and my Turkish teacher was an official... [static] ... a wonderful man and this being the time of the Korean war, the Department of Commerce had launched a new program and were recruiting madly young people just out of college to send out as, what they called, requirement officers to report back on the needs of the host countries for certain metals. They had a job like that in Iran and Karim introduced me, and I don't remember the details but I was recruited as a [Foreign Service] Staff officer, [pay grade] FSS-11.

Q: That was the Department of Commerce or Department of State?

BARBIS: Well, although it was the Department of Commerce who made the selection, it was the Department of State that recruited me. I went to Tehran as an economics officer (requirements). At that time the Iranians had just nationalized their oil industry. I was there when they booted the British out. My main job was to discuss and try to determine production plans or schedules and the tin plate requirements for making barrels to store the crude oil. Gradually I expanded beyond that into other economic/commercial activities in the economics section and after my first eight or nine months the political section started asking for my services. I remember assisting the biographic officer and doing some bios. At one point Ambassador Loy Henderson, Mr. Foreign Service, sent me along with another young officer, Lou Hoffacker, who was a consular officer, on a road trip to Baghdad to scout it out as a possible evacuation route. We had experienced the evacuation of the British, many of whom had gone by road and so we thought if we were forced to do the same (I think this was just prudent planning, there was nothing to indicate that we would be thrown out too), we wanted to know if it were feasible to move out with families. That was quite an interesting exercise.

Q: You went in 1961, perhaps by jet, home to Washington. What kind of job did you have there? You had been on the Korean desk in a previous period. Were you also a desk officer this time?

BARBIS: We did fly home by jet. My initial assignment was to the Iranian desk, although I had had no contact with Iranian affairs since my first tour there some years before. This was a very interesting time. I remember one of the main problems I was given to deal with as one of the desk officers was the problem of Iranian students coming to this country and then wanting to stay here for the rest of their lives, whereas our feeling was they should go back and contribute to Iran which was in desperate need for young, talented, knowledgeable people in its own development.

Q: They wanted to stay because of economic opportunity, jobs, professional...?

BARBIS: Exactly.

Q: Not because they were necessarily opposed to the Shah?

BARBIS: There were some who were anti-Shah and for political reasons wanted to stay, but I think it was primarily an economic motivation that kept them here. The opportunities here were just so far greater than anything they could have in Iran, and especially after they acquired a US university education which prepared them for a different world and a different kind of economy than Iran had at the time.

Q: Did somebody have a program to encourage them to return, or were you just generally aware of the situation?

BARBIS: We were aware of it and did what we could, primarily working with the Congress and trying to get provisions written into the legislation which would require that students return for at least a certain number of years to their country of origin. But, I think that problem continued even later and became more complicated as the political situation changed.

Q: Were these students on Fulbrights and other government programs or just students in general who were here on their own?

BARBIS: Just students in general, I would say. There were good programs like the American Field Service, which brought high school students and I think that program still continues around the world, but a lot of them were here on their own. There were a lot of affluent Persians at that time who could send their children here to study.

But, that job didn't last long because I was affected by another reduction in force program in the government and the position I occupied was abolished. So, suddenly I had to find a job. A friend ran into a friend and mentioned that I was looking for a job and I ended up in INR [Bureau of Intelligence and Research] in the Far East region [RFE], assigned as the analyst for Thailand and Burma. The Ne Win coup in Burma occurred my first weekend there and Dr. Spinks, who headed RFE, called me in and we went to the safe, which I didn't know how to open yet, opened it and looked in the biographic files. This was soon after the responsibility for biographic files and reporting had been transferred from the Department to CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]. But, that was no excuse, the file on Ne Win was empty. I knew even less, although I lived near the Burma border and one of my main interests in Chiang Mai had been to follow [cross border] developments and activities, I did not follow the Burmese political situation in detail. So, I had very little background that qualified me to write the brief for the Secretary on this coup. But, somehow with Dr. Spinks' assistance we managed to produce a paper that was acceptable.

CARLETON S. COON, JR.
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1961-1963)

Carleton S. Coon, Jr. was born in France in 1927. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Germany, Syria, India, Iran, Nepal, Morocco, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 26, 1989.

Q: I think a certain amount of emphasis should be made for looking at the growth of the Foreign Service of really our era. When I came in, at an early time, an awfully lot of responsibility was there to be had. There was quite a lot of independence. It was not such a computerized bureaucracy as it is today. And I think this probably developed a more free-wheeling spirit in later groups coming in.

COON: I've been arguing consistently over the past 30-odd years that the Foreign Service is developing in the wrong direction. That where you have reasonably amiable relations with a country, and where you have some desire to know what is going on in the country, the way to handle it is to have a substantial embassy and then have one-man posts spotted all over the place. And have them do without classified material. If something sensitive comes along, they hop a fast freight into the capital and talk about it, or report it there. They can do the consular work, and do the informational work. I actually put that in writing in a fairly serious way when I was consul in Tabriz. In Iran, in those days, it would have vastly increased our understanding of what was going on, and it would have been much more economical and efficient. And this was a major point, it would have provided a wonderful training ground for junior officers. We can't do that because we have to control everything to a greater degree. If you beef up your Inspection Corps you run around and inspect the hell out of these kids every now and then, every three months or so.

Q: What really was your principal work there [in Iran]?

COON: There wasn't a hell of a lot because the post was fairly quiet at that point. It had quieted down a great deal from previous years when there had been more of an American military presence up there, and that sort of thing. It was basically the responsibilities of a small consulate anywhere: show the flag, report, get around, keep in touch with developments, supervise the branch PAO's USIA program, take care of visiting firemen. There was precious little negotiation although occasionally somebody would get in trouble and I'd have to do something about it. It was a quiet post but I really enjoyed it. Every month I'd drive around the big lake, the Urmia, and every other month or so I'd get down to Sanandaj in Kurdish territory. I did a lot of reporting on the Kurdish situation. The rebellion was going on in Iraq at that time.

Q: How did we view the Shah and his government at that particular juncture?

COON: Very benevolently. He was our man. One thing they did want me to do: they wanted me to get the worm's eye view about the Shah's so-called white revolution which he'd just launched, and in fact a couple of the villages he'd first launched it in were in my district.

Q: This was land redistribution.

COON: Yes. This was land redistribution to the peasants, taking it away from the rich zamindars__. And I went around, and I watched the registration process, and I talked to the villagers through interpreters, and I talked to the zamindars__. And then I reported back in some detail that it was for real. It was really happening, and it was creating administrative problems, but they were being resolved, and they were moving ahead with it. And that was some contribution, I guess, that people found out about that. I also straightened out the embassy about a misconception they had about the relationships of the various Kurdish factions to the Shah. Other than that, I just had wonderful experiences.

Q: Then after that relatively brief tour...

COON: ...standard two years.

ARCHIE M. BOLSTER
Generalist
Tabriz (1961-1963)

Political Officer
Tehran (1963-1966)

Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1966-1968)

Archie M. Bolster was born in Iowa in 1933. He attended the University of Virginia and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1955. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1955 to 1958 and in 1958 he joined the foreign service. His posting include Cambodia, Iran, India, Belgium, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January of 1992.

Q: You left there in 1960 and went back to Persian training, is that right?

BOLSTER: Yes. I had requested hard language training. My first choice was Arabic and my second choice was Persian or Farsi. I was assigned to the 10-month course at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) and because of the timing I had to come back before I had completed my two year tour. I felt good about leaving Cambodia because I had worked with my deputy to the extent that he became disbursing officer and ran the job single-handedly, whereas I had been one of two Americans. So I was pleased that this assistant who had moved up and done a nice job. So we really in effect cut one American position from the payroll.

Q: You then served in Iran from 1961-66. Where did you go first and what was the situation when you arrived in Iran?

BOLSTER: I, of course, had done a lot of studying about Iran in the course of taking Farsi. This was the time when the Amini government was in power and they were looked upon as somewhat favored by the United States. We wanted them to make the country progress and Amini was sort of the fellow who could do this as the Shah was going to give him a certain amount of leeway in running things to try to meet certain goals that were shared between the two governments. That was more or less the atmosphere when I arrived there.

I went to Tabriz where my assignment was as vice consul. I was doing all kinds of different jobs but very little consular work because there were so few people applying for visas up there. While I was there one of the main tenets of the Shah's evolving program was first three, then six and eventually twelve points of the white revolution.

The main point of the three at the beginning was land reform. I found it fascinating to get into that because having studied economics in college as well as foreign affairs, I was interested in this subject. Right there on my doorstep began the first land reform pilot project in a town called Maragheh in Azerbaijan. As vice consul it was my job to go down there, look into what was happening and write reports on the land reform program.

Q: I have heard it said that the Shah went through these white revolutions to make the Western world, particularly the Americans, feel happy but it really didn't do much. What was your impression of how this was working?

BOLSTER: Actually I think it did a lot. It, of course, was eventually oversold and the accomplishments were overplayed. But land reform, itself, was really quite substantial. It was substantial for several reasons. One of them was that, as I mentioned, the Shah was giving Amini room to make a lot of decisions, at least as long as they didn't affect his own power base. In his cabinet was Arsanjani, who was this Iranian economist who became the Minister of Agriculture. He was determined to make land reform effective and in fact used it to improve his own power base. He always gave credit to the Shah, of course, but he didn't mind if many peasants had it in mind that they got their land through him, the Minister of Agriculture. Eventually, the Shah did have him moved out of his job because he was getting too popular and sent him off to be ambassador in Italy. That was a way to cutting Arsanjani down to size.

After he left the land reform program never quite did as much in the later stages as it did in the beginning. But it was quite an effective program. I went down and studied it to the extent that I used my Farsi to talk with villagers and people who actually had gotten land and how they were getting along. My conclusion was basically that people who received land were quite able to till; they knew what to do; they were excited about having land and worked much harder on the land when they knew it was theirs.

Q: Prior to that had it been a big landlord system?

BOLSTER: Yes. People were owned almost like serfs. They were attached to their village and the village was owned by the landlord. Typically they had a five part division of the harvest. The person who provided the land got one-fifth; the laborer got one-fifth; the water, the seed, the

draft animals, etc. So that in most cases the landlord got four-fifths of what was produced. The farmer just got the fifth representing his labor because he couldn't provide draft animals, water, seed. All of these things were provided by the landlord.

Q: What was the political situation in Tabriz? You were there from when to when?

BOLSTER: Well, 1961-63. The political situation there was that the land reform program was matched by some other programs that were less popular. One was giving the women the right to vote. I got to know several neighbors near where I lived and was having tea with this retired colonel one afternoon and we were discussing current events. He said, "I am really bothered by giving the women the right to vote." I said, "Well, why is that?" He said, "Well, it is a scientific fact that women's brains are only half as big as men's and therefore if you give them the vote they won't know what to do with it. They won't understand the issues and it will be just a disaster." But aside from that kind of Neanderthal reasoning, there were also many people who just felt that it would be sort of an upheaval in a religious sense, too. Men always ran everything outside of the house. They did all the marketing which involved going to the bazaar and all. All business and work transactions were all things that men handled. Women were supposed to just stay home, cook, and take care of children, etc. They really felt that it was an upheaval of their whole way of life to have to give women the right to vote.

Q: Did you have any feel about the power of the Mullahs in that area during your time?

BOLSTER: Yes, you certainly had the clear impression of how important religion was to people because every Friday there were gatherings in all the various neighborhoods. People would take turn hosting receptions open to the people in the neighborhood who went to the same mosque. You could tell that it was a very serious religious attitude on the part of people. They really were concerned about the modernization program, the Shah was maybe eating away at their traditional values. And, indeed, when there were gradually more protests and expressions of unhappiness about the Shah's reform program, they had their own less important but nevertheless riots up in Tabriz that had to be controlled by the police, etc. They were similar to those that were organized down in Tehran in 1963.

Q: I have the feeling that up in Tabriz you were playing the often usual role of a small consulate which was that you were more easily able to monitor what was happening in the town than would be the case of an embassy where you are overwhelmed with the society and the bureaucracy, etc.

BOLSTER: That is very true. Tabriz, although a city of over 300,000, had the flavor of a small town. Among the elite everyone knew what everyone was doing pretty much. It was a gossipy sort of place where anything that happened would be commented on by everybody. It was sort of like living in a goldfish bowl in a sense. Anything that Europeans did was much more observed and watched than the activities of the citizens there. But in any case there were concerns about the reform program.

At the same time we were doing other types of activities. We were keeping track of the Kurds

and their situation because the Consul, Bill Eagleton, was reporting constantly on events in Kurdistan and how they were being treated by the central government, which is another major issue. Of course, Bill is one of our best experts on the Kurds and has also done a lot of work on textiles. He has written a book on textile making in Iran, carpets of various kinds. So there were all kinds of things going on there in addition to these reform movements.

Q: Did you find you were sort of reporting one world and the Embassy was reporting another?

BOLSTER: Actually we were quite coordinated. The consulates did report independently...they sent in airgrams, telegrams directly to the Department...but we also did a lot of cooperative reporting where comments and information from all the consulates, that is from Kermanshah, Isfahan, Mashhad and Tabriz would be combined in the Embassy in larger think pieces.

For example, an assessment of the Shah's reform program would have in it contributions from the consulates in addition to analysis from the Embassy. I think there was a fairly successful attempt to integrate reporting from the posts.

Q: Then I gather you didn't feel that the Embassy had a line that it was pursuing vis-a-vis the Shah and the consulates had better fit into this scheme. Later on this did happen under the Nixon/Kissinger period.

BOLSTER: Yes.

Q: But I take it this was not the case?

BOLSTER: No, I think it was probably because of the personality and Foreign Service background of our Ambassador, Julius Holmes. He was a fantastic person and extremely generous in being willing to find out from the consulates what their views were and to incorporate that into the Embassy reporting. I remember as, of course, a very junior vice consul, going to Tehran on pouch runs and attending Embassy staff meetings, and actually being asked by the Ambassador to give a brief explanation as to how things were going in Tabriz and what our views were on current events, etc. It made you feel that you were really part of the team. You weren't being told that the Embassy knows what is happening.

Q: Which does happen in some places.

BOLSTER: Yes. But certainly Holmes made it very clear in the Embassy that he wanted reporting to bubble up from people in the Embassy and consulates who were in touch with Iranians and knew what was going on. He did not try to stage manage everything that was said. He, of course, dealt with the Shah and did all that reporting, but he certainly did defer to our judgments as to what was actually happening on the ground.

Q: When did you leave Tabriz?

BOLSTER: I left in the summer of 1963, went on home leave and then came back in the late fall.

Q: You were then in Tehran?

BOLSTER: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

BOLSTER: I came back and worked in the consular section for a while because there was a rotation program where people rotated into different jobs. I did both nonimmigrant visas and then citizenship and passport work before I then moved over into the Embassy.

Q: How did you find, I am speaking as an old consular officer who used to run into ripples from the Iranian situation through Iranian students applying for visas in Belgrade...how did you find the Iranian student who was applying for visas? Were they a problem?

BOLSTER: Oh yes. There were tremendous problems. There were unrealistic expectations as to what they could do in terms of study. You know, people going to the States to study nuclear engineering even though they didn't know English or had only basic science. I think it is fair to say that the Iranian regime figured that letting students go off on student visas was a way to release some of the pressure that people might otherwise put on the government for change. They really had no limitation on how many people could go overseas. So a family with any money would try to send all or as many as possible of their children off to study, whether in France, Germany, England, the U.S., whatever, so there was a tremendous pressure to get visas. It didn't matter really what kind of requirements you set up they would all manage to meet them in some way and try to convince you that they deserve a visa. So there was a tremendous pressure. It was very hard to sort out the truth as to why people were going and what their qualifications were.

But it worked both ways, we also knew there were many fraudulent I-20s coming, these were forms the American schools do to welcome a foreign student to come to their school. We knew that these things were turned out by some fly-by-night school, dozens and dozens of blank forms, signed and sent to counselors in a bazaar in Iran who would then get a student and sell an I-20 to him in exchange for a briefing on how to get a visa. When we tried to find out about this back through the Department and Justice, we were eventually told by several Congressman that it was none of our business to look into whether these I-20s were correct or not, just to give the visas and not raise trouble.

So it was a very difficult situation. We knew from some of the feedback that some of these students were not going to the schools where they were supposed to go. They would be assigned to some school on the East Coast and they would try to enter from San Francisco. The INS was constantly sending us notes about various people who had changed their status or never showed up where they were supposed to go to school. It was a mess.

Q: After your time as consular officer which section did you go to?

BOLSTER: I went into the political section and basically did reporting on the reform program and internal Iranian developments.

Q: What was the difference between the view from Tabriz and the view from Tehran from your point of view? Did you have to work mostly through the bureaucracy in Tehran or were you able to get out?

BOLSTER: I could get out. Tehran had its own consular district so we would work in trips. In fact, I found out about some studies that had been done at Tehran University about various villages. They were sort of sociological and economic studies. I got hold of these studies which had already been translated into English, so I had sort of a benchmark as to what this village was like at a particular time. It was very detailed giving names of farmers and possessions. I then used these studies and went to visit some of the same villages where I would go in and look up some of the same people and ask how things had changed in the intervening time. I was able to get a specific sense of what kind of progress they had made. I visited some of these villages a couple of times which gave me a further measure of how things were going.

Q: Was "progress" the operative word?

BOLSTER: Yeah, it really was. It might be small things like someone buying a bicycle and they hadn't had one before. Or getting a radio.

Q: When you think about it these are tremendous jumps.

BOLSTER: Yes, they really are. For us it sounds very minor, but it was not for someone who has never had a bicycle to suddenly get one and be able to ride off. If there was a road which had been built near his village he is now able to get his produce to market quicker. If his wife became sick he would be able to get help for her which he couldn't before because it was difficult to get to a village. A lot of things like that were a sign of progress. There were some things like the Health Corps that the Shah started, and the Literacy Corps. I visited villages where I talk with Literacy Corpsman at some of the same villages I had study data on. I talked with them about what it was like being in the village, their training before they came there, whether they felt they were accomplishing any changes in the village. Some of them really identified with the villagers and actually got into trouble for sort of organizing the villagers against landlords or former landlords. So there were a lot of interesting subjects like that that I got into.

Q: Did you feel that at any time the ruling class were trying to capture the Embassy?

BOLSTER: There was a distinct problem because if people didn't have the language they really couldn't do much except with people who spoke English or French. So there was a problem that way. I felt many times the contacts that more senior people in the Embassy had were so focused on the somewhat Westernized intelligentsia that it was difficult to keep a total balance. I could have done more than I did, obviously, but I did try while I was there to meet with a lot of people who did not normally have contact with the Embassy.

One of my assignments was to cover the political opposition so I did make contact with various people. I met them for lunch or in obscure spots just for brief talks. This, of course, didn't escape notice. The Savak was well aware.

Q: Savak being the Secret Police.

BOLSTER: Yes, they kept a close eye on all diplomats to see who they talked to, etc. So I knew there was no way I could visit people without it being known, but the Shah's attitude was that as long as contacts with the opposition was at a fairly low level in the Embassy it was not a problem.

One of my interesting interviews there was with Arsanjani. This was after he had been Ambassador in Rome and had come back and was working as a lawyer there. I wanted to talk to him because I had been so impressed with the land reform program that he had started and I wanted his views. We had quite a long conversation. I sought Ambassador Holmes' permission in advance because I didn't want to see Arsanjani if I thought I would upset the Iranian government. But he said it would be fine.

So I had about an hour with him. We had a very interesting conversation, all in Farsi. It was helpful to me having been in Tabriz and knowing a lot of the technical details of land reform; the Persian terms for various types of reform, and various technical terms. How the land is divided up. There are all kinds of very special terms. If you don't know them you can't talk to someone that well about the program. But having known all that I could talk to Arsanjani, and we really had quite a good conversation on it.

Q: What was your impression and was your impression different from some of the others of the Shah and his effectiveness? Again we are talking about this particular time during the mid-sixties.

BOLSTER: Well, I was one of the people who had a somewhat jaundiced view of the Shah. I thought he had done quite a few good things for the country. I think he was sincere in wanting to lead his country into the modern day. He did want to do a lot. He did have some feelings about the need to give the women the right to vote. Some of these things that became part of his whole reform program were deeply held. But on the other hand I think he was very stiff and distant to his own people. He really didn't know how to talk with Iranians except people of his social status. He was surrounded by people who told him what they wanted him to hear or what he wanted to hear. He desperately needed people to tell him things like they were, but he didn't have very many people like that. He had a few, but most people were sycophants who simply told him everything was wonderful and he was greatly beloved, etc. He was not loved by the people. He was respected and followed because Iranians like a strong leader. They had been accustomed to that over the centuries. But he was certainly not loved in the sense that we would think of people loving their leader.

Q: What about while you were there what were the roles of AID and CIA? Did you feel that these

were playing a major roles? Were there problems with this? Again from your point of view at that time.

BOLSTER: Certainly AID had played a major role...I am using past tense because by the time I got to Iran the real heyday of Point Four was passing. The numbers of people and the projects were on the downward trend by the time I got there in 1961. But it had a very good reputation because people had seen the literal changes that had taken place. They even talked about American chickens. They wanted to buy an American chicken in the bazaar because they were fat, plump enjoyable chickens, quite different from the scrawny variety they had had before. Wells had been drilled. Malaria had been pretty much eradicated by these tremendous spraying programs. One of the familiar sights in a village was spray painted letters DDT and the date when they had sprayed that village. They just wrote it on the mud wall so that people coming later would know that village had been sprayed. There were all kinds of things like that that people associated with Point Four that were good.

On the other hand the CIA's role was uniformly thought of as bad. Everyone referred back to 1953, when Mossadegh was in his ascendancy and then was overthrown in a complicated street demonstration that has been overplayed in terms of what the CIA actually did. I have read some studies since then that go into great detail saying that the CIA role was fairly small. It was mainly an Iranian show where different factions were jockeying for power and those in favor of the Shah and the Generals won out over Mossadegh and some leftists who were trying to influence Mossadegh. Although Mossadegh was not leftist himself he did need their support in order to have any power. But the fact that this had happened everyone just described that to the CIA which had just pushed a button and brought the Shah back. Therefore anything that happened that the Shah did that was bad was our fault because we had put him on the throne again in 1953. So if he didn't do everything right it was our fault.

Simple things like a street not being paved, whatever, was described to the Americans because they brought back the Shah who wasn't doing the right thing.

Q: You then left Iran in 1966 and came back to the Department and served in INR for two years.

BOLSTER: Yes. I was the analyst covering Iran at the time.

Q: Did you get any different impression? You were back in Washington and also getting, I assume some input from CIA, etc., did you have the feeling that Washington had a good idea of the Iran that you knew quite well by this time?

BOLSTER: Well, there was a tremendous range of reporting coming in. Not only the official reporting from our posts, but we were also open to academic and other sources of information. We knew a lot about what was going on. I wrote a study on political dynamics in Iran when I was the analyst and I was able to be a little more critical of the Shah and his regime than I was in Tehran. I had been subject to a little bit of control by our political counselor who wanted

everything said, he wanted to have the political opposition covered and all that, but he always came down to these grandiose phrases about how the Shah was the lynch pin of our interests in Iran and without him the whole thing would fall apart. So that was clearly the line, as much as we wanted democracy and other people to be part of the power structure, we were in the end dependent on the Shah. When I got back in this political dynamics study I tried to be a little more objective and point out some of the weaknesses of the Shah's government over time without any institution being allowed to be built up at all because they might threaten him, the country was basically weak. Without some kind of structure like that when the Shah did eventually pass from the scene through accident, coup d'etat, whatever, the country would be in a mess. Of course this was not very popular when it was received back in the Embassy. I got some heat indirectly from a later Ambassador, Armin Meyer. He wrote back to the head of INR that they didn't think my reporting was very helpful.

Q: I would think that anytime when you say everything is dependent on one person it can be nice but people do pass from the scene, sometimes violently, and you have to think about the future.

BOLSTER: Well, we did studies, in fact fairly frequently about "the unthinkable." But at the end one came down to the fact that the Shah is still running everything so we are stuck with him until some major change comes along.

Q: We can think of leaders like Fidel Castro in Cuba who has been there for more than 30 years. There was Haile Selassie, Tito, etc.

BOLSTER: But then you can also think of people like Syngman Rhee and others who passed from the scene and left quite a bit of chaos behind for a while. There were always these problems.

I did make another prediction while I was in this INR job. As much as we wanted the Iranians to be dependent on us for military hardware, it was very likely that he would go and buy something from the Soviets. There had been rumors of things they were considering, etc. I more or less made this prediction that he would do it. Ambassador Meyer felt that was quite unhelpful to our policies there, as if the classified study was being read by anybody outside the US government.

But, sure enough, they did. The Shah did turn to the Soviets and bought some military equipment for the very reasons I had predicted. That he would do this to appear to the world to be less beholden to the West than would otherwise be the case. Anyway that was more or less the way things went during my two years in INR.

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS
Staff Assistant, Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, DC (1961-1968)

Harold H. Saunders was born and educated in Philadelphia and received his

undergraduate degree in American Civilization from Princeton. In 1956, he earned his Ph.D. in American studies from Yale. After a stint with the Air Force, Harold Saunders began his government career with Central Intelligence Agency. He then moved to the National Security Council and then to the State Department. While at State, he became intimately involved in some major foreign policy events as such as the Middle East peace process and the Iran hostage crisis, about which he wrote extensively. He was interviewed in 1993 and 1994 by Thomas Stern.

Q: Let me now turn to Iran during the 1961-67 period. Why was it important to the US and what was our policy toward it?

SAUNDERS: Iran was central to our concerns because the Persian Gulf was central to our economic well-being. Iran, in addition of being a major oil producer, was also a buffer between the Soviet Union and the Gulf oil fields. As our relationships with Iran became closer, we used its territory for listening posts to monitor Soviet nuclear and missile programs. Both Iran and the US were members of the Central Treaty Organization in a period when CENTO was an important tool of our foreign policy. Pakistan was also viewed as an important country because of its proximity to the Soviet Union. Even in 1961 and the following period, we understood that the Shah was not in total control of his country; we knew that he had powerful enemies and we were therefore concerned about the stability of the monarchy and what might follow after the Shah's departure. As the Shah's control of his country grew, he became increasingly important to us. In the 1960s, we were not as greatly concerned with the Shah's behavior as were later in the 1970s. In the 1960s we were preoccupied with the Soviet specter and with the need to bring some stability to the country. We had always hoped that ultimately the Shah would broaden his political base, but in the 1960s, we were worried whether he could stay in power.

During the Kennedy administration, the agencies were required to draft country papers. It was one of these papers that provided me the opportunity to make my first trip overseas after joining the NSC. I went to Algeria with the Department of State's desk officer and a member of the Policy Planning staff. Since Algeria had only recently become independent, we went as a team to draft a policy paper for that country. I traveled again in early 1967 for orientation purposes in preparation for becoming the senior NSC staffer on the region. It was just coincidental that a war broke out in the Middle East later that year, but I found it useful to have seen the area on the ground. After 1967, I traveled much more frequently as I am sure we will discuss later...

FRANKLIN J. CRAWFORD
Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1962-1963)

Franklin J. Crawford was born in Ohio in 1927. After earning both his bachelor's and master's degree from Ohio State University in 1949 and 1950, respectively, he received his law degree from George Washington University in 1974. He also served in the US Navy from 1945 to 1946. His career has included positions in

Hong Kong, Izmir, Isfahan, Tehran, and Colombo. Mr. Crawford was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in January 2002.

Q: Then you got transferred back to the [State] Department, to INR [Office of Research] as the analyst for Iran. Had you requested this or did this come out of the blue?

CRAWFORD: No. I hadn't really requested it. But a fellow named Don Eddy who had been in Izmir when I was there had been in INR and he came out on some trip to Tehran when I was due for assignment and he said something to me about it. And I said, "Well, I wouldn't mind that. I've been doing this sort of active or operational stuff, and I wouldn't mind a spell were you would sort of read and think about it." So I said, "Okay, I'd be willing to do that." So I was assigned there. As it turned out Donald Eddy wasn't there anymore and I found the experience in INR very unhappy.

Q: Who was your chief there?

CRAWFORD: Oh, I can't remember. Herbert Lebesney was the great expert on the Middle East. He was the deputy chief of the NEA unit and the guy who was number one I forget.

Q: Who was the director of INR at the time?

CRAWFORD: Tom Hughes, who came in with the Kennedy Administration.

Q: Did you have any problems?

CRAWFORD: Well, my problem was that the whole organization was so flaccid, I guess the word is, they were only interested in grinding out daily intelligence things. My patience broke when, after they wanted some piece, Lebesny and whoever the head was wanted some piece on Iran, which I wrote in a timely fashion. I gave it to them and it sat in their in-boxes for something like six weeks. And then I complained. I said, "Look, I don't want to do this sort of stuff." So eventually I complained to Hughes and I got transferred, but I was there for a year. I met some nice people there, but...

Q: When you were in INR, how were your relations with the Iraniadesk or didn't they have one?

CRAWFORD: Oh, yes. They were fine. They were good. Because, for the most part, I knew more about Iran than the people on the desk.

Q: Yes, I can believe that. Did you get the feeling that Iran was getting any high-level attention in the [State] Department or was it one of the many countries that didn't?

CRAWFORD: Well, it wasn't getting all that much. It would occasionally get high-level attention when the Shah would get his nose out of joint, as he often did. I think once in 1959 and several times later he sort of threatened to take up with the Soviets and when he did that in 1959 we went spastic. Instead of just saying to the Shah, "Well, fine, go ahead." We didn't do that, we were so

wrapped up in the Cold War and nobody had the guts to do that sort of thing. If they had said that, the Shah would have said, "Well, I didn't really mean it." But, anyway, when that sort of thing happened, as one example of high-level interest, the Iranian ambassador here was coming in constantly to express the apprehension of the Iranian government about some guy who had written some sort of an exposé on Iran saying that the Shah and the American ambassador and a lot of other people were involved in all sorts of corruption and shady deals and so on. I think his name was Gudarzi. We always assured the Iranians that the U.S. government at the very highest level was very concerned about this thing and that everybody was working on it. Once an Iranian official came in to see Rusk (I wasn't in this meeting). The Iranian was talking about this problem and, of course Rusk had been briefed and had been assured that we were on top of this problem. And he asked about this and Rusk leaned over the note taker, assuming the man's name was Taligani, but that wasn't it, and Rusk said to the note taker, "What's a Taligani?" [Laughter.] That was a perfect example of how piqued the interest was.

DANIEL OLIVER NEWBERRY
Political Officer
Tehran (1962-1964)

Daniel Oliver Newberry was born in Georgia in 1922. He received his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1944. He then served overseas in the US Army from 1943- 1946. His career included positions in Jerusalem, Turkey, New York, Laos, Iran, Turkey, and Morocco. Mr. Newberry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1997

NEWBERRY: My next post was Tehran, Iran. This meant going back into the GTI [Greek, Turkish, and Iranian] area. In a sense, this was my "home base," and that's how I looked at it. We were talking earlier about the changes in the way personnel assignments were made. I just took it upon myself to write to the director of GTI, who had succeeded Owen Jones. This was Robert Miner, my last consul general in Istanbul, who was now in charge of GTI Affairs. I asked him if there was a spot for me and, lo and behold, I was assigned as deputy political counselor in the embassy in Tehran. That was my next post.

Q: You were there from 1962 until when?

NEWBERRY: I was there from 1962 until 1964.

Q: At that time what was the situation in Iran?

NEWBERRY: Let me just add one thing more. In between Vientiane and Tehran I was assigned to something called the "Mid Career Course" in the FSI [Foreign Service Institute]. That was one of the programs that the FSI organizes. I was a little shocked to be told that I was in "mid career." So far I had only been in the Foreign Service for 12 years. Here I was already in "mid career," but that's what they called it. So I spent three months in Washington at this course, and it was very

nice to be able to do that. I actually didn't get to Tehran until July 5, 1962. I was very careful not to arrive before July 4, as otherwise I might have been involved in preparations for the July 4 reception!

Q: What was the situation in Tehran when you arrived there?

NEWBERRY: By 1962 the situation was that we had many years of a cozy relationship between the United States government and the "Shahinshah." It was sort of a fixed, "mind set" for people in Washington that one of our principal objectives in Iran was to keep the Shah favorably disposed toward us, so that we could maintain all of the "listening stations" and so forth that we had and that we would have uninterrupted access to the oil supplies of the Persian Gulf. The fact that the Shah of Iran had pervasive intelligence organizations around the country and was a dictator did not seem to daunt us.

I'm not complaining, because we had an interesting and treasured experience during our two years in Tehran. However, as a political officer, it was a very strange situation to be in. There was a Parliament, but every candidate for Parliament was "hand picked" by the Shah. So there was no real Parliamentary or political activity that was worth reporting on. But we found other things to write about.

Q: Later on, and this became renowned in the Foreign Service, political officers assigned to Iran in the 1970s were told not to report anything "bad" about the Shah or the Shah's government. Were there any indications of this in the early 1960s?

NEWBERRY: That was pretty much the atmosphere, but it depended on the ambassador or the political counselor as to how much "candid" political reporting was allowed to go out. There was a lot of sort of "back channel" traffic. When someone would write a Memorandum of Conversation, although it might not go into a telegram or an airgram, a "courtesy copy" of the memorandum would find its way through the pouch to some guy we knew on the Iranian desk. He would share this copy of the memorandum around the Department, but it was never stated to be an official communication.

During my time in Iran there was a very talented and, I would say, "brilliant" young Foreign Service officer named Bill Miller, William Graham Miller, who is today the ambassador to the Ukraine. Bill Miller cultivated members of the National Front who were the supporters of Mossadeq. They were very much involved in maneuvering to try to persuade the Shah to have a more enlightened government or, who knows, maybe take over the government. Ambassador Julius Holmes and Harry Schwartz, the Political Counselor, as well as Schwartz's successor as Political Counselor, Martin Herz, allowed Bill Miller to keep up these contacts with the National Front.

Although we had a sort of channel to the National Front, in the end it was not the National Front that overthrew the Shah. It was the Muslim fundamentalists. In the end the National Front came to grief, along with the Shah. At least, this was one mitigating circumstance, during my time in Iran, that the leadership of the embassy had the good sense to keep some kind of channel open to

the National Front, in opposition to the Shah.

It fell to my duty, when President Kennedy was assassinated, to get in touch with the two, leading National Front figures, each one of whom had been Iranian ambassador to Washington. I persuaded them to come to Washington to the memorial service for President Kennedy which was organized. It was the only time since the Shah returned to Iran, or later fell from power, that the only official, open contact between them and the American embassy was at the memorial service for President John F. Kennedy.

Q: How did you go about your business as a political officer in Tehran? What would be a typical day in going about your business in Tehran?

NEWBERRY: I should explain that my role as the "number two" officer in the Political Section varied. My first political counselor was Harry Schwartz, who was a pretty "laid back" guy and easy to work with. He let me get out and "do my own thing." When I figured that there was no political reporting to do, I did some airgrams and despatches on institutions in Iran. In addition, I spent part of my time, and this turned out to be a rather time-consuming aspect of my job, keeping in touch with our consulates. We had four constituent posts or consulates in Iran: in Tabriz, in Meshed, in Khorramshahr, and the other in Isfahan.

It had been decided, before I got there, that the consulates needed a "friend in court," somebody who would watch out for their concerns and interests and would show recognition of what the consulates were doing. So I was known as the "consulate coordinator." I spent a lot of time doing that. I made frequent trips to the consulates and talked to the people in the consulates to maintain personal contact with them. A lot of my time in the embassy was spent in "following through" to see that, not only political or economic reporting from the consulates was properly evaluated, but also that the administrative and personal problems of people in the consulates were taken care of.

I found this liaison work with the consulates a very rewarding side of my work in Iran, although it was not what you might expect a political officer to be doing. However, in retrospect, it equipped me later on to function more effectively as the principal officer of a consulate. I think that I was much better prepared and more effective as a principal officer because I had had this experience of being a "friend in court" for the consuls.

Q: We had a very extensive reporting program in Iran.

NEWBERRY: Indeed, we did. However, a great deal of it was managed by another U.S. government agency.

Q: You're talking about the CIA.

NEWBERRY: Yes.

Q: Was there any difficulty, as far as you were concerned, about having two organizations reporting? Were the CIA people reporting one thing and you were reporting another?

NEWBERRY: I don't think that that was necessarily true, because a great deal of the CIA activity in Iran was "operational," rather than gathering information. I can only guess what it was and I wouldn't want to go on record, because it would be on the basis of my impressions only. However, my view was that a great deal of the CIA resources and staff were, as I say, "operational."

Let me make a side remark, Stu, about CIA activity in general in Iran. You will recall that in our conversation on Laos I made such a point about the CIA being all over the place. They were all over the place, but in a different way, in Iran. For example, the CIA chief of station had been in Iran for years and stayed there for a time after I left.

Q: Are you referring to Kermit Roosevelt?

NEWBERRY: No. This was Gratian Yatsevich, who came after Kermit Roosevelt. Yatsevich was a very colorful man who died in 1997. He saw and had more extensive conversations with the Shah-in-Shah of Iran than the ambassador did. That gives you, in a nutshell, what the situation was.

I want to hark back to my remarks about the situation in Laos. I would like to mention another of these "absurdities" for which I blame the State Department. Somebody before my time, and before Harry Schwartz's time, was very upset because, in the embassy in Vientiane we had two political sections. This situation was not unique to Tehran. There was the CIA "Political Section" as a distinct entity within the chancery building, apart from the State Department Political Section.

One of Harry Schwartz's predecessor's as Political Counselor had persuaded the State Department, and they were slow to act on this proposal, that we should have just as many political officers on the Diplomatic List [published by the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs] as the CIA people did. So we could keep a "balance" in this way. In Tehran the traditional, State Department organization had something like five or six political officers in a country like Iran which had no political parties to speak of. So we had a lot of frustrated, junior officers without real jobs to do. My function in Tehran as a deputy political counselor was to manage this situation and find useful things for these junior officers to do. The only reason that we had so many FSOs was just to "counterbalance" in terms of numbers the CIA officers down the hall.

This situation was carried to an even more absurd degree. I hadn't been in Tehran long when I found out that in the embassy mail room, where they were sorting out the incoming mail, distribution was made to one of two categories, "Political 1" and "Political 2." When a new political counselor arrived, he said that that is not acceptable. He said that there should be one political section, as far as he was concerned. So he included all of the CIA people in the Political Section. Of course, what the employees in the mail room did was to sort out the mail in two categories anyway and just go through a show of combining the two political sections. The mail was delivered upstairs in one package but in two, separate bundles. That's how the Iranians understood the distinction between the two aspects of the Political Section. This gives you an

insight on some of the traditional, "silly" things that we have done in the Foreign Service over the years.

Q: Was any attempt made on the part of Political Section 1, if you can call it that...

NEWBERRY: That's what they called it: "POL-1" and "POL-2."

Q: Okay.

NEWBERRY: We in the State Department were "POL-1," of course, because the State Department is older than the CIA.

Q: Were you able or interested in reporting on the workings of "SAVAK," the internal police service of the Shah?

NEWBERRY: Only sort of "inferentially." It was such a big organization and so pervasive that the journalists who came to Tehran reported on everybody. Everybody reported on it. Of course, when I said that the CIA people were "operational," a great deal of their operations were done through SAVAK, the internal police agency of the Shah's government. So there was not much that the State Department people could tell Washington about SAVAK that wasn't already in the newspapers or in other agency reporting. We didn't spend a lot of our own, State Department resources analyzing it.

Q: What about two elements of Iranian society which, I am told, are very important. One of them is the "Bazari" class, the merchants at a lower level than the merchant bankers, or whatever you want to call them.

NEWBERRY: We were very much aware that they were important, but somehow or other, for whatever reason, and probably anyone who has studied this subject could guess what it was, we did not have any good contacts with the "Bazari" class, except in the provinces. The consulates were much better at getting close to the "Bazari" class. They were much closer to the feeling of antipathy which the "Bazari" merchants had toward the Shah's regime and were much closer to the religious situation that led up to the overthrow of the Shah.

Back in 1963, the Shah was trying to demonstrate that he was a modern-minded monarch. He had his own reasons for trying to get control of the religious foundations, the so-called "Waq" or "Waqif" groups, which held tremendous stretches of agricultural land. The Shah wanted to get control of this land, and he called this an "agricultural revolution." He tried to confiscate this land and sell it to the tenants. But that's not the way it worked out, and the "Imams" and the "Mullahs" [two classes of religious functionaries] knew what was going to happen. So there was a struggle for power.

In 1963 that struggle was one of the two issues, on the basis of which the Ayatollah Khomeini first rose to national prominence. He was trying to head off the Shah's "land grab" which was going to take away the lands which the Imams and the Mullahs controlled, through the "Waq"

and "Waqif" foundations. The other issue was votes for women.

Q: This was what was called the "White Revolution?"

NEWBERRY: Yes, the "White Revolution." That was in 1963. That's the first time that any of us in the embassy, except a few people who were real specialists in Iran, had even heard of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, Khomeini was very much the power behind that demonstration of the "Sixth of Bahman," the Iranian month, against the "White Revolution."

Q: With the "White Revolution" taking place, this was just the sort of thing that...

NEWBERRY: There were several aspects of the "White Revolution." The Shah had assigned the educated military officers to teach literacy to the ignorant peasants, and so on. There were lots of very respectable parts of the "White Revolution." However, the pious, religious people, the "Bazaris," saw it as a power grab by the Shah to eliminate the influence of the religious foundations and the Ayatollah's [religious officials].

Q: Did these so-called reforms, known collectively as the "White Revolution," touch a responsive chord in the embassy? I suppose that this was the sort of thing that we had been pressing the Shah to do.

NEWBERRY: We reported all of this with a straight face, as though we admired the Shah for it. Except when things began to turn "sour," I don't recall that we ever asked why the religious people were against these reforms. The initial reporting reflected all-out admiration for the Shah as the far-seeing leader of Iran.

Q: Were you able to see that the "White Revolution" was more of a power grab on the part of the Shah? What was the feeling in the embassy about whether this land would be actually distributed? How did you think that this process was going to end up?

NEWBERRY: Of course, there were many debates about this. Most of our contacts were educated people whose sense of fair play in the scheme of things was very much opposed to letting the peasants get control of the land. One of their favorite refrains was: "Who's going to take care of the 'Qanats?'" The "Qanats" were underground irrigation channels. This was the sort of slogan which the anti-land reform people had. They said that if you let the peasants own the land, nobody would maintain the irrigation system. So you have to leave the "Qanats" in the hands of affluent people who know how to manage them.

Of course, this was regarded as a terribly reactionary attitude. Most of us who had the time and leisure to analyze the situation never believed that the Shah would actually let the peasants own the land. All of the thousands of years of Iranian history argued against that. Sure enough, the money that he did manage to get went into the Vaqf loan in which the imperial family and a lot of privileged people invested a lot of their money. The reform never, in effect, really happened.

Q: Were you able to report this situation as it developed?

NEWBERRY: Not me. I don't know what anybody else did but there was no "audience" for that kind of reporting in the State Department, and nobody encouraged it.

Q: I think that it's very interesting to get a "feel" for the situation within the embassy. That is, things of this nature were happening. Were you encouraged to report "positively?" Was this a pervasive feeling within the embassy?

NEWBERRY: I have the feeling that what we were doing was what, in Foreign Service parlance during my time, was called writing "sitreps." We were writing "situation reports" or factual, short items without any significant analysis. There was very little, long term analysis being done.

Q: What were you getting from the consulates? Was that getting through?

NEWBERRY: It was getting through to us in the Political Section of the embassy. I made sure that copies of the consulate reports were "pouched" back to Washington. I don't recall that an awful lot of it was incorporated into the ongoing reporting. Of course, this all happened 35 years ago.

Q: I understand.

NEWBERRY: My recollection may be "dim," but my general impression was that the embassy leadership did not hit the Department over the head with these reflections. We talked about them and even wrote notes to one another about them. However, I don't recall that we really said to Washington: "You have to think about this and think about it seriously." We did not make any campaign out of it.

Q: What was your impression of Ambassador Julius Holmes?

NEWBERRY: I admired him enormously. Since you've brought up the subject of Ambassador Holmes, I really want to put this exchange I had with him into the oral history because it was such a wonderful bit of advice to me as a Foreign Service officer.

Ambassador Holmes was a very busy man. He never looked very busy and he was always very gracious. His residence was right there in the embassy compound. It's still there, although I don't know who's living in it. Anyhow, his way of more or less "catching up with things" was to save material for later reflection in his "in box." He would come into the chancery on Saturday morning and sit on the sofa in his office and read this material. Then he would ask the duty officer to come into his office and sit down with him. This was one of his techniques for keeping up with the more junior staff.

Then the ambassador and the duty officer would chat for a while. It was a great privilege for me. On one particular Saturday morning I had gone through the incoming and outgoing traffic. I knew that the ambassador had an audience with the Shah the day before. I found out then that the ambassador had been at the Imperial Palace for over three hours. I saw the reporting telegram

which the ambassador had sent in on his conversation with the Shah. It was only about three paragraphs long!

By that time I had gotten used to these little "chats" with Ambassador Holmes, and I was bold enough to say: "Mr. Ambassador, you spent over three hours with the Shah, but all that I saw in the reporting telegram was three paragraphs." Ambassador Holmes pulled down his pince nez glasses, looked at me, and said: "Dan, always remember this. Report extensively on what the other guy said but say as little as possible about what you said." That was a wonderful lesson to a Foreign Service reporting officer, and I never forgot that.

Ambassador Holmes knew what his mission was. He knew, if you'll pardon the expression, what his parameters were and he conducted himself magnificently.

Q: What was the feeling in the Embassy about the Soviet "threat" to Iran and Soviet influence in Iran while you were there?

NEWBERRY: Of course, we always realized that Soviet troops were up in the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic, just across the border to the North. If things went badly in Iran, these troops could just move in. This threat was never more on our minds than during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Q: That was in October, 1962.

NEWBERRY: Again, it fell to my lot to be embassy duty officer on the weekend of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I described this experience in the book put out by AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] called, "Inside a U.S. Embassy." AFSA had asked me to write something about the experiences of an embassy duty officer. We learned of the final decision about what President Kennedy was going to do. I had to sort out this long message from Washington, which came in to the embassy in Tehran in "reverse order." The message came to us in the middle of the night. I decided to wait until we got the actual instruction part of it to wake up Ambassador Holmes.

When we received the actual instruction part of this message, I brought it to Ambassador Holmes, who said: "You need to do everything you can to make sure that the Shah reads this message before he goes to work in the morning, because it will be all over the radio and all over the world by tomorrow morning." So the code clerk and I were trying to put this message together. I drafted a "Third Person" note from the ambassador to the Shah, conveying this message ostensibly from President Kennedy, confiding in the Shah that he was about to announce establishment of a "quarantine" around Cuba.

I couldn't get anybody on the phone at the Imperial Palace, of course. I went over to the gate of the Palace and talked to the Captain of the Guard, with the request that he please see to it that His Majesty sees this message before he has his breakfast. The Captain's answer was: "That depends on His Majesty." However, the Shah must have seen this note, because Ambassador Holmes told me that the Shah never complained about not being informed about what the U.S. planned to do.

However, you asked me about the Soviet threat to Iran. One of the things that was very much on our minds and in our reporting was that the Shah was concerned about those Soviet troops which had threatened Iran in 1946, when they occupied the Tabriz area. They were still there and "in spades" in 1962, just North of the border. It would just take half an hour for Soviet tanks to start rolling into Iran from Soviet Azerbaijan, as well as set off demonstrations by the "Tudeh" Party [Masses Party] in Tehran. So in that situation the Shah of Iran was following every aspect of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was thinking about how this crisis was going to affect him, of course.

Q: Dan, is there anything else that we should talk about regarding Iran at this time, or any other developments?

NEWBERRY: I think that we have pretty well covered Iran. I apologize to you and to anybody who reads this that I haven't had the leisure to go back and sort out my notes. These are my impressions of Iran at that time.

Q: That's good. I thought that we might stop at this point. We are now up to 1964 at the end of your tour in Iran. Then where did you go?

NEWBERRY: I went back to Washington then. I might talk a little bit more about my experiences in Iran, particularly about personnel matters. I like to make sure that these personnel questions are made clear, so that anybody analyzing the Foreign Service personnel system would occasionally read this oral history.

Harry Schwartz's successor as political counselor was a brilliant but difficult man named Martin Herz. This was a very difficult relationship for me because, to use an analogy from the German Army, he treated me as if he were a First Sergeant. I found myself having to "protect" the junior officers serving under me from a very temperamental and demanding Political Counselor. So I thought of myself as a "Feldwebel" [corporal] serving under a First Sergeant.

I was getting toward the end of my first tour of duty there in Tehran and I was supposed to go on Home Leave and then come back to Iran. As it happened, the officer in charge of personnel in NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs] was Archer Blood. He came through Tehran. I "let my hair down" to him. He was one of my great heroes in the Foreign Service, not because he had helped me out of a bad situation but because he was a really outstanding, Foreign Service officer. We can talk about him when we get to Bangladesh, too.

Archer Blood said: "Dan, just keep quiet. I'm going back to Washington. The only way we can get you out of here is by assigning you to Washington. Are you ready for that?" I said: "Of course I am." So Archer Blood quietly arranged for me to be assigned to the Department as the officer in charge of CENTO [Central Treaty Organization] Affairs. However, this assignment was not revealed until my wife and children were safely on home leave with me. This was one of those maneuvers which people used to be able to arrange for. I was able to do this to get out of a very difficult and unpleasant situation.

This was a good time for us to return to Washington because, during the course of our home leave, it was revealed that another child was on the way. It was much more convenient to have the child born in Washington.

Q: Dan, one final question about Iran. Martin Herz was a major figure in the Foreign Service.

NEWBERRY: Oh, very much so. I admired a lot of his accomplishments. However, as a leader of men, he left an awful lot to be desired. I should say, men and women, although we didn't have any women officers in Tehran at the time. He would have led them, too.

Q: Did he have a different view on the Shah and what was happening there than Harry Schwartz did?

NEWBERRY: Oh, yes. He probed much more deeply into the situation than Schwartz did. I personally liked Schwartz a lot more than Herz. However, I have to hand it to Martin Herz, who was a brilliant officer. As people who knew him or have read about him, he had been a court reporter before he joined the Foreign Service. He took short hand and typed at 200 words a minute! The Marine guards in Tehran used to tell me that he would come into the embassy at 5:00 AM. By the time we arrived, at 8:00 AM, all of us had what we called "Herzograms," instructions written out to us. So what was the deputy political counselor going to do? Herz had already done the deputy's work for him for the whole day, before we even had our breakfast. That was the kind of virtuoso performance that Martin Herz turned in.

Q: With Martin Herz as Political Counselor, was there a change toward looking more closely at the "White Revolution" and other things that were happening in Iran?

NEWBERRY: Yes. As a matter of fact, Bill Miller, a brilliant young officer who was still in Tehran when I left, spent many hours talking to Martin Herz. I'm sure that Herz was encouraging Bill Miller to probe more deeply into the National Front. Bill Miller did not have any contacts that I knew among religious people in Iran, but he did with the National Front and did a good job on it.

Q: I take it that the religious leaders were almost beyond reach for us.

NEWBERRY: Pretty much so. We were aware of them, because other people told us about them. We had some "third hand" information but we didn't have any important, direct contacts among the religious community at all.

FERNANDO E. RONDON
Rotational Officer
Tehran (1962-1964)

Ambassador Fernando E. Rondon was born in Los Angeles on May 6, 1936. After

attending high school in Mexico City, Ambassador Rondon studied business administration at the University of California at Berkeley. In 1961 he entered the foreign service. Besides serving in Iran, Ambassador Rondon was stationed in Washington, DC, Algeria, Madagascar, Peru, and Honduras. He was Ambassador to Madagascar, Comoros, and Ecuador. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 4, 1997.

RONDON: I should note that when I entered the Foreign Service, I only had one wish: not to serve in Latin America. I wanted to serve in areas where the name "Fernando Rondon" was viewed as an American name. So when we were asked for our three assignment preferences during the A-100 course, I asked for the Iberian Peninsula, Western Europe and the Near East, in that order. Subsequently, I was told that I had "lucked out" and would be assigned to Tehran, which was in my third preference (if one stretched the term "Near East").

So we went to Tehran and served there from 1962 to 1964. Our embassy was large, headed by Ambassador Julius Holmes. As a rotational officer, I had to serve for six months in each of the four major Embassy sections. I got to know the Embassy very well.

This was the period of the Shah's "White Revolution." Women had been given the right to vote. The mullahs were throwing acid at women. The first time I was duty officer, which lasted for a week, I had to sleep in the Chancery one night because the mullahs had announced that they were going to march from Qom to Tehran. The capital became very tense. I remember most vividly the call I received from the brigadier general in charge of the US Military Group; he wanted to know what his people should do. I suggested that he tell his staff just to stay home. I was surprised that I was telling a general what he should do. I immediately told the Ambassador what I had done; he approved of my response.

Later, when our son, Mark, was born in June 1963, there were riots in Tehran precipitated by the religious right. The American military hospital was situated across from the Shah's palace. My wife had to check into the hospital during the day; a curfew was in force at night. She delivered early the next morning but, because of the curfew, I couldn't get to the hospital until daylight, thereby missing the birth of our son.

I taught conversational English at the University of Tehran. Dialogues with the students always turned to the Shah. The students were much opposed to the monarchy. I would mention the "White Revolution" and other societal "advances" that had been fostered by the Shah. The answer was invariably: "Iran is the Shah's country; not ours." I was always struck by this student attitude; they felt no ownership of their country. The students detested the Shah.

I was also struck by how deep religious feelings went in Iran. People were very, very devout. At the time, I did not know that this feeling of devotion would be used against the regime. While I was in Iran, the main threats to the regime came from the left, not the right. The students were essentially of a leftist persuasion. I did not imagine the church aligned with the left, although there were certainly leftist mullahs. But it was eventually the religious right that brought the Shah down.

I think the quality of the political and economic reporting that I saw was very high. There was a lot of debate within the Embassy about the political direction of the country. Bill Miller, who later worked for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, was a young political officer in the Embassy. He knew a lot about the opposition; he had very good contacts and was very articulate. Martin Herz was the Political Counselor--very bright; he ensured that the reporting included what was called "opposition flavor." There was no question of where the US stood; we supported the Shah. We were disturbed by the strength of the opposition; we hoped that the Shah could win over his people, but embassy reporting was not blindly pro-Shah.

During my six months in the Consular Section, I was exposed to everything except immigrant visas. I worked on non-immigrant visas, citizenship and passport services. I remember well how desperate many young Iranians were to study in the US. They would lie; they would promise anything; they would sign anything to get a US visa. We therefore had to be careful as we made decisions on the applications. I didn't resent the lying; that was almost a cultural pattern.

When I was in the Citizenship and Passport Section, the wife of an American oil man died in Tehran. She was fairly young and her death shocked the oil company. We helped her husband ship the remains to the US, as required by law and regulations. The gentleman later came to the Consular Section to thank us; he said he had never been to an American embassy. As a member of the John Birch Society (an organization which viewed the US government as riddled with communists), he avoided any contacts with the US government. He said that he had not realized how embassies help US citizens and was both impressed and grateful.

I was very impressed by Ambassador Holmes. Of all of the ambassadors I worked for in my career, Holmes was the most "old school" one. He took an interest in each junior officer and would meet with each when they were the embassy's duty officer. I remember that Mrs. Holmes called on my wife when we had the baby. She didn't let my wife know that she was coming; she didn't want her to fuss about the visit in advance. We felt a lot of loyalty and respect for Ambassador and Mrs. Holmes. They were first rate leaders and role models.

I was in the consular section when President Kennedy was assassinated. I remember being told that he had been killed and I was stunned; I could not believe that such thing could happen to an American President, much less one of Kennedy's stature. Kennedy had touched the junior officers of the Foreign Service. We were well aware of the stories that sometimes he would call a desk officer, by-passing the State Department's chain of command. Furthermore, the second Peace Corps contingent was assigned to Iran. I knew quite a few members of that group. I felt very strongly about Kennedy. When I was in college, I was a young Republican, but I turned against Nixon and joined an informal group of "Young Republicans for Kennedy". So I cared greatly for Kennedy; his death was a real shock. I was so distressed that today I don't remember what the Iranian reaction was; I can only remember my own. I am sure that the Iranians had a strong reaction--assassinations having played such an important role in Iranian history--but their reaction just didn't leave a permanent impression on me.

THEODORE L. ELIOT, JR.
Financial Officer
Tehran (1962-1966)

Country Director, Iranian Affairs
Washington, DC (1966-1973)

Ambassador Theodore L. Eliot, Jr. was born in New York in 1928. He grew up in Boston and attended Harvard University where he graduated with a bachelor's degree in government. He joined the State Department in 1949. His posting included Colombo, Moscow, Tehran, Kabul, and Washington, DC. He served as ambassador to Afghanistan from 1973 to 1978. He was interviewed by Robert Martens in April of 1992.

Q: So you went off to Tehran, and were there for several years, and, as I recall, you came back to be Country Director for Iran. I remember seeing you in that period. That was in the latter part of the LBJ presidency. You stayed in that until the Nixon administration came in, which we'll get into later. I think at this point we might ask what conclusions you might have--not only on your period in Iran--but your period after that as Country Director, and even to some extent the observations you have in a more general sense over the years since. I know you were, in fact, brought into play at one point many years later as the Shah regime was collapsing, on a possible role.

ELIOT: One of the things I have learned by this time, is that luck plays quite a role in a Foreign Service career, and it just so happened that while I was in this job as financial officer, our relations with Iran changed, as indeed they should have changed from a primarily grant aid program to a loan program. And loans, of course, were the job of the financial officer in the Embassy. And questions of Iran's balance of payments, and ability to repay, etc. all stopped at my desk and they were in many ways--both in military assistance and in economic assistance--the key questions that had to be answered. So, willy-nilly, I became a key person on the Embassy staff working directly often with the Ambassador on these questions. So it was not illogical when the time came when the Department set up the Country Director system, that I became the first Country Director for Iran, working with the same Ambassador, Armin Meyer, that I had been working with the last year or so in Tehran.

These were happy years in Iran. The Shah was doing extremely well; he was listening to the advice of many western, including many American-trained economists. He was accreting more power to himself, but he seemed to be acting with considerable wisdom. His resources were not so great that he was beginning to feel himself--as he did later-- omnipotent. We had some control over our funds and his ability to purchase military equipment by linking such purchases to his economic and balance-of-payments situation. And the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were very insistent that we maintain that kind of control. And I must say this continued through my three years as Country Director. There were constant missions from Washington, constant questions to the embassy about the Shah's financial resources aimed at trying to insist to him that

his economic development program not be prejudiced by his military expenditures. And I'm not saying that we handled this situation perfectly, or that his military appetite was always restrained, but it certainly was in comparison with the later period in the Nixon administration, I think we were reasonably successful in keeping a balance within Iran.

I was involved, as Country Director, in selling him his first Phantom F-4s, which was done on a credit basis through the military sales credit program. Of course, he knew how to play the Soviet card. He said, "If we don't buy it from you, we'll have to buy it from other people, maybe including the Soviet Union." And he did buy a few things from the Soviets like trucks, maybe some artillery pieces, just to prove his point. But it was also equally clear to us that he wasn't going to go to them for anything very sophisticated because his American connection was too important to him.

He and LBJ had a fine relationship. LBJ used to walk him around the White House grounds arm-in-arm. I had no problems getting recommendations through all the way to the President with his signature for our major initiatives aimed at supporting the Shah. It was hard work in those days because Iran was on the front burner a lot of the time, and both on the seventh floor of the State Department, and at the White House, but it was happy work in the sense that we didn't run into too many bureaucratic obstacles, and when we did they were very easy to override because we knew we had the support of the President.

Now, in the light of subsequent history, did we overdo it with the Shah in those days? Should we have been a little tougher on him and tried to force the pace of democratization? I don't think so. I think we struck a pretty good balance, and one thing that has to be remembered is that our influence was limited. He did have other resources. He didn't get all his resources from us. And I became convinced then, if I hadn't been already, and I've certainly been subsequently even more convinced, that by and large Americans don't know enough about how these other countries work to be able to play god with their internal political systems.

I have no regrets, and no feelings that we should have played our Iranian policy much differently than what we did in the 1960s when I was so intimately involved with it. There are certainly many critics who have written about that period. In fact, when I went to Iran there were a lot of people who thought the Shah would soon fall, and soon collapse. He didn't. The basic decision was made long before I was involved, back in 1953, when we conspired to overthrow Mossadegh and keep the Shah on the throne. The reason for doing that was that we were afraid Mossadegh was a wedge for the Soviet Union inside Iran. That decision can be criticized in hindsight, but at the time Eisenhower, Dulles, and everybody else involved thought that's the way it was going to be.

Although when I was Executive Secretary, '69 to '73, obviously I continued to be knowledgeable about Iranian policy, but I was not directly involved until just after I retired in the fall of '78--actually, I guess, early January '79--my wife and I were packing our house up in Washington preparing to move to Boston to the Fletcher School, when I got a call from the then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, David Newsom, to come into the Department. And what was going on was that Khomeini, in Paris, was on the verge, it appeared, of returning to Tehran for

the first time since he had been exiled by the Shah in 1963, and no senior American official had yet had contact with Khomeini, and the thought was that I should go over there and have a chat with him. We had some rather specific things we hoped Khomeini would agree to that would preserve and protect some of those people in Iran who had been important for us. This mission was set up by Warren Zimmermann, now our Ambassador in what was Yugoslavia who was in the Paris Embassy and had contact, if I remember correctly, with Khomeini's foreign policy guy.

I was led to understand--and this is a little footnote to the story--that Khomeini had agreed to receive me. Later I mentioned this to Brzezinski, who fervently denied that that was the case. And after hearing that from Brzezinski, I had a further conversation with David Newsom who said, "No, indeed. Not only was that the case, but Brzezinski didn't necessarily know everything that was happening in those days." Sometimes Vance talked directly to the President, which indicated the degree of problems in the Carter administration, which I guess the world subsequently knew about. At any rate, it was my impression, and Newsom confirmed this, that Khomeini had agreed to receive me.

The other aspect was whether the Shah, who was still in power in Tehran, would object to this visit. Bill Sullivan, our then Ambassador, went to the Shah and cleared it with him. The Shah hemmed and hawed; obviously it was a painful thing for him--very painful--but he hemmed and hawed, and said, "Well, of course. I don't blame you. That would be a normal and natural thing for you to do." The Secretary of State, Vance, had approved it, and I was all set to go one day--I was leaving one evening for Tehran. I called the President of Tufts University, in which Fletcher resides, and told him something had come up and was it all right if I postponed my coming to Fletcher by a few days? And he said, that was fine with him. So I had my ticket, I was ready to leave that evening, when Newsom called me--I guess early afternoon--and said, "Ted, its been scrubbed, and the Secretary would like to talk to you about this in the morning."

So the next morning I went over and saw Vance. Hal Saunders, Assistant Secretary for NEA, was present at that conversation, as well as the Country Director for Iran, Henry Precht. I learned that Carter and Brzezinski, who were then down at Martinique--I can't recall what the meeting was, except that the then French President, probably Giscard, was there, but I wasn't involved in that so I don't remember why he was on Martinique, but it was some kind of a western power summit meeting. And Brzezinski and Carter had canceled the mission. And Vance tried to describe to me why they had done so, and Henry Precht and I, and Hal Saunders, walked out together and none of us could really understand the reason we had heard. It didn't track. Perhaps it was that Vance, himself, didn't understand it because he favored the mission. The only thing that Henry Precht and I seemed to be able to agree on was that it was very hard for one chief of state, Jimmy Carter, to conspire at ousting another chief of state, the Shah of Iran; that there was this feeling about one chief of state for a fellow chief of state. Because the cancellation of the mission didn't seem to make any substantive sense with the Shah and Khomeini having both approved it.

At any rate, as a result of its cancellation, as far as I know no senior American official ever met with Khomeini. Would it have made a difference? Would my mission have made a difference? Gary Sick in his book, and I'm not going to remember right away who wrote the book about Ross Perot's Iranian rescue mission, but this appears in both those books, as well as in Bill Sullivan's

memoirs. And Gary Sick in particular thought it was rather incongruous seeing Ted Eliot sitting cross-legged at the feet of Khomeini and having a conversation with him. That occurred to me too at the time; among other things my tendons don't permit me to sit cross-legged very well.

Would it have had any substantive effect on Khomeini's policies? I think not. Khomeini was determined to do what he eventually did, and he needed the foreign scapegoat, and the United States having been the great supporter of the Shah, was the obvious scapegoat. So I don't think it would have made any difference in softening his policies regarding what he did to our friends in Iran, including the military. It might have given us some other access at some point in the future, but you'll recall that various Iranian officials did meet with Americans in the future and immediately lost their jobs, if not their heads. So my guess is that it wouldn't have made a difference. It's an interesting historical vignette. It was a little frustrating to be part of it in the way I was. That ended my close connections with Iranian policy.

Oh, except for one other thing I should mention. Many years later when I was by now at the Asia Foundation, so this must have been probably in '86, Secretary Shultz used to have Saturday seminars up on the eighth floor where he would invite experts on a subject that interested him, and the senior people in Washington, to come in and he'd sit away from the table in an armchair, and listen to all of us around the table discussing. And the subject this Saturday, which I was invited to participate in, was Afghanistan, which by then, of course, was in the middle of the Mujahideen war against the Russians. The Secretary of Defense was there, and I think Casey was there, and Gates was also there from CIA, and then a few of us from the outside world who knew something about Afghanistan. I remember about the only substantive contribution I made was that I thought it was very important for the United States to reestablish communication with Iran because the Iranians could play a helpful role in helping to get the Soviets out of Afghanistan, which the Iranians even under Khomeini very much wanted to do. I pushed quite hard at a number of points in the conversation for our trying to establish some mode of communication with Iran. I didn't get any reaction from Shultz, or any of the government officials there. Little did I know what was going on. (Laughter) The idea of carrying bibles and chocolate cakes to Khomeini was about the most absurd thing I ever heard in my life.

CARLETON S. COON, JR.
Principal Officer
Tabriz (1963-1965)

Ambassador Carleton S. Coon, Jr. was born in Paris, France in 1927. He served in the U.S. Army in 1945 and 1946. He graduated from Harvard University with a bachelor's degree in 1949, and entered the Foreign Service later that year. During his career, Ambassador Coon served in Germany, Syria, India, Iran, Nepal, Morocco, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Looking chronologically you went to Tabriz as principal officer.

COON: Yes. I had about seven or eight, nine very vigorous months working on this arms business for India, and then I went to Tabriz.

Q: That must have been an interesting assignment.

COON: It was fine. It was great.

Q: ...northern Iran and...

COON: Yes. I had a Vice Consul, and an Admin Assistant. The Admin Assistant's wife was my American secretary, and that was the staff.

Q: What really was your principal work there?

COON: There wasn't a hell of a lot because the post was fairly quiet at that point. It had quieted down a great deal from previous years when there had been more of an American military presence up there, and that sort of thing. It was basically the responsibilities of a small consulate anywhere: show the flag, report, get around, keep in touch with developments, supervise the branch PAO's USIA program, take care of visiting firemen. There was precious little negotiation although occasionally somebody would get in trouble and I'd have to do something about it. It was a quiet post but I really enjoyed it. Every month I'd drive around the big lake, the Urmia, and every other month or so I'd get down to Sanandaj in Kurdish territory. I did a lot of reporting on the Kurdish situation. The rebellion was going on in Iraq at that time.

Q: How did we view the Shah and his government at that particular juncture?

COON: Very benevolently. He was our man. One thing they did want me to do: they wanted me to get the worm's eye view about the Shah's so-called white revolution which he'd just launched, and in fact a couple of the villages he'd first launched it in were in my district.

Q: This was land redistribution.

COON: Yes. This was land redistribution to the peasants, taking it away from the rich zamindars__. And I went around, and I watched the registration process, and I talked to the villagers through interpreters, and I talked to the zamindars__. And then I reported back in some detail that it was for real. It was really happening, and it was creating administrative problems, but they were being resolved, and they were moving ahead with it. And that was some contribution, I guess, that people found out about that. I also straightened out the embassy about a misconception they had about the relationships of the various Kurdish factions to the Shah. Other than that, I just had wonderful experiences.

WILLIAM A. HELSETH

**Political Officer
Tehran (1964-1968)**

William Arthur Helseth was born in Florida in 1925. He graduated from the College of William and Mary in 1948, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy in 1949, received a PhD in 1962, and served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 to 1946 overseas. After entering the Foreign Service in 1950 his assignments abroad have included Frankfurt, Izmir, Ankara, Tehran, and Kabul. In 1996 Mr. Helseth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You left the desk in '64 and went to Tehran?

HELSETH: That's correct.

Q: You were in Tehran from '64...

HELSETH: '64 to '68.

Q: What was your job in Tehran?

HELSETH: I was number two in the Political Section under Martin Hertz, who was counsel of embassy for political affairs. In that office my position was also the consulate coordinator for Iran. That is, I directly supervised the four consulates that we had in Iran at that time.

Q: Where were they?

HELSETH: In Tabriz, Mashhad, Isfahan, and Khorramshahr, which was a seaport on the Shah-al-Arab.

Q: When you arrived there in '64, what was the political situation?

HELSETH: There had just been an assassination attempt on the Shah. If I recall, he had been slightly wounded. There was an attempt by the government to find the perpetrators, to arrest them and try them. While opposition to the Shah was increasing, it was still muted. He kept things under very tight control then politically. He was beginning, however, to expand economically. That movement had begun in '62 or '63 with the Shah's White Revolution, I think it was called. He was trying to expand the economic base. I think it was his belief that if he could successfully bring about economic development, he could then turn his attention to political matters, such as being less repressive, or granting more political rights to the country. But the political reformation, so to speak, had to wait until the economic expansion had taken place. That was what he was basing his rule on then and which occupied him for the next decade. In the end, he was unsuccessful, but that was, I believe, his belief at the time and why he felt he could not grant political freedoms then. So, the regime continued to be repressive. There was still opposition, but it was pretty well controlled. Savak, the intelligence unit both internally and externally, and the police kept were able to keep the opposition jumping. The opposition wasn't able to unite. They

weren't able to coalesce in any united form of opposition to the Shah. Incidents would arise here or there, but they never arose together. They were prevented by the government from uniting.

Q: How did you view as a political officer the political spectrum in Iran during this '64 to '68 period?

HELSETH: This was the height of the Shah's White Revolution, where he was attempting land reform. It was given great publicity, of course, by the government. They were doing some things. They were being successful to some extent. But it was the gloved fist that was still ruling there. There was no doubt about the fact that the cabinet did not make any move without the Shah's direction, maybe acquiescence, but all top level initiative came from him. The cabinet were implementers. The Shah made the decisions. He was the one who decided what would be done and, in some instances, even how it was going to be done. So, politically, it was a period of essentially complete central government dominance. There were no single elements of opposition strong enough, powerful enough to really challenge him. He kept them on the jump so that they were not able to get together, whether it be anyone or Khomeini - Khomeini at the time being in exile in Jordan. The Shah had sent him there earlier on rather than having him tried and whatever sentence might have been given in Iran up to possibly death. It may have been the decision at the top level to exile him rather than to terminate his existence.

Q: Did you see the student, the educated class, as a potential opposition to the Shah at that time?

HELSETH: It worked both ways. There were some young leaders, there were some students. The university was thought to be sort of a hotbed of activity. Yes, it was there, but not organized. It was rather disparate. Once again, the Shah's forces were able to prevent their joining together in unity. The Shah's control even inhibited us. We were not able to penetrate very far into the opposition ourselves and meet with the leaders. We had some sources, some access. The Shah's government was very touchy on this issue. There were, again, during that period, two or three times when he or the prime minister complained to the ambassador that his embassy people were seeing the wrong people, that we shouldn't be talking to certain elements. We would get the wrong picture of what was going on. But we did try to discreetly maintain contacts with various peoples. But they also felt uncomfortable (some of them felt uncomfortable) in talking with us. They were fearful our attention would bring the hand on their shoulder that would take them away.

Q: At a later time during the mid-70s or so, one of the great opposition complaints was that we had completely acquiesced to the Shah's desire that we didn't contact the opposition, and that our contacts really were limited to the Shah and his entourage. Did you feel there was any attempt to... Was there from the American side any attempt to control our reporting to ensure that the Shah was reported favorably?

HELSETH: No. I don't think that was completely true in the '70s either. There were some elements of it, yes, but I don't think we ever took a decision that we were going to view Iranian developments strictly from the point of view of the Shah and certainly not that we were going to try to make him look good. I can speak from personal experience only, of course, from '64 to '68.

Our instructions then were to be discreet in any event. But we were never closed off by a decision from the Front Office not to talk to these people. Only to be discreet, to be careful, but don't close it off. And maybe a time or two, the ambassador would say, "Well, you know, we don't need to talk to these people in the next month or so" and let the heat die down a bit. But then we did, as I say, attempt to maintain these connections. But these parties, the nationalists and other groupings there, were not all that significant themselves or powerful or well-organized in the '60s. So, it was difficult to see many of these leaders, but we did make some inroads. We didn't shut them off from ourselves.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

HELSETH: I'm trying to think now. Julius Holmes was ambassador when I arrived. He stayed there less than a year and was replaced by - the name is right on the tip of my tongue...yes, Armin Meyer. Presented his credentials in April 1965.

Q: Were we watching the religious right, the mullahs, as a factor in the political section, looking at them?

HELSETH: To the extent that we could. We didn't have much in the way of direct contacts with them and certainly no meetings with the highest level of the mullahs there. They wouldn't see us and therefore we couldn't see them. We had some contacts in the intermediate levels, but the Agency had some contacts there that we did not have.

Q: How did you feel about the Agency, the CIA? It certainly took credit for putting the Shah back in power after he had been ousted after the overthrow of Mossadegh. From your point of view, what was the role of the Agency?

HELSETH: Because of its support back in 1951 to '53, the CIA had easy access to many people there. They were well-regarded. I think in general, in that period of time that I was there, they played the game appropriately. I don't think they were obstreperous or unhelpful to us. They had their contacts and they received information. Some of it they shared in Tehran and some went directly back to Washington for sharing here. The ambassador and the head of station worked some things amongst themselves. I had myself no problem with the Agency role in Tehran at this time.

Q: Were there any major developments during the time you were there?

HELSETH: We had the continual flaps over developments in the White Revolution, challenges to it. We had problems in the foreign policy field with CENTO, or with the organization that the regional states developed on their own without US or British participation. We had the development, saw the successful conclusion of the Soviet campaign of smiles, which had begun in Iran as it had in Turkey after 1960 basically, in that it led to Soviet participation in economic development in Iran with a steel mill, with the gas development, and the sale of gas to the Soviets. This was a major concern that the Soviets were moving in particularly to build a steel mill down in the Isfahan area. This was coming about 1966 or '67, as I recall. That was a major

development and breakthrough for the Soviets at the time. There were other attempts on the Shah's life at this time. But basically, it was not a time of really critical development. The Shah changed government, his prime minister, a time or two. But that didn't change the direction of the government because he was the one telling whoever the prime minister was what to do. The opposition party which he had "created" was active in the Parliament. They would debate in it. They had their votes and we were in contact with those so-called opposition leaders. I met with a couple of them regularly. But they, too, were sort of created. So, it was not a significant challenge to the government. It was to give some semblance to the "democratic institutions," which the Shah really didn't want to have developed until he had economic development under way - or not underway, but enhanced. Then the political side could be expanded.

Q: What was the impression you got from both your own work, the feedback from GTI office in Washington, and from others in the Political Section of the Shah? How did you see him at that time?

HELSETH: Before I went to Iran and I was just seeing the country from time to time and was not really focused on it, I had tended to view the Shah as no exactly some tinhorn dictator, but a still had very low opinion of the Shah as a ruler, as a person, and what he was trying to do. I confess that after four years in country, I left with an appreciation of what he was trying to do and a feeling that he had a chance to succeed, but there was an equal chance that he wouldn't make it. But I felt that he was trying to improve Iran, the situation of the people. I don't say I was captivated or anything like that, but I did, in learning more about the country, come to feel that what he was trying to do was a rational way of doing it, but it was at heavy expense to the country. There were the political killings, the arrests, the tortures, the Savak role. This was there. It was a heavy price to pay. The question in all our minds was "Can he do it? Will it last out or will these disparate forces that were present in the '60s ever get together and make themselves heard?" We know in the aftermath that they did and the Shah lost out. But at that time, it seemed that he did have basically improvement of the country as his goal. But the implementation of that was stop and go. The family around him, the royal family, many of them certainly not helping with their own escapades (hand in the till and all that). There were a lot of ways in which government authority was misused, a lot of ways in which the people were not benefitting. That was the price that was being paid. As I say, I give them maybe too much the benefit of the doubt. I think he was trying to bring Iran out of the doldrums and to make it a respectable and respected country in the Middle East.

Q: Then, you left there in 1968.

WILLIAM GREEN MILLER
Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Iran Political Dynamics"
Washington, DC (1965)

Ambassador William Green Miller was born in New York in 1931. He earned his bachelor's degree from Williams College in 1953. His career has included

positions in Isfahan, Tehran, and an ambassadorship to Ukraine. Ambassador Miller was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2003.

Q: When was the overthrow of Mossadeq?

MILLER: 1953.

Q: Was the shah really in power, particularly from the Isfahan?

MILLER: The Shah was never accepted by the Iranian peoples as a whole as the rightful leader. The shah was always seen as illegitimate, as imposed by the West, certainly from the time I got there. The Iranians believed that he had been imposed by the British and by us, particularly the British. The line of agreement that Iranian nationalists used when I arrived in 1959 was that we Americans were manipulated by the hidden hand of the British. It was explained to me by Iranians who had witnessed the events in great detail how the overthrow took place. The role of Kermit Roosevelt, and Ambassador Henderson, and Shahban the Brainless were all related by my new Isfahani friends who had lived through all of the coups and had created a mythology, as well as a documented history and a body of poetry of the event. The story of the 1953 coup was a favorite subject matter for declamations. They saw to it that I was carefully educated in what they regarded as Persian realities. Indeed I was educated, because I was given full documentation, newspapers of the time, and met the personalities who had been in prison, tortured. The American spies at the time were all identified. I was actually asked, "Did I know so and so and so ..." It turned out that the governor, called in Persian, Ostandar, of Isfahan, a man named General Abbas Farzanagan, had been the "bag man" for the coup, a fact that he was pretty proud of. Farzanagan told me in detail his direct role in all of these events. We became very good friends. I was very interested in him. He was very pro-American, obviously, and very close to the Shah, but incredibly corrupt, as I learned in watching him at work as governor. So the gap between the governors of the shah and the shah's rule and the people of Isfahan, where I was living, was evident almost from the beginning. There was little respect for the shah among the Isfahani people.

Q: Was it the shah himself rather than his father?

MILLER: The father was looked on with more respect, because he was a relatively independent, self-made man. He was very tough soldier. He did his own thing. He resisted cooption by foreign powers till the end, and of course was deposed because of his recalcitrance, although he was a brutal dictator and ignorant in the minds of many of the nationalists, and in their view not fit to be a great king. Although they did accord him respect for the reforms he carried out such as building railroads, and roads, airports, and the beginnings of a new system of justice even though it was abused by him, used by him, for control rather than justice. The path of change instituted by Reza Shah was seen to have possibilities by the nationalists. For example, the new school system of course, and universities, were seen as a plus. The beginnings of modern economy created by the use of oil revenues from the oil fields in the south all took place under the shah's father. Shah Mohammed Reza, the son, was seen as weak, as a puppet of the Americans and the British, particularly the British, and not worthy, and certainly by his own example he did not do

noble things. The nationalists who were the remnants and successors to Mossadeq were the strongest most popular and respected political groups in Iran.

Q: How was Mossadeq viewed?

MILLER: As the greatest of the Iranian leaders of the early 20th century, because he came from a noble background and devoted his life to Iran and its people. He was a Qajar, a prince, from a distinguished princely family. He was well educated in Iran and in the West as a lawyer, was considered by all as a patriot, was a nationalist who resisted British and Russian, and Reza Shah, went to prison for it. Mossadeq was a land owner, who treated his villagers humanely, a reformer, and a democrat. He believed in democratic institutions, constitutionality, and legal reform. He understood the nature and history of Iranian civilization. So he was thought by Iranians to be a great man, unfairly and unwisely removed by foreign influence. It was a big mistake, in my view, for the U.S. and Britain to have undertaken the 1953 coup. His group was called the National Front, Hesba Melli. It was a coalition of interest groups and proto-political parties that reflected the whole spectrum of Iranian society from the religious right to the Marxist, on the left, but it was put together with a Persian perspective. The National Front Party was the biggest political group in Isfahan. There were Communist elements within the party, but they were a minority. The communist party, the Tudeh, were well organized and well under the influence of Moscow because their leaders had been educated in Moscow and their funding came from Moscow. Their social causes had the urban poor, the exploitation of the masses were real issues. They had some influence in the labor unions in the textile mills of Isfahan where conditions were far from ideal. The Tudeh had no appeal in the villages, which was at that point 70% of the population who lived in the 50,000 villages. The communists were an urban phenomenon. So I was familiar with all these groups, the Communists, the Tudeh party, and certainly the National Front people.

Q: Tudeh was the Communists?

MILLER: The Communists, yes. I also knew the SAVAK (National Organization for Intelligence and Security) people who were hunting them down, arresting them and killing them.

Q: How efficient and appreciated...was the SAVAK, or present at that time in Isfahan?

MILLER: It was a very big presence, partially because SAVAK at that point was led by a Bakhtiari General. Timor Bakhtiar was head of SAVAK, and he came from Isfahan or in the mountains near Isfahan. He was a Bakhtiari. Yes, General Timor Bakhtiar was head of SAVAK and he was considered a rival for the Shah for power because he was a player and could easily have deposed the Shah, given certain events and the attitude of the Americans and the British. The Americans and the British kept very close touch with SAVAK since they were the main training group for the secret police and supplied their equipment. We had a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) officer in Isfahan.

Q: Well, now let's talk about the consulate, not consulate-general ?

MILLER: There were five consulates.

Q: In Isfahan, at that time, because our reporting out of Iran has been very, has been criticized, that sometimes were too much this way or that way, you know. When you arrived what was sort of the attitude and what was the task of the consulate?

MILLER: The consulate was really a kind of the consul was a pro-consul, in many ways, because there was a huge economic and military assistance effort, Point Four and ARMISH-MAAG effort underway.

Q: Begun in the Truman administration.

MILLER: Yes, it was. Point Four was the forerunner to USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development). The Point Four Plan, of course was, developed in the time of Truman, for assistance to Greece, Turkey, Iran and Egypt, as an emergency foreign policy and security tool. That took the form of technical assistance, largely in agriculture, health, and water projects, airports, infrastructure, and there were quite a few aid technicians who gave, in many cases, extremely effective help, particularly the doctors in the universities and hospitals. The development assistance of Point Four was extremely helpful to Iran. Then we also had a very large ARMISH-MAAG (US Army Mission Military Assistance Advisory Group) contingent. ARMISH-MAAG was the military, the military security assistance. It was under the command of a general who wanted to assist a military academy in Isfahan, particularly giving access to artillery and tanks. We had a large military training component, a feature that lasted until the revolution in 1979. At the end, in 1979 they had air force training in Isfahan, and of course Bell Helicopters was building helicopters in Isfahan, and communications factories.

Then there were training and technical programs in all of the structure the police, the gendarmerie, doctors' education. So the consulate was in formal charge of all of this. As vice-consul I was in charge of all of this when Frank Crawford was on leave.

Q: There were just two of you?

MILLER: There were two Foreign Service officers.

Q: And the CIA.

MILLER: The CIA station chief, the USIS officer, later Bill Meader and the Point Four head, Harvey Coverley and John Hollingsworth, our administrative assistant and code clerk.

Q: Did the CIA office perform consular functions too?

MILLER: Reluctantly. He was a good man. We went on many field trips together. He was helpful. I learned much from him about CIA, and the mentality of those engaged in covert activities.

Q: How about just the mundane but Iranian students were the bane of most consuls existence in Europe and elsewhere cause they were all over the place looking for visas. Did you have that?

MILLER: I had to issue visas. It was my first post, I expected to issue visas. I issued about 50 a year.

Q: That's not many.

MILLER: No, and I even issued four passports, two of which I mangled in the seal embossing machine. We had a malfunctioning hand crank machine. I couldn't get several of the passports out of the machine. It was a rather comic scene.

Q: So then mainly your work was?

MILLER: I was the political officer, I was the economic officer, I was the coordinator of our mission and I was the deputy chief of mission, and I helped in communications. I did everything. I encrypted, decrypted, acted as a courier as way of getting to Tehran and so on. There wasn't any consular function I didn't do. I buried the dead. I picked up pieces of Americans who crashed themselves into the top of mountains, put dead bodies in embalming fluid and then put them in caskets. I got American travelers out of jail. I went to the ports to handle shipping.

Q: How did people get in jail there?

MILLER: The normal ways, traffic accidents, or theft?

Q: Was drugs a problem at that point?

MILLER: No, not noticeably. You have to remember this was really and still is a very remote part of the world. The only people who came through were the most adventurous and of course, there were those who were often traveling on 50 cents a day of their own and ten dollars of someone else's money a day. Some travelers proved to be burdens because they expected to be put up in your house or your apartment. Most travelers to Isfahan tended to be wonderful people like Agatha Christie, otherwise known as Mrs. Mallowan and her archaeologist husband. There were people like Anne K. Hamilton, the quiet Persian scholar who was a British Political officer during the war. Also Lawrence Lockhart, the art historian and historian of the Safavid period; Donald Wilber, and Cuyler Young and his archaeologist son, T. Cuyler Young, Jr. came.

Q: He was an archeologist.

MILLER: Yes. Another extraordinary person was Wilfred Thesiger, a great explorer, and of course all the archeologists in the region like Ezatollah Negahban, many of whom are now gone, but some of them are still alive and working, like David Stronach, who was head of the British Institute and is now at Berkley in California.

Q: With these connections you were developing, in the first place the language. I imagine this

was a hot house for getting into Farsi and Persian.

MILLER: Yes. Well, immediately upon arriving I had a tutor, several tutors. Since there were very few people in Isfahan who spoke English or any other foreign language, you had to learn Persian. It was a wonderful obligation and necessity. The atmosphere in Isfahan was such that the rhythm of life and the language fit it. It was a good place to begin to learn a language as subtle as Persian. The pace of life allowed me the luxury of having tutors during the day in the office. I rarely sat for a whole day at the desk. The paper work was minimal since we were a consulate in a very remote area. The traffic of consular work wasn't, even in the embassies, anywhere near the scale we have now. It was expected that my job was to learn about Iran, so I was on the streets of Isfahan every day. Two weeks of every month I was on the road in other parts of Iran. Over the five years that I was in Iran I visited every part of Iran. I've been to every city, most towns, and there is no region that I haven't visited, and almost every archeological site, every mosque. I met every major religious leaders, every political leader throughout the country. So I knew the country backwards and forwards.

Q: Were there any restrictions or no-nos? For example, you said the governor was incredibly corrupt, though he was a nice man. Was this a matter of reporting all the time?

MILLER: How did I know that?

Q: How did you know that and also were you reporting that?

MILLER: Oh yes, I was reporting the issues as I understood them. Yes, I reported on corruption and popular discontent with the Shah's regime from the outset. To do so wasn't a problem for political officers in the field. It did get to be a problem for me in Tehran. I'll tell you about that later.

Q: I am trying to pick up now because our work in Iran later on, particularly in the 70's, was renowned for restrictions put on our officers about reporting. What about then?

MILLER: No restrictions. The only curbs on one's writing were technical considerations of formal style, punctuation, and normal editing.

Q: They were done mainly through dispatches?

MILLER: The major reporting form was the "dispatch", and "official informal" letters. The major security categories for reporting were "limited official use" or "unclassified", because we didn't want to go through the very onerous, time-consuming task of encrypting one time pads. Any messages that required one-time pads really had to be a sensitive issue. Everything else was understood to be normal discourse in Isfahan: such matters as so-and-so is corrupt, that the SAVAK killed...and reported in unclassified form. The only thing that might have been put in classified form would be a comment on the event that was being reported, for example. Security regulations required that our classified material had to be sent by courier, hand-carried. Getting classified material to Tehran was not a problem, but every encryption certainly was.

Q: What about your contact and all with the mullahs at that time. How did this come about? Were the mullahs sort of...were they open to a young kid from the American devils or something, coming around and talking or not?

MILLER: Well, after all the mullahs were and still are, by and large, and certainly in the cities, among the most educated. They're the brothers and cousins of people who were leading politicians and businessmen. The mullahs were supported by the others in society in the same way we support our pastors and priests here in the United States.

Q: So this was not really a class apart.

MILLER: No, the mullahs were an integrated part of everyday life. It is a mistake, to look on mullahs even in contemporary Iran as a class that is somehow alienated. What's wrong or different for the clergy to be doing in contemporary Iran as compared to the traditional Iran that I knew is that the clergy are now doing functions that they normally don't do. The clergy are running the government, but the clergy come from the same families whose secular members ran the Shah's government. They are relatives of the politicians who were in power at the time of the shah.

Q: How did you wife find life there?

MILLER: Suzanne found it completely open. Perhaps because we were young and naïve, we felt no isolation or alienation. The people we lived among were interested in us. We had our first son born in Isfahan, in a simple but well run hospital there. She had a normal birth with a mid-wife. It was the Christian hospital run by the Christian Church. The hospital was made of mud brick, and it was very primitive in its appointments, but had extremely able doctors and nurses. No, Suzanne had a wonderful time. There was no restriction on dress, but she was careful about what she wore. She would wheel a baby carriage, with our son, Will, down the main streets. Isfahani women would stop her and chat about the baby and the normal events of ordinary life.

Q: Great opener isn't it?

MILLER: Oh yes. We would go on picnics in the mountains, find a deserted place and almost by magic tribesman would come down from the hills and surround us, inching up closer and closer with when we were having a picnic, and if we had enough food, we'd share it with them and they'd squat and look at our baby and ask questions like, "how did we get so far away from America?" "What is America like?" they were always courteous and respectful and genuinely curious about us.

Q: With our military mission there, did that cause problems? Sometimes you take young American soldiers, and they've got spare time, and sometimes it goes bad.

MILLER: A little bit. They usually went up to Tehran or out of the country for a change and for recreation. The social life that went on was open enough. The Iranian military was there too. The American advisors were a tiny part of the much larger Iranian military force of several divisions.

The Iranian military as a whole were seen as somewhat parasitical on the society, as were the police, because being poorly paid, they did put pressure on the ordinary people and extract bribes. The military weren't always of the finest type, but they functioned in Isfahan in a situation of normality, I'd say. You asked the question about mullah, I was very interested in them because they knew a lot about their country, were generally well educated and well read and the best were well informed about events in the world. And they were political leaders. They were political in the sense that they were aware, remembered the recent past, and were related to people who were political. They had admirable moral attitudes, and some were highly civilized. It wasn't difficult to get to know the clergy. If you were interested in them, they were interested in you. If you treated them with respect, they treated you with respect.

Q: What about the land owners? Had the White Revolution started at that point?

MILLER: No, the White Revolution took place later when I went to Tehran. So-called land reform was the biggest part of the White Revolution. This big issue in the World Bank at that time was assisting land reform program. Land reform in the early 1960s meant land distribution. It didn't mean necessarily improving the agriculture, it meant democratizing by parceling out equal plots to the peasants in the minds of Western, or at least foreign, economists.

Change in the patterns of land ownership had already begun in Iran as early as the '20s, because owning villages and peasants was no longer a benefit. Land ownership for thousands of years in Iran was seen as a prestige, power, and it was clearly in 1960, ceasing to be that. The big land-owning families, the so-called "1000 Families" of Iran, who typically would own 10, 20, 50, or even 100 villages, were selling their villages and going into manufacturing or investment. There was a very famous family called the Farman-Farmians in Tehran descended from the Qajar princes. In the generation I knew, there were 36 children from one father and four mothers. 32 of them were PhD's. The Farman-Farmians were a huge land-owning family, but at that time in 1962, they reduced their holdings to just two villages where they had homes they used for vacations and hunting.

Q: When they sold their villages, would it go to somebody else?

MILLER: Yes, the villages were sold in the bazaar, and rich merchants who were rising and wanted villages as prestige bought them. The process of change was slow.

The decision to sell or keep a village would depend on the quality of the village, whether it was profitable, very often there was prestige to own a village particularly in the marginal areas. Agriculture itself as an economic force was changing. Certainly, the methods of agriculture were changing. Typically water was the limiting and governing principle or, in the areas of rainfall, predictable rainfall, where wheat could be grown without fear of drought, or rice would be grown in the north, where there was plentiful rainfall for rice and for crops like tea, or fruit orchards. Water was a key determinant. If you bought a village you'd have to know how much water came with the village. Water would define how many people could work and how much land could be planted. For thousands of years in Iran, the measurement of work was by how much land could be plowed by a man and an ox in a day. Land divisions, so-called, were based on that man-ox

scale of measurement. With mechanization, in the twentieth century, the nature of plowing and land division and irrigation was changing. Land reform did not significantly affect overall output, really, but it was driving people off the land. The traditional agriculture was a form of intensive farming; so-called land reform, actually drove half of the village workers into the cities unnecessarily, unnecessarily because they were living quite a reasonable life in the villages. If better education and health were provided to the villages you would have had a much better situation.

Q: What with the clearances _____?

MILLER: Yes it is. It was something like that, not intended with that in mind. This class of people driven to the cities were called Khoshnashin. They were the so-called "landless." They were the workers in villages, they were the ones who didn't have land tenure by family inheritance because they had ploughed the same plots for hundreds of years, but were otherwise involved in harvesting and planting and did other jobs in the village. It changed the nature of villages, so-called land reform. Land reform as conceived in the 1960's was an inappropriate idea imposed by Western land reform theorists who tried to apply methods used elsewhere on a very complicated traditional land system.

This is how Mossadeq come back into the picture. Mossadeq was deeply interested in land reform. He was a big landowner, and understood well the complications. He said, "First step for reform of Iranian agriculture was to make a national cadastral survey. It was necessary to determine what kind of land Iran has, then determine how can it best be farmed, how many workers would be able to usefully work on it. What about village schools, and social infrastructure once provided by landlords." If the land is to use machinery what would be the optimum kinds of tractors, combines, etc. Mossadeq asked, "What have you got in the villages before you change them?" The Shah's White Revolution, was led by Minister of Agriculture, Arsenjani, who was the real architect but didn't know a damn thing about agriculture. He was a city, urban type, a journalist actually, who was drafted by the Shah to be Minister of Agriculture. Arsenjani bought the World Bank theory which had little to do with the agricultural and social and political realities of Iran.

The landowners over the last several hundred years represented a significant part of the ruling elite. In the last 50 years of the twentieth century, ownership of land meant far less, and in the last 10 years before the revolution land owners had very little direct influence. It was those who had factories and had invested in bank and those who were making modern mechanical cars and the machines of the new world.

Q: Was the feeling on the American side and the diplomatic service that Mossadeq was a bad guy and were we looking for another uprising and overthrow of the shah? Were we looking for revolutionary elements, even the Tudeh?

MILLER: We were helping the Shah to suppress the Tudehs. We were trying to root them out. All opposition to the Shah was suspect, even democratic nationalists. This was our policy towards Iran from the time of the overthrow of Mossadeq in 1953. It was certainly a major policy

concern in the Eisenhower period. In the Kennedy period when I was in Iran, the question of crushing the opposition was open. The idea that a democratic nationalist opposition was positive and should be supported was left open. After I left, starting with Nixon, our policy changed back to total support for the shah at all costs. In the period from Kennedy through Johnson, we placed high value on building democratic government and institutions, supporting democratic government with all the confusion of ignorance of the regional realities and history, and our inabilities in many ways, but the issue of governance was open and the American government was listening to nationalist expression, cooperatively at least, in Iran, Turkey, even Egypt and other places. We had in fact, a sort of schizophrenic policy. On the one hand we were supporting SAVAK, the secret police, to keep the shah in power, and supporting brutal police tactics, supporting undemocratic brutality; on the other hand we were urging Iranian judges to follow a democratic system of rule of law and to hold free elections. Election would be held by the shah. They were rigged. They weren't free, and to our credit, we condemned them. The Shah would hold elections again. They still weren't free. The shah was under tremendous pressure from us to allow the national democrats to have a role in government for about four years, during the time I was there. President Kennedy, Attorney Bobby Kennedy his NSC (National Security Council), and his State Department regional bureau, NEA, all were in support of the nationalists, perhaps because the Iranian nationalists were American-educated and a known quantity. They were thought to be the best elements within Iranian society and they came directly to us for help. They said, "We believe in you. You should believe in us." There was a policy battle between the supporters of the Shah's absolute rule and those who wanted Iran to have a constitutional democratic monarchy. The battle for policy went on until a decision was made in the time of Prime Minister Ali Amini, on the question of an IMF (International Monetary Fund) debt repayment. It was an amount of debt something like \$20 million, which, if we had given him a delay on debt payment, Amini would have survived. The decision was made not to support Amini's request, but rather to support the shah, so the shah became the "linchpin of stability" at that point. That marked the end of independent, democratic parties. The shah, from that point on, put in place a shah chosen one-party system. There were elections for the representatives of one party. The nationalists democrats were prevented from that point on by the shah from holding office.

Q: When was this?

MILLER: 1963, '64.

Q: So while you were still there. I think probably this is a pretty good time to stop.

MILLER: Well, we haven't gotten very far.

Q: Well, we're moving, it's all right. We'll pick this up really when you went to Tehran, and we'll pick that up in 1961?

MILLER: Sixty-two.

Q: There might be some more?

MILLER: There's a lot.

Q: Do you want to put down, here, some of the other things, here, so we won't forget that you'd like to cover them?

MILLER: The importance of field trips. The value of mentoring by senior ambassadors. The great utility of well trained, able locals. The work of the diplomat in such places as Isfahan.

Q: And also, I didn't really go into how we viewed and what was the Tudeh party at the time.

MILLER: Yes, and other countries' influences like that of the Soviets and the British.

Q: Today is April the 25th 2003. Bill, let's talk a little bit about you said you wanted to talk about, particularly the work of a consulate and all, about the value of field trips.

MILLER: There is some present day relevance to the pro-consuls that are in place in Afghanistan, or are being put in place in Iraq. Isfahan was not a primitive place. It was a highly cultured city with a thousand-year history or more and a population that knew that history and behaved in customary ways that were reflective of a highly civilized society. What I mean by that is that the daily courtesies of life were highly stylized. Greetings were expected and formalized, whether on the street or in arranged or formal meeting passing by on the street with strangers, comment on the weather. The discussion of everyday events was carefully considered through formulaic language, which, when fully understood, wasn't simply a matter of rote, but could subtly convey very accurate and direct feelings.

Q: Could you give sort of an example of this?

MILLER: Yes, a very popular thoroughfare in Isfahan was called the Chaharbagh, the Place of Four Gardens. That's what the word means. It was then and still is, as I saw when I returned a year or so ago, a street several miles in length in which there are four rows of plane trees, sycamores to us, London planes, to the British, some of which are hundreds of years old. It's a place where people promenade, really. In Persian it's called gardesh mikonan, "we will take a walk," and people go in one direction or the other and when they pass each other they nod heads and they have a salutation of at minimum, "Al-salaam Alaikum, to your health," comment would than follow on the weather, politics, the health of family and friends and perhaps more. These are the patterns of daily ordinary walks. Then there were conversations in the market if you're buying fruit or vegetables. At the other end of the scale of commerce, in antique or rug stores, for example, there is a formal language, and patter that reflects not only the occupation of the day and the feelings towards individuals or even countries.

This is a way of saying that Iranian society is very complicated. The language is very precise and learned. There is a lot of room for discussion, not only banter, but deep discussion within formulas. So for diplomats the use of language is ideal because you are already working within mental framework rules of the game.

Q: Did you have a problem beginning to pick up the nuances of this?

MILLER: No, and here is the importance of local staff who, in this case, were like Oriental secretaries in the British sense. Our local staff were people of great standing in the city, in this case, Isfahan, because of their family and educational background and learning. They saw their jobs as being a host for the city; to the Americans in a way, and as teachers to the Americans. So every step, particularly in the early stages, everything was explained, what these encounters meant, what the meaning and intentions of the linguistic back and forth was, what the depth of the bow or the rising or falling if you are sitting on the ground, and hand to the heart and the stroking of beard in the case of the religious who were always bearded meant. Those clues to behavior were very important for me.

Mr. Dehesh, Baquer Dehesh, was the principle senior assistant in the consulate, along with another person named Abdol Hossein Sepenta, who was a poet and a filmmaker, and a journalist spent a lot of time both of with them. They took me to see their circles of close friends as well as those in official circles. In the official circles were the governor of the ostan, Ostandar, the mayor, the Shahdar, the various heads of ministries in the governor's and the mayor's office, then the leading clerics, university professors, teachers in the schools, artists. A list of the hierarchy of important people, was drawn up. All consulates and embassies have a list of key personalities and their biographic contact lists they are now called. In the case of Isfahan and Tehran, the personalities were divided into the appropriate classes of society, not in the Marxist way, but in the Persian way which was in the form of a list of those who were the worthies, who were the land-owners, who were the factory owners, who were the intellectuals, artists, athletes, actors, etc. The initial analysis of society was carefully done and reflected not our perception of society but our local staff's perception of their own social structure.

Q: A worthy being whom?

MILLER: A "worthy" would be, so named for one of several reasons. A worthy would reflect power, that is, be a representative of the shah's regime, the appointed governor, in the case of Isfahan and the elected mayor, the head of the gendarmerie, or the head of the secret police. Then there were the families of the existing dynasty, that's the Pahlavis, and then the Qajars, who were much more numerous, from the previous dynasty, and in the case of Isfahan the Safavids from the time of shah Abbas, that great Persian dynasty. There were even some Afshars, the dynasty from Shiraz, and there were some families of the Afghan conquerors of the 18th century, and so on, and there were Jewish worthies, Christians. There were also the leaders of, the various modern oil dynasties, or the present political system, the religious structure, the intellectual structure. Then in Isfahan, because it was always an artisan city, the artists, the most honored miniaturists, tile makers, and in the time I was there, the sculptors and the oil painters or water colorists. All of the artists from metal work to textiles to bookbinding these were all very important.

Q: There were no strictures within the Shiite religion about portraying human people, the humans?

MILLER: Only in the mosques.

Q: Only in the mosques, but you know in the Wahabi and all this, there is none of that?

MILLER: No, in fact, in a number of the great mosques, even the shah mosque, now called the Imam mosque, there were representations of animals and humans in some of the back areas of the mosque. Usually there is a distinction between the mosque and outside, but outside it was rampant, figures and animals.

Q: I may have asked this before, but how strong was the writ of the shah at this time? How much were local authorities doing what local authorities do, and how much was it deferring to the shah?

MILLER: The hierarchy of power was at the head was the shah, the shah made the claim, and of course, his entourage and many throughout the country believed, that Iran was the shah, that he owned the country, but in the vibrant urban life of cities like Isfahan and Shiraz and Tabriz this dominance was contested by those of great wealth and long held social position. They thought they also had a piece of the country to which they had claim. The shah needed them as well to stay in power. That vitiated absolute power to some extent. The clergy were always split on the question of loyalty to the shah as the "Render unto Caesar..." was a reality and the spiritual life didn't belong to the shah, he had to belong to the spiritual life as a kind of defender, or as more accurate, in his case, persecutor of the faith.

There was a well known hierarchal list of power of so called "1,000 Families" who were the great land owners of Iran. Many on the list were from the previous time Qajars, Safavids or the great bazaar merchants, Isfahan of course having the most extensive and complicated bazaar. These bazaar families were extraordinarily important. They were the financial support necessary for the regime. They were also the support for the clerical establishment through charitable contributions on the vaqf, the inheritance, and they were political powers in their own right. Of course, commercial activity was crucial to the society as a whole.

Those were the worthies. Isfahan was a wonderful place for anyone interested in learning about the complexities and richness of Iran, particularly one from the United States. A diplomat at that time was welcome. I learned about Iranian society in ways that were much superior to the method imposed upon embedded journalists, for example, now.

Q: When you got outside talk about consulate trips, too. When you got outside going into your area, which is quite an extensive one, how did you feel about what you were picking from this?

MILLER: It was a huge consulate district. It extended to the Afghan border on the east, included the religious city of Qom in the north, it went to the Iraqi border on the west, the Persian Gulf to the south, and everything in between. It was a vast piece of territory, with huge variations of kinds of life.

Typically, I would spend at least a week or two every month on the road. The trips were primarily by jeep, because the cities and the settlements and villages were great distances between each other. The distances between settlements were due to the largely desert character of the plateau. Villages existed where there was water. The roads were very difficult; at best they were corrugated dirt roads. Travel anywhere meant adventure.

So I would have our great driver, Khachik, and one of the Oriental secretaries would often go along. A good example would be a trip to Yazd, which is to the east of Isfahan and over a range of mountains to the edge of the desert, Dasht-e Lut. The trip to Yazd would take about five or six hours. Yazd, itself had an extensive bazaar, several important mosques, seminaries. It had a full government structure. It had a governor, a mayor and an apparatus that was similar to Isfahan but smaller, and of a different ethnic composition. These trips would be prepared in advance, notice was sent from Isfahan's governor that an American diplomatic official was coming, and the governor requested "would you meet, and prepare all necessary meetings." There would be meetings with the worthies of the city. First, in that case, there was the meeting with the governor and then the mayor, and other city officials. We had "Point Four" an aid mission there, so it was necessary to visit the Point 4 projects. Then I'd go to each of the main mosques and meet the chief clerics, the mullahs. In each of these places there would be at minimum, tea, and very often dinner, lunch and dinner. We'd stay in a guest house, usually in the compound of the richest worthy in town. They would lay out the carpet, literally. The guest house usually contained a courtyard, a house with a big room with carpets, and padded mats, which we slept on, and servants would bring food and water. There would be a shower. Jeep trips through the mountains and deserts on very dusty roads found us covered in dust from head to toe. Showers were a blessing. A bath in a hammaa clean bath house, was even better. Then we'd have dinner at the host's house and with his guests. We'd spend several days in a city like Yazd, carrying out formal visits to the formal governmental and social structures of the city. Then we'd go touring. I was and still am an insatiable amateur archeologist, so every mound that we'd see from the road, I would ask that we'd stop so I could gather shards and check the shards against the examples showed in the various manuals that I had brought along. In the case of Yazd, we went up into the mountains to the west of Yazd, and visited the Zoroastrians who lived in villages outside of Yazd, the surviving indigenous Zoroastrian community that goes back over thousands of years. We visited the religious temple we were invited to a Zoroastrian religious service which was quite an honor. The religious precepts were explained, and the life of the village was described. They even took us to the Towers of Silence.

Q: Where they put the bodies.

MILLER: The Towers of Silence are the stone structures where they exposed the dead bodies of the Zoroastrians faithful to the elements and the carrion birds. There were also tribal groups nearby, so we paid a visit to the tribal leaders. The Yazd trip was one typical trip. Another kind of which I made several would be to go all the way to the Persian Gulf. This was a three week trip through Shiraz and through Qashqai lands and further in Arab tribal country. In this first case, the purpose was to meet with the leaders of the Qashqai. The Qashqai were one of the two most important tribes in Iran. The Bakhtiari who lived in the Zagros Mountains north of Shiraz up to Khorramabad was the other main tribal group.

Q: When you say tribes, were these, would you call them, I mean these were one of the terms I use is Arabs or Persians? Were there any Arabs per se?

MILLER: Only near the Shat-al-Arab River near Khorramshahr were there Arab tribes, and along the Persian Gulf there were Arab tribal groups which were called Bandari (along the shore), which were part of a separate Persian Gulf culture. The Persian Gulf was very different than mainland Iraq or Iran. They were inhabited by different kinds of people. There were obviously also mixtures of Arabs, Indians and Pakistanis who plied the coastal waters of the region.

Q: Well, then maybe we should move on to the time you went to Tehran. You were in Tehran from when to when?

MILLER: 1962 until '65.

Q: When you went up to Tehran, what job did you have?

MILLER: Isfahan was my first post in the service. Then I was assigned to go back to Greek training in Washington. However, the ambassador in Tehran, Julius Holmes, asked that I stay to be his assistant. So I went up as a political officer and as ambassador's aide.

Q: Was Julius Holmes there the entire time you were there?

MILLER: No, Wailes was there when I first arrived in 1959.

Q: Would Julius Holmes, who is one of the names that one thinks of being one of the major figures in that great time how did you find him? What was his method of operation as a person?

MILLER: This is a very typical Foreign Service staff. One of the people in my class, A-100, was Allen Holmes. Julius Holmes was his father. I met Julius Holmes on a number of occasions when we were in A-100 course. Ambassador Holmes and his wife Henrietta had us to dinner a number of times to their home in Washington. Allen and I were good friends and still are. Ambassador Holmes had come to Isfahan a number of times and I had helped him with his official trips. He had read my dispatches and liked them. He thought I could be useful. I was very happy to stay. Suzanne and I were very delighted to stay. We were given huge latitude by Ambassador Holmes. My beat, so to speak, was the opposition, which meant my friends, really. I was allowed to continue to travel, even in my new post in Tehran, to keep that pattern up, and given all kinds of freedoms. For example, I found, a house near the embassy that I was allowed to rent. It was a lovely house with a big compound two blocks from the embassy right in the middle of Tehran. This 19th century compound had a water storage pool called a hozh, which we made into a swimming pool. It also had a lovely orchard which included persimmon trees with abundant delicious fruit that ripened at Halloween. We used to carve the persimmons into pumpkin faces, jack-o'-lanterns.

Q: How did your wife find the difference between Isfahan and Tehran?

MILLER: We just continued our life that we had had there. Our first child was born in Isfahan, Will was born in the Christian Mission hospital there. She had many, many friends who were also the wives of my friends. She was never isolated in the sense of being a foreigner. She had no difficulty taking Will in a carriage down the Chaharbagh. The Iranian women would look in and say normal things. She fitted in very well. In fact, we have a Persian friend from those days visiting with us now.

Q: Did you find working at an embassy, that the attitude or something was different than working at a consulate?

MILLER: The scale of things in the embassy was much bigger. I had a wonderful political counselor, a fellow named Harry Schwartz, who was a great help to me, a good friend and mentor. Did you know him?

Q: No

MILLER: Harry Schwartz was a Princeton graduate. He married a Spanish woman of great distinction, a lovely woman with lovely with red hair, who was from Jerez. Her name was Maria Gonzales of the Gonzales sherry family. He was a saturnine, grouchy, wonderful person who had very high standards of reporting. He detested the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), they were constantly in battle.

Q: Who was the DCM?

MILLER: Stuart W. Rockwell. They were very different in personality.

Q: Stuart Rockwell was very urbane. He's a Europeanist, I would say.

MILLER: Yes, and a little aloof, but very able.

Q: That's what I mean when I say Europeanist.

MILLER: The political section, consisted of officers most of whom were Persian language officers. They were interested in the country. Everyone had a lot of work to do. There was a huge AID mission, a huge MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group), there was an enormous CIA station with a spectacularly flamboyant station chief, Gratian Yatsevich, who wore a monocle and carried a sword cane. He was the closest most congenial American friend of the shah. He would often be invited to be with the shah, much to Julius Holmes's anger. Julius Holmes said, "Look, I'm number one in this place." The shah had to resort to subterfuge to meet with Yatsevich.

Q: There were several countries that had the reputation in the Foreign Service of being CIA counties. Iran was one. South Korean was another.

MILLER: But Holmes being the consummate bureaucratic warrior that he was, he knew this game. He made it very clear to Yatsevich that he was in charge, that he had the authority, and that if Yatsevich crossed the line that had been drawn by Holmes, he was out. Holmes could deliver on his word. Holmes was a real pro of diplomatic life. He had had so many professional experiences that were appropriate, and relevant to the problems we faced in Iran and he had always wanted to go to Iran as ambassador. His appointment had been delayed in this because of the war. After the war there were inquiries in Congress about his shipping interests in the post-war period. As one of his assignments, he had been chief of protocol, among other things, so everything was in the old style and was done right. As ambassador's aide I was tutored not only by him but by Mrs. Holmes, who made sure I understood how to set a table, that I put the right people next to each other, and to be sure guests were well cared for. It didn't hurt to have to do these things. And, of course, there were many funny encounters along the way.

Holmes liked to travel, but more comfortably than I was used to. He had a DC-3. So he would fly all over the country. His children visited him, all of whom were interesting. Allen came, and his sister, Elsie, who was an archeologist. These trips were their first to Iran, and since we were all good friends we traveled throughout Iran together. So it was a very happy situation. The residence was still being furnished and landscaped. They allowed me to help them with getting trees planted. We planted several thousand trees in the compound. We got them out from the Ministry of Agriculture, through the aid program. As it turned out these trees had grown to such a height and density of cover that they would have prevented helicopters from coming in if that was attempted after the seizure of the embassy and the taking of hostages in 1979.

Q: Wasn't there the Iranians coming from an arid based country, trees are very important in the culture.

MILLER: Sacred! If a mayor planted trees, he was said to be a good mayor.

Q: Isn't there a Persian proverb, "Your life is successful if you have a son, plant a tree and write a book."

MILLER: If there wasn't such a proverb they would have created it. It was certainly apt. They did plant all the time. The water courses were all lined with trees and gave pleasure and beauty in a very arid landscape.

Q: Did you sense yourself, or within the embassy, any disquiet about the huge American presence there, or the aid, the military, the CIA and all this?

MILLER: Yes, there certainly was unease about that. It also created a great sense of generosity on our side, we were at the height of our generosity, that is, the amounts of aid and the benign character of it, I would say, even though it was complicated by the support of the suppressive organizations like the secret police, and the support of the shah without temperance, and the bringing Earl Warren to speak on the rule of law to a group of judges and lawyers that was doing the opposite.

Q: Earl Warren being at that time ?

MILLER: The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. You can imagine the resonance of that kind of ...

Q: Was is Sharia law or was it shah law in Iran?

MILLER: In Iran, it was shah's law. The Iranian legal system was a mixture of Zoroastrian principles with Islamic and European additions. At that time, 1962, the entire legal system under Reza Shah had been codified into a European structure of law, although the code incorporated family law principles from the Sharia. There were exceptions such as the movement in the direction of equal rights for women. It was an evolving legal system, and the Justice Ministry, judges were going on exchanges in Europe and the United States, and bringing back ideas that were changing the nature of Iranian justice. Many of the law makers, for example, from the National Front were educated in the West, and helped pass laws that were more democratic in character. So the legal system was alive, formally a mixture of Zoroastrian, Islamic and Western law, and evolving, but it was clearly shah-dominated and not a rule of law.

Q: What about, say in foreign policy, I know from the Saudi perspective when I was in Bahrain we covered the crucial state as well as all the Gulf states except Kuwait. There was real concern about the shah, well, the Persians are moving in. They didn't like the name Persian they much preferred it to be called Arabian Gulf. Was this expansionist from the Tehran point of view how did we do?

MILLER: The only issues that were faintly expansionist of course the Iranians didn't regard them as expansionist, really, but they had no doubt about who owned the disputed islands lesser tombs and larger tombs, which are only dots in the Gulf. They basically scoffed the notion that the Persian Gulf could be referred to the Arabian Gulf.

Q: In Iran, in Bahrain, there was a feeling that this is very typically Middle Eastern, that there was a plot to infiltrate all sorts of Iranian workers so that eventually they would take over the island of Bahrain.

MILLER: Well, certainly the oil workers throughout the Gulf were and are heavily populated by Iranians. They knew how to do it, but no, there certainly there wasn't a plot that I was aware of. It was just normal historical pressures of peoples in an area where boundaries come together.

Q: As you were part of the political section, was there any tension between the political section and the CIA station there on reporting, and all that?

MILLER: Yes, constantly. This was a normal feature of the time in all significant embassies. CIA had large stations, many of their officers were buried in the political sections, and the distinction between assets and contacts was when it became an issue, would be decided by the ambassador. I had many contacts that they wanted to have as assets, and there were occasions when I went to Julius Holmes and said, "You know, this absolutely crazy. They don't need to do this." He always

supported me.

Q: Wasn't there, just in the bureaucratic sense there was pressure on the CIA officers to sign up as many assets, whether it made any real sense or not. I mean, they wanted to show that they were?

MILLER: No, I don't think so, not in Iran, because, on the whole, they were very good. The CIA had superb people that I have kept in touch with over the years from that time, who I still see now, such as George Cave.

Q: I just know the name.

MILLER: He was their number one Iranian expert, and probably still is, even in retirement. He was very sensible, spoke excellent Persian and in fact was a Muslim. Yatsevich did the police jobs himself. He worked with the shah to the extent Julius Holmes permitted it, and worked closely with the chief of the secret police, Timur Bakhtiar, later Pakrahvan. Yatsevich had a circle of friends at the shah's court. He was the designated person to do that. He liked being at court anyway.

In reflection, I look on Julius Holmes as a super-ambassador, almost a viceroy. In this circumstance, and time he had that kind of power and influence, because both Washington, and the shah understood that, was a viable style and Kennedy made clear that Holmes had his personal support. Holmes knew Johnson, too, pretty well and the shah and his entourage understood that reality.

Q: Were there any, while you were there, any visits, by president, the vice president, or?

MILLER: Kennedy didn't come. Of course, he died in '63. No, he didn't come, but Bobby did, and Justice Douglas, and a lot of the people from the NSC Bill Polk, I don't know if you know that name.

Q: Well, I know the name, but ?

MILLER: Bob Komer, with DOD (Department of Defense). So the key players in Washington came frequently, and Johnson came, and I was one of the control officers for Johnson's visit.

Q: First, how did Bobby Kennedy visit and then we'll talk about the Johnson visit.

MILLER: Well, he wanted to go to visit the tribes. He went to the tribes. He had a message from the shah, but his interest was Justice Douglas-driven. Douglas had great admiration for the Bakhtiari when he visited. Bobby Kennedy was a hero to many Iranian democratic nationalist particularly those who studied in America.

Q: How about Johnson, when he came?

MILLER: Johnson was spectacular. He came when he was vice president, after visiting Pakistan where he was given a white camel, something he mentioned several times with some irony, but he was definitely liked. He came with an entourage: Lady Bird, Lynda Bird, a masseur Liz Carpenter and Bess Heel. It was a big visit, a full plane load.

Anyway, he arrive I remember that Harry Schwarz went to Istanbul to accompany Johnson and his party. He didn't want any mistakes made. Every minute was scripted, but Johnson did violence to any script. Johnson didn't like the air conditioning in the palace so new air conditioners were put into the marble palace where he was staying, and holes were drilled into ancient walls. He wanted to go out and see the night life. His masseur had to be closer, in a nearby room to work on him, I guess. Johnson was rather grumpy at first.

And then he said, "Let's go outside of the city. I want to see the country." So we tumbled into a convoy owe were running along the desert at high speed and then Johnson sees an excavation, one of a series of donut shaped holes in the desert. He asked, "What are they?"

I tell him, "These are the qanats, where the ancient water system flows underground, sometimes 20 to 30 miles from the mountains. They first dig down and clear a way a sloping channel through the earth. The channel is lined with clay cylinders, baked clay cylinders, that reinforced the long, hand-dug tunnels that are about the height of a man. This is an ancient agricultural practice." He was very interested in this. It seemed to him like West Texas, this arid desert countryside. This reminded him of his home. He said, "Let's get out and see this." So we get out of the cars and come up to a Qanat Moqani, a worker cranking a windlass coming up with a bucket full of loose earth and rocks from fifty feel below. Johnson said, "Is someone down there?" I said, "Yes there is someone digging a water channel down there fifty feel below." "Tell him the vice president of the United States brings his greetings." "Brings his greetings!" I say, "He maybe is a little intimidated by this awesome presence." The peasant at the windlass blinks somewhat incomprehensively and then sends down the message from the vice president. Silence. "Tell him again!" the vice president said. Still more silence, then after a long pause a distant voice said uncertainly, "Long live the shah!" Johnson laughed heartily at the answer as we all did. So he was that way. Impulsive, forceful, demanding. He was very interested in Iran and in an intelligent way. He asked about Iran's politics and whether the shah was loved by the people, did he have the people's support the key political questions. Could the shah control the opposition?

Q: When these questions came, how did you talk about the opposition at that time?

MILLER: Well, I was clear in expressing my views to Johnson about the political situation. I thought the shah was losing his absolute control. I thought he had lost his chance for legitimacy. He never had gained legitimacy after '53. He was ruling by force, not by popular will. I thought that the best people in the country were the Nationalist Democrats, the followers of Mossadeq, and that there was no way that the shah could sustain his absolutism. That was my view. That was an argument in Washington as well at the time, and the policy assumption was that the shah was the linchpin of stability. He said, "How can this be, in the face of popular opposition and no reliable popular support?" Johnson took it all in, asking intelligent questions at every point.

The Shah had the levers of power, and therefore we should deal with him our Washington policy makers said. The economic transformation of Iran, which the plan organization was producing and there was no doubt Iran was being transformed. Iran's economy was growing at a fantastic rate of growth and infrastructure was being put in place, paid for by the oil revenues. The economy was progressing mightily. The main policy view was that economic transformation would lead eventually to political transformation.

Q: This was the take-off period?

MILLER: Yes, the take-off period, written about by Johnson's NSC advisor, former MIT professor, Walt Rostow. Iran had reached the stage of take off already, and in due course it would evolve, Rostow and others said. The contrary theory, well, there were two opposing theories. One was, because of a ruling military, it will always be a royal-military kingdom as it had been for thousands of years. The second opposing view was the theory that I held, which was that the shah would be removed if he didn't evolve with the democrats. They were the future.

I told Johnson that. I gave him the spectrum, and when he asked where I stood, I said I thought that we should support the democrats.

Q: It shows an aspect of Johnson that often gets misplaced. He gets forgotten, and that one talks about his demands on all these trips, but here is a man that is asking the right questions, wasn't he?

MILLER: Yes, but one thing about him that I know, that I haven't seen later, over the years, that I know from his Senate colleagues, and friends of many years who worked for Johnson, was that it was hard to be certain that he'd be in a listening mode. One friend who worked for Johnson said to me, he would listen to you so that he would be able to dominate you, and you will do what he says. Johnson already knows. He doesn't need to hear anything else." In this case, I think Johnson was listening. I suppose the reason was that his key staff had told him that I was worth listening to, that I knew more than a little about Iran.

Q: During the time you were there in '63 to?

MILLER: You mean in Tehran? '62 to '65.

Q: Were there any major developments?

MILLER: Oh yes, many.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about some.

MILLER: The most important event, no, there were two important, even pivotal -events. Ali Ammini was the Prime Minister. He was a clever, extremely able experienced politician of Qajar origins.

Q: Qajar being?

MILLER: The previous dynasty that ruled Iran from the late 18th century until the takeover by Reza Shah in 1921. Amini was very courtly and popular. He had been an ambassador in the United States, had dealt with the oil nationalization issues, was extremely bright, very funny, appealing to many, but he had been in so many battles that he was distrusted by everyone to some degree. But he was astute and thought that the young nationalists were the future, that we should move in that direction. The shah, of course, distrusted them and him. The shah made that clear to Julius Holmes, and the American government, that this issue was an indication of whether the U.S. supported the shah or Amini. The Shah told Ambassador Holmes that Amini had to go. The outcome of the control issue turned on a loan. This loan referred to 20 million dollars to finance a roll over of debt to the IMF, for a loan to handle a difficult time in a transition budgetary process. We didn't support Amini's request for a rollover loan, so he fell. From that point on, the shah was absolute ruler. He would from that point on dictate all matters in the Parliament, the budget. He ran the government, he chose the ministers, he prescribed the elections, he made the election lists. Iran became an absolute monarchy, and abandoned any thoughts of evolution towards a constitutional monarchy, and it was a conscious decision on our government's part. It was a battle that the policy makers in NSC and Defense Department lost, and of course the people that held my point of view lost in Tehran. That was one issue. The other was?

Q: Before we leave that, those supporting the refusal of the loan and the American government, where were they coming from? What was the feel?

MILLER: Well, they were known as "Shahparast". It was a term that was used for "shah-lovers." The issue of support for the shah was partially resolved, by extremely successful Iranian diplomacy, that is, they had ambassadors in Washington who threw the biggest, elegant, lavish parties. They were civilized, charming and able, well-connected in Washington circles and worked the newspapers, the CIA, and the lobbyists very effectively. They worked hard and well. The shah, himself and his wife Farah was very attractive too, many at that time. In Washington they did the job of persuasion very well.

The policies approached that were future oriented were viewed as too risky, too speculative, and I suppose, the philosophy of a bird-in-the-hand is better than two in the bush governed. The Shah seemed to have all of the trappings of power. He commanded a modern military, he was buying new equipment, he would develop the military using our technical assistance and the secret police, and he had the army so he?

Q: Coming from the world's major exponent of democracy, was there any sort of misgiving about supporting an absolute monarch?

MILLER: That was the debate, of course, at the time. For me, it was a major disappointment. It seemed to me that our policy was not only a loser for the long term, and certainly violated our own principles, and certainly violated the view of George Kennan, that our strongest diplomatic weapon is to live as democrats abroad, as we do at home, that we shouldn't have a schizophrenia of purpose abroad. Iran's policy was a supreme example of that mistake. It was a bitter

experience for me to see this decision made. I was very disappointed in a number of my colleagues who understood, but didn't want to take the risk by speaking out. Holmes, I think, was one of them, really. He talked to me a number of times about this when I brought it up with him. He said to me, "I don't see the Shah losing now. Not in my time."

Q: He was right.

MILLER: However, he could have been right the other way, as well, depending on the decision. To Holmes credit, he always heard me out and always insisted that my views be known and reported. Ambassador Holmes supported me when I got into direct difficulties with the shah. I saw the Shah, the queen and chief courtiers on many occasions. I had a lot of contacts and friends in the court including some of the sons of the Shah's sister. We often played tennis together. One of them was a particularly odious type, for example, he used to sell antiquities from the recent archaeological finds on the market, rather than putting them into museums, a practice many Iranian friends found offensive.

It came to the shah's attention that I was spending a lot of time with his opponents. So he told Julius Holmes this, and Julius Holmes said, "Don't worry. We need to know what is happening with the people who oppose you. It's good that we know and, in fact, we will, of course, tell you what I understand was happening. Don't worry. He's a young officer. He'll be all right."

Q: You mentioned, you say there were two major things that happened.

MILLER: The other major event was Khomeini, the emergence of Khomeini. There were discussions at that time about reforms, some of which were put into the five points of the White Revolution reform, emancipation, more rights for women, and a number of other reforms that all were actually from the program of the opposition National Front. In Qom, religious people were upset about land reform, about immodesty of women, and changes in the law of inheritance. Land reform affected the Waqf, the giving of bequests of land to the religious establishments. The reforms were contrary to the normal laws of inheritance. The National Front was opposed to land reform because they believed that land distribution should be based on cadastral surveys; on first determining what were viable pieces of land, and how could you create land holdings large enough for individuals to survive under the new circumstances. That was the Mossadeq point of view.

In Qom a number of the clerics made speeches against one recent law that had been forced through the majlis by the shah, which the United States wanted, which was the so-called Status of Forces Agreement. The nationalists generally opposed this law because it was understood to be a "concession", an abridgement of Iranian sovereignty, and the religious people took this sensitive nationalist issue up as a cause along with the others. The shah, after hearing that sermons had been given in the mosques and Qom, sent down paratroopers, and killed, brutally, a number of the mullahs in the mosques, in one instance bashing their brains out against the walls of the mosques. The paratrooper attack was an atrocity. So a jihad (holy war) was declared. There was a march from Qom of the religious, dressed in white shrouds. They really were profoundly affected on a deeply felt jihad. No one expected this. The nationalists had no idea that this issue

would create such a huge popular uprising. Tens of thousands came from Qom, hundreds of thousands gathered when they came into Tehran, and in the end many hundreds of thousands rioted. The shah sent the troops into battle, in American tanks of course, and killed about six thousand people, six thousand on their approach to Tehran and then the battle in Tehran itself. I was in the midst of some of these battles, observing, and I was almost killed in one case, around the university.

Q: What happened?

MILLER: Well, the Shah's troops were machine-gunning at the people in the streets.

Q: Was there much opposition?

MILLER: Yes, everyone.

Q: Well, I mean opposition in that these were armed people shooting at soldiers or was this pretty much?

MILLER: No, they were unarmed. They had no weapons. They were being shot down. They were just pressing forward in their frenzied lunatic way. Bullets were firing everywhere, and the mob came very close to where I was standing and there were bullets firing very close to me. So Khomeini emerges for the first time. I reported this, at this time, about this unknown clerical leader. Khomeini was taken prisoner and sentenced into exile. The importance of the uprising was that in the absence of anything else, that is the nationalist opposition, the religious people had this force to bring the populace into the streets. This astounded the nationalists, astounded the shah. We were somewhat shocked by it at first and then it slipped out of our political consciousness as other events took precedence, as they exiled people and cleaned out, they thought, the religious opposition. I can remember at the time, my good friend Hussein Mahdavy telling me that this was a new force, that we all have to take account of it.

Q: You must have been talking to other people about the army. It's not that easy to get an army to shoot defenseless people, particularly religious people. Was the army a different breed of calf than was it?

MILLER: I think the uprising was so sudden and so violent that it seemed to the military that criminal elements were in the street. I know that the scale of the disorder was terrifying. It was premature to connect the uprising with solely the religious leaders of the country. There were divided views about everything, and religious leaders were way down on the list of significant opposition to the Shah. Religious leaders were not at the top of the agenda; they were near the last. The clergy was the last structural organization in the political system. There were many viable secular structures in between. First were the democratic nationalists than there were Communists, after the Communists the religious structures were of least importance, at that time, 1963.

Q: And of course, putting the mob into Tehran really was going right at the jungle of the

Bazaari?

MILLER: Yes, loyalties.

Q: They were going to rip up the shops.

MILLER: No, no. The mob wasn't going to destroy the bazaar; after all many were from the bazaar. They were after the shah. The bazaars, they would never touch them, because that's where they come from. The bazaar and the religious people were and are almost an identity.

Q: When you were talking to them...how long were you there after this?

MILLER: This event? '63? Two more years.

Q: Was this something that that came to dominate the thought of the opposition?

MILLER: They thought this was a phenomenon that they had never believed could happen. They began to take account of it. They had religious people involved in their nationalist politics -- they always had religious people among their ranks. This was religious extremism that arose as a result of an extremist action on the part of the shah. That was the new equation, that nationalist drew up at the time. At the time, the National Front couldn't do anything about it. They didn't take charge of it. They had to step aside. The uprising was understood as a signal that in the absence of institutions in-between, the religious structure would be there unless they too were destroyed. The shah's thinking was he could take care of the religious unrest. He would wipe them out. What stands in the way, is the growing international and internal power of human rights, which if applied, would limit the ability of the Shah to exterminate the group. The transparency of the society, the growth of a free press...more open comment, education, travel, the desire to have the respect of the West, a longing to be regarded as a positive world force in the circles of international power, particularly at the enthronement of the monarchy, the celebration of 3000 years of monarchy in Persepolis in 1974.

Q: Did that happen while you were there? When was that?

MILLER: No. That was afterwards.

Q: Did you find while you were...sort of were you up against the Washington establishment...with the government becoming the hand-maiden of the shah?

MILLER: Yes, that was at the core of the policy and the intellectual debate. On the desk, at the Middle East bureau were real policy pros, and they understood what was happening. Kay Bracken was the desk officer, John Bowling and John Stutesman were in the NEA Bureau as were David Newsome and Richard Parker. I'd say the issue of the shah versus democratic opposition was a permissible debate within the Department. In the Kennedy years, and into Johnson, the NSC was more important than State covering Iran, but not elsewhere, because of the quality of the Arabists and their domination of the policy debate. Iran policy was an issue in the

White House. It was also an issue in Congress. Iran policy was a big issue in the lobbying community. The Iran lobbies had a very powerful impact in Washington. After the Israelis, I suppose, the Iranians at that time were the most active, and spent the most, and got the most out of it. Policy debates about Iran among the academics, was very lively. Certainly the opposition point of view was very strongly held in universities where the students were almost without exception part of the democratic nationalist opposition.

Q: And demonstrating from time to time.

MILLER: Repeatedly, as the end came near. The Iranian students were of course engaged in their own politics.

Q: Who were some of the dominant figures in this Iranian connection in the NSC?

MILLER: At that time?

Q: Yes.

MILLER: There was Walt Rostow and the superb Middle East scholar, Bill Polk, who were the most important, and Bob Komer in the Defense Department, called by his allies, a very brilliant bureaucrat but called by his enemies "the Hammer."

Q: Or, "the Blowtorch." Polk, is he still around, or is he?

MILLER: Polk is in retirement in south of France at Mougins. He has a lovely house there. Suzanne and I have visited him there a number of times. He is still writing articles and books about the Middle East.

Q: About this time you?

MILLER: There were other people, in the universities that were important -- Cuyler Young at Princeton. People like Herman Eilts, and Richard Parker. Nikki Keddie was very good on Iran.

Q: Did you get any feeling for NEA (Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs)? Were they, as so often happened, so enmeshed in the Israeli cause, one way or another that this was -- you were sort of a sideline?

MILLER: No, at that point Iran was a major issue. It was also White House issue. Therefore, it was a major policy issue for the whole government. It was also a Hill issue, therefore it was a major policy issue of national importance. The shah, of course, had good relations at that point with Israel. The Israelis had an agricultural mission of sizable proportions. They were also giving technical assistance and training to the SAVAK secret police, on communications, techniques, and sharing intelligence on the Arabs, and on the Soviets. The Soviet factor was important at that time.

Q: Was the Soviet factor important in that it was always a concern that it might extend its influence, and so you had to?

MILLER: There were several reasons. Yes, one was the possibility that the Soviets would extend its influence...influence that receded after the 1953 coup and the removal of, in our minds, of Communist political structures from Iran. The Soviet factor was the reason for the need for bases, listening posts for watching missile launches up along the northern boarder, particularly at sites close to Turkmenistan, on both sides of the Caspian, east and west and even south. These bases were very important to us from the point of view of watching Soviet missile activities.

The strategic missile, nuclear aspect of our Soviet policy was very important at that time. I should mention that. There was a bill passed in the Parliament in 1964 which forbade the placement of foreign missiles on Iranian soil which our government did not like. I remember going to see the shah with Julius Holmes on this question. It was a very sensitive discussion, but it was a practical matter. From a strategic point of view, we didn't need the emplacement of missiles in Iran, particularly after Cuba. The removal of Jupiter missiles from Turkey made very clear that we were now in the age of long range missiles, ICBMs, submarines, and bombers even though coverage of the Soviet Union from Iran could be done, with shorter range missiles. That was one aspect. The Soviet question was always a major concern for American policy. The shah used this American policy imperative very successfully to his advantage.

Q: What about the issue of corruption during the time you were there?

MILLER: That was always an issue. It was always an issue, but it was understood in Washington as a normal feature of governments in that part of the world and not treated with more than mild regret, as long as it didn't interfere with major U.S. business interests or government policy, which it didn't.

Q: Did you feel that the shah, particularly the shah's family and the court, was getting greedier and greedier?

MILLER: Yes, the family was. I did considerable reporting on that, and others in the embassy did as well. Corruption and greed and the odiousness of the royal family and the court were frequently reported subjects. Corruption didn't seem to matter as long as the shah supported us. I suppose by comparison to the other states in the region, Turkey, Iraq and the Gulf states, Iran did look like the most stable state in the region. It is still the most stable state in the region even if we are not friends at the present.

Q: I'm looking at the time and this is probably a good place to stop. Should we move on to what happened when you left Iran? You left there in '65. Just to put at the end, where did you go?

MILLER: The first assignment that I had in Washington was in INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research), to write a political dynamics paper on Iran. That was a six-month project. Then I was assigned to the Peace Corps. That was the time when the State Department was encouraging assignments for junior officers in other agencies. I was head of Middle East programs for the

Peace Corps for six months or so. That was followed by assignment to the Secretary of State's staff as a line officer.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up in '65. We'll talk about the INR and the Peace Corps and then go on.

MILLER: To Dean Rusk's staff.

Q: All right, well let's talk about the Peace Corps. What were you up to?

MILLER: Assignments were being made from the Department of State to other agencies, in order to give familiarity to junior Foreign Service officers to some other parts of the government that were involved in foreign affairs. The Peace Corps being a favorite of the Kennedy administration, it was very vigorous and had considerable funding and political support within the White House and in Congress. It was well funded, and as an idea for creative foreign policy, had great currency that is, the idealistic youth of working with counterparts in countries less fortunate would build lasting bonds through mutual efforts of improving the lot of those countries. When I was in Iran, the Peace Corps had put in place a very large program. It was a good one. It worked in the villages, on education, health and water supply. The Peace Corps had a very big group that worked on teaching in the villages. Literacy corps activity, by the Iranians and other village work by the Peace Corps made it possible to extend education to villages where it was not possible before. It should be noted that in almost all villages of Iran no matter how remote, there was a mullah. He would teach at the village school called maktab for three grades. They taught the Koran, the great Persian poets, and used whatever literary materials were available. The idea of village education was something that was built into the Iranian system. What the modern world brought, with the shah's so-called literacy corps and programs like the American Peace Corps, accompanying that, which were much smaller in number of course compared to the tens of thousands of teaching mullahs, was a new dimension. The literacy corps and the Peace Corps teachers extended and modernized, meaning secularized, what had been a traditional form of basic literacy that had a strong religious content. As I think about it now, the roots of religious life throughout the country really was reflected in the role of the mullah in the village. The mullah performed marriages. He taught. He buried the dead. The mullahs were a key part of the social structure of villages and cities that had existed for a very long time. I suppose if one did careful research you could go back before Islam and you would have found that Zoroastrian priests carried out these necessary social functions.

Q: Under the shah's regime, were they able to tap a resource to bring about further education of having young, educated Iranians going out to the people, sort of like Narodniki? I mean, of that type?

MILLER: Well, that was the way the literacy corps performed. That was characteristic of the most successful programs. The literacy corps was a program whereby young Iranian university graduates, and high school graduates, went out to the villages and taught. In other words, those who were going into education as a profession in the Ministry of Education that was the sole employer of teachers, and a handful of very few private school they went out into the villages as part of their training. Just as our doctors here under the medical student support programs the

Congress has mandated, are given free education for medical training, then the doctors were obligated to serve for several years in public health. So the Iranian student teachers went out to the villages as secular, modernizing missionaries. Most of the teachers were urban, from the big cities. They had never really experienced or seen real life in the villages. They became socialized when they saw, at first hand, realities of Iran. Many of the literacy corps became revolutionaries later. They saw the needs of the country first hand. It was part of the process of what we could call, Iran's democratization. The country was meeting itself on its own terms and seeing what its needs were and responding. The literacy corps, the medical corps, those infrastructure kinds of approaches that were in the so-called White Revolution but were also planned for in the Plan Organization objectives of the time of what was needed for Iran to become a modern state. One could see some of the roots of revolution, the revolution of '79, in the experience those people who went to the villages in the 60's.

Q: Back to your time. You were with the Peace Corps from when to when?

MILLER: It was after I came back so I would say it was six months really. 1965.

Q: Sixty-five. What were you doing?

MILLER: I was in charge of Middle East Programs in the Peace Corps down the street from here at the Wilson Center. What that job involved was being like a bureau chief in the State Department for the Peace Corps, handling the reporting in and out and visiting the programs in the field and seeing to the budgets and working on personnel assignments.

Q: What were our programs in the Middle East?

MILLER: They were varied, but they were largely in education. Teaching of English was the main program. It was very hard to train people to a level high enough so that they could teach in the language of the country, although there was a commendable emphasis on language training. The Peace Corps was very good for our youth, extremely important. In the case in Iran, they did have six months of Persian language training. Many Peace Corps volunteers later went into the State Department. There were, also, a group of doctors sent throughout the Middle East; there were architects sent to some places like Morocco. There were even small business programs. Jimmy Carter's mother, for example, was a retired business person and went out as a Peace Corps volunteer. Generally, Peace Corps volunteers were working in the villages in some useful way, whether it was trying to deal with cleaning up polluted water, bringing needed medical supplies, or adequate toilets and basic sanitation. Most important, I'd say our best result from our Peace Corps experience was the knowledge that it brought, to young Americans, of the outside world. That was the greatest impact. It had as much impact on us, as the Peace Corps had on other nations.

Q: You did this for only about six months, and then what?

MILLER: Then I came back to State. The INR assignment was before the Peace Corps. Then I came back to State, and went to SS (Secretary of State) as a line officer for the Middle East and

South Asia.

Q: Well, you were in INR for how long, then?

MILLER: It was a year.

Q: What were you dealing with in INR?

MILLER: Tom Hughes, who was then the head of INR, asked me to do a political, dynamic study of Iran. That was a form of art at that time, which, as the name implies, is an analysis of how politics works in Iran. Who's who? How do they behave? What are their views, what's their attitude to the United States, what are the long term prospects? The Political Dynamics paper was a useful summary of what Iranian politics was. Certainly the paper made use of what I knew, making use of what I was engaged in, for five years in Iran. This was a marvelous Tom Hughes invention. The length of the paper was about 75 to 80 pages. The Political Dynamics paper followed a fairly sensible format. I've reread this document recently, was a useful comprehensive way of looking at politics in Iran. There was the day-to-day coverage of intelligence concerning Iran, the Middle East, and conferences, the interagency contacts that one has and in Washington. The Political Dynamics paper was a way for a junior officer coming into the Washington policymaking world, and INR, at that time, to do something useful. INR was a good place for a junior officer to be because of Hughes. Tom Hughes was very well wired to the White House even the Johnson White House, certainly with the Kennedy White House INR product was used, valued, and there were very good people in INR at the time. One could expect phone calls from the White House. The NSC staff called frequently. The major people who were interested in foreign affairs would call about Iran. It was a place regarded at that time as a useful resource. I found it extremely good posting, and there were very few bureaucratic restrictions. INR put the highest value on intellectual rigor. INR product was used which is not always the case.

Q: How did you find INR, at that time, in your field, Iran, worked with the CIA? Did they have different views, the same views, or problems?

MILLER: I don't think there was very much difference between the interrelationships that one has now, in that period. The reason is that in the field in Iran itself, even in the consulate like Isfahan, when you have a spook there, and of course, a very large station in Tehran, you have to work together. We knew each other well. It was a carefully integrated disciplined embassy. This is partially due to Julius Holmes's discipline. Many of the CIA people I knew then I still see from time to time now. I value them very highly. One of the interesting things that I learned at that point was what they could do better than we could do as State diplomats, and what we could do that they couldn't.

Q: What were those?

MILLER: Well, they could buy people. They could place agents, recruit agents in the world that we would not frequent normally, that is, the underworld. They were dealing very often with traitors. They were dealing with criminals because they had information and were in position not

only to know, but to do. Of course, the legacy of the overthrow of 1953, in the Iran case, was very strong, and they had a very close liaison with the local intelligence service, which diplomats probably would not have. I would say that where the difficulties arose was in the normal world of diplomacy. Officials, who should be working with the diplomats, were often curried by the spooks. They shouldn't have done that.

Q: There was pressure to get agents. Every scalp that you got you credit, I think.

MILLER: There is a very interesting case in point that comes to mind now. In Isfahan there were several leaders of the National Front, which was the democratic descendant of the Mossadeq National Front. Western educated, highly educated, under any standards, well-to-do, bourgeois democrats. Two of the leaders in Isfahan were good friends of ours. The reasons were our first two children were born in Iran. Our Iranian friends had children at the same time. We'd play tennis together. We liked each other, saw a lot of each other.

The National Front was a target of the agency. They wanted to know about it. The National Front avoided any Communist ties. I had a clash on this matter because these were my friends and the spooks were saying get out of the way. I said, "No, not at all. That's not your turf." That's one issue I took to Julius Holmes, and he sorted that one out. These kinds of problems arose on occasion in Tehran too. We had those kinds of disputes. It is very important, it seems to me, for Foreign Service people, even if you are junior and have no power or rank, to make it clear what you think the legitimate grounds are, and to understand what they are, to begin with. Then you can have a good working relationship with CIA on the basis of what people could do best.

In the interagency arrangements, at the highest levels, it is like many other things. If you are part of the group that goes to the same dinners and parties, it's useful in the long run. I happen to have known Richard Helms because he was a Williams man. I've known him since I was at Williams.

Q: What class was he?

MILLER: 1935.

Q: 15 years before my time.

MILLER: Yes, and because of that, he would invite us to dinners and dancing parties, for example, at the Chevy Chase Country Club and the Women's Sulgrave Club. He was part of the circle of Washington people often invited to the White House. The reason I mention this is that the social relationships, the friendships you make in the field, if they are also a part of what you do in Washington, give you greater depth, dimension and influence. INR, which is seen by many now as a dead end for the career, was certainly not regarded as that, perhaps because its OSS beginnings were still part of the aura of policy making in Washington. The first INR Directors had influence because they were part of the policy making cadres that carried on after World War II the analysts from INR, as a consequence were very influential, even the long-term civil servants, many of whom came directly to the State Department from OSS. The Soviet analysts and the Middle East experts, were highly valued. They really had a superb group of experienced,

brilliant analysts, even though their filing systems were often of the shoebox variety.

Q: I can remember I was in INR, I think in '67, and I had the heart of Africa, and I had just taken it and there was a reported coup against Haile Selassie. I had to go down to the basement of the State Department and borrow a flashlight to look in a bunch of, literally, shoeboxes to find the papers.

MILLER: People like Hal Sonnenfeldt and Baraz were writing excellent analyses of the Soviet Union. There were some really astonishing intellects of the kind that reflect the closest parallels, in the outside world, to the world of Smiley and his colleagues in the great Le Carré spy novels.

Q: A spy that came in from the Cold War?

MILLER: Yes, and the woman in charge of shoebox memory that Smiley went to, saying "What do you know of Karla ...?"

Q: Were we seeing at that time you were looking at Iran, did you see this is well, 15 years before the overthrow of the shah, but did you see a stable, destabilized, troubling situation there, when you were looking at this?

MILLER: No, I said there's a coming revolution, and I even titled some dispatches, "The Coming Revolution." An Iranian friend of mine, who I still am very close to, Hossein Mahdavy, who I had met at Oxford when I was a student, wrote an article for Foreign Affairs, which I helped get into Foreign Affairs, called "The Coming Revolution in Iran." He laid out the difficulties of democratic groups under the shah and the pressure that difficulty was creating in society, and laid out with remarkable accuracy what eventually happened.

My view, based on my direct experience in Iran was that the shah was imposed, that he was not popular, that the vast majority of Iranians wanted more openness, and a share of governance. The Shah would be removed if he didn't respond to the people.

Q: Did you run across in this as you were at your level, but right above you, was there an almost entrenched Iranian club that felt the shah would go on forever?

MILLER: Yes, there was. There was the shah's "linchpin of the stability group." That was the phrase that was used in Iran policy documents. Their argument was, this is a traditional monarchical society and had been for thousands of years. This is the way it has been and the majority of the Iranian people are used to it. The democratic idea is a western idea. It wouldn't work in Iran. Further, we have good relations with this shah. He does what we want. We put him there. He's our man. That was the policy when I arrived. That was the policy through the Kennedy administration, through the Johnson administration, although it was contested all the way through in the White House, not in State, not in the CIA. Yes, in the Pentagon there were some individuals who pushed a reopening up such as Bob Komer.

"The blowtorch", Bob Komer, who was very close to Lyndon Johnson, and of course was deeply

involved in Vietnam policy, he and Bill Polk, in the White House, who was a good friend of the Kennedys, were raising questions of political stability constantly, based on the Iranian student demonstrations that were increasing in number and size even to the extent of picketing the White House and Congress. The issue was, can the shah withstand unpopularity? Were there alternatives to the shah? So the issues were raised. Komer and Polk, came out, I can vividly remember on one occasion, to Iran on a U.S. military aircraft and annoyed the hell out of Ambassador Holmes because they were very preemptory and imperial in their manners and demanded to see the Shah and all the key figures in the government. They were very short on courtesies. So they went throughout Iran, saw everyone they could, and wrote a report saying that the shah was unpopular, and was holding on to an increasingly weakening power base. But in the end, despite this awareness of unpopularity, on all of the critical points, the decision was made to support the shah in the face of the opposition, even democratic opposition. The crucial point, that tipped the balance as I mentioned earlier, was a decision covering roll-over funding for Prime Minister Ali Amini, an IMF rescheduling of debt payment. But the real issue was support for the shah or Parliamentary governments. Yes, there was a dispute in Washington, but the majority view was that the shah's regime was well-financed, he had the military, and would prevail. The contrary view was that he didn't have the military, except at the top. The younger ones were trained in the United States, just like the students. They would take hold of different view and we knew their views, because we knew them in the field.

FRANKLIN J. CRAWFORD
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1965-1966)

Franklin J. Crawford was born in Ohio in 1927. After earning both his bachelor's and master's degree from Ohio State University in 1949 and 1950, respectively, he received his law degree from George Washington University in 1974. He also served in the US Navy from 1945 to 1946. His career has included positions in Hong Kong, Izmir, Isfahan, Tehran, and Colombo. Mr. Crawford was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in January 2002.

Q: How would you characterize our relations with Iran at the time you took over?

CRAWFORD: They were quite good, but there were some people, myself included a little bit, who were a bit nervous about the indiscriminate way in which the United States responded to whatever the Shah wanted and we didn't want to upset him and we didn't want to get the Russians any more involved in Iran than they were (and they weren't - we wanted to keep them out). But my notion, and this has sort of ripened over the years, is that we were far too timid in telling the Shah what we really thought. He didn't hear any of this from us. He might have heard some of it from Julius Holmes, but not much generally. And we gave military assistance and Armin Meyer, who was our ambassador when I was on the desk, used to say, "We've got a five-year military assistance program negotiated at two-year intervals."

Q: Did you get to visit Iran during this period?

CRAWFORD: Yes. I went to Iran. I think I made one trip to Iran and it was about military assistance. Another big program was being ginned up and we had to make some assessments.

Q: We had put a lot of hardware into Iran. Well, you were on the desk about a year, I guess, and then you were sent to the Industrial College in 1966. I'm sure that was an interesting year for you.

WALTER L. CUTLER
Principal Officer
Tabriz (1965-1967)

Ambassador Walter L. Cutler was born in Boston in 1931. He attended Wesleyan University and graduated in 1953 with a bachelor's degree. He later attended the Fletcher School. He served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956 and then joined the Foreign Service. Mr. Cutler served in the Cameroon, Algeria, Korea, Vietnam, Zaire, Iran, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Then we move on. You seem to specialize in difficult, out of the way places, going from the office of the Secretary of State to Algiers. Then, in 1965, you went to Tabriz in Iran as the Principal Officer. Was it considered, at that time, a good assignment? How did one look upon that assignment then?

CUTLER: Well, I wasn't quite sure. I think the Personnel people thought it was a good assignment, because it was a Principal Officer job. In other words, I would be heading my own post, and there weren't that many of those around.

On the other hand, initially at least, I had some reservations about it, because, having been in Washington in that kind of a job and then in Algeria, which was very much a priority in that part of the world, it seemed to me going to Tabriz was very much like going on a side track. I really wondered whether, from the standpoint of career and everything else, this was such a good move.

In fact, I enjoyed my two years in Tabriz immensely. I learned a great deal, and certainly, professionally, it didn't seem to have any...

Q: What was the situation in Iran, and especially Tabriz, in 1965 when you went there?

CUTLER: It was a somewhat quiet period, at least compared to what was to come in Iran and what had been before, in the early '50s.

The Shah was just getting his oil industry started in an important way. But, also, he was pursuing

what was called in those days the White Revolution, trying to reach out to the countryside and stimulate development.

For example, many of the young Iranians serving in the military were sent to the countryside in sort of a domestic Peace Corps arrangement, where they would be social workers or medical technicians. Doctors coming out of medical school were required to spend a couple of years, or at least a year, I guess, in the countryside.

Tabriz, mind you, was not a regular consulate. It was a post that had been opened and closed several times in this century. It was essentially a listening post, a presence in a part of Iran where separatist tendencies remained strong. Located in Azerbaijan, it had the duty of monitoring political and social and economic conditions in a part of the country which, historically, had been occupied by the Russians twice. Where there had been an independent Kurdish republic set up after the Second World War, briefly. And where the Azerbaijanis were not fully integrated into the Persian nation, speaking a different language and all that. There had been troubles in that northwest corner of Iran over the decades, and, therefore, we kept a small post there.

So it was not really a consular assignment at all. As a matter of fact, we issued barely a handful of visas every year. And my job, essentially, was to be the eyes and ears of the embassy there and to keep the flag up.

Q: Well how did you do this? You didn't have Iranian training, Farsi training, you were new.

CUTLER: I had studied several months of Farsi before going out. Farsi is not that difficult a language, although, yes, I did not speak it fluently at all. In fact, in that whole northwest area, a rather difficult dialect of Turkish, Azerbaijani-Turkic, is spoken. This is a very difficult language, and I'm not sure anybody in our service speaks it. And then, of course, there was a lot of Kurdish spoken in my consular district, too. It would have been pretty difficult to have mastered any of those languages to a useful degree. So we had some good local employees, and I used to travel with my assistant.

Q: Were there dissident groups coming and saying: Where does the United States stand on this? Or were your contacts pretty much with the Shah's officials?

CUTLER: Political ferment at that particular time in Iranian history, in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, really was not at its height. The Shah's security apparatus was pretty prevalent. If there was political dissidence (and I'm sure there was), it was pretty hard to establish contact with it, because the Iranians figured it was the better part of wisdom not to make such contacts.

Nevertheless, one could keep a thumb on the pulse in a general way. I think it was probably useful to have had a presence there. Not only because of the potential for political unrest, but also because that part of Iran is considered the country's bread basket. So, economically, it is of some importance.

We had a very small staff. It was very much of a do-it-yourself post. I used to spend about one

week to ten days every month on the road. It was very primitive going in some parts.

Q: Sounds like a hell of a lot of fun.

CUTLER: It was great fun. It was great fun. I enjoyed it. I was one of four Consuls in the country, and of course, we used to work with the embassy. But I enjoyed the distance between me and the embassy.

Q: The Ambassador was whom at that time?

CUTLER: The Ambassador at the time was Armin Meyer. He would come maybe once a year, I don't think more often than that, maybe once or twice a year. But he had a lot to do, there were four posts. The Political Counselor, Martin Herz, would come more frequently.

Q: Did you gather that the embassy, including the consulates, the mission there, were doing everything we could to encourage the White Revolution and getting the Shah out? Or were we more or less passive bystanders?

CUTLER: One of our jobs was to try to assess the real effect of the Shah's White Revolution: Was it having any impact, both in economic and social terms? Was it having any positive political effect, particularly in an area which traditionally had not been too supportive of central governments?

My general assessment was a positive one, that slowly but surely the central government, through these outreach programs, was having a positive effect on the attitudes of the people and on their living conditions, but it was going to take some time.

I might say that the idea of establishing any kind of effective contacts with the religious elements, the Mullahs, was extremely unlikely to happen, because they were keeping their heads way down in order to survive. They were highly surveyed by SAVAK, the intelligence and security organization. Contacts with foreigners were probably not a healthy thing to pursue. We would have to do our reporting on the religious attitudes through second-hand sources. I'm not sure that these attitudes had begun to crystallize into highly anti-Shah attitudes at that time.

Q: Was this an area that later turned anti-Shah?

CUTLER: Oh, yes. When the revolution came, the Azerbaijanis were right with it. It's a conservative part of the country, and the religious elements are strong. They were just way underground when I was there, very difficult to ferret out.

JAMES E. TAYLOR
Rotational Officer
Tehran (1965-1967)

**Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1967-1970)**

James E. Taylor was born in Oklahoma in 1938. He graduated from the University of Southern California in 1960. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961-1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1965. His career included positions in Iran, Germany, the Soviet Union, Afghanistan, and Israel. Mr. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 5, 1995.

Q: You were in Tehran from 1965-67?

TAYLOR: Yes, for two years which was a normal time for a first tour.

Q: What was your job?

TAYLOR: I was a rotational officer doing roughly six months in four different functions, sections of the embassy.

Q: What was the situation in Iran in this period?

TAYLOR: It was very stable, it was what some people call the good days of the Shah. He was very much in control, for better or worse. His regime was very much in control. His secret police were very effective. Khomeini had been exiled to Iraq, I believe in 1964, maybe 1963. There had been a major uprising from the bazaar people, a riot more than an uprising, in 1963 which had been put down with a lot of bloodshed. So, anybody even thinking of opposition was pretty much cowed. The foreign presence was... this was before the big oil crises and the explosion of oil money coming into Iran and the rest of the Gulf countries, so even though Iran was making a lot of money off of oil, it wasn't by any means to the same degree as later.

Q: So you didn't have this mass of influx of helicopter maintenance people and all that sort of thing?

TAYLOR: Not at all. The largest presence of Americans, other than the embassy, were with the NIOC, the National Iran Oil Company. We had no major military sales and support program. There was no huge American presence. I remember one of my jobs while in the admin section was to prepare part of the E&E, Emergency and Evacuation plan. At that time I remember we had roughly 5,000 American citizens in Iran to worry about as a possible maximum evacuation. By the time we actually had to go through that in 1979, I think there were upwards of 100,000, maybe even more. That gives you a feel for the increased American role there and in my opinion, in retrospect, probably one of the contributing factors to the whole crisis, that there were just too many of us doing too many things that were looked upon with disapproval by the mullahs and their supporters.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

TAYLOR: Armin Meyer was the ambassador for the entire two years. He had a stellar embassy. Nick Thacher was DCM and became Ambassador to Saudi Arabia after that. Stu Rockwell was also DCM while I was there and he became Ambassador to Morocco and Chief of Protocol. Martin Herz was the political counselor and became Ambassador to Bulgaria. Ted Eliot was a reasonably young, 35 years old, econ officer and he later became Ambassador to Afghanistan when I was there. So that particular embassy at that time produced a lot of very senior and successful officers.

Q: Did you get involved in political reporting at all?

TAYLOR: Yes.

Q: Later, during the Kissinger period there was sort of a clamp down on what you could report. It seemed that you could only report nice things about the Shah. How did you find it during this period?

TAYLOR: It was exactly the same. There was very little contact with what you would call the opposition. The government, of course, did not want that and that view was expressed to the ambassador and the ambassador let that be known to the staff. As well as I recall, one or two embassy officers had contacts with a few acceptable mullahs, acceptable trade union leaders and acceptable bazaaris who were not only highly successful merchants in the bazaar but were successful local politicians in the Daley Chicago sense. But that was all, there was no widespread contact and there was no reporting critical of the regime. There were no doubts allowed to be expressed in terms of maybe this place is in fact vulnerable to something, maybe it is corrupt, maybe it is an oligarchy, great masses controlled by a very thin veneer of very wealthy people at the top. All power stemmed from the royal family.

There was one time after my tour in Tehran when I was the Iranian analyst in INR for the next three years, and Ted Eliot had become country director for Iranian affairs, I was trying to make the case one day that perhaps the Shah was not invulnerable. Maybe we should perhaps think about distancing American policy from too close identification with the Shah because when the Shah goes down he could well take US policy and US interests with him. So we could in fact portray ourselves somehow as independent of the Shah. There were human rights consideration even though there was no human rights policy, it hadn't been drawn up yet. And there were a few other younger people who agreed with me. I will never forget Ted Eliot said, "Well, be that as it may, I think most of you are nothing but civil libertarians." That was the extent of any dissent. Of course, there was no dissent channel in the State Department at that time.

Q: While you were in Iran was there concern...often it is the junior ranks in an embassy that are more idealistic...was that true in Iran at this time?

TAYLOR: That was the case. The people I am talking about were JOTs like myself or younger members of other agencies, including CIA and AID and people like that. There is also another quote that Kissinger, himself, made about the time of the fall of the Shah. He said, "Any policy

that works for 25 years can't be all bad. So what were we arguing for, divorcing the Shah before there were any signs of major troubles and to what degree?"

Q: Were the young officers able to get out and around and see problems?

TAYLOR: Well, you could see the problems just by wandering through villages and seeing the extreme poverty in cities and at the same time drive by huge villas and see daily photos of the Shah and family doing things. These were the sixties, of course, and leftist revolutions were occurring left and right all around the world. So one could argue that this sort of reaction could be evoked by an absolute monarchy such as the Shah. As it turned out, of course, the reaction was from the right and yet the Shah's main concern was from the left. You all know the story in the fifties when Mossadegh was in control for a short time. He died, during my tour there, and got a 2 inch notice in the newspaper and that was it.

Q: Was there much contact other than a few tame mullahs with the religious side?

TAYLOR: As far as we knew at the time, that was much the extent of it. There was no information available to me, perhaps there was elsewhere, that Khomeini was building some kind of effective opposition to the Shah. There was a clandestine radio station up in the Soviet Union broadcasting down to Iran things that were not only prepared by the left, but every once in a while something from Khomeini who eventually ended up in Paris with many of his advisers who eventually became well known after the 1979 revolution. But, no, it was the change of the circumstances as I mentioned before of this huge influx of foreign presence, foreign military assistance programs and the increasing corruption of the regime, probably those three factors, that became so exacerbated in terms of the mass of the population, that led to the creation of the massive opposition movements which exploded in late 1978 and 1979.

Q: Did you have any feel for how Armin Meyer operated?

TAYLOR: Well, it has been a long time and there were a lot of people between Armin Meyer and me, so I didn't have a whole lot to do with him. He was from the old school, he really was. He was tall, grey-haired fellow, very courtly, very gracious, well-mannered, soft spoken, but there was no doubt who was in charge of the embassy. I recall that every time he had an audience with the Shah he went through the business of putting on the formal morning coat, grey striped pants. I do recall he explained to a couple of the JOTs, there were three of us at the time...he called us in one day and sat with us for about an hour and explained what they were trying to do, what the embassy mission, the whole US was trying to do. I recall that one of his techniques in dealing with the Shah--every time he had an audience--he had his own agenda with points he was going to make. He said that if his allotted hour was up, and if he hadn't gone through the agenda, he would leave a copy with the Shah and tell him that these were the points he wanted to make and although they didn't have time to get to them, he would leave them with him and would appreciate his giving thought to them. So, I thought that was kind of an interesting technique. Even though you had a very formal environment with the American Ambassador in these very formal clothes meeting in this great palace, he was still sort of saying, "Well, here king, this is what we didn't get to." Sort of an informal touch to it.

After that he was named Ambassador to Japan and some fanatic at an airport in Japan during a visit by William Rogers, Secretary of State, broke through the security lines and stabbed Armin Meyer instead of Rogers. The corridor talk back in the State Department was that that was because Meyer looked more like a Secretary of State. Anyway, that was the old Foreign Service.

Q: You came back and was in INR from when to when?

TAYLOR: From 1967-70.

Q: Was your work dealing with Iran?

TAYLOR: It was Iran and I had the portfolio of arms sales to the Middle East, tracking not ours but everybody else's.

Q: Did you feel you were getting pushed into an Iranian specialty?

TAYLOR: No, I didn't. I thought Iran was an interesting place, but I didn't want to be branded solely an Iranian specialist at that time. I wanted to see other parts of the world. I didn't feel under any sense of coercion at that time.

Q: Were there any significant developments from your point of view in Iran during this period?

TAYLOR: No, it was not a time of great change or turbulence or any major developments in Iran itself. This was the time when the British were withdrawing east of Suez. Everybody was talking about who was going to fill the vacuum in the Gulf. A lot of people felt the Shah had tremendous ambitions to do that and it sort of gave us a little pause as to why we would be backing the Shah versus our other friends on the other side of the Gulf who by and large were pretty much afraid of the Shah, fearing the growing military capability that the Shah commanded. Probably internally one of the major developments was his decision to make several major purchases of Soviet military equipment...conventional stuff, tanks, etc. A fairly large amount of stuff and it marked a departure from reliance on us and the British. That was a bone of contention for a number of years as to what was he trying to signal us, or was he signaling us anything.

Q: Were we responding during this period by saying we would sell him more stuff?

TAYLOR: Yes, we were to a fairly extensive degree, but not the way it became in the seventies. At that time one of our basic goals was to keep his appetite for sophisticated arms controlled as much as possible, satisfy it to some degree, but not completely because otherwise he would buy everything he wanted and couldn't operate it nor have the trained personnel to operate or maintain. He wanted submarines, surface ships, top of the line destroyer escorts, etc., to use in the Gulf. That was a red flag for the Saudis, of course, and smaller countries along the Gulf. So, we were doing two things. We were trying to decide what we could sell him and should sell him and then trying to explain away the rest of it as best we could.

Q: You were keeping track of arms sales in the area, what were the concerns about arms sales at that time? These were non-US arms sales weren't they?

TAYLOR: Yes. Well, you recall this was just after the 1967 Middle East war and people tend to forget that at that time the Israeli military was not US supplied, not US equipment. The 1967 war in the air was fought basically with French Mirages. So, as a result of that there was a great deal of interest in Washington regarding who was going to fill the gap given all the destruction of military equipment on the Arab side. The Israelis were being turned off by de Gaulle who just shut down further sales of spare parts and major equipment to the Israelis because he was very opposed to what the Israelis had achieved in the 1967 war. And so, in effect, they turned to us and that was the beginning of this huge and intimate security relationship with the Israelis, up to this day. But there was a lot of concern about what the Soviets might do, what any of our Western allies might do, because we were concerned about the balance of forces in the entire area. Whether massive resupply of the Egyptians would perhaps spark another war which we wanted to avoid. Being in INR we had no policy responsibility, we just tracked as best we could the inflow of arms and where they were going and how much.

Q: Where were you getting your information from?

TAYLOR: Mostly embassy and CIA reporting. A few nuggets would come out of publications like Janes and that sort of thing.

Q: What was your impression of CIA reporting?

TAYLOR: At that time, and I guess up until I retired, I was always very positive about what CIA produced in the way of raw intelligence. Sometimes the analysis of it, which was usually done back here, didn't always agree with what those of us in INR were thinking, but the raw information, itself, coming out of their stations overseas, was always I thought very useful. It was not crazy, off the wall stuff, at least in areas of my experience.

Q: Was there any concern that we may have been sort of over-arming, by "we" I mean the West and the East, including the Soviet Union, of putting too many lethal toys into the sandbox of the Middle East?

TAYLOR: Yes. Again a lot of us in State, and I had more senior officers agreeing to that between 1967-73 and then, of course, after 1973 it became a very difficult sell to argue that we should have more and more arms all the time. Before 1973 there was concern at State but we were pretty well steamrolled by the Pentagon and private arms sellers and the big airplane people.

Q: Did you get any feel for the political clout of the Israeli lobby from your vantage point?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. Later in the eighties I served in Tel Aviv as a political military officer. There was no question of that after 1967, despite the huge victory that the Israelis scored. The Israelis have always claimed and argued that they have extreme external threats and therefore these have

to be countered by extensive and very modern, state of the art military capabilities on their own part. That has been a driving force and the lobby, and it is not a homogeneous group, but in general what we would call the lobby has always been supportive of these requests and can bring pressure to bear quite quickly and quite effectively. Even up to this year we have seen the foreign aid budget cut drastically except the assistance to Israel and Egypt required by Camp David which has not been touched. Whereas a lot of countries have been zeroed out. So, it is an effective lobby.

Q: What was the role as you saw it of INR vis-a-vis the Desk in policy considerations, etc?

TAYLOR: It was a very nebulous one as far as I could see. We would write analyses of trends or shorter analyses of particular developments and clearly we would send copies of these down to the Desk or the Bureaus all over the place. I generally got the feeling that most of these were ignored, if they were read at all, because it seemed as if we, the INR directorship, at that time had very little impact on policy. The intelligence community produces an extraordinary amount of paper and reports. These are huge organizations that produce things daily, almost hourly. There is one publication that comes out two or three times during a work day. People on the Desk and front offices of various Bureaus don't have time to read all of that, pay attention to it or absorb it. They may wait until the end of the day and get a little briefing from their staff assistants or something like that. I frankly thought then, and later in a brief tour in INR, that it's essentially a very over staffed organization. It is the largest Bureau in the State Department in terms of people, and it does a lot of things which I think are probably superfluous.

Q: I was in it from 1960-62 and felt actually the same thing. It was a little like writing school essays or something like that.

TAYLOR: It was almost an unwritten rule, of course, that you never agreed with what CIA said. You always had to disagree to justify your paycheck, I guess. They are not stupid people at CIA. Sometimes we disagreed, but not always.

ALFRED LEROY ATHERTON, JR.
Deputy Detailed Director of Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1965-1974)

Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs,
Washington, DC (1974-1979)

Ambassador Alfred Leroy Atherton, Jr. was born in Pennsylvania in 1921. He received a A.B. and an M.A. from Harvard University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946. In addition to Egypt, Ambassador Atherton's Foreign Service career included tours in Germany and India, and many positions in Washington, DC involving Middle East affairs. Ambassador Atherton was interviewed by Dayton Mak in the summer of 1990.

ATHERTON: President Carter had planned a trip, right after Christmas and into the new year, to Europe and Iran and New Delhi, and had decided that it was important to have a meeting also with President Sadat. It would be the first chance to meet with Sadat after Sadat had gone to Jerusalem. He had had a meeting with Begin, who had come to Washington on his way to the Isma'iliya conference, but my recollection is he hadn't had a chance to see Sadat. And there were a couple of issues on which Sadat felt it was important to have a meeting of the minds with Carter.

One of them had to do with the Palestinian issue. (I'll explain that in a minute, but first, just briefly...) The President was going to be stopping in Warsaw, Poland, on this trip, and I got instructions that I should find a flight and get to Warsaw to join the presidential party and be with them from then on, for the swing through Iran and India and on down to Egypt, which I did.

The Warsaw visit was just overnight. I had nothing to do with the visit there at all. I was included in some of the events in Tehran, including that New Year's Eve party where the President gave a very fulsome toast to the Shah, calling him one of the world's great leaders, which came back to haunt him later on when the Shah's regime began to collapse.

But it was quite a good evening, and I had a particularly enjoyable time because I was able to reestablish contact with an old friend of mine, Amir Hoveyda, who had been an Iranian vice consul in Stuttgart when I was at my first post and subsequently ended up becoming at one point prime minister of Iran, and at this time I think minister to the court. We stood on the side and he made ironic comments about various people at the party who were fawning over and flattering the Shah--respectfully, obviously, but still he had quite a sense of humor and he couldn't resist the temptation to jibe and jab here and there. Hoveyda was one of those executed following the revolution...

It was a big sacrifice. This was Israel's principal source of oil. The other source was Iran. The Shah had been providing them oil. But just remember, this was 1979, and in late '78 and early '79 the question was how long the Shah would be in power. The Shah's regime was beginning to look very fragile, and they were concerned that if there was another kind of regime in Iran they might no longer be able to buy Iranian oil. Israel had developed very good relations with Iran--not diplomatic, but they had a diplomatic non-mission in Tehran and a very good intelligence cooperation. And they felt quite confident as long as the Shah was strong and in place, but they had begun to get worried about the Shah's staying power and wanted one source of oil that they could feel confident of. They wanted an Egyptian commitment to continuing oil supplies from the fields they were giving up. They also wanted the company which had done the exploring and developing for them, an American company under contract to the Israelis, to be allowed to continue under the Egyptians. This had nothing to do with the company... oil in their territory under Israeli occupation...

The other visitor who came and I greeted at the airport in Cairo was Henry Kissinger, who had been invited as a special guest in Egypt. I met him and took him to the hotel, and he told me what was on his mind and wanted to be briefed on Egypt. It also gave me a chance to talk to him about

my concerns about Iran.

This was the time when the Carter administration was being pressed very hard to give asylum to the Shah of Iran, who by that time had been overthrown and was being sent around to Panama and various other places looking for a permanent home, and, although we didn't know it at the time, fatally ill with cancer. He needed treatment. I guess it was known by that time; it had not been known before that. And Carter was hesitating, because this would complicate our relations with the new revolutionary government in Iran.

And I had an additional concern, and I found out later that others had made the same point. I said if the Shah is admitted to the States, I'm afraid that we ought to evacuate all of our people from Tehran first, because I'm afraid that there will be those who will see them as potential hostages, used as a bargaining lever to press us to turn the Shah over to revolutionary justice. What they wanted most was to get the Shah back in Iran where they could try him for crimes against the people of Iran.

I had made the same point to David Rockefeller earlier, when I met with him before leaving the States. I had a consultation with him because he was then chairman of the board of the Chase Bank, and Chase Bank was very big in Egypt. He was a strong supporter of the Shah. Chase Bank had the Shah's account among other things.

Both David Rockefeller and Henry Kissinger said they thought it was unconscionable of the Carter administration not to show more gratitude towards this man who had been our friend for so long and let him into the States and give him asylum. And that was when I said that there was another side to it, that there was the risk our people would become hostages in Iran. Anyway, that was one of the issues in my discussion that I remember with Henry Kissinger...

Were now at the point where the search of the shah of Iran for asylum had begun to run out. By that time it was generally known that he was fatally ill with cancer. He had had it for some time, but it was a very well-kept secret for a long time. And he was given, in effect, the hospitality of Egypt by President Sadat, who welcomed him and his family and supporters, and made available to them one of the old royal palaces of Cairo so that they could live in royal style that was befitting the shah and his family.

And it was not too long after that that the shah died. There was a very impressive state funeral. He was to be buried, or his body interred, at one of the old mosques in Cairo, the one that had been originally built during the Shiite period in Cairo and so therefore had some associations with the Shiite branch of Islam, to which, of course, Iranians belong. Many dignitaries and some heads of government came to the affair.

There was a policy argument about whether or not I should go, representing the United States government. We were in a very delicate situation vis-à-vis the revolutionary government in Iran and there was concern in Washington it might complicate our efforts to see whether or not ways could be found to get the hostages out of Iran if I went as the president's representative to the shah's funeral.

Q: Your official position at that time was what?

ATHERTON: I was ambassador to Egypt. And I consulted with the British and others to see if we could get a common position. The original decision was that it would be better perhaps if I gave private condolences to the family on behalf of the Carters but shouldn't go to the public funeral. And it was my impression at that time that this would be also the position of the British. I learned later that the views of the British Royal family prevailed and the British ambassador was instructed to go to the funeral.

I sent Washington a message that I thought I would be conspicuous by my absence among all of at least the western ambassadors in Cairo, that if I didn't go. While I could understand the sensitivity vis-à-vis the Iranian regime, we didn't seem to be having much luck with them anyway, but we did have a certain amount at stake in our relationship with Egypt, and it would be misunderstood by Sadat, who had given asylum to the shah, if the U.S. ambassador wasn't there for the last rites, to pay the last respects to this man who had been such a strong friend and supporter all his life of the United States. So the decision was that I would, in fact, go to the funeral.

The most senior American at the funeral was Richard Nixon, who came in his private capacity. It was a hot July day. We walked all the way to the mosque, broiling in the Cairo sun. Sadat was at the head of the procession, wearing his full uniform with choke collar. The Shahbanou also walked. We all walked. And we walked through some of the narrow, tortuous alleys of old Cairo, with people on the roofs and people all over the place.

I suppose there was a potential security problem. If somebody wanted to knock off Nixon, or any number of ambassadors, or President Sadat, this was a perfect time to do it. I'm sure that Egyptian security had gone through the area ahead of time and had done their best to sanitize it, but you never can be sure. In any case, the funeral went off without any incidents, except for the usual jostling and crowding.

I had received instructions to deliver personal messages from President and Mrs. Carter to the Shahbanou. I called Egyptian protocol, who were handling protocol for the shah and his family, and asked if they could arrange for an appointment for me to go and deliver messages from the Carters to the shah's widow. And the answer came back, almost within an hour, that the Shahbanou would receive me an hour later that same day. It was late in the day, as I recall, and I think it was the day just after the funeral, if I'm not mistaken.

So I pulled myself together, got in my car, went out into the traffic, which was pretty bad as I recall, and got to the palace and was waved through the gate, and entered the palace. Who should be there at the entrance waiting to greet me but Ardeshir Zahedi, who had been the Iranian ambassador, the Shah's ambassador to Washington, and was part of the family circle, and who was there at the funeral. I hadn't seen him at the funeral. But he was there, and he greeted me as a long-lost brother, and we had a little chat. And then he escorted me into the room, and I delivered the Carters' messages to the Shahbanou, which she obviously was very anxious to see; she read

them eagerly. And then, I must say - she is a woman of great character and strength - after I had said the usual things on such an occasion, she said, "Now I want to talk about getting my children into the American School here in Cairo."

Q: First things first.

ATHERTON: First things first. I said, "Well, you know, the American School is not a government school. I can only pass this word to the principal, but the decision will obviously be a decision of the admissions people at the school." And she looked at me as though she couldn't believe it. As if to say, if the American ambassador says they'll be admitted to the school, I'm sure they'll be admitted, was her attitude. Well, in fact, they did get admitted. It created a bit of a security problem, because there were Palestinian students at the school, there were Israelis, and there were all sorts of other nationalities. And there were lots of people who were not very friendly to the former Iranian regime. They had to have high security protection, and that was always disruptive of the normal life on the campus. This was high school. And it included the son who is now, I believe, the heir apparent. I can't remember now. But he was the crown prince, he was the eldest son.

Q: Sometimes he is called the pretender, sometimes the crown prince, heir apparent.

ATHERTON: The dénouement, as I recall, of the Iranian episode, came with the attempt by the Carter administration to mount a rescue operation to get the hostages out of Iran.

The first communication that Egypt was going to be asked to help in the attempts to rescue the hostages came through a message, conveyed through the secretary of defense, Harold Brown, to the Egyptian vice president, Hosni Mubarak, asking if they could make available some Egyptian airfields that we could use as a place to preposition equipment and personnel that would support a hostage rescue operation.

The message came through a back channel, and it was basically an instruction for our senior defense representative, who was a brigadier general, David Rohr. Dave Rohr was head of the Office of Military Cooperation, which administered our military assistance program in Egypt. And it was an instruction from the secretary of defense for him to go call on the vice president. It didn't say anything about informing the ambassador or asking the ambassador to take part in it. But fortunately the message had been delivered through the station chief. Incidentally, this was not a clandestine position; he was acknowledged and declared to the Egyptians, so that I'm not giving away anything I shouldn't when I say that we had a station chief who was a member of my staff and an official liaison with his counterparts in the Egyptian government.

And he came directly to me and said, "I have this message that I'm supposed to give to the general. But I know my instructions. No messages are to be given or accepted without the ambassador's being aware of it." So he gave it to me.

I called in the general and said, "There is a message to you from the secretary of defense about calling on the vice president. I think it really should be addressed to me, and before you take any

action on it, I'm going to go back and try to get this in the right channel. What I will do is request that you and I jointly call on the vice president."

And I got on the secure phone and called NEA in the department and talked to Morris Draper, who was then deputy assistant secretary in the NEA front office, and said, Morris there has been a glitch. I have this message that wasn't even supposed to come to my attention, and I told him what it was. And he said, "I'll get right back to you."

And it was almost no time at all that a correction came in saying that the secretary had certainly not meant to by-pass the ambassador, there had just been some mistake with routing, and would I please arrange for a meeting with the vice president. . .

Q: So NEA did not know about the message either?

ATHERTON: So far as I know, NEA at that point hadn't known about it either. But they did know now. It got back in channels fairly quickly. Dave Rohr and I got an appointment very quickly and called on the vice president, presented the request. He said he would have to talk to the president, but added, "I think I know that the answer is going to be positive. And I think I know the best place for it." Mubarak was an Air Force officer, he knew the airports very well. He said, "We have a very isolated base, which is not an active base now, but we have a small maintenance detachment there." It would be out of the public view, in the area between Cairo and Luxor, east of the Nile, in a secluded valley called Wadi Qena, with good runways and good basic facilities, power and water and all that. And we did get word very quickly that this base would be made available to the US for staging a possible rescue operation.

And that's exactly what happened. It wasn't very long before we had an American military detachment there with an Air Force PX and all the usual things that go along with an American detachment, AWACS reconnaissance planes landing and taking off.

Q: And word never got out about this?

ATHERTON: Well, it eventually began to seep out. The Egyptians just simply stonewalled it, of course. It was interesting, the local foreign press began to get wind of this and began to make inquiries, but they couldn't get anybody to confirm. They just got stonewalled. They didn't get anybody to give them hard information. And there was no way you could get there easily. You couldn't just take off and go to it. In fact, they weren't quite sure where it was. It was not on any of the maps that we had. I think the first time people began to get suspicious was when young American tourists with short haircuts began to turn up at odd hours from nowhere on special buses to view the ruins of Luxor. It wasn't quite clear where they had come from or where they were going back to. I went down, actually, and made a visit once, and was given a flight in one of the AWACS on one of its reconnaissance missions. My one and only ride on an AWACS. Anyway, it was there, and the Egyptian military all knew about it. But it was one of the best-kept secrets, as far as making headlines was concerned. I think today there have been stories about it, but it's sort of old-hat now. But it was quite active in those days.

Anyway, the next thing that happened with regard to this base was another message through General Rohr who was the direct liaison for the commander of the base. Rohr was an Air Force general, and after that first glitch on the meeting with Mubarak, he kept me well briefed. Rohr did tell me (strictly on a need-to-know basis, not for general dissemination, because it was being handled in absolutely the most secret way) that in fact D-Day had come, and that they were going to be bringing people in for this operation and staging through and to Iran, with other stops on the route. I think they also had to regroup somewhere using facilities we had available in Oman, en route to launching the helicopter raid, which ended in such a disaster in the Iranian desert.

VICTOR L. STIER
Iran Desk Officer, USIA
Washington, DC (1965-1968)

Victor L. Stier was born in 1919 in Michigan. However, he was raised in Oakland, California. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Thailand, Greece, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Finland, The Netherlands, and Washington, DC. The interview was conducted by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.

STIER: Iran was just a splendidly beautiful country and, of course, fascinating politically. Anyway, I spent three years in IAN as a Desk Officer. The first half, miserably, on the inside of the building, the interior wall so to speak, without a window on Pennsylvania Avenue, just going absolutely bananas. Occasionally I'd walk over and ask the indulgence of luckier colleagues to let me look out their window once in a while. It was a terrible claustrophobic feeling, at least for me. But finally, I worked up enough seniority in IAN to get myself a desk with a window. Big deal. I enjoyed that very much, working in Washington. It's the only tour I ever had in Washington and I never felt a Washington man. I was always a little bit of a rebel about that, but I learned a lot there, and it was fun watching the Washington government work.

Q: You said you learned a lot; what was it you thought you learned while you were in Washington?

STIER: This indeed was where I learned the Agency's principal task was assisting in the formulation of United States foreign policy, and what our role ought to be in trying to get along with the rest of the world and to effectively convince them of the rectitude of our views.

Q: Let's see. When you went back to Washington that must have been 1965?

STIER: 1965, July.

Q: Who was the director of the Agency? Was it Carl Rowen?

STIER: No, I think he'd left. It must have been Leonard Marks.

I was three years there in Washington and I'd been almost five years in Greece, so I ended up eight years of Iranian, Greek, Cyprus and Turkish affairs there. Much of that time was spent on Cyprus and NATO affairs. An increasing amount of time was spent on Iran.

I don't know if you want this, but I really learned something there. There was a U.S. country paper in progress for Iran, and one draft was written before I got back to Washington. I contributed the USIA portion to the second draft. I'll make a long story short. I presented a kind of white paper in our contribution and Alan Carter went along and endorsed me on this. He was very strong in his support. I presented this to the whole--there were 100 people in that meeting--foreign affairs community of the United States.

Q: Was Alan at that time the Director?

STIER: Area Director.

Q: Area Director.

STIER: Yes.

Q: He had been the Deputy Director.

STIER: When Bill Miller moved along. I think Alan succeeded Bill.

Q: I think Bill went to India.

STIER: Yes, that's right, and Alan succeeded him.

In that whole vast foreign affairs group working on the Iran paper only one other officer supported the USIA position when we finally submitted our papers.

Q: Who was the head of the drafting group? Was it Rostow?

STIER: Rostow yes; not Walt, the other Rostow, Eugene, was the Chairman of the Committee of the Country Paper on Iran. But the only person who supported my view, which I'll describe briefly in a second, was Jim Spain of the State Department, who later became an Ambassador. We tried forcefully to show that the Shah, that our policy of spending all our time and putting all our resources in with the Shah, might be a limited and counter-productive policy. Of course, we were right, if I may say so, and a long time before Iran went belly-up. Now, there may have been people who agreed with us who didn't speak out, but I didn't see our view written either. It's hard to understand our vast and myopic support of the Shah and our ignoring every other view in Iran.

But working on an area desk was interesting, involving a lot of work, heavy work, a lot of drafting, a lot of going out to other places in the agency and finding out how they work, and, lest we forget, a lot of struggles with one's area director and the State Department, to mention but a few.

Q: Did you have any struggles with the media producers who often it seemed to me weren't producing for the field. They were producing what they thought was the right thing, which a lot of us who had come from the field didn't agree would be effective in the areas.

STIER: Yes, especially with the motion picture service I think. With the Voice too, there were always problems, and rather surprisingly too because most of the people there had been in the field and knew what the situation was. The root of the problem there, again, was the State Department. One of my greatest chores as a desk officer was trudging over to State all the time, to Country Office meetings, briefings and debriefings. Sometimes State would set up a special task force for some crisis which might be brewing at the time that would entail a desk officer spending an enormous amount of his time actually at the Department, leaving his normal work load for taking home in a briefcase. I regularly attended weekly or daily meetings in the Department's Country Offices and that was a fecund source of information for us. People would be there as well from the Pentagon, Commerce, CIA, whatever, and sometimes we would get into some pretty heated arguments. As with the incident I recounted with the writing of the Country Paper on Iran, in these meetings it was difficult to get the Agency's point of view included in position-fixing, and again, because USIA simply doesn't have the clout of the other principal organizations in the U.S. foreign affairs community. I don't know if the situation remains the same today, but in my time our Director was rarely at White House meetings, which boded ill for his status or clout. Perhaps an Edward Murrow would have greater influence, but I doubt most of our USIA directors had that kind of clout. I had always thought the separation of USIA from the Department of State was a sensible and effective action enabling the U.S. to take advantage of the contribution a professional and independent information agency could make to U.S. foreign policy, but across the years I came to see it had not worked out that way, and that we were, at best, a poor relation to the big movers in the foreign affairs establishment of the country.

ARMIN H. MEYER
Ambassador
Iran (1965-1969)

Ambassador Armin H. Meyer was born in Indiana on June 19, 1914. He received a master's degree from Capital University and a master's degree from Ohio State University. Ambassador Meyer held positions in Beirut, Baghdad, Kabul, and ambassadorships to Lebanon, Iran, and Japan. He was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1989.

Q: Now for those who don't know, Ambassador Meyer served as ambassador to Japan, to Iran and to Lebanon. He also served, other than ambassador, in Lebanon, as well, and also in Afghanistan, in Cairo and in Baghdad for a number of years. He, of course, served the Department of State primarily in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs.

MEYER: It's very interesting that, when Eisenhower was President, he initiated what was called the Eisenhower Doctrine. He secured a congressional resolution supporting it and appointed Congressman James Richards to head a delegation to visit Middle Eastern countries to determine whether they'd like to be covered by the Eisenhower Doctrine. The Eisenhower Doctrine simply said that the United States would support any country that was threatened by international communism.

By the time this effort of Eisenhower's was initiated, Angus Ward had been replaced by Ambassador Sheldon Mills. Very few countries stood up and said, "Hey, come on over and see us." The Lebanese did. Foreign Minister Charles Malik and President Chamoun were in trouble and they were the first ones to welcome Richards who carried with him the availability of substantial aid funding. Other countries were more negative. He visited some but with meager results. The amazing thing, about which very few Americans are aware, is that the Afghans invited Richards to come to Afghanistan. It was undoubtedly due to Prince Naim, the Foreign Minister, who had been ambassador in Washington and was more oriented toward Western interests than was his brother, who tried to maintain a strict neutrality and was more inclined to play the "Great Game."

In any case, Congressman Richards came to Kabul while I was there. Before going to see Prime Minister Daud, we had a meeting which included Congressman Richards and his State Department advisors, Bill Burdett and Jack Jernegan, as well as Ambassador Mills and his key embassy advisors. During that briefing both the State Department officials said, "Look, there's no way that we can commit American prestige to Afghanistan. We're already overextended by American commitments to Iran. We cannot tell the Afghans we'll support them if they get attacked by the Russians or by international communism."

DANIEL OLIVER NEWBERRY
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1966-1967)

Daniel Oliver Newberry was born in Georgia in 1922. He received his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1944. He then served overseas in the US Army from 1943- 1946. His career included positions in Jerusalem, Turkey, New York, Laos, Iran, Turkey, and Morocco. Mr. Newberry was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1997.

Q: Then you served on the Iranian desk from 1966 to 1967.

NEWBERRY: Just one year. I worked under Ted Elliott. I was his deputy. We had another officer working on economic affairs. I was working on political affairs.

Q: What was your impression of how we treated Iran at that time? You already alluded to it before, but now you were back and sort of in "the heart of the beast" in the State Department.

What were you getting, from the perspective of the Iranian desk, as far as looking at the Shah, Iran, where things were, and all of that were concerned?

NEWBERRY: My general impression is that it confirmed many of my surmises about how little thought was given to the details of Iranian policy. On reflection, we were just "transfixed" by dealing with the person of the Shah. Much of my work, as the deputy on the Iranian desk, was simply making sure that the ambassador's recommendations were followed. The ambassador was at the other end of the cable traffic, and that was what the desk had to do.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

NEWBERRY: Armin Meyer. He reminded us daily that we needed to support his relationship with the Shah. That was a major preoccupation. Whenever an Iranian cabinet minister visited the United States, we made a major effort to accommodate him. At one point the Minister at the Court of the Shah, who was probably the Shah's closest, personal friend, decided to visit the U.S. We pulled out all the stops and organized a whole program for him. Then, without giving any warning, he decided that he had something else that he would rather do than follow this program. So for about three days I had to make apologetic phone calls to all of the people who had agreed to see this Iranian cabinet minister. It was an awful lot of non-substantive but important "stagecraft." That's the kind of thing I thought I was working on when I was on the Iranian desk. When the Shah came on one of his many state visits, my chief occupation was dealing with the White House staff, with their endless, "picky" arrangements about the guest list at the big, black tie state banquet. In the end, after working for weeks, getting together the most respectable guest list, in the end, most of the people who were invited to the state dinner were political friends of the President. They had nothing to do with Iran or foreign policy or anything else. I didn't consider my time on the Iranian desk as a very substantive year.

Q: It also sounds as if you were between two, very "imperious" people: President Lyndon Johnson and the Shah of Iran. Those two personalities sort of dominated your work.

NEWBERRY: Of course, volumes could be written about the "imperious" President Johnson. I won't go into that except to give you one vignette. When I was preparing for this state visit of the Shah, who, of course, had been to the U.S. on several, previous state visits. The White House staff had decided that President and Mrs. Johnson were tired of the usual "gifts" which the State Department recommended. So I was to come up with an original, imaginative gift list. I was pleased that they liked the suggestions I made. One of the things that particularly intrigued them was that we had a report that the Shah had installed his own "bowling alley" at the Imperial Palace in Tehran. It turned out that he and the Empress were both avid bowlers. So I did some research and got the Brunswick bowling ball company to make some special bowling balls and put the imperial crest on them. These special bowling balls were finally delivered to the White House the day before the Shah and the Empress were to arrive. Mrs. Johnson took a look at this gift and said: "That bowling ball is just too big for the Empress!" A member of the White House staff called us and said: "Why did you send such a heavy bowling ball?" Then I had to "level" with them. I said: "We researched this and had somebody quietly go into the Imperial Palace in Tehran and take the number off the ball. We have our sources of information." I assured Mrs.

Johnson's assistant that this ball was, in fact, the same weight as the Empress of Iran usually plays with. To this day the Empress is a strong, robust woman. She could lift that bowling ball and did. So, with all the last minute tensions before the state visit, I was on the phone to the White House, explaining about the bowling balls to Mrs. Johnson's office. By this time I had spent 15 years in the Foreign Service, and that was what I spent my time doing!

Q: While you were on the Iranian desk, was there any "disquiet" about policy toward the Shah or toward the Shah's policies?

NEWBERRY: There was concern but no disposition to pursue the consequences of our misgivings.

Q: Could you talk a little about what you were getting from people?

NEWBERRY: These concerns were mostly expressed by people returning from serving in Iran or people who made trips to Iran who were aware of the level of discontent and also the abuses of the Shah's regime. One of my favorite, and sort of telling reminiscences, concerned an American-educated Iranian. He returned to Iran and did some traveling around. This must have been in the mid-1960s. He later returned to the U.S. and told us: "I was in many places in rural Iran, where there are no doctors or dispensaries. However, there are all of these SAVAK [secret police] agents." To me that just spoke volumes about what were the priorities of the Shah's regime in terms of taking care of the Iranian people. There were no doctors, dispensaries, or nurses. However, every village had its quota of SAVAK agents.

Q: Was there any effort made, on our part, to try to pump more assistance, such as the delivery of medical care, out into the countryside? I imagine that one of the real problems was that, as is typical in many countries, including our own, it's very hard to get doctors to work in rural areas.

NEWBERRY: I'm sure that that's true, right here. If you go 50 or 100 miles from Washington, it's not all that easy to get doctors to go and set up medical practice there. It's worse in countries like Iran and Turkey. I know from personal experience how difficult it is to get professional people to go outside of the big cities.

Q: It is very difficult to do.

NEWBERRY: It is, indeed. Available, medical care there is very primitive. In Iran medical care was not being delivered in the rural areas. As a matter of fact, schools were among the things that the Shah had managed to do something about. He made it a requirement that young Iranian men who were drafted into the military and who were university educated had to spend a certain amount of time working in the literacy program, teaching villagers how to read and write. We have to give him credit for that. He did some good things.

Q: During this 1966-1967 period, were there any great crises and problems which occurred, other than with bowling balls?

NEWBERRY: They don't spring to mind. There was always this continuing concern about the foreign relations of Iran with Iraq. The Kurdish question was something on which I maintained a watching brief. However, most of my work involved the reading of daily intelligence intercepts. I knew more details about the Kurdish question than I could do anything about, anyway. However, somebody had to read those reports, and that was one of my jobs.

Q: What about the Kurdish problem, as it pertained to Iran? Did we have any particular policy for dealing with it, or anything like that?

NEWBERRY: Yes. We had our own, clandestine operations going among the Kurds. However, we blew "hot and cold" on what to do about this problem. As long as the Shah was around, we tried to gear our Kurdish policy, how shall I say it, to accord with the policy of the Shah. And the Shah played "games" with the Kurds. This involved making counter-moves against the Kurds who were operating from Iraq. Turkish activities against the Kurds appeared much later on, long years afterwards.

Q: How was Iraq perceived by the Iranian desk in Washington, from your point of view? Was Iraq regarded as a threat? What was the feeling?

NEWBERRY: At that time my recollection is that we were more interested in how Baath Party politics were going to work out. The Baath regime in Baghdad was sort of a rival of the Baath regime in Damascus. There was always some fascination with manifestations of the same political doctrine. However, at that time Iraq was not regarded as a threat.

Q: Regarding reporting from Iran, did you feel that there were "constraints" on it?

NEWBERRY: They were the same constraints that I described in our earlier talk. Those constraints were still very much there.

Q: Was there a feeling that Ambassador Armin Meyer was sort of "captured" by the Iranian Court?

NEWBERRY: No, I think that Ambassador Armin Meyer was a very astute diplomat. He knew what Washington wanted and he conducted himself accordingly. The inspiration for our "coddling" of the Shah came from Washington and not from individual ambassadors.

LAWRENCE J. HALL
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1966-1968)

Lawrence J. Hall was born in Jersey City, New Jersey in 1920. He attended both New York University and the University of Wisconsin. He entered the foreign service in August of 1953. His Foreign Service career included positions in India,

Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Vietnam, and Morocco. Mr. Hall was interviewed by Hans Tuch on August 23, 1988.

Q: Let's go into Iran, where you were from 1966 to 1968 as PAO after India and, of course, this was still during a time when our relationship with the Shah was very close. Did we have a big program in Iran at that time?

HALL: It was quite big, yes. At the time, we still had branch posts, one-man posts, in Isfahan, Mashhad, Khorramshahr and in Shiraz. We had a Tehran staff of about a dozen Americans.

It was a time of transition from that very close relationship that the U.S. had had for perhaps ten years before when we were more than just close to the government. We were actually running it to a degree, but that had largely disappeared before my time.

I am afraid it was rather a badly thought out policy that permitted us to do that.

Q: This was in the early '60s?

HALL: This was in the early '60s and late '50s. In my day under Ambassador Armin Meyer his policy was to get away from that close association and to make certain that our Iranian friends understood that we were not making decisions for Iran any longer and wanted to have the same type of correct relationship we would have with any other country. This was sometimes difficult to do because there was a generation of older Iranian officials and sub-officials who almost thought they had to come to the American embassy when they were looking for a job or a promotion.

It began to be understood and, of course, the Shah began early on to assert his independence. In fact, in some ways, his independence was a part of his egocentricity and his mania for building up his military forces and regarding Iran as the keystone of Western military might as well as a strong stable force in the shaky Middle East.

Q: How did the PAO in Iran interact with his ambassador -- in this case, Armin Meyer, right?

HALL: Very closely. Armin and I were old friends from Beirut days. Armin kept his own counsel to a good degree. He nonetheless was open to argument and discussion.

Q: Was he interested and involved in public diplomacy?

HALL: Interested but not involved to a great degree. He was not a gifted public speaker himself, although he was quite adequate when called upon.

This was a time when we were withdrawing from a position of being too closely associated with influencing the government. We wanted to lower our profile in all ways, so our touch was a delicate one in our relations with the Iranians.

Q: Was his conception of his job, say, as a delegate, as a representative, did it include the area of public diplomacy or did he believe in political-economic security work, did his own conception of his job include public diplomacy?

HALL: It was not among his tools for achieving policy ends. He was politically sensitive and felt that the political aspect was the most important. I think he probably was right since we were operating in a closed society, with no real political opposition and tight control of media.

He was always available when called upon. Probably the most useful operation we had in public diplomacy was our binational center which, during the time I was there, multiplied in size enormously largely because the city government of Tehran decided, after having it under review for years, to make a grant of land to us to build a new binational center.

We had been holding in reserve a couple of million dollars for this purpose, so the building rapidly went up and became a very interesting, intercultural center and probably our most effective tool there.

Q: How about your relationship with USIA in Washington? Did they give you the support that you needed? I do not know about the area director. This was a period when the area directors, so to speak, in the scheme of things, were riding high. In other words --

HALL: They were still riding high, yes.

Q: There were always these various changes. In some administrations, it was the area directors who were the sort of principal officers under the director. At other times, it was the media person, the media director, who ran the agency and not the areas.

This was a period when I think that the area directors were riding high.

HALL: I agree. I think that actually the area directors -- there may have been minor changes -- but right from Ted Streibert, the first Agency Director, right into Frank Shakespeare's day, the area directors were still very strong. I think until that time they were even second guessing the Personnel Division on assignments.

Q: Right, right.

HALL: That was a big element of strength. And they also defended the field budgets before Congress, included a great deal of media support.

Alan Carter was the area director at the time. In the last year of my term there, he became a pain in the neck because he was constantly asking me to do things that I had done two months before.

While his main point in all this was a very good one, it was something that I had anticipated and worked on and that was a shift away from information activities toward more cultural activities and the shift away from more slots being allocated to information to a situation where our

cultural staff was, by far, the larger element. Obviously this kind of emphasis was needed in a closed society with little media freedom.

Q: That was also during the time when Leonard Marks was the director and really quite sympathetic to cultural and exchange activities and certainly libraries and things like that.

HALL: He was and although Leonard never visited Iran during the two years I was there, Alan did a few times. We had a mixed kind of staff. It was not ideal and I am not sure I was the ideal person to head it, either. As it worked out, I got very poor marks for my personnel relationships when Hew Ryan and his team inspected me.

We really had a strange staff -- if it were not tragic, it would be pretty funny. We had a films officer who tried to steal very valuable equipment when he was leaving on reassignment and was only caught when my excellent deputy, Brian Bell, insisted that his lift van be opened up. He was fired a short time thereafter.

We had as a press officer a garrulous, sodden cast-off from the Point Four Information staff, a man who had been a small town reporter for years before he got the job, knew very little about the outside world, loved alcohol, drank it on the job, was usually too plastered to work, and almost had no sensitivity toward what he was doing.

His boss, who shall be nameless, since he is dead -- should he be nameless?

Q: Yes, maybe in this case.

HALL: He was a pleasant man.

Q: He was the Information Officer?

HALL: He was the Information Officer, who had served long and well in a Washington job, especially for IPS where he was a reporter and covered major government elements. The reward for all that long service was to put him out as Information Officer in a country where he was not needed and where he did not know what to do.

His constant slogan was, "The Way I run my shop is to get good men and let them have their head." Unfortunately he had only one good man (a woman) and he was inept as an administrator.

DAVID M. RANSOM
Consular Officer
Tehran (1967-1968)

Ambassador David Michael Ransom was born in Missouri on November 23, 1938. He received his AB from Princeton University in 1960 as well as a BA from

the School for Advanced International Studies in 1962. He served in the US Marine Corps from 1962 to 1965 as a 1rst lieutenant and entered the Foreign Service in 1965, wherein he served in Yemen, Iran, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and Bahrain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 2, 1999.

Q: You went to Tehran in mid-1967?

RANSOM: This must have been July or so of 1967.

Q: How long were you in Tehran?

RANSOM: It was only to serve out the remnant of my first tour; so they stuck me in the Consular Section. I was there for less than a year. Then we were put into Arabic language training in Beirut starting in the spring of 1968.

Q: How did you find Tehran?

RANSOM: You have to remember that I had come from Yemen. We were terribly impressed by how much more Tehran was developed and organized and how much more promising its future appeared. The Shah was leading at the time what he called his "White Revolution," transferring land from rural feudal landholders over to new groups of people. Development was surging. He was phasing out the old society. The Iranians looked stronger all the time, not weaker. I was very impressed with what was going on.

Khomeini was a name I heard at that time. He had been exiled, which created problems, as he seemed to be much beloved.

What we saw around us was a tremendous surge in education, investment and development. It looked very good. I came away impressed by the fact that the Middle East was a place where you needed to have friends and they needed to be strong friends. So, I became a supporter of the Iranian government.

Q: Who was our ambassador at that point?

RANSOM: Armin Meyer was our ambassador. He was a very able man, very thoughtful. He had a perfectly dreadful wife named Alice - named "Tiny Alice" by anybody in the embassy who knew her. She was a woman who made impossible demands on junior officers and on their wives to show up at her parties and to play servant roles like serving drinks and food. In those days, officers by and large accepted that. It was life as they knew it and they accepted it. There were references and whole paragraphs in the efficiency reports that related how well Marjorie and I had done. I didn't like it. Marjorie didn't like it either. She had been a USIA officer and she didn't want to be treated in the old fashion. On day, Mrs. Meyer tried to collect all of the junior officers in the embassy to tell them that they were coming to her house for a New Year's Eve party and that the theme was going to be the Wild West, requiring us to dress up as cowboys to make up an appropriate backdrop. The women were to dress up as cigarette girls and pass around

trays of smoking things to the guests. I decided that I wasn't going to do that. Marjorie and I went off to Tabriz to spend New Year's there. We sent a little note to "Tiny Alice" that we would not be there. I think she saw through the subterfuge and didn't like it. But that incident was a reminder of why changes in the Foreign Service toward women and families was so badly needed.

The DCM at the time was a wonderful man named Nicholas Thatcher. I liked him and got to know him rather well, even though I was a very junior officer. There was a wonderful consular officer named Maurice Healand. He was an Oklahoman with a great beard. Nobody wore beards then. He was very humane, thoughtful, warm, funny, and a tough administrator. He had a deputy, a career consular official, named Laurie DeWitt, who also became a good friend. In fact, when I think about the Foreign Service and all of my assignments, my recollection is flooded with the memory of people who became very good friends, whom we saw again and again in the course of our lives, not because we served together, but because we sought each other out to say "Hello" and to catch up.

Communications at the time were quite "primitive" compared to today. It was difficult to call your home in the United States. No one used the telephone to call back to Washington. People went for vacations in the region, out of the country maybe, but nobody went back to the United States. It wasn't a time when people just automatically got on airlines and flew somewhere. To fly to the United States took several days, using propeller airplanes which had to refuel en route several times. You were completely removed from America. There were no VCRs, very few movies, no radio broadcasts, no Internet. The result was that you immersed yourself in the embassy community and learned the local culture. The Foreign Service indeed had an identity and a sort of corporate personality that was palpably real. Now, as I ended my career as U.S. ambassador in Bahrain, I find that junior officers have the same levels of ability as they did when I entered the Service, but they have never created for themselves a close knit local community for themselves and other diplomats. They don't have to. They never really leave the States. They go back twice a year on bargain tickets. It takes 12-14 hours to fly back to see their relatives and friends, have a good time and then return to post. I don't know if they will have the same set of recollections and friends in 30-40 years as Marjorie and I have from when we started in the Foreign Service.

Q: I agree with you. Had you planned to take Arabic early on?

RANSOM: Yes. I had Arabic in graduate school. Marjorie had also studied it. It was our intention to become Arabists and to work in the Middle East and that was, in fact, how our careers worked out. We never had much reason to leave the area; our professional career was quite promising.

Q: You went to Beirut when?

RANSOM: It would have been 1968.

MARJORIE RANSOM
Temporary Duty
Tehran (1967-1968)

Marjorie Ransom was born in New York in 1938. She received her bachelor's degree from Trinity University in 1959 and her master's degree from Columbia University in 1962. Her career includes positions in Jordan, India, Iran, Yemen, Washington D.C., Abu Dhabi, Syria, and Egypt. Mrs. Ransom was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 2000.

Q: Then you went to Tehran.

RANSOM: We were just in Germany for medical care. We were there at the time of the June war.

Q: In Tehran, what were you doing?

RANSOM: In Tehran, by that time, I was expecting our first child. I was unable to get work there. David was given a job in the consular section. He worked as a consular officer for that period of time. We arrived in August and our first child was born at the end of October in Tehran.

Q: How did you find Tehran in those days?

RANSOM: It was a fascinating city.

Q: That's really the "Arabian Nights," isn't it?

RANSOM: Oh, it is. We lived downtown below the Embassy. In those days, in Tehran, you were given a rental allowance and could find your own housing. We managed to save the government and ourselves a little money and found a charming little house, but south of the Embassy rather than way up on the hill in one of those luxurious suburbs.

Q: Today is January 26, 2001. 1968. Arabic language class. Was it a nine-month course?

RANSOM: The course was as long as the department would let us stay. I think I had eight months of study and then I had to drop out for my mother-in-law's visit. When we arrived in Beirut, I was a spouse. At that point in time, the Foreign Service Institute had no full-time language classes for spouses, but we persuaded Haile Smith, the director, and Jim Snow, the linguist, to let me study full-time. They agreed, as long as one of the other students would not object to my being in his class. So, we were tested. As I recall, there were three Foreign Service

officers who tested at about the same level – my husband, David; Arthur Houghton; and David Mack. Arthur and I were near the same level. He had no objection to my studying with him. So, they very nicely let me study. I was extremely appreciative. So, I did all that study as a spouse. They couldn't register my score in the end, but they at least told me how I did.

Q: I assume they made a certain mark in the books somewhere.

RANSOM: Yes, I'm recorded. I got a 3/4 and I was very pleased. I went in with a 2/2+. In those days, Beirut was a lovely place to live. We were near the school, which was in the Embassy around the corner from our apartment. There were some other students there who had been there before. Joe Montville was there. There were several others. But we ended up being a very close-knit nucleus – the Houghtons, the Macks, David and myself. David managed to take a course at AUB with Walid Khalidi, but that was really one of the few activities we had outside our language studies. We knew it was a rare opportunity and we made the most of it.

We were supposed to go from Beirut to Jerusalem, but there was some type of downsizing and the position that David was to go into was abolished. Then, we were supposed to go to Jordan. For a whole bunch of reasons, we ended up going instead to Jeddah. But I remember those nine months in Beirut as a really unique opportunity.

Q: How did you find the Arabic program?

RANSOM: I had studied a very classical approach to Arabic at Colombia, where there was a lot of emphasis on grammar and almost none on vocabulary and rapid reading. It was just the reverse in Beirut and it was absolutely what we needed. We were just thrilled. They had the green books of well-prepared language materials. They were relatively new at that point, but I think they're still using them. The materials were good. The teachers were extremely dedicated, and very knowledgeable about the current political situation. It was really an ideal learning environment.

Q: Were you getting any reflection of what was going on in Beirut at the time?

RANSOM: There were some political problems at the time. We lived in a building with a Palestinian manager who often talked to us about the desperate plight of Palestinians in Lebanon at that time. But it was early in the developments that led to the Lebanese Civil War. We left Beirut in the summer of '69. I think the problems really began to develop the following year.

Q: Yes. It was Black September, too, wasn't it? It had repercussions all throughout the Palestinian community.

You went to Jeddah and were there from when to when?

RANSOM: We stayed there about 14 months. It was roughly from August 1969 to very late 1970.

Q: What was David doing and what were you doing?

RANSOM: When we went to Jeddah, I was pregnant with our second child. David was assigned to the consular section. He was the juniormost officer in the Embassy in Jeddah. I was very busy with one small child and another one on the way. That is when I really experienced what it was like to be a Foreign Service wife. When I arrived, I was told the women I should call on. I think I had my own calling cards. They were wonderful women and I respected them a great deal. Actually, I looked on the diplomatic call, the formality of it, as useful. I got to know these women and they introduced me to other people. It wasn't easy for me to get to know Saudis. So, I went to a lot of tea parties. Andrea and Bill Rugh were in Jeddah at that time. Andrea was a very good friend. We went to endless tea parties. Andrea was interested in anthropology, so she was probably more interested than I was. I was trying to find women who were sufficiently liberated to come and socialize with us with their husbands. I don't think I was very successful in that, but I certainly met a lot of women and got to know the female Saudi society in Jeddah that mixed with western women.

Q: Let's talk about this. This is not a group that is easy to penetrate and you have to be a woman to do it. If you're a working officer, that's not your target. In a way, it was a unique opportunity. What was your impression of the wives of what amounts to the professional class within the Saudi society?

RANSOM: Well, I got to know some women at the university – professors and the woman who ran the university, who was someone I admired. Our best friends in Jeddah were a group of couples who socialized regularly. In this group, there were two Palestinian couples, two Saudi couples, and ourselves. Two of the Saudi wives had studied at the equivalent of a junior college in Alexandria, Egypt. So, they were fairly well educated. One of them had been a champion swimmer. At that time, we had access to an Embassy boat. A very nice way to go swimming in the Red Sea was to go out on the boat into the middle of the sea, several miles from shore. You were out there by yourself and it was totally private. When I talked to this woman, she talked about how she missed swimming and being able to engage in athletic activities. I said, "Well, we have this boat. You can go out and we could pick the group that would be with us and could assure your total privacy. Would you be able to go?" Yes, she said she would be very interested. So, David and I both became quite excited about this opportunity. We organized a group and got ready to go and went to the boat. Her husband came, but she never appeared. That taught me something early on about interpreting signals. Arabs almost never say "No." I should not have been surprised that she wouldn't feel free to do so. There was a veil drawn over their activities. I saw her a lot after that. We just didn't refer to that incident. She never explained the why or wherefores. There also was a Saudi woman I got to know quite well in Riyadh who was more educated and her husband was a minister in the government. She was much more active, but still, she could only go so far. She would go out wearing a long coat and a scarf over her head. She didn't veil in those days. She was able to move around town with a car and driver quite freely. But to me, and I was relatively young then, it seemed that the women were surprisingly accepting of the limits that were placed on their lives, even though both of them had studied abroad (one in Egypt and the other in the U.S.). It was fairly frustrating.

I had another Saudi female friend who got a Ph.D. from Columbia University and who came

back to Jeddah imagining that she would be able to become the head of the women's university there, because the woman who was the head of it at that time was Palestinian and not Saudi. This woman came and visited me at home a couple of times. I was very frustrated, however, for when she came she refused to see my husband, even inside the house when no one was around. She absolutely refused. He had to stay totally out of sight in another part of the house.

Another time, a young woman from a very good Saudi family in Jeddah returned from studying in the U.S., full of energy and ideas. She was ready to challenge the system. She told us that she was going to be the first Saudi woman to work in the Foreign Ministry. She was going to do this and that. Then she simply disappeared from sight. We would try to call her and the calls weren't returned. I met her father at an Embassy function and asked about her. He said, "Oh, she got married a couple of weeks ago to a cousin." So they had married her off and set her aside.

Q: Did you find that you could talk to these women about events that were happening of the period? Were they following things, listening to the news?

RANSOM: It depended on the women. Those who had studied in the U.S. did follow events and were more interested. The women who studied in Alexandria, Egypt, were much less interested.

Q: Did you ever have problems with the fundamentalists, the religious police?

RANSOM: I think I had one minor encounter with the mutawwa in Riyadh, but not in Jeddah. They just had civilian police at that time. I did find that in Jeddah in the souk, some of the shopkeepers were not very friendly and were sometimes rude. A friend of mine had given me before I went to Jeddah a heavy, dark, drab, cotton dress which was several times too big for me. She said, "You'll want to wear this when you're in Jeddah." I said, "Yuk," and put it in the back of the closet. One time, I had a particularly unpleasant encounter with a shopkeeper. When I said to him, "Salaamu alaikum" [Peace be with you] he responded: "You can't say that because you're not a Muslim." That was outrageous and very bad behavior on his part. Then, I pulled out that dress and thought, "Well, maybe I'll try this." Another time, I had trouble with a foreign worker following me around the souk and could find no shopkeeper friendly enough to ask for help. So, I thought I'd try this dress. I actually found the dress quite liberating in the souk. I then was treated like a man. I hated wearing it. In fact, I hated the whole idea of such a garment. But it was the only way I could go here and there freely. I was determined to do that, so I used the dress to make it easier.

Q: Separation always has made it very difficult for our American diplomats or other diplomats to penetrate the society.

RANSOM: I never had any difficulty in any country doing my job. People recognized what my job was and they dealt with me on that basis. Socially, it was trickier, but being a woman gave me access to the families of my contacts. I think that it has become a lot easier to get to know Saudis since that time when I was there. There weren't many U.S. graduates. They were the people that we would naturally have easier intercourse with.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the Saudis were treating people like the Yemenis and the Palestinians?

RANSOM: Oh, terribly. Well, the Yemenis – I have to be fair. The Yemenis were doing quite well. They were shopkeepers. They were allowed to come and go without visas. They had a privileged status. Yemenis did very well there. It was the Pakistanis and the non-Arabs who suffered more.

Q: Was there much of a Palestinian presence there?

RANSOM: We were socializing with Palestinians. I would imagine there were quite a few. These people that we socialized with were on very friendly terms with their Saudi counterparts. It wasn't bad then.

Q: People had been talking about the Saudi ruling group, saying that it wasn't going to last. I remember back in the mid-'50s being in Dhahran and speculating that maybe in a few years it's not going to be around. The Soviets disappeared and a lot of other people disappeared and they're still there. Was there much speculation about this within the American group?

RANSOM: I think there was. The Saudis had some trouble with their military, with the Air Force. But Faisal was King and commanded a certain amount of respect. But, the whole nature of society in Saudi Arabia is so different from any other in the Arab world that it's hard to imagine that it would continue to survive, especially after they have sent thousands of their young men and some women abroad to study. It's hard to imagine how it has continued to be such a conservative place.

Q: Did you get involved in conversations about our support of Israel?

RANSOM: Absolutely. Our support of Israel was always an issue with the women.

Q: Was there any solution to this? Did you just sort of sigh and explain the...

RANSOM: I have always tried to explain in the Arab world how foreign policy in the United States is formed and the role of different lobbying groups. It's very difficult to explain it, especially to those who either haven't spent any time in the U.S. or know very little about the nature of our government.

Q: In 1970, you and David left. Where did you go?

RANSOM: In 1970, we returned to the United States.

WALTER M. MCCLELLAND
Deputy Supervisor of International Relations, Near Eastern Affairs

Washington, DC (1967-1970)

Walter M. McClelland was born in 1922 and raised in Oklahoma City. He graduated from the University of Virginia, where he was involved in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). He received his commission when he joined the Navy in 1944. After his tour with the Navy, he entered Harvard Law School and graduate school until 1950. Mr. McClelland then joined the Foreign Service, serving in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 20, 1995

Q: You were on the Iranian Desk from when to when?

MCCLELLAND: That was from 1967 to 1970.

Q: What were relations like with Iran during this '67 to '70 period?

MCCLELLAND: The US and Iran had very close relations in this period. Our cooperation was extensive in economic development and military programs -- Americans were everywhere in Tehran. I was especially concerned with these two fields.

Iran had very able Western-trained experts in the economic field and had prepared a very detailed 10 year plan. I would sit down with my USAID counterparts and carefully examine the plan to see if we really thought it was realistic. The problem we found was that the Shah was spending too much on his military program if he really wanted economic development to move ahead. We reported this to our superiors, but it was not something they could control, even though Ambassador Meyer once tried to urge moderation on the Shah. On one occasion President Johnson had a talk with the Shah and promised to sell him 23 new aircraft when State and AID (and the Pentagon, I believe) had been trying to get the Shah to cut these purchases. Later the Shah told us about what the President had said and we had to find out from the President if this was true. It was -- and it didn't help economic planning.

As you may know, the Shah was a hard bargainer with the Consortium (of oil companies) and every year we had a crisis as to whether or not the Shah would agree to accept the payments the Consortium offered and extend the agreement another year. He did, but only at the last possible moment.

But the Shah was doing a lot on the economic development side. He brought in many American experts to help the Iranians learn how to set up efficient companies, his own Bureau of Standards, and many other things. He was also working on improving agriculture, bringing in foreign firms who used the latest techniques, etc. Iran was really going places in Western eyes -- that is why it was such a heart-breaker when the Shah was overcome.

Q: What about Iran's military spending?

MCCLELLAND: The Shah was very concerned with building up a strong military force,

especially the air force. Military aircraft maintenance was very important to him so a program was set up to channel high school students into aircraft maintenance. As I remember it, he planned for so many maintenance personnel that we figured it would take almost the entire high school output for years to meet the plan! I, as a part of the State/Defense team, used to meet with the Iranian military negotiating team to work out just exactly what equipment Iran should purchase and how they would pay for it. The Iranian negotiators were very good, spoke perfect English, and we were able to get along well. And the Shah got what he wanted.

Q: I never served in Iran or really dealt with that area, but sort of by word of mouth, and also by the media in the United States and all, there seemed to be the general idea -- maybe it was more later than then, but still at the same time -- why all this military stuff going in there, do we know what we're doing. Did you have any feeling that our military was behind this pushing too, in order for savings in quantity or what have you?

MCCLELLAND: No, I did not have that feeling at all. In fact, it was the other way around. Defense was concerned about all these weapons and what too much military spending might do to Iran's economy. But the Shah thought, quite reasonably, that if he was going to hold his own in the volatile Middle East, he had better be strong enough to defend himself well. He was the one, as best I can tell, who pushed the military side very strongly. He may have overdone it a bit, but it was not our egging him on.

Q: During the time that you were there, you were dealing with mainly what, on the economic side, or was it on both?

MCCLELLAND: When I was on the Iran Desk I was responsible for Economic and Political-Military affairs. As you know, these two are very closely linked together.

Q: Was there any concern on anyone's part about what developed, probably somewhat later in the 70's, the vast infrastructure of Americans who were working on airplanes, working on the equipment and all this, and its effect on the society?

MCCLELLAND: I am sure that our political people knew that there was great resentment against the Shah for bringing so many Westerners in to develop the country, Western Style. The conservative Islamic leaders were not happy -- and they had great influence on the ordinary people who were not used to Western ways. When I was involved in Iranian Affairs, this problem was not seen as very important. The idea that the people would rise against the Shah just seemed unlikely since things were really going so well. The Shah might have been able to do something at that point if he had allowed a viable opposition to vent its views. But he did not -- and if anyone saw what was coming, I doubt that they would have been able to influence the Shah to change his tune.

Q: During the time that we're talking about, this is '67 to the '70s, you were there during the transition between the Johnson Administration and the Nixon Administration. The Nixon Administration, in its latter years, really went overboard with the Shah. Did you get any feel that there was a particular change from late Johnson to early Nixon?

MCCLELLAND: No, I didn't. I continued to be involved on economic and political-military affairs on the working level and our problems remained basically the same. We wanted to help Iran improve its overall economy and not overburden itself with military debt. In my work I was not really involved with internal Iranian political matters -- although we thought that a strengthened economy would promote internal stability.

Q: Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II took over when Nixon came in. He had the reputation of being a very tough Ambassador. Did you note this on the desk? Was there a change?

MCCLELLAND: No. My impression was that Ambassador MacArthur was very much aware of the problems facing Iran and might well have tried to get the Shah to cut back his military program a bit -- but I do not remember any specific case when he did.

Q: You left there in '70?

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1967-1971)

Harold H. Saunders was born and educated in Philadelphia and received his undergraduate degree in American Civilization from Princeton. In 1956, he earned his Ph.D. in American studies from Yale. After a stint with the Air Force, Harold Saunders began his government career with Central Intelligence Agency. He then moved to the National Security Council and then to the State Department. While at State, he became intimately involved in some major foreign policy events as such as the Middle East peace process and the Iran hostage crisis, about which he wrote extensively. He was interviewed in 1993 and 1994 by Thomas Stern.

SAUNDERS: As far as arms sales to Iran was concerned, there are a number of points that should be made. My own recollection of that process begins when I had to provide Kissinger with the State and Defense recommendations on positions to be taken with the Iranians during one of our periodic consultations with them on their military procurement wishes. During the Johnson administration, when we still had significant economic and security assistance programs in Iran, a review mechanism was established to insure that the costs of military procurement would not over-burden the country's economic development, which had a higher priority. At the beginning of the Nixon administrations, the departments forwarded their recommendations for another round of discussions with the Iranians. Kissinger flatly rejected the recommendation; he did not want the United States to be in a position to tell the Shah how to run his country. My guess is that Kissinger, while an NSC consultant and an as an observer of US foreign policy, had acquired a sense that the US was too intrusively involved in essentially domestic issues of foreign countries. So when the opportunity arose, Kissinger put an end to the review process. Sometime later, I accompanied him to the Iranian Embassy in Washington to meet with the Shah

during one of his visits to the United States. This may have been at the time of the Shah's first visit to Washington after Nixon's inauguration. The Shah and Kissinger discussed strategic issues, including Vietnam, the Soviet relations, China and other global matters. Kissinger, as well as Nixon, regarded the Shah as a kindred mind, a strategic thinker; they were comfortable with allowing the Shah to decide what should be done in Iran. In light of my later experiences as Assistant Secretary for NEA, when the Shah was deposed, I believe that the seeds for that downfall were sown during the early Nixon/Kissinger period.

I don't think we were responsible for the Shah's fate, but we might have taken a different approach. I remember a story told to me by Walt Rostow . Soon after he had left government, he visited the Shah to collect some material for his book on "The Stages of Political Development" . He and the Shah discussed the issue in the Iranian context. In that conversation the Shah mentioned that the political base in Iran had to be broadened; otherwise he felt that his son would never ascend to the throne. That indicated that the Shah was well aware of his political position and was wrestling with the problem in 1969.

As I reflected on the early Nixon period and the so-called "blank check" policy, I would ask myself whether, had Nixon taken a different approach to arms sales, that would have made a difference to the Shah's reign? Nixon could have, in his first conversation with the Shah, told him that all leaders had domestic political problems. He could have explained how difficult it was for him to obtain support for his efforts to restructure the US relationships with the Soviet Union. He could have told the Shah that he, Nixon, spent considerable amount of time worrying about developing support from the American body politic for his various policy initiatives. From that beginning, Nixon might have been to develop a dialogue with the Shah about the need and the means to develop public support. This may sound very simplistic, but the fact was that the Shah looked to American presidents as standards and he wanted to measure up to them. He wanted to be in their league. If such a conversation could have taken place in 1969, the Shah might have returned to his country more concerned about his popular support and his need to broaden his political base. Such a discussion might have led the Shah to give greater priority to his need for more public support. I must hastily add that some people, particularly in academic and foreign policy circles, might well laugh me out of town for these sentiments. But I feel that an if inter-connection between leaders is an important factor in foreign policy, then such a discussion might have proven useful and valuable. The "blank check" policy permitted the Shah to do the easiest things--e.g., building his military forces. Of course, he fancied himself as a military strategist and that made his predilection to military matters even more accentuated. Nixon and Kissinger told the Shah that they would publicly say that our Gulf policy would be based on the twin pillars--Iran and Saudi Arabia-- and the cooperation between those two countries, but they also told him privately that they recognized that the Saudis did not have the capability to carry an equal share of the burden. Furthermore, the Shah was informed that the US had no intention of filling the British shoes in the area, even though the British were rapidly leaving. That in fact meant that the United States was relying on the Shah to maintain stability in the Gulf.

There was another component of the policy and that was the Soviet Union. This was particularly relevant to the clandestine aid to the Kurds which we provided through the Shah. That policy was articulated in the same way as we had done often in the Arab-Israeli context through the use of

military sales. Nixon and Kissinger felt that Iraq had to be shown that "being a friend of the Soviet Union didn't pay off"--I think I am quoting accurately. The other side of that coin was, of course, that being a friend of the United States would pay dividends. The assistance to the Kurds--regardless of one may think of it now in retrospect--was a way to maintain the Kurdish rebellion to the discomfort of the Baghdad leadership. It was not a situation in which the Soviet Union could help; only the United States could have had some impact. This was another illustration of how the Nixon administration used its relationship with the Shah in the context of the Cold War.

You also have to remember that this was a period during which it was hoped that the United States and the Soviet Union would reach some agreement on strategic arms limitations. The Shah's cooperation was very useful to us in that context because he gave us permission to install listening posts along his border with the Soviet Union so that we could monitor Soviet practices. Ultimately these posts were very useful in the verification of the agreements that were reached.

This is not to say that military sales are just another "commodity" available to the US in pursuit of its foreign policy objectives. Such a characterization tends to ignore something that I always felt laid at the core of decisions to supply arms to other countries. I was always very conscious that whenever we had any requests for arms, we were dealing with people who were the stewards of their countries' future and survival. In many cases, leaders came to us because they believed that their countries were under serious threat. Whether their analysis was self serving or overly cautious was not material. That was their perception and as leaders of their countries, they were responsible for providing for their people's safety and security--just as our president is for us. In those cases, the provision of arms made military equipment much more than a mere "commodity", although it had some aspects of it. But the "bottom line" factor had to be that the decision to provide arms was perceived as a matter of life or death in many cases. So we may have used arms sales as a means to foster our objectives, but that was by no means the only rationale. Furthermore, if one looks at the arms sales policies of the principal producers, I doubt that many, if any, of the others worried so much about the impact of their sales as we did. We really did care about destabilizing arms balances and I think we were more responsible in making our decisions than most of the other producers. We did not trivialize arms supply nor did we use them primarily merely as a "currency" or, generally, as economic assistance to American manufacturers. There were a couple of periods when we did actively promote arms sales to reduce our balance-of-payments deficits, but that was before the period we are now discussing.... The economic issues did not play a significant role in policy making.

THOMAS R. HUTSON
Rotation Officer
Tehran (1968-1971)

Thomas R. Hutson was born in Nebraska in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska in 1962 he served in the US Army from 1962-1967. His career has included positions in Tehran, Belgrade, Winnipeg,

Moscow, Lagos, Taipei, Belgrade, Bishkek, and Mazar-e-Sharif. Mr. Hutson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 1999.

Q: You were in Iran from April, 1968 to July, 1971. What was your first assignment?

HUTSON: I did not rotate through various embassy sections. I spent my whole tour in the consular section, working for Maurice Ealum, a wonderful guy. He is now retired in Oklahoma. He was a superb boss. He was Russian speaker as well. He was the greatest manager I ever saw. I think he viewed himself as another Ernest Hemingway and he was a talented writer.

So I worked in the consular section until Arnie Raphel convinced me to take his place as staff aide to Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II. I did that for 18 months. That was also a great experience.

Q: Let's start with your experiences as a consular officer. This was a period during which we had hundreds of Iranian students who wanted to come to study in the U.S. Not all were really students. Was that a problem?

HUTSON: I don't think the big wave of applicants had quite started in 1968. In fact, the non immigrant visa section had a waiting room. At the end of it was a counter. Then there was a little office for a consular officer. The applicant would be brought in and be interviewed, most often with an interpreter since I and most of the other American officers did not speak Farsi. I discovered that one of the interpreters was a crook. At a lunch sometime during my tour, we were commenting that the embassy security officer seemed to have no interest in this interpreter's activities. I had to investigate this individual myself. In brief, the interpreter was the brother of the Christian Assyrian Senator in the Iranian "majlis" (Parliament). This seemingly dim-witted interpreter was supporting a high style of living and his brother's political activities by selling U.S. visas to Jewish families who wanted their sons to avoid Iranian compulsory military service. He had a small fortune. His name was William Bit-Mansour.

We did have a lot of student applicants for studies in the U.S., but it was not at the level it would reach a couple of years later.

Q: What do you remember of Iran of the later 1960s?

HUTSON: I loved Iran. I still believe that the Shah was a positive force, despite all of the corruption around him. I had a chance to meet his wife, the Shahbanou, Queen Farah, when I met the Queen of England in London at the 50th birthday party of Crown Prince Alexander Karageorgevic which was held at the Claridge Hotel on July 1, 1995. I thought she was extremely likeable.

Q: Did you pick up on anything from the younger political and economic officers about the situation in Iran?

HUTSON: Oh, yes. A number of us were involved in the International Theater of Tehran. Two younger officers, Raphel and Michael Michaud, organized a sort of junior officer committee to

discuss some of the hot topics of the day, including U.S. policy toward Iran. We made a series of recommendations to the senior staff of the embassy. In retrospect, I think if some of them had been adopted might have led to a different outcome in Iran-U.S. relations. For example, we believed that our military in the MAAG was pretty insensitive to cultural issues. The U.S. military ran its own radio and television stations; it had of course its own commissary and clubs. We were insensitive to the feelings of the Iranian people living in the countryside. Both Arnie and Mike traveled with tribal people; both spoke Farsi and felt this insensitivity deeply. I know that the recommendations of this group of officers came to the attention of Ambassador MacArthur - I was his staff aide, as I said - and were given consideration by the senior staff.

My contacts with political and economic officers were enhanced by my participation in the theater group. The director was a Peace Corps volunteer who spoke Farsi and of course knew the countryside well. We used to hear his and his colleagues' views about the situation in Iran. We associated with many Peace Corps volunteers who really had a good feel for what was going on outside of Tehran and could describe to us the huge gap between what was happening in the capital and what was happening in the rest of the country.

I had a fair amount of exposure to the mullahs because of my consular responsibilities - e.g. issuing certificates of marriage. I attended a lot - a lot - of weddings. Of course, visas, as in many other countries, were very important and valuable documents. Whenever we went to a reception, invariably, many of the guests would say hello to the ambassador and then rush over to a consular officer to say hello.

Q: Did you run across the familiar problem of an American woman marrying an Iranian with the marriage turning sour several years later after the birth of some babies, who were not allowed to leave the country?

HUTSON: When I was the American citizen services officer, I dealt with a lot of problems like that. They were heart wrenching. I remember one case that Maurice Ealum was dealing with just as he was leaving post. He tried to resolve it; he got the American woman as far as the airport, but for some reason, she started to flirt with the Iranian customs officer. He got suspicious and after further research, found out who she was and what she was trying to do; that put an end to her departure from Iran. So we had lots of cases like that.

Iran of course was not the only country that had family situations where one member was American and the other a citizen of the home country. I faced similar problems later during my assignment to Nigeria. These marriages are not rare; my best Iranian friend almost married an American woman; she got "cold feet" at the last minute because she had heard enough stories about the some of the catastrophes that ensued marriage of an American to an Iranian. An Iranian man may look very attractive when in the U.S.; when he gets home, he may be an entirely different person. He certainly has a mother who is most likely to be very difficult for a foreign bride to get along with.

Q: Did we have a set pattern on how to handle cases of this kind?

HUTSON: We did a lot of “winging” - talking to the family or influential people. Sometimes, if they got the family’s approval to leave, we used to hustle them to the airport as soon as possible - before any one had a change of heart.

I remember one case which fell out of the category we are discussing now, but is in part related. This was a case that Ealum started. He was a great writer and would send “Operations Memoranda”, detailed commentaries about his visits to a woman who had sought his assistance. She had come from New York - from a family which was financially “comfortable.” She had decided to come to Tehran and had taken a room at the Royal Tehran Hilton; she had been there for two years. She would not leave her room during the day - only at night. She only ate hamburgers and drink Coca-Cola. She hated Iranians. When the waiters would deliver her hamburger and Coca-Cola to her room, they had to be prepared because this woman - who was quite large - would come out swinging her handbag at the waiter. Maurice did finally convince the Iranians to deport her. They put her on a train to Istanbul and made sure she got over the border into Turkey. Six months later, while I was the acting chief of the section - Carl Clement having been transferred - I got a call from the police which reported that they had an American woman sitting at one of their stations with her eyes closed. They could not communicate with her and wanted our assistance. So I went to the station and it turned out to be the woman that Ealum had dealt with; she apparently had re-crossed the Iranian border. I found her sitting in her fur coat in the middle of a heat wave. She was a pitiful sight – made up with lipstick, rouge and powder, almost something like a clown.

I sat down beside her and whispered in her ear. I finally convinced her to come with me. I knew who she was and her history in Iran. I put her in one of the embassy’s transient apartments. Nicholas Thatcher was the chargé at the time - a wonderful human being. When I returned to the chancery, I went to see him and told him what had transpired. I also told him that the woman had agreed to leave on the next flight. Thatcher did not find my solution acceptable. He thought that after her history at the Hilton, I had made a huge mistake in letting her into one of our apartments. He gave me 48 hours to get her out of the country - or else I would be gone. I went to work on the case with David Boerigter, a colleague in the consular section. We lined up all the arrangements, including a flight out with PanAm. This was Flight PanAm 1, which made a number of stops at various capitals in Europe before flying to the States. I made sure that members of the consular sections at posts along the route would meet the plane when it landed, give her her favorite food and drink, and made sure that our woman was on the plane when it took off to its next destination.

I took her to the airport and put her on the plane. I watched as the plane started its run off the runway only to see, much to my dismay, it stopped half way down that runway. The plane dropped its passenger ladder and pushed my ward out of the door and onto the tarmac. She had bitten one of the stewardesses. That was unexpected. I walked out to the tarmac and told the pilot that he just had to take the woman back on and out of the country. My career depended on getting that done. He did and as far as I know, the rest of the trip went smoothly and I never heard another word about the woman.

Q: Tell us a little about your tour as staff assistant to Douglas MacArthur and say something

about Mrs. MacArthur.

HUTSON: Douglas MacArthur II was the nephew of the General. He was a career Foreign Service officer. He graduated from Yale. He was a diminutive man with steely blue eyes with a deep voice. People were terrified to work for him. They were even more terrified of “Wahwee” - Mrs. MacArthur. She was the daughter of Vice-President Allen Barcley. Her given name was really Laura, but had picked up the name “Wahwee” somewhere along the line.

I worshiped the ambassador. He was the best. I have worked for many fine ambassadors, but he was the best. When you worked directly for MacArthur, you became a member of the family. I lived through the ambassador's very serious bout of pneumonia and an assassination attempt which was kept secret for over a year. That was the beginning of terrorism in Iran which eventually led to the revolution. There was no question in anyone's mind that he was the ambassador. He had a speech about the Persian Gulf situation which emphasized the importance of the region's oil to the industrialized western world. He believed that repetition was the “mother of learning” when it came to dealing with Washington. Of course, in those days, cables were the usual method of communication; phone calls were rare and not always reliable. So he would constantly bombard the Department pointing out the importance of the issues and the Shah's vital role in maintaining our role in the Gulf. I thought MacArthur was extremely effective; he worked well with all elements of the U.S. representation in Iran. For example, there was no doubt that he was completely abreast of the CIA's operations in Iran; the station was well staffed, but all knew who the “leader” was. That went for the military as well; he was the boss there as well. He was a tough professional, but effective.

He had a very human side as well. I remember that at one time, there was a young boy who attended the American School who was killed in some kind of accident. He didn't know the family at all, but he wept openly when he got the news. I was really startled. He had the reputation of being a very tough leader, but he was so moved by this event that he just broke down.

MacArthur was a great bird hunter. My guess is that he got involved in that when he was our ambassador in Brussels and Vienna. He undoubtedly had a lot of hunting friends there; he would join them on their hunting expeditions. He brought a group of them to Tehran one time. That reminds me of a story which I call “Protocol and the Pig-Sty.” The hunt was held on the grounds of an Armenian family where pigs were raised and pork and wine was manufactured on very good hunting grounds. The owners were friends of the ambassador. The family arranged to have a lunch for the guests - in the middle of a pig farm filled of course with droppings. Tables were brought out and nicely decorated, but the pigs' droppings were everywhere. The smell was overwhelming. I could not - and others could not - understand why this spot was chosen for the lunch. I guess the hosts preferred a “rustic” location. I remember that everything was proceeding smoothly despite the farm aura. At one point, Mrs. MacArthur called me over. She asked :”Tom, do you love your wife?” I knew the theater group involved an interesting group of women, but it seemed a very strange question. I said, “Of course, I do.” Then Mrs. MacArthur said, “I am glad to hear that because she is not doing your career any good!” Then “Wahwee” noted that my wife had gotten in the food catering line ahead of Mrs. Lehfeltdt, the wife of the economic counselor.

They two were chatting and my wife, I am surely entirely inadvertently, had gotten ahead of Mrs. Lehfeldt - out of protocol order! I should note that Mrs. MacArthur had helped to write our own local protocol manual and so she was fully aware of all of its picky requirements. The point that Mrs. MacArthur made caught me entirely by surprise and I didn't know whether to laugh or cry. I was very upset with Wahwee, but I was wise enough not to respond and the episode passed without any further notice.

Wahwee would not let local-hire staff into the residence to attend social functions there. That was appalling because most officers really needed translators since few spoke Farsi. When we had an event one of the embassy's substantive sections would send a suggested guest list. I would screen it as did our Iranian social secretary. The final word was of course the ambassador's. He would take it home, let Wahwee review it and then he brought it back and invitations were issued. I remember at one time, near the end of his tour, that Bill Lehfeldt was trying to get some of his local employees in the commercial section invited. He needed their help and would have added immeasurably to their status in the Iranian community. I reviewed his proposed list and didn't touch the FSNs on the list. I sent the list to Mrs. MacArthur. Much to our surprise, the list came back with the FSNs still on it. We all thought we had made a breakthrough. The night of the event, as I was standing just before the receiving line, making the introductions, Mrs. MacArthur came up to me and said: "Tom, what are these local employees doing here?" I told her they had been on the list that she had approved. She then said: "Tom, in the future... Oh, I guess, you don't have much of a future in the Foreign Service!"

I should at this stage mention that Mrs. MacArthur was very nice to me at a later stage in my career. After the MacArthurs retired in Brussels, in part to be with their daughter who had married a Belgian, I had a chance to meet them again. I was traveling in Europe trying to find other employment - I was thinking of leaving the Foreign Service. I sent them a message that I would be in Brussels and would like to call on them. I really did worship him. I got a very warm response inviting me to stay with them. When I arrived, Mrs. MacArthur met me at the airport driving their old Mercedes by herself. She took me to their lovely apartment. They had kept the Filipino housemaid that they had had for many years and who stayed with him until his death. The MacArthurs could not have been warmer, although I did detect a second agenda. At the time, I was the consul general in Winnipeg working for Ambassador Thomas O. Enders. He had been the DCM in Belgrade for Ambassador William Leonhart. Leonhart had been MacArthur's second DCM in Tokyo. Leonhart had fired Enders, which in turn resulted in Leonhart's removal. The MacArthurs wanted to know all of the "dirt" surrounding this feud. I have never worked for a smarter man than Tom Enders; he was a very effective ambassador. Fortunately, I got along very well with Enders - many did not. So I had nothing but praise for the Enders. I think that disappointed the MacArthurs.

After Mrs. MacArthur died, I had lunch with the ambassador. That was the second time I saw him weep. This was about six weeks after her death and he was still very much in shock.

Being staff aide was a seven-days-per-week job. It was morning, noon and night. As I mentioned, I participated in theater activities while MacArthur's staff aide. In fact, I was the president of the International Theater of Tehran. It became a major enterprise; so I was busy acting, running the

business end of the productions, etc. My wife began to wonder where I spent my time; I didn't have much time to be home. Douglas MacArthur, despite his demanding ways, was an effective manager; he knew what the objectives of his mission were. We encountered one major personnel flap and that was the result of the Vietnam war. It had a terrible impact on a very fine Foreign Service officer, Ernest Thomas Greene who was the consul in Tabriz. I really looked up to him; he was a Persian scholar; he was a superb manager who ran a very effective post. He had a British wife whose ancestors had been in the British diplomatic or colonial service. Tom had an employee, Murray C. Smith, who was leading protests within the Foreign Service against our involvement in Vietnam. Tom got caught in the middle and was burned by it. That was really sad.

I was not in the Service long enough to know how to stop the forces that eventually railroaded Smith out of the Service. When he took his grievance to court, the anvil fell on Tom Greene because he was Smith's immediate supervisor. I think Doug Heck was the DCM at the time; he was a very decent human being; I think he did everything he could to prevent the final outcomes. Iran was one of the reasons I resigned from the Foreign Service in 1980. I think we made a big mistake in turning our back on the Shah; that was not what I consider a valid American policy. The Shah was our friend and Americans don't turn their backs on friends.

Q: What did you think MacArthur's attitude was toward the Shah and the ruling clique?

HUTSON: He related well with them socially. There is a wonderful book written about this period in U.S.-Iran relations by a former Fulbright scholar, James Bill; he was at William and Mary where until recently ran the Reeves International Center - he is now retired. He had the permission of the Department - a rare occurrence - to work in the embassy; he had access to all of our material and information. The book, "The Eagle and the Lion", describes how decisions were made. He has a more critical eye than I would have since I was so enmeshed in the day-to-day activities of the embassy. I think I was quoted in the book as saying "Never have so few been entertained so often." The fact is that our Iranian circle was small and consisted of the privileged and well-connected. USIS, through its various programs, tried to reach out beyond this very small cadre. But it was very hard to do when our policy was so centered on the Shah.

My main regret from this period was that we couldn't figure out how to manage a deteriorating situation. We should have known that the Shah was ill. If we had known it, we should have done more to assure some continuity after the Shah's departure through an outreach program which would have put us in touch with elements that eventually brought the Shah down. We should have tried to maintain the monarchical governmental structure. Whatever the sins of the Shah were, the sins of the successor regimes were far greater - the Pahlavis were far better than the Khomeini and the Rafsanjani and the Khatami that followed.

Q: You left Iran in 1971. Did you have any views about Iran's future?

HUTSON: I thought things were going well in Iran. There were signs of unrest - e.g. terrorism. But I thought that that would be suppressed. I was not really concerned about that suppression. In retrospect, perhaps I was too sanguine. But I was not really concerned about the activities of the

SAVAK. I was not familiar with their practices; I had heard a lot of stories about their brutality, but I was probably too inexperienced to fully appreciate the potential effects of brutal repression on a society. Our interests in Iran were quite clear; Iran did things in the Persian Gulf that we could never do - during Vietnam. We and the Shah saw the region in the same way and our interests meshed well. But as I said, there were signs of unrest: some assassination attempts, which increased after I left. I kept in touch with my former Peace Corps friend who stayed in theater work. He went to work for the Queen and started a children's theater for her. That took him all over Iran which gave him a broader understanding of Iranian mood than he would have gotten just from being in Tehran. At one stage, I was seriously considering bidding for a vacancy in the embassy. I asked my friend whether I should do that. His response was that I should not be asking him because he was leaving the country because it was coming apart. In 1977, he came to visit me in Winnipeg where I was the CG. He reported events in Iran that were beyond my comprehension because they were so different from those I had experienced in the early 1970s.

As I suggested, I liked Iran and Iranians and therefore stayed in touch with events there. Had I been a little more experienced, I might have picked up signs of deterioration, but I didn't.

CHARLES W. MCCASKILL
Political Officer
Tehran (1968-1972)

Charles W. McCaskill was born in Camden, South Carolina in 1923. After completing two years of study at the Citadel, he entered the U.S. Army, and returned to graduate in 1947. Mr. McCaskill then attended the University of South Carolina, where he received a master's degree in history and political science. He joined the Foreign Service in 1950, serving in Germany, Greece, Cyprus, Iran, and India. Mr. McCaskill was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 7, 1993.

Q: It is one of their traits. So what prompted you to go into Farsi training, and go to Iran where you served from 1968 to 1972? What got you going on that?

MCCASKILL: I felt I needed to get out of Greek-Turkish-Cyprus affairs, and the Number Two job in the Political Section in Tehran was opening up. I would ordinarily have gone out in the summer of 1967, but the incumbent extended for a year, leaving me in limbo since I had given up my Cyprus job. The NEA Personnel Officer, then Orme Wilson, suggested that I go to Farsi training.

I ended up getting a 3-3 in Farsi, which delighted me since I was the oldest of the three students and the other two were really very good language students. The tutor told me later that they rated me second among the three, which pleased me no end. But then he might have told the other guy the same thing for all I know.

Q: You were in Iran from 1968 to 1972. What was the situation there at this point?

McCASKILL: Iran was a strange place in many ways. I worked very hard the four years we were there, and at the end I did not feel that I left many friends there, Iranian, that is. The Iranians were hard to get close to. Life was good, housing was good and easy to find. The Shah was a fascinating figure. But there was really very little for political officers to do in Tehran because our ability to get around was limited. For example, we talk about the mullahs today: I doubt if anybody in the Embassy ever knew a mullah. They were inaccessible to us. We speak or spoke about the Bazaaris; again, nobody in the Embassy knew any Bazaaris. If we had wandered around the bazaars, somebody would have reported it to SAVAK, the Shah's secret police, and we would have had a fairly severe reaction from the government. In the Embassy, we knew a small number of the establishment -- government types, "politicians" (and I put that in quotation marks since there was no politics as we know it), bankers/merchants, etc.

And, of course, reporting was circumscribed in the Embassy. There were some things just not reported. For example, a young officer in the Political Section prepared an airgram to the effect that things were not as rosy in Iran as some of our reporting indicated and as some people seemed to believe. The airgram, not seen in the front office until after it went out, caused great consternation there. An instruction subsequently came down that nothing was to go out of the Political Section without the Political Counselor's clearance. This in turn caused some chagrin in the Political Section. We felt that the Embassy's reporting was not altogether honest.

Q: This brings up something that recurs all the time but particularly during the latter part of the Nixon Administration. Kissinger didn't want to hear anything bad. What was your feeling?

McCASKILL: I think that is true. Let me cite an example. I did a memorandum of conversation one time based on a conversation with an Iranian journalist representing an American wire service who was very pro-American, pro-Western, who spoke good English, etc. The memorandum covered several subjects, one entitled "Military Trials" or something to that effect. My interlocutor had told me that there were political trials every day in the military courts because the civil courts were full. The Political Counselor, my boss and a friend of mine, would not approve the memcon, despite my protestations that I was only reporting what my contact had told me. When I asked why it could not go, he replied that there were some people in the Department and the White House, and possibly others, who did not want to read anything unpleasant about Iran and did not want anything detrimental to Iran to circulate in Washington. There were some people in Washington, particularly on the Hill, looking for such things.

At a Chiefs of Mission Conference in Iran in 1969 or 1970 when I was the note taker, I heard the old cliché that Iran was "an island of stability in a troubled area" a number of times. I think sincerely that this was our policy, based on inadequate reporting. We simply did not want to report anything to the contrary.

Q: There are two things here, extremely important. One is that you don't want to rock the boat, create waves, and you won't be paid attention to. That's one reason why one wouldn't report unpleasant things. The other is even though you might feel -- this is often the case of corruption

or something like that -- if you report it back to Washington, the way paper multiplies, that it will end up and be used against the regime even though there may be mitigating circumstances. The other one is you don't want to make people unhappy.

McCASKILL: I think it was more of the second in the case of Iran. I think there were people in Washington looking critically at Iran from time to time. And I think there was a genuine belief offsetting that that the Shah was our best bet in that part of the world and we did not want to report anything that reflected on him. We did not want anything to upset the flow of arms, so to speak. I think there was a very strong feeling that he was our man in that part of the world. We put a lot of time and effort into the Iranian army and air force, even though we used to joke in the Embassy that that fiercest of armies in that part of the world had never heard a shot fired in anger. But to repeat, we did not want anything to reflect unfavorably on the Shah, did not want to report anything unpleasant.

Q: Let's talk about the Political Section. I have an interview with Andrew Killgore who talks about his great frustration at the time when he was in the Political Section that he was told just what he could not report. This is what we're trained to do. You came from a place where you were reporting, and you were talking to everybody in Cyprus from all accounts, and here you are in this never-never world where you said you were a political reporter who essentially did not report. Also talk particularly about the junior officer.

McCASKILL: Well, it was the more junior officers that it affected mostly. The most meaningful reporting was done by the Ambassador and/or the DCM and the Political Counselor. Only the Ambassador saw the Shah, the Minister of Court and the Foreign Minister. The DCM ran the Embassy, really, a sort of executive officer. I was fortunate my last two years to be given responsibility for reporting on the Persian Gulf. The British had announced publicly that they were pulling out East of Suez, and Iran was being armed by us and groomed by the British to fill the void when the Brits left. This was an extremely important reporting function at the time, since there were significant developments every two or three days. The career man in the Foreign Ministry responsible for the Gulf on the Iranian side was apparently under orders to keep us completely informed.

The junior officers did the domestic reporting, such as it was. One junior officer was assigned to do bio reporting and almost nothing else. As a result, we had the most extensive bio files I ever saw anywhere. It was one of those junior officers who wrote the youth airgram that caused the front office flap.

Q: Who was that?

McCASKILL: Arnie Raphel, who, you may remember, died in that plane crash in Pakistan.

Q: He was Ambassador to Pakistan?

McCASKILL: Yes, Ambassador to Pakistan. He was a brilliant officer who was a pleasure to work with. It was his airgram that raised the front office's hackles.

Q: In the cold light of day, away from all of this, it sort of negates everything we're supposed to be doing. Obviously, we're all operating under orders, but when you see the obvious disaster ten years later, you must wonder.

McCASKILL: Iran is an obvious case where you can look back and ask "Who lost Iran, when did we lose Iran?" I think there was some genuine belief in Washington that Iran was the "island of stability", based in part on inadequate reporting from the Embassy over a long period. For his part, the Shah was surrounded by sycophants who told him what he wanted to hear. I've done almost no reading on Iran since I retired since I have been preoccupied with writing and lecturing on Cyprus. So I don't know what the experts and scholars are saying. And it may be a long time before the real story is told. I do know that the initial mistake may have been the overthrow of Mossadegh and the restoration of the Shah to the throne in 1953.

Q: I hope we can use some of these conversations we're having for future political officers to absorb how things happen. You say we couldn't get to the mullahs, couldn't get to the Bazaaris. Do you see any way at that time that we could have done more in getting to those people? Were there any restrictions? Or was it just language, cultural? What was stopping us from getting out, putting some junior officers out?

McCASKILL: If we had put junior officers out wandering around the bazaars, talking to people in the bazaars, and so on, somebody would have reported it to SAVAK, the secret police, who would have reported it to the Palace. In the first place, those mullahs and Bazaaris were very xenophobic, as the last 10-15 years have shown. Secondly, as I noted, SAVAK would have picked it up.

Q: And then what would have happened?

McCASKILL: And then SAVAK would have reported it, and somebody in the government would have said to somebody in the Embassy, "Look, one of your guys has been wandering around asking embarrassing questions and nosing around, and we don't want that. If you want to know something, ask us and we'll tell you." And I'm serious. The young officer might well have found himself with another assignment in another country. There is, I believe, at least one case where this happened to a junior officer, a Farsi language officer who was a bit too active.

Q: I understand completely. A couple of things about the climate at that time. We had a huge American community didn't we?

McCASKILL: Yes.

Q: And these were essentially gung-ho Americans, perhaps not very sophisticated, probably anathema to the mullahs. This is the wrong group to plunk in the middle of a nation with so many zealots in it. Were we monitoring this, or did these people tend to "screw up the works"?

McCASKILL: I don't remember any specific such cases. It was all pretty well policed. Certainly

the military policed itself closely. There was a large American Club complex, with a big club house and restaurant, swimming pool, tennis courts. There was even a teen club where American teenagers could hang out, and that was healthy. The noncoms had their own big club.

There were several American military installations around the city well known as such. There was a rod and gun club, and since my boys and I liked fishing and hunting, it was a place we would go on a Sunday afternoon. And, of course, there was a big American school; this was not a military school while I was there, but the military was increasingly anxious to have it so classified since then the military would run it.

The commanding officer of the Military Assistance Advisory Group, the MAAG, was a two-star general. I can't remember how big the mission was altogether, but it was considerable. But I don't remember any untoward incidents involving the military. There were times when one wondered who ran the show, the military or the Embassy. I served in two countries with large military missions, Iran and Greece, and we had a navy contingent in Cyprus. India was the only country in which I served in which there was no US military presence, and I thought it was purer foreign service experience, without the military presence, if I might put it that way.

Finally, there was a relatively large big business community, most of it oil-related. The oil people were relatively unsophisticated, but they were also quite careful as I remember. One time when I was duty officer, an American oil company employee, a rather pleasant middle-aged man, hit somebody with his car and we had to get him out of Iran because there was always the possibility of a reaction. But offhand, I don't remember any untoward incidents among the business/oil people.

Q: What was the impression in the Political Section of the Shah at that time? And his program?

McCASKILL: The Shah had done some very admirable things. He had a reform program, called the White Revolution, in which draftees were given a sort of alternative service; instead of going in to the military, they did such things as teach, serve as medical technicians in villages without doctors, and so on. I have forgotten the number of such corps, but they really seemed to be making a difference. The Shah had also begun land reform, which had not gotten very far since the old landlord class was extremely powerful in the country.

But the Shah was authoritarian at heart. I mentioned that he had surrounded himself with sycophants who told him what he wanted to hear. He had no common touch and was cut off from what was going on. He had allowed so-called political parties but it was all a sham since the candidates were all hand-picked, the elections a farce, all a charade.

The Shah told Ambassador Armin Meyer one time that the Iranians were not "ready for democracy." The Americans were always pushing him toward more and more democracy but did not understand that the Iranians were not ready for it, he said. I think the Shah believed that. I am a little at a loss to know what I believe since the revolution. After seeing what has happened, the Shah may have been right all along. Maybe they weren't ready. While the so-called parliament was really kind of ludicrous, maybe he was trying to "bring them along." But maybe they weren't

ready for democracy. Maybe they still are not ready...

Q: What was your impression of how Armin Meyer operated, the first ambassador when you were there.

McCASKILL: I liked him very much, and thought he was an excellent career ambassador. He seemed to have a good rapport with the Shah and members of the government. The second ambassador I served under was Ambassador MacArthur.

Q: Douglas MacArthur II.

McCASKILL: Yes. I never felt as close to him as I did to Ambassador Meyer. Ambassador MacArthur was a very cold, demanding man. His Embassy was just not a very nice place to work. The third ambassador was a political appointee, Joe Farland, I believe from West Virginia.

Q: How did MacArthur relate to the Iranians from your vantage point?

McCASKILL: We had the feeling in the Embassy that he never really liked Iran. The rumor around the Embassy was that he had not wanted to come to Tehran (his previous post was in Europe, I believe.) He was said to think of himself as more a European man, and he just never seemed to relate to Iran. This may be terribly unfair since, as I said, I wasn't very close to him. I do know of one instance where he treated his staff aide and the two front office secretaries very, very shabbily over something very minor.

I think his attitude toward Iran may have been colored by the attack on his life by the Iranian urban guerrillas.

Q: We're trying to get a feel for the Foreign Service world, and Mrs. MacArthur was known as one of the dragons in the Foreign Service. Did this have any effect? I mean her demands. Did this permeate the Embassy, or was this a problem? Did it bother people?

McCASKILL: We had heard rumors of Mrs. MacArthur's reputation long before she arrived in Tehran. I think her worst days may have been behind her when she got there. But she showed some signs of her reputation from time to time, and one who crossed her -- unknowingly -- regretted it. As you know, an ambassador's wife can make life miserable for the staff, but in truth I think Mrs. MacArthur's toughest days were behind her.

Q: How did we view the Soviet problem from Iran?

McCASKILL: The increasing commercial relations between Iran and the Soviet Union when I was there were a great concern to Ambassador MacArthur, who seemed to be viewing the Soviet Union from Vienna rather than from Tehran. As the foreign relations type in the Political Section I had to compile, every month, a list of commercial transactions between the Soviet Union and Iran. I asked my boss to try to talk him out of it, to tell him that this was nothing new. I thought then, and continue to think now, that he was reading far too much into something relatively

insignificant.

Something brought to his attention that there was considerable trade between the two countries, and he wanted it followed in some detail. I think after a few months of reading the same thing he began to see that it was nothing to get steamed up about. The Iranians were wary of the Soviets, dating back to 1946. Iran and the Soviet Union were, after all, neighbors, and the volume of trade between them was relatively significant.

Q: Did you see -- I think they were called the Mujahideen -- the communist guerrillas who tried to kill MacArthur, was this a particular problem?

McCASKILL: This is what I referred to a bit ago, but I think they were called "urban Guerrillas" then, a movement that grew fairly rapidly the last two years I was there. I do not recalled that they were known as the Mujahideen then.

Anyway, as I understood it at the time, Ambassador and Mrs. MacArthur had a very close call. As I heard the story in the Embassy -- and it was kept quiet for a long time -- it was a classic maneuver, with the guerrillas' cars forcing the Ambassador's car to the side of the road next to the jube, the open water drain carrying water from the hills down through the town. One car was in front, one in back. As I heard it, several armed men got out of the car in the rear and started toward the Ambassador's car. At that moment, the Ambassador's driver noticed that he had just enough space between the front car and the jube to get through, and he gunned the Cadillac as fast as he could and got out. I was told that Ambassador MacArthur always felt that his driver saved his and Mrs. MacArthur's lives. I heard that the gunmen opened fire on the Ambassador's car and that shots ricocheted around inside the car.

Then when Nixon and Kissinger came to Tehran in 1972, we had a couple of shootings. The commanding officer of the Air Force section of the MAAG had a bomb rolled under his car; the explosion killed his driver and broke both of his legs. Then at the tomb of the Shah's father (I think that is what it was), a bomb exploded there shortly before Nixon was to visit the tomb. Obviously that stop on the schedule was canceled. I seem to recall another shooting at the time of the visit, but I can not recall just what it was. This was all in May, 1972.

Q: The visit of Nixon and Kissinger later on was a sort of by-blow of a visit to the Soviet Union at that time?

McCASKILL: He went to Romania and the Soviet Union, but he was in Tehran for a couple of days.

Q: From what I gather practically a blank check was given to the Shah.

McCASKILL: That's what I was about to say; that's when the so-called blank check for military assistance was given to him. This was supposed to be the opening of the floodgates. Former British Ambassador Dennis Wright, at one time the British Foreign Office's foremost Iranologist, fluent in Farsi and close to the Shah, told me in 1976 or 1977 when I saw him in India that he

thought the Shah had "gone off the track" in 1973 with the great rise in oil prices after the embargo. The Shah really began to "lose his bearings" then, Ambassador Wright thought, and really began to lose touch with reality. Ambassador Wright had retired by the time we met, but I place some stock in his opinion in view of his long experience in Iran over a number of years and his closeness to the Shah.

Q: What was the view of Iraq during 1968 to 1972 when you were there?

McCASKILL: We followed relations with Iraq very closely, as did the Iranians. General Bakhtiar, a former chief of SAVAK who had broken with the Shah, had been given refuge in Iraq and the Shah seemed to expect the general to cross the border with his forces at any time. And there was the question of Iranian and Israeli support for the Iraqi Kurds. The Kurds were actually fairly active in those days under a colorful figure Mustapha Barzani. It was well known that Israel was furnishing arms to the Kurds through Iran.

And of course, the old perennial between Iran and Iraq, the Shatt-al-Arab River which formed the boundary between the two countries in the south. When the British withdrew from the area in the 1930's, they arbitrarily fixed the border between the two countries at the high water mark on the Iranian side of the river, rather than at the thalweg or channel of the river. This meant, of course, that the entire river was in Iraq. They did this, I was told, so that Basra would have responsibility for maintaining and dredging the river, keeping it clear. In international law, when a river is a boundary, the thalweg is normally recognized and you will find few cases where the border is at the high water mark. This was a real source of bitterness to the Iranians, and in truth I always felt they had a legitimate gripe. In any case, the two countries had arrived at a settlement in 1969, when the Shah declared that the border was to be at the thalweg, or channel, and Iraq accepted it.

One of the more interesting developments vis-a-vis Iraq when I was there was the apparent decision by Iraq to allow the Iraqi Jews to leave the country. While some of them seemed to "escape" at first, we concluded that the Iraqis were closing their eyes to the Jews' exit. The Jewish community of Baghdad was one of the most famous in that part of the world, a very prominent community, wealthy, solid.

I was fortunate enough to meet one of the first families to get out, the Shemtob family. One of the two brothers, Jacob, had been living in London for many years; he returned to Iraq to visit his brother and sister, and could not get an exit permit to leave. Jacob masterminded the flight for the family -- four adults and four children, as I recall -- by presumably arranging a summer vacation for the family in the mountains to escape the heat of Baghdad. He had previously contacted Kurdish groups in the mountains, into whose hands the Shemtobs placed themselves. They literally went underground with the Kurds, and finally worked their way to the Iran-Iraq border, where they were pretty well welcomed by the Iranian border forces. They were the first of a rather large number of Iraqi Jews who got out that way. Jacob actually set up this pipeline which many of the Jewish community used to escape the country. I think the Shemtobs may have been the first family to use the underground Jacob had established rather than "one of the first", and Jacob deserved considerable credit for having started it.

It was an exciting and interesting development and I was pleased to have been involved to some slight degree and happy to have gotten to know the Shemtobs. As a footnote, the Jewish agencies were very well provided for in Tehran, and received the full cooperation of the Iranian authorities. And, it was said, with the full knowledge of the Shah. The Jewish agencies welcomed those coming through and arranged their onward travel to Israel, the U.S. or wherever they were going. My wife and I had the Shemtobs in for dinner one evening, and had a wonderful evening with them. They were very cultured, refined people who had lived under constant threat in Baghdad. You remember that four Jews -- I think it was four -- were hung in the square of Baghdad in 1968 or thereabouts on trumped up charges. That was the kind of threat the Shemtobs lived under.

I have not followed this question in the 25 years since I was there, and do not know what has been revealed since that time. But, as I said, we concluded in the Embassy that the Iraqis probably decided that holding the community hostage was no longer worth the trouble and closed their eyes to the Jews' departure. This in no way minimizes what the Shemtobs and other Jewish families did, since going into the underground to get out required considerable nerve and daring.

Q: How was Vietnam playing in Iran from the people you talked to?

McCASKILL: I don't remember a thing.

Q: That's a good answer: it didn't play. Is there anything else we should talk about?

McCASKILL: I don't think so. I can't think of anything.

Q: I must say I've never known anybody who really stuck to one area, Near Eastern Affairs, as you did the entire time. And you really covered it. You went to Bombay, 1972 to 1976. What about this assignment?

McCASKILL: I had completed four years in Iran, and the Department informed me that the Number Two job in the Consulate General there was open and asked if I would like to be assigned there. It was considered a pretty good job. This was before open assignments, when things were much easier I thought. I accepted and went there in July of 1972 on direct transfer from Iran.

While I went on direct transfer, the Department authorized some consultation in Washington which enabled me to visit my mother who died before I would have gotten home on leave the next year. This was one of the reasons I loved NEA; we may have been in-bred and incestuous, but NEA looked out for its own. I think Howie Schaffer, who was NEA Personnel Officer at the time, was behind it. I have never discussed it with him, but I have always been grateful to him or whoever did it.

To get back to Bombay, the job turned out to be a good job, and we stayed there until March, 1976 when I went over to Madras as Consul General.

WILLIAM W. LEHFELDT
Economic/Commercial Officer
Tehran (1969-1974)

General Electric - Vice President for the Region
Tehran (1975-1978)

William W. Lehfeltdt was born in California on July 13, 1925. He served in the U.S. Army in a specialists role. Upon completion of his tour, Mr. Lehfeltdt received a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service in 1950. He entered the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Kabul, Bilbao, Buenos Aries, Cordova, and Tehran. This interview was conducted by William Burr in as part of the Itan Project of the Columbia University Oral Histry Program in 1987.

Q: *So what circumstances led to the assignment in Tehran? Was it your choice?*

LEHFELDT: No. It was the farthest thing from my mind, but Nick Thacher, who was the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], and Armin Meyer, who was ambassador, both knew me and I should say since I guess they had a hard time finding anybody any better, they took me.

Q: *What time of the year was this?*

LEHFELDT: *This was in the summer of 1969.*

Q: *Meyer was leaving, actually.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Meyer departed by the time I got there. But Nick was there, and then Doug MacArthur came.

Q: *What were your general duties as economic commercial counselor?*

LEHFELDT: Well, we still had the residuals of the aid program to work with and try to clean up. My then financial officer, the late Ed Prince, and I along with Ambassador MacArthur and the then head of the Plan Organization, Mehdi Samil--who is in London now--did the last review of the Iranian economy that was called for by our US-Iran agreements, aid agreements. It was rather perfunctory by that time. It was embarrassing to both of us. We had no aid program, we had no reason to meddle in their economy by then.

Q: *What was the name of the Plan Organization official?*

LEHFELDT: Mehdi Samil. S-A-M-I-L.

Other duties were reporting generally on the developments in the Iranian economy. I had a petroleum officer, civil aviation officer, financial officer, a whole raft of commercial officers, including a commercial attaché. We tried to cover the waterfront.

Q: Did your duties change over time?

LEHFELDT: Well, to the degree that we had no aid responsibilities yes, they did change. To the degree that the commercial responsibilities were accented more, and we added a trade center in Tehran, yes they changed. But not markedly.

Q: Did you do any work on arms sales issues, for example economic aspects of arms sales, or...

LEHFELDT: To some degree. We did a good deal of analysis on debt service ratios because in the early 1970s, that was the hallmark of how much the nation could stand. We had sort of a rule of thumb that if they used over twenty percent of their foreign exchange earnings to service their debt then they were at the limit, outside limit. Those parameters have changed these days.

Q: These arms sales were planned in to the Eximbank {Export-Import Bank} credits?

LEHFELDT: Eximbank credits in those days, yes.

Q: Who were some of the people who worked in your office? Who worked on petroleum issues, for example?

LEHFELDT: First, there was Bob Dowell. He was succeeded by John Washburn, who in turn was succeeded by David Paterson. David was still there when I left the embassy in 1974.

Q: Who was the finance officer?

LEHFELDT: Finance officer first was Ed Prince. Then Alex Rattray, who's now Consul General in Frankfurt. He was succeeded by Walter Lundy, who is in African Affairs now. Walter was the man that when I left he in turn was succeeded by the fellow who's presently ambassador in Paraguay--I can't remember his name. [Clyde Taylor}

Q: Did you have any Iranian nationals that worked for you?

LEHFELDT: Yes we had primarily, well, we had two in the economic section. Gutshab Bakhtian and, oh what was the name of the other one? I guess the rest of them worked in the commercial section. Bakhtian was the only one who really worked for the economic section. In the commercial section we had Ishmail Ghobadi, Ike Pirnazar, David Kashani, Mrs. Melikian--I'm sorry. That's not quite right, but it's Arpik and--oh my word. Why is it their last names don't come to me? But they won't right now.

Q: You had a number of nationals?

LEHFELDT: Yes we did.

Q: They did research jobs?

LEHFELDT: Research jobs and on the commercial side they did an active job in preparing WTDRs--World Trade Directory Reports--distributors lists, contact lists. They would often times go out with American businessmen, just accompanying them on calls and serve as translators, although that was above and beyond the call of duty.

Q: Besides the ambassador, leaving the ambassador aside for now, who were some of the influentials at the embassy outside the economic section.

LEHFELDT: Well always, of course, the political counselor and the DCM, who in my first days there was Nick Thacher and the political counselor was Jack Armitage. They were in turn succeeded by Jack Miklos as DCM and Don Toussaint as political counselor, and later Andy Kilgore as political counselor.

Q: Did you ever know the chief of Armish-MAAG around that time?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Major General Hamilton Twitchell.

Q: Twitchell--he was still there?

LEHFELDT: He was there. He was succeeded by Williamson, Butch Williamson, who in turn was succeeded by, Rock Brett? Brett, no. No, Brett wasn't--Brett was air force. There was a bad patch in there when there were funny changes. I can't remember the name right now.

Q: I guess MacArthur was the person actually who you worked for.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: What was he like to work for?

LEHFELDT: Unvarnished?

Q: Yes, as much as you...

LEHFELDT: I got along with him very well. A lot of other people did not. Partly because his competence in things economic was not well developed, let's say. He relied on me both for information gathering and for interpretation for his purposes. He developed, it seemed to me, a good deal of confidence in me. I learned early on if I wanted to argue with him I would argue with him in private--not at a staff meeting or in public. That was the way to handle the gentlemen. We were together, sometimes at three or four o'clock in the morning on his bed, reporting on the Tehran oil negotiations of the early part of the 1970s. My colleague in the British embassy, Donald Murray, and I went to meet the oil men. It could be Lord Strathalmond,

Willy Fraser, Chuck Percy from Exxon, Al Decrane from Texaco, Bill Tavoulareas from Mobil, or a combination of them, or only one of the, when they finished their day's negotiating with OPEC representatives, led by Jamshid Amouzegar. Then Donald and I would debrief them--or "take what it was they wanted to give us" is a better way of putting it--and I would go back to the embassy, prepare a message, and then he wanted me to come over at any time of the day or night and we'd go over the message and get it off. He always put his imprint on it. Always.

Q: Tell me. How effective do you think he was as ambassador?

LEHFELDT: Not very. His relations with the American community were parlous at best. He was scared stiff of the Shah. He had a couple of interests that people pandered to--hunting primarily. I just don't think he measured up as a very good ambassador in the sense that he could stand up to the Shah, interpret what the Shah meant, interpret what the government meant, and sort of put it together in an amalgam that was useful as a policy guide in Washington. Similarly when it came to the oil men he, I'm afraid, offended them badly in the first few meetings when they came to call on him. With the result that they never really trusted him. So, there was a relationship surely, because of the position he held. But there was no friendship and no confidence.

Q: He seemed to have an imperious manner to me.

LEHFELDT: Yes. But that was because he affected that to look as much like his uncle as possible. Which his wife always made fun of. She being from a political family herself.

Q: Yes--the Barkleys.

Now Joseph Farland took over for MacArthur I guess in 1972.

LEHFELDT: Yes. He was there nine months. They rushed him up from Pakistan so there would be an ambassador in place when Nixon came, Nixon and Kissinger came. In May.

Q: Was he appointed to be a long-term ambassador? Was that the original purpose?

LEHFELDT: He was to be a long-term ambassador, yes. But he was a failure. He, on the other hand, had great relations with the business community.

Q: He was a coal industrialist, from coal mining?

LEHFELDT: Well yes, sort of. His wife's family was, and he was a lawyer "of counsel" to [Walter] Surrey and [David] Morse here in Washington. He'd worked many years in the Republican vineyards fund raising, so he was rewarded with a lot of ambassadorships.

At any rate, he was there for about nine months, and was very popular in the American community. He was a lightweight, no question about that. He had no, apparently could build no rapport with the Shah. I have heard it said and I don't know that I can confirm this, but his recall was as much a desire expressed by the Shah as it was a need by Mr. Nixon to find a place for

Ambassador Helms.

Q: *That's very interesting. That's very interesting.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. I can't prove that.

Q: *So Helms comes in early 1973, I guess?*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *How would you characterize him as ambassador?*

LEHFELDT: Well he was very knowledgeable. He had a background that was unparalleled as far as I could tell, in any ambassador I worked for in Iran or knew about in Iran. He was preoccupied with some of his legal problems at home. And of course all of the Watergate nonsense that took place after he left. He was dragged in--kicking and screaming oft times--but he had to worry about that too. He and the Shah got along very well indeed. He knew how to interpret the Shah, knew how to deal with him, had long experience in it, and of course with his unparalleled connections in the US government. Whether he had the confidence of the US government or the attention I don't know, but he at least had the connections to get something done when it needed to be done. I had the greatest admiration for him, not to mention affection. I think he made an impressive record in Iran. Let me I guess add this at this point--if there were any directives from him that we stop trying to find out anything, I never saw or heard them.

Q: *In terms of what's going on in the country generally, and politically.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Or the opposition or anything else. That simply didn't take place on my watch.

Q: *So he was much easier to work for than MacArthur, I take it.*

LEHFELDT: Yes, in a different way. I had no trouble working for MacArthur. Other people did, but I didn't. He was not as easy in some respects to work for because he had a knowledge and a willingness to go off and do things himself without naturally checking whether it was what I wanted to do or not. It didn't matter whether I wanted to do it or not. Sometimes advice was not sought. But that was a rare occasion. What else can I say about him?

Any time I got in trouble with an Iranian government official--and I did. When I say trouble, I was backed up. If you'd like an example--after the oil price increases and money started rolling in, one of the preoccupations of the U.S. government--naturally--was the recycling of petrodollars. It fell to my lot, on instructions from Washington, to go over to see the then head of the central bank, Dr. [Mohammed] Yeganeh, to break the news that the U.S. government was not going to support a couple of World Bank loans to Iran that they had in process, and that indeed we would like to suggest to the government--to the Iranian government--that they start putting their oil money in places where it would whirl around the world and help some of those nations especially that had no oil and were badly off and could use some funds somehow. Well this upset

him greatly. He rushed to the palace to tell the Shah all about it, and the Shah got all over Helms. But, after venting his spleen a little bit, the next thing we knew the Shah had announced a grandiose scheme to loan money at low interest to developing nations and so forth and so on, if you recall that episode. So, you know, these episodes had their effect, or these initiatives had their effect. The personal equation may be a little difficult at times, but it was easy in that sense to work with Helms because he understood what had to be done.

Q: *Very interesting.*

Who were your principal contacts in the Iranian government? Who were the people you worked with the most?

LEHFELDT: Perforce, the one I worked with most was Mehdi Samil. He was variously head of the central bank, head of the Plan Organization, special advisor to the Prime Minister, head of the Agriculture Development Bank, a whole series of things of that sort. He always had a special relationship with Prime Minister [Amir Abbas] Hoveyda and the court, indeed. I respected him as a good technocrat. He gave good solid unvarnished advice. We became close and I think still are close, good friends. He was one.

Another I worked with a good deal--now let me see, there were a whole batch of them. But Fereidun Mahdavi, who was then deputy director of the Industrial Mining and Development Bank, later became Minister of Commerce and was the organizer of what I call the, I don't know, Chinese students price control committees during his reign as Minister of Commerce. He was a factor in bringing about the revolution, from my view.

Jamshid Amouzegar, who was Minister of Finance. I, in a variety of ways, worked with him. I single-handedly negotiated with him on the Iranian debt question with the United States for several years.

Q: *This is the lend-lease debts?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, the lend-lease debts. Which he was totally opposed to paying. But I, after Chinese water torture I guess, got him to give me a million something or other--a million three as I recall--on account, and was going to give me more money. Then I made a mistake. [laughs] He was always very prickly on the subject to begin with. I made the mistake of suggesting that, you know, the U.S. government really had no legal requirement to do some of these things we did after the war. Because after all the Iran agreements were with the Soviet Union and with Great Britain, and we were simply a subcontractor to Britain. With that he went straight through the ceiling and said, "I'm not gonna give you another penny!" [laughs] But I see him, I mean we're still friends--I see him here in Washington once in a while.

Another one--Hassan Ali Ebtehaj, who was a senior statesman, head of the Iranian's Bank. Reza Moghadam, who was deputy head of the Plan Organization. Khodadad Farmanfarmayan.

Q: *So a wide range.*

LEHFELDT: *A wide range. Sure--a wide range of personalities. They were in and out of the government, some of them. Let me see. [Abol-] Qassam Kheradju, who was head of the Iranian Industrial Mining and Development Bank. Reza Fallah from NIOC [National Iranian Oil Company]. Taghi Mossadegh from the gas company, whom I still see--socially at least. There are some others I know. Dr. Tahir Zia'i, the head of the Chamber of Commerce.*

Q: *You got to know a number of these people personally as well as...*

LEHFELDT: Oh yes. Personally, socially, and officially on business purposes.

Q: *Did you get a sense of what people privately felt about say the Shah, the Shah's system?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. For the most part in that time frame, and I have to divide from then to the second half in my stay in Iran. There was a great deal of pride in what was happening and what could happen if properly carried out. There was a great deal of satisfaction--scarce resources were being managed prudently. This comes from Khodadad Farmanfarmayan, from Mehdi Samil, Cyrus Samil, and a couple of people I hadn't mentioned earlier. Reza Amin, who was head of Aryamehr University at the time. Farhang Mehr, who was the head of the Pahlavi University in Shiraz, also head of the Melli Insurance Company for a long time. He was a Zoroastrian and head of the Zoroastrian community in Iran.

They felt very proud of what they were accomplishing educationally, technically, and industrially. They were less proud of the ultimate effects of the land reform and the way agriculture was being treated. They knew they had problems. But they felt that given time--and this was something the prime minister said every once in a while--that "If you give me another ten years or so, we will overcome our problem and we'll last. But if I don't have another ten years"--this was well into the end of his prime ministry...

Q: *Hoveyda?*

LEHFELDT: *Hoveyda. "--I don't know whether we can make it last or not." So that, sure, they questioned. A lot of these people came out of the opposition--Fereidun Mahdavi, Tudeh, Mehdi Samil. If not Tudeh, one of the parties aligned with it. A lot of them came back from abroad, from positions of trust abroad, to take part in the reformation of Iran. Not because of their love for the Pahlavis, but rather their patriotism and their strong sense of duty to their family and their country. There were even some from the old Qajar families, as Farmanfarmayans, who looked at the Pahlavis as upstarts. If you got enough Farmanfarmayans together privately, they would talk about those sergeant's kids, and so on. [laughs]*

Q: *Did they express concern about the lack of political institutions that could outlast the Shah? Was there concern about the political dimensions of development?*

LEHFELDT: There were always those concerns. But, you know, the various experiments that took place in the five years I was there at the embassy, with the Mardom Party. The head of that

was a friend of mine, who was killed in an automobile accident up in the Caspian. Then the Rastakhiz party, which everybody made fun of. I remember one election day I was overseeing Jamshid Amouzegar, and I made a crack about, "Why aren't you out voting today?" He says, "I am not political. I have never belonged to a party and I never will." Well he ended up as the head of the damn Rastakhiz Party, because the Shah told him to. So yes there were concerns but, they had never enjoyed democracy before--really never had in Iran. The system was making progress fitfully. There were leads and lags as there always are, but on the whole I think they were reasonably satisfied. But of course they all had friends who had run afoul of SAVAK somewhere along the line. So, they were realists!

Q: When was the first time you met the Shah?

LEHFELDT: Oh, I guess when I went up with MacArthur for a presentation of his credentials--seven o'clock in the morning in a white tie and tails. [laughs]

Q: Did you ever have conversations with him?

LEHFELDT: These were always very formal occasions when I was permitted near the Shah. That was one of the things that happened with the marriage of the Shah and [Empress] Farah. I know from friends who were in Tehran in the immediate post-war days and as late as the early 1950s, the court was very informal. Third secretaries from the Turkish embassy or the American embassy would play tennis with the Shah. But by the time I got there the formality of the court, caused as much by security requirements as by the growing numbers of young princes and so forth, and lackeys who were trying to protect him from his public, and the genuine need to protect him as a matter of fact, made it impossible for ordinary intercourse. If that's the right word there.

Q: What were your general impressions of him, just from afar.

LEHFELDT: From afar he was--I had a number of impressions, filtered through by various people and from my own observations. He was bound and determined to appear imperial. Indeed, he said as much to a newsman that I know when they were together on an airplane flight to Geneva or to Switzerland once. "I have to act like a Shah. I have to act imperial. My people expect it. That isn't my nature, but that's what I have to do." You get a sense of the emptiness of the imperial life from another Iranian friend of mine who was often at the court. When I was involved in some negotiations involving an American company with Hushang Ansary and the development of the Sar Chesmeh copper deposit which was then, you know, an enormous deposit. They played a game called Botticelli up in the court. Do you remember how that goes? I'm not quite sure I remember either. They occupied several hours of time at the court playing Botticelli with the Queen and the Shah and the various hangers on. One of the questions apparently revolved around the Sar Chesmeh copper deal--I can't remember what it was. But my friend Cyrus said that, you know, this is the way it often is. Sit around and make small talk, and while away their time. Get all dressed up with their jewels and gowns, the children and so forth and so on, and just very sterile.

Q: Now in terms of the state of the country as a whole--Iran as a whole--in this period, what were your impressions of the conditions and...

LEHFELDT: Of the reach?

Q: Yes.

LEHFELDT: Well Tehran, of course, was spoiled. Tehran got everything first, and got all the best. It was necessary. If you're traveling around the rest of the country, the level of availabilities of the necessities of life and some of the good things of life were almost entirely dependent upon how wealthy you were. Which is not unusual. The poorer people in Tehran were infinitely better off than the poorer people, let's say, in Mashed or Tabriz or Isfahan or Shiraz. Now this changed. You could see the change, you know, it was almost palpable, especially as compared 1969 and 1978. You could go off in the farthest village in Iran in 1978 and something would have happened in the village that reflected the increased wealth. It might even only be a portable radio that they started to like to carry around. The Iranian version of the ghetto blaster, I guess. Or, plastic dishes of one sort or another, or plastic slippers. A whole variety--some nonsensical, but some very utilitarian things that in 1968, 1969 simply were not available to the average Iranian. That doesn't mean there was any equitable distribution of the wealth--I'm not saying that at all. Just that the trickle down theory works if you don't expect too much of it.

Q: When people looked at the country in a political sense, did you see it as basically stable in the early 1970s?

LEHFELDT: Well that was an article of faith. That was--I don't know whether Ambassador MacArthur gave you his "island of stability in the sea of troubles" speech, or "the great arc speech," as we used to call it. Or the simile of "the Shah is trying to pull the Iranian nation out of its womb into the twentieth century" so forth and so on. I don't know where he developed those things, but they were colorful if nothing else.

But that was an article of faith that there was just no way that he was in any way challenged by any political movement. Sure there would be the odd terrorist. As days went by, it was clear that yes, there was a movement that was out to get him or somebody--anybody they could get to ambush, Ambassador MacArthur even, as you probably know. They tried the Shah several times too. But no, there was never a question that he was in any danger in those early five years. The first five years.

Q: Say in terms of the religious opponents of the Shah. Were there any look at them, or thought about them as...

LEHFELDT: Very little. We knew that with the death of the grand ayatollah--(Kashami) I forget his name now. He (the Shah) had never succeeded in bringing himself or getting anybody to agree on who should be named to replace him as the grand ayatollah. My own feeling is that he just decided he wasn't going to do it anymore. After all, my own view of the sweep of Iranian history is that it was a constant battle between the monarchy and religious--the secular and

religious, as exemplified by the monarchy and the religious establishment. I think that goes back as far as the Safavids at least. I don't know whether it went beyond that or not. Probably so. If you look at some of the old pictures when Reza Shah came into power, the majlis was made up of mostly mullahs--or at least they were wearing turbans. I was told later when I made that observation to somebody that, "Well yes a lot of people took on the religious attire at that time, but that didn't necessarily make them Mullahs." I still think most of them were, though. At any rate, the religious element was always there.

When Ataturk successfully--at least up until now has successfully--made stick the division of church and state in Turkey, Reza Shah wanted to do that in Iran, and [King} Amanullah wanted to do it in Afghanistan.

Q: *Who?*

LEHFELDT: King Amanullah, who was assassinated and overthrown in 1929 by Bacchaw Saqao. At any rate, that's neither here nor there.

Reza Shah's desire was to try to separate church and state. But he had a much more difficult time of it, because the relationship of church and state in the Shi'i tradition I think is stronger than in the Sunni tradition. I'm not totally certain of that, but I think it's...

Q: *That's my impression.*

LEHFELDT: So it was more difficult for Reza Shah to impose the same sort of reforms that Ataturk imposed. But that was his desire. Had World War II not come along to frustrate any further developments by Reza Shah, he might have got them there. But, who knows.

Q: *Now in terms of the, say, foreign relations issues. How would you describe, as you understood it then, the policy approach that Nixon, Kissinger, and Rogers took towards Iran.*

LEHFELDT: It changed. Perforce it changed with the withdrawal of the British from the Gulf Area in 1970. We had relied on the British for a variety of activities in those days, and we were not either psychologically geared or I believe materially geared to replace the British in any real way. Certainly not commercially. [laughs] The advent of a Britishless area, with their ability to manipulate, maneuver, and control made it incumbent on the U.S. to try to look to its policy approach to the area. That coupled with the growing preoccupation with Vietnam--leaving Watergate alone--and the rapprochement that Nixon achieved with the Soviets and the Chinese made it clear to all of us that some changes in American policy were necessary. Now whether it was necessary--well, be that as it may. What eventuated was of course Nixon's sort of anointing the Shah as the peace keeper for the area, to the irritation of the rest of the Arabs, and to the--I presume--great joy of the Soviets. I'm not sure, knowing that he couldn't do it.

But some great things, I think some useful things happened as the result of that. I believe the agreement engineered by the Algerians with Iraq over the Shatt al-Arab was a real achievement, and would--all other things being equal--have let to a good deal more stability in the area. I don't

know whether that was the result of Nixonian-Kissingerian policies or not, but that was certainly one--it followed from them, anyway.

Of course the effects of Nixon's diplomacy towards Iran were that the Shah, during the 1973 oil crisis, and as a result of the Arab-Israeli War and the deepening Vietnamese crisis, turned out to be one of the most staunch areas of support for the United States, in the sense that he made available a squadron of used, but a squadron none the less, of F5E's for transfer to Vietnam. He made sure that our Navy was resupplied at sea--of course we paid, none the less the supplies were there, when the Arabs were cutting us off--and other evidences of strong support that flowed from the Nixon-Kissinger policies. There were exacerbations in other directions, but in terms of strictly US-Iran arrangements and relations they were good.

Q: Was there any dissent in the embassy or at the State Department or elsewhere from the policy? Any thinking that maybe it might not be workable?

LEHFELDT: I wasn't aware of any. Then, that wasn't my bag.

Q: Yes, exactly.

One thing you mentioned earlier in terms of the question of stability. You said that as far as you know, Helms had given no directives saying, "There should be no contact with opposition people." To what extent were there discussions with, let's say, former National Front people. Was there contact with the opposition under Nixon and Ford?

LEHFELDT: Well of course it's easy to say there were no directives not to discuss anything with them. Mostly it was their decision, the opposition decision, not to have anything to do with the United States representatives. Very few of them would openly consort with us, or talk with us, because they were afraid for their skins as well. You know, those of us who didn't speak Persian particularly well of course were condemned to those who spoke English or French or German or Spanish or Italian or whatever. They were by and large the all ready coopted ones into the Shah's system. The uncooperative ones, the active oppositionists, the Mujahideen, the religious fanatics, had every reason not to talk to us. So that for someone in my position to go off and seek out someone like that would have been fruitless almost.

Now, having said that let me say this, add this. We got some bitter complaints from the palace one day, from Court Minister [Assadallah] Alam. It seems that every American newsman or anybody who came to interview the Shah came to the American embassy first for a briefing and then he comes up and asks the most embarrassing questions. [laughs] I recall--and you may recall this too, I don't know. In one interview with Mike Wallace, Mike Wallace came to the embassy and several of us briefed him. I briefed him for a couple of hours. Then he went up to the Shah and asked a lot of searching questions about his sisters' involvement in drug smuggling. Just absolutely infuriated the man. So much so that on his Sixty Minute portion covering the Shah, he was able to make the Shah look like a real fool. Unfortunately. I don't know why the Shah subjected himself to these things. There was absolutely no reason for him to. But he just had enough amour propre and enough egoism to think he could out-smart these rather more

experienced interviewers.

Q: In terms of the question of context--I mean the CIA had a station in Iran, but did they have people that would be in touch with, in a sense they must control the Soviet Union questions.

LEHFELDT: You know, as economic counselor I wasn't--again--privy to the things they did. When I was acting either as charge or as DCM, which I did at various times under Helms, yes then I had a little bit more knowledge but I really don't have a great feel for the kinds of things they were sending in. I saw a lot of their reporting. Yes, they had people scattered around. I don't believe, I never really got the impression, that they were actively cultivating oppositionists. Yet in post-revolution discussions with some of my friends at the Agency, it comes clear that, you know, they had pretty good relations with a lot of these people. They knew a lot of them.

Q: Through the years.

LEHFELDT: Over the years, yes. Including Ghorbanifar.

Q: George Cave was station chief then, wasn't he?

LEHFELDT: No, he was never station chief.

Q: I thought he was station chief?

LEHFELDT: He was deputy. Station chiefs, unless it was a cover sort of arrangement, the station chief for many years was Bill Bromell followed by Art Callahan followed by somebody else, followed by a man who had spent the thirteen previous years in Tokyo, who was station chief at the time of the revolution. George at one time was technically working for me as my civilian aviation guy.

Q: That was the impression I had. That was his cover.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: But he had an office somewhere else.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: And the first one was Bill Bromell?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Okay, that's interesting.

Now, in respect to some of these policy issues. From what you sensed, what kind of interest made Iran important to Washington?

LEHFELDT: Well it was a market among other things. We had hoped it was going to be a growing market. It was a source, of course, of profit for our oil companies--considerable profit. It was an object of possible investment, and other companies were there besides the oil companies. From a military point of view, if the relationships between Turkey and Iran made sense at all after the demise of the Baghdad Pact, it was in the security sense of relationship with NATO and so on, and with Pakistan. And it provided a very important air route for American commercial, as well as military, aircraft from Europe to the Far East. Now they have to go all the way around. Well, that's not quite as important today as it was in those days, in the early days, when jets were just beginning. It was certainly important then. And from another set of glasses, the intelligence side, it provided a safe haven for some of our intelligence gathering operations on the Soviet Union. So there are a whole series of--and it was the kingpin on the Persian Gulf. In Doug MacArthur's time, he would often rail against the "radical Arab regimes of those wretched little states who have just been let free. We have to worry about their long range stability, and the Shah is the man to keep them in place," and so forth and so on. Finish the statement. So from the point of view of that time frame, there were a whole set of interesting, if not necessarily overwhelming, considerations that made Iran important to us.

Q: How did policy filter down from Washington? Were cables circulated widely, or was it the ambassador who would give you briefings, or what?

LEHFELDT: Well of course we all, we came in and out of Washington. We were all--those, at least the senior officers of the embassy were privy to the missives that came out and to the periodic assessments, intelligence assessments. We had all the policy briefs that came out of Washington. Unless there was something particularly sensitive, we had access to all the incoming telegram files from Washington--to the ambassador, to the various sections. In the economic-commercial session, by and large I was about the only one who was privy to most of that. But, there was a certain amount of need to know. But when it came to things petroleum and when we got into these very delicate negotiations. John Washburn, certainly was privy to most of them.

Q: Who were your counterparts in Washington? Who did you keep in touch with in Washington in terms of economics?

LEHFELDT: Oh--[laughs]--good question. Sort of just sent things off into the blue! No. [laughs] Partly that's true! Partly that's true. You never knew who you were sending things to sometimes. No, the desk is always uppermost in our mind. At the time, for most of the time I was there, it was either Jack Miklos or Charlie Naas, John Countryman, Bob Dowell, Mike Michaud, and so on who were always understudies. Jim Akins and his successors in the oil-petroleum side. On the commercial side, it was a little bit more dicey because they just--most of them--the Commerce Department were fighting different games. They didn't like MacArthur. They didn't like me, they didn't like my commercial attaché, because they felt we weren't playing the Commerce Department game.

Q: Who was the attaché?

LEHFELDT: George Ellsworth. Who was a funny man. You know, very strange, very effective, inspired great confidence in the locals. Was well liked in the American business community, but not by his own department. [laughs]

Q: He was part of the Commerce Department.

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, he was a Foreign Service officer but a career commercial officer. Had worked for them for years! All over the world--Latin America, Vietnam, wherever. Very accomplished, knew the game.

Q: Did you keep in touch with officials at other agencies besides Commerce and State? Like Treasury or the ExImBank?

LEHFELDT: Treasury to a much lesser degree. ExImBank yes, because you know Henry Kearns used to come out and his minions used to come out. Whenever I came to Washington I would see Henry. I saw Bill Casey, one time when I was leaving Iran. He was then head of ExIm. Treasury and certainly the then beginnings of what is now DOE [Department of Energy]. Mel Connant was part of the operation in Treasury. Bob Ebel, who is now here with Enserch.

Q: With what?

LEHFELDT: Enserch. It's a corporation.

Let me see, what other agencies. Agriculture I used to go see quite a lot as well, because we had extensive agricultural arrangements--CCC credits [Commodity Credit Corporation], Fat Lamb programs, Regional Pulse Improvement Project, and things like that.

Q: Most of the correspondence with Washington was done through cables, or was it also...

LEHFELDT: Cables. There was a good deal of "official-informal" as well.

Q: Yes. Letters.

LEHFELDT: Yes. Cables and what we called dispatches, which I guess, they're almost obsolete now.

Q: Those are the longer papers.

LEHFELDT: Yes. You were supposed to do your think pieces on those. They served that purpose in the early days, but as cable became so easy and so cheap, in a manner of speaking, dispatches became something that you could sit down and write your novel almost, and send it in. Somebody might read it, and find its way into the archives, and you will have made your point. But you've had no effect whatever on policy.

Q: Now during this period, as you note, Nixon and Kissinger put in, in effect, a new National Security Council system, in which I gather the State Department lost some of its policy making authority on. Did you get that sense at the time, that State had a diminished role?

LEHFELDT: Well we had that sense but mostly because of the newspaper reporting that Bill Rogers was not considered to be an equal of anybody's in the White House. It didn't surprise any of us. Certainly didn't surprise me, because I'd lived through the Kennedy White House in the Department of State, and they had the same approach to dealing with the State Department as the Nixon White House and as the Carter and as the Reagan White House! "Forget the professionals. We politicians know better how to do things." Well it was fine when you have real politicians with a great deal of background--as McGeorge Bundy, and so on and so forth, in the Kennedy White House. Even in the Nixon White House you had enough professionalism, with Kissinger and the people he gathered around him, to have some faith that nonsensical things would not occur. But in the Carter White House, that faith was dissipated. In the Reagan White House--well, we're not in to that.

Q: The story is still unfolding.

LEHFELDT: Yes. They had a guilty plea, by the by, from [Carl] Channell today on conspiracy to defraud. He named as his co-conspirators [Oliver] North and, I've forgotten the other.

Q: That's very interesting.

But these arrangements that we're talking about at the NSC. Did this cause any problems for people at the embassy?

LEHFELDT: Not really.

Q: No real practical effect.

LEHFELDT: No real practical effect as far as we were concerned.

Q: Okay.

Now, one of the major issues during this period, of course, was the control of oil prices and production. How much work did you do on energy issues? I guess you've already talked about it a bit.

LEHFELDT: A lot.

Q: Apparently quite a bit.

LEHFELDT: A lot. Yes. John Washburn and Bob Dowell before him were really first rate professionals in the petroleum business. They understood it, they did a good deal of research in it, they had infinite number of contacts and associations within and without NIOC and the oil

business and the private companies--British, American, French, Dutch. So, I never felt starved for information, in the daily practical sense. Where the U.S. government was hampered was, the oil companies had been permitted--and some of this I've just picked up recently by reading about the Harriman missions and Hoover, that helped set up the Consortium after the Mossadegh days, and [John J.] McCloy--permitted the oil companies full and unfettered control. There was no requirement on them any time, to keep the U.S. government informed. Indeed, our ability to get good solid, reliable, statistical data was very low. The, what is it called--American Petroleum, API. It did not collect information. They collected some general stuff, but not the kind of information you needed for close analysis of pricing and supply, and so forth and so on.

So that as time went on, some of the things we had to deal with when 1970 and 1971--the early days of the Tehran negotiations--came along, we had some intractable problems that couldn't be solved that had been caused by other economic actions. For instance. The domestic refining and distribution systems of most oil companies were almost break even operations only. Because the companies had pushed all the profits to the well head. That's because unrepatriated profits were not taxed! So, they had billions of dollars to play with for added exploration around the world, and development around the world, that were--until they repatriated profits--were free money. So that when the local government started--after the OPEC agreements--started taking a bigger bite, a much bigger bite, it made the distribution and refining operations unprofitable at home. That's why you saw a lot of stations close, a lot of chains sold off, and so forth and so on.

Q: They need to rationalize their systems.

LEHFELDT: Yes. None of us realized that until, almost too late.

Q: So you're saying the cooperation with the companies was very, nil practically.

LEHFELDT: Parlous, yes.

Q: Parlous. Before we get to the details, how would you characterize the general approach the Nixon administration took to OPEC as OPEC developed?

LEHFELDT: All the time until 1973, we had strict instructions to stay away from OPEC. We were not even to recognize it as a viable entity. There may have been--no there wasn't an OPEC office in Tehran but, the OPEC office was in Vienna. The embassy in Vienna was instructed to stay away from it. We had no knowledge of what OPEC was doing as an organization. When the negotiations came along during the last days of 1971, I guess it was--the early days of 1971--that resulted in the increase of oil prices to, now these get a little hazy.

Q: You mean the Tehran agreement? February 1971?

LEHFELDT: The Tehran Agreement. Yes, February 1971. The results of that agreement were announced by the Shah in a television address, which we watched at Doug MacArthur's, at the residence. All the oil men were there because they didn't know what was coming out, either. They hadn't been told by the Shah or by anybody what was going on. Just as side light, the

Japanese ambassador and a couple of his people had been sent out from Japan to monitor the things were also there, because he was an old friend of MacArthur's. The Japanese of course along with the Germans, who at the time were expected to pay for all of these increases, had no handle on any of it. John Washburn and I at the time, came to the conclusion that the Japanese especially would never let themselves get caught in that situation again. From then on we had a very active Japanese effort to get hold of, get some controls one way or another--by investing in petrochemicals, by buying oil companies, by buying whatever. Until now you see heavy Japanese involvement all over the oil business. But at that time they felt very helpless.

Q: I'd like to ask you some questions about the Tehran agreement and how it developed, the Irwin Mission and so forth. How are we fixed for time?

LEHFELDT: It's almost six o'clock.

Q: Let's go maybe for a little while longer, then we can break off for now.

LEHFELDT: Yes, sure.

Q: Now, many important developments in late 1970 and early 1971. Libya raised prices first, and the OPEC met at Caracas and declared their intention to take over oil pricing generally. How did the embassy I guess, and the State Department generally respond to that decision?

LEHFELDT: Well the oil company strategy at the time, which was also the U.S. government strategy, was not to recognize OPEC and was to keep the Eastern Med situation--which is the Libyan situation, we called it Eastern Med [iterranean]--separated, walled off, from the [Persian] Gulf situation. Gulf pricing and Eastern Med pricing would have no relationship one to the other. Even the oil that was delivered to the Eastern Med through pipelines from the Gulf were to be considered special from our point of view. Now the oil companies always suspected that Doug MacArthur gave this away in some of his loose talk with Jamshid Amouzegar and the Shah. I don't know. I think so too, but I don't have any proof of it. That he linked the two through the U.S. government for the Shah and Jamshid Amouzegar, who was then the, sort of the, leader of OPEC, and forced the oil price increase of January 1971 that did relate Eastern Med and Gulf prices on the oil consortium in Iran.

Q: Was there much concern that Libya would convince OPEC to use oil as a political weapon?

LEHFELDT: Yes there was. That was why it was our desire and firm intent to separate Eastern Med pricing from Gulf pricing.

Q: From what I've read, and I've seen some of the Church Committee hearings and so forth, apparently now McCloy and the oil companies, I guess they worked on a plan for the majors and the independents together to take a collective approach.

LEHFELDT: There were forty some of them that met every morning for hours, yes.

Q: This was called the joint approach, which the State Department and the Justice Department sort of approved?

LEHFELDT: Yes, they gave them a letter of...

Q: Waiver.

LEHFELDT: Waiver.

Q: From the Anti-Trust Act?

LEHFELDT: Anti-Trust Act, yes.

Q: Wasn't John Irwin sent over to negotiate?

LEHFELDT: Came over on a mission, yes. Came over on a fact finding mission more than anything else, and he went through all of the Gulf, through Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Iran, and I don't know where else. Of course John came out of an oil background himself. He was a banker as well as a lawyer. He understood the business. I never ever got the feeling that the Irwin mission--this gets a little foggy--that the Irwin mission really had that much effect on the outcome of negotiations. It was more fact finding as nearly as I could tell.

Q: This joint approach, then, the companies were trying to organize. Did the State Department actively push that? Or was that just...

LEHFELDT: No, that was just the oil companies. The oil companies. The oil companies acted jointly in Iran, as well.

Q: Now according to one document that I've seen, the Shah was distressed by this joint approach idea of collective bargaining.

LEHFELDT: Yes, he felt that he was being ganged up on. That was part and parcel of his congenital, or his long suffering, paranoia. Which is shared by all Iranians, that they're being conspired against. When you are forty oil companies led by the major oil companies of the world, that they view as having manipulated them for years--in a sense they did. Well, in a real sense they did. Ganging up and meeting on how to deal with all of these--as some of the oil men might say--"rag heads," sure you do get real paranoia. Let me just throw in a couple of reasons why at least on the surface it's believable that they were being conspired against.

When I first got to Iran, in 1969, the total oil income for Iran was 690 million dollars. That's it--less than a billion. Of course when I left in 1974 it was twenty-four billion, allegedly. It was, came close to that. We would argue over pennies a barrel, which the oil companies would sit there with a straight face and say, "This means billions of dollars to us." It did. But the penny a barrel the Shah was going to get as increased royalty was peanuts. Five million barrels a day, let's say--not very much.

Q: I guess the Consortium had an agreement whereby they could control production, and limit it. I think it was the APO system, something like that.

LEHFELDT: They had an agreement with the Shah on annual liftings. Or they had five term, five year, agreements that were reviewed. What each company would lift. Of course given their alternate supplies around the world, this is why the oil companies were so successful in keeping them separated for so many years. The Saudis would push them to lift more, and so the Iranians couldn't sell more or they couldn't undertake to lift more from Iran because they were lifting more from Saudi, and vice versa. They played one off against the other very nicely over the years.

Q: I had the impression that the companies had their own arrangements among themselves that the Shah didn't know about for some time, whereby they could control production, prevent over-production and falling prices.

LEHFELDT: Well yes, they could do that all right. Sure, they managed the supply--no question about it. Because you know left alone, Saudi Arabia and Iran and the Gulf states and Libya would have been flooding the market with oil if there hadn't been some controls. That's why they got in trouble later on when OPEC really was in control--they didn't control very well.

Q: Back to the time of the Irwin mission. According to one of the documents that I saw, the Shah threatened to MacArthur an oil embargo by the Gulf producers if the companies played what he called any "dirty tricks." Did you ever hear anything about that?

LEHFELDT: Yes, I heard that. But nobody really believed him. Nobody really believed him. He couldn't afford it. He was engaged in a military build up, domestic military build up. He was engaged in an extensive development program. They were already having trouble managing their resources in a way that provided for all of their needs, and the money tree hadn't started to blooming yet. So at the time that threat was made, it was viewed as an empty threat. But again, that was as much MacArthur's reporting and his failure to understand and handle the Shah, as anything else.

Q: What kind of options did MacArthur have, do you think, at that point?

LEHFELDT: What kind of options did he have? I don't know that he had any real options. But had Julius Holmes been there, Julius would have said, "Hey. [pounds on desk] Your majesty, calm down. It's in all of our interests to make sure this works out well. Threatening us like that isn't going to do you any good, it isn't going to do us any good." MacArthur simply reported. Didn't remonstrate, as far as I recall. Phil Talbot would have done the same thing.

Q: Back to this joint approach idea. Apparently the oil companies, were they hoping that Irwin would push this approach to the Shah?

LEHFELDT: I don't know.

Q: *You didn't get any sense from talking to...*

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: *Okay. In any case, after Irwin's visit the companies agreed to separate negotiations in Tehran with the Gulf states on the one hand, and in Tripoli...*

LEHFELDT: Yes. That was part of the same effort to keep them separated.

Q: *The company team in the Gulf was led by Lord Strathalmond.*

LEHFELDT: That's right. Willy Fraser.

Q: *Do you moderate negotiations pretty closely?*

LEHFELDT: Yes! Practically every night, with Willy and Al DeCrane, Bill Tavoulareas, Chuck Percy.

Q: *People you mentioned earlier.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Donald Murray. Sometimes the Dutch ambassador would join us when he was not out of the country. But when I say every night I meant we'd meet them at one or two or three o'clock in the morning.

Q: *Did the companies seek any advice or direction from the embassy, from Washington?*

LEHFELDT: No. No, no, no, no. Indeed, had we tried to instruct them they would have told us to go peddle our papers. [laughs]

Q: *They didn't seem to need diplomatic assistance at all?*

LEHFELDT: No, they didn't want us meddling. That was their point of view all along. This was not a diplomatic matter for "you amateurs in the oil business" to meddle in.

Q: *The policy makers in Washington saw it the same way? I mean, they approved that separation?*

LEHFELDT: Well, that was the way that it'd always been.

Q: *They accepted it?*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *Under the Tehran agreement, which was signed I guess February 14, 1971, the companies*

and the governments agreed to fairly modest price increases, compared to later on.

LEHFELDT: Yes. What did it go to? You don't have the figures.

Q: I don't have the figures.

LEHFELDT: It seemed to me we kept arguing about the equivalent cost of producing a barrel of synthetic or shale oil, which was then estimated to be about seven dollars or something like that. Seven forty-one.

Q: Somewhere in that range, yes. But in any case, the agreements were supposed to last until 1975. I think the Shah also agreed that Persian Gulf prices would be stable even if Libya raised prices.

LEHFELDT: Right.

Q: Was there any doubt at the time that the Shah would stick to the agreement? How did people assess its durability?

LEHFELDT: I don't think any of the oil companies ever felt comfortable that anybody was gonna stick with the agreement. In the event, of course, we never really were able to tell whether they were gonna stick by the agreement because of the things that happened, then, in 1973. After all it was only, what, a year and a half later that the whole thing fell apart.

Q: The Tehran agreement meant a major step in the direction of national control over petroleum resources. Did oil companies generally accept this as a fact? Was there some resistance?

LEHFELDT: Oh there was a great deal of resistance. There was always a lot of argument over interpretation of terms. When gas became an important factor--supplying gas, for instance, for the Soviet pipeline and for the projected pipeline through Turkey to Europe, and the major gas deposits that were discovered down in the Persian Gulf, absolutely mountain-sized--then a lot of discussion took place, a lot of argument took place, over the interpretation of what exactly those agreements meant, and what if any rights the Consortium had over these gas deposits. When they started using the gas for reinjection, for secondary recovery purposes, there was the question of, "Well who pays for that?" There was always the argument over who was going to fund the investment in added capacity. Of course the Iranians didn't want to invest in any of that. They felt the oil companies should invest almost all of it. So that, you know, there was a good deal of dubiety abroad as to the reality of the agreements, and how well you could make the Iranians stick to them, or the rest of the OPEC members.

Q: How did the State Department assess these developments? Was it something that they thought that they should try to accept and try to moderate, or something that they should try to reverse if possible?

LEHFELDT: No. There was never any thought, at least not in my mind or I never heard anybody

express the thought, that we might be able to turn the clock back. No way. Nor was there any real effort at the time, until 1973, to inject U.S. government muscle into the oil patch. Then it became a matter of life or death, of very great strategic value. That's when the U.S. government became much more active in trying to affect national policies on the local level of the individual OPEC states.

Q: Did any of the oil companies come around and, say, complain? Say maybe the State Department should be helping to push this?

LEHFELDT: Never. You know, these were all old fashioned international oil folk. They'd grown up in the tradition of, "We don't need you guys, and we don't want you meddling in our business." You had people like Jan van Raven and Chuck Percy, and let's see. Who was the...

Q: van Raven?

LEHFELDT: The Dutchman who was head of the Consortium at one time. Some of the British Petroleum people, especially, and certainly the French CFP--Compagnie Francaise des Petroles--guy. They had no interest whatever in especially having the U.S. government get into it.

Q: Okay. Now around the same time, the Shah was talking about going downstream, so to speak. Like getting the NIOC involved in refining and marketing of oil around the world. How much did the companies worry about that as a...

LEHFELDT: Because, as I told you, they pushed all the profits to the well head they were quite willing to sell them. You recall, NIOC did buy some of our Gulf's--Gulf I believe it was, or Getty stations here in the United States. I forget what exactly. They were prepared to buy much more. The oil companies were quite prepared to let them run those non-profit operations. The Iranians and the other oil producers had the mistaken impression that that's where the great profit was. That how they could control the off-take of crude supplies, was by increasing refinery run through sales at the station and so forth and so on. They had very little real understanding of the basic economics of petroleum business around the world.

Q: So the companies were not really worried about a competitive threat.

LEHFELDT: Not really. They were happy to take their money for those things.

Q: In early 1972 the Shah made another step towards national control with the Saint Moritz agreement to turn over policy making and operational responsibility of the Consortium to the NIOC. Did the companies discuss these negotiations with the embassy while they were going on? They were fairly protracted, apparently.

LEHFELDT: They were fairly protracted. No, not to my knowledge. The St. Moritz agreements were almost totally negotiated in the air there with senior oil company guys. It was, you know, it really was more window dressing than reality anyway.

Q: The companies still kept the privileged position in terms of...

LEHFELDT: Absolutely. They still had their off-take agreements and their cross purchasing agreements and so forth and so on. They weren't worried about that. If a little ego salving and massaging was necessary, I'm sure it didn't cause them very much pain.

Q: That's interesting.

Around the same time in 1972, 1973 the Shah and companies, I'm sure the Shah and OPEC were starting to stress the idea of unilateral national control for prices as a closed negotiations with the companies, whereby OPEC members would set prices themselves rather than bargaining with the companies. Did this move cause much concern, this announcement?

LEHFELDT: This was all posturing in a long line of posturing. These were all ploys in a negotiating game. If you stopped to get concerned about one or another of them, you would lose a lot of unnecessary sleep.

Q: Now, of course, in the fall of 1973, the oil price explosion came.

LEHFELDT: The Arab boycott of the U.S.

Q: How did the State Department respond to this development?

LEHFELDT: The immediate concern, of course, was military related, so that the efforts to keep the U.S. Navy supplied, and we were of course in the throes of--had we withdrawn from Vietnam by then? I guess we had.

Q: In the midst of it.

LEHFELDT: We were right in the midst of it.

Q: It may be over.

LEHFELDT: It gets fuzzy because my concerns were immediate in Iran, but I believe we were still in the throes of withdrawing, in any case, and concerned about the possible spread of war in South Asia. We were of course concerned for Japan, and its continued well being. We were concerned with the resupply of our own fleet in the Indian Ocean and Diego Garcia and COMIDEASTFOR [Commander, Middle East Forces] and all the rest of it. So that the efforts at the time were directed towards assuring that oil was available to us in whatever way. The Shah cooperated. He did not observe the boycott. Indeed, there are some Arabs who feel that he conspired to keep Israel supplied. I suspect there may be something to that, I don't know.

Q: Did he supply Israel?

LEHFELDT: Always. Yes. Iran was one of the major suppliers of Israel for years.

Q: Did he increase production at the same time the boycott was going on to compensate for some of the oil?

LEHFELDT: Well he promised the Arabs that he would not increase production, as I recall. He was not going to take advantage of it. By that time he was beginning to be concerned about conservation, himself. About how long in the future his oil supplies would last.

Q: In terms of the actual price increases he took a fairly hawkish position, though.

LEHFELDT: Indeed, indeed. He felt that it's a scarce commodity, and was gonna get scarcer. So let's make up for all past sins against us and put the oil price where it belongs, truly.

Q: How much of an effort was there, in a diplomatic sense, to try to moderate the Shah?

LEHFELDT: I never had the sense that we were trying to moderate the price from a price point of view. We were always grateful to him, and willing to go along, because he made supplies available. That was the utmost consideration.

Q: Stability in that aspect.

LEHFELDT: Right. Yes.

Q: Now, before the price explosion--I think in September, 1973--I think Libya had gone, raised some prices at this point. Nixon gave a speech where he said that the West could treat OPEC like it had treated Mossadegh in 1952, 1953, by denying OPEC countries markets for oil. Now, did anybody take that seriously?

LEHFELDT: If they did, it was very momentary. Because by then it was clear we didn't have control of OPEC. I frankly don't remember the speech! [laughs] It was a great ho-hummer, I would think. Because by then Mr. Nixon was in deep yoghurt himself. His leadership was nonexistent.

Q: Was there any kind of an effort made to find ways to bring prices down or check price increases by banks?

LEHFELDT: No, none that I could see. They wouldn't have worked in the event. I think we were dealing with a fait accompli, and we were dealing with the need to try to make the best of it. That was, again, that's when the episode I recounted about going to the Central Bank occurred. You know, finding ways to recycle these vast numbers of dollars that we're suddenly getting. That was our major diplomatic effort.

Q: I've gotten the sense that Nixon and Kissinger had some hope that they could bring oil prices down by somehow dividing OPEC countries among themselves. Did you get any sense that that was a desire?

LEHFELDT: If they had that sense it certainly wasn't imparted down to the embassy, at least down to my level. I think had we been asked for a view on that as a policy effort, I would have tried to discourage it. We really had to deal with the immediate effects rather than trying to roll back the clock.

Q: Was there much concern at the embassy or in Washington that the U.S. and Western Europe and Japan might somehow start competing for access to energy supplies?

LEHFELDT: Oh indeed! Indeed. There was some of that. There was great concern that Japan was--well let me back up. In the heady days for Iran, of those vast oil price increases, there are a number of court cases still going on resulting from efforts to sign long-term agreements with NIOC and Ashland Oil. The Japanese signed long-term agreements at great prices. Yes, there was concern that oil would not be available, that there would be shortages, that the Arab boycott would be reinstated--a whole variety of fears came along, that have proven groundless, but at the time it was real. Because Japan after all controlled the majority of the tanker fleet, Japan and the Greeks. In order to keep Japan, Incorporated going you had to have tankers going every day. So it was to their interest to sign long-term agreements. So they went ahead and did it. There were people coming to Iran in 1974, in early 1974 from the damnedest places in the United States trying to sign up long-term agreements, trying to bribe people. Trying to do all kinds of silly things in order to assure themselves of oil supplies. Some of the joint projects that were under way, especially utilizing gas, foundered because of the increase in prices. One was Transco, for instance, in the United States. It was going to be a major developer in the "C" structure down in the Persian Gulf. That had to back off.

Q: Now I read that during the first energy crisis some of the Europeans were concerned that the U.S. might use its political clout to negotiate bilateral agreements with key Mid East oil sources, which would effectively preempt supplies that otherwise would have gone to Europe or Japan. Was there any discussion about bilateral agreements by the government?

LEHFELDT: No, there was none. This was not in the American tradition. To my knowledge, if it was considered it was considered in the abstract in Washington--not as a reality. The Shah was quite willing to sign long-term agreements. But no, we preferred to let the market play.

Q: Okay. Now, in the long-term Kissinger supported a policy of cooperation, the U.S. supported the development of the International Energy Authority to bring Western countries into a cooperative stance. This is 1974 also. Did State Department officials see the IEA as sort of the potential counter cartel to OPEC? Was it seen in that way, or--you said that you weren't involved in that at all.

LEHFELDT: My involvement was minimal because by that time I was withdrawing from Iran. I left Iran in the summer of 1974, and went to Barcelona as Consul General. So that, you know, my involvement during the greater part of 1974 was simply not there. I did talk to a lot of oil people when I came back to Washington, before I went off to Spain and so on down the line. But I just don't recall any serious discussion of IE or whatever as being viewed as a counter poise to OPEC.

Q: Okay. This might have occurred before then, I'm not sure. But I read that Robert McNamara and Hollis Chenery at the World Bank believed that the U.S. would fail, in any case, to get OPEC to lower prices and that instead the U.S. should encourage OPEC to organize the recycling of oil revenues to assist countries that could not pay for oil on their own.

LEHFELDT: That's right.

Q: Do you recall any discussion of this proposal?

LEHFELDT: Oh yes! Well that was part and parcel of what I was doing. Yes. We pushed hard around the world for the oil countries to recycle their gains that they couldn't immediately use, into ways that would make it possible for the less fortunate countries to survive. The thought did not occur to the Shah until we pushed it on him. Then he took it as a, he made something out of it for his own grandeur. It was fine. I thought it was a great gesture.

Q: Now I think one development that did occur before you'd left in the summer was, I think, at least the initiative to organize what was called the US-Iran Joint Economic Commission.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Did you do much work on the Commission before you'd left?

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: I think it was in April it was sort of, proposed.

LEHFELDT: Yes. It was proposed, and we were studying what we were going to do, who was going to fund what, how much money the Iranians were gonna put up. But it was not a reality by the time I left. In the event the Iranians didn't want to put up any money. Unlike the Saudis. This was a, sort of a fashionable thing to do with all of the oil rich countries. We had a joint council with the Saudi Arabians, we had with Iran. I don't know whether we ever did one with Venezuela, but probably we did. And so on down the line.

Q: What were the general purposes of the Commission?

LEHFELDT: The general purposes were to discuss problem areas on an official level, and at the same time we organized the US-Iran Business Council as a private sector adjunct to the Joint Economic Council. I took part in that.

Q: Later on?

LEHFELDT: No--at the time, in the first meetings of that. Then when I came back as a businessman I took part in it from a business point of view. Walter Surrey, from Surrey and Morse, was very active. Hand Greenberg from AIG was very active--American International

Group's insurance guy. The head of it was a guy from IOP--International Oil Pipelines or something or other. From Iowa, as I recall. [Edward L.] Hennessy from Allied Chemical.

Q: To what extent was the Commission seen as a means to ensure that U.S. exporters got a large share of the market that would be developing as oil revenues increased?

LEHFELDT: Well that was our aim, of course. To make sure that the American share of the market was either constant or increased, and to smooth out the methods for increasing American involvement in the Iranian economy, and to help the Iranians export other things than oil to the United States. We met periodically. We got a few things done but nothing overly overwhelming.

Q: Back to this oil thing on another aspect of it. Did Richard Helms meet with the Shah to discuss OPEC questions, periodically? expressing concern about price increases?

LEHFELDT: Well I can't say that--I don't know that he expressed concern about price increases. It was the other aspects of it, the recycling and so on, that were necessary to be discussed. And the military supply, which was overwhelming. He was willing to sell us, for instance, oil for our strategic reserves. But at a price, and he wanted a long-term agreement. Which we weren't willing to sign.

Q: When you were a businessman in Iran in the late 1970s--well I'll get to this later on.

I'd like to go back a few years earlier, to Nixon's visit to Iran in 1972 on his way back from the Moscow Summit. Was the embassy given much advanced notice about this visit by the President and Secretary Kissinger?

LEHFELDT: No, not really a lot. We knew about it. We knew it was in the cards, because naturally any presidential visit requires a great deal of security being laid on and so on down the line. But our participation, other than the ambassador and the security people, was very minimal. We had all the troops from Washington there--all the press.

Q: You didn't get any real sense at the time of Nixon's or Kissinger's purposes in visiting the Shah?

LEHFELDT: No, none whatever. None whatever. The purpose was just as stated, to brief him on the results of his summit in the Soviet Union, and it was a great builder for the Shah's ego. But apart from that we had no sense that that was when they were going to anoint him as the savior of the Middle East.

Q: There was no discussion about that at that time?

LEHFELDT: No. It came out later.

Q: It did filter down, the decision?

LEHFELDT: But you see, Helms wasn't there then.

Q: *Farland was there?*

LEHFELDT: Farland was there. It was quite a different can of worms. Because he'd only been there a couple of weeks.

Q: *Was Farland present at the meetings with the Shah and Kissinger and Nixon?*

LEHFELDT: I doubt it. Seriously. He may have been.

Q: *You don't know who was?*

LEHFELDT: No. Because Nixon and Kissinger were staying at the palace. They could have met any time, anywhere.

Q: *They were in the stratosphere, yes. Now the policy, though, did filter down.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Rather soon as a matter of fact because the Iranians, the Shah himself was very proud of the whole thing and wanted it known that he was a chosen instrument.

Q: *This was confirmed by cables from Washington eventually?*

LEHFELDT: Over time, yes.

Q: *You got a sense of the arms sales approach that was discussed at the same time?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, because that was when Henry Kearns and I were discussing how we were going to use a billion dollars worth of ExIm money, or something of that sort.

Q: *Henry Kearns was the head of the bank?*

LEHFELDT: He was the head of the ExImBank.

Q: *Okay. The idea being that the Shah could use the money as he pleased?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, pretty much.

Q: *Was this a big departure from previous policy and practice?*

LEHFELDT: Oh absolutely. We had been very chary, very cautious, about the kinds of things and the amount of money that we thought the Shah should spend on his military. Suddenly to be able to say, "Well here's a half a billion or a billion. Let's get our military together and decide how we're gonna spend it," was essentially the way it was approached. Not on what they could usefully absorb. It was a real departure. General Twitchell was head of MAAG. His every effort

was to make sure that whatever it was the Iranian military got, they were prepared to absorb and use before they got it.

Q: *Without any waste?*

LEHFELDT: Without any waste. With as little waste as possible. That flip-flopped the whole policy.

Q: *But up through May 1972 that was the practice?*

LEHFELDT: That was the practice, right.

Q: *Did you know, at that time, if there'd been any inter-agency discussion in Washington of this whole issue? Was it debated, the pros and cons?*

LEHFELDT: No. I have no knowledge of that.

Q: *I have some questions about--this is covering relations, other than oil, during this period.*

Now I've read--and I don't know how true this is--that beginning in the late 1960s U.S. banks began to move heavily into Iran.

LEHFELDT: Yes, that's true. When you say heavily--I mean there's a considerable presence. Citibank, for instance, was a partner with Hassan Ali Ebtehaj in the Iranians Bank. David Rockefeller in Chase and Mannie Hannie and Chemical and Irving Trust, Bankers Trust, Pacific Security--you name the lot of them. Mellon Bank, Bank of America, Wells Fargo. They all had people either stationed in Tehran or in Lebanon, or coming through often. Because when the Central Bank floated a loan--100 million here, or forty million there, whatever--it was by and large syndicated, and all of these banks took part in it. One of the closest advisers to Mehdi Samil, for instance, in those days at the Central Bank was Minos Zabanakis, who was at that time with Manufacturers Hanover and later with the First Bank of Boston. I think it was First Bank of Boston.

Q: *As these banks were setting up offices and so forth, did they consult with the embassy when they made their plans, or planned major investments?*

LEHFELDT: Well [laughs], they came and talked to us about the general economic fundamentals. They came and talked about who was who in the banking business, who was trustworthy, who was not. Once in a while they would come and talk to us about whether or not they should fund a particular investment or not. But, by and large they made their own decisions.

Q: *They just wanted information.*

LEHFELDT: They just wanted information, right.

Q: Now apparently Citibank and Chase had a very competitive relationship in Iran?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Did this cause any problems?

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: Because I'd read that the Central Bank complained about Citibank's practices and that Citibank had to withdraw some of its people at some point.

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, they got a little aggressive. They were moving into areas where the Iranians didn't feel they should move. Yes, they did withdraw one fellow--I can't remember his name off-hand. That was part of Ebtehaj's operation. Citibank was trying to use the Ebtehaj connection for whatever it was worth.

Q: Were there any visits by David Rockefeller to Iran while you were there?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well among other things Chase bank was known as the Shah's bank.

Q: His personal bank?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Although Bankers Trust did a lot of imperial family business. Chase would lead the Consortium on occasion when major lending operations were put together. But they did have a small piece of the Industrial Mining and Development Bank, along with Continental Illinois, I think it was. Then later on these several banks started private banks in association with other American banks. But by 1974 the only full blown joint venture was the Iranians Bank.

Q: The Citibank thing?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: When Rockefeller came to Iran did he stop by the embassy and meet with people, or is it more complicated than that?

LEHFELDT: Well, sometimes yes. The ambassador would have a party for David. But more often the Shah would have a party for David and the ambassador would be present. Or, when we had the big financial conference there in 1972, led by David Rockefeller--and all kinds of other businessmen. Don[ald] Regan was there from Merrill Lynch. Bob Abboud and so on. It was an all star cast! Whenever David came to town, he had audiences with the Shah on a regular basis.

Q: To what extent was the embassy's function sort of to encourage investment?

LEHFELDT: Well, I considered that to be one of my functions. My major function, however, was to try to find sales for--my staff was trying to help American business find sales, and

partners. Or to collect, as the case may be. It's strange but you got the feeling that American business wasn't all that interested in investments. They were interested in financing investment with local resources and then carrying the profits home. I became a little disenchanted with some of my stalwart American risk-taking businessmen.

Q: They wanted joint ventures.

LEHFELDT: They wanted joint ventures but locally financed, and make their participation comprise of the technology and some very expensive American talent and so forth and so on. Didn't work. The Brits and the Japanese and the Germans were willing to do other things.

Q: In general though, I guess you had talked about this big bankers conference in 1972. Was it a sense that it was to be growing national income that would make investments and loans more likely and possible?

LEHFELDT: Exactly. The purpose of the conference was to introduce a lot of American businessmen to Iran who had never been there before. The Iranians really put on a great show.

Q: The embassy helped set it up?

LEHFELDT: The embassy worked on it, but it was set up by the Iranians themselves at the initiative of David Rockefeller.

Q: What kind of problems did U.S. companies have in doing business in Iran in this period?

LEHFELDT: Well, corruption was always a problem. Who to pay off? There were people with their hands out all the time. It reached up into the royal family. More often than not.

Finding the right partner with the right degree of expertise and a certain amount of sophistication, financially as well as technically, was really one of the greatest problems. Financial resources was a real problem too.

Q: I think we better stop for now.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: What was your assessment of general Iranian economic conditions during the late sixties and early seventies, before the oil price explosion?

LEHFELDT: Well, there were some inequalities in the economy and certainly some leads and lags in terms of development, but in general, I felt very comfortable that there was a good solid team of economic technocrats, good technocrats, managing the economy and allocating resources in a rational way, insofar as it was possible in a somewhat erratic environment. Given the enthusiasms of the Shah and so forth, it was difficult to keep up with him sometimes.

But as one of the leftovers from the AID days, we had, during the first two years of my stay in Iran, the so-called annual review with the Prime Minister and the American Ambassador and whoever was allegedly running what was the AID mission at that time. And I took part in the last two in the fall of '69 and in the fall of '70, between Ambassador MacArthur [Douglas] and Prime Minister Hoveyda [Amir Abbas]. And Mehdi Sammi, who was then the head of the Plan Organization.

They were not thorough-going reviews of the economy, but they did focus on the main thrust of the government's investment policies, the main thrust of their use of their foreign exchange, and were to some degree at least the basis for the justification of providing Export-Import Bank loans for arms procurement at the time, because that was run through the Export-Import Bank at the time.

And so they were useful, but not very exhaustive and certainly not very profound examinations. But those annual reviews enforced a discipline--or seemed to enforce some sort of discipline--on the Iranian economic managers.

Q: The Central Bank?

LEHFELDT: The Central Bank, the Plan Organization and so forth. Those ended sort of by mutual consent, because the Prime Minister and the Shah thought once there was no AID mission any more and there's no AID program, why the hell should we permit this unwarranted intervention in our internal affairs.

But nonetheless, until about 1973, '74, when the oil prices started going up, this team of technocrats did quite a credible job of allocation of resources. And by the time I left, although the team had been disbanded to some degree and politicians were in place--when I left in '74, the politicians were in place--nonetheless the general direction of the economy was still good.

Q: You thought it was developing along healthy lines?

LEHFELDT: Reasonably healthy. In the agricultural field there was absolute chaos, because they were moving into so-called agro-business and industrial agriculture and so on and literally screwing the small farmers. Prices were not permitted to rise at the farm level.

Q: There were price controls, weren't there?

LEHFELDT: There were price controls, both to the producer and to the consumer, and they filled the gap, because naturally there wasn't any production coming in from the farms--or not very much at any rate. But they filled the gap with imports.

Q: What kind of impact did the land reform program have? Was it a positive impact, by and large, or were there some negatives?

LEHFELDT: Kind of hard to say, because without the freeing up an agricultural economy, land

reform itself became a political act rather than an economic act, and it was political in large part and did break up a lot of large land-holdings and certainly there were a lot of small farmers who benefited from it in terms of gaining title to their land. But many of them were forced into farm cooperatives.

Q: *Corporation farming?*

LEHFELDT: Farm corporations. Cooperatives. But they operated in the same way. And, of course, they had mixed experience with them. Some were showcases. The government poured lots of money into them and so forth and so on. And there was one outside of Persepolis that every foreign diplomat and statesman had to go visit. I'm sure they paid everybody to be there.

You know, land reform was one of the touted accomplishments of the White Revolution, so-called, and when I first got there in '69, the romance of it was still alive. But by 1974 such early supporters and admirers of land reform as Ann Lampton, a British scholar, had turned a hundred and eighty degrees around and were quite critical of the implementation of land reform.

Q: *Were there experts at the U.S. Embassy that sort of monitored the program?*

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: *Or people in USAID?*

LEHFELDT: Well, AID, you see closed up before I got there. John Westberg, who was a lawyer, was the last one there. So there was no AID program to speak of.

Q: *So there was no U.S. technical assistance at this point for any of these programs?*

LEHFELDT: No. Except in a couple of technical things, the Regional Pulse Improvement Program, stuff like that. But nothing...

Q: *a lot of secondary accounts from various writers, who have written about Iran in the seventies and sixties, have argued that the Pahlavi family and its associates distorted the economy through their control of the banking system with their political influence. It was from this allocation of credit and financial resources, because of the Pahlavi family's influence in certain respects. How much evidence did you see of that when you were there?*

LEHFELDT: Well, the Pahlavi's direct influence on the direction of loans, no. There was not that much. Certainly some of the institutions, as Bank Omran, which was an arm, as I recall of the Pahlavi Foundation, and it was used to finance and rule the PL 480 program, for instance, and there was a lot of money rubbed off there. But in terms of running the banking institutions for the benefit of the Pahlavi family, I don't think that's a sustainable charge. There were enough opportunities for the Pahlavi family members to become partners in profitable businesses without distorting the banking system. I'm not saying that they were not active in banks on occasion, but it was not a publicly evident activity. Ashraf's first husband--I can't think of his name right now,

but a very distinguished gentleman--was the head of a bank, but that was after he was her husband.

Q: *This is the Shah's sister?*

LEHFELDT: Right. The Shah's twin.

Q: *I have some questions on the economic assets of arms sales. Did the Embassy's commercial and economic staff play much of a role in arms sales matters?*

LEHFELDT: Not really, except in the sense that we were called upon to provide the analysis of the economy.

Q: *Mostly annual review?*

LEHFELDT: Both for the annual review and for just general economic analysis of the economy for the purposes of the U.S. government generally. We put out a six month semi-annual review that was published, an unclassified thing. And we were usually called upon to draft the economic justification for arms credits, and, you know, we made our points at that time, when it came to use of foreign exchange. We had lots of rules of thumb in those days, about how much foreign exchange earnings, the percentage of foreign exchange earnings one should devote to servicing loans, foreign loans. And, of course, those rules of thumb have long since gone by the board all over the world, but generally speaking, in those days any country that was using more than twenty to twenty-three percent of its foreign exchange earnings annually to service foreign debt was considered to be in trouble.

Q: *Much more than that?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes.

Q: *Now when you worked on these reports, did Armish-MAAG people scrutinize them?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. We provided them to--well, General Twitchell and his successors and predecessors were always provided with our analyses. That is not to say that they necessarily had much real effect on situations, because these arms recommendations were primarily political considerations. Although in General Twitchell's day, he had a very strong feeling that there was a finite sort of rate of absorption for rational use of foreign military equipment and upgraded military equipment that an Army such as Iran's could possibly use, and use effectively. His thesis at the time was that we had to try to fit what we were providing them with what they could rationally absorb. So the economic justification found a good friend in that approach to arms sales.

But the Shah, of course, was not persuaded. And on the political level, certainly President Nixon was not persuaded.

Now this is in the pre-oil price...

Q: That's right. Before '73. Exactly. Did you ever run into an official named David Alne? From ISA?

LEHFELDT: Well, yes, I ran into him, but he had several--Dave Alne. Henry Kuss, who was one of his predecessors.

Q: They all played a role in arms sales considerations?

LEHFELDT: Yes, they all played a role. And I've forgotten who the latter ones were, but they took their advice from the Armish-MAAG missions. And after the oil price increases, of course, other considerations came in. What the Shah could afford to spend was--or what he wanted to spend, rather.

Q: You came to the Embassy in '69. Was the Ex-Im Bank already playing a role in financing arms, arms sales?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Yes. Arms and others.

Q: Did any people from the Bank come to discuss...

LEHFELDT: Well, Henry Kearns would come out quite often, every year or so. Well, almost every year. And other bank officers would come out to assess the economy and talk to different people. And the World Bank always had its people out there too, looking around and assessing the economy, and those analyses fed back into the U.S. system as well.

Q: When it came to negotiations over, say, the interest rates, would your office take part in those?

LEHFELDT: No, the interest rates were out of our province. No, that's a function of domestic U.S. policy as much as anything else.

Q: Now in 1971 the U.S. was running its first trade deficit, since, I guess, the 1890s. In the late 'sixties, early 'seventies, the U.S. aero-space industry was somewhat in the doldrums. To what extent did those kinds of considerations influence arms sales policy? From your vantage point in the Embassy? Were those things that were discussed as having a bearing on arms sales?

LEHFELDT: Surely they had a bearing on arms sales, but not in that bald a depiction, because what we saw at that end was the competition between the various firms--the McDonnell Douglasses, the Northrops, the General Dynamics, the Grummans--for sales of a particular type of plane or system. There was one effort by Lockheed to sell--this was--well, I was still the Economic Counselor the C-5 to Iran, that would permit the reopening of the line for U.S. purposes. That was a slightly different focus, because the U.S. Air Force wanted some more C-5s, and in order to open the line, if the Government of Iran would pay for a good deal of it, yes,

that would be helpful.

There was always the consideration that for every plane sold abroad, the average price of the planes, both to the foreign buyer and to the U.S. Air Force, would come down, because you were writing off the development cost over a time. And that was a consideration, but not a main one.

Q: When you were in the Embassy, did you provide assistance to companies who were trying to sell particular weapons systems to the--or was that more a function of Armish-MAAG?

LEHFELDT: That was more a function of the Politico-Military section (of the Embassy) and Armish-MAAG, but, yes, they usually came down to talk to me. When I say down--because my office was on the first floor as opposed to the Political Section on the second floor. They usually came and talked to me, generally about the economic scene and about who was doing what to whom, just generally, and this involved the question of who was a good representative. They would often times toss names at me to see how I would react. I tried to steer away from endorsing any of them. Some were better, more honorable, than others. Not all of them.

Q: Could you give a sort of indication as to who would be more reliable? Or you couldn't do that?

LEHFELDT: No, I really couldn't do that. All I could do was--and I tried not--well, I avoided making recommendations about anybody. If they asked me about somebody, yes, I would say what I knew about them, how acceptable they were up in the Palace and what their general reputation for probity was in the business community. I had a little lecture about you have to decide for yourself whether you think you need that kind of representation or not. If you think you have a proposition that is saleable on its own and needs no personal representation or enhancement, then by all means avoid it. If they want it bad enough, they'll buy it. But if you are out there selling snake oil, why then you decide accordingly.

Q: You're talking about arranging intermediaries between the companies and the government?

LEHFELDT: Yes. The present-day Albert Hakims, the Khashogis, the Abdol Fath Mahvis, and the Khayamis, and the Hindujas and so on down the line.

Q: So the people who were operating at this time...

LEHFELDT: Oh, they were operating in those days.

Q: So you could basically provide information to the firms? Could you go beyond that? What other kinds of assistance could you give them besides information as to who the...

LEHFELDT: You know, I had a slightly different view of my role in assisting U.S. business than some of my more timid colleagues in the Foreign Service. I felt that I was there to be helpful to them and I wasn't there to play mother hen to all American companies and try to--if one came to me for help and nobody else did, I would give that one who asked me help. But if, say, General

Electric and Westinghouse and Combustion Engineering all came to me for help, I would give them all equal help, but that didn't mean that I had to go--if only one of them came to me, I had to go, say, to the other two and say, "Hey, General Electric is after this and I'm going to help them and I'll be glad to help you too." That's not the way you play the game. Some companies felt the need for help and some didn't, and I take the view that those who ask for help deserve it.

So I would make appointments, I would send people along with them to help interpret, if they had that problem. I did a lot of things that were not in the ordinary run of services that Economic Counselors used to provide. I guess commercial attachés do more so now than they used to, but I still get--I have complaints myself. [Laughs]

Q: Also in the present-day experience?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: I guess there are certain limits that were placed on what could be done for a company? Were there limits?

LEHFELDT: No, no. No. There are no legal limits whatever. Certainly there are some things you couldn't do, but if the Ambassador was willing, you could have him entertain some people with and for the businessmen.

Q: That happened, I'm sure.

LEHFELDT: That happened. The British Ambassador used to do it all the time. He gave a party once, when they were selling the 1011, the Lockheed 1011, because it had Rolls Royce engines as an option on it. And he gave a big party--a reception at the Embassy for the businessmen and the military and what not, and Iran Air, who were going to buy it, as part of the support for British industry, but also supporting American industry.

Q: During our last meeting, you mentioned that--you went into the problem of corruption in Iranian political and business circles, and sometimes it reached to the top levels of the Pahlavi family. Many writers have discussed this problem and its implications for the way American corporations did business in the country during the seventies. Now how common was it for U.S. companies to actually use corrupt methods to make sales in the country

LEHFELDT: Well, now let's back up a little minute. The term "corrupt methods" is a misunderstanding of how you do business, not only in Iran, but all over the Middle East and in other parts of the world. We have a very puritanical view of the world, but when you do business in the Middle East, you do business their way. And traditionally, for thousands of years--I'm exaggerating a little bit--but the closer to the throne you got, the richer you were supposed to be. Or the closer to the throne you were, the richer you were supposed to get. It was just, you know, a fact of life in Iranian and other milieus that if you were going to get something done, you had to pay for the services.

Now, viewed in that sense, it is not corruption. When the payments become exaggerated and the services are of dubious value, then that is corrupting the system, but it's still not necessarily corruption in the given atmosphere.

So that, yes, there were companies back in the sixties and seventies who used well-known intermediaries, some of them members of the royal family and some of them not, all of them close to the throne, to help get projects and contracts through. It was reasonably well known that Abdol-Fath Mahvi, for instance, was one of the premier ten or twenty or whatever percentage it was. Court Minister Alam's [Asadollah] daughters tried to play the game as well. My good friend, [Abul Mehdi] K. Kashfi was another one, who was pretty good at it. There were--I won't say--there were rather a large number of them with various degrees of entree into various portals. Now some of them were in the palace, some of them were in the Ministry of War, some of them were in the Ministry of Water and Power. It varied, depending on what the contract was.

That is not to say, however, that there was real venality. These were--I know, viewed in retrospect and viewed from the American point of view, sure, it's corrupt, it's bad business, it's uneconomic, it's all of these nasty things, but it was the way business was done. Now, as we imposed over years our notions of public morality on other countries, including Iran, they took steps to try to comply with what they viewed as our requirements, but those requirements only apply to American businessmen. They didn't cover the French and the Germans and the Japanese and the British, with the result that we got left behind in many cases. Except in those areas where we either had something that nobody else had or, as in the military, the Shah, for political and other purposes, was equipping his military with American military equipment.

Q: But in other areas you think there was a disadvantage?

LEHFELDT: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Lead pipe cinch.

Q: I assume that intermediaries were necessary?

LEHFELDT: They were. Just as a statement of fact, they were necessary.

Q: But payoffs would be another question entirely though, wouldn't they?

LEHFELDT: What's a payoff? If you're going to pay a fifty per cent commission, yes, that's a payoff. But if it's a five percent commission, even if it's on a hundred million dollar deal--although companies as General Electric, for a hundred million dollar sale, the percentage of the commission is concomitantly reduced, but it still came out to maybe two million dollars, two and a half million dollars, which is a lot of money.

Q: The two per cent, did that happen quite a bit that you know of, that kind of a...

LEHFELDT: Well, for General Electric that percentage was--you know, they could pay as much as twelve per cent, but that's on small stuff. But when you got into a power project, a hundred million dollars or whatever it was, two per cent was a lot.

Now in some of these other companies--and I'm colored now by my latter-day experiences--certainly many of the non-American companies doing business were not as careful in the percentages as some of the American companies, and thereby their was absolutely no way you could edge them out of a project, if they were there with both feet. Because they bought the information, no matter how careful you were. So they managed to underbid you by a slight amount.

Q: Were any classes of U.S. firms more likely or thought it more necessary to rely upon, say, using payoffs to make sales that other kinds of firms? Were smaller firms more vulnerable perhaps than large corporations like GE?

LEHFELDT: Well, you know, in large corporations what would pass for a large payoff in a small corporation was loose change in a way. For small corporations doing small business, the percentages were higher, but it was simply reflected in the sales price if it happened to be a consumer good.

Now, if you were in a joint venture, you could handle your problems by several ways. By dealing a percentage of participation with real investment, but--and maybe to a member of the royal family. But there was no notion by the royal family member, in some of the cases that I can recall, that they were going to take part in management. They were simply going to collect some profits and so on.

Now there were some Iranian businessmen--one notable one, Haji Tajhi Mohammad Barkhordar, who probably had the largest single fortune in Iran before the revolution--that is, outside the royal family--was very proud that he never had a member of the royal family as a partner in any of his businesses. He had maybe two hundred companies. He was a very important businessman.

Others felt compelled--felt no constraints, I guess, in accepting members of the royal family, through usual cutoffs, as members of the joint venture. And there were some areas of business--for instance, the importing of chickens--that were sort of handed over to hangers-on of the royal family. Madame Diba, the Empress's mother, was one of the biggest dealers--she didn't do it herself--in the importing of frozen and chilled chickens into Iran for many years. One friend of ours decided it was a pretty good business and he started to try to import, and he ran into more difficulties. He had more Customs problems. He had trucking problems. He had distribution problems. He had breakdowns in his cold storage. And finally someone wised him up. This was Madame Diba's terrain he was trampling on.

Q: I think, from time to time, the Shah had sort of crackdowns on companies that relied upon payoffs and so forth to make sales. So that became notorious. There was a Grumman case and a Lockheed case.

LEHFELDT: Now wait a minute. Lockheed, there was no payoff.

Q: No, no, Northrop, I mean. I'm sorry.

LEHFELDT: Lockheed, my good friend, Z and, kept them from any trouble.

Q: *I meant Northrop. But I get that name mixed up sometimes.*

LEHFELDT: But Northrop was not on airplanes. It was a Page Communications, a national telecommunications system.

Q: *Now what are the things that the Embassy could do that would help these companies out? Did they come to the Embassy for help?*

LEHFELDT: I didn't know about that. We always suspected, because Prince Shahram, Ashraf's son, was part of their coterie, and so we always suspected that he had been the intermediary for helping Tom Jones get the project. But it wasn't until it all came out later...

Q: *'76 I guess it was it came out. '75 or '76?*

LEHFELDT: No, it came out before then, because the vice-president of Northrop, Jeff Kitchen, had to leave before then. I had dinner with him last night, as a matter of fact. And he got a golden handshake from Northrop, but he had to take the rap.

But again, looked at in retrospect, and we overlay our moral puritanism on top of it, it made it all look wrong, because they wanted to make it look wrong. A group of--and I may have told you this last time--a group of young Iranian friends of the Prime Minister--he would get them together in a dohreh every month or so, and they were made up of--some of them the young technocrats I was talking about, some of them representatives of very powerful families.

Q: *Was this Hoveyda [Prime Minister]?*

LEHFELDT: Hoveyda, right. There was eight or ten of them. They would get together for lunch or drinks or whatever. And at one point, because the Shah was on this anti-corruption kick, they put together and started collecting--and for six months or so put together dossiers of cases of corruption that they knew about and could document to some degree. And it became--as I am told, I never saw it myself--a rather sizable piece of work. And they delivered it up to the Shah and he looked over it and he said, "My God, if I have to get rid of all of these people, I will have no one left to run the economy." With that, they took it all out and burned it, I'm told.

Now I know it happened. Whether it happened in exactly those terms, I'm not sure.

Q: *The Rashidian brothers? Were they ever involved as representatives?*

LEHFELDT: Well, Rashidians--yes, he ran something called--I was trying to think of his name. There were three of them, but one of them in particular--ran something called the Distributors Credit Bank, which funded all the taxis in town, the taxi cooperatives. And, of course, the Rashidians were instrumental in the '53 riots, and they went back a long ways with the British

Intelligence Service. Yes, they were widely rumored to be involved, but they went broke. Or one of them did, as I recall.

Q: You mean involved with company representatives or intermediaries?

LEHFELDT: Yes, but he never represented the big ones. I went over there, to their house, shortly after I arrived, and General Griswold, I guess, who was head of the International Bank of Washington--still is, as a matter of fact, was their guest, and he was thinking of buying into the Distributors Credit Bank. It didn't get through the Central Bank. It didn't warrant approval, because the Distributors Credit Bank was in such perilous condition.

Q: Recently I saw a letter that would be classified, by Douglas Heck to Jack Miklos, November '72, and he mentions the sale by Bell of Texas to the helicopter industry, a sale of helicopters to Iran, and he goes on to say that this was beginning to--this was a boon to Bell Helicopter, to Bell of Texas, and to various influential people on the Washington scene. Perhaps we can get an Iran lobby going. Was there any talk about an Iran lobby?

LEHFELDT: I think there was, sure. Of course, this was in the early days, November of '72, before real money started coming in.

I see why you've mentioned Dave Alne. Fascinating. I never saw this letter.

Yes, at the time we--I understand what his direction was. We were always concerned that the Shah was getting bad press at home. And he did. And, of course, he brought it on himself, because 1972, as I recall, was about the time when the twenty-five hundredth--we were getting close to the twenty-five hundredth anniversary celebration. Or did we just have it?

Q: I think it was in '71.

LEHFELDT: '71. Well, we just had it.

Q: The fall of '71.

LEHFELDT: Yes, that's right. It was the fall of '71. And he got a lot of bad press. Spending millions and millions of dollars down in the middle of the desert for something that no Iranian was going to see. And so on down the line.

By that time President Nixon had pretty much decided that Iran was going to be our strong ally in the Middle East and we were going to rely on them to keep the peace, with the British having moved out, and the Nixon Doctrine, so-called--I've forgotten whether it had been enunciated just before that or just after that, but about that time.

Q: Actually that was back in '69 in Guam. ...Guam and articulated the idea.

LEHFELDT: Yes. We would provide them with the arms, but they would do our dirty work for

us. Or whatever you call it. And we had chosen the Shah as our instrument. So we had the need for trying to see whether we could get better press for him. They spent a lot of money on it, but without much real...

Q: *Who's they?*

LEHFELDT: The Iranian government.

Q: *Trying to influence the U.S. press generally?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. They had some P.R. advisers. I've forgotten who they were at the time.

Q: *U.S. P.R. firms?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Some of the Bobby Grays of the time.

Q: *This same letter also mentions something called Operation Enhance Plus, which I hadn't heard of before.*

LEHFELDT: That was a military...

Q: *I'm sure it was, but...*

LEHFELDT: I was not involved.

Q: *Now when you were at the Embassy, you drew up contracts with the local U.S. Chamber of Commerce? They had an organization there?*

LEHFELDT: Well, I was instrumental in getting them started.

Q: *When you were at the Embassy?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Sure.

Q: *What is the story behind that?*

LEHFELDT: Well...you know, the story behind it, let me see. We had the American Businessmen's Association or something or other. I've forgotten exactly what it was called. And it met sporadically. But we felt the need to find a way to help influence the Iranian authorities on issues that were helpful to American business being more active in Iran. And the dates get all jumbled up, but with the big conference that Jim Linen led in...

Q: *Oh, the Rockefeller...?*

LEHFELDT: The Rockefeller Conference. When was that?

Q: *1970? Linen was with TIME-LIFE?*

LEHFELDT: He was with TIME-LIFE, but he was retired by then. He was spending his time setting up this sort of thing.

We tried to establish a chapter of the American Chambers of Commerce abroad in Iran. We succeeded somewhere along about this time. Because somewhere along about this time also Henry Kissinger hit on the idea of a joint U.S.--whatever it was--Economic Council.

Q: *Commission.*

LEHFELDT: Commission, yes. And we wanted to have a role in the U.S.-Iran Business Council, which was usually associated with these commissions. And so we got the Chamber established finally, with the help of John Caldwell, who was the Vice-President and Director of International Affairs for the U.S. Chamber. And we created the U.S.-Iran Chamber of Commerce. I, as the Embassy economic wallah, was an honorary member or ex-officio member, and I was as instrumental in getting that going as anybody. I kept pushing and hosting these people and so forth and so on.

Q: *This was in '71 or '72?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, something in that order. And the Chamber grew by leaps and bounds. Of course we had Iranian members as well, representing American firms or doing business in the United States. Plenty of them represented American firms. And we had Iranians on the board. We had people like Rahim Ivrani and Ahmed Ladjevardi and--oh, I don't know, a couple of others. And we had periodic meetings with the Ambassador, and it was a useful P.R. and maybe even an informational thing.

On the other side, it gave our Iranian associates a method for getting news critical of policy through to Iranian authorities without the Iranian businessman having to take the onus for being critical of the government.

Q: *In terms of policies that had impact on American investment and trade?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. And there own ease in doing business. And as days went by and as the wild days of the later seventies came along, they were more and more critical of their government's policies.

Q: *Which we'll get to later on. Who was the president, the first president, of the Chamber?*

LEHFELDT: The first president was John Formel.

Q: *Of which company?*

LEHFELDT: Goodrich. He was out of Chicago. He is now retired and is caretaker for a golf course, among other things at this point.

Q: But the members of the Chamber would meet from time to time with the Ambassador?

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes. Not the whole membership, but we had monthly luncheons and the Board of Directors would meet with the Ambassador. This is a practice followed all over the world in some form or another.

Q: And they'd meet with Iranian government officials also?

LEHFELDT: On occasion, yes. Especially with the Minister of Commerce and the Minister of Economy. Sometimes the Minister of Finance. Jamshid Amuzegar liked to meet with people like that.

Q: Why was that?

LEHFELDT: I don't know. He just had a taste for it.

Q: After oil prices started skyrocketing in late '73, arms purchases began to expand at a pretty phenomenal rate in the following couple years.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Did anybody in the Embassy or Washington sit down and try to think through the cost implications of massive arms transfers to Iran?

LEHFELDT: Yes, a lot of people did. The view at the time in the Embassy--and, of course, I left in the summer of '74, so I can't speak for much beyond that time.

But clearly the Shah had the bit in his teeth. I'll carry on exactly where I left off, I hope. And he was bound and determined he was going to get whatever he wanted. And I will say this. I've talked about this with Ambassador Helms afterwards, in the vein that while he and I can be faulted for not cautioning the Shah to go a little more slowly, and he said, "Bill, there was absolutely no way you could have hung on to his coat-tails. He was flying high. There was no way you could tell him it was going to be bad for them."

And certain it is that when I came back to Iran in late '75, the atmosphere and the general euphoria that was present then was so vastly different from the first years of my stay in Iran, where you were making use of everything. By '74, when I left, it was just absolutely No Holds Barred. The sky was the limit. We had money for everything. If we needed more money, we just raised the oil prices and the world would pay, and so on down the line. Of course, they know better now, but...

Q: Given the fact that Nixon had more or less decided to give the Shah a free entree into the

American market, would there have been any kind of business that had even looked closely at the questions, the implications of the policy?

LEHFELDT: Well, surely there were people who were concerned about this, seriously concerned about it. But their objections were overridden all the time. You know, just putting it back in context of '73 and '74, the administration at the time was so heavily burned by Watergate and the Agnew episode that it's a wonder they paid much attention to Iran and its arms purchases at all, except just to sign the authorization. Which is essentially what happened almost, although I have to give General Brett and some of the others their due. They tried. They may not have tried hard enough, and there was no way they would have been successful, in any case.

Everybody was coming through with something to sell and everybody was buying. That was the trouble.

Q: Do you remember some of the names of some of the officials at the Embassy or the State Department, who were sort of concerned about the economic implications, or who cautioned...?

LEHFELDT: Well, Henry Precht was certainly one of them. And John Rouse.

Q: This was the early seventies?

LEHFELDT: Yes, in the seventies. After '74 I can't really say who was concerned about it. We all were. And certainly the American business community was, to a degree. To the degree that those who weren't representing American military equipment manufacturers.

Q: But they were very commercial? So the commercial men were more sensitive to the problem?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Yes. Because it was detracting from their abilities to do sensible business.

Q: Did you get the sense at all, first-hand or from what you've heard in the rumor-mill, that people like Henry Kissinger might have been concerned about the implications of the decision? In retrospect.

LEHFELDT: No. I've never really had the feeling that Henry Kissinger understood the implications of this, the economic implications of that political decision. Indeed--well, again, however, George Shultz was the Secretary of the Treasury at the time. I remember when the President came out--in May of '72, was it, after going to...

Q: To the Summit.

LEHFELDT: After the Summit. Shultz was there. Volcker [Paul] was there. You know, all the economic wallahs were there. And if there was concern expressed and if there was any real effort to put that concern into concrete action, it certainly wasn't then.

Q: Now were you in Tehran when--besides the May '72 visit--when you were in Tehran as an

Embassy official, can you recall there were occasions when Kissinger visited Iran?

LEHFELDT: I was trying to think when Kissinger visited. I don't recall that Kissinger had any independent visits apart from the President, did he?

Q: I'm not sure.

LEHFELDT: I don't think he did. We had John Irwin through on the oil negotiations. Elliot Richardson came through at one point. But I don't remember Kissinger...

Q: Besides the May '72?

LEHFELDT: Besides the May '72.

Q: There might have been one after you had left. I think there was in the fall of '74.

LEHFELDT: There may well have been.

Q: With the oil crisis issue coming up.

Now what issue did the Shah and Kissinger agree upon at the May '72 meeting? There was a question of CIA covert aid to the Kurds, who were operating against the government of Iraq in '72 and the following couple of years. How much about that operation did you know at the time?

LEHFELDT: Nothing. That was later on. Absolutely nothing at the time. Everything I know I sort of picked up.

Q: Subsequently?

LEHFELDT: Subsequently. No, that sort of thing was not vouchsafed to us mere mortals. Even though oftentimes during that period I was serving as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission], but I was still carefully circumscribed from much of the sensitive operation. As I should have been. I had no need to know about that. I knew about a number of other things, but that was neither here nor there.

Q: Now, through the sixties and seventies the CIA and the National Security Agency had listening posts that were stationed in northern Iran, so they could monitor Soviet missile tests and such. I guess they went back to the sixties, early sixties perhaps. Maybe even earlier, I'm not sure. Maybe the fifties.

LEHFELDT: But the real technological breakthrough was later on.

Q: Was the existence of these listening posts pretty much general knowledge at the Embassy?

LEHFELDT: Pretty much, yes. Indeed we had listening sort of antenna there at the Embassy. It

wasn't just for our own--we had our own little bubble in the back yard.

Q: *What was that for? Just for communications or what?*

LEHFELDT: Well, for communications, and I suspect--I never really knew, but I suspect it was for more than just our communications. I don't know that that was true.

Q: *Just a surmise, yes. Now did the existence of these posts give the Shah much leverage with the U.S., the fact that the U.S. seemed to need them for its [crosstalk]*

LEHFELDT: As I understand it, it was as much a source of titillation to him as it was a source of real intelligence important to us, because we shared stuff with him that we got from there. Whether we shared all of it, I don't know. I had no reason to know. But the Chief of Station found it easier oftentimes to see the Shah than the American Ambassador sometimes.

Q: *I somehow had the feeling that maybe these stations gave the Shah some leverage in terms of, you have these stations here, therefore you can't push us too much about oil prices--that's pushing it too far?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, I wouldn't push that very far, because it was mutual. A mutual need and a mutual desire and mutual benefit. That's my view of it. Other people may have other views.

Q: *Were these mostly major CIA intelligence operations in Iran at this time?*

LEHFELDT: As I understood it at the time and better now, we pretty much limited ourselves to so-called tech-int in the latter days. Technological intelligence rather than real, individual intelligence. But whether that's literally true, I don't know.

Q: *Now, I read that North American Rockwell had a plan for a series of listening posts that were called the IBEX projects.*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *That became notorious in the mid-seventies. There was a lot of controversy over it. I guess some Iranians believed they were designed to be a listening post for internal intelligence.*

LEHFELDT: That's right. It was internal control rather than external.

Q: *Was there much truth to that?*

LEHFELDT: I don't know. I really don't know. Again that was a program that I had nothing--no intimate knowledge of.

Q: *I guess the Shah believed that the system was a dud for some reason, that it wouldn't work at all. That's what I read in this book by Anthony Sampson. And he believed the Pentagon had*

deceived him about the capabilities of the IBEX program. But you didn't know much about that controversy at all at that time?

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: Now I've read that when Richard Helms was appointed Ambassador, that Tehran became his command center for CIA operations in the Middle East generally. Would this appointment have that kind of significance?

LEHFELDT: Without going too far into it, I had several agents under MY cover in the Economics Section, and they performed real work for me. And oftentimes they would come and say, well, I'm going to be out of town the next week or ten days, and I never knew where they were going. I knew they were going abroad. But this happened before Helms came and it happened after Helms came. There was no material difference.

Q: That's interesting. Now by the time you were assigned to Iran, the Shah had developed a fairly elaborate internal security system, that pretty effectively, from what I could tell, suppressed overt political dissent in the country to a great extent.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: It was on many accounts responsible for human rights violations in the country during the seventies and early years. Now to what extent did U.S. policy-makers and officials of the Embassy generally believe that some form of absolutism or royal dictatorship was necessary for Iran at that time?

LEHFELDT: Well, I think again it's in the same class of attitudes as the American attitude towards corruption. You know, you put a different twist on and you look at it differently. You put a different twist on absolutism in the Middle East. Not just the Middle East, but in a lot of other countries. It's been the pattern for thousands of years. The pyramidal system, the guy on top in Iran, has been the way it's operated, if it's operated successfully, since the dawn of time in Iran practically. Where you had a diffusion of power is when it fell apart, and the attempts to change an absolute monarch into a democrat usually failed, and if you look at it from that historical point of view rather than from our own moralistic, democratic point of view, you can see why Iran fell apart in '78 and '79. When you take the pressure off and allow a thousand flowers to bloom, as Mao [Zedong] found out, all you have is a real mare's nest.

And so periodic efforts by the Shah to satisfy his foreign critics on both human rights and democratization questions led to unfortunate experiences, which he and his father before him--and his Qjar predecessors before him--felt constrained to lop off as they grew.

But the times caught up with him. I remember Khodadad Farmanfarmayan, who was then head of the Plan Organization, told me one day--I've forgotten who I brought in to see him, Senator Hatfield or someone like that--but this has stuck in my mind. He says, "You know, talking about--" I guess I forgot whether this was the Fifth Plan or the Sixth Plan. "At the beginning of

the Fifth Plan, maybe fifty per cent of the population was within reach of a radio. By the end of the Fifth Plan, or the Sixth Plan, ninety-nine per cent of the population will be within reach of a radio, and maybe eighty per cent will be within reach of a television." Now put that sort of stream of communication into a great unknowing and unschooled and unlettered and unaware population, at the same time you have other pressures for democratization, you have let loose an awful lot of feelings.

That was one of the things that struck me in 1978, towards the end of the revolution, some of the things that were going out over National Iranian Television I believe were purposely put on to irritate and outrage a very conservative Iranian population of viewers. There was one night in early December, I think it was, or late November, there was a straight Lesbian show in French, dubbed in Persian, with a great deal of nudity, female nudity. And, you know, that couldn't possibly have been just put on for entertainment. I'm sure it was done on purpose, to outrage the population, inflame them against the Shah and his people.

Now what I'm getting to is that--your original question, was there a lot of sentiment for this matter? You had to have an understanding of how things operated, and if you wanted to change them, you had to be prepared to live with the consequences of change. And this is what critics of Iran and other countries, including the Somozas, won't accept.

Q: Say when people discuss the role of the SAVAK in Iran at the time, apparently they were charged with torture and so forth.

LEHFELDT: Oh, absolutely.

Q: Was there concern that this might be counter-productive in stabilizing for the long term?

LEHFELDT: Of course. Of course.

Q: Was that discussed?

LEHFELDT: In retrospect--well, not only in retrospect, but at the time. Even as early as 1960 or '70, you know there was a whole class of the Polytechnique School who were exiled, the graduating class of Polytechnique School, which was relatively elite, because of some things that some of the students had done. These were intelligent, highly educated, sometimes well connected kids, who were overnight turned into opposition. And not just opposition, but smart opposition. I would suspect that if you went through the ranks of the Mujahideen in Iran, you would find a lot of these guys involved.

The control of the intelligentsia was another area and the attempts to control the Masons allegedly. The widespread rumor was that the Shah was one of the senior Masons, the head of the Masonic Order in Iran.

Q: I never heard that.

LEHFELDT: Oh, when you dig into Masonry in Iran, you've got another funny sort of--maybe not funny, tragic in a way, because there were a lot of them who were Masons. Scottish Rite.

Q: Through this period though, when you looked at the political situation generally, how firm a political base, in terms of positive political support, do you think at that time that the Shah enjoyed in the country?

LEHFELDT: Well, again, put it in the context of the system of government that they were used to. That he was loved was dubious. That he was respected as a strong man, whose will you crossed only at great peril, which was the traditional view of an Emperor, of a Shah, and how the Shah viewed himself, viewed his own role, as being necessary, then--yes, he was respected. Loved, no. And this was the mistake that Empress Farah made. She thought she was loved, when she was only respected because of the power that she shared or she reflected from her husband.

In the last days, when the earthquake at Tabal took place, in the fall of '78, and the Empress rushed over to comfort the populace, she was reviled. And she retreated in great disarray. She couldn't understand it. She thought she was loved by everybody, that she was coming there to show her concern.

Q: She believed her own P.R.?

LEHFELDT: Yes. That was symptomatic of the whole disappearance of the aura of power at the top of the pyramid. One friend of mine, who is probably one of the most astute observers of Iran, as well as the American political picture--(he knows American politics down to the precinct level)--we used to have periodic discussions about what would happen after the Shah disappeared, and, of course, I always took the position that it depended on how he disappeared. If he were assassinated, then you had one set of circumstances. If he died a natural death, you had another possible set of circumstances.

But my friend posited that--and it later turned out, I think, pretty much to be the case--that once you remove the Shah as the center of power, the power that was reflected in all the other people that we viewed as all-powerful, including the head of SAVAK and the Chief of Staff and the Air Force and the Prime Minister and so forth, they wouldn't dare show their faces in the streets. Because they had no power until someone reconfirmed them one way or another. And I think he was right. That's just the way the system worked. I'm over-simplifying.

Q: When you were in the country in your first phase in the Embassy, did you see much evidence of political problems or political opposition? Was anything visible to you?

LEHFELDT: Very rarely. Very rarely. You would find critical comments in funny places sometimes. All the old Qajar aristocracy would be critical of these upstart Sergeant's kids, but you would rarely find--and, of course, I didn't move in the religious circles. Practically no one from the Embassy did. There were a few people who tried. Stan Escudero was one.

Q: Was he a political officer? Escudero?

LEHFELDT: Escudero, yes. And John Washburn was another. But I can't think--and George Cave probably knew more of them than anybody else. But there weren't very many who were both able and willing to try to do it. It was Intelligence that was uncomfortable to some degree, although I know of--as I told you before, I know of no order to stay away from them.

Q: *From the opposition figures?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. They preferred we stay away from them.

Q: *Among your Iranian friends in those years, did any of them confide in you their own feelings about the Shah and his regime? Were any of them very critical in private?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Yes, they were critical in private. They were critical of the emptiness of the Court and they were critical of the increased protocol that surrounded the Shah and his family, that distanced them from the people and the actuality. But they were not necessarily critical of the system as a whole, because they viewed it from the Iranian point of view as a necessary evil, and what you tried to do was limit the exaggerations of power and limit the excesses of power, not change the system itself.

Q: *At our last meeting you said that you left Iran in 1974.*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *Where did you go from there?*

LEHFELDT: I went to Spain as Consul-General. In Barcelona. Back to Spain, (I'd served in Spain before), I kept getting visits from American businesses to come talk about Iran, because there weren't many people who knew about Iran and the most recent emanations of economic well-being and the money tree that was blooming and so forth and so on. And like as not, when they left they'd offer me a job. So I finally decided, what the hell. I sorted out the various offers and I picked the one that I liked best, which happened to be General Electric. And so I retired from the Foreign Service and went back to Iran.

Q: *What year was this?*

LEHFELDT: Late '75. I wrote Dick Helms and told him what I was planning to do. I wouldn't have gone back if he'd said, don't do it. But he said, come ahead, we'd love to see you. So I went back.

Q: *So what were your responsibilities for GE?*

LEHFELDT: I was Vice-President for the region for General Electric headquartered in Iran, with primary responsibility for sort of being a senior statesman for General Electric in Iran and setting up the office and finding opportunities for investment and for sales and providing a home for

those activities that were already ongoing in Iran. We had extensive aircraft engine sales, for instance. GE engines were on the F-5s and on the C-130s and on--I don't know, on a series of other planes. Some of the helicopters.

Q: Well, in these cases was GE or other corporations producing the entire system? Or did you sell them separately?

LEHFELDT: I don't know whether you know the aircraft business particularly, but engines are an option that the consumer chooses. You can have a Rolls Royce engine or a Pratt & Whitney engine or a GE engine. So the engine manufacturers are out there fighting head on for the contract to supply the engines for one or another of the aircraft.

And when the U.S. Air Force chose an engine for its aircraft, then automatically that engine manufacturer had a leg up. That was only one part of it. We had a lot of other business as well. GE manufactured radar and we had some power generation projects and stations, and a joint venture in the manufacture of refrigerators. We had a license--this was a joint venture. You know, a joint venture for the manufacture of lighting equipment. That is, street lighting. And so on down the line.

Q: If I'm not mistaken, during the mid-seventies and late seventies there was a discussion on building nuclear power stations in Iran?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Was GE involved in that?

LEHFELDT: We talked about it, but we never really pursued the projects, because by 1976 the environmental problems and attacks on the nuclear industry in the United States were such that GE had pulled its horns in a great deal, even though the great nuclear engineer was President in those days. Nuc-u-lear engineer. [Laughs] And we never really were in the fray and competing for the Iranian nuclear program. Westinghouse was fighting harder than anybody and Kraftwerk Union Siemens was actually...

Q: German firm?

LEHFELDT: Yes. And the French. What was their nuclear--? I can't remember. They were the ones who were the most active and the most successful, and again it was related to this question of who do you pay?

Q: Did GE have any particular qualms in doing business in Iran during the period you were with it?

LEHFELDT: Only that we were very conservative. We moved very slowly. We were very careful about the partners we worked with, with the result that when the revolution came, we had very little to lose, and I owe my continued longevity with GE to that very fact.

Q: Were there any direct investments by GE in Iran?

LEHFELDT: Yes. We had direct investments in a refrigerator manufacturing plant with Haji Barkhordar. It's still turning out refrigerators. Without the GE meatball [GE symbol], but it's still turning out refrigerators out in Qazvin. We had a service shop (heavy equipment repair joint venture) that was just getting off the ground, that the revolutionary government took over and used to manufacture--still is using it--to manufacture spare parts for its military equipment. And, let's see, we still had the lighting project. There were a number of other things we were pursuing, but, thank goodness, slowly.

Q: Were these very cautious gentlemen on investment decisions?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Very.

Q: Was this because Iran had this climate or just generally globally?

LEHFELDT: Generally globally.

Q: Now you were also involved in the Chamber of Commerce?

LEHFELDT: I was elected to the Board of the Chamber after I returned and then I was later elected president of the Chamber of Commerce. I guess I still am the president of record of the U.S.-Iran Chamber of Commerce.

Q: Who were some of the major figures? As president of the Chamber, did you have any special responsibilities?

LEHFELDT: To preside at the monthly meetings and talk to people. We would host visiting firemen. Have breakfast, for instance, with Senator Byrd or Senator Long or Senator Jackson and brief them somewhat on the economic situation, and answer whatever questions they might have.

Q: Who were some of the major figures in the Chamber at that time?

LEHFELDT: The Iranians or the Americans?

Q: I guess both.

LEHFELDT: Both sides. Well, Tahir Zia'i, who was the head of the Iranian Chamber, was an honorary member of our board. The major Iranian members were the Ladjevardis, Ahmed. Rahim (?) Irvani from Melli Shoe Company, the Melli group, one of the major industrialists. Haji Barkhordar, I've mentioned him before. James Saghi, who was American, a Kimberly Clark man, Kleenex. Novzohour papers, Lloyd Bertman, who was one of the oldest and longest American residents of Iran. He was opposed to the establishment of the Chamber. He did join.

Q: *Who was he with?*

LEHFELDT: He had a trading company with an Iranian partner by the name of Tonian, and the company was Jupiter Trading Company. They represented a number of firms off and on. Brunswick Bowling, cigarette machine companies and cigarette manufacturing equipment. Chicago Bridge & Iron. There was a whole series of them.

And all the major companies joined. Bell Helicopter, Grumman, General Dynamics, they were all members. Boeing.

Q: *The banks, did they join?*

LEHFELDT: Banks? By all means, yes.

Q: *Were there any special issues that concerned the Chamber?*

LEHFELDT: Well, investment issues, and visas into Iran were very difficult sometimes to get. Business visas. We were pushing an investment agreement. Taxation agreement. I guess that was before, I worked on the civil aviation agreement.

But these were issues that were ongoing. Insurance and re-insurance was a problem. A rather specialized one, but it was a problem. Shipping. Port congestion. That sort of thing.

Q: *Did the Embassy help focus the Chamber on some of these issues?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes. It was hand in glove.

Q: *And the government of Iran, was it...?*

LEHFELDT: Not very responsive.

Q: *That was under Hoveyda?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. And later, when Jamshid Amuzegar was Prime Minister.

Q: *Did you ever meet the Shah at all during this period or earlier?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes. Well, I met him over--mostly ceremonially obviously. I think I explained that earlier.

Q: *You did, yes.*

LEHFELDT: And that was still the case, even as a private citizen. It was ceremonial rather than...

Q: *So you really didn't get any impressions at close range?*

LEHFELDT: No.

Q: *During the period you were with GE and the Chamber, who were some of the Embassy officials that you worked with?*

LEHFELDT: Always the Ambassador, whoever that happened to be.

Q: *Helms or Sullivan?*

LEHFELDT: Helms or Sullivan. And the DCM, who usually--I mean, most of these were all my old friends, after all. And the Economic Counselor, who was hand-picked by me. Roger Brewin, who succeeded me.

Now with the military, when I went back and after the Carter advent, we were persona non grata to them, because I represented a company that was a military manufacturer, and so we couldn't be seen together anywhere.

Q: *Armish-MAAG?*

LEHFELDT: Armish-MAAG people. And so it was a little uncomfortable in town.

Q: *Was that a legal requirement?*

LEHFELDT: There was a "Carterian" dictum and the Embassy enforced it with great fervor for some strange reason. And the military, the Armish-MAAG, was more vigorous about it than anybody else.

Q: *What explains that, do you know?*

LEHFELDT: Who knows. Who knows. Well, some of it was secrecy. That was during the time when we had a couple of real cowboys, a military movement in Tehran. Colonel-- (Hallock) what was his name? Well, Eric von Morbad.

Q: *He was the defense representative?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. And colonel--what the hell was his name? The Gray Ghost-- (Hallock.)

Q: *He was called the Gray Ghost?*

LEHFELDT: Not Eric. The other guy was.

Q: *Oh, the other person.*

LEHFELDT: I knew him when I was Economic Counselor. When I came back, I tried to see him,

and he wouldn't even acknowledge my telephone calls. Finally Toufanian bought off his contract at great expense and sent him back to the States. He was James Schlesinger's personal sort of representative.

Q: *This is Morbad?*

LEHFELDT: Von Morbad and [Hallock].

Q: *They worked together?*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *Now you mentioned earlier that the U.S.-Iran Joint Economic Commission--did the Chamber do any work with the Commission at all? How did that work?*

LEHFELDT: We were sort of the resource for the Joint Economic Council. It was a subgroup of the Chamber really and your companies joined and paid to become a member of the U.S. section of the Joint Economic Council, Business Council. And so whenever you were having a Joint Economic Commission meeting, the U.S.-Iran Business Council would meet at the same time and there would be a little bit of cross-fertilization and it always became a great social occasion, although it didn't last all that long. John Patterson, I think his name was, from the UOP was the head of it at one point.

Q: *UoP? Is this a firm?*

LEHFELDT: It's a firm. Of the Middle States somewhere. I've forgotten what it was. A pipeline transmission company.

Q: *So the commission would sort of facilitate trade, and investment from U.S. to Iran?*

LEHFELDT: That's right.

Q: *Was it very effective in that way?*

LEHFELDT: No. Not really. It provides a certain--yes, there were certain--it did accomplish a few things, but not really very much. These things I view as--although I take part in a lot of them even today, they are more window-dressing than really--you have to demonstrate to your host government that you're active and interested in their affairs, and that opens doors that wouldn't ordinarily be open perhaps. You meet people. You get to know them on a social and non-official level that helps later.

Q: *Now your second stay in Iran coincided with the growth of opposition to the Shah and the collapse of the monarchy, back in '78, early '79. Now before the revolutionary crisis began in mid-'78 and the following months...*

LEHFELDT: Why do you say mid-'78? It started well before that.

Q: *Well, actually, I guess, January. January '78. But before 1978 was there--did you notice any developments that suggested particular difficulties in the country?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, sure.

Q: *Of very serious difficulties in the country?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes, indeed. Well, and opposition. After all, Doug MacArthur, they tried to assassinate or kidnap him. And there were other incidents or attempts on Americans. The Rockwell officials were assassinated. And there were a number of other incidents that you can point to.

The attempts after 1975--after '76, I guess, when--when Amuzegar came into power?

Q: *I think '77.*

LEHFELDT: '77. When that wild man, Fereidun Mahdavi, was made Minister of Commerce, he organized all these student groups to go around the bazaars to check on price controls.

Q: *That was even before that, I think, perhaps. '75? A lot of pressure. Sort of a mid-70's phenomenon. The Rastakhiz Party?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, the Rastakhiz Party.

Q: *But it continued into the following year?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, it continued in those years. And that was when they started the program of "Rustication," of people who were accused of violating price controls and so forth. One of the Bighanians--one of those big Jewish families was rusticated down in the desert.

Q: *That means exiled?*

LEHFELDT: Exiled, yes. And it aroused a great deal of enmity in the bazaar class, and it was palpable. You could hear it. You could feel it. They'd talk about it with people, because it made absolutely no economic sense, what they were trying to do. And I remember one evening going over to dinner at Reza Moghadam's house, who was then running a bank. John Gunter, I guess was his name, from the IMF was visiting. Khodadad Armoni Armain was there and Cyrus Sammi, Mehdi Sammi, myself and John, Reza Moghadam, Sahl Shoraha, Dr. Amin. There were ten or twelve of us. This was really the economic brain trust of Iran.

And they were talking about the situation and the money the government was wasting on imports, to keep, as one of them put it, Tehran happy. Fresh fruit, fresh chicken, fresh butter, fresh everything, to make sure that the stores were filled with everything they needed, while the

agricultural base of the country was still being devastated by a lack of a sensible economic policy. And they were highly critical. But that was within this very small in-group.

Q: So what was your general evaluation of economic conditions when you were back in the country in '75 and '76?

LEHFELDT: Well, when I went back at the end of '75, things had changed so drastically from the time I left, as I indicated, that there was almost no control. There was no discipline. The hotels were jammed with foreigners of all stripes with propositions waving contracts and proposals and so forth and so on. It was a field day for anybody who had any claim to being influential. So money was just flowing all over the place. It made it very difficult for sensible companies, like mine, to try to do something reasonable. Sure, I would go around to see my old friends in government, and I never ever made a proposition to them that I wouldn't make to you or a Congressman or anybody like that, but more often than not--I wouldn't say it fell on deaf ears, because it didn't, but there was just no movement.

Q: Now I've read descriptions of the Iranian economy at this time, that after '75, when oil prices were skyrocketing, there was an inflationary boom that triggered all kinds of problems. Like shortages, income equality was aggravated. There was overcrowding in the cities, like Tehran. Bottlenecks in the ports, which you mentioned earlier. Now apparently this led to a lot of popular resentment of economic conditions in the country and in the city of Tehran generally. Did you see much evidence of resentment? You mentioned the question of bazaars and their apprehension of the price control issue. Besides that, there was...?

LEHFELDT: Besides that, yes, businessmen, industrialists generally found doing business very difficult. Mainly because the port facilities were so badly organized and the transportation system was so over-taxed that getting their supplies in--and especially if they were in something like housing, construction, that sort of thing--getting cement supplies, in competition with government, was very difficult indeed.

I was talking to someone the other day. Who the heck was it? Oh, I know. They were involved in building the national tele-communications system, the microwave system. It was a Northrop project, a Northrop Page project. And he was complaining to his friend that, you know, every time he turned around he found his cement being delivered to this housing project that had the Shah's family's protection or involvement. And the guy who was building that says, "No way, I didn't get any of that. [Laughs] Apparently you were just being taken by one of the truck drivers, who was selling it twice."

But, yes, it was very difficult. And government action would solve things on occasion. SAVAK would order a thousand trucks to go down to the port and bring back cement or other supplies that were necessary. There were shiploads of live sheep that would be offloaded in Bandar Shahpur and no one was there to take care of them, and, of course, that was a great hassle. What do you do with fifty thousand sheep overnight? [Laughs]

Q: I think I've also read, I guess in the wake of the Shah's anti-inflation campaign, led by the

Rastakhiz Party, that there was a lot of capital flight.

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, they opened up the--yes, sure, there was a capital flight.

Q: *Was that indication of sort of declining confidence in the regime or something else?*

LEHFELDT: Well, no, it was just that any prudent Iranian or Middle Easterner in that kind of a euphoric situation would automatically toss a few anchors to the windward. Some of them had a lot of money abroad always. Others had enough to take care of themselves. A few I knew refused to do it and ended up on the short end of the stick. They were genuine patriots. They felt our life is here and we're going to keep it here.

Q: *Did your Iranian business and economic official friends--what did they think of the arms purchase program by this point? They had problems with it?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, they had problems with it. What are we going to do? What are these guys going to do with them? There was just a great amount of doubt that they could be effectively used and who were they going to use them against. Although they did sort of take a little pride in the Abu Musa operation.

Q: *In the Persian Gulf?*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *From what I've read, the Rastakhiz Party--or the Resurgence Party in English--had two wings. There was a progressive wing, which I guess was more nationalistic and more supportive of government intervention in the economy.*

LEHFELDT: It was all window-dressing. This wasn't really--people were assigned to the wings. It wasn't because...

Q: There weren't any actual...

LEHFELDT: There wasn't any real choice, no.

Q: *Oh. There was supposed to be a constructive wing, which was more internationalist and more towards economic revolution. That was a totally artificial...*

LEHFELDT: Totally artificial, absolutely. That was my understanding of it, and I think if you ask some of the Iranians around here, they'd tell you the same thing.

Q: *So these wings are not really reflective of the real views of the participants?*

LEHFELDT: No. Well, Jamshid Amuzegar, who was the head of the party, a year or two before had told me, he said, "I have nothing to do with politics. I am not a politician. I will not join any

party." And the next thing you knew, there he is heading the damn thing. Because the Shah told him to.

Q: I guess the prices had soared before you actually came back to Tehran. I think it was March of '75?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: What did you make of it?

LEHFELDT: Well, I figured it was just more of the same situation. You know, the two parties they'd had before--I've forgotten the names, they're so memorable--were artificial as well. I knew Ameri, who was the head of one party (the Mardom), the opposition party. But there was hope, when they had the two parties, that one day the system would grow into real democracy. But with the advent of the decision to create the Rastakhiz Party with the two wings, you know, all of those hopes were dashed. They all played the game, but it was not a real political movement.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier the Shah's efforts to sort of police--the Shah's efforts through the Rastakhiz Party to police the bazaar, in terms of price controls and so forth. Did this have an impact on U.S. corporations who were active in Iran, this anti-pleasure [?] campaign? Did it have any impact on corporate operations?

LEHFELDT: I don't think so. No, this was more addressed to those things that affected the average Iranian's daily life. The cheap plastic shoes, the green vegetables, the oranges and things of that sort. Fruits. Chicken.

Q: Just basic consumer...

LEHFELDT: Yes, basic consumer items.

Q: Consumer necessities?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Around the same year, '75, the Shah also had selected a Law for the Extension of Industrial Property, to require large corporations, Iranian and foreign, to sell forty-nine per cent of their shares to employees. I guess the Shah thought this was a way to head off labor trouble in the future. The same law I guess also restricted foreign participation in joint ventures. They could only hold a small percentage of investment stake in Iran. How did American corporate investors react to these?

LEHFELDT: That law, in effect, was never really applied. It never had a chance. There was a lot of talk about it. This was one of the efforts of the U.S.-Iran Joint Business Council. To try to smoke out of the government how they were going to implement these decrees, because they were decrees. And the implementation orders, by the time the revolution came along, had never

really been put into effect. A lot of companies jumped in and said, sure, here are our shares, we'll give them to the workers and so on. So some of them made shows in handing out certificates, but again it never really became effective.

Q: Do I recall reading somewhere that B.F. Goodrich pulled out of Iran because of one of these laws or something? That they reduced their operations or...?

LEHFELDT: Well, B.F. Goodrich was undergoing its own problems at the time and they did pull out, but I don't remember the proximate cause. I think it had more to do with repatriation profits and capital than anything else.

Q: Repatriation of profits could have involved the question of government regulation? In terms of employees.

LEHFELDT: Yes. But when they freed the exchange controls, the question didn't arise.

Q: One last question, then maybe we should break up for the day. In March '76 David Rockefeller and a group of about fifty American bankers--I think industrialists also--came to Iran. Came to Iran to discuss...

LEHFELDT: Yes. I had Jack Parker, the vice-chairman of GE, there, and John Burlingame, the senior vice-president for International, was there. And I attended the conference as well.

Q: So this was a delegation designed to discuss investment issues in Iran?

LEHFELDT: Yes. You know, Bob Abboud and Don Regan and all kinds of cats were on that one.

Q: What motivated this delegation to come to Iran? Was there some kind of concern about the business climate or just an effort to just find a way to...

LEHFELDT: Just an effort to find a way to--well, help recycle oil money. To insure the Americans were getting their fair share of Iranian investment money. David Rockefeller always liked to be seen with the other Shahs of the world. And he's a nice fellow. I mean, he really did a first--let me tell you something about that.

I was instrumental in briefing the delegation before the conference began, and I spent half an hour on the corruption issue, telling them that this was a real problem and getting worse. And so they took it to heart, in a sense, in the sense that Tahir Zia'i and David Rockefeller and I don't know who else got together and discussed the problem and agreed that they would not discuss corruption, they would not mention corruption at all. Well, that was all right. Until the last dinner, when Prime Minister Hoveyda was addressing the assembled magnates and accused all the American businessmen of corrupting the poor Iranians by offering them money, and the Iranians couldn't resist the temptations that we put in their way. So we were the culprits, and, boy, was there a reaction to that one.

Q: Apparently the Rockefeller group was also interested in trying to set up an international money market in Iran at this time.

LEHFELDT: Yes. That was the focus of the discussion, to bring Iran into the international financial world, but my recollection of the general conclusion was that the Iranian system was not developed enough yet to make sense. The stock market was not really functioning in a real way and the banks were not efficient enough. There simply wasn't enough fundament to make it. But the view of the future was that they could get there and this was something that they were trying to bring the Iranian government and financial world to do over time. I don't think anybody had any illusions when they came that this was going to happen very soon. Least of all the Iranian bankers.

Q: Was the Rockefeller group--were they concerned about these degrees of share participation and how many joint ventures there were?

LEHFELDT: They wanted to know what it was all about but that was the early days and they really didn't get much illumination is my recollection. You know, it was a fun conference in a way, because I'd never seen so many senior American businessmen together in one place before.

Q: We'll stop for today and then finish up the next time around.

LEHFELDT: Okay. Very good.

Q: With the expansion of the arms sales and the growing U.S. business activity in Iran during the mid to late seventies, there came an influx of American nationals--technicians, managers, military advisers and so forth.

LEHFELDT: And other entrepreneurs, who were just looking to get under the money tree.

Q: That's right. Now what issues did this growing U.S. cultural and economic presence raise?

LEHFELDT: Well, you can divide them into a series of things. First there was the pressure on the housing market, which seems kind of silly, but it's also one of the points of complaints by many middle and upper-crust Iranians, that the influx of Americans and other foreigners, who really didn't care how much they paid for housing, drove the average Iranian out of the rental market and made it almost totally impossible for a young Iranian couple even to hope to either rent or own their own apartment or house, with the result that a lot of young couples started their married lives living with in-laws or family and sometimes under rather crowded and difficult circumstances. So that was one point.

The pressure on public facilities was another one. Automobiles were expensive and hard to come by, and the visibility, the easy visibility, of foreigners driving expensive--or to the average Iranian, expensive cars, which were either provided for the Americans or the foreigners by their companies, by their governments, was another point of criticism and difference.

Then finally the--not finally, but one other thing was that the competition for competent Iranian help became very intense, with the result that salaries were driven up very high and the local Iranian companies again could not compete, except those that were tremendously strong, tremendously wealthy, or tremendously corrupt, whichever.

So there were a number of points on the living level. Over time the--oh, and I know, the education that was provided, educational facilities that were provided for American kids in Iran, were so far superior and so visibly far superior to those provided for Iranian kids that it too became a point of difference.

So that you had it on a whole series of levels and there are other examples. The practice of religion was one problem. Many of the foreigners, Americans principally, who came were--well, some, at least, were either religious fundamentalists, Seventh Day Adventists, whatever, or Mormons or a whole series of things that were anathema to the religious element in the country.

So putting them all together, you had a mixture that was bound to create widespread dissatisfaction. Balance that on the other side with the efforts of the government to satisfy the needs of the average Iranian by heavy imports of foodstuffs--fruits, vegetables, chickens, butter, onions, whatever--to make sure that the cities at least were well fed, even if the countryside was neglected, helped to some degree to alleviate the discrepancies that were caused by the heavy influx of foreigners. The insensitivity of many of the foreigners to local mores and customs was another point of some considerable criticism.

Q: Did those attitudes have sort of a visible impact on the relationship of the Iranians? Did ethnocentric attitudes on the part of Americans, a sort of national chauvinistic attitude, have a problem?

LEHFELDT: I don't think it was necessarily the chauvinistic attitude. It was just simply insensitivity. The selection process by some of the companies, of the technicians and other people they assigned out there, was simply not very thorough. They almost just went out in the street and grabbed people and sent them over and hoped that they would work. Now in some cases they didn't. Bell Helicopter had a number of cases of people who showed up down in Isfahan, stayed less than twenty-four hours and went home, because they were simply not prepared for what they found down there. So, you know, it was kind of difficult for everybody.

Q: Did the Chamber of Commerce work on these issues?

LEHFELDT: We tried to work on these issues. We tried to brief companies as they came out. Our executive directors over the time--Frank Burroughs and his predecessor, whose name escapes me right off-hand--used to brief people, and Frank, of course, was fluent in Persian and married to an Iranian and quite sensitive to the needs of the average Iranian. I think he did a superb job in trying, at least, to influence people to do the right thing.

But it was a--there were those--if I might divide the companies into those who tried harder and those who didn't, those who were allied with the military, i.e. military suppliers, military

equipment suppliers, were the least effective in their personnel selection and the most demanding in terms of creature comforts and the hardest thereby to satisfy and the ones who caused the most difficulty. By and large. That's a generalization, but I think it's substantially true.

Q: You suggested that the problem of housing, the role of our educational institutions in Iran, among other things sort of tended to lead to criticism of Americans in general. Did you see visible evidence or implicit anti-Americanism during the period when you were...?

LEHFELDT: Oh, sure. Oh, indeed. My wife and I and the family used to travel--at least we attempted to travel extensively, and always during the Noruz period, we did take trips out into the boonies. Some of our favorite trips were going down through Kashan to Nain, Nataz, Yazd, Kerman and so on, and getting off into the mountain villages alongside.

One specific instance we went up to--oh, my word--outside of Kashan there is in the mountains a village where they harvest rose petals to make attara roses. It's well known. I can't remember the name right off-hand. But it was converted to Islam as late as 1935 by Shah Reza, by the bastinado pretty much. At least that's the story we got. There were some villages of that sort. They had previously been Zoroastrian.

At any rate, we were wandering through the village and some little children came up to us and started talking to us and reflected their teachings from the mullahs, which were the "You Christian, you no good; me Muslim, me good," in their medieval English. A medieval modicum of English. They did know some English, believe it or not. But the attitudes that they displayed were symptomatic, I think, of what came later.

Q: It's been argued that to some extent Iranian anti-Americanism was partly stimulated by the role that the Eisenhower administration played in restoring the power of the Shah in 1953.

LEHFELDT: Well, let's back up just a minute. You are assuming--and forgive me if I'm putting words in your mouth, but your question at least gives the implication that anti-Americanism was endemic and widespread. I don't believe that to be the case. Yes, there were people who were anti-American and some of them with reasonably good reason. But I think there was a far broader, and I believe there still is a far broader base, of pro-Americanism in Iran than the events and the success of the Ayatollah would lead one to believe. The Iranians are a volatile lot, there's no question about it, and they are easily led, difficult to push, and they develop extreme dislikes. Now their basic desire was to get rid of the Shah, but it wasn't necessarily because they were anti-American. The two are not necessarily coexistent. That is not to say that there is not anti-Americanism. There is. And some of the people who are involved, especially the--well, the Tudehs naturally, but many of the pro-democratic element, without being communist or communist-leaning, felt--as is apparently felt in many other parts of the world--that we were supporting a right wing, autocratic not to say dictatorial regime, when we might well have gone other directions.

Now no one has ever satisfactorily, at least for me, demonstrated that there was an alternate direction to go in existence at the time, given our other strategic and geopolitical needs in the

area.

So I don't know...

Q: Well, I guess what I'm saying is that those who were critical of American foreign policy in some respects, that was simulated or reinforced by the U.S. role in '53 in overthrowing Mossadegh and rebuilding the power of the Shah to some extent.

LEHFELDT: Let's examine that premise a little bit too. Despite Mr. Roosevelt's [Kim] book, the return of the Shah would not have happened if it had not been a reasonably popular activity on the part of the majority of the Iranians. I posit that as--I mean, that's my basic premise. It would not have happened if most people had not wanted him back.

Q: But I guess you said that the U.S. played a sort of catalyzing role in bringing Mossadegh down? That's the argument that has been made, in any case.

LEHFELDT: *Yes. Bringing Mossadegh down is probably more a British activity than an American.*

Q: But I guess what I'm trying to say is to what extent, when you talked to Iranian officials--this is men in the seventies or sixties--to what extent did they assume that the U.S. had played a role in that episode?

LEHFELDT: Oh, that was a given, that we'd played a role.

Q: A major role or an unimportant role?

LEHFELDT: Well, it was an overblown role. I think our role was not nearly as crucial, and I believe Kim Roosevelt says this in his book. Not nearly as crucial as a lot of people would have one believe today. We are widely credited--CIA is widely credited--in bringing Mossadegh down, in bringing back the Shah. Not so. We had a minor role in it. A real minor role.

Q: My interest was to what extent you took--you took it for granted.

LEHFELDT: They took it for granted, oh, sure. But those who knew better really knew better, and you didn't find them making those charges. People like Egbal and Alam had serious questions about American policies, based on serious problems that they could see. But they were still basically pro-American.

Q: Moving on to another issue. Now apparently during the course of '76 the Shah made some tentative steps towards internal liberalization. For example, he moderated the degree of political repression, of internal repression, to some extent, and made some moves toward legal reform of the judicial system. How much knowledge did you have of this change in tack around that time.

LEHFELDT: Well, I guess it was more apparent than real, because it was not really--those

changes were allied with some other changes, as I recall. I may have the timing wrong, but the creation of the single party, the Rastakhiz Party, took place about that time as well.

Q: '75 or so?

LEHFELDT: Yes. And so when you have a single party government, even if you have two wings, with the leader at least of one of the wings--that was Jamshid Amuzegar--dragged in kicking and screaming to head it, other so-called reforms really are meaningless. And so if there was a judicial reform...

Q: *It was more a discussion of taking steps as opposed to actual...*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, there was the effort to get democracy working at the lowest possible level. Electing village chiefs and headmen, that sort of thing. It never really got very far.

Q: *Some suggest that the Shah was moving in this direction because of concern that his son have some kind of a--be able to establish his own rule in a sort of legitimate fashion.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. There were some interviews given by the Shah at the time, and I recall one such--reported to me, at least, by a man who flew with him to Europe. It was John--it was a CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR guy. At any rate--John Cooley, I think it was. He had several hours to talk to the Shah on board the plane on several of the things, and I may have mentioned this earlier. The Shah sort of let down his hair and said, "You know, I've got to act imperial. I have to act cold and aloof and distant. My people expect it of me. That isn't the way I want to be." And it certainly wasn't the way he was at the end of World War II, when he was a playboy about town and so on. Then he went on to say, "My greatest hope is to leave my son a throne, although I am not certain that that's going to happen. Certainly he's not going to be able to rule in the same manner in which I do. He's going to have to give a lot if he's going to rule." So he clearly had something of that in mind. And I can't place that interview in time. I believe it was about '75 or thereabouts.

But, yes, I think he was trying, but it varied. He wasn't willing to go all the way and he wasn't willing, as I think I recounted earlier, to root out corruption all the way. They would take half-hearted steps against it, but it was more than he could do to bring himself to discard some of his oldest, longest associates, his most trusted associates.

But when you got down to the end, the end of 1978, they all fell by the wayside. His personal physician, who was a Bahai. There were several others. The head of SAVAK, General Nasari. A whole batch of them he tossed in jail at the end to try to buy time.

Q: *Now in early '77, Jimmy Carter of course was inaugurated President. Now from your vantage point in Tehran, how did Carter's election go over? In government circles, I suppose, or business circles?*

LEHFELDT: Well, there was a certain amount of just--let me see--unhappiness over his election.

And some of the things that came to pass as far as the business community were concerned were immediately criticized, I guess. Any of us who had anything to do with a company that manufactured military equipment that was being supplied, we were pariah. I mean, we couldn't mix with the military. These were Carter's orders, that the military not have anything to do with any arms salesmen. They were not to help us in any way. The Embassy enforced that rule as well. And it was really a very distasteful period for American businessmen abroad. For instance, even myself, who had close, good relations with many of the Embassy folk, based on personal friendships, found it very difficult to carry on a normal social intercourse with them. They wouldn't accept invitations, some of them, because they interpreted their orders to just ignore us, stay away from us, not help us. And so it was not a very happy time, and the distrust of the American Embassy began with the advent of Carter. And by the time the Revolution came along, the distrust and alienation of the American community from the Embassy was pretty much complete.

Q: What about your Iranian contacts? People in the government, Iranian businessmen, how did they view things?

LEHFELDT: Well, you have to differentiate. The Iranian businessman and his government contacts were never disturbed particularly. Their only concern was to make sure that they didn't raise their heads too far, so that they attracted the attention of one or another of the royal family.

American businessmen and their contacts with government--oh, it became from 1975 very difficult to even get to see a minister, where before there were open doors. It became very difficult to talk sensibly to some of the people, because the ministries were peopled with politicians rather than technicians, technocrats. And even some of my old, close friends had been moved aside from positions of power into more advisory positions, and it was very difficult to get anything sensible done. There are some exceptions, but people like Fereydoun Mahdavi, for instance, who had been a reasonably junior--not junior, but reasonable obscure senior officer in the industrial IMDBI, Industrial Mining and Development Bank of Iran, suddenly became Minister of Commerce, and he was impossible. Mehdi Sami'i, who had been running the Plan Organization and the Central Bank, suddenly found himself over in the Prime Minister's office as a special adviser. And although Mehdi's door was always open to me and even Fereydoun's was to a degree, if I needed to see him, but a lot of the other people withdrew. Reza Mogaddam withdrew from government and started his own bank. Cyrus Sami'i--well, of course, he'd gone into a bank before, in any case, the Iranians Banka joint venture of Citibank, and then the Iran-Arab Bank--that's not quite the right title, but...

At any rate, a whole raft of new people came in, that were unknown or strictly politicians, and made it very difficult to deal with them rationally. Many of them had their hands out, which made it very difficult. They had a whole new coterie of interlopers--intermediaries rather--coming along seeking to be helpful to you. For a price. And so it was very difficult to walk the straight line that the Carter Administration expected businessmen to walk and satisfy the Iranians in the manner in which they expected to be satisfied.

Q: Getting back to Carter's foreign policy, he appointed William Sullivan as Ambassador, of

course.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *Did you get--given what you've been saying already, it sounds like you didn't get to know Sullivan or...*

LEHFELDT: Why, I'd known Sullivan before.

Q: *Oh, you had? Okay.*

LEHFELDT: You know he owed his appointment as Ambassador to Averell Harriman.

Q: *I think I've heard that.*

LEHFELDT: He was Averell's protégé.

Q: *The Laos period, yes.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. And Bill did have some Middle East experience. He'd served in Iraq--Basra or some place like that--early on in his career, but he knew nothing about Iran. Or very little. He came almost directly from the Philippines. And he arrived--if I recall correctly, he arrived in about March, 1978. He left in Early June to go on extended home leave and he came back at the end of August, 1978. Because I was on the same plane with him when he came back. I know when he came back. It was about the time of the Abadan Theatre disaster.

Now--you can't tell me that Bill Sullivan kept his thumb on the pulse of things during those crucial months, when many serious things were taking place. I think we had a pretty lousy Embassy then. Perfectly frankly, we had a lousy Embassy. And I may have mentioned this earlier, I don't know.

Q: *Not in those terms, no.*

LEHFELDT: We had a Political Counselor who didn't want to be there.

Q: *Who was that?*

LEHFELDT: A Greek name, George Lambrakis. Pretty bright guy, all things considered. We had an Economic Counselor--I'm talking about 1978 now...

Q: *This is '77, or '78 particularly?*

LEHFELDT: '77, '78. Late '77-'78 particularly, because all the turmoil began in early '78. Some people put it in Tabriz, some people put it in Mashhad, some people put it in Qum, but it all began in early '78. Or would be intensified in early '78.

We had an Economic Counselor who had never served in the Middle East. He'd been head of the Economic Section in Panama, of all places. We had a head of the CIA, the Station Chief, who had spent the previous thirteen years in Japan. Spoke no Persian, as far as I know.

Q: *The DCM was...?*

LEHFELDT: The DCM was Charlie Naas, who was reasonably knowledgeable. I believe it was Charlie Naas.

Q: *Well, Miklos was on...*

LEHFELDT: Jack Miklos was there until Bill arrived, that's right.

Q: *Actually through part of '78, I think.*

LEHFELDT: Yes, until Bill arrived.

Q: *Well, Sullivan arrived in '77, didn't he? Spring of '77?*

LEHFELDT: No. No-o.

Q: *Yes. The spring of '77. Like June or something.*

LEHFELDT: Late. Later than that. If it wasn't early '78.

Q: *Well, there was a gap between Helms and Sullivan.*

LEHFELDT: There was a long gap between--there was a pretty long gap. He didn't get there--well, it was late '77 then. It wasn't early '77.

Q: *I think Miklos was there through like May or June of '78, something like that. What was your assessment of Miklos?*

LEHFELDT: Very careful. [laughs] He wasn't going to do anything to rock boats. He was hoping to get an ambassadorship himself, with the result that he wasn't going to take any chances. He knew a lot of Iranians, no question about it. But I don't believe that he was fully trusted or respected by the Iranian senior hierarchy. Well, obviously he was the junior man and a fill-in, so they weren't going to accord him the same treatment that they would someone who was clearly the right hand of the President, or the emissary of the President, as Dick Helms was and Bill Sullivan was supposed to be.

But, you know, there were a number of other things that were happening at the time in the military.

Q: *Oh, in the MAAG?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, in the MAAG. You had Arthur Schlesinger--no, I'm sorry, not Arthur Schlesinger. You had Schlesinger anyway.

Q: *James Schlesinger?*

LEHFELDT: Who was the Secretary of Defense?

Q: *Brown. Schlesinger and then [Donald] Rumsfeld, then Brown, under Carter, right? Before Brown you had Rumsfeld, and before him was James Schlesinger. But he was in Energy under Carter, right?*

LEHFELDT: Well, under Schlesinger started the fundamental deterioration--I view it at least--of the MAAGs integrity.

Q: *It was during the Ford period then.*

LEHFELDT: Yes, it was during the Ford period, because he'd put in this Colonel What's-His-Name down there as an adviser to...

Q: *Hallock?*

LEHFELDT: [Richard] Hallock, yes. Adviser to Toufanian, and that came a cropper. Toufanian paid Hallock off very handsomely just to get out of the country. And then Erich von Marbod came as the personal representative and this sort of detracted from the authority of the Armish-MAAG Chief and made life very difficult and set up another pole vis-a-vis both the Armish-MAAG Chief and the Ambassador. And by the time you got [Philip] Gast there, who was not overly--I don't know what to say about him, I didn't know him all that well. Apparently an able military guy, but knew nothing about Iran particularly. And that came back to haunt everybody when he was running that operation in the desert later on.

The Embassy's disarray--and I view it as disarray, because it didn't have a very good crowd--and the military disarray, because of the divided loyalties there, made it very easy for the Iranians to play them off one against the other.

Q: *That's very interesting.*

LEHFELDT: Yes. I don't know whether anybody else would say that, but I certainly felt that.

Q: *About early '77--I guess by early in the year--the economy of Iran was falling into recession of sorts. I've read that unemployment reached about nine per cent by the end of the year.*

LEHFELDT: Oh, hell, it was always much higher than that. Nine per cent where?

Q: I guess I saw a figure for the national level. That could have been...

LEHFELDT: That was a figment of imagination to begin with.

Q: In terms of statistical methods?

LEHFELDT: Yes. There was more disguised under--and unemployment than you could shake a stick at. It was almost as bad as India in some respects. Not quite. But to assert that you had only a nine per cent unemployment rate I think is ludicrous. I realize they had to manufacture numbers for things, but if you went down into South Tehran in 1977 of a warm summer's day, you wondered why the place didn't blow up earlier. People were flocking to town from the countryside, from the small villages all over the country, hoping to get in on the gravy train and crammed into impossible living quarters in South Tehran, by and large. And all looking for jobs. You could go down there with your truck and fill it up with people to go out working on day labor, and you didn't have to pay them very much, because they were really paid starvation wages. And here were all these enormous big apartments going up, enormous luxury housing projects, and nothing going on in South Tehran. That's another one of the effects of the...

Q: Like I say, I guess unemployment became much more serious than it had been earlier.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: What was the impact on the U.S. business community of this development? If any?

LEHFELDT: *Of the recession?*

Q: Yes.

LEHFELDT: Well, there was a--when you say recession, they suddenly realized that they had overspent and they'd over-committed, and they had to draw back.

Q: There was a tightening of monetary policies?

LEHFELDT: Yes. And there was also the problem that they were over-taxing their own facilities. You know, the crowding of the ports was just incredible by that time, and so they had to do something sensible about clearing them out. And I think there was a return to some effort at rational management of the economy, but not enough. I'm not quite sure my memory permits me to bring back chapter and verse, but by 1976, I guess, they had lifted all foreign exchange controls, had they not? Can you remember when that...?

Q: Yes, that's right. It was around that time.

LEHFELDT: So by 1977 every Iranian, wealthy Iranian worthy of the name, was planting his little nest egg outside. So you had a drawdown on foreign reserves. And the oil situation was not reaping the rewards that they'd thought it would, and they were spending a hell of a lot more than

they were taking in. And if I'm not mistaken, it was about that time they started to go on to the European market to raise money, didn't they? They floated a few loans out there at that time. So they had to begin to try to put their house back in order. The trouble is they didn't do it quickly enough or thoroughly enough. They were still relying on some of what I call the Chinese Cultural Revolutionary Squad methods to get some of it done, with the attendant increase in dissatisfaction with the government. Especially on the part of the bazaar and the industrialists.

Q: So these deepening economic problems--did they have much of an impact on the investment plans of U.S. corporations?

LEHFELDT: Of course. Of course. You couldn't get anything approved. Governments were--I mean, government agencies were pulling back. My own company, General Electric at the time, we had thought we might do a number of things with the government. We made some proposals to IDRO, the Iran Development & Reconstruction Organization, I think it was called, which was the government industry arm, government-owned company. And they owned a lot of things like Machine Sazi Tabriz, and a lot of the Arak [Southwest of Iran] businesses were run by IDRO.

And we made a whole series of presentations to them on what we would like to do, absolutely with no resonance whatever. Mainly because we weren't bringing big buckets of money in. We were expecting participation and cooperation and so forth and so on, and that wasn't what they were looking for.

I always got a good hearing. I never had any problems. Some of my old friends from government, when I was in government, were running those ministries. Reza Amin was running the Ministry of Industry--Commerce and Industry, I guess it was. And Dr.--I can't think of his name--was still head of IDRO. Very nice man. Very honest. Thoroughly competent, but no place to go. No place to go.

Q: Now with the worsening of economic conditions, I've read the Shah began to relax somewhat the Rastakhiz Party's anti-inflation campaign.

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: And the anti-profiteering efforts as well. And he made some cabinet changes. He appointed Amuzegar...

LEHFELDT: Prime Minister.

Q: Replacing Hoveyda?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: This was all, I think, in August of '77. From what I've read.

LEHFELDT: Yes, that's correct.

Q: What was your impression of this policy shift? The Amuzegar appointment, among other things?

LEHFELDT: Amuzegar was much more of a nationalist than Hoveyda was. Hoveyda was a real pragmatist. Amuzegar was more of an ideologue than Hoveyda. And Amuzegar was probably, in a sense, a better educated technocrat than Hoveyda. But Hoveyda was the ultimate politician in Iranian terms. He knew how to get the best and the most out of a diverse ragtaggle group of people. He knew who to pay, when to pay, and how to pay, and he engaged in a great political juggling game for thirteen years as Prime Minister. One of my friends, who knew him well, quoted him one day to me. He says, "You know, give me another five years and I can make this system last and work, but I'm afraid I don't have that long." And it was very shortly after that that he was replaced by Amuzegar.

Now Amuzegar, who had been a very good Minister of Finance for many years and made his reputation as the principal representative in OPEC, and indeed was the man who sort of made OPEC work, along with [Sheik] Yamani, back in 1971-72-73 period, and engineered those agreements that brought about the vast increase in oil income, should have been a good technician, but he was insensitive as a politician. There are stories--and I'm told they are true--that when he discovered the sort of privy purse list that Hoveyda maintained of mullahs, ayatollahs, religious leaders, he was appalled and said, "Cut it all off." So he cut off...

Q: The subsidies?

LEHFELDT: The subsidies, yes. So he cut off the payments that were keeping these people loyal--at least vocally loyal, if not truly loyal--to the government, and forced them with one stroke of the pen, overnight, into the vocal and active opposition. That's, I think, demonstrable, although I can't say for sure, because I've never seen the documents of it. But there are many people who will swear to that. That was the first of many sort of insensitive things.

Q: Now, I guess during the course of the same year of '77, there was an increase in organized opposition activity, there was student unrest that was fairly widespread, there were protests in the Tehran bazaar and other places. How did you assess these developments? How much did you know about them?

LEHFELDT: We didn't know much about them, because naturally they didn't appear in the newspaper. And unless you happened to be caught up in the middle of one of them, you didn't know it occurred. You got rumors, and, of course, some highly visible things as the assassination--the killing of a couple of American officers, technicians, and so forth. That was hard to keep under cover. But by and large, we didn't know much about the demonstrations and anti-regime activities.

Q: Before '78?

LEHFELDT: Before '78. I've been asked before, when did business know what was happening

and what did they do about it? We really weren't aware very clearly about what was happening until well on into '78. The Embassy, I must say, didn't do much to elucidate the situation either.

Q: Now late in that year, in '77, President Carter made a state visit.

LEHFELDT: Yes. On New Year's.

Q: Right. That's right, close to New Year's Eve. What was your interpretation of the visit? How did you evaluate it at that time? Did it have any special significance?

LEHFELDT: Not particularly, except that it was a convenient place to spend New Year's, and you'd rather do it amongst friends than any place else. He did indulge in some hyperbole that I don't think Mr. Nixon would have, but that's all right. Which he lived to eat a year later. It wasn't exactly a state dinner anyway, but that's all right. No, it was just another ceremonial stop without a--it didn't seem to us a heck of a lot of substance. There couldn't have been. They were only there twenty-four hours, if that long. And so the kind of substance that took place would be pretty limited. That's right, Bill Sullivan was there for that. He had to be. But he got there just before. He couldn't have been there very long before that.

Q: Now in his campaign, of course, Carter emphasized the importance of human rights issues. Did your contacts in the Iran government or people you talked to who were with the Embassy, did they suggest that this concern had a real impact on the way the policy was conducted?

LEHFELDT: Yes, it was very much in everybody's portfolio. Miss Darin's strictures on democratization and all the rest of her baggage were always brought to mind, and the general human rights issue was on that was constantly hammered by the Carter Administration in Iran, into Iran. And it was probably that as much as anything else that sort of forced the Shah, or moved the Shah, into making a lot of steps, taking a lot of steps in 1978, early '78, that eventually probably led to his downfall. Easing opposition activities, permitting the street demonstrations. Maybe he had no choice, I don't know, but the spectacle of the Shah and the Shahbanou on the White House lawn wiping away tears caused by tear gas was really pretty shocking. And that happened about four months later, I guess. It was April, wasn't it?

Q: No, November, I think. Before Carter's visit to the country.

LEHFELDT: Was it '77 or '78?

Q: '77. Like November or October. November.

LEHFELDT: At any rate, that was caused by Iranian students abroad. Vast numbers of them. I thought it was later than that. I thought it was after the New Year's visit.

Q: It was before.

LEHFELDT: I guess it was before, yes. Memories tend to get fuzzy.

Q: Some of the accounts I've read recently suggest that in practice, as his administration proceeded, Carter tended to subordinate the human rights issue to the strategic issues of arms sales, the role of the Shah in the Persian Gulf, et cetera.

LEHFELDT: But that was after Afghanistan.

Q: No, even before. Did you get a sense of that? You didn't get a sense of that apparently from your vantage point?

LEHFELDT: No. Not from our vantage point we didn't get a sense of that. Brzezinski, of course, was an apparatchik of realpolitik to some degree. But it was only after Afghanistan--which was '77, I think, wasn't it?

Q: Nine.

LEHFELDT: No, no.

Q: The invasion? That was '79.

LEHFELDT: The invasion, but the...

Q: Oh, the coup?

LEHFELDT: The coup, right.

Q: Yes, right, that was a year or two earlier.

LEHFELDT: In '77, I think. I'm almost certain.

Q: Yes. Yes, that's right.

LEHFELDT: That the American attitude towards Afghanistan and the area began to--the Carter attitude towards Afghanistan and the area began to shift, because clearly the regime that came into power in Afghanistan was a pro-Soviet regime, no matter how bad it was, how badly organized it was. And so that caused a rethinking, I think, of a lot of the problems in the area. And the problem of Bhutto was another one that sort of impinged on all of this. That's about the time he was--killed, wasn't it? '76? '77?

Q: Thereabouts. Now shortly after Carter's visit the Iranian government ran a newspaper article that criticized Ayatollah Khomeini, which led to demonstrations in Qom that were violently repressed? That's sort of the sequence as I recall.

LEHFELDT: Now that article was allegedly written by Daryoush Homayoun. He denies it. He's a very nice man, by the way.

Q: Actually in James Bill's book, he suggests a lower level person actually wrote the article?

LEHFELDT: Yes, exactly. Exactly. But his name was associated with it. And it needn't have happened, needn't have been written, but, yes, that was one of the proximate causes of demonstrations and more distaste for the Shah's regime. Just solidified opposition. But, you know, hell, by that time--as I've pointed out many times--they had managed to offend almost every aspect of government, civilian, intellectual, religious, business, and trade in the country. And the only thing they thought they had going for them was the military, and that turned out to be a weak reed.

Q: Now the repression of the demonstrations at Qom touched off a cycle of demonstrations and protests that encompassed the whole country?

LEHFELDT: Yes. The exact progression is a little fuzzy in my mind. I thought the first demonstration that caused the repression took place in Tabriz, because there were people killed up there, and forty days later they started holding the funerary--the mourning period. And that then took place in Qom, and then there was Tabriz and then there was this, there was that, there was the Abadan fire, and it just sort of snowballed.

Q: Did you witness or know about the protests that were taking place in Tehran the first months of '78, as part of the cycle?

LEHFELDT: Yes, we knew about them, but it wasn't really until later on that we could see and feel the effects, for instance, of the strikes in the passport section, the foreign residence section of the interior Ministry. When you couldn't get exit permits and so forth and so on.

Q: What was your initial evaluation of the protests that were breaking out in early '78? Did you see them as very striking?

LEHFELDT: Yes, we were concerned about them, but we never really felt--I never really felt and most of my colleagues never really felt, with one or two exceptions--that the Shah was in any danger. All he had to do was tighten the faucet a little bit, tighten the screws a little bit, and everybody would go back in their holes was the attitude. And that this was permitting a little bit of pressure to escape, and that when enough pressure had escaped, why, they would put the lid back on and we'd go on our merry way, and maybe this would have had a salutary effect over the long run for the people of Iran, but that this was simply one more step in the progression of Iranian political development that had to take place in an orderly, slow, stately, step-by-step manner. Going overnight from dictatorial Shahdom to democracy was clearly not in anybody's imagination.

Q: You said there were a few exceptions, people that took a more somber interpretation of what was going on. Do you recall who they were?

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes. James Saghi, an American of Lebanese extraction, who was the

Kimberly-Clark man [Novzohour Paper and Novzohour Sports] and a very active--he pulled out in '77. He saw the writing on the wall, he now says, and he sold his house at the top of the market for something approaching two and a half million dollars cash, which he took out of the country immediately. Moved lock, stock and barrel to San Francisco, where he lives happily ever after with a four hundred acre spread in Napa, a luxury apartment in San Francisco and numerous other investments, of course. Still very wealthy.

Lloyd Bertman was another one. Lived in Iran for twenty-eight years. Ran something called Jupiter Trading Company. His proximate cause, proximate complaint, was the anti-corruption act [Foreign Corrupt Growers Act of 1976]. He says, if I have to live and report under that, I can't, because there's no way to do business in this country unless you play by the Iranian rules. You can't impose American rules here. Then besides that, he said, there are things that are happening that make me uncomfortable, so I'm going to leave. So he sold out, again towards the end of '77 I think it was.

Q: This is all before '78 then?

LEHFELDT: All before '78.

Q: Before the demonstrations? Okay.

LEHFELDT: Yes, yes, before the demonstrations. Another one who voiced his suspicion that everything was going to fall apart was Bill Shashua, who was an American citizen of Iraqi--the Peugeot representative in Iran. We talked often about how the place was going to hell in a handbasket, and he kept thinking that he ought to withdraw and move out, but he waited until the last minute. He had enough money abroad anyway, but that's neither here nor there.

But they were really the only ones that I know who acted on their feelings, their suspicions, that something dire was going on. And there was one Iranian who did the same thing. He moved out in--well, I guess he didn't move out until '78, but he moved out in the summer of '78 when it was still possible to go. With all of his chattel, all of his extensive collection of priceless Iranian artifacts and things, carpets and so on. He lives in London and New York and does very nicely, thank you.

Q: Did your contacts at the Embassy--did you discuss these issues with them in '78, the demonstrations, with them?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, you know, the Chamber of Commerce had a periodic meeting with the Embassy, with the Ambassador. Now they tended to become a little bit stilted, because we now had a couple of Iranians on the board. Rahim Iruani, the head of Melli Shoe Company, the Melli Group. Ahmed Ladjevardi. But those two especially would come to the meetings with the Ambassador and naturally there were some restrictions on how open we would be.

Nonetheless, most of us felt the Embassy was never very forthcoming with us when it came to difficulties, that to some degree in the latter part of the summer of '78 and the beginning of the

fall, the American business community was being urged to stay put, not to show, not to desert, not to show any lessening...

Q: *On the part of the Embassy?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Not to show any lessening of support for the Shah and so on. We were, in a sense, being held hostage by the Embassy [chuckles] for this policy of supporting the Shah.

Q: *Did any of your contacts in the government of Iran or the business community--were they trying to find ways to smooth things over between the government and the opposition? Were any people taking any initiative?*

LEHFELDT: I never ever came across anybody who was trying to do that. The few people who had bridges built to both sides, at least to some degree in the intellectual side, were not sufficiently tied in or were overly identified with the regime to be useful in this. No, I never got the feeling that there was any real attempt at dialogue between the different parts. And, you know, when the religious element began to make itself felt, it was clear that they weren't interested in dialogue.

I have often and publicly said that I did not consider the Iranian revolution in its fullest to be a religious revolution. It was a middle-class revolution. It was a revolution in which all sides agreed on only one thing, that was to get rid of the Shah, but there was no agreement on what the form of the government would take after the revolution. And that's where it all became terribly, terribly difficult.

Q: *Now in August, '78, the Shah tried to find ways to placate the opposition by promising Western style democracy. He promised to change the calendar to please the religious opposition. He promised, I think, tax cuts and wage hikes to please business and labor. And he appointed Sharif-Emami as Prime Minister.*

LEHFELDT: Who took all the lids off the press. We had a completely free press for about a month in Iran for the first time in my memory. But by that time, there was nothing the Shah could do. This is hindsight speaking now. Sharif-Emami was a discredited politician to begin with. They were all--most people did not--he did not have the respect of even the people he purported to represent. That is, the upper crust. And even there there were some who said, well, this is the Masonic Lodge at work. The Masons were widely reputed to be the managers of the whole country anyway. Have you ever heard that?

Q: *Yes, I've heard of that theory.*

LEHFELDT: Well, Sharif-Emami was one of the senior Masons in the country. Very much so. So was the Speaker of the House. His name begins with an R.

Q: *Speaker the majlis?*

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: *Going back to that time. Do you think that those concessions of Emami had any immediate impact at that point in time?*

LEHFELDT: Those concessions?

Q: *Yes.*

LEHFELDT: No, we did not. But by that time, you know, strikes were all over the place. Banks--you couldn't get money sometimes. You couldn't get exit visas. There were a lot of things you couldn't do. And it was very difficult, in August, September, October, just to go about your daily life. And by November, early November, which was when Tehran was pretty much--they burned Tehran. That's when the revolutionary--sorry, the riots really got out of hand, no amount of concessions by the Shah would have satisfied the opposition. They had the bit in their teeth then. And by that time they knew that they had pretty well eaten into the integrity of the military. By that time too--no one knows for sure when he turned, but General Fardust, who was the Shah's closest adviser, had turned traitor apparently. And maybe one or another of the other Generals as well.

So by that time--and again this is all hindsight--the Shah knew how ill he was, but nobody else knew except the French doctors.

Q: *Had there been rumors about that?*

LEHFELDT: Oh, there were rumors all the time about the Shah having kidney problems, impotence, a few other serious things. Heart problems.

Q: *Nothing like a fatal...?*

LEHFELDT: No, no. You know, this is true of any dictator. I remember when I was first in Spain in '55, Franco was about on death's door every week. When I went back in '75 he was still there.

Q: *But closer?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, but closer. He did die later that year. [Laughs]

Q: *In September there were the famous Black Friday events in Jalal Square.*

LEHFELDT: Yes, in Jalal Square. Those were known. Well, and the fire in Abadan was a month before and was a terrible catastrophe, and that's what led to Amuzegar's downfall. He didn't show any sensitivity whatever. He didn't go down there to investigate for himself. He may have sent a representative, but it was widely rumored that the theater was locked by SAVAK and set fire to on purpose, to blame it on the opposition.

And then there was the--when did the earthquake in Tabas take place?

Q: *I'm not sure about the chronology in that.*

LEHFELDT: Somewhere in the same--not too long after that. And that's when the Empress decided that she didn't really love her people all that much after all.

Q: *You mentioned that last time.*

LEHFELDT: Yes, I guess I did. Yes.

Q: *Now with the Black Friday events, the killing of protesters in the square, around that time, September, did you think there was any possibility for the government to make an accommodation with the opposition?*

LEHFELDT: Again, you know, quoting--I may have quoted him before--I quoted (Khodadad) Farmanfarmayan, who said, you know, "We all expected the old man to pull something out of his sleeve." Only this time he couldn't. He didn't have anything up his sleeve to pull out. And many people, including myself, had sort of blind faith the Shah would survive, and U.S. government support for the Shah was well placed and should continue. The evidence to the contrary was widely discounted.

Q: *This was true of the Embassy as well, I take it?*

LEHFELDT: It's hard for me to say. It's hard for me to say about that. I wasn't close to the Embassy in those days.

Q: *But did you have a few contacts and talk about these things? or were they very guarded?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, sure. They were very guarded in their analyses, but, you know, Brzezinski was still very staunch in his support of the Shah, and the trouble is the State Department was less staunch in its support. By the sounds of things. At least ex post facto.

Q: *At any point during the late summer or fall of '78 did you travel outside of Tehran?*

LEHFELDT: Let me stop and think. Did we travel outside of Tehran in '78? We did at Nouruz. We took our traditional trip to...

Q: *That's in December?*

LEHFELDT: No, it was in March. We did in March in '78. I went to Kashar, as I recall, and farther down, Haft Tapah. Dezful and so on. And we went to the Caspian. But I did not go to Tabriz or Mashhad or any place else in '78. I was spending more of my time for General Electric briefing them on what was happening. So in October, for instance, I went to Copenhagen to brief the chairman of the company and the international board on events in Iran. By that time--I had

written a speech, with slides and all the rest, which I still have, as a matter of fact. Headlines of daily newspapers and so on. It was very discouraging. Well, my boss in London said, "Don't be so discouraging." So I softened it a little bit, but not...

Q: What was the thrust of your argument?

LEHFELDT: My thrust was that this is a tough time and that it's questionable whether the guy's going to survive. But by the time my boss had worked me over a little bit, I pushed it a little bit to the other side, that, yes, he would survive.

Q: By October you were not so sure then?

LEHFELDT: I was not so sure of it.

Q: I guess it was the same month, important U.S. establishment figures like John J. McCloy were pressing the State Department to push the Shah to begin a military crackdown on the opposition?

LEHFELDT: Yes.

Q: Were there any foreign businessmen in Iran who were putting pressure on the Embassy to take a similar approach, pressing the Shah to sort of crack down?

LEHFELDT: No, I wouldn't say--you know, the business community in Iran were not in that position vis-a-vis the Embassy, to urge them to urge the Shah to crack down. That role had never been created for us. They wouldn't have listened to us in the first place probably.

Q: Did word about things like McCloy's pressure come back to Tehran?

LEHFELDT: No. But when Dick Cooper, for instance, came out to look things over...

Q: For the Treasury?

LEHFELDT: Well, he was Under-Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. I had a dinner for him at the house, and I think that was October as well. Of course everybody came in armored cars, and they had to leave by ten o'clock because of the curfew and so forth and so on. So it was a very--and I had all the establishment there. The head of the Central Bank, the head of Bank Melli, and, you know, some other...

Q: What was the atmosphere?

LEHFELDT: The atmosphere was nervous. Questioning. Wondering whether the economy could survive. This was mostly looking at the economy, because everything was tied up in strikes by that time. It was a difficult time for anybody.

Q: Now you mentioned earlier some of the concerns of the American community vis-a-vis the Embassy. I take it they grew more and more as...

LEHFELDT: They grew more and more real, especially in the first--I think it was the first week of November, when the rioters moved up into the middle of Tehran and burned, for instance, the Waldorf Hotel, which I could see out of my window. I had Dennis Neill from U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT with me that day, and I was on the eleventh floor of a building downtown and we could walk around and watch the whole city burn. There was smoke coming from every direction. The rioters swept up north of Takhti-i Jamshid and, you know, set a number of places on fire. And broke a lot of windows and were trashing things. Why they missed my building, I don't know. They trashed all the windows of all the airlines except Aeroflot and--I don't know who the other one was, but there was an Eastern European one.

Then about three o'clock the troops came down from the north, and as if by arrangement the rioters withdrew to the south and the northern part of the city was once again in the hands of the government.

By that time, in November, we were all starting to move out--the business community was moving dependents and other unessential people out of the country. Now some companies bugged out very early, much to the distress of the Embassy, and some of the dependents of the Embassy wanted to leave and did leave. And Bill Sullivan was quoted at one point as telling one officer, "Well, you will never work for me again in any Embassy of mine if you send your people home."

So that was the attitude that we felt, that we were being held hostage for a policy that seemed to be failing by that time.

Q: What were some of the companies that were leaving?

LEHFELDT: Westinghouse sent everybody home. Didn't leave anybody. Some of the companies simply couldn't function, because you couldn't get residence permits, you couldn't get--and you had to send your people out while they still had valid exit permits. You couldn't pay your personnel. So a number of companies simply decided, well, let's get everybody out of here that we can while we can and maintain a skeleton crew and we'll come back when things are back to normal.

Q: Now I've seen a State Department cable that was declassified a while ago, from around October, maybe early November, that suggested that some Iranian businessmen and government officials were concluding that the demonstrations and strikes would not cease until the Shah left the country. Did you hear such arguments before you left Iran? During the fall?

LEHFELDT: Yes. By that time it was clear that there was a good deal of pressure on the Shah to leave, and he was resisting all those pressures. But from the Embassy--no, I never heard anybody from the Embassy--I wonder who wrote that? George?

Q: *I think it was one of Sullivan's cables.*

LEHFELDT: One of Sullivan's cables.

Q: *But these are Iranian contacts that were discussing this with you?*

LEHFELDT: Well, you know, many of my Iranian contacts had already left the country. Not all of them, of course, because some of the businessmen stayed on thinking, well, you know, we're businessmen, we're not politicians. Little did they realize that they too would be held up. But there was no--you know, people like Reza Fallah, who was the Deputy Head of the National Iranian Oil Company, he left early on. And even on the plane I left on, when I left Iran--which was December 21st or 22nd, '78--there were a dozen businessmen and government officials of one sort or another that were bugging out at that time. But they'd stayed late. Many of them had already left.

Q: *Now after the demonstrations you talked about, where buildings were burned and so forth in Tehran, the Shah set up a military government?*

LEHFELDT: And Sharif Emami was removed and General Azhari took over, yes.

Q: *What was your evaluation of this move? Did you think it would make a difference at this point? Maybe make things worse or make things better?*

LEHFELDT: Well, it seemed to indicate that they were prepared to use the military in a forceful manner. In the event it didn't happen. That was, I guess, the thing that everybody thought the Shah had pulled out of his sleeve, that he'd install a military government and he'd restore order and then he'd go back to trying to put the pieces back together. But the Shah was unwilling apparently--and again this comes out afterwards, we certainly didn't know it at the time--was unwilling to order any drastic action. And, again with hindsight, it probably wouldn't have worked. They probably wouldn't have paid any attention to him by that time. Who knows?

Q: *Now by November--it's around the same time--Ambassador Sullivan was concluding, I think, that--or beginning to conclude that the Shah's position was hopeless, or apparently hopeless, and it was necessary to be in the search for some alternative to the Shah.*

LEHFELDT: Thinking the unthinkable.

Q: *That was the name of the famous cable he sent.*

LEHFELDT: Infamous cable, I would call it.

Q: *How much did you know about his views at this time?*

LEHFELDT: Damn little, because about that time he had brought Senator--who was it? Was it Senator Byrd? I guess it was.

Q: Possibly. Yes, I think he visited.

LEHFELDT: I think it was Senator Byrd, yes. He was scheduled to address the Iran-American Chamber in November. And we had our monthly luncheon at the Sheraton, and Byrd couldn't make it because he had an audience with the Shah, and we sort of held forth until Bill got there. And then he filled us in on what was going on. But his message to us then was, stay put. There wasn't any give on his part, so if he was thinking the unthinkable at that point, he didn't let on.

Q: Now at what point did you conclude the Shah's position could not be salvaged?

LEHFELDT: After I was back here in December.

Q: After you'd left?

LEHFELDT: After I'd left.

Q: Up till then, you still weren't...

LEHFELDT: I still kept--I guess it was more hoping than anything else. Hoping that he would be, because I'm always very slow in withdrawing support. I was hoping against hope that he would be able to put it back together, and so I had a round trip ticket. But then the company wouldn't let me come back as things deteriorated, which was quite right. Because when I left in the third or fourth week of December, just before Christmas I was just going home to spend Christmas with my family. I was not evacuating. I left my house intact, with all my furniture in it, and my houseboy, my dogs, and a gardener. Of course, my wife, when she had left three weeks before, she had packed up all the so-called valuables and shipped them out. Just as a personal note--in the event, they didn't leave the country at that time, and it wasn't until May in '78 that they discovered them in the warehouse at the airport. They'd gone through customs and they were sitting there waiting for shipment on Lufthansa. And so they finally shipped them and they didn't have to go through customs again. Otherwise we probably would have lost everything, because there were pictures of me with the Shah and there were some carpets and some pots and so forth and so on. The Revolutionary Guards would have confiscated--also had all of our silver and a lot of personal things, photographs. But that finally showed up.

But as an example, I left my house intact, except for those few things that my wife had packed. Now that makes me look a little stupid maybe, but it showed the depth of my respect for the Shah's ability to come back. He had done it before.

Q: Now the same month, during the religious holidays of Muharram, there were huge demonstrations in Tehran, I guess involving millions of people.

LEHFELDT: Millions of people, right.

Q: Did you witness any of these?

LEHFELDT: We were well advised and did stay off the streets. My family had left by then. I was alone. I had a few people from the company over for lunch and we just stayed out of sight. Some of them even spent the night, because there was no point in trying to go back downtown.

But I talked to, then, a day or two later, Mehdi Sami'i. Let's see, I've forgotten which demonstration it was, but there was a--no, the Muharram demonstration, no, that was not the one. It was the one previous to that. He qualified it as a middle-class demonstration, a family demonstration. You had whole families walking down Semiran Road carrying flowers and sticking flowers in the rifles of the soldiers who were guarding them. But it was a middle-class demonstration. Hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, marching up and down Semiran Road, demonstrating for change, for democracy, for whatever. But this was not the madcap mujahideen revolutionaries or anything of that sort.

Now the Muharram demonstrations were massive. Well organized, well policed by the revolutionaries themselves. And there was a demonstration that had to have had a very debilitating effect on the Shah's psyche, and I guess it did. Because to have a couple of million people out was a fantastic sight. You know, I wouldn't have shown myself out there, frankly. It would have been foolhardy.

Q: Now when you returned to the States, you worked for GE? You continued to work for GE?

LEHFELDT: Yes, I continued. I ran Tehran--because I left a staff. We didn't pull all Americans out when I left. I had about, oh, eight or ten people still there. Americans, plus all my Iranian staff. And so I moved to London personally. My family went to Ohio to my wife's mother's town. And I commuted between London and the States when I could. I never did return to Iran, but I managed the withdrawal of people from Iran at the time, and it was about May, I think, that we got the last of our people out.

Q: Was GE closed up in Iran pretty much?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, we left the local staff still. And they closed up the office in an orderly fashion. They packed up my house and shipped everything out. Everything that we wanted out. We didn't have any of the heavy stuff flown out. But it was an orderly departure, and even in May--April--if the situation had righted itself and the government had wanted us to come back and stay, we would have been in a position to do so.

Q: Now at that time--late '78, early '79--what was your interpretation of the origins or the basic causes of the revolution? How did you see it then?

LEHFELDT: Well, I saw it then as a weakening of the resolve of the Shah, a growth of the opposition in terms of numbers and volubility and strength and economic strength to the point that they could do a lot of things. Now whether they were helped by outside forces, I didn't know, although towards the end of '78 it was clear that the religious element was doing a lot more than they ever had before. They were able, because they were getting lots of money from the bazaars

in Tehran, from over in Najaf in Iraq. And then, I believe, with the connivance of General Fardust, the Shah asked the Iraqis, their now great and good friends, because they'd settled all their differences, to expel the Ayatollah. That happened in I think about September, didn't it?

Q: Then he went to Paris.

LEHFELDT: Then he went to Paris, because the Kuwaitis wouldn't take him. And that gave him Open Sesame. He got access to world attention. If they'd kept him in Najaf, I bet nothing would have happened. Or very little would have happened. The mujahideen would have taken charge perhaps of the revolution then, but not the religious. Because the only one with the authority, moral and public relations authority, to take charge of the revolution at that time was Khomeini. Nobody else could. Shariat Madari--any of the other ayatollahs who were in opposition to the Shah had been pretty much compromised over the years.

Q: I've read at that time that some American business leaders like David Rockefeller--I read that he believed that ultimately the Communists were behind the whole thing. Did other American businessmen believe that?

LEHFELDT: Yes, of course. You know, again, going back to the November showdown--and this is personal observation--the leader of one of the gangs stoning shops and breaking windows and setting fire to things was a lady in a pants suit. And clearly she wasn't a religious lady. She wasn't wearing a chador. She was a real instigator, a real rioter, and probably left wing. Let me move to another area, the television business. Iranian television and the AFRT, the American--well, no, the Iranian television. Leave AFRT out of it. On the night before Muharram, before this big demonstration, when all the religious were out shouting "alia aqbar" and so forth, and the electricity was out and so forth and so on, on television, before the electricity went off, they were showing--I guess it was Swedish...

Q: Oh, I think you talked about that.

LEHFELDT: A Swedish movie about lesbianism and nudity and everything. Totally designed, as far as I was concerned, to incite the religious conservative elements against the regime. So you had to assume that there was collusion, some planning, some reasonably bright psychological analysis that had taken place on how to turn off people from the regime and the Shah, and that this is all sort of coincided. The mujahideen were probably the most adept at this part of it. I can't believe it was the religious. I don't think they would have done that sort of thing. The religious were doing other things. The religious were passing tapes around of the Ayatollah's speeches and so on. And the underground was working very nicely in that regard. No, it was a congeries of opposition to the Shah that coincided, as I've said before, on only one thing, getting rid of the Shah, but did not agree on what the form, substance or objectives of the government would be after the Shah left. And you could see that. The Ayatollah, who was probably one of the most surprised people of all when he found himself sort of in power, had nobody prepared to run a government. And that's why he named Bazargan, who was one of the few respectable Iranian politicians who had supported him and opposed his exile and opposed--well, Bazargan was about the only politician with enough standing to head a government. But, of course, he headed a

meaningless government. They wouldn't let him govern.

And the creation of the Revolutionary Guards, which was a mujahideen, I believe, operation at the outset, was gradually taken over by the religious, and maybe with the connivance of Communists, I don't know. Iranians today aren't sure and some still posit that the mullahs, the Soviet mullahs, are the ones who are running the show and eventually are going to turn it into a Soviet.

Q: *What do you think of that?*

LEHFELDT: I think it's highly unlikely.

Q: *The Tudehs have been on the outs most of the time?*

LEHFELDT: Well, the Tudeh Party was never highly respectable anyway, but the Soviet mullahs are another question, because the Soviet government did subsidize mullahs to a fare-thee-well for many years, and probably still do. And there is no--apparently in their mind there is nothing wrong with them taking help from the Soviets.

Q: *Now to what degree do you subscribe to the theory that U.S.-Iran relations in the late seventies represented what's called an intelligence failure, in the sense that the revolution and the Shah's downfall came as such a surprise to American policy-makers and American businessmen and so forth, who had to do with Iran?*

LEHFELDT: I can only quote, I think, some of my academic friends. When I came back at the end of '78, I gave a lecture up at the Asia Society in New York, and I had a couple of academics there as well, who were talking at the same time. And they publicly admitted that they blew it, that they were looking at the wrong things, that the things we should have been noticing, we were so bedazzled by the magnificence of the Shah and his imperial trappings, we simply couldn't see what was happening in the underbrush of Iranian politics and political sentiment. And if the professed experts at the subject don't see it--and I believe if you'll read Tony Parsons' book, he expresses some of the same sentiment, that they missed it too. And Dennis Wright certainly missed it. He was one of the old pros at the business.

So that if the experts on the subject missed it, how the heck do you expect the poor businessman to see it. We were riding along on a wave of euphoria that hoped to take advantage of the oil income. Most of us. Maybe it was falsely engendered hope, but nonetheless there was that hope. And just poor simple businessmen, not political analysts. So although we pride ourselves usually, businessmen do, on being able to feel things better than embassies sometimes, the Embassy was no better off. I mean, we were all surprised. We were all caught off balance. And certainly the one factor that might have made a difference, certainly to policy-makers in the United States, was the knowledge of the Shah's illness. Had that one fact been known, a lot of things would have come clear. Maybe. Maybe, I don't know.

But the efforts to make sense out of the regime from 1973 to '78, to control corruption, to control

conspicuous consumption--which was ridiculous, the things that went on by some of the wealthy Iranians--were simply ineffective and to use a terrible word, counter-productive, in terms of keeping popular support for the regime.

Q: This is a question I should have asked you in the very beginning of our interview, but when you were first assigned to the Embassy in Tehran, did you receive any special area training in Persian history or society, anything like that?

LEHFELDT: No. No, because I went--if I don't miss my guess, I was under a good deal of pressure to get there in a hurry. I had come from Naples, where I'd been Deputy Principal Officer for the previous three years. And I went to home leave, had a little bit of consultation in the Department--maybe a week, ten days--and then I arrived and was thrown into the breach.

Now, of course, I had had some Persian language before. I'd served in Afghanistan many years before, and I had some knowledge of the area. I had served in South Asian Affairs, in Pakistan-Afghanistan affairs. So I wasn't totally abjectly stupid. [laughs] Although I wasn't as well prepared as I would like to have been. Armin Meyer, who was the Ambassador at the time I was selected at least, and Nick Thacher, who was the Deputy Chief of Mission, knew me well. So they were quite prepared to take me on faith.

Q: How many of the Embassy staff people at this time actually had area training before they took the job? Was your experience fairly common among...?

LEHFELDT: Well, no. The people who were in the Embassy at the time, some of them were long-time Middle East hands. Nick Thacher was DCM. Jack Armitage--this was his second time around. He was a Political Counselor. John Rouse, who was in the Political Section, was a Persian language officer. Ed Prince, who was my deputy in the Economic Section, had been there for four or five years and spoke Persian and was quite good. The Chief of Station was an old hand there, Bill Brommel. My oil man, Petroleum Officer, can't think of his name...

Q: Washburn?

LEHFELDT: No, his predecessor--again was a very able guy, both in petroleum, and spoke Arabic, I believe, as well. Arabic besides Persian. And then John Washburn came along and he was a Persian language officer. And he was followed by David Patterson, who was another Persian language officer.

So that I thought at the time I was there in the Embassy that there were a number of other good Persian language officers. [Michael] Michaud was one. John Stempel.

Q: He was there also?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Arnie Raphel was a Persian language officer. There were a whole series of young officers who were very good in Persian, and so I thought we were well served. Stan Escudero. There were a whole raft of kids. But by the time '78 came along, there was practically

nobody there.

Q: *Did you know what accounted for that?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Budgetary strictures more than anything else. The Carterian budget revolution. The Ford revolution. And so forth and so on.

Q: *From your testimony, it sounds like you had fairly frequent contact with Iranian government officials. And this is when you were at the Embassy. How true is that of other officials in the Embassy? It's probably hard to generalize about it, but...*

LEHFELDT: It was hard to generalize. You know, the Political Section had a lot to do with the Foreign Office, and certainly the Political Military Officer, whether he was John Rouse or Henry Precht or Martin, had a good deal to do with both the American military and some of the Iranians and General Toufanian's staff. Not beyond that, I don't believe.

The Military Attachés' offices had their counterparts. Probably the people who were approved by the Shah for dealing with them. But I don't get the impression that many of them had the breadth of associations across the government that I had. And I say that without any pride particularly, but that's just the way it was. I was there longer than most of them, to begin with. I was there five years in the Embassy, after all.

Q: *Now to what extent did your own contacts extend beyond the business community and government officials when you were at the Embassy?*

LEHFELDT: On the Iranian side?

Q: *Yes.*

LEHFELDT: Well, there was considerable social intercourse outside the business side. My wife, of course, was busy in the International Women's Club, the Nurayin Society--which supported the Blind School down in Isfahan. It was a very social organization in the sense that it was supported by some very high level, socially impeccable ladies, led by Sedegh Rastbgar, she was a Farmanfarmayan princess, one of the direct descendants of one of the Qajar shahs.

But we had that sort of connection with a lot of Iranians who were not government, not official, not business. In the Samian family, Mrs. Samian was one of the earliest leaders for women's rights in Iran. The family was a close friend of ours. Of course, they were variously married into a number of other families. Abbas Fallah, Reza Fallah's brother, was married to one of the Samian sisters, and so on down the line.

Q: *I read that somewhere around half of the Embassy employees were from local minority groups?*

LEHFELDT: Yes, it was known as the Armenian Embassy.

Q: A very large component of Armenian Christians, I think?

LEHFELDT: Yes. And some Zoroastrians and some Jews and some Bah'ais. But we had a pretty good mixture of pukka Persians too. My chief local in the Economic Commercial Section was Ishmail Gohbadi. More socially acceptable he couldn't be. He was a very highly respected man.

Q: Now in his new book, James Bill suggests the existence of a fairly large component of Iranian minorities on the Embassy staff had adverse implications. One was that the Armenians--a lot of them worked in the Consular Section apparently? His research suggests that they were often rude to local Iranians who were applying for passports. This had an impact on the way they perceived the United States. This was their first contact with American officials.

LEHFELDT: My friend, I don't care whether it's Iran or London or Paris or Karachi or where it is, locals are rude to their own people. And, yes, they can say that the Armenians may have been rude to the Iranians, I would posit that that would have made no difference whatever.

Q: So it was a generic Embassy problem?

LEHFELDT: Yes, a generic Embassy problem, right. You take on a little bit of power when you're with the American Embassy, whether you're Armenian or Zoroastrian or Muslim or whatever. And besides, I have to believe that at least some of those people in the consulate were SAVAK employees on the side as well.

Q: Was that...?

LEHFELDT: Oh, sure. A common practice. They were sprinkled throughout. You could identify some of them very easily.

Q: Bill also suggests the existence of a fairly large minority component among the employees tended to insulate the Embassy from day-to-day contact with Muslim Iranians. Was this seen as an issue at that time?

LEHFELDT: At least in the Economic Commercial Section not so. Not so. There were no one more Muslim than the Ladjevardis and the Khosrovanis and the Iruahis and the Barkhordars and so on. Yet we had very open, close relations with them and didn't depend on the locals for that sort of entree at all. The average bazaari was a little more difficult, but as many of the bazaari--for instance, the rug dealers were Jews or Armenians anyway. And so that was the extent of a lot of the Embassy employees' association with local business, the rug and curio dealers. And they were Armenians or Jews anyway.

Q: Now he also talks of the Embassy Social Secretary, who was Iranian.

LEHFELDT: Oh, Minou. Yes.

Q: *Apparently she more or less determined who would be invited to Embassy functions?*

LEHFELDT: Well, for some Ambassadors she did. But not for Dick Helms and not for Bill Sullivan. And that turned her into a real harridan.

Q: *Yes, apparently, he says, some Ambassador tried to weaken her authority or influence...*

LEHFELDT: Oh, yes. They not only weakened it, they just ignored her. Mrs. Helms couldn't stand her.

Q: *What's her name?*

LEHFELDT: Minou Moshiri.

Q: *Apparently when she had some authority in this issue, she tended to confine those she invited to the social, economic elite.*

LEHFELDT: Exactly.

Q: *...other Iranians. More middle-class types?*

LEHFELDT: Yes. Well, you know--yes, there's no question about it, but the invitation lists oftentimes, depending on what the invitations were for--for instance, the Economic Commercial Section would submit its list of people and most often we would get them invited, if it was a big reception. Fourth of July was another bash that was a real enormous collection of people and didn't really matter. It's easy to criticize an Ambassador's entertainment lists. It's harder still to construct one that escapes criticism.

Q: *Now this is another point that he raises in his book that's also been raised by other writers on the period. He argues that because of the strong pro-Shah views at the highest levels in Washington and the Embassy that independent, objective reports that might cast a bad light on the regime were either not written, because they could hurt career advancement in some respects, or when they were written, they were sometimes suppressed or not sent to Washington. To what extent was that a problem when you were at the Embassy in the early seventies? Were there examples of that that come to mind?*

LEHFELDT: I killed one report, because it was--not because of any bias that it might reflect adversely on anybody. And certainly the officer in question has not suffered because I killed it. And I didn't suffer because I killed it. It was just a stupid report. But it was the only one that I can think of that I killed in the five years that I was there that would faintly fall into that category. Indeed, the reports that we sent in on such things as corruption--and I believe you will find somewhere in the archives...

Q: *We talked about that. In fact, he cites that as one that did get to Washington.*

LEHFELDT: John Washburn's for one was--we got criticized for dwelling on corruption, but there was a real problem. But again, there was never any stricture, any order out, no instructions not to send anything in. Now self-censorship, that may have taken place, I don't know.

Q: That's what he was implying, that that might have been a sort of an internal constraint, that people might have appeared rocking the boat somewhat.

LEHFELDT: Well, it's kind of hard to demonstrate and it's hard to--you know, when you are dealing with a one-party government and a one-dimensional government that is run by one man, and everybody depends on his whims and his judgments and his sources of information, it's hard to write sensible analyses of what's going on in the countryside when, you know, nobody's talking. The opposition didn't want to talk to us, to begin with. They didn't want to be seen with us. They knew we were followed, and so they had reasons for not talking to us. There was no way we could hide or disguise ourselves. We were so damn visible. And especially when we got tagged with bodyguards everywhere we went. What the heck were you supposed to do?

Q: I've also read--I think this was mentioned in Bill's book--that by the mid-seventies, maybe this was after you left, but the number of political officers had declined and there was less reporting going on of internal political affairs than there had been in, say, the sixties to late sixties period. That might have been a budgetary problem, the decline of political officers? I don't know. Was that so, do you think?

LEHFELDT: No, I don't buy that particularly. There was never a big number of political officers anyway. There was a political counselor and the assistant political officer and a political military officer and usually one other officer. And that was about it, four or five all told, and I don't know that it ever varied from that in all the time I knew the Embassy.

Q: I guess there may have been more than ten or fifteen in the early sixties. That's the figure he gives, I think. Something in that order, that there was a lot more.

LEHFELDT: Dubious. Dubious. Highly dubious. No. If he's going on the Foreign Service lists record, some of those may have been station CIA people, who had other...

Q: Who were listed as political officers, but actually doing something else?

LEHFELDT: Yes. Real State Department political reporting officers were never more than three or four. To my certain knowledge. In the ten years that I was associated.

Q: I have no further questions, unless you want to make a concluding statement.

LEHFELDT: No, I don't have any peroration.

Q: We've covered all the issues, I think.

LEHFELDT: I don't know that we've come to any final conclusion on what happened, but it's

been--you know, it was in retrospect a traumatic experience and one that almost defies analysis to some degree, because if you talk to some of my Iranian friends, they are certain that the whole success of the Ayatollah was the result of British planning, assisted by American dupes, for the sole purpose of keeping oil prices up, so North Sea oil was profitable.

Now there's a certain mad logic to all of that, but somehow all the rest of the facts don't fit it. And yet the conspiratorial view of the world is so widespread in Iran that there are thousands and thousands of Iranians who are prepared to believe that or a variation of that theme. And it is extremely difficult for any of us to argue convincingly that such was not the case, because all we can argue is that the bits we saw don't fit that theory and the people we know certainly were not smart enough to plan it. And if the Brits and the CIA were smart enough to plan all of this, why are we in such bad shape around the world. Now I think that's enough to say. [laughs]

Q: *Thank you very much.*

LEHFELDT: Thank you.

BRADSHAW LANGMAID
USAID, Iran Affairs
Washington, DC (1970-1971)

Bradshaw Langmaid was born in Salem, Massachusetts, and graduated from Harvard in 1958. He spent five years in the Air Force, and then attended Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He joined USAID in 1963, and spent a large part of his career at the Near East Bureau in Washington, D.C. He retired in 1993. Langmaid was interviewed by W. Haven North on July 14, 1998.

LANGMAID: Iran was simply ending an old program. It was running down the pipeline. I went to Iran a couple of times on CENTO business, not Iranian business.

Q: *What year would this have been?*

LANGMAID: This would have been while I was office director of GTICC from 1970-1974 and probably during the early years, 1970-1971. There was no new money going on, just a residual pipeline.

Similarly with Greece. Greece was just cleaning up a pipeline.

Q: *What do you think the impact of the program with Iran was?*

LANGMAID: I don't really know. I didn't spend any time worrying about Iran, as such, or where the program had gone. The program had been ended because the Iranians had oil, not because it had become developed. There were still very poor parts in Iran that weren't being touched by this

wealth and a ruling group lived very, very well. But, in those days programs were largely dictated by balance of payments considerations. You needed to import capital in order to grow and Iran no longer imported capital.

CENTO was still operating

Q: What is CENTO?

LANGMAID: CENTO included Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. It was the Middle East complement to NATO. It had a joint military and civilian staff structure, but not a lot of content. On the civilian side, there were training and technical assistance projects and a few capital projects.

Q: What was the purpose of having CENTO?

LANGMAID: The same thing as NATO, containment, to build a ring around the Russians and prevent it from obtaining a warm water port. We had a CENTO telecommunications project which built a microwave communications line from Pakistan to Iran to Turkey. The three countries in CENTO were Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey. Iraq was not a member of CENTO and neither was Syria nor Afghanistan. We also had an air traffic control project designed to coordinate civilian air traffic. There were several training programs.

One of my objectives during this period was to complete the CENTO program. To finish the projects well but then in some sort of formal fashion say goodbye, the foreign assistance part of this treaty is now over. You never do that well. You just let things run down. There were big handover ceremonies. With the handover of the microwave project, the three presidents got on the wire and talked to each other for a brief time. I think most were amazed it worked.

MICHAEL METRINKO
Peace Corps
Iran (1970-1973)

Michael John Metrinko was born in Pennsylvania in 1946. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1968. After entering the Foreign Service in 1974, his postings have included Ankara, Damascus, Tehran, Tabriz, Krakow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and special assignments in Yemen and Afghanistan. Mr. Metrinko was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Today is May 18, 2000. Mike, you're at 1970, and you've just finished going around looking at archeological sites on the Black Sea, was it?

METRINKO: The Black Sea.

Q: Okay, so what did you do after you came back and went to work?

METRINKO: That period, more to the end of the Peace Corps presence in Turkey, I was one of the very last of the volunteers, probably the second or third last, to leave the country. The Peace Corps presence left there because of the growing anti-American feeling that was rising in the student body in Turkey, the leftist press, etc. Turkey was going through a period of extreme civil problems, civil unrest, if you will, and the Peace Corps was seen as too much of a presence, too obvious a presence. We were at all the Turkish universities, throughout Turkish schools. They got rid of us. That was fine with me. Because the program was ending so abruptly and so early, and because I had expected to spend a third year in Turkey - I had made all my plans to do this. I had already been assigned to a new position in Turkey in the Peace Corps - and suddenly found myself without an assignment; and the Peace Corps in Washington offered several of us Peace Corps assignments in other countries. On the list of countries was Iran. Because I had been to Iran on a vacation and had really liked it and had wanted to go back, I decided to go to Iran. I originally thought I would go there for one year. That was my plan, to leave the Peace Corps after three years in the Peace Corps. Instead, I went Iran and ended up liking it so much that I spent three years more in Iran.

Q: Okay, so I wonder, this was 1970 to '73 you were in Iran in the Peace Corps. Well, let's talk about what you were doing, where you were, and the state of things there at that time.

METRINKO: Peace Corps training in Iran took place - it was all in Iran, unlike my Peace Corps studies for Turkey, where I'd been trained in the United States partially. All Peace Corps training for Iran was actually conducted in the country of Iran. And I spent two to three months in the city of Hamadan in western Iran. And my first assignment would be in the town of Sonqor (or Songhor). Sonqor was a Turkic town surrounded by Kurds in Khorramshahr Province, which is in western Iran. It was not very far from the border of Iraq, and the town of Sonqor, according to local legend, had been founded by Bay Sonqor, the grandson of Genghis Khan, who was allegedly in the area on a hunting trip and had a hunting accident and broke his leg and had to camp there for several months until he was recovered enough to leave. He liked the place, established a tribal presence there, and the Turkish town of Sonqor came into being. Sonqor has a Turkish name. The Turkish which is spoken there, according to linguists, is closer to the Turkish of Central Asia, rather than the Turkish of Azerbaijan and Turkey. Also, I noticed later that the carpet patterns, the ones that were native to the people of Sonqor, I saw the exact pattern in carpets that came straight out of Central Asia. In fact, I've made mistakes in thinking one carpet was from Sonqor and it turned out to be directly from Bokhara. You see the Bokhara city pattern as well. These patterns are only found in these two cities as far as I know.

I spent one year teaching in the local high school. I was responsible for all of the first-year English classes in the two boys' schools. We had more than 200 students, and all the students had three English classes a week. It ended up being a pretty full-time week. The students there were very different from the university students in Turkey. Number one, they were all guys. First-year high school, which meant an average in age of anything from 11 or 12 up to 18 or 19. The first year high school was the year traditionally in Iran when students came in from the villages to the nearest city or the nearest town to continue their high school education. Most Iranian villages had up to the sixth grade or seventh grade, but not much beyond that. This was the time when

village students were showing up. This meant that I had a very heavy contingent of Kurdish students who had a lot of trouble speaking Persian, along with the town students from Sonqor itself, who were basically Turks. So it was mixing Kurds and Turks, almost no Persian presence at all. Persian was the state language, the official language. Everyone in the town was trilingual. They all spoke Kurdish, Turkish, and Persian, and I spoke Turkish and Persian, so that made me at least good in two of the languages, and I learned to get along in Kurdish.

Q: What was the Shah's government doing at this particular time that you were seeing evidence of in Sonqor?

METRINKO: Well, he was sending Peace Corps teachers, for example. The Shah's government was trying to open up the education system, trying to spread literacy in a country that had been historically illiterate. The closest friends I had there were Iranian guys from the town, several of whom were village schoolteachers. I met a group of guys my age very quickly after I got there. They all had high school diplomas and they had been sent out to teach in various of the villages around Sonqor, within one, two, three hours' walk. And they became my friends, and I spent a lot of time, because of that, out in the villages. That was one indication of what the Shah's government was doing, making sure that at least basic literacy was getting to every nook and cranny of the country.

Other than that, there was a good clinic in the town - a couple of good clinics, as a matter of fact. The town was small, by the way. It had 9,000 people. Electricity had been brought in that year. It was the first time people had had electricity. This meant, of course, very basic electricity, usually a light bulb hanging from the ceiling, and that was it. And when I say light bulb, I mean exactly that - a light bulb hanging from a wire. There were no televisions in the town. There was no television reception in the town. I had a short-wave radio, so I could pick up short-wave broadcasts. Other than that electricity was not used for anything at all - maybe an occasional tape recorder, but not much else. No televisions at all. The town was a strange and somehow very attractive place as far as people were concerned. It was on a plateau, a large plateau surrounded by mountains, and you had to pass through some pretty heavy mountains to get to the town proper. I think that's why it retained its Turkic identity. Nobody had gotten into that place or out of that place in so long.

The town of Sonqor, if you tried to go there up until World War II, the nearest city was Khorramshahr, which was about four hours' drive away when I was there. If you tried to go through Khorramshahr to Sonqor up through World War II, the trip would have taken approximately one week by horseback, donkeyback, or camelback. The path over the mountains is a rough one. There are a lot of mountains in between. It's just a long, dry haul to get to the city. By the end of World War II, my understanding is that the British Army and the American Army had pushed through and at least leveled off somewhat a road you could drive a jeep over, and the trip had gone from a week to the longer part of a day. The road had improved considerably by the time I was there. We were serviced by a bus and you could get there in approximately four hours from the city. The town was certainly one of the most conservative towns anybody had ever seen in Iran. Every woman in the town, with the exception of a single woman only - I can tell you who she was - wore a full dark *chador*, a full black heavy veil that Muslim women in Iran... that has

become famous since the revolution. In the time I was there, I rarely saw a woman's face. The society that I was in was totally male. I had a landlady, of course, in the house that I shared with an Iranian family, but I rarely saw her face. She would normally, as soon as I walked in from the courtyard, cover herself up and then talk to me through her veil. Once in a while, if things relaxed in the course of a day, I saw her face, but not very often. Other than that, my best friends - and I found very good friends - and I would only see the older women, for example their mothers or their grandmothers occasionally - they'd be allowed to come out and talk to me. Other than that, I never saw the women in any of the houses I went into. If I did see one, it would be someone totally veiled who would simply say "Welcome," or "Welcome to the house," and then would disappear. From then on I would only see a hand from behind a wall holding trays of different foods. If you had been dropped in from outer space you would have assumed that only men existed in the city except for lumps of black walking around the streets in heavy black veils. There was no cinema in the town. Someone had tried to build a cinema there. He was warned by the local clergy that this was a sin because films and the cinema industry were anathema to Islam. He persisted, and he died. And the clergy then collected money in the mosque to help pay his wife through gifts so that she would not starve. He was killed for trying to build a cinema. Other than that, it was a very pleasant time. I had no problems there. I had a lot of friendships there. I still get telephone calls from people in the town on holidays, Christmas, etc.

Q: Well, now, what was the situation that you were seeing in Iran? How was the Shah perceived at this particular time?

METRINKO: 1970. The Shah was very much disliked in the town that I was in. The town had, for *pro forma* reasons, requested permission to put up a statue of the Shah and was turned down by the palace, which refused to give them permission to put up a statue. The town was known in the area of Khorramshahr, in joking, as "Stalingrad." It was a town that had been heavily influenced by the Tudeh Party, the old pro-Communist party. It was a town of separatists. A lot of people in the town had died fighting the Shah's armies. The people were not pro-Shah at all. There were *pro-forma* celebrations on the Shah's birthday and at other times, but in general the feeling was rather anti-Shah. One example I can give, I have a photograph of myself that was taken by someone else in Songhor at the time of the Shah's birthday in November, 1970. It was a little celebration with the normal folkloric dances and people like that in the central square of the town, and I was standing with a friend who was one of the local bank presidents. We were standing at the edge of the *maidan*. Somebody was giving a speech, and approximately every 20 or 30 seconds he would call out, "*Shahanshah aryah mehr!*" And everybody would clap. My friend would clap, too. This means, "Shah of shahs, the light of the Aryans." It was a title used by the Shah. I turned to my friend the banker, and I said, "Why are you clapping? You can't hear anything he's saying? I can't." And he looked at me and said, in a whisper, "If I don't clap now, I'll be in jail tonight." So I started to clap, too, whenever they'd say "*Shahanshah aryah mehr!*" That man, by the way, later on, after the revolution, became one of the heads of the regional Islamic banking system. He was put in charge of a big chunk of the country to turn the banking system Islamic.

Q: You were from America. Did they kind of know what America was, have any feeling for it? Or were you just a helping hand?

METRINKO: No, the Iranians never accept the idea of somebody helping them. They are the most suspicious people in the world and accept nothing at face value. There was a basic assumption that I was a spy of some sort or there for some nefarious purpose. That did not stop the friendships because Iranians accept nefarious purposes as part of their culture. They never quite knew whether I was working for their own government or another government. Most of the people in the town would not have known where America was, no. For example, I was invited once to dinner to the home of one of the other teachers, and his wife was present at the dinner. That was a bit unusual. This was an educated family, by the way. And after the dinner was over, the wife looked at me and, addressing me directly, said, "You're probably wondering why we invited you for dinner tonight." Well, I had been wondering. And she said, "The reason is that I have a brother who's living in your country, and I thought that if we became friendly with you, you might have your family invite my brother to dinner at your place." I said, "That's great." I said, "What's his address?" And she went and got a piece of paper and handed me his address, and he was living in Frankfurt, Germany. I looked at it and said, "But I live in the United States of America." And, "Yes." She assumed they were the same place. If you were from America, you were just from out there. Now that changed absolutely 100 percent in a few years.

Q: Now we're sticking to this '70 to '73 period. What were you picking up? Because this is always a very... this area, I would assume, had been one in which there were unpleasant neighbors around, not only Iranian, but you had Iraqis and Turks. In typical way, how were relations there?

METRINKO: Relations with Iraq... the Iranians and the Iraqis had had relations for 3000 years. It's been hot and cold throughout the length of that 3000 years. They've been fighting with each other and visiting each other and trading with each other constantly through that whole period. The Persian Empire wiped out the Babylonian Empire. That was only the beginning, and it's gone back and forth, back and forth, back and forth all along. When I was in Iran in the early '70s, the business of border security had been turned over in large part to the Kurdish tribes who lived on the border. The Kurdish tribes went back and forth; each came into the other's country all the time. People visited, they did trading, they did black market smuggling all the time. Also, despite flare-ups and the Shah supporting Kurds in Iraq, for example, in Iraq in this period lived some of the major Iranian Shiite religious leaders. They lived in the shrine city of Najaf. There was a huge Shiite presence in Iraq - still is, the Shiite religion of Iran - and a lot of religious leaders went back and forth constantly. Khomeini lived in Iraq at that point. There were Iranian religious families living around the shrines of Iraq who had been there for hundreds of years but still considered themselves Iranian, and they had Iranian passports. Was there a problem? Well, for one part of that period, you couldn't visit Iraq. In fact, Iran accepted a lot of Kurdish refugees from Iraq who had fled across the border. For other periods of time, it was fine. One could go easily - not Americans, particularly - but people could go easily, and Iranian pilgrims always visited Iraq. So was it a friendly border? No, but it was a much-traveled border, and people did go back and forth, and there were treaties between the two countries.

Q: Did you get any repercussions of that, or was that farther away?

METRINKO: It didn't touch me at all. To the best of my knowledge, none of the refugee Kurds came into the Sonqor area. I only saw them later, up in the Caspian.

Q: What about the relations between the Turkic and Kurdish speakers?

METRINKO: In Sonqor it was absolutely fine. They all spoke each other's languages, and in fact most of them were intermarried. I don't think there were any pure Turkic peoples or pure Kurdish peoples there. The language you spoke... people would routinely, for social reasons, use all three languages. So even illiterate villagers or illiterate townspeople, who had had no formal education at all, spoke all three.

Q: What was the value of teaching English at this thing?

METRINKO: My students could never understand. The value of teaching English was that the Shah had realized that if anyone wanted to really go past small town life in Iran, if they wanted to go off the university, English was going to be a requirement. The books of the world are written in English, and technical subjects are taught in English best. At the time the Shah was developing a very good military relationship with the United States, and the Iranian helicopter system, weapons system, the airplane system, were all being provided by the United States. It required knowledge of English to buy this, to maintain it, to continue dealing with it. He wanted his soldiers to speak English. The soldiers came from small towns. Well, he wanted kids in school to start doing English then so they could continue using it as they got older, and the Shah had always been an Anglophile, in his own way.

Q: How were your students reacting to learning a fourth language?

METRINKO: It depended. I had students with whom I am still in touch from that period, who studied in high school under me and who learned English extremely well. It opened up a way of getting out of the town or going off to university, because they had good English [skills]. And several of my friends now are guys who studied English under me at that school.

Q: You mentioned, was it Tudeh party? What was both local Communist and Soviet Communist influence in the area that you were seeing at that time - or did you see it?

METRINKO: The presence of the secret police was so strong, or the implied presence of it-

Q: You're talking about SAVAK.

METRINKO: SAVAK - was strong and so heavy that nobody would have spoken to me about a Tudeh activity or Communist Party activity, but there was also an underlying current of anti-Shah feeling linked to everything. Could I say that this person or that person was a Communist? No. But I could certainly think of all sorts of people I knew there who were anti-Shah. What did I actually see in the way of political activity or sort of underground activity by the Tudeh Party or by any of the other opposition groups? Nothing, *per se*. But the town itself became a real hotbed of revolution as soon as the revolution started in 1978.

Q: I would have thought that for a normal secret policeman who ends up in a small town - I mean we all know how the system works - you don't get your smoothest operators there. Just having an American teaching there even though the Shah was fomenting this would have been highly suspicious.

METRINKO: Oh, I'm sure they had a lot of fun watching me.

Q: You know, and here you are messing around with the young... what passed for intellectuals... anyway, the people who were going to be in Iran, the young people in an area that's not very friendly to the Shah. Did you feel the hand of the police?

METRINKO: Not specifically, although as a teacher, subject to the regulations of the Ministry of Education, there was a heavy hand on all of us. For example, I was not allowed to leave the town without getting permission from the head of the school, and you had to get this every time you wanted to leave the area of the town. It wasn't difficult for me to get it; he always gave it when I wanted to go away, but I still had to obtain it so they would know where I was. Other teachers had to do this as well. Did they watch me specifically? I'm sure they did. I'm sure I was great practice for them. But was I ever told not to do this or not to go there? No, not really. I think there were more interested to see who would become friendly with me than what I would be doing.

Q: Well, then, you were there for about a year.

METRINKO: I was in that town for a year.

Q: So '70-71.

METRINKO: Correct.

Q: Where did you go in '71?

METRINKO: In 1971, I was invited to participate in a seminar the Peace Corps had agreed to run for one of the training colleges. It was up on the Caspian, and it was supposed to be an intensive English seminar, where approximately 100 students from one particular small university, a college that is a university now, were going to spend six weeks of the summer studying English intensively. The head of the school was very interested in this. The Peace Corps contacted me. I volunteered to go up and do this, too. I think there were about 14 or 15 teachers there from the Peace Corps. From the very first moment I arrived there, I thought it was great. I finally had students in front of me who seriously wanted to learn English. They were older, they were intelligent, it was a very, very good college and really cream of the crop students. And the education experience was totally different than I'd been having in high school. The high school experience, I should say, was... Did you ever see *Blackboard Jungle*?

Q: Yes, Glenn Ford and Sidney Poitier.

METRINKO: It was sort of like that, except that you had to use your fists in almost every class to keep order.

Q: *Good heavens.*

METRINKO: I was teaching in rooms where I would have 70 or 80 young male students, all of whom were in their teens. Imagine a room with 75 guys in it, all cramped in together and sitting four people to a bench that would only hold two comfortably, and they were between the ages of 13 and 18. And you are a foreign teacher. It wasn't only me. I adapted quickly to the teaching methods. On first entering the school system there, one of the other teachers, a very pleasant man, asked me if I would like to watch his classes first just to see what the teaching methods are in the town. I thought this was a good idea. I went into one of his classes, and I saw him turn from a pleasant, amiable gentleman who spoke quite decent English into a sort of monster, smashing students, screaming at them, insulting them. I didn't say anything. We walked out of the classroom, and I told him I could never teach like this, this wasn't the American way, it was counter-productive - all those fine words. These were the hope of Iran, the youngsters who were going to lead the country, etc. He told me that - I'm still a friend of this guy, by the way, all these years later - what he said was, "Michael, in this town, our students get beaten up by their fathers, they get beaten by their brothers, they get beaten by everybody in the alleys they live in. They only understand force. If you try to talk to them nicely or if you are too polite, they will think you are weak. I told him - I assured him - he was wrong. For the next several days, until the end of the week, I tried teaching the liberal, pleasant, nice way I had been able to do in Turkey in the university, and by the end of the third class or so in each of my classrooms not only was I being ignored by the students, they didn't even acknowledge my presence in the room. They were throwing things, fighting with each other, and basically having a free-for-all before I entered. I thought about this over the weekend, and at the beginning of the second week of school walked into one of my first pandemonium classes, walked over to the biggest student in the room and beat him up in front of the others. The class went silent. I walked out, came back in, everyone stood up. I said, "Good morning." They said, "Good morning." I looked at them and said, "Page one, open it." And I had great classes for the rest of the year - *but* it involved, every week in each of the classes, physically beating somebody. This was accepted and common. It was considered routine teaching practice. And you could use your fists, though that wasn't really encouraged because you could hurt your fists on students. Usually what you just did was throw them out into the hallway and summon the prefect of discipline, who was walking up and down the hallways with a stick or a length of rubber hose and who would simply lay into them as soon as they landed in the hallway. We routinely performed massive physical intimidation on the students to keep them quiet. That included up to use of the *bastinado*.

Q: *That's hitting somebody on the bare feet with a rubber hose or two sticks.*

METRINKO: Two teachers holding the student upside down about half a foot off the floor and a third teacher beating the soles of his feet with either a rubber hose or a stick. It's very effective. I had great classes all year, and I was able to teach a lot of English. A lot of my students learned English. A lot of my students got severely beaten by me as well. But it was the only way to

survive there.

Q: *All males?*

METRINKO: Completely. This was like penitentiary life without bars.

Q: *Where were you? This was on the Caspian Sea, or -*

METRINKO: What I've been describing has been Sonqor and the teaching methods there. The Caspian Sea, number one, half my students were girls, and very pleasant girls. None of them were teenage males. They were university students at school in Tehran. These students were all interested, intelligent, and eager. The students at this school had all been chosen by scholarship. They were there because they had already spent several years as teachers themselves. It was called the Literacy Corps Teacher Training College. The school only took people who had a minimum of several years of teaching experience behind them, gave them full scholarships to come do a four-year degree program. In Iran at the time you could teach up through high school with only a high school diploma yourself. It's probably changed by now, but at that time you could have a high school diploma and become a teacher. So we were teaching people who had several years of teaching experience and had gotten there by scholarship. They were interested, eager, industrious, etc. It was like a dream school - beautiful campus, everything was wonderful about it. They had a summer campus up in the Caspian where I was. I developed a lot of friendships with students there, and the president of the school asked if I would consider transferring to the school full time, become an English teacher at the school itself and continue teaching at the college level. I thought about this for all of maybe a minute and decided this would be a great idea. It was the difference between going back and basically flailing away at unwilling teenagers or continuing in the university environment. There was no choice.

So it got arranged. The Peace Corps had no problem with it, and the president of the university was a good friend of... in fact, he had been the Shah's tutor, and they just gave the necessary orders and the Ministry of Education arranged my transfer, and it was all done immediately.

Q: *What was the name of this school?*

METRINKO: In Persian it was the Danesh Serai Aliyh Sepahi Danesh - the Literacy Corps Teacher Training College.

Q: *Where was it located now?*

METRINKO: Physically the campus was near the town of Varamin, about 30 kilometers outside of Tehran. A very nice campus, it had been an old agricultural facility. In fact, the original facility had been put up by AID after World War II, what was then called Point Four. It was a beautiful campus, some fine old buildings, and a lot of nice, new buildings. I had a beautiful office with large windows overlooking a nice green campus that was watered and rose beds all the time. A great place. Tennis court, swimming pool - the whole bit. A nice Peace Corps experience, too, by the way.

Q: You were there from, what, '71 to '73?

METRINKO: That's correct, yes.

Q: Can you describe how you saw the attitude of these students - I mean, obviously we're talking about an elite - and your relationship with them?

METRINKO: The students, first of all, came from cities and towns all over the country. They weren't from one town. So they represented every tribal group, every religious group in the country. There were Christian students. There were Shiite students. There were Sunni students. I had Kurds and Turks and Armenians and this and that and Gashgahi, people from the Caspian, people from, you know, the Afghan areas, and from up in northern Khorrasan. Arab students from the Arab provinces. It was a whole mixture. Every one of them was there on a government scholarship, every one of them had been a government teacher. There was a great deal of activism there, certainly a lot more open talk about SAVAK, what it was doing, a lot more open talk about politics. No one in public would criticize the Shah, because you could be put in prison for doing that, but privately many of them did to me. Some of the students were reputed to be members of various underground groups, and at least one of my students was executed.

Q: Were they trying to sound you out, drag you in, involve you, or how did this work?

METRINKO: I wouldn't say that because, there too, none of them knew where I was really from. They had a far better idea, of course, of the United States in politics, probably a better idea of the American-Iranian political relationship than I had. But were they trying to sound me out? Yes. I would joke about things that they did not. They could lose a lot more than me by reading the wrong book. I had a roommate from the school my third year who, I know, was pulled in by SAVAK and told that he had to report about me, what I did. And it really frightened him. He told me all about it. He really got frightened. So we agreed that he had better start reporting things that they would have found out anyway.

Q: Was there much of a drive to try and go to the United States to be educated later, because as a consular officer elsewhere I know roving bands of Iranian usually young men were all over Europe trying to get visas to the United States.

METRINKO: The time period here is the crucial thing. My Peace Corps experience in Iran was from 1970 to 1973. The oil money was just filtering in. Up until 1970, the normal Iranian did not have a car, did not have a television, did not have a telephone. When I went to call from Sonqor to Tehran - forget calling outside of Iran, it was not possible - but to make a call from Sonqor, my first Peace Corps site, to the Peace Corps headquarters, for example, in Tehran, I would have to go to the post office on one of the two days when we had a telephone connection open, stand in line, and it was only open for a couple of hours when the town was given the rights to use the telephone lines. And you had to register your name, give the number, and eventually somebody would start to connect. It was a matter of using old phones that had the turn handles on the side and a telephone operator would keep twirling this and saying, "Khorramshahr, this is Sonqor,

Khorramshahr - Sonqor - can you hear me?" And Khorramshahr would then pass you down the line to the next city, Hamadan. Hamadan would pass you down to Zanjan, and you could hear all the operators talking to each other: "Zanjan, this is Hamadan. We need a line to Tehran." And it was done that way. I say that because it's an indication of the sort of communication in the country. There wasn't any feasible way to get information there, if you were in a small town. There was no money. There were no cars in the towns when I was there in the Peace Corps the first year. I have pictures of the town taken in 1970, on regular working days when you could see the dirt street from one end of the town to the other, and there would be one jeep parked on the side, and that was it. By 1975, 1976, there were traffic jams all the time because people suddenly... the oil money just spread all over the place, and if you didn't have access to oil money *per se*, you had access to the jobs that the oil was creating - the construction boom. So people had money. Once they got the money, it meant that all sorts of people would then look out of Iran for education. And Iranians have always been interested in education and in traveling. They like to travel. It's just part of them. There are countries whose people never travel. Iranians like to travel. I think that may be one reason they had so many shrines - because they liked to travel to them. So once you had a family sending a nephew or, say, a son to the United States, then this would attract others in the family. The mother would go on a visit, the sister would want to go on a visit, the younger brother would look at this and say, "If Farid went, I want to go too." Another nephew, another cousin behind it. And this sort of skyrocketed in the course of just a few years. But up until 1970-71, very, very rare, exceptional students.

Now, in my second Peace Corps site, in the training college, they had a program where they would take the top several students of every graduating class and give them fellowships to go to the United States or to England to study. They liked the United States. They would send them off, and they could get their master's degree and their doctorates in the US, and a lot of my students from that time came here and do have doctorates. Some of them are still here. But there was that focus by the government ministries also, sending people out, and the government ministries did have direct access to oil money.

Q: Everybody was sort of on the government payroll, essentially, there. Did this keep down political activity?

METRINKO: It did, and it didn't. I'll give you an example. One of my favorite students, a girl, was arrested when I was there, and I knew she had been arrested. All the students talked about it. The head of the school was a good friend of mine. He told me she'd been arrested. And through a combination of totally accidental circumstances, I was able to follow her case until the day when she was eventually released. I was sitting in an Iranian friend's house when this girl's father and uncles came to try and get my Iranian friend to intercede with the Shah. The Iranian friend I was with did not realize that I knew the girl. He had no way to know this. He was a very upper-class Iranian, a friend of the Shah, who was writing a book in English, needed some help editing it, and had found me through friends and just asked if I'd be interested, sort of *pro bono*, helping him to edit this book. I agreed to do it because of a common interest in it. I would sit in his garden... in fact, he lived in one of the Shah's old houses that was given as a gift. I would sit in his garden every weekend, the whole of a Friday or Saturday, have lunch with him, and we would just go over his manuscript of the preceding week. It was great fun. Except one day a whole

group of people from the town of Shiraz came to see him, came into the garden. He told me what it was about in English, even though I was following all the Persian, and said, "Here was the daughter of " "this girl has been arrested, and they want to get her out of prison, and they hope that I can do it as a friend of the Shah. I've been waiting for them to come to see me." I heard the family explain the whole thing, and none of the family knew that I spoke Persian or that I knew their daughter. They had no way of knowing this. But eventually, she was released at least temporarily and then re-arrested. I saw her the day she was released. Yes, there was that activism. She was picked up for reading the wrong books, political books, things like that, nothing that anyone would consider anything at all in the United States. But in Iran, reading was heavily censored. Did other people complain about the government? Yes. Did they do it all the time or too vocally? No. Did people go to prison there? Yes. A couple of times students from my classes disappeared, and I would be told that so-and-so was in prison, and I just sort of ignored it for a while. They usually came back out.

Q: What about - again, I'm sticking to this '70-73 period - the influence of the mullahs and religion and that sort of thing? I mean, how were you observing it?

METRINKO: It was always very strong. The students that I was dealing with... Well, in my first Peace Corps site, everybody was ostensibly very conservative, very religious. There was no alcohol in the town, there was no cinema in the town, women were all dressed right to the tops of their heads in heavy dark veils. It was everything that Khomeini could have wanted in a post-revolutionary town. So when people today talk about how Iran was so different under the Shah, that's bullshit. Much of Iran was as heavily conservative as it is today. That having been said, my students at the university level, I'd say that a fair number of them were strongly religious. If they had alcohol, it would be a beer now and then, nothing else, very unlike the Turkish students I had had. They were religious, they prayed, most of them. It was very common to see people praying at prayer times on campus. Girls, even if they weren't wearing veils, they were still conservative acting. I got into some of the Sufi circles, the Iranian mystic circles, when I was there, because I was studying at the University of Tehran at night, and some of my students were involved in Sufi mysticism. I was invited to spend a couple of evenings at one of the Sufi monasteries out in the western part of Iran and did so. I got to know some clergy there, very different from the traditional Shiite clergy, but still a religious part of the country expressing itself in a traditional religious way. I didn't hang around with wild people. Most of the people I knew were observant, or at least quietly observant or quietly observant Christians too, because there were Armenian and Syrian students. But there was no wild stuff; they were all quite conservative.

Q: Well, did you have any contact or feel for the embassy or the American presence while you were there?

METRINKO: You know, I'm trying to think. Not really. I mean, I went to the Peace Corps office occasionally, got my mail at the Peace Corps office. Other than that, the embassy occasionally for a hamburger or a cheeseburger, something of that sort, but not really.

Q: You weren't being impacted upon by Bell Helicopter or mechanics and all that, which were elsewhere?

METRINKO. No. Well, one thing was changing, and this is what stopped the Peace Corps in Iran, too. That presence was just building up as my Peace Corps assignment was winding down. That presence came in when the Shah had enough money from oil to start buying big-time. It started in 1972-73. By 1973, it was very, very easy to get a job teaching English, for example, for the Iranian military through a Bell contractor or other contract. They were desperately seeking out native English speakers because they had to start teaching vast numbers of Iranian soldiers and helicopter and airplane technicians how to speak English. I could have left the Peace Corps and gotten a job teaching English for 10 times what I was getting paid by the Peace Corps and still have the Peace Corps experience. I didn't because I was close to the end of my time anyway and because the American Embassy, apparently, was so upset about the types of jobs... not so upset - they were trying to save the Peace Corps and had gotten the agreement of some of the companies not to hire Peace Corps volunteers who were still active Peace Corps volunteers. As it turned out, the Peace Corps basically disappeared of its own weight, the weight of changing times, about a year or two after that.

Q: *Well, in '73 what happened?*

METRINKO: In 1973, I had gone to graduate school

CHARLES A. MAST
Commercial Officer
Tehran (1970-1972)

Consul
Tabriz (1972-1974)

Charles A. Mast was born in South Dakota in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Calvin College in 1963, he received his master's degree from the University of Maryland in 1967. His career has included positions in Kastamanu, Curacao, Tehran, Tabriz, Ankara, Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur, Dhaka, and Bombay. Mr. Mast was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2001.

Q: *Well, you went to Tehran when?*

MAST: I went in August of 1970.

Q: *And you were there until when?*

MAST: I was in Tehran until the summer of 1972, when I went to Tabriz, in northwestern Iran, as American consul, and I was there until the summer of 1974.

Q: *Well, let's stick to Tehran first. Who was our ambassador when you got out there?*

MAST: When I got there, Douglas MacArthur II.

Q: He had a reputation of being rather imperious, but also a real professional - but rather demanding. How did you find him?

MAST: Well, he was clearly very professional in his dress and his demeanor and the way he approached problems. I found him imperious. I am sure he didn't know my name. There's no question about that, even though I was control officer occasionally for a senator or someone, and we'd be in his office and he'd be briefing the person. But I was one of his younger officers. As a junior officer, that's what we accepted in those days. Although I do remember one thing in retrospect, after what happened to the Shah. Ambassador MacArthur was briefing Dewey Bartlett, who had been governor of Oklahoma and was going to be running for the Senate. And I can still hear Ambassador MacArthur talking about "in the great arc that extends from Japan to Turkey, there is only one Island of stability, and that is Iran." That was 1972, so he certainly didn't foresee the future very well.

Q: What was your job? What did it involve?

MAST: There were three of us in the commercial section. After the oil price increase in 1971, Iran really became a booming market for the United States. As the junior, I was a trade promotion officer, worked very closely with the local employees, the two commercial librarians - I supervised them - and then there were, I think, four or five local employees who wrote our world trade directory reports, and I supervised them and would go with them on calls. I would brief the businessmen coming in, people who wanted details...not necessarily people who wanted the big picture. They would see the commercial attaché or the Economic Counselor or the Ambassador. But I would work with people who were looking for agents. How can we find such and such an agent, and what kind of information on agents did we have? I enjoyed it a great deal.

Q: You are in one of the preeminent commercial countries in the world, going back to God knows when. Did you have much to do with the bazaaris?

MAST: We'd go to the bazaar to go shopping, and we would sometimes have work with the *bazaaris*, but mostly the people that we would be dealing with would be people who were one step removed from the bazaar, perhaps the son of a *bazaari* who was setting up in machinery or office equipment or things of this kind. We would be trying to help them find American sources of supply and help introduce them to Americans who were looking for agents. We also worked a great deal with Americans who were bidding on contracts with the municipality or the national government or the World Bank.

Q: What was your impression of how the commercial world in Iran worked?

MAST: Well, it was relatively difficult to operate there. A great deal worked on what they called party *bazi*, which was who you knew. When I was there in 1971-1972, there were three or four of us who did a study using world trade directory reports. We had three or four thousand of these which were pretty in-depth studies of Iranian companies. We discovered that relatives of the

Shah or the Shah's close family were involved in something like 30 percent of the companies where they had either silent partnerships or were active partners, and of course at that time we saw that as unusual favoritism and perhaps even corruption. Many times when American companies would come in and they wanted to find well-established companies, we'd look for two things. We'd look for a company that had the technical and the administrative and sales expertise, but was also well connected. Many times, Prince Chahram, who was one of the Shah's nephews, was a silent partner of that company, but people would still go ahead and pick the company. Sometimes they picked the company because Prince Chahram was a silent partner.

Q: Did this seem to work fairly well? I mean once they got in, were both sides pretty pleased with how things were going?

MAST: Certainly during that period, I would say 1970-74, there was a boom not only in sales but also in investments, and a lot of American companies found good Iranian partners or in some cases set up wholly-owned subsidiaries, and I think by and large found business there a fairly profitable undertaking.

Q: Did you get involved in military sales, or was that a different -

MAST: Fortunately I didn't get involved in military sales. There was a pol-mil officer who did some of that, and of course the military attaché's office did some as well. And we also had, as the sales beefed up even more, a separate military office that handled that kind of thing.

Q: Well, in those days, were the merchants in Iran, the people and the American companies you were dealing with, did they see Iran as being more a market in Iran, or did they see it as being a center where they could use Iran to deal with neighboring countries?

MAST: I think the American companies that came in saw Iran as a market, Iran as Iran. Obviously the Iranian investment promotion board and the people who were trying to attract foreign investment, as in virtually any developing country I've ever worked in, saw Iran as an export platform, as an opportunity for their people to be productively employed in making products with American or other foreign technology and expertise and exporting to other countries for export earnings. That one didn't work out very well. Iran didn't have that productive an infrastructure. The labor force needed training etc. It's a difficult thing to undertake. And as the oil revenues flowed, of course, Iran became a higher cost economy as well.

Q: So it was mainly oil revenues that were paying for goods that came from other places, including the United States.

MAST: Almost totally. They had some traditional exports. Obviously, carpets and hazelnuts, pistachios, dried fruits. But I'd guess almost 90-95 percent of their export earnings were from oil and gas.

Q: While you were doing it, was it easy to make professional contacts.

MAST: Well, I'd almost have to separate the two assignments. The two years we were in Tehran

- perhaps it had to do with the fact that I was a junior officer and we had two small children, my wife was very much involved in teaching, and we had a circle of American friends - but we did not break into the Iranian community as much as I would have liked. When we moved to Tabriz, and for the two years I was there as consul, we had a tremendous group of Iranian friends, many of them actually mixed marriages, where you'd have Iranian males, in most cases, with foreign wives. In many cases, obviously, Iranian wives and husbands. We had a very large group of friends. We would have thirty or forty couples, for example, for a square dance, and every one of them were good friends. So we really enjoyed Tabriz much better from the social point of view than we did Tehran.

Q: Well, let's stick to the embassy to start with. You weren't, obviously, doing political reporting and all, but did you feel that we were under constraints to show the brighter side of how Iran was - I mean, not you but with the other officers you'd be talking to?

MAST: Oh, no question. I think that certainly - particularly under Douglas MacArthur II and to a certain extent under Ambassador Farland, who came later, to a lesser extent, I think, under Helms, who was the last ambassador I served under when I was in Tabriz - there were constraints on reporting. I remember there was a group of junior officers that got together to do a particular report. I don't even remember what it was on any more, but it had to do with corruption in the royal family. And there were some pretty good names: Arnie Raphel, Stan Escudero, who is a three-time ambassador just retired now, and two or three other junior officers - I was one of them. Arnie Raphel quarterbacked the operation and was going to be the one who was going to get it cleared through the ambassador, and it never left. I think finally the ambassador wanted so many changes that we just felt it wasn't worth sending in any more. And I don't remember whether that was pre-Dissent Channel or not, but perhaps we didn't feel strongly enough to send it as a dissent channel. Another time, I remember the finance officer - and you would think that this would be a fairly straightforward kind of report - he had gone to see a contact who was the deputy head of the Central Bank, and there were some particular problems in the economy with foreign exchange, and he wrote up a report, which was going to go through the ambassador. It came back, and I still remember the economic counselor talking to him saying, "Alex, I'm sorry that it can't go out that way because the ambassador says that's not what we've been reporting." Alex said, "Well, fine, then it won't go out at all." And I don't know exactly what did happen to it. So there were some of those kind of things.

Q: Did you get any feel at that time - I'm talking about when you were in Tehran first - about discontent in the country? I mean, obviously about nine years later all hell was going to break loose.

MAST: That's something that we've talked about many times, people who had served in Iran. I certainly didn't. I have to be honest. Part of this, perhaps, is because I was working primarily with the business community, but even among friends, and we knew a lot of people well. There were some junior officers at USIS, and I think they got a little more, but not very much either. The Iranians were very close-mouthed, and SAVAK was ubiquitous. You didn't know where they were. They were everywhere. In fact, I remember hearing the story that any board meeting of any corporation, company, foundation, cooperative, whatever, in Iran that had a meeting, there would

almost certainly be a person there to report to SAVAK on what happened at the meeting or what didn't happen. Those kind of things we knew from 1970-72, but I think we thought that the economic progress, what we saw with the White Revolution, with education, with rights of women, etc. - this could partially at least compensate for the other things.

Q: Was there a feel, again at that time, sticking to the 1970-72 time, was there concern about the Soviet Union doing anything at that time or messing around with the students?

MAST: Some, one of the anti-Shah parties was pro-Soviet. Many nationalists opposed both the US. and the USSR. There was some religious opposition to the Shah. I remember talking about it at times, but there had been such a long relationship between Iran and Russia, not particularly advantageous to Iran, that rapprochement was not that likely. Now the Shah, of course, would use that - that the Soviets were milling around and could interfere in Iran - in order to try to keep us on the reservation, so to speak.

Q: I'm asking the question but I'm pretty sure I know the answer: did you or your fellow officers have much contact with the religious in Tehran?

MAST: I certainly didn't, and as I think back, I think very few of the people did. I know Arnie Raphel and Stan Escudero, as I said, we were all Farsi language officers, they would try to get into the bazaar. They had some success there, but I think very little with the religious establishment - certainly not with the anti-Shah religious mullahs.

Q: Religious establishment is always difficult because almost by their nature they're rather xenophobic. This is true in almost any country. Well, then in 1972, you were off to Tabriz. You were there 1972 to 1974. Talk about Tabriz - where is it located, it's importance at that time, and how sort of is society there?

MAST: Tabriz at that time was the second largest city in Iran after Tehran. Isfahan and Mashed were virtually equal in population and a close third. It's in northwestern Iran, I guess maybe 75 miles from the Turkish border and about 50 or 60 miles from the Soviet border. We had four or five provinces in our consular district, East Azerbaijan being the major one, and it was a very small consulate. There were only two Americans in the consulate. It went back a number of years. There were some excellent people who had served there. Bill Eagleton was one who wrote an excellent book on the Kurds and later became an ambassador. There had been times when we had been thinking of closing Tabriz, but during the 1950s it was a fairly major listening post for the Soviet Union, and later we built a magnificent new consulate, in 1965. It would have been extremely embarrassing to close that five or six years after we built it, and so instead we just gradually lowered the number of people that were there. It hadn't been a listening post for some years when I arrived, but we had magnificent vaults and we had a great building. It won an award actually from *Architectural Digest*. The house was built in similar style and was very comfortable.

Q: *You had one other officer?*

MAST: One other officer.

Q: *Who was that?*

MAST: The first one was Dick Bagnell for one year, and he left the Foreign Service after that assignment. The second one, again someone who has done well in the Foreign Service, was Ron Newman, Ambassador Newman's son, who later became ambassador himself to Algeria. I think he's currently deputy assistant secretary in NEA, though may now be ambassador to Bahrain.

Q: *What was this north Iran? I assume there were Kurds there and Azeris and other people.*

MAST: Yes, the main differentiation there would be, I would say, a high percentage - 75-80 percent - of the people in our consular district, which was about a third of the population of Iran, would be non-Farsi-speaking people. They might know Farsi, but it wouldn't be their mother tongue. So primarily, as you say, Azeris or Turks and Kurds. There were also Rashits near the Caspian who had different dialects as well. And then, of course, there were the more traditional heartland Farsi speakers in Khorramabad, Hamadan - those areas. It was really a nice mix of people and cultures.

Q: *Well, this is 1970-74. Nixon is President. Kissinger is riding high. By this time he's the Secretary of State, I guess for most of that time. Did you get any high-level visits there?*

MAST: Yes, I remember that one very well because it was just before I left Tehran, late May, early June of 1972. President Nixon, Kissinger, Haldeman, the whole crowd came out, and I was control officer of the guest house where Haldeman and Kissinger stayed. Another colleague of mine was in control officer of the palace nearby, where the President stayed. So we had quite a lot of interaction, at least in a logistic sense, with the visit.

Q: *What was your impression of how the visit went, and just dealing with these people? I think it's sometimes interesting to get the junior officers' viewpoint of a presidential visit.*

MAST: Well, one of the things that I thought was very intriguing concerned one of the people in the embassy who worked with the Agency and had incredible contacts with the imperial guard and people like that. He was in charge of one pretty important aspect of the visit having to do with motorcades and security, and at the end of the trip he said, "Well, one thing you won't have to worry about - we'll never have to handle this group again. I won't guarantee that the next party or the next administration will be any better, but at least we won't have to have another visit from these characters." Frankly, there were some people, a couple of Haldeman's staff and so forth, that I was sort of glad to see go to prison over Watergate, because they had just run roughshod over anybody from the embassy there. But that's unfortunately not unusual for a Presidential visit. I didn't mind Kissinger, and Winston Lord went out of his way to be considerate of junior officers.

Q: Up in Tabriz, how did you see your role as principal officer?

MAST: I think one of the reasons I got the job, after being commercial officer, is that I convinced the economic counselor and the DCM and, to a certain extent, Personnel in Washington (although it was logical to take an officer of my rank from the embassy who spoke the language and send him up to the consulate, because they'd done that before in Khorramshahr), that there were a lot of commercial opportunities in Tabriz. It had not been a commercial interest post before, but there had been six or eight major plants established in Tabriz starting in the late 1960s and going until 1974, actually. There were some that were established while I was there. Some of these were plants with Eastern European joint ventures. There was a Czech machine tool factory and a Romanian tractor factory, if you can believe it - later taken over by Massey Ferguson. SKF was there with a ball bearing plant, and Mercedes was there with an engine plant. There were a couple of American companies that were coming in, including Gould's to manufacture electric engines. Dorman Diesel, which was a British company, was there with a diesel plant. So there was a lot of investment going in. There were a lot of opportunities. I started work before I went there and then soon after I arrived we had a successful trade mission from the American Machine Tool Manufacturers Association. So there was beginning to be those kinds of opportunities in northwest Iran, that there hadn't been before. Now, in retrospect, I don't think we had a smashing success, but we had started something at that time that could have been carried out more successfully, obviously, if the Shah hadn't gone and the relationship hadn't changed.

Q: What was your impression as you looked at it, and also getting back to your Tehran times, about the ability of the Iranians to move within, rather than this mercantile role, manufacturing and getting into the heavy stuff?

MAST: I think they did fairly well. What happened is you had such a large group of Iranians - this is something that I found very unusual after my experience in Turkey - such a large group of Iranians that were being educated and had been educated abroad, particularly in the United States, so almost without fail, all of the managing directors, deputy managing directors, and even the directors of many of the divisions within these companies would be returned Iranians from the United States, or in some cases from Germany, Britain, or from France. Some of them not only had degrees, but had worked for several years with International Harvester or companies like that. So that helped a great deal. Now obviously they still had to train people in industrial discipline, factory management, workers, the technicians - there were some problems. But I think they were doing fairly well with that.

Q: You mentioned that there were Rumanian and Czech factories. Were these sort of real, legitimate factories and that's what they were doing, or were they sort of a launching ground for other activities?

MAST: I think they were real factories. The Rumanian tractor they built was basically a copy of an old 1930s American International Harvester tractor, and of course it was going to be good for them. The Romanians could make a lot of foreign exchange out of this particular investment, and they'd use a lot of their own machine tools in putting it in. I think they had negotiated pretty well with the Iranian Government. The Czechs, of course, were pretty good in machine tools, and so I

think that was it primarily. We had just recently gone through the Prague Spring. That happened before I got to Tabriz, but we had pretty good relations with the Czechs and with the Rumanians. I don't remember having them over that often, but we didn't have a problem with visiting their factories and things like that.

Now there was a Russian consul general and a Russian insurance agent in Tabriz who were doing some of the other thing that you're talking about.

Q: What was the situation between Iraq and Iran up in your area at the border there when you were there in 1972-74?

MAST: Well, there was starting to be quite a lot of problem with the Kurds in Iraq and to a certain extent in Iran, and so we were starting to do some reporting because we could get right to the border in many cases in Iran and could talk to some of the Iranian officials there. That was just starting in 1974, and Ron Newman, who was vice-consul and then was consul for two years did quite a lot of good reporting from 1974 to 1976. Of course, Kissinger really pulled the plug on our support for the Iraqi Kurds in 1975.

Q: I was wondering, this is not one of the more savory instances of American policy. When you were there, what were we doing? Were you aware of our support for the Iraqi Kurds at that time?

MAST: Yes, I guess we were aware, but it was still relatively early, the 1973-74 period, and so I don't remember a great deal. There was a great deal of curiosity on our part to get down to Tehran to try to find out what was happening. Of course, this often wasn't reported in diplomatic channels. I think Ron was probably a little more interested. He was a very aggressive young political officer, and as it picked up more in 1974, I started to back off a bit on my political travel and said, "Ron, you're going to be consul here next year. You take that trip." So I did more of the commercial-economic, and even found myself doing some of the consular and administrative work so that he could do a little more reporting and traveling in the first year he was there, in 1973-74.

Q: Speaking of the consular side, way off on another thing, but did you get involved in the normal consular problem of the mixed marriages with the Iranians and Americans who get married? Usually it's the woman who's the American - and then children and then the marriage doesn't work and they can't take their kids out. Did you have that problem?

MAST: Yes, I came back from a consular trip to find out that my wife had an American living in our guest house on the property because her husband and the family had essentially thrown her out, and she had come there with their child, a six-year-old boy. It was pretty clear when we started talking to the family that they had no problem about her leaving - the husband was pretty weak - his father, ran that family, and so the American-educated husband of the American woman didn't really have a great deal to say about what was going on. He was willing to let his wife go, but he wasn't willing to let his son go. Eventually we were able to work that out, and the boy actually went back to the United States with his mother.

Q: How did you work that out?

MAST: I don't remember, just a lot of talking back and forth. Finally, I think the husband eventually came to see that his father was controlling the household and that there would still be an opportunity for him to see the boy in the United States, that the wife was not vindictive. The split would not necessarily be permanent, that there might be a chance to work something out again. But it was a very interesting month or so. Oh, and of course the stories that previous consuls or other Americans would tell were incredible. Stories about American women who had married Iranians and would come to Iran, their passports lifted the minute they entered Iran because under Iranian law they are property of the husband and therefore Iranian citizens. And some vice consuls would have stories about American women who had been chained to the bed. When the husband left in the morning he'd chain them to the bed because they couldn't be trusted, and then he'd come back at night and unlock them and they'd prepare the meal. It must have been a bit of a shock to American women.

Q: You said you had much greater connection with the community when you were in Tabriz.

MAST: Yes, we found this to be particularly true where there were mixed marriages, American or French or German or British, with an Iranian. They tended to be looking more for foreign friends. We had a swimming pool on the consulate compound, which we opened pretty much to our friends, and Americans, on the weekends. My wife - she had done this in Tehran as well and she continued in Tabriz because we had a lot of extra room in the consulate - started quite a large nursery school. There were a lot of Iranians who wanted to send their children there. So we had pretty good entrée then into the university community, medical community - we knew a lot of doctors - some lawyers, businessmen, professionals out at the various factories - the engineers, people like that - though not such good contacts into the bureaucracy itself. But they were always open. We could call on them. We even got to know the chief of SAVAK - not that he told us anything, but we got to know him.

Q: Did you get any feel about this community, that there was a disaffection with it from, say, Tabriz from Tehran and sort of the center of the government and all that?

MAST: Yes, there was some of that. I think some of that was historical, some of it went back to the fact that in 1906, when you had the original constitutional revolution in Iran, it really started in Tabriz. So they felt that in a sense they were ahead of Tehran, but Tabriz was looked down upon in Iran.. It was considered the largest village in the country. In some cases it was. It hadn't had a great deal of investment. Investment was coming in to the university. It was growing, but there hadn't been very much in terms of cultural and economic and government investment. Some of the disaffection was because of that, and some of it was a question of language.

Q: How about the Azeris? How did you see their society and their allegiance?

MAST: Well, it was always interesting because, of course, we had lived in Turkey, and we took a trip to Turkey while we were in Tabriz, and then I went to Turkey after Tabriz. And the Turks, at

least some of them, have this pan-Turanist view that really the Azeris are Turks more than they are Iranians, which I might have believed until I lived there. I mean, the Azeris may speak Turkish, and they may have some affinity to the Turks in Turkey, but they are Shia, and so from a religious point of view they are very much Iranian. And I think secondly, even from a national and a cultural point of view, if anything they would tend to look down on the Turks. I mean, "We're Iranians."

Q: The political reporting was mainly about the Kurds?

MAST: Yes. Occasionally, I remember a couple of different occasions where we had some university unrest in Tabriz. And particularly the second year there was one period where there were several demonstrations. We never could get the straight story. There may have been some deaths. There were certainly some bloody heads on campus. I don't think it was particularly political. Some of this would have to do with fees or it would have to do with a certain question of academic freedom and so forth, but obviously there were some underlying realities there as well in terms of the student unrest. The police would be called in, and they would just club heads. And I remember there were one or two days, particularly with the doctors from the hospital, many of whom had children in my wife's school, and my wife and I or others would talk to one of the doctors when they came. And, oh, these people were just beside themselves with what had happened, and the bloodshed, and "what they're doing to these students," and "what we saw in the hospital!" I thought, Oh, great, we're really starting to get some stuff here. By the next day, nothing had happened. Even these same people would argue nothing much had happened. And I don't think it was so much that anyone had come to them and said don't tell the Americans or anyone what you saw or what happened. I think some of it was they may have been a little bit excitable, as it's natural they would be, but Iranians in some cases are even more excitable, so there may have been a little hyperbole in the initial story. But primarily, I think, they just mulled it over and thought what was to be gained by talking about this and protesting it and so forth. We'll just be quiet and things will go back to normal.

Q: Well, now, did the Shah or members of the immediate royal family appear in Tabriz often at all?

MAST: Not often. I remember at least one official visit when the Shah came and we all went out to the airport to meet him. One thing that struck me is how tall he *seemed* when I really knew that he was only I think about 5' 4" or 5' 5". But just from his bearing he really made himself seem several inches taller. Maybe he had elevator shoes, too, but I don't think so.

Q: Were we kind of watching what the Soviets were up to in the area?

MAST: A little bit, but I was convinced the consul there was pretty much a straightforward - drank a little too much - consul who had had several previous assignments. He was at least 20 years older than I was, and I think it was basically a sinecure for him until he could retire. Clearly, the "insurance person" (quote-unquote), who represented the Soviet insurance company and who spoke Azerbaijani Turkish as well as Farsi and Russian, was a KGB person, and our people in the embassy were at different times working back and forth with each other on that one.

Q: Were there any sort of crises or problems?

MAST: With the Russians?

Q: Just in the area when you were there.

MAST: No, other than these two or three incidents in the university and what we would see to a certain extent on the Kurdish border, I don't recall that there were any major other outstanding events.

Q: The oil fields of Mosul - where are they? Is that in your area?

MAST: Well, no, it's in Iraq, but, yes, it's in Iraqi Kurdistan, and we would go to Baneh, one and Kermanshah in Iranian Kurdistan. There were two or three other smaller cities right on the border, where the Kurds were fighting, and Ron Newman actually got to know Mullah Barzani and his family. That was somewhat easier to do between 1974 and 1976 when he was consul.

Q: One of the things that I gather the problem with the Kurds is that they never really get together.

MAST: Yes. There was the Talibani group and the Barzani group, and they could maybe make temporary alliances, but the families just hated each other. This would go back generations.

I want to say one thing about whether we did or did not have a feeling that something was going wrong with the Shah or something was going wrong with the American relationship with the Shah. We had two very good friends; one was a medical doctor who was head of the public health department in the province, and the other was a university professor. I remember one morning - probably two o'clock in the morning - and it was shortly after the Nixon-Kissinger visit and the press commented extensively on how many planes we were going to sell to Iran, F-14s, billions of dollars. And my friends started complaining about the sale of all the military hardware. They argued that the Shah had a big enough head already, was a strong enough ruler, a megalomaniac, and that we were pampering that sort of thing by encouraging him not only to have that role in Iran but in the entire region. All the money that was going to be spent on these arms could much better go back into economic development, education, health, things of this kind. And they were pretty bitter about it. That was really the first... I heard people speak so harshly. One didn't hear that sort of thing. They were obviously very confident of each other's friendship, and they must also have been pretty confident that their house wasn't bugged, because otherwise it would have been pretty dangerous to talk that way. But that's about the only case that I can remember where somebody really unloaded.

Q: Did you have a Peace Corps there?

MAST: Yes.

Q: I've interviewed somebody who may have been there at that time, Mike Metrisko. Did you know him?

MAST: Oh, I know Mike Metrisko well. I didn't know him at that time, although he may have been there in the Peace Corps. I knew Mike in Turkey later when he was working in the embassy. After he finished the Peace Corps, he became a GSO and he was our GSO in Ankara. He spoke fluent Turkish and Persian. He later was consul in Tabriz.

Q: Yes, yes, he did. How did you find the embassy? Did they show much interest in what was going on, or were they pretty well absorbed in Tehran?

MAST: They were pretty well absorbed in Tehran, although there would periodically be requests that we're doing such and such an update and so on and could you put input into this? It was somewhat difficult because both of the consulates - one in Khorramshahr, which is in the south, and Tabriz - were both too small to have our own communications system, so we could only handle things by pouch, and that was only every couple of weeks. So we would do a little double talk on the telephone. Or we'd go back to the one-tank time pad, which, as we all remember, was so complicated that in order to sit down and write a message on a one-time pad it would take you a week or two anyway.

Q: How did your wife like it there?

MAST: Oh, she loved it. If I liked the Foreign Service, my wife loved it. If I loved the Foreign Service, my wife was ecstatic about it. We never had any problems with it - Tabriz was one of her favorite places. She would go to the bazaar weekly. It was a great place.

Q: Did you get to travel around there much?

MAST: We traveled extensively in the consular district. We did quite a lot of traveling within Iran, and we went to Afghanistan and to Pakistan by car while we were in Tehran as well.

Q: Well, then, you left there in 1974. Whither?

JAMES G. SCOVILLE
University of Illinois Research Grantee
Iran (1972)

Mr. Scoville has worked with the International Labor Organization, has conducted research for USAID in Afghanistan, has worked for USDL, and has done various other activities involving Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Mali.

SCOVILLE: During the summer of 1972, while in Iran on a University of Illinois research grant, I arranged for a meeting with Minister of Labor Abdol-Majid Majidi (whom I had not been

"encouraged" to see during the WEP Mission the previous winter) to express my doubts about the employment balance sheet predicted in the Missions's Report. (I felt that the Report under predicted urban labor force increases and over predicted urban employment increases; civil unrest was among the consequences I foresaw of soaring urban unemployment. This whole story, and the degree to which it comports with subsequent developments, is reported in "The Labor Market in Pre-revolutionary Iran, "*Economic Development and Cultural Change*, October 1985.) I gave talks based on the same topic at a number of universities and at the USDL's International Manpower Institute in the mid-70s, before the Iranian Revolution.

JOSEPH S. FARLAND
Ambassador
Iran (1972-1973)

Ambassador Joseph S. Farland was born in West Virginia on August 11, 1914. He attended the University of West Virginia, where he received his JD in 1938. He served in the US Army as a Liaison Officer from 1944 to 1947. His career has included positions in the Dominican Republic, Panama, Pakistan, and Iran. Ambassador Farland was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 31, 2000.

Q: You left Pakistan in 1972. Did you know where you were going?

FARLAND: I knew when I left, yes.

Q: What were you going to do and how did it come about?

FARLAND: I came back to Washington and began briefing on Iran and waiting for my call from the Foreign Affairs Committee chairman to allow me to be an ambassador. I got a call from one of the people connected with the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. They had seen me enough that they didn't want to see me. I didn't have to come up. So, I was cleared. I had to get over pretty hurriedly because Nixon was going over to see the Shah. So, I had to get acquainted quickly, which I did. But unfortunately, I didn't realize that I had already run into a buzzsaw - one of these situations that are made in the past that suddenly comes up and bites you. An Iranian boy came to West Virginia University. I met him. He was delightful.

Q: When was this?

FARLAND: This was long before I was in ambassadorial service. It was in the 1950s sometime. His name was Jahanbani. His father had been a general. Naturally, he was an important person. He didn't know why he was at West Virginia University. His child had been run over in an accident in Tehran. His wife wasn't with him and he was very unhappy. We had him to dinner and he finally moved in and stayed with us for a while. I was instrumental in getting his wife over. We became quite good friends. He told me about Iran and so forth. That summer, I took

him out to the country. He said, "You know, you ought to strive to be an ambassador. You're the type that should get into that service. You've obviously shown a great deal of sympathy towards foreign students. You've helped me. You should think about that." Well, I did think about it. So, when I got my appointment to Iran, this was a story that I loved to tell because it was a connection with Iran. What I didn't know was that the foreign minister and the minister of court were violent enemies. They hated each other. I didn't have any idea about that. Secondly, the foreign minister's private secretary is Jahanbani. She was a very brilliant, beautiful member of that family. So there is a foreign minister with a member of the Jahanbani family and here is the minister of court who doesn't like this situation. I am telling the story and the foreign minister hears it and thinks it's great. The minister of court thinks it's awful. He acquires a great deal of hatred for me without ever seeing me.

Q: When you say "the minister of court," you're talking about the Shah's minister of court. This was not the legal system. This was the man who runs the Shah's entourage.

FARLAND: That's right. He was a very important person. Before I got over there, that story had circulated and I had friends on one side and an enemy on the other. So, I ran into that situation when I got there. Nixon came over.

Q: Kissinger was with him on this trip, wasn't he?

FARLAND: I don't remember. He must not have been. If he had been, I certainly would remember.

Q: Maybe not. This was in 1972.

FARLAND: That was 1972.

Q: You were there from 1972-1973.

FARLAND: Yes.

Q: Before we get to the trip, when you were getting ready to go, what were you getting from the desk and all about... Iran and the Shah were special cases which turned out to be a problem. Were you being told to be extra careful?

FARLAND: I don't remember a whole hell of a lot about how much I got. I was in such a rush. I got a very casual briefing, to be frank about it. I did a lot of reading and that was it. I was on my way. Nixon sent several advance parties over. This was not a big trip. I think to think of the one Clinton made to Africa with 400 people. I can't believe it. Anyway, he arrived and the Shah... There was trouble going on and they were worried that there would be some upsets along the line. They had five bodyguards for the ambassador. I didn't want any bodyguard. If they wanted to get me, they were going to get me, bodyguard or no. The only thing that made it possible was that I could always get a parking place. That was nice.

Big embassy, a lot of work. Nixon arrived and the Shah put on the most lavish dinner I've ever seen in my life. I never saw so many diamonds, emeralds, and rubies, so many ambassadors wearing a big line of medals. The American ambassador was without any. The plane lights were hitting Nixon right in the eyes and he couldn't read his speech. He ended up making one heck of a good speech. I was really proud of that. Then the following day, Nixon had a small dinner in one of the palaces and ordered lobster flown in from Maine. Nobody asked me. I just happened to know the Shah was allergic to seafood, shellfish particularly. So, the Shah was pushing his finger around the table quite a lot. It was a reasonably quiet little dinner, not too much said. They went on.

In the meantime, they had a satellite move over for communications. A red phone direct to... All this costs an awful lot of money. So, I presented to the court. Normally, after a presentation, you go into an anteroom with the Shah and you have maybe 10 minutes to chit chat. I seemed to make an impression on him for some reason or another. One of the things I told him was that one thing I wanted him to know was this: when I got a telegram from State, I would advise him what that said if it was directed to him or to his government, and I also would tell him what I thought personally. He liked that. He kept me for almost 45 minutes, which was unusual. Whether or not he was trying to make an impression on me, I don't know.

I got along fine with the minister of court, I thought. I know I got along fine with the foreign minister. We had rapport right off the bat. I was doing my best to get acclimated to Iran and to its customs and studying everything I could find. Unfortunately, just at the point where I had reached where the Shah was beginning to trust me, Dick Helms had to oversee the accommodations. Dick said that Nixon suggested Iran. I don't know. I know they offered me... First, they were talking about Greece and then they withdrew that because of Colonel Papas intervening. They offered me five other posts. One was Mexico and that was too far up in the air for my plunk, plus the fact that so much activity is in Acapulco, this being a port.

Q: This is not good for anybody with a heart problem.

FARLAND: No. Then they offered me Argentina. My wife said, "You can go to Argentina. You'll get along fine. You know Senora Peron. You certainly know Peron. But I'm not going. So and so down there now won't go out of the embassy residence because he is afraid of getting shot. Knowing you, you are going to be out with the campesinos or whoever all over the country. I am not going to lose you that way." Then they offered me Jamaica and I wasn't interested in that. They designated me to New Zealand. My father in law was dying. He by that time had become a big coal operator. My father in law pleaded with me not to go. I was the only one who could possibly take over what he had. There was a lot of money involved in that. It was a big operation. I was back in the State Department listening to some of the briefings. They had a big meeting one day to decide whether or not between the embassy residence and an adjacent hall, the walkway should be curved or should be straight. There were about 12 men sitting there making a decision of that kind. I thought, "No. Here are a number four post. I've had number one post. Listening to a discussion of the curvature of a walkway, I am not interested."

Q: Also, having tasted some really raw meat, some difficult things, New Zealand sounds... That's

what you do to the inoffensive person with little diplomatic skills. It's a good burial place.

FARLAND: That's right. With my father in law in the condition he was in... We're talking big money and a piece of mining equipment of \$25-30,000 minimum, once it goes into that mine and you bring it out, it's all rusty. It's still in perfect shape, but it's lost 98% of its value. So, I kept going, hemming and hawing. I finally decided "The hell with it. I am not going to go."

The State Department had me posted to New Zealand. I was carrying a card that said, "Seventeen years in the Service. Last post: New Zealand as an ambassador." I never went to New Zealand. I told the Council of American Ambassadors this and "This is not according to fact," but the State Department- (end of tape)

Q: Before we see what you did in your post diplomatic time, I would like to go back to Iran. When you were there-

FARLAND: I covered that pretty rapidly.

Q: We covered it too rapidly. One of the concerns was, and it certainly became more apparent later on, Nixon and Kissinger seemed to be delighted with selling as much military equipment as they could to the Shah. It was sort of whatever the Shah wants, he can have. Was there disquiet on your part or the officers of your embassy about what was happening? When military equipment comes in, there are lots of American technicians.

FARLAND: Generally speaking, the officers, particularly the military people, were delighted to see it coming in. I thought they had plenty of it. That was meant. As far as objection to the sale, I never heard an officer complain about it. They were all salesmen.

Q: This was military. How about our political officers?

FARLAND: They made no objection.

Q: Who was your DCM?

FARLAND: A fellow who later became ambassador. I can't think of his name. That is awful of me. My effort there at that point was getting acquainted.

Q: Was your embassy under any constraints on what to report? I'm not sure if it was going at this time, but it became sort of notorious that we had agreed to the Shah that we wouldn't make any contact with opposition. So there were constraints.

FARLAND: I had no constraints on that. I let the Shah know my entire background as far as FBI, etc. He was aware of that. I also revealed the fact that the CIA was weekly in contact with the Shah. I indicated that I didn't think that was such a good idea. I told the Shah, but he didn't give it up. I felt that I should be there when that conversation was ensuing if such was going to ensue. But I hadn't reached the point where I could...

Q: You really didn't have much of a chance to...

FARLAND: No. I was just reaching the point where the Shah was beginning to have faith in me.

Q: If I recall, and correct me if I'm wrong, I think one reason why Helms was sent to Iran was, in a way, to get him out of the way. There were some problems with the CIA. It was to get him out of the Washington game.

FARLAND: He wanted out. I don't know exactly why. It was a big difficulty... This was too bad, really. This was strictly from the standpoint of the States. During his hearing before the Foreign Affairs Committee, a friend of his said, "Did the CIA have any activity going in Chile?" Helms said, "No." That was strictly untrue. They had a hell of a lot of activity going on in Chile, a great deal of it. That was a friendly questioner, somebody that didn't know what to ask. Helms was going back almost weekly to Washington to try to minimize that damage.

Q: What did you do when you finally left foreign affairs? What sort of things did you become occupied with after you left Iran and you looked at these other posts and decided that you had to take care of your father in law's estate?

FARLAND: That I had to do. My father in law died. I had some cleanup work to do. We decided the property that he had acquired was more than we wanted and more than the two of us could handle. It was too big. So we remodeled a house in Winchester, Virginia. Then my wife died. I've been very lonesome ever since.

Q: I'm sure you have. Do you have any general comments at this point?

FARLAND: I would like to tell you very frankly that I think your project has merit - not from what I'm telling you particularly. I would like to see it somewhere where there can be a closer feeling of contact between the Foreign Service than I was offered, but that was not my handshake. That was the back of somebody's hand that I was getting. Here was a great honor which I would have been glad to accept if it had been a continuation. But that meant the end of my career. I wish there was some way that the Foreign Service and the political appointees could get closer together. How to do that, I don't know. If it were possible for a political appointee to have what I had done, a year's tenure in a lowly position in the Department, that would help. But they are not going to do that.

Q: No, they are not. This is often offered not because of what the person can do for the foreign affairs, but rather as a reward. It is often because of political contributions or because more and more people who have been involved as staff assistants to congresspeople.

FARLAND: Mansfield, for instance, was in Japan and he could stay as long as he wanted.

Q: He did bring an extensive foreign affairs background.

FARLAND: He was there for a long time.

Q: Well, he was untouchable.

FARLAND: That was off-limits. I wish some of the Foreign Service officers could have a year of corporate experience.

Q: They try sometimes, but it hasn't-

FARLAND: I know. These suggestions are not mine alone.

Q: There is real merit. There often is the problem of having never met a payroll. It is a real problem. I know I suffered from this and I think most of us do.

FARLAND: I wish there was one little simple addition to telegrams, that the writer of that telegram had his initials on it.

Q: Yes, instead of the ambassador signing everything.

FARLAND: The ambassador's name could be on it, but someplace along the line should be who wrote it.

Q: It used to be that when they did the airgram, the drafter's initials would appear. But with the telegram, that went.

FARLAND: I don't know why. You have no idea. In the paper on February 16, 1964, or whatever, a person in the State Department with a name that he or she does not want published, said, "I have had three or four conversations with him." Who was that? The janitor? How much of an authority is an individual of that kind? That is another thing. How am I going to [navigate] that situation? "A State Department official..." It also said "The despatch is a disaster." That doesn't mean anything.

My other only comment is that I frankly enjoyed it, serving overseas and in the Department. Seventeen years was enough.

Q: Yes. You were both in important and interesting places. New Zealand, unless you're dealing with the nuclear issue or something like that, there isn't any other issue out there.

FARLAND: No. I like to fish- (end of tape)

Q: Today is February 3, 2000. You said you had something you wanted to put on tape and you weren't sure how you wanted to treat it. We thought we would do it now and see how it goes.

FARLAND: There are two items. Two situations arose that were delicate in the sense of I was intrigued and I debated long and hard whether to even mention this. I think I shall. A month or so before I left Iran, Governor John Connelly (Governor of Texas, Secretary of the Treasury, Secretary of Commerce, a major figure in the Democratic and Republican parties) arrived with pomp and ceremony. He let it be known that he wanted a conversation with His Imperial Majesty without benefit of embassy accompaniment. He wanted to go by himself. That smelled of something, palace intrigue of some magnitude. I just was not going to have it and I told him so, that if he wanted a conversation with His Imperial Majesty, I was going to accompany. He didn't like it a bit. We drove in virtual silence up to the palace. He had a short conversation that amounted to absolutely nothing. It dealt with the weather, the nicety of the country, and how pleasant things were. He just happened to be there. We got in the car and started down the hill and he said, "Would you mind closing that window between us and the chauffeur. I want to speak to you in confidence. I want you to do the following," which I thought was very inappropriate. The suggestion was not to my liking. Obviously, that was what he had in mind to talk to the Imperial Majesty about. I mulled over this thing for some time. In due course, I wrote a double talk, back channel communication to Kissinger conveying what had transpired and asking for advice. In short order, I got a reply back: "Drop it," which confirmed my suspicion. I felt very good about that.

Q: What was Governor Connelly's position at this time?

FARLAND: As far as I know, he didn't have any official position.

Q: What was the subject? You're making the money motion.

FARLAND: The way he phrased it, I don't know where it was going. In any event, it was either for himself, for the political campaign, or to be divided up. I have no idea. It was inappropriate and, as far as I'm concerned, illegal. So, that passed over. The election was held. I was reappointed ambassador. I was getting down to work and thought, "Now I can really go to work. I am strongly entrenched here in the embassy and with the Shah." The Shah was a good friend by now. He trusted me. I mentioned during the first six months, "Look, Your Majesty, this is not from the CIA. This is my personal observation. I think you're going to have some major trouble with the mullahs." He didn't answer. He sent word to me subsequently that he was aware of that situation and he had it under control. Well, obviously, he didn't.

Q: From where were you getting this information about the mullahs?

FARLAND: Personal observation and comments that I heard as an observer. I felt that there was more going on than was being reported to him. I knew the CIA hadn't reported it. How did I know these things? you go into a city and look at the people's faces. You get a pretty good idea of what is going on. You look in the shops and you get a pretty good idea of the economic situation.

Q: Most of us, when we start looking at the Russian Revolution and the French Revolution, we see a court society which is living very well.

FARLAND: Too well.

Q: This is the problem. It doesn't seem to be well integrated. Was this quite apparent at the time?

FARLAND: It was. The Shah was trying to minimize that, although he himself overdid it. That was a bad mistake.

Q: That was terrible.

FARLAND: Whoever advised him on that...

Q: I can't remember what anniversary it was - the recreation of the Persian Empire.

FARLAND: Whoever advised him on that began the Shah's downfall. It was a pathetic situation. The Shahbanu was a lovely, lovely, solid person. The Shah was trying to do the right thing. There were overtones of the past empire, yes. I was back in 1978. He told me, "Joe, I don't know what to do. The embassy tells me one thing. I do it. A special envoy comes from Washington, sent by the President, and tells me something else diametrically opposed and I do that. Another envoy comes from the United States military and tells me something else and I try to do that. I've given the women the right to vote. I've given the right to hold land. I've made them citizens of this country. I've taken land away from the mullahs and given it to the poor of our country for farming. I've tried to do what the United States has recommended, but the people are in the street walking against me. The women are wearing the chador and parading against me. I don't understand it."

Q: It was trying to put American values into another culture.

FARLAND: And too fast. His family was a part of the difficulty.

Q: I understand that the family was essentially very corrupt.

FARLAND: They were. The twin sister was...

Q: She was really the dominant person, wasn't she?

FARLAND: You can read in his book that the Shah criticized her vehemently as being one of the thorns in his side.

Q: I am talking about what you were getting from your embassy, your staff. Was there the feeling that the Shah was a powerful person or essentially a rather weak person who was trying to do what was best but really didn't have the strength of personality to do it?

FARLAND: I didn't get that from the embassy or the CIA. Incidentally, there was a CIA officer there who I consider one of the best I've bumped into. Another one was a CIA officer in Pakistan who was absolutely tops. Some of those officers were great and some of them weren't.

Q: Who was top within the Political Section, your main people who knew Iran best, studied the language, and were the best plugged into the situation?

FARLAND: I had an excellent economic officer and a very good political officer. I think the economic officer was better.

Q: Who was that?

FARLAND: I can't remember. The staff was adequate. It was a first-rate embassy as far as I was concerned in many respects. But we were working under certain hardships, too. Their contacts with the so-called opposition were most limited. That is the way the situation was. I can't fault the embassy.

Q: Off mike, you were saying you wanted to talk about the appointment of Richard Helms as ambassador.

FARLAND: I settled down thinking I could really go to work now and do what I felt should be done. In about a month or six weeks, I received a telegram from the Department saying that I was to go to the foreign office and ask for agreement for Richard Helms. I was shocked. I was surprised. I had no previous warning. I had no consultation on this. Nothing. So, I gathered up two or three other items that I was going to talk about in the foreign office. Incidentally, in the other tape, I was referring to the foreign minister. That should have been the prime minister. Albayta was the man who turned out to be a good friend of mine. I went down to the foreign office and went over a few of these things. At the end of it, I said, "By the way, I will be leaving this post and I have been asked to ask for agreement for Richard Helms, a very fine officer. He is now head of the CIA. I am sure that he will follow in my footsteps and do an excellent job here in Iran. I trust that you will extend agreement to him." Then I started to walk out. I got almost to the door and the foreign minister said, "Mr. Ambassador, please come back. I didn't get the endpoint of what you said." So, I repeated it quietly and smilingly. He said, "Thank you very much." That night, my wife and I went to a cocktail party in one of the embassies and the prime minister, Albayta, was there. He saw me. He walked over with his little cane in his hand, banging it on the floor. He said, "I am mad! I am mad!" I said, "I'm not exactly jumping with joy." He said, "I am mad" and turned around and walked away. I was getting ready to leave. I was sure that he asked for agreement. Not to do so would be almost paramount to breaking relations. It would cause a problem.

Q: It would cause a problem, but you can really say "I don't think this is suitable." I can't think of his name now, but the Iranians had a very strong ambassador in Washington.

FARLAND: His name was Zahedi.

Q: He was very well connected.

FARLAND: He was a watering spot in a social center the like of which hadn't been seen since

Demoyer from the Dominican Republic was there. There was a party virtually every night. Wine and liquor flowed freely, along with caviar, which was in abundance. Zahedi had been the general who had helped put the Shah's father back on the throne. Anyway, about two or three nights before I was to leave, my secretary got a call not from ALAN's (the court ministry) office, which was the normal procedure, but apparently from someone close to the Shah. It may have been his major domo, for all I know. He was asking that I alone come up and see the Shah at 8:00 that night. Without benefit of bodyguards, I was not worried. I drove up to the palace in which the Shah was resident and it was dark. The lights weren't on. The entourage in front was not there. The place looked empty. I wasn't exactly sure what I was getting into. This was most unusual. I got out of that car and walked over to the door and the major domo, who knew me, said, "Oh, Mr. Ambassador, come in." I walked in. I thought they hadn't paid the light bill. There were only just a few lights in the hall. He said, "Just follow me, Sir. I will take you to His Imperial Majesty." We walked down, made a turn, made another turn, and he came to a door and said, "I am not permitted to go into the room, Mr. Ambassador, so I will open the door and you walk in and I will close it behind you." Well, I've come this far. I might as well go on. I walked in and over at the far end of the room sat the Shah in an old sweatshirt, an old pair of pants. They looked like the dog had slept in him. There were shoes that the dog obviously had been chewing. He said, "Come on in." I walked in and he said, "If you want a drink, you're going to have to help yourself. My servants aren't allowed to see me dressed as I am now. That is to say, undressed." I said, "I had better have a drink under the circumstances," so I fixed a drink and went back. He said, "Sit down here beside me. I want to say something." There was a long pause. I took a sip of my drink and he said, "No one likes to have something pushed down their throat. Royal throats are even more tender than that of the plebeian. I have had something pushed down mine. But I know how to get even and I am going to get even." "Thank you very much. It is awfully nice to see you. I am sorry I'm leaving."

Q: Was it obvious he was referring to the ambassadorial appointment? This was unsaid, but known?

FARLAND: You have been at this game a long time. You know what he was talking about. I did, too. After some smalltalk, I went out the door. The major domo was standing about 50 feet away. He met me. I did not report that conversation to the State Department. I knew precisely what he was telling me. He was telling me, "If you want to make some money out of this, you talk to some oil people. I am raising the price of oil." And it happened.

Q: On the Helms thing, a personal shock is one thing, but his background going there would have struck me as being almost gratuitous because it was widely assumed that the CIA, run by Archie Roosevelt right after Mossedegh had [been deposed] and put him back in.

FARLAND: It was a fact.

Q: Yes. So, putting a CIA man in sounded like we were putting a handler in as ambassador. It sent a very bad message.

FARLAND: That is the way I thought about it. That is the way the prime minister, Albayta, felt

about it. That is obviously the way the Shah felt about it.

Q: We look at the effect of what happened in Iran, but it sounds like this was really more of a domestic deal that was put together to move Helms out of the way.

FARLAND: Well, Helms' story of how it happened and Nixon's story as I've read and other stories that I've read [differ]. "The Chinese Corridor" is one book that has something about it. They are all slightly different. Helms says that Nixon suggested it, that he hadn't thought about it. Regardless of that fact, Dick went over. Unfortunately, during his confirmation, a friend of his wanted to ask a gratuitous question which Helms answered negatively and the question was, "Does the CIA have any activity in Chile?" Helms said, "No." Well, Helms as a result thereof was going back and forth to Washington almost on a monthly or bi-weekly basis trying to get that straightened out. The CIA certainly did have a big operation in Chile. I think Dick did a good job as far as he could, but he didn't spend a lot of time there because he traveled a lot.

Q: And the message was very bad. How about SAVAK, the police organization of the Shah's government? What was your impression of how that ran?

FARLAND: The CIA had a meeting with SAVAK constantly. I finally said that I thought I should meet the head of SAVAK because of their relations with our CIA and I did. From an outsider, they were rough. There is no question about that. They were rough. This, remember, is the Middle East. Things were rough in Pakistan.

Q: Things were rough in Israel.

FARLAND: Things were rough in Israel. I told Albayta... I went back into the practice of law and was with a big law firm in Washington of Council. I represented a big firm in Chicago on a dam they were building there. That is what took me back in 1978 and that is when I last saw the Shah. The Shah was aware that that the world was a little aghast at the way people in that part of the world treated each other. He knew that this was a problem.

Q: I've talked to people who went out as Iranian experts, who studied Farsi and served in the consulates, etc. They said that there was always a major problem, that it was almost impossible to make meaningful contact with the mullahs. It wasn't a matter of our not wanting to, but you just couldn't.

FARLAND: You couldn't. It was like trying to talk to the Pope privately, especially the ones who sided fervently with Khomeini.

Q: Was there a problem with the court society absorbing an awful lot of your embassy time? You've got the Bazaaris and the newly educated... A lot of Iranians went to the United States and other places to get educated.

FARLAND: There are right now 600-700,000 Iranians in the Los Angeles corridor north to San Francisco. The Shah wanted the right for Iran Air to land in Los Angeles because of all these

people. The United States kept saying "No." He called me up one day and said, "Will you convey to the United States that Pan Am will no longer stop in Tehran." I got a telegram back: "Iran Air can stop at Los Angeles."

Q: Sometimes some of our most bitter negotiating points are over airline stops, airline franchises.

FARLAND: It's true. Well, I don't know what to do with this.

Q: I see no problem with it. Time has gone on. It's not the man's fault. The Shah has passed from the scene. It doesn't reflect on Richard Helms.

FARLAND: It doesn't reflect on him [except for] the sense that he did get himself into a jam.

Q: That was a whole different matter. That is a matter of public record. Again, it was quite apparent... You had this very peculiar relationship, I've found, between Kissinger and Nixon. They treated Iran as almost a toy. We didn't use common sense in our dealings with them as far as putting too many American technicians in, which helped upset an awful lot of traditionalists. It was big money and whatever the Shah wants, he can get.

FARLAND: Plus oil.

Q: And oil. The whole thing. So, it wasn't handled well. In hindsight, it's quite obvious. But a lot of it came from what was set by Nixon and Kissinger and carried on by Carter, really not trying to keep at some remove from the Shah and trying to downplay American influence in the country.

FARLAND: There was a great hatred over here towards Iran. I certainly sensed it when I got back. But those are little bits and pieces that are a part of the...

Q: I'm glad we'll put this in the record.

FARLAND: I made some good friends. But again, it was impossible for me to get down to the average household.

Q: I think this is true of any ambassador. You go around and shake hands, but when you get right down to it, you have to deal with either the ruling class or, in some countries, the opposition. In a normal country, it's both. I have been told that it started under Kissinger and Nixon that we were not to report much (This may have come later.) on internal matters within Iran because the Shah didn't want us to be messing around.

FARLAND: No restrictions were laid on me, but-

Q: I think this may have come a little later.

FARLAND: As I said on the previous tape, I kept talking about the foreign minister. That was

the prime minister. His name was Hobayda. Jahanbani is now married and living in France.

JOHN M. EVANS
Consular Officer/Special Assistant to Ambassador
Tehran (1972-1974)

Ambassador Evans was born and raised in Virginia and educated at Yale University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and became a specialist in Soviet and Eastern European Affairs. His foreign posts were Teheran, Prague, Moscow, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Chesenan (Moldova) and Yerevan, Armenia, where he served as Ambassador from 2004 to 2006. In his assignments at the State Department in Washington, the Ambassador dealt primarily with Russian and former Soviet states' affairs. Ambassador Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Well what- Your first assignment was to Iran?

EVANS: Yes. By that time they already were handing out lists of assignments for the bidding process and...

Q: This was fairly new at that point.

EVANS: It was pretty new and I remember I was also interested in Izmir in Turkey but as it turned out I was assigned to Tehran to the consular section and because I had worked with Firuz Kazemzadeh at Yale I was not disappointed at all to be going to Iran. He had always taught Russian history with great emphasis on the influence that Iran and Persian culture had had on Russian thinking over the years, the Eastern influences on Moscow. So I was quite excited.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

EVANS: When I arrived there in the early winter of 1972 the ambassador was Douglas MacArthur II, who was the nephew of the great general.

Q: I've interviewed Ambassador MacArthur, one of my first interviews. He had quite a career himself as POLAD (political advisor) to Eisenhower, interned by the Germans for awhile and-

EVANS: He was really one of the great old men in the Foreign Service at that point but it was also... it was definitely the old Foreign Service. The servants wore white gloves. Mrs. MacArthur...

Q: Wahwee.

EVANS: Wahwee.

Q: Well let's talk about- What was the situation in general in Iran and all and then how were our relations but first, the situation.

EVANS: When I got there in the early '70s the United States was already a major supporter of the shah and the shah had just thrown a 2,500-year birthday party for the Pahlavi dynasty or really for Iran because his -- the Pahlavi dynasty -- was not an old royal house, it went back to his father who had been...

Q: He was a Cossack.

EVANS: He was a part of the Persian Cossack brigade. That was, of course, Reza Shah, who was something like Ataturk in what he did with Iran. But the big buildup in our involvement there had not yet begun. There were signs of it. Of course it was President Truman who forced the Soviet Union out of northern Iran when they set up the short-lived communist Mahabad Republic in...

Q: Azerbaijan.

EVANS: Azerbaijan and the shore of the Caspian.

Q: It's really remarkable when one thinks about that, that you know, the Soviets were in there and they got out.

EVANS: Well, that's right. Of course they had divided Iran during World War II with the British and they basically refused to get out and they were also menacing Turkey and that's when Truman got together with Acheson and devised the Truman Doctrine and we put...we organized CENTO and kept the Soviets back where they belonged.

The Peace Corps was just wrapping up their operations around this time. We had had a very successful Peace Corps record in Iran. There was some business and we were starting to get more deeply involved militarily. There was already a military advisory and assistance group active there. We had posts in Isfahan and in Khorramshahr and in Tabriz. The one in Isfahan was closed. One of the first things I had to do as a consul was make radio contact every morning with Tabriz because there were no telephones.

But back to the situation, the shah was trying to carry out what he called the "white revolution" to modernize from above. It was very much a continuation of what Reza Shah had done and it was similar to what Ataturk had done in Turkey, to try to fight back the religious folks who were seen as a sign of the country's backwardness and to try to educate, build roads, build hospitals. But there was a lot of corruption that was affecting this white revolution so it was not by any means the great success story that was written about in "Time" magazine at the time of the big party in Persepolis.

Q: Well then, when you got there, what were you getting from your colleagues about the shah? I

mean, were they- How did they look at him?

EVANS: The shah was our partner, was our client, was very much respected, was treated as a monarch but as more, really as more than a monarch might be thought of in a constitutional monarchy. He was everything. And certainly, I had three ambassadors there; Douglas MacArthur, the first one: he left on Leap Year day in 1972 and somebody quipped that he left on that day so we couldn't celebrate his departure for another four years. That was kind of cruel. But certainly MacArthur and his predecessors had treated the shah with utmost respect, with kid gloves, and as a major partner in securing the stability of the Persian Gulf. I mean, he was treated with great seriousness and with great hopes for his potential.

Q: Did, I mean you obviously didn't have a reporting job at this point but were you getting any complaints from your- sort of the junior officers who had reporting responsibilities but they couldn't get in there and report this isn't working or that corruption, that sort of thing?

EVANS: That developed during the three years I was there. There had been no explicit prohibition on reporting officers talking to anybody but during the time I was there that prohibition became explicit. We had a star reporting officer there, Stan Escudero. He knew the language, he knew his way around and he got very close to...he loved to collect rugs and samovars and every weekend would see him down in the bazaar drinking tea with these guys who were bazaar merchants and so on, who turned out to be the people who were bankrolling Khomeini. And he was getting some very interesting reporting. There was also a communist movement still there, leftover from earlier days, the Tudeh Party, and so there was reporting that was being done but at a certain point, and I can't tell you exactly when this was, I think it was during the term of the next ambassador, Joe Farland, that the shah basically said "back off those people in the bazaar, I don't want you even talking to those folks." And we, I think to our discredit, went along with that, and Stan Escudero was told to stop seeking out these people and concentrate on other things. So I think we kind of blinded ourselves, allowed ourselves to be blinded by the shah's devout wish that we not talk to those folks. He didn't want us messing around with them.

Q: Yes, that, I mean, I think all of us in the Foreign Service abhor that sort of thing because it, I mean, we're not out to make somebody look nice; I mean, we're out to say the way it is, let other people maybe make the decisions but at least we should be able to report where the problems are.

EVANS: Well, I know there was a time, it must have been in June of 1972, Henry Kissinger and President Nixon, well, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger I should say, visited Tehran and it seemed from that moment on that the relationship grew like topsy. I wasn't in meetings, I did have some interesting experiences on the fringes, but apparently that's when we went into full gear in our relationship with the shah and started supporting him more and more militarily, selling more military equipment, backing him, and he seemed to become more and more megalomaniac at that point.

Q: Well what sort of interesting experiences did you have on the periphery of this presidential

visit?

EVANS: My job was to take care of Kissinger and White House staff people who were all being put up by the shah, the ministry of court, at Saad'abad Palace, which was one of the shah's old palaces. And my job was to see to their arrangements. They were people like H.R. Haldeman, Chuck Colson and several other people who were in Nixon's clique, John Dean and a number of other people.

Q: One only has- Their names loom large in the Watergate investigation.

EVANS: Well that's exactly right. But the chief guest at Saad'abad was Kissinger himself and what I had to do, first of all, was to... they sent a big list of what they wanted in their rooms. Now, the Iranians are a very hospitable people and they think they know how to play host and what should be in a room and what shouldn't but I, for example, had to find a way to get a bottle of scotch into Henry Kissinger's room. I think Haldeman also wanted whiskey but wanted it under the bed so that it wouldn't be visible. And there were all these little requests that I had to somehow satisfy.

And then I know that, I remember that Henry had some laundry. They had come down from Moscow, I think, from the Soviet Union, and he gave me the laundry to do or to have done and he said "I need this back by 10:00 in the morning." And I said, "well is it more important that it be cleaned or that it be back in your possession?" And he said, "well, certainly back in my possession but preferably both." And on the basis of that the next day he asked for my name and he said "you should come work for me on the NSC" (National Security Council) but that call never came.

And I remember at breakfast the shah served, well, in the Saad'abad guesthouse they served, a mound the size of a croquet ball of "golden caviar" from the shah's private stock. The shah, as you may know, was allergic to seafood or anything from the sea so he actually couldn't eat caviar himself but that's what appeared on everyone's plate. Henry didn't eat his; I ended up eating it after the breakfast.

Q: It's wonderful getting these wonderful vignettes of dealing with the high and mighty, you know.

EVANS: But you know, there was something more serious at that time. There were serious security concerns even then. Now, this was 1972 and there were a few little explosions that went off during President Nixon's visit which were an indication that something was not altogether right.

Q: Well actually Douglas MacArthur was- his car was attacked by the mujaheddin.

EVANS: That's correct.

Q: Which was, you know, even earlier.

EVANS: That's correct. His car, his armored limo, was attacked by two fellows, one of whom had a Kalashnikov and the other had a, I think, an axe, and it was the Armenian driver, Haikaz was his name, who managed to keep the car going, just as cool as a cucumber, and he kept the car moving and got the ambassador out of danger and was something of a local hero because of that.

Q: Yes. Well let's talk about consular work. What were you up to?

EVANS: Consular work, I think, remains a wonderful way for new Foreign Service officers to learn something about our business, about the legal side of it and the human side and the public relations side of it. My job was American Citizen Services or protection of Americans. Within just a few weeks of my arrival there, unfortunately, a young American girl had gone climbing in the snowy mountains behind Tehran and there had been an avalanche and she was killed, and one of the first things I had to do was go and identify the remains, of which there was not much because both of the young people had been devoured by animals. And there were the typical cases of Americans in bars who stripped naked to show they didn't have an American Express Card and the craziness like that. But there were two things worth mentioning.

First of all, there was an entire class of American women trapped in Iran because they had married young Iranian students in the United States then come back to Iran and were considered by the government of Iran to be citizens or subjects of the Empire of Iran. Their American passports were taken from them at the airport and they were effectively trapped in Iran. So we had this whole group of unhappy wives.

And then the other thing that's worth mentioning is that it fell to me to keep tabs on the relative size of the American expatriate community. And when I first got there we had several thousand but at the last count it had gone up very rapidly to 12 or 13,000 by the time I left in '74. So there was major growth.

Q: Were we having problems of- You know, I heard at one point that sort of Bell Helicopter mechanics getting on their bikes and running through the souqs or the bazaar, you know, I mean, you know, these are pretty much hard working, hard drinking, hard playing rednecks.

EVANS: Yes, that's true, and they came with their wives and families and some of the wives were going around in states of dress that were not appropriate in some of these more conservative Iranian villages where they lived in some cases, near Isfahan in the case of Bell Helicopter. So I think we poured a lot into Iran that was indigestible to the Iranians and at the same time then we had blinded ourselves to what was really going on politically. So we were setting ourselves up for a very unhappy outcome.

Q: Well were you picking up any thoughts of your own about whither Iran, whither America and Iran and all as you-

EVANS: Well, I have to say that the original chip on my shoulder that I arrived with in Iran,

thinking that perhaps we were ill-advised to be supporting such an obvious dictator, I was cured of that pretty much. And it was because I saw what a primitive society we were dealing with there. I mean, if you went outside the bright lights of Tehran where there were nightclubs and people drank wine and were educated and spoke English and so on, but if you went just a few miles away people were living in mud hovels with no running water and no electricity, no access to education, in many cases no jobs, the only outlet to another life being the mosque. And so I must say that I felt that the shah needed to be in a hurry and he was building roads, he was building hospitals, he was building schools. So I thought that the general direction he was taking the country was the right one.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Iranian students who sort of flooded our country around this time?

EVANS: After doing American Services I did a stint as a visa officer and I and my colleagues issued a lot of student visas. What we found was that there was a tremendous amount of fraud, you know, faking assets and connections, and as it ended up there was a lot of adjustment of status that took place, typically when a young man reached his 26th birthday because then he was not eligible for the U.S. draft.

Q: And avoiding the Iranian.

EVANS: At the same time, yes.

Q: Well then, what was your job while you were there, the two years you were?

EVANS: I started off as vice consul in charge of protecting Americans, basically, American Citizen Services, looking after people who got in trouble with the police, who ran out of money, sometimes looking after deaths; there were a number of death cases in those days. And it was one of the more lurid of those consular cases that brought me to the attention of the ambassador's office. I won't go through the whole story but basically...

Q: Go through the whole story. Well, part of this thing, I think consular stories are good, and two, I think it sheds light on one of the aspects of Foreign Service work.

EVANS: Okay. As briefly as I can then, what happened, we got a call one day in the consular section and it seemed that it was a call from an Iranian official in the holy city of Mashhad in the east near the Afghan border. And I think it was the chief prosecutor who called and said there have been two Americans killed here and we need your help in deciding what to do. And indeed two young Americans, about 18, a boy and a girl, had been in Afghanistan, traveling by motorcycle. They crossed over from Afghanistan from Herat into Iran in the early evening hours when the light is very poor. People in those days didn't have their headlights on yet and yet the natural light was waning so shadows were confused and they apparently ran hard into an oil tanker truck. The boy was killed -- he was driving -- he was killed instantly. The girl, unfortunately, lived for another three hours in some terrible agony and then died. And the bodies had been retrieved by the police and were in a refrigerator in the prosecutor's office.

Now, in that part of the world the practice is normally to bury a body before sundown or at least very quickly so they don't have, generally, outside the major cities, places to keep corpses. So these two bodies were literally in a refrigerator when I arrived from Tehran with my Azeri Turkish assistant, Mr. Massoumzadeh. And there were only two flights a week from Tehran to Mashhad and back so we basically had three days in which to decide what to do with the bodies. A complication was that the parents of both of the deceased were divorced and they were living in four, literally four, different places around the world. One parent was in Korea, one was in Florida, one was in Washington and one may have been in New York; I can't remember exactly. But we had to contact the parents to get their instructions as to the disposition of remains. That turned out to be very difficult in the age before -- not only before cell phones and the Internet -- but in the age when just getting a telephone call from Mashhad out to Tehran was a problem. But we finally got the word out that we needed instructions and we also needed money if there was any intention of shipping these corpses out of Mashhad back to Tehran and on to the United States.

Well, we waited, we waited and we waited, and we had set a deadline of something like, given the difference in time zones, something like 9:00 a.m. on the Thursday morning of that week. The last plane out of Mashhad was on Friday. So we got a call, must have been the Friday morning because we had extended our deadline, having not heard on the Thursday; right, about 3:00 a.m. on Friday we finally got a call from one of the parents saying we do not want you to bury our children there, we want you to send them back to the United States. Still no money and this was a costly undertaking. By that time, in fact, we had already had to go ahead and bury them. So the day before we had done that, because we had had no instructions, we had to leave and the refrigerator in the prosecutor's office was filling up. There were some fresh corpses. So it was really a necessity that something be done. We were being told that we had to do something.

So we contracted some gravediggers who dug all Thursday night. We arranged for an Armenian priest to show up at dawn, an Armenian priest being pretty much the closest thing you could get to a Protestant minister in those parts. We got black cloth, we had coffins built, we did all the intensive paperwork that was necessary to have a body buried and certified that they were dead and so on. In the middle of the night when we got the call saying that was not what the parents wanted we went completely into reverse. We raced out in an ambulance that we hijacked to the graveyard where the gravediggers had just finished their work, we literally snatched the corpses out of the grave, got them into the ambulance, took them into town where a different sort of coffin was built which met the standards for air shipment, and it had to be draped in black. So there were a million things that had to be done and furthermore all the paperwork needed to be reversed, and that was actually more difficult than moving the bodies, just getting bureaucrats to believe that somebody who had been certified as dead and buried was now going to rise from dead and buried and be shipped to Tehran. But we managed to do this and just by a matter of seconds, with our ambulance that we had hijacked, we made it to the side of the plane, which was delayed about 10 minutes, and we got those coffins onto the plane and it almost immediately took off. We didn't even have time to tell the embassy what was going on.

We arrived back in Tehran and I called the embassy and I said "I'm here at the airport with two

corpses; can you send a truck?" Well, this brought me to the attention of the ambassador as somebody who I guess they thought had accomplished the impossible, although really it was just force of circumstances. Oh, I forgot to mention that the public prosecutor in Mashhad had lent us the equivalent of about \$800 with which to get all this work done. We had to pay off the gravediggers, we had to pay off the Armenian priest, we had to get the coffins built and so on. And so the ambassador, this was Ambassador Farland, called the prosecutor and had him come in to Tehran, he was given an award for services to the American people and he got his money back and that's when, I think, the DCM (deputy chief of mission) decided that I was going to be brought in as aide to the ambassador, taken out of the consular section and brought in to work for the new ambassador who, by this time he knew, was going to be Richard Helms.

So I spent the rest of my time in Tehran as special assistant to Richard Helms.

Q: What was the reaction of people, you know, you're a junior officer there and all but you're nobody is more, in a way, hearing all the rumors and all, what were you getting about all of a sudden the head of the CIA appearing in Tehran? I mean, we'd gone through that, was it Kermit Roosevelt?

EVANS: Yes, who was involved with the Mossadegh overthrow.

Q: Very much the Mossadegh- I mean, you know, the CIA had kind of a, you might say a reputation.

EVANS: Well, that's true. And in Iran there had always been great suspicion of the British, going way back. That suspicion to some extent was transferred to the Americans after the overthrow of Mossadegh. And so indeed there was a lot of talk about the CIA chief coming to Iran and speculation about what this meant for U.S. policy in the region. It was already clear that the strategic wager that the United States was making on the shah was a very serious one. There was a joke going around at the time based on the reality; the Soviet ambassador apparently had been going around saying oh, look at America, they're sending a spy here to Iran, this just shows what kind of a country America is. And one wag said "well, the Soviet Union sent a pretty low ranking spy here as their ambassador, at least the Americans sent their top spy." That actually is quoted somewhere in the papers, I think.

As it turned out, Richard Helms and his wife Cynthia were the most able couple, diplomatic ambassadorial couple that I have ever encountered. Mrs. Helms has a British background; they are both very sensitive to Persian culture. Mrs. Helms in fact went on to write a book about archaeology and Persian culture. They made many, many friends there. The ambassador himself had been at the same school in Switzerland, Le Rosey, where the shah had studied, although I do not believe they were in the same class, but they knew each other. And so our ambassador's relationship with the shah was an extremely close and effective one and I think he managed things there extremely well. He traveled a lot and I traveled with him and interpreted, in fact, for him on several occasions. My spoken Persian was quite good. He went to the south to investigate everything involving oil; he went to the normal places that Westerners visit, like Shiraz, Isfahan and so on.

But in our last session I talked about the mistake that was made in cutting ourselves off from the opposition. A request had come from the shah not to have our domestic political analysts meet with the people in the bazaar who were bankrolling the Ayatollah Khomeini who was then in exile in Iraq and we, I think ill-advisedly, agreed to that and pulled our people back, in particular Stan Escudero, who was getting very close, just a step away from some of these opposition figures. And that, I think, combined with the big bet that we had made on the shah, resulted in our not understanding the political dynamics that were at work there.

Q: Well did Helms to his staff or to you anyway muse about this limitation on the traditional work of any embassy, and that is to, you know, to report on all sides? I mean, this is really exceptional.

EVANS: There was some discussion of it and I know that Stan Escudero, whose office was next to mine for a time, was unhappy about it. I don't know how much... I wasn't there when the request by the shah was made. I presume that our ambassador felt that there were other ways of finding out what was going on and it could well be that the idea was that the CIA would do some things but the State Department people were not to be seen talking to the bazaar merchants.

Q: Yes, well that would, you know, considering the personnel and Helms' background, you know, the CIA was of course an instrument which he was very familiar with.

EVANS: Not only that -- that's a good point -- but also, let's say, let it be said that the CIA was in very close cahoots with the SAVAK, which was the shah's own intelligence agency and it may well have been that the bet was that we didn't need anything that we would get in the traditional way: we could get it through those sources.

Q: Well while you were there was there- were you picking up, was there a feeling that this was a regime under siege or- It was obviously, you know, it's forgotten today but as you mentioned before, I mean, it was sort of a revolutionary regime under the shah at that time of the white revolution and you know, really trying to change his country and bring it into the 20th century.

EVANS: Well, that's right and it was recognized internationally as doing that. The shah's family included his twin sister and the empress, who did a lot of things to improve the status of women. Back in the early '60s, for example, the legal age of marriage for girls was nine. Now that was gradually raised to 15 and then 18 and this is one of the issues on which the Ayatollah Khomeini, by the way, clashed with the regime.

Q: It's back to nine, I think.

EVANS: It's back to nine under the current regime.

Q: This is incredible.

EVANS: And so, you know, in Western eyes what the shah was doing was progressive. Now, he

was doing it with harsh means in some cases. Foes of the regime were being treated very harshly, in some cases imprisoned and worse, but let's remember that the first organized opposition to the monarchy was really on the left. The Tudeh movement was still present -- that's the communist movement -- and we have to remember also that this was the height of the Cold War and the Soviets were definitely present and active and Tudeh was out there. So we definitely were banking on the shah to force Iran into a rapid modernization.

Q: MacArthur had been ambassador earlier, is that right?

EVANS: That's correct.

Q: And he had been attacked by the Tudeh, his car was, wasn't it?

EVANS: Yes, that's-

Q: It was an assassination attempt.

EVANS: That's right, that's correct. And in my time there were already some signs of disaffection in the sense that, for example in about 1973 two colonels were murdered on the streets of Shemiran in north Tehran. Now, that was an assassination; I think they apprehended the people who did it but it was nothing like a mass movement. That came much later in the '70s, of course.

Q: Well how- I realize, you know, you were at the bottom of the food chain at this point but still you're, I think the thing that's interesting in these interviews, I think you have people in positions like yours where you're sort of the fly on the wall. Did- Would you say that the wealthy ruling class sort of monopolized the ambassador's time or was he able to talk to the bazaaris and to, you know, more, let's say ordinary folks or not?

EVANS: In Iran under the old monarchy, well, the Pahlavis were a new monarchy but the old regime we can now call it, there were about 1,000 families, it was said there were 1,000 families who ran the country. And it certainly did seem... It's like the 400 in New York. It did seem as if they were very much the focus of our attention. But there were, in addition to the old aristocratic Muslim families, the minorities in Iran at that time were feeling very much protected by the shah. For example, the owner of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company was a Baha'i.

Q: Yes, or really anathema to the present regime.

EVANS: They're considered heretics, that's right. Also the Armenians, the Assyrians, even Jews felt relatively safe under the shah because his attitude was not to persecute them and to have them contribute. And they did contribute and some of them became quite well-to-do from their business activities. So although there was a nasty side to all this which involved the SAVAK and its persecution of regime opponents still there was a growing middle class, good things were being done, highways, hospitals, schools and the amenities of public life were improving. The educational levels were going up and so on and so forth. There was very decent medical care, if

you could pay for it; it was at a pretty good level. So all these things seemed to us on balance to be going in the right direction in the early '70s.

Q: In Iran, were there real splits of the Baluchis, the Azeris, the different, you know, these tribal splits?

EVANS: You know, you have put your finger on one of the things that Americans today have largely forgotten about and that is that this was the "Empire of Iran" with only about 50 percent of the population being Persian, that is Shia Farsi-speakers. The largest other minority group is the Azerbaijanis, a Turkic speaking group focused or settled primarily in the northwest around Tabriz. Actually there are twice as many Azeri Turks in Iranian Azerbaijan as there are in today's Republic of Azerbaijan. And indeed in the southeast there were, in Baluchistan, Baluch tribes, some of them still nomadic. There were a large number of Kurds in the northwest and various other tribes and one of the previous empresses, Soraya, the predecessor to Empress Farah, was from one of those tribes; I want to say she was Qashqa'i. And so yes, indeed, there were tribes, some of them nomadic, some of them settled, some of them more restive, some of them less. And I should also mention there's an Arab population in the south. So yes, it was a mosaic, it still is a mosaic, of nationalities.

Q: Having trouble with the Baluch.

EVANS: Baluch, yes.

Q: Baluch right now.

EVANS: Well, they are, and the Baluch are in three countries; there are Baluch in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Iran, so it's an area and then of course this applies to the Kurds as well, being in Iran, Syria, Iraq, Turkey and even the Caucasus.

Q: What was the feeling, that you were going to ally with the shah, that this would be a unifier for that whole area or would it be a base- I mean, what would it be for?

EVANS: I think the term that we were mostly using was that he was a "pillar of stability" or something like that. In those days academic practitioners talked about the "arc of crisis" from Bangladesh in the east through Somalia, cutting through the Middle East, and the idea was that Iran was going to be a bastion of stability in that arc of crisis and someone no doubt carried the metaphor too far and said it would be the keystone of the arch or something like that.

What was also important: let's remember that Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State at that time. Kissinger understood the dynamics of the region extremely well and so did Helms, and as a fly on the wall I did see that Kissinger and Helms, who were in very close contact with each other, were able to calibrate things on an almost daily basis, if there was an instability or a hint of an imbalance in the area, and they were particularly good about balancing Iraq and Iran. And the Kurdish question was there too and there were various levers that they were able to use to keep the Gulf area stabilized and moving in the right direction. And of course it was one of the

calamities of the loss of Iran from American calculations or at least an ability to deal with Iran was that you then had a terrible disbalance between Iraq and Iran which showed up in the war that broke out in the '80s right after the Iranian revolution.

Q: Well, we're talking about the Kissinger era and Kissinger had, as I recall it, had developed quite a bad name among the Kurds for encouraging the Kurds, I mean we the United States, at one point and then cutting them off. What was going on when you were there Kurd-?

EVANS: Well, I don't know all the ins and outs of that. I do know that we had to be talking to the Kurds at that time; I think some Kurdish activists would probably say that this has always been the history, that people have encouraged their aspirations and then when it was convenient turned their backs on them. That's not me speaking, that's just what I've picked up from Kurds. But let's also remember that at that time Henry Kissinger was very much involved in seeking improvements in the Middle East and it was during... in the spring of 1974 as Watergate was getting to be a much more serious problem for President Nixon that Kissinger was shuttling between Damascus and Cairo and Tel Aviv and even with a stop in Alexandria here and there, working just incredible hours and logging innumerable miles trying to settle that part of the Middle East. And of course there had been the Middle East War which had necessitated this.

Q: In '73.

EVANS: In '73.

Q: To the U.S. the Yom Kippur War.

EVANS: That's right, that's right.

Q: Well were you there during that time?

EVANS: Yes, and I remember there were afternoon newspapers in Tehran at that time and I remember driving home and seeing "Jang dar hovar-e-miyaneh," (war in the Middle East) in the headlines. That was a big shock.

The other big major geopolitical shock that I remember from those days was when the Indians tested their atomic weapon, which must have been in the spring of '74, and that, although you couldn't literally hear it you could metaphorically hear it just rattling the chanceries in every capital in the region.

Q: Was India looked upon as a real threat? I mean, with India part of the calculations because it's a one removed from Iran.

EVANS: Well, Iran has a very long history of statecraft. Like the Ottomans they go back centuries. And Iran's policy as I would describe it to you has been one of balancing, of cultivating good relations with the neighbors next to their foes, sort of a chessboard kind of pattern. And so Iran maintained rather decent relations with both Pakistan and India. Iran at that

time had relations with Israel that were considered strategic although the Israeli embassy was not called an embassy, it was called something else; it was called a liaison office or something like that. And there were no relations with the Saudis because of the Shia-Sunni division and there was... I remember two serious territorial disputes that sometimes came to minor violence, one was over the Tunb Islands in the Strait of Hormuz, and the other was on the Shatt al-Arab, the river that divides Iraq from Iran, and there were different ways of or calculating the border, whether it was the... it's not called the rhumb line, there's a word for it, the tollweg... and other ways of calculating that, and there were always little spats arising over this...

Q: Yes. But there was considerable concern. I go back to the '50s; Iranians, too many Iranians were coming in to Bahrain and this was- it was- this was sort of a disturbed area in a way that- I don't know if it remains disturbed or not.

EVANS: Well, you're absolutely right. I mean, one of the great divides in the Middle East is between the Arabs on the western side of the Persian Gulf and then this Iranian colossus to the east. And of course what has been the stabilizing factor, first, was British power in the Gulf and then we inherited the mantle and of course the U.S. Navy is a major factor there, particularly on Bahrain.

Q: During the time you were there, was the problem of corruption of concern to us? I understand, for example, the shah's twin sister was-

EVANS: Ashraf.

Q: -I mean, how did we view it at the time?

EVANS: We certainly deplored it, maybe not publicly but we sort of muttered about it. But in those days the old idea that you didn't interfere in internal affairs was still much more in force and since we were -- since the shah was our guy -- we were willing to close our eyes to a lot of the things that were happening. There's no question in that society from time immemorial, baksheesh or some kind of lining the palms of bureaucrats has been the way to get things done. And I remember conversations where we debated this and I think the conclusion of some was that corruption actually is a lubricant for the society to a certain extent, that the bureaucrats are underpaid and if you have to get things done it's not surprising. That doesn't mean that we thought it was right but we just accepted it as part of the landscape.

ERNESTINE S. HECK
Wife of DCM/Cultural Affairs Officer
Tehran (1972-1974)

Ernestine S. Heck was born in Oregon in 1940. She received her bachelor's degree from Oregon State in 1962. Her career has included positions in Bombay, Saigon, Tehran, Niamey, Katmandu, New Delhi, Colombo, and Madras. Mrs.

Heck was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in December 1997.

HECK: ...So I went through this course until March, when I had had enough Hindi to get the requisite three - that's sort of middle grade - language competency, and then I told them that I was quitting and marrying. I was not resigning from the Foreign Service, but I was getting married and I was going to go to Iran, where my future husband was posted. And that is what I did. I gave them about a week's notice and turned in my badge, as it were, although not really, and went out to the West Coast. He came home from Iran and we went to the West Coast and got married and flew back to Iran, all within a period of a week.

Q: Well now, what was the situation? Could you say, "I'm getting married," and then go to India or go to Iran? Was this in the cards?

HECK: Do you mean did I have a choice on what I did?

Q: Yes.

HECK: It was so early on after they had changed the rules that I don't know. The system, State Department, hadn't really gotten used to the idea of split families, certainly not split from long distances. I don't think that it even occurred to me that that was an option at that point, as it would today, of course, if it were to happen.

Q: Well, there was the one that we knew of, and that was Ellsworth Bunker and Carol Laise.

HECK: That's true. They were both ambassadors when they were married, but because they were ambassadors, they were out of the Foreign Service system and they didn't get hit with the sort of rules that you or I would have been hit with on something like this, because they were both Presidential appointments. But there hadn't been, so far as I know, any case of any family being separated by more than a very short distance at that point. There were also some very strict regulations about whether or not the spouse - that meant usually the woman, because I don't know that there were any examples in early '72 of cases where women officers married a man and then the man became the dependent spouse - but there were nepotism rules which just had to be seen to be believed or heard to be believed, because the State Department had not yet figured out how to handle this sort of thing. They had, I think, probably been forced against their better judgment into allowing them to be married, and they were feeling their way, the Department was feeling its way at that point. In any case, men officers who married a woman officer, if the man, who was usually the more senior of the two just by function of ages that people get married in - if this were the case, the woman very often was not supposed to work if the man had any sort of responsibility within the embassy. These nepotism rules went back to things that had been put into place because of malfeasance or at least hanky-panky on Capitol Hill going back years, where senators or representatives would put their wives on the payroll and give them what amounted then to tremendous salaries to basically do nothing, thereby tying up one of their staff positions and bringing home some extra money for the family. That's where the rules started. They didn't have anything to do with people who were already in a service and had been selected for that service because they had a certain amount of talent. There was no reason, for instance,

why women working in the State Department, be it as a secretary or communicator or officer, could not continue to do so. They had been selected for that job because they could do that job. So they should not necessarily have had to give it up. But basically I had no choice in the matter. I was going to be out of the Foreign Service as long as my husband was overseas. They would not make me resign, but they would put me on leave without pay, and that's what happened. I went on leave without pay and became a spouse. My husband was the chargé at that point in Tehran.

Q: This is Douglas Heck?

HECK: This is Douglas Heck. So the first three months of my married life I was the wife of a chargé, and then we got an ambassador, and Doug reverted to being the deputy chief of mission. When I got to Tehran, which was a big embassy - in fact, it was the largest of our embassies in the Bureau of NEA, Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, at that point in the early '70s. It was our largest - I could not, of course, work at the embassy even if there had been a job available to me. But USIA, the United States Information Agency, offered me a position, and I accepted it, so for the next 18 months or two years I was on part-time reimbursable detail. In other words, I worked four hours a day, and I was paid by the State Department for this, but I was a Cultural Affairs Officer with the United States Information Agency in Iran. Later we found out that if we had done the right thing, we would have asked Washington for permission and Washington would have turned down permission for me to do this job. But having not asked - no one thought at the post that it was wrong, I had no connection with my husband's office, I had no connection with the embassy, we were located in a different part of town, and basically I did cultural things. I wrote cultural-type letters and took care of people who were going to the United States on visitors' grants of various sorts, and sat in on boards and selected them and took care of Americans who were visiting, and I enjoyed it very, very much.

Q: This would be about '72 to '74?

HECK: '72 to '74, yes.

Q: What was sort of the political situation in Tehran or Iran in '72 to '74?

HECK: Iran was at that point our best ally in the region, probably more so than Saudi Arabia, which would have been the next in line. The Shah, of course, was very secular in his outlook and very open to modernizing his country. I, as a spouse, who was working in the Cultural Section part time, I suppose, didn't see the fissures that were there and the problems that were just waiting to burst. The Shah, of course, had been asking for all sorts of military assistance from the United States for many years. He was very pleased when Richard Nixon came in to the Presidency here in the United States. He obviously felt, as did his government, that the Republican- (end of tape)

Q: Ernie, you were talking about the Shah being pleased that the Nixon Administration was in, because you thought it would be more amenable to the Shah's desires than Democratic administration.

HECK: Well, this is indeed true and, in fact, Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon basically gave the Shah carte blanche to buy weapons. A major change in the country happened at about the time that my husband and I were leaving Iran, and that was the October war in 1973, the Yom Kippur War...

Q: Between Israel and Egypt and Syria?

HECK: Between Israel and Egypt and Syria, that's right. That war marked a turning point for the price of oil. The oil-producing nations in the Middle East, led in large part by the Iranians, had been pushing to raise the price of a barrel of oil, which at that point was about \$10.50, as I remember. The oil-using nations and the big oil companies had fought it tooth and nail, but the war in October changed all of that and suddenly prices of oil jumped for the first time, and they, I think, continued to rise. We left Iran in March of 1974, and even before we left, there was a huge foreign population in Iran, to the extent that the American Women's Club - this is just one measure of size - the American Women's Club had something like 500 members, and they met in the ballroom of the biggest hotel in town when they had a meeting. Lots more money came into Iran following the October Yom Kippur War of '73, and it was beginning to be shown. In fact, some of it had already been coming in and there were, even before we left, signs that things were not going so well in terms of American-Iranian relations. For instance, with all of these new weapons came the need to have training, training not only in using them but in maintaining them. Bell Helicopter, for instance, sent a large contingent of people that year, in '73, to maintain helicopters, and these were people who were sent to Isfahan south of Tehran, one of the major cultural and historical cities in the country...

Q: Religious center too.

HECK: A religious center also. The people who came were different from the previous people coming to the country as businesspeople in that they tended to be highly trained retiree noncoms from our military, and when they had been overseas as enlisted men, as noncoms, they had tended to be in many, many places there as singles. Their families were left back in the United States, certainly when they went to places like Vietnam but also to a number of the bases overseas. When they came to Isfahan for the first time, they were bringing their families. We had a tremendous problem with some of the families, specifically with the teenagers. It became a game among some of the kids, the boys, of these families, who were living in a sort of gated community outside of Isfahan, as I remember, on the outskirts anyway. These boys would ride around town on mopeds or mobilettes or motorcycles, whatever they were using, two-wheelers of some sort, and they'd play games with pulling the chador or the covering cloth off of women on the streets. Well, this is a very religious city. These are very conservative women, and this was akin in Iran of the early '70s to some man stripping a woman on the main streets of Washington, DC. Even though the lady had clothing on underneath this chador, it was something that should be left inviolate. It was a terrible things for the kids to do, and, of course, there were problems. There were problems between our communities. The embassy was always picking up the pieces. This is what consular officers, of course, have to do for a living. But it was a frightening thing. So the times were changing. We were increasing our presence there. Other countries were also. A

lot of it had to do with this money. The last time I was in Iran - and it was very interesting - we left in March of '74 and we happened to pass through Iran in February or March, February I guess, of '75, eleven months later. We were on our way to a ceremony elsewhere, actually in Nepal, and it was a different city. The traffic had grown geometrically as opposed to arithmetically, the money that was available and that you would see on the streets in terms of ostentatious purchases and shops. The city of Tehran, at least, had always been a very rich city when we were there; at least portions of the city were very rich. I mean, I would go to ladies' teas at four in the afternoon, and all the Iranian ladies would be wearing emeralds the size of - well, very, very large ones. There was no way that people from the West could ever dress up to the standard of these women, because nobody from Europe or the United States had the sort of clothing and furs and jewelry and money to buy Parisian specials all the time that these ladies seemed to have. In fact, the only foreign ladies who ever seemed to be able to match them blow for blow were the women from South Asia who did have some of their wedding saris that were up to snuff in terms of matching the glitter. But it was even more so eleven months later, and I never saw it again, but you could see the sort of problems that were going to come to the country because of this great influx of money. Of course, there were many other problems that had nothing to do with money. The Shah put in technocrats to run all of his government, or as much of his government as he could. These technocrats tended to have Western educations. That put them out of the mainstream of the way things were in Iran. Iran was a country with tremendous talent, tremendous abilities, tremendous money, and it had an underclass or a poor class which didn't share much of this and certainly didn't share the values. The people that I knew socially tended, for instance, to be Western educated. It was amazing to go to a dinner. I remember sitting once at a roundtable of eight people, and a lady who was a Secretary of Education - not a minister but a high-ranking civil servant of education - was one of the eight people at the table, and the rest of us, the other seven of us, were all from other countries, and she spoke to each of us in our own language. It was just amazing. She spoke Greek, she spoke English, she spoke Russian, she spoke French - it just went on and on. Now, she was perhaps more so than most, but there was a great sophistication. There was also great sophistication among people like that who tended to have serial marriages as opposed to multiple marriages at once, but they certainly went through spouses and there was a constant reorganization of society as people married and divorced. That was not part of what the people from the bazaar and lower classes did. These people whom I saw socially didn't really pay much attention to things like fasting at Ramadan. They wouldn't eat on the street, but they would certainly eat privately. There were a number of people on the other side of the spectrum to whom this holiday or this religious observance of fasting between the hours of sunrise and sunset was of immense importance. The fact that these people were out eating and drinking during it didn't make them loved by that level of person. We of the United States should have seen this, aside from our political officers in the embassy who I know did see it. We had a Peace Corps there. Now, what was the Peace Corps doing in Iran? Well, it was providing the flautist for the orchestra in Tehran. It was providing city planners. These are things that you don't normally think of the Peace Corps as doing. And then it was teaching school. Now there were plenty of people in Tehran who could teach school. They didn't want to go out to the small villages. They didn't really have to. At that point Iran, with all this money and all of this ability to change things, had a literacy rate of about 35 percent. It was unacceptable, and it was certainly unacceptable that their own literates weren't doing the teaching, but others were. Later on it became the same sort of thing. Doctors - well, the doctors

didn't want to go out there. There were plenty of Iranian doctors, lots of them in Europe and the United States. So where did they get the doctors? Iran brought them, as it were, from Korea, from India, from Pakistan, countries all that have large numbers of educated people willing to do this for hard currency. It was not a healthy situation, but I was largely oblivious to it at the time.

Q: Ernie, we'll go to your work in the USA in a minute, but here you are, you've already come from a country where you were a political officer. You can't turn these genes off more or less. What were you getting from Doug and from others and from your own observance about how our embassy looked upon the Shah and what was happening? We're sticking from '72 to '74.

HECK: I arrived in Iran just after Ambassador Douglas MacArthur III left. The political section in the embassy in Iran at that point during his tenure had an ongoing battle with the ambassador, with my husband very often trying to protect the junior officers and the political officers in general from the ambassador. He was a very strong and a very senior member of our Foreign Service.

We had consulates in Tabriz up in the Northwest, down in Khoramshar on the Persian Gulf near the Shat-al-Arab and the border with Iraq, and I'm trying to remember whether we still had one in Mashad or not, I think we closed Mashad. No, Shiraz and Isfahan at that point were both USIS posts, but not State, and they had language programs. Anyway, we had people in the provinces, and shades of Vietnam. These officers had trouble getting things through the embassy.

Washington wasn't going to get the bad news, because the hierarchy wasn't going to let it happen. I know that this was one of my husband's major battles during his time as DCM there at that point. By the time I arrived, he was the chargé, as I said, for three months, and then we received a political appointee ambassador who was quite unusual in that he had been an appointee both of the Democrats and of the Republicans. He was on his final embassy at that point, coming out of Pakistan, and he paid very little attention to what the embassy was doing. I mean by that that things like this, political reporting, didn't factor into his life. He did the public issues and the socializing and so on.

Q: This was Ambassador Newman?

HECK: No, this was Ambassador Joseph Farland. He had been, I believe, in Panama and the Dominican Republic, and he had gone later, some years later, to Pakistan and then came to Iran. He was a friend of the President or at least he certainly fit in that category of big money donor and so on. He was there with us only perhaps eight months, although he had planned to have a longer period. He left under unusual circumstances, because, as I said, he did have, I think, the support of President Nixon, certainly of the Administration. But Mr. Nixon was eager to get rid of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, Richard Helms, and he apparently basically told Richard Helms he could have any overseas post that he wanted, in order to leave, and Mr. Helms, for a lot of professional as well as personal reasons, asked for Iran, and the President said yes. Well, of course, our poor political appointee was devastated, but I don't think it had anything to do with him personally. I think the President just had a greater need to get rid of a civil servant he wanted out of town. So Mr. Farland came in May just before President Nixon's visit that year, and he left in January, and that was one of the shorter tours. Immediately after he left, Richard

Helms came, and so I had a couple of ambassadors and my husband had three in this post in a period of, for my husband, four years and for me two. Obviously Richard Helms had a great deal more interest in Iranian politics and what was happening in the country than did Mr. Farland. As far as I know, there wasn't the tension in the embassy or the resentment in the embassy that had been there before. I think that the officers who were there were able to pretty much get their reporting in the way they wanted, although I would have to defer to them on this. But it certainly didn't seem to have the unhappiness that had been there before. I think our junior officers in many cases did see what was happening, and I think our hierarchy in the embassy didn't for whatever reasons. This is something I never really talked to my husband about, and I wish I had been able to. I would like to know what his answers would be on something like this and where he stood. But, of course, everyone, I suppose, revises history as they get it behind them.

Q: Oh, yes.

HECK: I think it should have been apparent even in the mid-'70s, in '74, that this was a society which was in a somewhat dangerous situation and could indeed fall, as it did five years later.

Q: There was a time - it probably was a little later - but essentially - at least this is the word I got - sort of a deal was made almost with the devil - I don't mean to make it pejorative - but a deal was made where the President passed the word down that we should on internal affairs rely on the Iranian sources, the Shahs and the Secret Police, Savak and all, and that we weren't to mess around domestically, which, of course, is what we're supposed to be doing. Had that happened yet?

HECK: Yes, I think it had. I had heard that it had. Here again, I hate to comment on this in that it was sort of third hand. My husband didn't share a good deal of the really sensitive things with me obviously, but it's my impression that the President at the same time was saying basically that they could have anything they wanted to buy, that this dictate had been laid down. Certainly as a country we accepted an awful lot of what was told to us as gospel when we shouldn't have. I don't think that we didn't have people who knew, but I think that they were pretty much kept out of getting that word on to the top.

Q: Were you getting any reflections? You're coming out of the sort of having been a young political officer and used to the give and take within those ranks in Vietnam. I think it would be hard to turn that off. Were you picking up anything about the CIA and what the CIA was doing as opposed to the rest of the embassy? Iran had a reputation of being sort of a CIA post in some places, or AID post.

HECK: Well, yes, of course. I mean the CIA had been responsible for putting the Shah back on the throne after they got rid of a fairly elected, democratically elected government led by Mossadegh in the mid-'50s. That was 20 years on. The Shah had great gratitude and respect for the Agency, and he had close ties with the Agency that were not shared with the ambassador and the DCM, the standard line of how things went in the embassy, in any embassy. The Shah had come back into Iran at that point, brought in by the machinations, I guess you would say, of the CIA. They really pulled off quite a professional-looking coup d'etat and put the Shah back on the

throne. At the time the Shah came back, he was a rather diffident young man, apparently who asked for and got a lot of advice from the CIA about how to do things, perhaps also from the earlier ambassadors on how to do things. I remember hearing stories of how the royal family would participate in functions at the embassy like a softball game occasionally. There were pictures, carefully put away by that point, but pictures of them doing just that. By the time I got there, and certainly by the late '60s, early '70s, the Shah was into his imperial mode. By the time I got there, he had already had the 250th anniversary of the ruling in Iran of royalty, a big ceremony at Persepolis in about 1971 with all the tents and all the world leaders coming to live in these fancy sort of Camelot-type tents with all the food flown in from Maxim's and the bedding from Europe and so on. Everything was from Europe. He was imperial. He was His Imperial Majesty when I got there. The embassy called him HIM, His Imperial Majesty, in terms of talk around the embassy, and he acted like an absolute monarch and an emperor. So things had changed dramatically in the 20 years since he had been brought back into power. So what I saw of Iran was all the imperialness, going to the palace, and the extraordinary things that were held there. When Naw-Ruz came every year - that's the Iranian 21st of March, the spring solstice, the big new year's date for Iran - the diplomatic corps would go there dressed in white ties and everybody would be given a gold coin with the face of the emperor and maybe two of them or one of them with the empress. We probably had 25 gold coins at one point given to us by either the Shah or the Shahbanu, the empress, for various occasions like that. They have disappeared over the years as jewelry has gotten stolen and so on, but there they were at one point. Everything was in superlatives at the palace. One didn't question the Shah, one spoke when spoken to, and all of the most rigorous of rules having to do with monarchy and imperial monarchy at that were in play by the time we got there. My husband had a special relationship of sorts with the Shah because he had gone to school with him for a year in Switzerland when they were both adolescents. The Shah's father had been a Cossack at the World War, First World War, and had seized power from the previous dynasty and went from being a rather crude colonel to being an emperor himself. He sent his oldest son to Switzerland for schooling, and the first year that the little boy went, he was about eleven, and he was sent, along with a couple of courtiers who while I was there were heads of very secret parts of the government of Iran, to a school called École Nouvelle, where my husband was enrolled. It was a rather spartan school of the sort where every little boy took a cold shower at five a.m. and went out to do calisthenics and so on. It didn't take long before all the little boys were picking on the poor little shah boy, whatever his title was at the time. I remember hearing stories about how in playing soccer - because he loved soccer but, of course, in his own country when he played soccer he always had the ball, nobody rubbed his nose in the dirt - he got lots of nose rubbing and dirt-type exercises. He lasted only a year there at that school and then was moved on to Le Rosey, a much tonier, fancier school with a little bit softer lives for the students. He never really talked about École Nouvelle. His official biography never mentioned it, but he had been there for a year. So Doug had known him then and came back at him to a different age and a different place. It gave a slight edge, I think, in talking to the man, but one didn't really volunteer anything to him as far as I know.

Q: What had you picked up from other people about the rule of Douglas MacArthur and Mrs. MacArthur.

HECK: Douglas MacArthur had had five embassies, I think, five heads of missions jobs. Mrs.

MacArthur was an extraordinary woman. She was the daughter of Alvin Barkley, who had been our Vice President under Mr. Truman and before that a very prominent Senator from Kentucky. She was imperial herself, and I frankly refused to marry my husband until I knew that she was away. I had heard of the MacArthurs long before I had any thought about getting married. In fact, when we were in Iran together, Stu, one of his previous DCMs, I think his DCM from Belgium, was there with us in CORDS as the senior person in CORDS, and I had a conversation with him one night where he told me horror stories about what it was like to be the DCM, or the wife of the DCM in the case of his wife, working for this couple in Belgium. So their history had gone ahead of them, had preceded them. She ran her meetings, the women's club, the embassy wives, that sort of thing, with a rather heavy hand. She served, for instance, coffee. All the wives came together in the big residence, and it was huge, and they were given coffee. Mrs. MacArthur had a woman who followed her, a servant of some sort, a lady's maid, with a tray of Veuve Clicquot champagne and a champagne glass, and Mrs. MacArthur drank champagne all morning, whereas all the other wives were relegated to coffee. It caused a certain amount of resentment among some of the wives who thought that that was a rather two-tier approach to running a wives' meeting. There were also some stories about wives being ordered to appear in costume at New Year's Eve functions and entertain. I mean by that where they would have some sort of gambling evening, a casino night type thing. The wives who could do it, who could carry it off, were expected to wear little costumes and do things like pass out the chips. It wasn't terribly embarrassing, but it was certainly not necessarily the way that any of us would like to spend our New Year's Eve. So things were hard. My direct predecessor, i.e., the wife of the previous deputy chief of mission before my husband arrived, was giving a luncheon one day, a formal luncheon, an entertainment type thing, representation entertainment, of a large table full of people, and the phone rang. The ambassador's wife demanded that she leave her luncheon guests at the luncheon table and go out and look for the ambassador's wife's cat which had gotten out of the residence. Both the DCM and the ambassador lived next to each other in a huge wooded compound. So, this poor woman with 24 guests or 18 guests had to walk out of her own party while they were eating and go out and look for the royal cat. This sort of story got around. The story I remember most: Iran was a place at that time with lots of entertainment. The ambassador, the DCM, the various officers of the embassy went to a lot of parties, a lot of dinners, lots of receptions, all sorts of things, and when the MacArthurs were ready to leave, there were apparently just lots and lots of functions in their honor among the Iranians and among the diplomatic community and so on. For the last month or so, my husband, who was then still single, was called home by the ambassador's wife every night after whatever party they had been at. Her husband would go upstairs to bed, and she wanted to reminisce and have another glass of champagne and talk about things, and one of the things she talked about rather obsessively for my husband's last month with her was that he as chargé when they left was not to use the ambassador's Cadillac, which was armored. He was to continue to use whatever the car was, the Chevrolet or whatever, that was assigned to him, but he was not under any circumstances to use the ambassadorial Cadillac. That was not his car to use. Of course, he sat there and he said he never got home until about two a.m. She liked to stay up late. He sat there and agreed with her, because he knew that the minute the plane took off he was going to be in charge and he could use any car he wanted, and it just was not worth the fight and certainly he didn't care whether he used the Cadillac or not, but it just got to a point where it began to grate on his nerves terribly that every night he was being told to leave the car alone. That was the sort of story I had heard earlier in Saigon.

Q: How about the Helmses? What was your impression as a professional person of Helms? Having been the head of CIA and a real pro at CIA coming to the post, I was wondering whether this had put a different cast on things.

HECK: I had nothing but the greatest respect for Mr. Helms. I think he is an extraordinarily competent servant of the people of this country and a man of great dignity and great honor. I don't know any of the specifics about who he had known in Iran before he came. He certainly had very good ties with everyone in government. He was discreet to the core. I never heard anything that indicated that he ever involved himself more than would be appropriate in anything that was going on. Certainly he knew what was going on. I assume that he knew a lot more about where the bodies were buried than anyone else in the mission. He was a very, very good ambassador, however, as was Mrs. Helms in a completely different way, a very intellectual woman who quickly became very interested in Iranian culture, archeology and so on, and has in fact written on these subjects, on art and the arts in Iran as well as anthropology and archeology type subjects.

Q: What about the role of Savak? Were there people that you knew at all? Was this a concern? This is the Iranian secret police - more than secret police, it's sort of the Iranian arm of the Shah, wasn't it?

HECK: It was a secret police with a vengeance, I suppose in large part like what Stalin had in the '30s in Russia, in the Soviet Union. It was a power unto itself. Everybody used the word *Savak* with fear. When you talked about Savak, always there was something bad attached to it. People were afraid of it. Iranians that we knew certainly never talked about it openly with me. They may have with my husband, but they danced around it very carefully, and there were lots of things that one didn't want Savak to know. Savak was perhaps like the military which was so powerful in Argentina in the same general period, when people disappeared and one could never really find out where your relatives had gone or what had happened to them or where their bodies might be buried. There was a good deal of that sort of thing with Savak. It was something that very much went bump in the night, and it was the boogie man for everyone most definitely.

Q: Were you there during the Nixon visit?

HECK: Yes indeed.

Q: I'm told one Presidential visit is equivalent to three earthquakes.

HECK: I think it probably is, although they grow and grow and grow. This one, I think, had 182 people with him, and we were shocked at the numbers coming in. Now, of course, it's four times that or more, I suppose. So they do grow. First of all, the government of Iran wanted it to go well. They wanted everything to match the visit of President Eisenhower, who had come in the '50s. When President Eisenhower had come, the streets were lined with carpets, and he drove through a crowd of millions of people on these Persian carpets to the palace. It was an outpouring. Well, outpourings didn't happen in the Iran of the '70s, but the government wanted it to go very well indeed. They had us out at the airport. By us I mean everybody who was going to be in the

motorcade, from the Iranian government - and that meant a lot - as well as from the embassy. We all had to be out to practice this at the airport, to practice the motorcade, to practice the landing, to practice all of this stuff, and when did we do this? We did this in the middle of the night so that for a couple of nights, three nights running, I think, we were out at the airport at two in the morning to practice doing the motorcade. Now I don't think that any other country has ever done that to American diplomats, but there we were driving into town in the motorcade in the middle of the night with all this stuff going, in order to make it work beautifully. The President arrived with his dentist, various hairdressers, as well as the press and various other people who go on these visits. He also brought with him, I think from the U.S. Navy, a chef or chefs and servers to do a luncheon for the Shah. The visit was marred by some bombs, nothing really serious, but there were, I think, maybe perhaps three incidents where bombs were thrown outside various USIS places, USIA offices, and it marred the departure. When the President and his entourage left to go to the airport at midday just after a luncheon to catch the flight - they were going next, I think, to Romania - they bypassed the center of the city. They had come through the normal way from the airport to the palace, in which they were staying, coming in, but going out they went on sort of a ring road, and there were people up on the sides of the ring road throwing things at the motorcade. A little damage was done. I don't think anyone was really hurt, but I think some windows may have been broken and some things. The Shah, of course, was absolutely livid, and I gather that some heads rolled on that, perhaps not really more than figuratively, but Savak had a certain role in rolling whatever happened with the demonstrations. There had been, of course, the standard banquet, the Shah offering the formal white-tie dinner for the President and the visitors, and it was the kind of thing that I had a number of while I was in Iran, white tie, very elegant, really basically French, and always five glasses at the table. You had your water glass. You had to have vodka with the caviar, and we always had caviar for the first course. One of the worst things that ever happened to me in Iran was I learned to love really good caviar, and I will never be able to afford that caviar again. We used to eat it by the scoopful. You could get it for like \$2.50 for 500 grams. It was just nothing. Anyway, the Shah always offered the kind that was only for the royal family, which is called golden caviar, actually not as good as the gray but very rare. So we always had the little shot glasses of vodka, which were often refilled, and then you had the white wine and then you had the red wine and you had to have the champagne and then there was water, of course, and so on. So you had this array of glasses and a very elegant dinner. The dinner was televised when President Nixon was there. The cameras, I'm told - we were at the dinner - swung up into the chandeliers every time a glass was raised and the sound was turned off so that the Iranians didn't have to watch their Shah drinking these various types of alcoholic beverage. So there was this huge dinner, and then the next day the President offered a luncheon, and it was either 18 or 24 and we were the cut-off point. My husband and I were the lowest ranking people there at the luncheon. Anyway, it was an absolutely magnificent lunch cooked by naval cooks and served by navy stewards in this palace. The table was arranged with the Shah across from the President and Mrs. Nixon across from the Shahbanu, the empress, in the middle of the table, and we all went down the table and, of course, my husband and I were way at the end. I think our Major General who was in charge of our Military Action Group, the MAG, was at the other end as the bottom, and in between there were all these various, the Foreign Minister and the Prime Minister and the Court Minister, who was the equivalent of a prime minister but in the court system, etc. Delicious food, really strange conversation, because President Nixon was basically discussing with the Shah the horrendous aspects of the Communists and the awful things that

they did and had done and probably would do in the future. I'm sure he believed this about socialist states. I'm sure that the Shah believed this also, so they were both preaching to the converted there, but we had to be quiet and listen to this. The President was using Henry Kissinger as sort of the cat's paw. "Isn't this right, Henry? Isn't this right, Henry?"

Q: You mean Henry Kissinger?

HECK: Henry Kissinger. Anyway, Henry Kissinger, and Henry Kissinger would then do the dog-and-pony show about the perfidiousness of whatever aspect of Communism we were talking about. He was really playing up to this. I thought to myself that I would expect that both of them had a little bit better grasp on reality in terms of what socialism meant to the world than what they were painting, which was a very simplistic sort of - it was the sort of communism that I think we heard of in the United States under McCarthy in the '50s. It didn't behoove the President of the United States to be believing that, and I hope to God that he was a little more sophisticated and I think he was in his interior acceptance or internalization of what the political situation was in the world. But it was very interesting to me at least to watch Henry Kissinger acting like the pet dog and filling in the blanks whenever the President wanted him to.

Q: I take it that whatever it did cemented relations more of this particular group.

HECK: The Shah, as I said, felt that the Republican administrations served him better and understood his predicament, his plight, better than the Democratic, and that may or may not be true. Certainly it was a lovefest between President Nixon and the Shah, partially, as you pointed out, because Nixon tended to allow him to do what he wanted within the confines of his own country and partially because we really needed him at that point. He was the voice of reason in the area. He did provide us with support in the Middle East, and he was a very important cornerstone of our foreign policy in the region.

Q: Were you picking up any disquiet about the effects of the Shah's white revolution?

HECK: Well, yes, because it was moving perhaps faster than some of the more conservative members of society would have wanted it to. What his white revolution was doing was, in effect, what we would have liked to have seen done in Iran: more justice, more education, better water and electricity and other support for people living in the countryside. All of these things the United States, that most Americans, would say are good things to have. It was obvious that he was pulling a somewhat recalcitrant, traditional population behind him. By that I mean what were called in Iran, and are called today, I suppose, the bazaarees, the small businessmen in the bazaar, the peasants and so on. The one part that I didn't get a feel for, because it was almost nonexistent there in public view, was the power of the religious element, the mullahs. The Ayatollah Khomeini was in exile in those days living in Iraq, as were a number of other religious leaders. There were government rulers who gave the appropriate blessings at departure and arrival of the Shah and that sort of thing when he left the country, and I never really realized what was going on religiously. There were tapes even then being passed around very surreptitiously from these mullahs and others in exile.

Q: You're talking about audiocassettes?

HECK: Audiocassette tapes, yes, but sermons given in Iraq were being passed from hand to hand even then, and people were very careful about it. I didn't know about them, although there again, if I had been in the embassy, perhaps I would have, but in my role in life then, which was to be a spouse and to be in charge of a lot of entertainment and to run a hotel, I didn't in fact see it in my personal life, but apparently it was there.

Q: What about concerns about corruption? I understand from reports that as the white revolution went on and money started coming in, the royal family and all the cousins and aunts and all got very much involved in being middle people or running things. Did that appear on your radar at all?

HECK: Yes, of course, and it wasn't just the royal family. Iran was run by a bunch of people who were what we call five percenters. If you wanted to sell Boeing Aircraft to the airline or military airplanes to the military or whatever the military equipment was, the firms would get a local citizen, who would then rake off his commission, and five percent was probably less than what a lot of them were taking, but there was a lot of money to be made, and a lot of people had it. There were tremendous stories of corruption among certain members of the royal family, whereas other members of the royal family were seen to be quite innocent of that sort of thing. Of course, Princess Ashraf, the Shaw's twin sister, was the butt of a lot of gossip about this sort of thing. I suspect that a lot of it was true. She was also the butt of a lot of gossip about her sexual proclivities, needs, demands. Probably a lot of that was true. There was a good deal of all sorts of things going on under the surface of this society. Opium was another one. I can remember parties where, if you stayed too late, the hard core got out the opium, and that's when we always left, but it was there. Drugs were there, all sorts of money and sex, all the various things which are tied into corruption, yes, very much so. Tremendous wealth to be made and plenty to share.

Q: I would have thought that this would cause disquiet in the embassy, because, you know, when all is said and done, America is a relatively puritanical society. Did this, sort of putting these two together, cause problems?

HECK: I'm sure it did, Stu. I think, though, that that's something you need to talk to people who are actually posted there. You have to remember that I was at this point in a very special part of my life. I had just gotten married. I was suddenly in charge of a tremendous establishment. I left Washington having lived in a small one-bedroom apartment, living on my carton of cottage cheese and my hamburger, and then suddenly I was running a house with seven adults living in it and servants and giving tremendous parties. I spent so much time just concentrating on doing that correctly and successfully that I probably missed a great deal of what was actually happened.

Q: ...about your work with USIA.

HECK: Well, I count myself very lucky to have been given this opportunity, because otherwise I really probably would have gone bats. It was a very useful thing to me to have a four-hour-a-day job to which I could go and sort of decompress from having had my own career to being the

spouse in a rather large organization. So I had my own little four-hour period there when I could do my cultural stuff and write my letters and discuss things like Eisenhower Fellowships and Humphrey Fellowships and international visitors' programs and get out of the constant spotlight that I was in as the wife of a senior officer in a big embassy. Basically, I think, I was the fourth of four in the Cultural Section, so I got what was left over, which I had had a great deal of experience in, having done that in Saigon in the Political Section.

Q: Were you involved with Iranian students? Iranian students became, probably more than in any other country, the expatriate students became a factor in what happened later. I was consul general in Athens at this time, and Iranian students were, again using diplomatic terms, a pain in the ass all over the place, with Iranians trying to get to the United States, often not to very good schools but just to go there. They weren't a very impressive crew.

HECK: Well, there were some very impressive ones. They just weren't the visa problems and the problems that came up. First of all, you had the very rich, and their children went to the United States to study with no problems whatsoever, and they went to the very good schools. Then you had this whole new rich who wanted to send their kids there, who might not have had the background, who were your problems and were the problems for our Consular Section in Iran. There were all of the problems you would expect, people trying to cheat, falsify documents, things under the table being offered to get the student to wherever he was going. So, yes, there was something of a dichotomy in our student populace. The part that I saw more was the student who came through our Iran-America Society, which was a huge operation in Iran and operated under the aegis of but separate from the U.S. Information Agency. It had a huge physical plant, and it offered English classes to students, perhaps five or six thousand of them in several places around Tehran. The students who came through that program, learning English preparatory to going to the United States, then constituted the problems I suppose that you got later on in Athens and elsewhere. The very best who went to the United States were very good indeed. They had good backgrounds. There were three English-speaking, American-oriented, international schools in Iran open to Iranians in some cases as well as foreigners, and the kids who came out of that process and then went on to Stanford or MIT or wherever they went were really good students and perfectly capable and had the money behind them usually. So it really was, as I said, a dichotomy. We also sent to the United States - and this was the sad part, I suppose - lots of doctors. I used to get involved in giving the test that doctors have to take in order to come to the United States to practice. They had to have all their medical records and so on, but they also had to have this long English test and so on, and I would get involved in the English test for them. Thousands would take this exam. It would be like 1,800 a test or something who would take the exam and who ended up working on Fifth Avenue and other places in the United States, while Iran hired doctors from India and South Korea to fill the slots that were open in their own country - very strange situation. But the worst of the student problem hadn't hit us yet in 1974 when we left. I gather that it got worse and worse up till the time of the revolution when then the students in the United States who had helped to bring down the Shah by demonstrating here in the United States against him when he came to visit then began to demonstrate in the streets as the revolution swept over Iran in '79, perhaps culminating in the hostage taking of our embassy and concurrent demonstrations by Iranians here in the United States, Iranian students.

Q: It didn't go over very well.

HECK: It did not go over very well, and wouldn't.

Q: I recall I was in Naples then, and they were asking if Naples could be a place for Iranian students to come and sort of adjust their sadas, and I said, "Hell, no." There was no sympathy for the Iranians. Ernie, can you comment, before we quit this session, on your feeling about the role of women that you observed there.

HECK: In Iran?

Q: In Iran, yes, from the cultural field and particularly getting away from this upper class.

HECK: Well, we can't get away from this upper class. I mean, the role of women in the mid-'70s in Iran very much correlated with the role of that particular family in the society. There were families which were quite modern and quite sophisticated and allowed their women roles in public. There were women in all the ministries. There were women in high-ranking government jobs. There was even at least one woman who was a minister at that time. Women who wore the chador, which is, as I said, the Iranian equivalent of a burqa although it's really more a sheet that is wrapped around to cover a person instead of a garment under which you climb in order to get into it. The women of middle class in Tehran, upper middle class in Tehran, and higher did not wear this at all unless they were perhaps going into a special religious shrine like the shrine in Mashed or the shrine in Gom where holy men had been buried or whatever. Otherwise, they never wore it. They were out in public, they drove cars, they did all the things that women do in any country in the West. They were doctors, not perhaps a tremendous number but there were doctors and lawyers and dentists and all sorts of things. And then one had the lower middle class and lower. We had a woman working in the house. She had been deserted by her husband who had run off with another woman. I think he was a policeman. In any case, she was left with nothing. She had no children, no money. She could have starved to death. She got a job working in our house, and had been working there for years, as a laundry woman. She came every day and did whatever had to be done in terms of the laundry. She didn't take any garbage from the male servants, who sort of circled around her. She was a tough little lady, and she wasn't going to accept it when they got uppity, so they basically gave her respect. In 1974 she was invited to come to the United States, and she came as a tourist, this little laundry woman. Her nephew worked here at the Smithsonian, I think. Anyway, he worked in the greater Washington area. I don't know what he did, but he basically told her - and she came to work every day with a chador on, and she put it on when she went home - he told her if she ever wore a chador again, he would disown her. She came back absolutely convinced in 1973 that this was the wave of the future. She gave up the chador, a very brave thing to do considering where she lived, because in her own little neighborhood one was expected to wear this. She came back from the United States with her hair done, her nails painted red, and she wouldn't wear the chador. She was just so proud of herself because she was a modern woman. I've often thought about Banu - she was called Lady and not by her name - but I've often wondered what happened to her when the revolution came because, of course, she would have had to go back immediately to the other side. But there was this sort of a dichotomy. The society she came from did this, and the other society, the higher-on-

the-social-scale society, didn't, and there was a real chasm there, which has been papered over by what has happened since then. Like, I suppose, many places in the world, the fight against things like wearing the chador had started in the very upper classes. There was a lovely old lady called Princess Peruz, who had been one of the leaders of this in the '20s, I guess, fighting against wearing the chador, but she was married to a prince of the previous dynasty. She was the sort of person who would have been a labor leader in the '30s in the United States, and she was out there on the hustings and walking in the front of a parade and so on, but it was people from that class that fought against it, the liberals from the upper classes rather than people down the line who fought against any of the social injustices. The thing that bothered me most about the situation of women in Iran - I suppose because I saw it happen so often to people from my own country as well, and I gather that this is a function of Islam in many of the more traditional parts of the world, certainly in Afghanistan, upon which I spent a good deal of my career later - and that was that a woman was never her own. She always belonged to the men in her life. So a woman had to have written permission to travel, if she was leaving the country, from her father. If she were married, it had to come from her husband. If she were a widow, it had to come from her son, and if there were no sons, then from the nearest male relative in the family. But there always had to be a written permission for her to get her passport and leave the country, in fact, if that was what she was going to do. We had lots of American wives of Iranians there, and it was the same thing for them. They had to have written permission. Well, there were some real horror stories, and as a consular officer you can appreciate the problems that this would give us, we as Americans, because these women couldn't go home to visit their families if their husbands didn't want them to. They couldn't take their children out unless their husbands gave written permission for the children to go, etc., or the other men in the family hierarchy, which meant that a woman in trouble was a prisoner. We had lots of prisoners, because inevitably in a number of marriages like that, there are some which perhaps shouldn't have happened, when the men who came home either reverted to what they had been before they went off to wherever to study or however they had gone to the United States and who caused great problems. I think that the saddest stories that we heard as an embassy had to do with women who had married either policemen or Iranian noncommissioned officers or enlisted men in their military, who had gone over to the United States for short-term training programs of various sorts, who went to bases, say, in Texas or somewhere and were there for four months or six months and picked up a bride in the process - nice looking men, really nice looking men, and I can see how it might happen. Then these women would come back to Iran, and they would be out in the middle of nowhere living in conditions that they would never have lived in in the United States, and they were prisoners. It was very, very sad in some cases. That continues to this day, of course, with the new government as well as the old. It happens in Afghanistan, as I said, and probably in other Islamic countries as part of a culture which is hard - it's not the religion but the culture which is hard for us to accept.

Q: Well, Ernie, why don't we stop at this point and pick it up next time when you leave Iran in 1974?

Today is the 12th of January 1998. Ernie, 1974, in the first place just to give a little continuity to it, where did you meet Doug?

HECK: Well, I actually met him in 1964 when he was the political counselor and he came down to Bombay, where I was working at the time, and I was the factotum for the consul general. He came down to take Jane Abel, who is now Jane Abel Coon, off to Goa. It was the first time the Americans had visited Goa after the take-over by the Indian government in Portugal. I actually had 15 minutes of conversation with him in the outer office, so that doesn't really count. When I actually got to know him was at the time that I had come back from India in 1968. I was assigned to that office for four or five months until the junior officer course started, and I was actually attached to Carol Bunker, Carol Laise Bunker and was her good right hand, I guess, for about four months. I didn't think of it again until the winter of '69 when I was working in INR on South Vietnam, and I suddenly got an offer to be sent off to South Asia, actually to Afghanistan. Robert Newman, then the ambassador, wanted a woman. He didn't care what she was doing. He wanted a woman as something that was professional, and I was offered the job by the South Asian people. Well, the junior officer people heard this, and they immediately turned it off. Of course, the junior officer office controls junior officers for the first two years, and I went downstairs to see the junior officer people a day later or two days later and got this awful explanation which was that I had been in South Asia and, since all of South Asia and Africa were the same anyway, they thought that they would send me and they had already assigned me to go to Rio to be a consular officer. Now I had classmates who would kill for that job, but it wasn't me. I went back upstairs to INR complaining. My boss, who was then Dick Smizer, working on North Vietnam - and basically what I was doing was working out in days what the North Vietnamese were doing in the peace talks - he said, "The one way you can get out of this is to go to Vietnam. How would you like to go to Vietnam?" I said, "Fine, anything that will make me (a) a political officer and (b) get me back to Asia," and so that's how I got to Vietnam. Well, to go back one step further, I had, in the same time of talking to Dick Smizer, also written to Doug Heck, who had been my boss on the South Asian desk, who was then off in Istanbul. By the time his answer got to me, my problem had long been solved, but I had made the connection and that's where it came from. Then in the meantime one thing led to another, and four years later we were married.

Q: You were going where in '74 then?

HECK: In '74 he had just been assigned as the ambassador to Niger, and in the typical Foreign Service way of the early '70s, they didn't even tell him where he was going. He had a phone call on Thanksgiving morning our time, so Thanksgiving evening Washington time or whatever, the then Director General of the Foreign Service asked if he would go to Niger. He said yes. That was in late November. In late January it was announced publicly that he was going to Niger, so that's how he heard about it. When I think about it today, I think that's really a terrible way to handle an appointment. But anyway so there we were and we were going to go to Niger. We left Tehran in March of 1974 with a lot of people making really horrendous racist comments about going to the dark continent. The Iranians were not exactly nonracist.

Q: This was from the Iranian side?

HECK: Oh, yes, all from the Iranians, and we went through at least a month, maybe six weeks, of

daily lunches and dinners. There were farewell parties everywhere, but it was interesting in sort of an odd way to try to decide what they thought about it, because they were all so embarrassed about it. They couldn't congratulate us. "My God, he's going to Africa." But they could certainly feel it, and so we had a lot of caveats but not a lot of good memories from that.

Q: This was the era when everybody was competing, you know, the African leaders. Had the Iranians made any efforts to reach out as the Soviets had and everyone else to get African students at the universities and all that?

HECK: Not quite then, Stu, a little later perhaps. They were into the big time in the '74-'75 period. Late '73 was when the major war came for Israel, and that was the Yom Kippur War. The price of oil, which the Shah had been fighting tremendously for getting it raised, was \$10.50 a barrel then. He got nowhere until the Yom Kippur War, and then all of a sudden the price of oil just shot up, and you remember what that did in the United States. Well, what it did in Iran, of course, was make an already more or less rich country really rich, and they could just spread this money out any way they wanted. It was a very short period. It was about four and a half years and then, of course, the whole country went comatose, but in that one four-and-a-half- or five-year period they were really going to town.

Q: Was there any feeling that you got from your contact and Doug's contacts that the Iranians had any sort of social interest in helping their neighbors?

HECK: No, not at all. There was a completely different base between the upper and the lower middle classes in Iran, and I don't think I noticed it. I feel that a lot of it had to do with the fact that I was very newly married and I was very much into other things. I wasn't being the political officer; I was being the wife, and I didn't see this, but it was tremendous. So you would have on one hand the annual period of fasting that comes every year in Islam. Nobody I knew did it. All they did was sort of hide behind the doors. They could eat anything they wanted whenever they wanted. They just didn't do it in public. Did I notice it? No, I didn't. So when we left, we left behind a lot of people who had been part of a very rich lifestyle, a number of whom either were executed or escaped in the late '70s. The ones I always thought about were the poor. The stories that I remember are much more tearful than perhaps some of the those of the rich people who were just sort of nutty.

Q: Well, turning to Niger, you were there from when to when?

ANDREW I. KILLGORE
Political Consular
Tehran (1972-1974)

Ambassador Andrew I. Killgore was born on a farm in Alabama, and graduated from a small teacher's training college in Livingston, Alabama. He entered the Foreign Service as a Wristonee, initially working as a service staff officer. He has

served in Jordan, Baghdad, Tehran, and Qatar. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 15, 1988.

Q: How did you get this assignment to Tehran as political counselor, which at the time was considered a fairly important assignment?

KILLGORE: It's a big assignment, a very big embassy, class one embassy and all that. Because Joseph Farland, political appointee, was appointed as ambassador to Tehran.

Q: And he had been in Pakistan.

KILLGORE: He had been the ambassador in Pakistan when I served in the East Wing, and I saw a lot of Joe Farland and liked him, and he liked me. He liked my reporting. He liked my writing and my style and he also liked my personal style.

Q: You got along well.

KILLGORE: We got along very well. Joe, mind you, he's no giant intellect. But when I heard that this Tehran job was open and that my name was bouncing around on lists but not very high, I told Joe Farland, "Look, Mr. Ambassador, if you have enough political clout to get appointed as U.S. ambassador to Tehran, you certainly have enough political clout to take me as your political counselor. So if you want me to go with you to Tehran, you just have to say in no uncertain terms to the office of personnel, to Joe Sisco, 'It's going to be Andy Killgore, nobody else.'"

It's better to be lucky than rich, as we say. The very next day, as it turned out, as I found out later, Joe Sisco and Joe Farland, the two Joes, were going over to the White House to call on President Nixon and have a photograph taken. In the ride from the State Department via automobile over to the White House, Joe Farland told Joe Sisco, "It's going to be Andy Killgore."

The next day I got the job. Farland said, "You got it." You know what Joe Sisco said? "I got Andy Killgore that job." (Laughs) In any case, that's how I got the job.

Q: So we're talking now about being the political counselor, which means you were in charge of political reporting from Iran, from 1972 until early 1974. What was the situation there and how did you port it?

KILLGORE: The situation was that we were not talking to the opposition in Iran, believe it or not. There was no negative reporting on the Shah.

Q: Was there illegal opposition at that time?

KILLGORE: Really, the Shah was the total boss. No, it was, "Yes, sir, boss." The Shah was it. As a consequence, of course, it was a very unsatisfying job if, in effect, you can't talk about the political situation. I did have a pretty good job the first eight or nine months that I was there, because Ambassador Farland did not like to write or couldn't write, I don't know. So he would go

down and talk to the Shah or to the Prime Minister Hoveyda, or to Khalat Bari, the Foreign Minister, and he would come back, and I would talk to him about what had happened in the conversation. Then I would sit down with my secretary and dictate a first-person telegram, long or short, as if I were Joe Farland, and normally he just shot it off to Washington.

Q: *This was pretty much our political reporting?*

KILLGORE: That was our political reporting.

Q: *In other words, we would talk to the Shah.*

KILLGORE: Moreover, there was something very important going on that we were explicitly told not to talk about. Just two, two and a half weeks before I arrived in Tehran, June 26 or June 27, 1972, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, who was still the NSC man, zipped down to Tehran from Kiev. They'd been traveling in the Soviet Union. They spent one night in Tehran and dined with the Shah, the night of May 30, 1972. They told the Shah that night, "You can buy all the military equipment you want other than nuclear weapons." That was a fateful, disastrous step, because the Shah was a megalomaniac. He had been pushing us for years to let him have all this military equipment, and we'd kept him on a short leash until then.

Henry and Nixon flew off the next day to Warsaw. It was almost as if they were down there on a lark. You got yourself this big plane, down to Tehran, back up to Warsaw. As soon as Henry got back, he sent out a message. I don't know if it was ever recorded or not. The word was passed. It's mentioned in a recent book by Professor James Bill, who is now at William and Mary, was at the University of Texas for years, a book called The Eagle and the Lion, about United States and Iran, in which the word was passed, "There will be no second guessing this decision to sell all the arms the Shah wanted. You just carry it out." Now, this became a painful situation, because I knew dozens of the fellows who were over there as the months and years went by, who were in the business of trying to train the Iranians to use all this equipment, and it piled up in gigantic amounts, covering mile after mile after mile, up hills and mountains, down valleys, with huge fences around it, gathering dust in the sun. Eventually, \$25 billion worth of equipment.

Of course, you have to look at the Arab-Israel context to understand. It made no sense in terms of the United States. If you look at Iran, the population of Iran is almost double the population of all the Arab states touching the Gulf. That includes Iraq, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Kuwait. As you know, Britain was pulling out from east of Suez then, and some giant vacuum was reckoned to be forming over the Gulf, some power vacuum. We selected the Shah as our strongman. This defies all the rules of geopolitics, of *Real Politik*. You don't pick the strongest man; you always pick a smaller group to be your special guys on the local scene, for obvious reasons. If you pick the big boy on the block, he has the capability of rushing off on his own. Of course, the Shah and the Israelis were allied close together. The Persians hate the Arabs, and Arabs hate the Persians. This is a fundamental of history. It goes back to Sargon the Great in 2300 B.C. There's a geographic and cultural divide along that Zagros mountain line there.

In any case, this crazy sale of arms went on, and the Shah started talking in the most grandiose

terms. He was going to build an empire that excelled that of Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C., which was ultimately destroyed by Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. He said, "Our industry is really building. We are catching up with West Germany." Mind you, they were making Kleenexes and assembling a little car called the Kahan, something like that. Surpassed Albania, but not West Germany. And he always talked in terms of ten years, "Within ten years, we'll be overtaking Japan."

Q: In the first place, this decision, I know, almost all of us within the Foreign Service and certainly within the press in the United States, who were not experts, were wondering, "What the hell are we doing, giving so much?" Really very fancy aircraft, which were the most noticeable things, to somebody who is outside of our control and often an area that was very unstable.

KILLGORE: It doesn't make any sense, except in terms of the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

Q: In other words, this would be off balance to build a super power, military power on the other side of the Arab world.

KILLGORE: If you have a super military power on the west side of the Arab world, that would be Israel, and you have a super power non-Arab, there being this basic antipathy between the Persians and the Arabs, on the east side of the Arab world, then you've got the Arabs squeezed in between, and Israel could keep everything it wanted.

Q: Do you think that Nixon and Kissinger knew what they were doing on this?

KILLGORE: I don't know about Nixon. Nixon was looking, of course, to get re-elected. This was, after all, an election year, 1972. Henry, of course, was just a fifth columnist, as far as I'm concerned. He was working for the Israelis.

Q: Do you think there was anything to our military pushing? Because there is such a thing as economics of scale. In other words, if you want to build an F-14 Tomcat plane, it costs less for the United States Army or Navy to have one of those if you're building 500 than if you're building 40 of them. So if you sell a lot to this oil-rich country, this means your airplanes are going to cost less.

KILLGORE: You can make all sorts of rationales that make a kind of spurious case for doing this. I was complaining among my colleagues quite frequently in Tehran, saying, "This is crazy." They said, "Well, Andy, this is too big for you to fight with. After all, this is keeping tens of thousands of American workers busy. There's unemployment in the States. It's keeping the factories going. We're making money out of it and he's paying for them." Just as you can pay less per copy, as the Pentagon says, for a sophisticated fighter bomber if you're manufacturing 1,000 of them, as against manufacturing, say, only 50. Obviously you get a cheaper price. But the problem was that Iran did not have the societal cohesion or the skill level or the internal political solidarity to support this kind of a vast buildup. After all, the farms were being cheated, the workers' housing was being cheated.

Q: So we're really talking about a destabilizing situation.

KILLGORE: It's like a pack mule and say he's strong. You've got 400 pounds on his back. But you see, here's another 1,000. But he collapses, rather than being able to carry it. And that's what happened with the Iranians. It was shameful.

We lived up in a part of Tehran called Darrous, about 5,000 feet up in the foothills of the Elburz mountains there. We had a fairly grand house with a swimming pool. Behind us, however, in a little alley-way, you had some little one-room hutments where people lived. These were families. And they got their water not from a pipe, but they dipped the water out of the jube, the jube that ran along the streets.

Q: Equivalent to a sewer?

KILLGORE: A little cleaner than a sewer, yes. I felt acutely uncomfortable living in those circumstances, when I knew damn well the money spent on U.S. arms should have been put to a better purpose. Also, the Shah's megalomania was becoming such that when he talked about an empire like that of Cyrus the Great, you didn't have to be a very well educated Arab to know that Cyrus the Great ruled countries all the way across to the Mediterranean and, in fact, into Turkey and even into parts of Greece, down into Egypt!

Q: This was an absolute prohibition?

KILLGORE: Absolutely.

Q: Isn't this unusual?

KILLGORE: Unprecedented.

Q: How about not only you, but the officers you dealt with and the ambassador? I would think there would be a matter of revolt, to be able to say, "This is out of bounds."

KILLGORE: It didn't happen. Ambassador Farland was not a very thoughtful man. In other words, he believed the propaganda that there was something called a white revolution going on in Iran. There was a literacy corps, there was a health corps. The Shah had seized the great landed estates and divided them up, given them to the peasants, was the line one heard. Actually, he had wrecked agriculture.

I remember when my eyes first opened to reality. The director of the Peace Corps in Iran asked me, as political counselor, if I would be willing to come down and talk to the Peace Corps volunteers. I said, "Sure." And I did. I learned more from them than they learned from me. They kept referring to a fellow named George. "George has built the greatest society on earth, health corps, literacy corps, villages are being rebuilt, fresh water, pure water." They were talking about George Bernard Shaw--Shah. They referred to the Shah as George. They told me that the so-called literacy corps and health corps that were much touted in the media and in the PR

pronouncements by the government of Iran, were simply not happening at all; they were just words. There was nothing but poverty and misery out in the villages, that the government wasn't doing anything. Subsequently, I traveled to every corner of Iran by road. The truth of what the volunteers said was evident.

Q: The political reporting, which you were supposed to be doing, to use an elegant diplomatic term, they cut your balls off on this. What about the other branch of our reporting, the CIA? They're supposed to be doing this type of work.

KILLGORE: They were in such a close alliance, they were in almost a passionate embrace with the Shah. Don't forget, if you remember the press for years and years and years, the CIA, every time something happened around the world that gave CIA a black eye, they would always say, "But we can't talk about the good things that we're doing. Only the bad stuff comes out." And our great success in helping to overthrow Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh in 1953, and throwing the Shah back in power, who had actually fled to Rome for a few days, that was regarded as CIA's greatest single triumph. It was so touted for years! It was trumpeted as a great American national victory. We had changed the whole course of a country here. You may recall that Mossadegh, in the press, was referred to at the time as a dangerous leftist, maybe allied with the Communists. This was in 1952-53, in that period. Actually, of course, he was a conservative landlord. He was a nationalist. He wanted to nationalize the oil. That's what it got down to, because he felt that Iran was being robbed by the oil companies.

Q: From Tehran, you left in January 1974, and you went in May 1974 to New Zealand as deputy chief of mission. Why this?

PHILLIP W. PILLSBURY, JR.
American Bi-national Center Director
Tehran (1972-1974)

Phillip W. Pillsbury, Jr. was born in Chicago in 1935. He received a BA from Yale University in 1957 and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. His overseas posts included Spain, Italy, Mali, Madagascar, Zaire, Iran, and Argentina. He was interviewed by Charles Kennedy on February 28, 1994.

Q: Then you left Lubumbashi and you went back ... You were reinstated in USIA as an FSIO. Then you went off where?

PILLSBURY: It came as a bolt out of the blue, really. I can't remember the places that I put on my bid list, but Tehran was not one of them. I had no experience in that part of the world at all. I had no language experience, no cultural experience, no knowledge of the history, no training. Nothing in my college career would have indicated an assignment to Tehran, but the man who was PAO in Tehran at the time had been my boss, had been Director of African Affairs in USIA and liked what I did apparently in the center. He needed a director to run the American

Binational Center, known as the Iran American Society. So he had me come and I was extremely honored and please to be so named. Then when we got there, again, it was one of these wonderful openings that occur for Foreign Service Officers when you encounter for the first time a culture and a tradition and a people that you know nothing about. It was a tabula rasa from day one. I just learned an enormous amount.

Q: What did you do? What was the political situation? You were there from '72 to '74?

PILLSBURY: Right. From '72 to '74. It was a fascinating political situation because during the time the Yom Kippur war occurred in October of '73 I think and the world woke up to the fact that oil was no longer a cheap commodity. The price went up from 2 or \$3 a barrel to around \$11 overnight. The world realized for the first time that OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, was a formidable adversary that would require a whole new way of dealing, politically, economically... And little had been prepared in the way of police. Also it was at a time when the Nixon administration looked at the Shah of Iran as the bastion of security in south west Asia, in that part of the world. Here we had a man who was absolutely in control, an absolute monarch. There was no doubt about that. His interview with Oriana Fallaci is a classic of a person who had assumed in his own mind and certainly was regarded as such by the people around him as something even above an ordinary king. The Shah knew a great deal about the oil industry and was the leader at the time in, and I give him credit today for making us in the west wake up to the fact that energy is ... I mean that there are down sides to profligacy. Profligacy and the use of energy, petroleum products at any rate. He also was the first to really make the world at large recognize the importance of oil to world economies. So I give him credit for that. He was also bent on acquiring a very modern military force. The figure of twenty billion dollars in purchase sticks in my mind. Something like that. It was a huge military operation and we had a very large advisory and training military presence in Iran at the time. There was also the fact that they bordered with the Soviet Union. Right across the Caspian Sea were some of the Soviet Union's most important missile facilities. It was a place of enormous security interest to the United States. So that going from Zaire which was the most important security interest of ours in Africa perhaps, to going to Iran when at the time Iran was one of our most important security interest worldwide was a fascinating experience. I certainly wasn't involved with the political end very much. I was the Cultural Officer in charge of the Iran-American society at the time, but you couldn't help but recognize the importance of being in Iran at that time.

Q: A great many Iranians go to the United States universities. How did you find being in the cultural center ...? Were you dealing with the American trained Iranians? What did you do?

PILLSBURY: At the time the Iran-American Society (IAS) was the largest institution of its kind in the world. It had been vastly expanded by my predecessor. They received a grant for operation from USIA, especially for the salaries of the Director, the Deputy Director and the two Americans who ran the English teaching program. The English teaching program was one of the largest in the world, twenty thousand students a year. The cultural facilities were like none other. It had the best theater in the Middle-East. So that as a presence, the American cultural presence was by far the most important I would say of any western country. The Shah was not interested in having any Soviet or Chinese presence at all. He did not permit access to the opposition. He said

that that was being taken care of by his own intelligence people, the SAVAK as you know at the time. This was an accepted quid pro quo. We had invested in the Shah the position of the bastion of security in the Middle-East and also a very important access to watching and listening to what the Soviets were doing across the Caspian Sea. That was important for us too. So that there was a quid pro quo operation there that was recognized by both sides. The Cultural Center itself, given the fact that we had that unrestricted access and that extraordinary facility, we regarded that as a very strong responsibility not just as presenting aspects of American life to the Iranians, but also in a truly binational sense putting on and presenting works that were Iranian to Iranian and American audiences. So that our programming there was really half and half. That, coupled with the English teaching program, we had a credibility there that was very wide and we also willy-nilly had people coming in whom we now know were members of the opposition. One of the hostages during the hostage crisis in 1980 was the PAO at the time whose guards spoke perfect English and who told him that they'd learned their English at the American Cultural Center. So that we know that we had, tacit perhaps, but access to elements of the opposition. The poetry readings that we would do, we had Iranian poets come in and read their poetry to audiences of two thousand people. It was just an extraordinary experience to see that. We know also that the Ministry of Information was watching us. Just before I arrived the society did a play by Bertold Brecht that had been translated into Farsi. The Ministry of Information had to approve each page of the translation before the play could be presented. The play went on, and the first night, it had not been going on more than an hour when somebody in the audience who turned out to be a member of the Ministry of Information got up and said: "We're going to close it down." The reason was that the actors were using intonations and inserting words into the translation that were messages from the opposition that were recognized by the members from the Ministry of Information right away which of course the American director didn't read at all. But it was an indication that our activities were very closely followed by the Shah's people and that we had very unlimited access within a very narrow framework.

Q: What was your impression of the Iranians who were trained in the United States and came back? I assume they would be one of your major clientele.

PILLSBURY: Not just the ones trained in the United States, the European trained ones also were just very easy to get along, wonderful people. I mean they were our best friends. Years after of course, after the revolution they went to the four corners of the earth, the European trained ones and it took a long time for us to reestablish contact with some of our friends who got out. But they were the ones we dealt with. We were with them all the time partly because it was easier, partly because they understood America and Europe, partly because we weren't allowed to have access to the people in the bazaar and (a part of where the opposition) around the countryside. So that the Iranians on the board of the IAS were European-trained or American-trained Iranians. Generally that was our life. I always felt of course that it was proved that they too had, in their training, lost contact with some of their own heritage and roots and above all, they'd certainly lost any kind of credibility with the Khomeini people who came in. They were among the first that the Khomeini people wanted to get rid of, either truly eliminating or just getting out of the country.

Q: Was it a matter of concern to you or to our operation there, whether attempts to reach into the countryside, to the more fundamentalists, or to the more mercantile bazaar?

PILLSBURY: Again as I said when you question in terms of our recognizing winds of opposition coming into Iran, I'd say that the beginnings of the indication that something was rotten in the State really began to occur just as we were leaving in 1974. I believe the first killing of an American military guy took place at that time. So that there were hints of things to come. The Shah's illness, his cancer was not known, although he had it then. He did have it but it was kept very quiet. Certainly when we left in '74, he remained in our minds, my wife's and mine anyway, omnipotent. There were scholars, one is James Bill who is now teaching at William and Mary who did have access to elements of the opposition. It was permitted by the Shah, and especially by his wife, the Shahbanou, for scholarly reasons to talk to people who were *verboden* to us anyway, were not permitted. I'm assuming that some of the intelligence people had access to the opposition perhaps on an agreed basis with the SAVAK. That I don't know, but I'm assuming. There were a couple of officers who wrote very fine pieces on the need to have access to the opposition and recognize especially the religious people, and in this case, one in particular wrote this thing for ... What was that channel called? The Dissent Channel. He wrote some pieces that I think are required reading or ought to be in terms of his views, in terms of what was happening in the religious community. So that there were some voices, but it was never really ... I don't think that anyone foresaw the explosion that occurred in '79. That period from February to November '79.

Q: Was there concern on the part of you and others in USIA about the effect of this large American, particularly military and AID community, because you know, we bring our own baggage with us, and to suddenly plunk it down in the middle of an Islamic society (...) cultural clashes?

PILLSBURY: It was huge. It was not so much of a concern, because, at my level at any rate, what I read about the situation too, it looked, as I said, to me as if the Shah would squelch any kind of opposition. But where it was evident ... I give one example, the Shah bought a thousand helicopters -- he never did anything in a small way -- from the Bell Helicopter Corporation in Texas. The Shah decided that he wanted to decentralize this type of operation in the countryside. He wanted to decentralize, and rightfully so. And part of what he called his White Revolution, he wanted to decentralize the economy and move it away from Tehran. So he established the helicopter base of operation in Isfahan, one of the most beautiful cities in the world and certainly a tremendously important religious center for the Shiites. So, all of a sudden, you get the support structure flying in from Texas into the middle of a culture that is totally alien, and they ran amok. They created a horrible public relations problem. So much so that the Bell Helicopter people called a lot of them back to Texas for sensitivity training and cultural training, and we began working on a crash basis with the military to provide a basic understanding of what Islam was all about. This was done by one person in particular who is the daughter of Margaret Mead, Mrs. Bateson who was brilliant in cross-cultural communication. But it was something that should have been done ... Let's say the Shah orders a thousand helicopters, and one or two years later they begin to send their people after they've been trained. It was much too fast and created all sorts of problems. I think that, there's no doubt in my mind, that, if we in '74 didn't have much

inkling of the cataclysm that occurred in '79, that period of massive military build up with the absolute necessary military assistance of Americans who were very good in their field but perhaps more culturally sensitive, that created a fertile field for the preachings of the Iranians, of Khomeini and his people. So that really is I hope a lesson learned in terms of our dealings with traditional societies outside of the small circle we talked about, the European/American trained Iranians. But moving that out into areas where there was no understanding, to see foreigners, in this case Americans, trampling on traditions and cultures that are held sacred, that was a fertile field for Khomeini to preach to, I tell you.

Q: You left Tehran in '74?

PILLSBURY: Yes, in '74. I came back to USIA

HENRY PRECHT
Political/Military Officer
Tehran (1972-1976)

Henry Precht was born in Georgia in 1932. After receiving his AA from Armstrong College in 1951 and his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1953, he served in the US Navy from 1953-1957. His career has included positions in Rome, Alexandria, Port Louis, Tehran, and Cairo. Mr. Precht was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.

Q: In 1972 how did you feel about leaving?

PRECHT: It was time to go. You didn't want to make your career living on Mauritius. I was told I was going to Tehran to be the political/military officer, a key position in the embassy.

Q: Oh, yes.

PRECHT: The Shah was keenly interested in military matters. I had been in the Navy but had no experience in military matters. I couldn't tell an F-4 [an aircraft] from a M-4 [an armored vehicle]. After my Harvard experience I wasn't terribly keen on being part of the military industrial complex. Nevertheless, it sounded like a challenging experience. While on Mauritius we had an R&R (rest and recuperation trip) and used it to go to India and visit friends in Iran, so we had been to Iran and it seemed like an appealing assignment. So, I went off bravely to a new challenge.

Q: You were in Tehran from 1972 until when?

PRECHT: Until 1976.

Q: You had a full tour there then.

PRECHT: Yes. I originally went for two years but the ambassador asked if I would extend and I said that I would for another year. Tehran was not an easy place to live in, but there were places in Iran we wanted to visit. After three years were up, I got in touch with the department and asked about my next assignment. They said that there were no three-year tours in Iran, only two or four years, "So you are there for four years." I didn't complain, but I warned that after three years I would think I knew everything and no one would be able to instruct me. In the event, I think my prediction proved correct.

Q: Did you get a briefing before you went to Tehran?

PRECHT: I had three or four days in Washington. No language training was deemed necessary for my job as military liaison. I spent most of the time on the desk in the Department and the Pentagon. When I arrived there I asked the desk officer, Jack Miklos, if he could recommend something that I could read that would bring me up to date on modern Iranian politics. He said, "There are no books on Iran." There were, of course. There was the classic Nationalism in Iran by Richard Cottam, but Mr. Cottam was a friend of those in opposition to the Shah and was persona non grata. No one got access to the Department of State who opposed the Shah.

The other remark that I recall from the desk in those four days was Jack Miklos telling me that I would no longer have to worry about what arms we might or might not sell to the Shah. Previously, before I arrived on the scene, there had been a regular debate between the Pentagon military elements and the State Department on how to deal with the Shah's continuing requests to buy sophisticated American equipment. The arguments against it were that his people weren't able to maintain or operate such advanced equipment or whether threats to Iran justified the sale. Earlier there had been questions about whether he had resources for purchases, but oil money and aid money had made Iran a success story in the '60s and he was no longer on the aid list. He could afford whatever he wanted. Jack Miklos said that those bureaucratic questions would now disappear because Kissinger and Nixon had been in Iran in early June of 1972 and had reached agreement with the Shah that he could buy whatever he wanted short of nuclear weapons and the Americans wouldn't second guess him. So, Jack told me he was drafting a memorandum for Kissinger to send to the Executive Branch saying exactly that. He said that that should solve a lot of my problems in Iran. Actually it made a lot of problems.

Q: I think it is always interesting to catch the impressions of the new boy on the block before he gets absorbed in the details. Were you getting from other people questions about the Shah? About his role? As you were to experience later there was this thing that maybe we were overly sold on the Shah.

PRECHT: Absolutely not. There was no one in the Department of State who questioned the Shah's stability. There hadn't been when I was a staff aid in late '60s. There was no doubt in the official mind that the Shah was good for Iran and Iranians loved the Shah. When I arrived at the embassy, I was struck by the absence of any political expression. My job was not to monitor internal affairs at all, but this was a country where no one had any opportunity to criticize the government -- not even on the local level and certainly not the Shah himself. He was absolutely

off limits. I wondered how it was that a man trained to be a Ph.D. in the United States and coming back to Iran to practice his profession or a businessman could accept their inability even to protest the local taxes or inadequate services of the government. The conclusion I came to was that this was a country that for the first time in its history was really making it. People who had never had much of anything now had not only refrigerators and cars and new apartments but were able to send their children overseas for education. Politics was less interesting to them than their economic well-being. They knew if they got into politics they would jeopardize their economic standing.

Q: I have read recent accounts about Iran and it is hard for us to go back to a time when it really was a terribly primitive place. I'm talking about in the early 20th century.

PRECHT: Well, I'm currently reading a book by Lord Curzon who was in Iran in the 1890s and the descriptions of travel in the country are just as primitive as you can imagine. There were few roads. Nothing had been developed along the lines Europe had taken.

Q: When you arrived there, who was the ambassador and what was your impression of what the embassy was doing?

PRECHT: The ambassador was Joseph Farland, a political appointee who had been in the Dominican Republic, Panama and Pakistan previously. He had brought several friends of his from the staff in Pakistan to Tehran. It was a large embassy with a large military mission. There was no longer an aid program but we still had the Peace Corps. We had a [four-person] political section: the political counselor and three officers - one for international affairs, one for domestic affairs, and me for military affairs. In effect, I worked directly with the DCM and the ambassador. Later in my tour, I was made counselor of embassy because it was, truly, an independent function. I was interested in the local scene although there wasn't a great deal to sink your teeth into politically in Iran, but whenever I got the opportunity I did so. My job was exclusively working with the MAAG [Military Assistance Advisory Group], our military mission, and the defense attachés. We had another mission to the Iran Gendarmerie which is sort of the rural police force and I worked with them occasionally. I learned a lot in a very short period of time.

Q: What was your feeling about the expertise in the embassy about this country?

PRECHT: I thought it was pretty good. I thought the political section was not very impressive because they had nothing to do. The economic section had more to deal with commercially. Iran was buying a lot. We had a heavily engaged consular section issuing visas to Iranians and occasionally I would go over and help them out issuing visas just in order to get a chance to talk with some regular Iranians who weren't in uniform. We had a very busy USIS program and a big English language program. It was quite an active embassy. Mr. Farland, I think, was not quite up to the job. He was supported by a very good DCM, Doug Heck, but he didn't exert any real leadership in the embassy.

Q: You were in the political section and usually the political section talks to the media, talks to

the intellectuals and gets a feel for things. I have heard, at least at other times, they were under wraps. Was there that feeling?

PRECHT: Yes, the Shah plainly didn't want us messing around with his opposition, such as it was. The domestic political officer, Stan Escudero, once had the gall to schedule an appointment with a mullah down in the Tehran bazaar area. A few hours before he was to leave for his appointment there was a call from the Ministry of Court saying that it would not be a good idea for Mr. Escudero to have this meeting. So, the ambassador said, "Stan, you stay at home."

In 1974 or '75 I was the escort officer for Congressman Solarz, who was a liberal Democrat. I met him at the airport and was driving in with him and gave him his schedule of appointments. He wasn't going to see the Shah because the Shah didn't see liberal Democrats in those days, but he did get to see the court minister. He said, "Am I not meeting with the opposition leaders?" I said, "There are no opposition leaders in Iran. There is no opposition." He said, "Of course, there is opposition. Every country has opposition. Surely there are students who oppose the Shah." I said, "Yes, there are students who demonstrate." "I would like to meet some of those." I said, "Okay." So, I went back to the embassy and got USIS to organize a meeting on Friday afternoon of a group of students who could talk to the congressman. They did that. Friday morning we got a call from the ministry of court saying the meeting with the students was canceled. It was that kind of very tight, very closed political system. A CIA friend, formerly assigned in Moscow, told me the Iranian regime was more autocratic than the Soviets.

I once met a journalist who had just come back from a year's scholarship at Harvard. I talked to him and he seemed interesting so I said, "Well, maybe we could have lunch." We met in the embassy restaurant for conversation and I repeated that engagement with him every six weeks or so. He was the only Iranian I met in four years who would venture a word of criticism about the regime. I would go back to the embassy after we had had our steak and beer and send in a memorandum of conversation, not a cable, recording his views. I want to let the desk know that there was one person in the country, at least, who didn't fall in lock step with the Shah's regime. Of course there was no official reaction to my contact with someone opposed to the regime – perhaps the only such contact the Embassy had.

Q: It is interesting when you think of a comparable situation, say with Chiang Kai-shek, where the political idea was you either were for Chiang Kai-shek or you are a communist, or something of that nature, there was always talk about Chiang Kai-shek and the corruption and all this. I find it an interesting phenomenon at the time how little opposition there was within the body politic in the United States to the Shah including the embassy. This is really almost non-American.

PRECHT: Well, Iran wasn't entirely free of criticism. To jump ahead, after the surge in oil prices and the big spending spree that the Shah launched in 1974, Business Week, Time, Wall Street Journal, several others, had a series of articles on corruption and autocracy. Congress began to hold hearings. This upset the Shah terribly. He once told our ambassador that he was going to put a stop to it. He was having word sent to Jerusalem to call the American press off. It was his thesis that Jewish interests controlled by Israel could influence the American press.

So, there was criticism at times but it was never sustained and it was never, never shared by the Department of State. The Department of State towards the end of my tour was constantly having to go up to testify on the Hill about human rights in Iran and arms sales and to defend Iran which we felt was our obligation to do.

Q: I am trying to capture the spirit because we are talking about the early '70s. This was the time when we had junior officers practically setting themselves on fire and opposed to policy. This was a great time for young educated people to demonstrate but Iran seemed to be off the radar screen of protest within the foreign service.

PRECHT: There was one officer, John Washburn, who was the petroleum officer and had quite a liberal and free ranging intelligence. When he left, after four years in Iran, he wrote a long memorandum to the ambassador describing what he knew of corruption in the regime. One copy to the ambassador only. I don't think anybody else ever saw it. It was that kind of sensitivity. You would never put that into a cable back to the department which might be leaked. That was our great fear.

But, there are two other factors. First of all, opposition wasn't easily manifested. It wasn't readily apparent. There were students who demonstrated regularly. In Iran the students had anniversaries. Troops had gone to the university and shot a bunch of them so the next year and the year after on that day there would be demonstrations and they would be put down again. There were several of those occasions during the year. But, beyond that, there was nothing. People didn't throw manifestoes over the embassy wall or light themselves on fire in a public square. The demonstrations occurred on the university grounds where they were put down or in the United States on university grounds. So, you didn't come naturally into contact with people like my journalist friend.

The other thing was some people in opposition were shooting at us. While I was there, terrorists assassinated six people, three of whom were friends of mine. It is awfully hard to say you should invite such people to tea. We tended to dismiss these events as a nasty bit of business, but not something that was seriously threatening the regime's stability.

During my four years, each year there would be a delegation from the National War College that would come over and I would be the person who arranged their schedule. Inevitably there would be a visit to the Shah who would spend an hour with them talking for ten minutes and then answering questions. Rarely have I seen anyone so well versed in international affairs, someone with a wider range of knowledge than the Shah. They would ask him if he preferred to pilot the F-4 or F-5. What did he think of the drought in the Sahel? Usually there would be a question about his domestic opposition and he would dismiss it. "A nuisance," he would say. This is the "red and the black" conspiracy. Communists and religious fanatics, but they will not stop us from our work on development. We are bound to become a power second only to Germany, or whatever. His megalomania at that stage prohibited him from recognizing that there was a problem with domestic dissent. I am not able today to say how serious that dissent was. You didn't get the sense in 1972-76 that any kind of revolution was brooding.

Q: Our concern at that particular point would have been the Communists and the Soviets. How did we feel about that?

PRECHT: Well, the Communist Party, had largely been eliminated. I think SAVAK (the Shah's secret police force) was still trying to find some under rocks and our CIA was interested in what the Soviets were up to. But, internally, no one took it as a very serious matter.

Q: What about the religious side?

PRECHT: It was absolutely not something we worried about. In 1975 or 1976, I was the escort officer for Senator Percy who came over. He got the standard embassy briefing that everything was hunky-dory in hunky-dory land. Then he said to me that he would like to see the unofficial Israeli ambassador and have a briefing from him. So, I took him there. I had never been in the Israeli non-embassy, which was a kind of bunker. The ambassador was Uri Lubrani, one of their top diplomats. He had been in Ethiopia and was later in a senior diplomat for Lebanon. He told Senator Percy that the most serious problem that the Shah had domestically was from the religious elements who were hostile and very difficult for him to deal with. I never heard anyone say that in the American embassy. I never heard any journalists say it or any Iranians say it. This was the first time that I heard that analysis. By that time I had acquired some knowledge of Iranian history and had known the religious folk had led a boycott of tobacco in the 1890s and were put down brutally when they objected to the Shah's father. And religious figures had been big in the Mossadegh period. But, I had never heard that in the '70s.

Q: During Mossadegh's time had the religious side allied with him?

PRECHT: They were with him at the beginning, I believe, and then turned against him. Their defection seriously weakened Mossadegh.

Q: Did you feel the hand of the CIA there?

PRECHT: The CIA was big stuff there. Their chief of station would see the Shah separately, alone, as did the MAAG Chief and later the Special Representative of DOD [Department of Defense]. Otherwise, the ambassador was the only other person that did. When Helms was the ambassador, of course, the Agency never tried anything without full consultation with him. But, they were clearly a big factor in Iran.

Q: What could they do? Normally the CIA are either chasing Soviets or they are trying to find out who is doing what to whom within a country.

PRECHT: It was more than that in Iran. They had their liaison with SAVAK which was a much feared organization by the Iranians but not much respected by our people. I got to read some of their reports occasionally and found them appallingly simple. They also did their thing with the Soviets and the Eastern Bloc countries. Beyond that they had listening stations which were terribly important to the United States for monitoring Soviet missile launchings. Because of the

geography, Iran was perhaps the only place where we could get a bead on Soviet missiles being tested. When the revolution came, that was one of the grave concerns we had - the loss of those sites.

When the Shah was into his military buildup phase, the CIA was going to help him have an IBEX system. That is intelligence, monitoring, listening devices that would give him his own full range of technical systems for gathering intelligence - which presumably he would share with us. This whole business was super secret and I didn't know anything about it until I read Seymour Hersh's exposé in the New York Times. So the Agency was active in that kind of thing. I think the CIA chief also served as a back channel for the Shah from time to time - but that was hardly necessary with Helms on the job.

Q: Helms took over in April, 1973. Did that cause a change? He is quite a different man than Farland.

PRECHT: I can remember when the DCM called us together and told us that Richard Helms would be the next ambassador. We were amazed that the White House would send a man who after all had such associations with the CIA, which was deemed by every Iranian responsible for the fall of Mossadegh. It seemed to us to abandon any pretense of a sort of a neutral America and to confirm that the Shah was our puppet. But, Helms turned out to be a fine ambassador, probably the best I have ever worked for. He knew the names of practically all the local employees. He was interested in Iran. He was fair minded. He was smart and knew all the world's major players and how games were played in Washington. His descriptions of politics were rich with telling details

Q: Did you feel any change in the political section along the lines of let's find out a little more about what is going on in this country?

PRECHT: Not really. The same rules applied. Our policy of support for the Shah remained unchanged. On the other hand, Helms insisted that we get to understand the country better. Each week political and economic officers were required to give him a memo listing the contacts we had had with Iranians. That was hard. Pretty soon, when it had become a matter of repetition, the requirement was dropped.

I think the ambassador wasn't happy when anyone ventured too much criticism of the regime. For example, Andy Killgore, who was our political counselor, made a trip to Mashhad. In a staff meeting after his return the ambassador said, "Andy, how was your trip?" He said, "Mr. Ambassador, I just wish the Shah had bought one fewer of those F- 4s and paved that road." Well, that kind of remark didn't go down terribly well with the ambassador. Andy's tour was a short one.

Q: I doubt if anything would have changed there, but it sounded like we had deliberately put blinders on a system that is suppose to be observing?

PRECHT: That's true. I think Henry Kissinger and Nixon didn't want to know that the Shah had

any problems domestically. They didn't encourage the embassy to inquire if the country was stable before making a military commitment. They assumed that it was stable and didn't want to look further into such questions.

Q: The White Revolution, I guess, was in full force by this time, wasn't it?

PRECHT: Land Reform happened in the sixties. No one in the embassy talked much about it or went out to investigate what really happened or whether it had positive or negative political effects. It was assumed that the country people loved the Shah.

Q: So no one was going around looking at land reform and asking who gets the land, etc.?

PRECHT: Not in my time, no. The political section would do reports on things like rivalry between the Shah's twin sister and his wife. When I arrived there were two parties which we referred to as the "Yes, Sir" and "You're right, Sir" parties. He abolished them and had a single party, the Rastakhis party. Our political section took that stuff seriously and did thoughtful pieces on what this meant for political development in Iran, etc. The Shah's top-down political system was ridiculous stuff – completely devoid of meaning.

Q: Did we have other posts in Iran at that time?

PRECHT: We had three. When I arrived we had a post in Tabriz and in KermanShah (later moved to Shiraz) and when Bell Helicopter moved into Isfahan we opened one there.

Q: Sometimes just by their very nature, being away from the central government, you get a different perspective. Were we getting anything from our consulates?

PRECHT: Nothing radical, but I think you are right that there was a bit more independent judgment there. They talked to a wider range of people than the embassy did. A lot depends on the reporting officers. I think the people we had in the consulates were people who were inspired by traditional foreign service work. They were going to get out and talk with people and reported honestly. We didn't have much of that kind in Tehran.

Q: Well, let's get to your job.

PRECHT: I arrived and the big question had been whether the Air Force or the Navy would sell its top fighter to Iran. Nixon had said to the Shah that he could buy anything he wanted. Would it be the F-14 or F-15? The F-15 was Air Force fighter bomber and the F-14 was a carrier-based plane that had great speed, etc. The decision was going to be made by the Shah. So, the embassy took the position that there should be no lobbying by the services. That meant McDonnell Douglas, which made the Air Force plane, and Grumman, which made the Navy plane should stand aside, perform flybys or what was necessary, conduct tours and provide technical information, but no sales pitch. Well, I suppose that was a naive hope. I remember the DCM called in a visiting admiral in charge of sales once and told him that his activities of pushing this sale by constantly coming over, etc. were contrary to policy and he should cease and desist forthwith. The admiral said, "Well, that may be the embassy's policy, it is not the U.S. Navy's

policy. The Navy's policy is to sell these planes." Obviously if they sold 60 or 70 planes to Iran, the unit cost would go down for the Navy.

So, there was a big competition. I think the Air Force was a little better about holding back its salesmen for a little longer. Finally, the Shah made his decision and bought the Navy plane. Subsequently, we learned when General Toufanian, the Shah's chief procurer for military weapons, called me in and told me that two, possibly naturalized Iranians, the Lavi brothers, had received bribes from the Grumman corporation. They had presumably passed these on to somebody in the Iranian government who was deemed to be making the decisions. The decision was to be made by the Shah so I don't know, unless he was taking bribes. These guys had received something like \$23 million from the price Grumman charged and Iran wanted that money back. They wanted the price that they paid reduced by \$23 million. That started a process in which Grumman acknowledged that they had paid the Lavis the money and they would make good on the \$23 million by providing Iran \$23 million in spare parts for their aircraft once they were delivered. One of the Lavis came to see me and said that we were accusing him of terrible things and ruining his business. But, there was a fair amount of that later on. But, I have jumped ahead of the story.

When I arrived in 1972, the Shah decided that he needed helicopters. So, there was a competition for helicopters and he bought Bell helicopters. Part of the deal was that they would be manufactured or assembled in Iran at Isfahan. He was going to buy other stuff as well, and he recognized that he didn't have the qualified personnel to handle all of this equipment and he would have to have Americans come in and train. Well, there was still a great deal of sensitivity about the escalation of troops in Vietnam and Secretary of Defense Laird said he was putting a ceiling of 600 American military personnel in country and would not go above that. So, one of the first things that I had to do was to participate in negotiations with the Iranians for pricing and establishing of small teams called technical assistance field teams (TAFTs) who would come over. There would be one for the helicopters and one for the F-4s another for F-5s, etc. These would be supplemented by contract technicians provided by the manufacturers. Bell would supply its own technicians for their helicopters and there were no limits on those people. They came in as the company was willing to provide them and the Iranians were able to pay for them.

In December 1973 practically the entire embassy, except for the ambassador and the petroleum officer, Dave Patterson, went skiing up in the mountains behind Tehran over the Christmas holidays. We were all staying in a hotel and we got a call from the ambassador saying the Shah had called him in and said he was going to raise oil prices. Remember there was an embargo after the Arab-Israel war and the price of oil was going to go up. I don't remember how much, but it was to be a substantial increase. After that surge in Iranian income, civilian and military development just took off and there was no saying no to the Iranians. There was no saying no to American firms who came over to sell them something. I was constantly being briefed by these entrepreneurs on what they were selling or obliged to go to receptions that they would give for the Iranian military, etc. Tehran became boom city. The amount of money that the Shah put into projects was vast. It was a situation seemingly out of control.

Q: What part were you playing, your actual job?

PRECHT: I monitored and advised. I really worked more closely with the MAAG chief of staff, a two star general, than I did the political counselor. I was his sort of chief and would write messages if we needed to have the rationale for the Shah's decision to buy something. When I first arrived they would pass messages for my clearance before transmitting to Washington. Perhaps you are familiar with Pentagon English. At first I labored trying to make it into literate English. Then I decided the person who would be reading the message was the same kind of person who was writing it, so it was foolish of me to try to change their means of communication. If they understood each other, that was what mattered. I stopped editing for spit infinitives, which pained me.

Whenever anything had a political content I became involved. I attended briefings. I went to see General Toufanian usually about something like this bribery scandal. If the Pentagon wasn't performing fast enough for him or pricing things wrong, he used me as a channel to express his unhappiness. Often the ambassador would go to see the Shah and come back and call me in and tell me that the Shah wants to buy such-and-such, or that he is going to send troops to Dhofar to help the Omani government put down a rebellion. I would write the reporting cable - that sort of thing.

Q: I can remember reading articles and it was the talk around the State Department wondering what we were doing. The Shah's regime wasn't the greatest regime. There was disquiet in the media and atmosphere.

PRECHT: Later on in my tour there were press articles and liberal Democrats questioning our sales to Iran. The law was changed so that any military sales had to be vetted by the congress. The Shah disliked that intensely. He wasn't keen on having people discussing his internal affairs or his defense needs, etc. It was a slowly evolving development. But, policy never changed in the Executive Branch. In the embassy and within the Department of State, we took our lead loyally from the White House.

Q: During your time there was there any talk about the personality of the Shah and the quality of the advice he was getting?

PRECHT: No, not really. I would see him on occasions [when I escorted] the War College or other visitors. Once I went with him when the U.S. Navy gave a demonstration on the Kitty Hawk, an aircraft carrier in the Gulf of Oman. We flew down and landed on the carrier and he was the guest of honor, obviously. The CIA and MAAG chief both saw the Shah separately. They were enthralled with him and there was little to counter them with. Ambassador Helms once told me that Dean Rusk had said that the Shah of Iran was the best informed world leader on world affairs with the exception of the President of the United States. I think it was true.

We kind of snickered at his grandiosity - his saying he was going to make Iran a great power and that this leap was going to take place in a very short period of time. All you had to do was to drive outside of the developed modern neighborhoods of Tehran and you would see that you were dealing with a country that had a long, long way to go.

There were questions about his health from time to time. I recall once the ambassador said that French doctors had come over and the Shah was writing his will. But we all have wills and see doctors. So, we didn't consider him vulnerable in any way.

Q: You mention a military advisor?

PRECHT: Yes. During this great military boom, the Secretary of Defense, wanted his own man in Tehran to advise the Shah on what he should buy. People in Washington were getting a little bit concerned that maybe the Shah was on the going overboard – buying so much that he would weaken his armed forces. So the Secretary of Defense appointed one of these defense intellectuals, Richard Hallock, I believe his name was, who was a very secretive guy and had his own small group of defense experts and set up an independent office. It was rather a bizarre arrangement. Mr. Hallock would go to see the Shah and the MAAG chief would go to see the Shah and the Shah would sometimes tell him something that Mr. Hallock had told him to tell the MAAG chief. There was great friction between the MAAG chief and Mr. Hallock, obviously. I developed a good relationship with Hallock and used to go to him and as far as I knew he was pretty open with me. But, he had his own office and he disliked the MAAG chief as much as it was reciprocated. Later on there was an accusation of some hanky-panky and that operation came to an end. He was replaced by another DOD whiz who was then in the open, Eric von Marbod, and was made sort of supreme czar with the MAAG chief reporting to him. That was another source of friction between a military man and a civilian. There was so much money and so much at stake that it was easy to see how these things could happen.

Q: What was the hanky-panky that Hallock was accused of?

PRECHT: I don't recall. There was something peculiar that caused Hallock to be closed down, but I don't recall the details.

Q: Were you all keeping an eye on what was developing in Iraq at the time? What was all this military buildup for?

PRECHT: Iraq was the principal threat. Certainly, no one thought the Shah was going to defend Iran against the Soviet Union. That was just not part of the equation. But, Iraq was the threat that we erected to justify these purchases because there was no other. I have to say I didn't take it seriously. There was plenty of tension between Baghdad and Tehran and in 1974 it became active as a result of Henry Kissinger's asking the Shah to help the Kurds make problems for Saddam Hussein.

As I understand it, Kissinger wanted to divert Iraq's attention away from Arab-Israel issues as he went through negotiations with Egypt and Syria. To keep him occupied on the home front, the Shah was to provide arms to the Iraqi Kurds so they could cause trouble for Baghdad. The Iraqis took the bait and responded and some shells began to fall on the Iranian side of the border. That is, Iran was getting more progressively involved with the Kurds in Iraq and at some point, it must have been early 1975, the Shah sent his head of the army over to the border with Iraq to see how

well the Iranian forces were positioned if there was going to be a real fight between Iraq and Iran.

This general came back and said they are not up to it. It was the kind of situation where if the Iranians wanted to move forces towards the Iraqi border they would have to stop at the gas stations along the way to gas up. There was no military infrastructure for a real war. Having been discouraged by his chief of staff from the military enterprise, the Shah reversed field and made a deal with the Iraqis. This had to do with where the boundary was on the river between them. There was the Algiers accord in March of 1975 which resolved that issue and cut the ground out from Kissinger's enterprise. This incident showed the Shah was capable of doing things purely in his own interest from time to time – not just following Kissinger's orders.

Q: Here you were doing political military stuff and we are flooding the place with very sophisticated equipment. What was the evaluation of your military colleagues of the Shah's military morale and readiness?

PRECHT: Well, sometimes, what the MAAG senior officers would say was that Iran had problems and describe them as serious if they were discouraged at the moment. But, basically they were upbeat. The military people who were assigned to Iran as advisors were can-do people. They would say, "We want this relationship." "We want these sales." "Let's make it work." Each of the services wanted a piece of the action. Even the Corps of Engineers came over to try to get a piece of the action. From time to time - only rarely - the military would say a particular weapons system was not suitable. Usually it was a system being pushed by another service.

I, as a civilian, was suspect by the Iranian uniformed people. I couldn't talk to an Iranian colonel that I might meet at a party and think I would get anything out of him. But, I persuaded the MAAG chief to send his technical people to see me, people who were based in the field as training experts, to come in and debrief me when they came to Tehran for a visit. So, I was able to get a sense from these guys who were sent out to advise how to maintain an F-4. Some of them would speak very frankly to me. I would write up a little memorandum, send it to Washington. Like anything else that I sent in that was not what Washington wanted to read, it would be filed away. But it gave me a sense of what the Iranian military was like. While I also got to know most of the senior Iranian generals, the relationship was strictly at arms length rather than the type you would develop with Iranian diplomats. You did what you could and used whatever means that you could to find out what was going on.

Q: The guts of any military organization are the non-commissioned officers. Can they maintain the equipment, how capable are they at leading, what is their relationship to their officer? Were you picking up any of this?

PRECHT: Not much. Some of the advisors that we had were non-commissioned officers themselves. Generally their relationship would be with a commissioned officer. There was not very much about what went on down below. Occasionally I would visit Iranian military installations. I am not an expert on military installations around the world, but they didn't look too spiffy to me. They were not third world-ish, but they were certainly not first world.

Q: An F-4, for example, probably has hundreds of thousands spare parts. It is a huge operation to keep a modern military plane or helicopter going which means you have to have quite a sophisticated backup system.

PRECHT: Yes, and towards the end of my tour we were setting up a sophisticated supply system, computer based, etc. to bring the Iranians the spare parts from US suppliers when they needed them. I don't think the Iranians ever considered that maybe some day their relationship with our country would reach a bad point and that that chain would be cut and they would be frozen on the ground. This was viewed, I think, on both sides as a kind of eternal and mutually satisfactory relationship. There were rough points from time to time but basically it was terribly advantageous to both sides.

One little example. As the Vietnam War was changing shape with the peace agreement, etc., Kissinger needed a squadron of F-5s to be added to the forces of South Vietnam. The Vietnamese air force had F-5s and he wanted to enlarge their forces up before we were precluded from sending anything to them - before this treaty went into effect. The only place he could find F-5s around the world was in the Shah's air force. So, one Sunday afternoon I was called over to the DCM's house and he said, "We have a message from Kissinger that says he would like the Shah to give him a squadron of F-5s." He called the court minister and within about 30 minutes we had our answer which was positive.

Within a week an American crew came over and boxed up the planes or flew them out. I thought at the time, this squadron was sold to Iran so they could defend themselves against an ostensible threat. Suddenly that threat is less important than our need for them in another country. And, what will be the reaction of the pilots who no longer have these planes? What will be the reaction of the strategists who rely on these planes as part of their force? I think that the idea was that the Shah knows best and one doesn't dare think for oneself. That was the best answer I came up with.

Q: Were you watching or other people in the political section watching the infusion of these Texas mechanics from Bell Helicopter? Isfahan is a religious city, isn't it? It is not a sophisticated capital. Was this a concern?

PRECHT: Bell Helicopter technicians rode motorcycles through the lobby of the Shah Abbas Hotel. Did anyone care? I think we cared. The American population grew and grew as this boom went on and technicians arrived, not only military but civilian as well. There was an American school - there had always been an American school. My wife and I went up to a football game one weekend. There were cheerleaders and a marching band and fully uniformed players in the stadium. In the background were the Elburz mountains of central Asia. My wife said, "There is something quite unnatural about having small town America in this part of the world. It seems somehow not right." So much for wives and what they know about political military and geostrategic matters, I thought. But she was intuitively on target.

In 1975, Henry Kissinger came over for one of his periodic meetings after visiting the Middle East, Russia, etc. to brief the Shah. Both men enjoyed those conversations. After one, the 1975

stopover, there was to be a press conference. The ambassador called me up before hand on a Sunday afternoon and said, "Henry, can you come down to the embassy? Henry Kissinger is going to have a press conference and they will ask him a question about the number of Americans in Iran. You are the only one in the embassy who has a handle on this." (To backtrack a bit, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had sent two staffers over to study the number of Americans in Iran and they had written a report saying Americans were likely to be held hostage in Iran if things go badly between us and the Shah.) I went down to the embassy and Helms said, "Now you sit here in my study and think a few minutes and come up with the number of Americans in Iran. In five minutes I will bring Henry Kissinger in and you tell him exactly how many Americans there are."

So, I sat with pencil and the back of an envelope and figured there were so many military technicians, so many in the embassy, so many in the oil industry, so many tourists, so many dependents. I totaled up the figures and rounded it off. Kissinger came in and I said, "Mr. Secretary, there are 25,000 Americans in Iran." He said, "Thank you very much," went to his press conference and gave that authoritative figure. The next day at the embassy staff meeting I told the ambassador that I had made a very rough calculation and thought we needed to do a little more scientific counting. Why not send survey letters to all the companies here and get a figure that was more reliable than my guess. He thought that was a good idea, so I sent out these questionnaires. When they were returned we totaled them up and the figure was 50,000. I don't know if a correction was ever issued but we were quite surprised. However, no one thought the numbers were a bad thing, that we were overstressing. There was no way that you could keep Americans from traveling abroad to do business unless you passed a law or issued a regulation. So, they came and the community flourished. I think many Iranians resented the conspicuous number of them, particularly in places where large numbers of Americans had hardly lived before like Isfahan, Tabriz, and places where they were more conspicuous than elsewhere. That unfortunately did not seem a concern to the Department of State or Department of Defense.

Q: How did you and your wife find life in Tehran?

PRECHT: A difficult city. The traffic is terrible. It was every man against every man. Tehran is not an interesting city to live in compared to Cairo, which is a living medieval city. We had fewer friends in four years in Iran where we had an excellent relationship with the regime, than we had in two years in Alexandria, when the relationship was tense all of the time. The fact that I worked with the military people who didn't want to socialize sort of cut us off. But, the children went to the community school which is an international school and a good school. We had a nice house. My landlord was said to be a 5 percenter with Defense contracts. We had good friends in the embassy, but didn't know many Iranians. I decreed at one point, in order for our souls not to corrode, that we needed to get out of town once a month which would mean we would go on a picnic or to a small town nearby just for tourism. It was a pleasant life but not a paradise like Mauritius or always interesting like Egypt. I was busy. My wife took Farsi lessons and went to a class on Persian poetry given by Mrs. Helms.

Q: Then in 1976 you came back.

PRECHT: Yes, I came back and was regarded as a political/military officer and assigned to the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM). When I came back, the desk officer was Charlie Naas who was a pretty open-minded, questioning person, although not disloyal to the basic concepts of the Shah-America friendship. He said, "How are things going over there? What do you make of it really?" I thought the economy was a big problem because in 1975 the oil prices had sort of leveled off and began to decline a little bit for Iran. They had to scale back their purchases and construction somewhat. There were problems with procurement. At the same time inflation had begun to take off. The Shah's answer to that was a typical authoritarian answer of decreed price controls. Once when we were traveling in the northern province of Azerbaijan I went into a small grocery store and was amazed to see pasted on every tin can a piece of paper with a new price. The owner said that the price had been lowered for all these items and if you didn't comply goons would come around and beat you up.

So, I said to Charlie that there was no economist there to tell the Shah how to get a handle on the uncontrolled developments in the civilian and military sectors. He said, "Wonderful that there should be such a blessed country with no economist. Wonderful." I was getting a little concerned, however. Although there still weren't any signs of political unrest, on the economic front a lot of people were unhappy. My idea was that the people who support the Shah - the middle class, shopkeepers, the mainstays of his regime - were being hurt. If he was making them unhappy he was not doing himself a favor. So, I came back with some feelings of disquiet, but not a lot of evidence to back it.

WALTER A. LUNDY
Economic Officer
Tehran (1973-1975)

Walter A. Lundy, Jr. was born in Georgia in 1933. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of Georgia in 1954 and serving in the US Air Force from 1954-1958, he received his master's degree from Georgetown University in 1961. His career has included positions in Colombo, Saigon, Hue, New Delhi, Tehran, and Seoul. Mr. Lundy was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in September 2005. Q: OK, Tehran in '73. What was it like? Well, you were the number two in the economic section.

LUNDY: Absolute paradise for an economic officer. Shortly after I arrived, in the fall of 1973, another Arab-Israel war broke out. In the aftermath, the price of oil shot right up.

Q: Certainly after the '73 war there was an Arab boycott and OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) which had organized itself and became very powerful.

LUNDY: The drastic rise in the price of oil and its implications for the Iranian economy, needless to say, were of great interest to Washington. Suddenly, Iran was wealthy beyond its wildest dreams. This was the first major jump in the price of oil, and the country had to make

major policy decisions about how the money would be absorbed without needlessly aggravating inflation.

Q: Iran was active in OPEC?

LUNDY: Iran was very active in OPEC, but of course the Iranians were telling us how they were trying to moderate Arab demands for the sharp increase in the price of oil. The Iranians, needless to say, were just as eager as the Arabs to push up oil prices. We may not have known very much about the internal dynamics of OPEC, but clearly there was nothing much the U.S. Government could do to influence oil prices. The Shah saw his chance to make big oil profits, and he was not shy about taking advantage of the opportunity. As I recall, the price of oil within a month or two just about tripled, and Iranian foreign exchange earnings increased at a similar rate. To its credit, Iran soon began its own aid program to help out other developing countries suffering from oil price increases. Iran was booming, the city of Tehran became a rather unpleasant place in which to live because of mounting traffic problems and sky rocketing housing costs. But the work there throughout the two years of my assignment was very interesting and challenging. Unlike New Delhi, our embassy in Tehran was not overstaffed. Everybody was busy, our work was appreciated, and we were not over supervised. There was interest in Washington in what we were doing, and morale was high. Most of the time, we had a very good working environment.

Q: One significant difference I suppose was that the other agencies were not represented to the same extent as they had been in Delhi?

LUNDY: We had an agricultural attaché, but there was no Treasury representative. The financial reporting was my responsibility. With all that money coming in, Treasury Department visitors were frequent, however. The AID mission had closed some years earlier. There was only one AID local employee, who ran a small training program for Farsi-speaking Afghans in Iran. She came under my supervision.

Q: There was a separate commercial operation?

LUNDY: Yes, but unlike in New Delhi there was no question the commercial attache reported to the Economic/Commercial Counselor. There was only one commercial officer assisting the commercial attache when I arrived, but a second slot soon was added. There were frequent American business visitors and trade missions. We all assisted in commercial work. Bill Lehfeldt, our boss in the counselor position was not a hands on manager. He simply wanted people working for him to get their jobs done. We received plenty of encouragement, but only general guidance.

Q: So you didn't feel like you had to refer to him for every comma and...?

LUNDY: No, never, and it was the same with his successor, Roger Brewin, who was our boss my second year. They were both excellent managers.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time in the offices of various Iranian ministries?

LUNDY: Very much so. Making contact with Iranian officialdom was very easy.

Q: You had good access?

LUNDY: Very good access, particularly in the ministry of finance and the central bank. I worked more closely with those two organizations than any other. The Iranian elite in those pre-revolutionary days wanted to maintain a cordial relationship with the embassy. Sadly, most of the Iranians I knew best probably didn't survive the revolution, or they went into exile. Those events occurred after I had departed.

Q: And your family was able to be there with you throughout?

LUNDY: Yes. Living conditions in Tehran were not particularly good; they were much better in Delhi. Often that is the case in the Foreign Service, however, you get one or the other. Good living conditions and a lousy job or bad living conditions and great work so often is the trade off.

Q: It is hard to combine the two.

LUNDY: If you are really fortunate, you have both...

Q: It is paradise.

LUNDY: Yes.

Q: Well, this was really an interesting period I think in Iran, certainly in the economic section, I can see that it would be, and it sounds as though you must have been pretty busy with all that was going on?

LUNDY: I was, but the work ethic at the embassy was not such that you always felt you had to stay late or go in on weekends. Plenty of times we did put in considerable overtime, but only when it was necessary to get the job done. No one went in just because of being expected to show up. I would like to cast three cheers for that style of management.

Q: Bill Lehfeltdt, I know after he left he retired from the Foreign Service and lived and worked in Tehran for a while. I think leaving about the time of the revolution...

LUNDY: He stayed until most private citizen Americans were evacuated. He had one other Foreign Service assignment after leaving Tehran in 1974; he served as consul general in Barcelona for a year before retiring.

Q: And at that time came back to Tehran with the American Chamber of Commerce?

LUNDY: He came back to Tehran as General Electric (GE) representative and remained for nearly four years--1975-79. He eventually became president of the American Chamber of

Commerce. Bill had a serious family problem in that two of his four children are handicapped. Both are deaf; their need for special schooling reduced his flexibility considerably. He also was caught in the period when salaries for senior officers were frozen. He needed to make more money in the private sector. He liked the Foreign Service and wanted very much to be transferred to Embassy London where good schools for the deaf are available, but no job ever worked out for him there.

Q: I guess a question one has to ask of anybody serving in Tehran in the mid-'70s was to what extent did you see the opposition, anticipate the revolution coming within three years, 3-4 years after you left?

LUNDY: I don't think anyone did, certainly not the Iranian elite, not the embassy, not the CIA. With the value of hindsight, we obviously should have been more perceptive, but the nature of Persian society must be taken into account. I am proud of the fact that I had good contacts there, but the sophisticated, well educated Iranians I knew were hardly typical. Most of Persian society, however, was very much closed to foreigners. As is the case in any country, within Persian society there were many different factions. The people from whom the revolution came had no contact with foreigners at all, and practically none with the Iranian elite. They were lead by the mullahs, the religious right, the conservatives. They knew the kind of society they wanted; the modernization of Iran, which was occurring very rapidly, was anathema to them. They had to get rid of the Shah, this leader who after all represented only the second generation of his family in the monarchy. He had to be overthrown because he was driving the country in a direction of which they did not approve. We did not comprehend the extent of the mullahs' power nor the degree of disenchantment with the government felt by many Iranians. The more sophisticated and westernized Iranian elites tended to be moderate Shiite Muslims to whom religion was less important

Q: Did you have contact with the Shah?

LUNDY: None at all.

Q: Ceremonial events?

LUNDY: I never even saw the Shah, though his picture was everywhere. The counselors I think were presented to the Shah at one time. Bill Lehfeltdt had a picture of himself in formal attire bowing to the Shah. I remember hearing that earlier there was an annual Palace reception for the diplomatic corps, but that ended before my arrival. The diplomatic corps had grown too large.

Q: Perhaps the new ambassador at the presentation of credentials presumably to the Shah might have taken along a few key people as well. Who was the ambassador?

LUNDY: Richard Helms was the ambassador during the two years I served in Iran.

Q: Did he take much interest in the economic side of things?

LUNDY: Yes, but not to the extent of interfering with our work. I have all the respect in the world for Ambassador Helms.

Q: Were there lots of visitors to Tehran that you had to take care of in the economic realm?

LUNDY: Lots of them, both official and business. Yes, that was a big part of our work but it was less official U.S. government policy that sent American visitors to Iran than the lure of the oil money.

Q: Which as you said was accumulating rapidly. Yes, with the price of oil shooting way up. Other than the contacts you had with various government ministries and the central bank and so on and the American business community, were you doing much reporting on the economic trends in the country, and did you travel around Iran quite a bit?

LUNDY: Yes, I traveled quite a bit. I visited the other main cities. We had consulates in Tabriz in the northwest close to the Turkish border and at Khorramshahr, which is close to Ahwaz and Abadan, the heart of the oil producing area. I visited the first integrated steel mill near Isfahan. I also went to Mashhad in the northeast which is important to Shiite Islam. Our family did some personal travel as well. The American presence in Iran was growing very fast from about 1974 through 1978.

Q: Were you much involved with U.S. military, MAAG (Military Assistance Advisory Group) in the period you were there?

LUNDY: In the economic section, not very much. Their liaison with the embassy was through the political section where there was a full-time pol/mil officer.

Q: OK, this is a continuation of the Foreign Affairs Oral History interview with Walter A. Lundy. It's the 5th of October 2005. I am Raymond Ewing, and this interview is being conducted at the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training office at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

Walt, last time we were talking about your assignment as economic/commercial officer to the embassy in Tehran from 1973-75 which took place right after the September Arab-Israeli War, and I think you talked some about the kind of economic reporting you were doing and I think right at the end I was asking you about the petroleum sector which obviously was a key sector in Iran at that time.

LUNDY: I did not do the reporting on developments in the oil industry in Iran. There was another officer in the econ section who had had some special training on the oil sector and did all of the reporting on oil developments. My job was to report on the financial aspects. How Iran handled its vast financial windfall, how it was invested, how it was recycled so to speak in western financial markets--those were the main aspects of my job there. I really enjoyed my two years in Iran from a substantive point of view.

Tehran was not a very pleasant place to live, however. It was, of course, a boomtown. The local government estimated that every day an additional 200 cars were introduced into Tehran's already choked streets. This was my only post where government leased or owned housing was not provided. We had to find our own house. Rents were very high. The State Department in its wisdom based our housing allowances on the average amounts Embassy staff actually were paying, not on the prices we had to pay as new arrivals in a booming housing market. We lost about \$2,500 in two years on a barely adequate dwelling. The challenging work itself, however, went a long way toward compensating for the unpleasant living conditions. Financial writers and other journalists, as well as American businessmen, were frequent visitors. The Iranian economic boom seemed to interest everyone. It was an exciting time to be there.

Q: You mentioned Iran began an AID program; was that focused on a few countries or do you remember much about how it was distributed?

LUNDY: Sort of across the board to developing countries. The Shah did not seem to concentrate assistance on other Moslem countries. Helping other countries probably was an ego trip for him. Iran had been a recipient of foreign aid for many years. We once had a big AID mission in Tehran. We put a lot of money into Iran as did a number of European countries; now the Shah was doling it out. Probably in terms of actual financial transfers, the amounts were not large, and the Saudi's were doing the same thing. The aid was tied to imports from Iran, which meant oil purchases. It was mostly loans on not particularly liberal terms rather than grant aid. The Iranian Government, needless to say, received plenty of advice, both foreign and domestic, on how to spend its money.

Q: You mentioned the huge revenues that were coming into Iran because of the oil price increase at that time and other disruptions that had happened. Do you want to say anything about how the recycling was taking place or to what extent were Treasury and the Federal Reserve interested, did they come out to Iran or...?

LUNDY: There were frequent visitors from both the Fed and the Treasury. The Federal Reserve, of course, carefully guards its independence from the executive branch. Its representatives do not necessarily even check in with the embassy when visiting a foreign capital. There were also were U.S. Export Import Bank people frequently visiting Iran. We had one brief visit by the Secretary of the Treasury.

Q: OK, it sounds like an interesting time to be there. I think we talked before about whether the revolution had been seen by you, but you were not a political officer. Anything else you want to say about the substantive aspects of your work there and what you were doing?

LUNDY: Well, one might ask why I only stayed two years. I was offered home leave in the summer of 1974 and return for an additional two years, but we decided for a number of personal, family reasons the time had come to go home.

Q: OK, anything else about your time in Iran? Was it pretty much focused on Tehran or did you get around to the other major cities as well?

LUNDY: My reporting responsibilities mainly were focused on what was happening in Tehran. The travel mentioned in our first session was necessary to get a better feel for the country, but the information to cover the reporting topics which interested the Department mostly was available in Tehran.

Q: Was air pollution a big problem in Tehran?

LUNDY: Yes, a very big problem.

Q: Along with all the other problems that you mentioned.

LUNDY: Every day you could observe the extent of pollution by just looking North to determine whether you could see the mountains, the Elburz, which overlook Tehran. On a clear day, the setting of the city is lovely. Foreigners living in Tehran tend to reside in houses in the foothills of these mountains, north of the downtown area where the Embassy compound was located. Sometimes, on our way to work in the morning we could see a sea of pollution hovering maybe a thousand feet in elevation below where most of us lived. This made for a depressing ride to work.

Q: OK, anything else about that period?

LUNDY: I don't think so.

Q: Where did you go from there when you left in 1975?

LUNDY: I went into a very bad period in my career for the next couple of years. I had been assigned to the economic slot on the Iranian desk; in fact I had been recruited for that job. Late in the assignment cycle, after most jobs already had been filled, the incumbent, who wasn't pleased with his onward assignment prospects asked to stay in the job for an additional year. The NEA bureau backed him up. This resulted in an assignment to a non-existent job in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). I got out of there as soon as I could. I was in a situation where there was simply nothing to do, even worse than being in New Delhi.

**JOHN RATIGAN
Consular Officer
Tehran (1973-1975)**

Mr. Ratigan was born in New York, raised in Minnesota and educated at Dartmouth College and Yale Law School. After service in the Peace Corps and ten years in private law practice, in 1973 he joined the Foreign Service. A specialist in consular matters, and particularly immigration, Mr. Ratigan served as Consul Officer in Tehran, Cairo, Toronto and Seoul and from 1984 to 1985 as

immigration specialist and Pearson Fellow on the Senate Immigration Subcommittee. In 1989 he again served on that subcommittee as immigration expert. Mr. Ratigan was interviewed by Ray Ewing in 2007.

Q: Well I think in these interviews the A-100 orientation class has been pretty well covered, but what did you do after that? Did you stay for an assignment in Washington?

RATIGAN: Well one of the people who spoke to us in the A-100 class was a man named Alan Lukens who was just about to go out as DCM in Nairobi. I went up to him after his speech and said, "You know I have been assigned to Tehran but I speak Swahili and I would love to go to Africa." I wasn't trying to mess the system; I just wanted to let him know that I was interested. I think I had already been assigned. In any case, he I think, really did his best to see what could be done and ran up against whatever he ran up against, I don't know, but anyway it didn't work. But he certainly tried I think hard to get me a spot in Nairobi which would have been wonderful. So anyway having been assigned to Tehran I went and took Farsi language training.

Q: For how long?

RATIGAN: Well it was supposed to have been for six months but you know they pulled me out after four and said they really need you over there and so forth. So I went off and I think arrived in Tehran I think in July of '73.

Q: And you were assigned to the consular section.

RATIGAN: I was.

Q: Which at that time was how large roughly?

RATIGAN: It had one American services person, one immigrant person and two or three non immigrant visa officers. Then we had a couple of people who worked half days in the visa section. This was a time when we interviewed for non immigrant visas in the office, in the officer's office; now of course we interview behind bullet proof glass. Nobody gets close to you. But in those days in the early 70's you still interviewed in the office. It was often difficult to get people to leave the office if you turned them down. So we had two very attractive young Iranian women whose job among other things it was to get these guys out of the office. It wasn't the most efficient business, but it was a different era then.

Q: And you were a non immigrant visa issuer?

RATIGAN: I started on the immigrant side. The first, they started me on the immigrant visa side because they had two FSN's. One had 26 years of experience and one who had 20 years experience. There was no way I could screw this up. So the first case, literally the first case I had, I am interviewing this woman who was married to an Iranian guy but he was in the States. So there were problems. The marriage between the two was a proxy marriage. Somebody stood in for the guy in the States. I was pouring over the file and asking questions and one thing or

another. At one point, you know this young woman is sitting opposite me and was carrying a pencil. It drops on the floor. She reaches down to pick it up and stands up again. Her blouse was wide open from the waist up – she was holding it open. I just, I mean honest to God the first case I ever got. All I can remember I felt my ears were about to burn off. I just whipped my head to one side. I realized oh I can look in the file. You know I just found some reason to turn her down and escorted her back out of the office. And then I thought, now did those two FSN women out there, did they know this was going to happen? Did they decide to test me out with this first case? I have not resolved that question yet, but I mean I wouldn't be surprised.

Q: The first day, orientation.

RATIGAN: The first day, you know we are going to test this guy out and see where he comes down on this. Of course like two or three months later, the woman comes back for her re-interview having established whatever else she had to establish. She looked like she was going to choke on this blouse that was buttoned up so tight and went halfway up her neck.

Q: Did she get her visa that time?

RATIGAN: She did. So that was a very memorable introduction into the business.

Q: Then later you moved to the NIV side.

RATIGAN: I did. My office was right in front of a window. Anyway in the course of my time in NIV I had two death threats. I think the first one came in the first two or three months I was in NIV. The consular officers were allowed to go one by one with the consul general to attend staff meetings, the ambassador's staff meetings. So anyway I was there, and when the CG reported I had this death threat, and Richard Helms who was the ambassador at the time just looked at me and said, "Welcome to the club." So the response of the embassy's security team was to move my desk away from the window, but not to stop interviewing in the office or anything else.

Q: Nothing affecting your movement or travel.

RATIGAN: Well it was at a time when the two U.S. Air Force colonels had been killed in Tehran not too long before. So we all rode to work with Iranian guards in the white embassy van that took us from our homes to the office. We were such obvious targets in those vans it was ridiculous. But for some reason or other they didn't ride in the vans on Thursdays. So I would drive to the embassy on Thursdays in my own car. We worked from Sunday to Thursday and then had Friday and Saturday off. I always would go hither and yon, varying my route with a vengeance. But I always thought most people thought Thursdays were the most dangerous day because it was really Saturday in Iran, and Friday was Sunday in terms of the religious observance. So there weren't nearly as many cops on the street or anything. I felt really safer driving to work on Thursdays by myself than going in one of the embassy vans.

Q: The reason you were expected to drive yourself was the Iranian guards weren't available that day.

RATIGAN: The vans still ran on Thursdays, but I decided I didn't want to take them on that day, because I thought the risk was so much greater on Thursdays. I think the guards must have worked an Iranian week where they were off on Thursday and Friday and it didn't coincide with our week. I am not quite sure, but I suspect that was the reason.

Q: Who was the consul general?

RATIGAN: A man named Cliff Gross who was a very good teacher and sort of lead into the business.

Q: And the ambassador during the whole period you were there was Richard Helms.

RATIGAN: It was.

Q: And the DCM?

RATIGAN: We had Jack Miklos and Charlie Naas. Charlie is a pretty well known Iranian hand. Miklos not so much.

Q: This was the period not all that long before the revolution, 1979.

RATIGAN: I served '73 to '75. You could actually, you could see when I first went there, it was the time of the oil shocks of '73-'74, so the price of oil had gone way up. Money was flooding into the country. You could see I felt that Iranians were becoming much more confident, much greater sense of their own importance, and of course Iranian kids were going to the United States to school like crazy. We had this huge effort at issuing student visas. In that regard there was a particular incident that was quite dramatic. The consular section building was a block and a half or two blocks away from the main embassy building, but we set up a student visa unit basically in the embassy's motor pool area, on the main Embassy compound. So one of the visa officers over there was working under half days over in the student visa unit, and when the morning's work was done over in the student visa unit, an embassy car would take him and any other officers out of the embassy and over to the consular building. Well on one of those occasions when the car went from out of the motor pool and over to the consular building, a car pulled out in front of the Embassy car, and a car pulled in behind and an assassination attempt was made. The doors of the car were pulled open and the person in the car was shot several times. It was not the visa officer who was working in the mornings in the student visa unit, but an FSN who looked very much like him. So he was shot and killed. My wife and I attended his funeral. We loved him very much. He was almost blind. He was the best FSN we had in the consular section by far.

Q: He had worked there many years?

RATIGAN: Not that many. He was a young kid. He was 22 or 23. He was trying to get money to have his eyes operated on. He was going to go to Vienna. I and the officer that I mentioned who

worked in the student visa unit, we decided we would sell our cars when we left and would donate the profit to help this guy get his eyes fixed in Vienna, because we had to give away the profit anyway under the rules. Well as they went through his things -- this young FSN's things after his death -- they came across floor plans of the consul general's house, floor plans of the visa section. It was clear that he was one of the conspirators and that he had set up this assassination attempt. The story was that when they pulled open the doors he was riding the back seat and he said, "No, not me," or "Not now" or something like that. So he was the one who was killed in his own assassination attempt. The other officer was immediately of course whisked out of the country. A lot of this only came clear months later. It was quite a traumatic event in many ways, certainly for the officer who was the target of this assassination attempt, but for me too. We had been very close to this guy, and to realize that he had been plotting against us all this time came as quite a shock.

Q: OK, anything else about your time in Iran. Your second child was born there.

RATIGAN: Second child was born there.

Q: Not in the American hospital.

RATIGAN: They wouldn't let us use the Army's American hospital. People in the embassy, the State Department could not use the Army's hospital. So we used the Tehran General hospital. It was not a happy occasion. The details probably aren't that useful, but we weren't very happy with the way things were done.

My second year there I became the American citizen services officer. My job was really in two key functions. One was dealing with the American prisoners when they were caught if they came across with hashish or marijuana or God knows what when they came across the border from Afghanistan into Iran. DEA was active at that time. So I think what seemed to happen in these situations was that the Afghan border guards had it all set up so they would stuff something in the back of somebody's car as they were in Afghanistan and the Iranians would find it on the other side. The Americans who were caught were certainly not innocent in any case. But I think these setups were done to make the border guards look good to DEA. I made several trips up to Meshed, in northeast Iran, while these guys were in prison. When you flew up there, an interesting kind of a side bar here. You would often see several Americans on the plane going up to Meshed. They were dressed in blue jeans and had cowboy shirts and stuff like that. Number one, up there, there is no oil up there. They were manning the listening posts that were directed into the Soviet Union. Every once in awhile you would see them down -- not that I recognized the faces -- but they would be down in the embassy in the commissary, in the snack bar and stuff like that. Anyway so we went up to Meshed and visit these guys. There really wasn't much we could do for them, but we always brought along magazines and newspapers. If they wanted to eat well, they could pay the guards and the guards would bring them decent food and so forth. One kid in particular we all thought was just the nicest fellow and must have been set up and so forth. So he got out and came down and visited us in the consular section. We all wished him well and off he went. Two months later we heard he had been picked up on a hashish charge in Lebanon and was in jail there. So obviously not nearly as innocent as we had thought. The other part of the job was

with American spouses. Iranian students were going to the United States in wholesale numbers at that time. Many of them would meet American women and marry them and bring them back to Iran because employment prospects were very good for graduates of American colleges in Iran at that time. Money was flowing into Iran, and the Iranians were spending much of it on military projects. And there were a great many Iranians studying in the U.S. So there were a lot of these American wives of Iranians, and when they would arrive in Iran, the man, who was so charming in the United States as all the women said, would sort of revert to being more of an Iranian male and the wife would become the handmaiden or servant really of the mother-in-law. And of course the woman could not leave without the husband's permission, nor could any children. So the movie *Not Without My Daughter*, I knew Betty Mahmoody when she was there, the woman who wrote that book. And we would talk to and sympathize with these women constantly, miserable with their lives and yet unable legally to leave. I remember one woman who was trying to get out of Tehran. It was raining one day, and I went out and picked her up in an embassy car. She didn't want to talk in the embassy car because she was sure the driver would overhear, so we walked around in the rain. She was talking about going out on an Arab dhow, out to Kuwait or maybe Bahrain. I think ultimately she decided to go out in the back of a car over the mountains into Turkey. She made it, but she didn't have her baby and she didn't have any money. She just got herself out. There were a real lot of these cases. One of them we got out, we managed to help get out, and two or three months later she was back. She came in to the consular section. We said, "Why did you come back?" She said, "I can't help it; I still love him." It got to the point where there were so many problems like this that maybe it was my legal background or whatever, but I put together an information sheet about what an American spouses rights were in Iran. I think it was two sides of a single page. This was back in the days when you mimeographed things. We did that. We sent them out to I think three or four hundred U.S. colleges where these Iranian students were studying. I am sure I showed this to my boss. I can't imagine what the front office would have thought, though: I was being very factual and all that kind of stuff. But I mean it highlighted the fact that American citizens got into problems. In retrospect that it got out and we sent it to all these schools. But who knows whether any young woman ever saw these sheets. You mail it out to these places and probably 80% of them go in the waste bin somewhere, but we would send it out. I kind of vaguely remember hearing some grousing about doing something like that. But I certainly didn't know any better. I thought I was doing a public service.

Q: did you travel around the country quite a bit? You mentioned going up to Meshed to visit American prisoners.

RATIGAN: The best part of Iran was getting out of Tehran. We certainly developed a taste for caviar. You could get 100 grams of caviar for ten bucks in Tehran in the sort of grey market. As I mentioned earlier I am an enthusiastic skier. The skiing in Iran was excellent. I mean the Shah liked to ski, and they had two mountains where the snow, the snow on one mountain in particular was as good as anything you find in the western United States. But he had, and the snow was very good on the other mountain as well. He had first class Swiss and French equipment, lifts and all that sort of thing that he brought in, so the skiing was really good. So we did that a fair amount. We traveled around really quite a bit. Even though we had young kids it still worked. I remember sitting out with my wife at dinner one time in a place called Hamadan which is in western Iran. We were having a glass of wine and enjoying a nice dinner and so on. Somebody

comes over to our table and says, "Excuse me, aren't you the U.S. consul? I have a visa problem." I didn't know how to wiggle out of that one, so we had to listen to this fellow. It certainly was a mood breaker. But they were always looking for a visa.

Q: OK, is there anything else you want to say about your time in Tehran from '73 to '75?

RATIGAN: Let me just say that I thought Richard Helms was a terrific ambassador. I think many officers tend to really greatly admire their first ambassadors, but I am a big fan of Richard Helms. I just thought he was a terrific human being. He treated the little people like me, I mean I couldn't have been any lower on the totem pole in that place. He treated me just excellently. He was one of the smartest human beings I have ever come across. You talk with him about some small thing and six months later he would ask you about it. Or you might go back to him and say, "I want to update you on this," and he was right there. He knew exactly what you were talking about. He was really good. So I was a big fan of his.

Q: Did you have much to do with him directly in terms of organizing and going on a trip with him or anything like that?

RATIGAN: He took me to a meeting of the cemetery committee. There was a foreigners cemetery in Tehran. The ambassadors – for some reason -- met every once in awhile to do whatever had to be done. I am sure he had been prepped up by someone other than me. He would just sit there and tell you what was really going on in this meeting – the sub-texts, I guess you would call it -- in a way that was just amazing to me. It was very impressive. Of course the intelligence officers at the embassy would tell you he would go into a room and work a room for 20 or 25 minutes and just come back and turn out page after page of cables back to Washington. They were in awe of what he could do. So his insight I guess into situations was very impressive.

Q: Did you work with the political or economic sections much, USIS?

RATIGAN: Oh yes because everybody wanted a visa. So we had some good people there. I mean I worked with people like Hawk Mills, Andy Kilgore, Henry Precht. The Prechts have become friends. Henry was the pol-mil officer there. Roger Brewin, I am trying to think who the others were. I worked quite a bit with all of them simply over visa issues. One story that I heard at staff meetings was I think General Vandenberg was the Air Force Chief of Staff at the time. He paid a visit out to Iran because obviously we were selling them a lot of aircraft at that time and had huge operations of Boeing and Bell Helicopter and Lockheed and so forth were all represented with big operations there. So the Air Force Chief of Staff paid a visit to the Shah. The story in the staff meeting was they had their normal discussion and so forth, and finally the Shah said, "Tell me General, how do you get your pilots to keep on flying toward the target once they start shooting at them?" When the defense attaché told that story, the whole room just roared with laughter. So obviously to judge from the story anyway, it was a problem that they were having getting Iranian pilots not to turn away when the guns started shooting at them. Although, they sent them all to Lackland Air Force Base, we were issuing visas to Iranian pilots to go, so they were getting their training there primarily.

Q: OK, anything else about Iran? Where did you go from there?

RATIGAN: I came back and went to the op center. That was a fascinating experience. As a junior watch officer, you get an introduction to the functioning of the seventh floor, and you meet a lot of young middle grade people who are obviously going to go places in the department. I did that and it was a lot of fun. I can't remember any particular instances, though.

ARNOLD SCHIFFERDECKER
Desk Officer, Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Arnold Schifferdecker was born in Norbone, Missouri in 1935. He graduated from Princeton University with a degree in history in 1958. From 1958 until 1964 he served in the U.S. Navy and joined the Foreign Service in 1964. His postings included Turkey, Israel, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Morocco, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by C. Edward Dillery in May of 1996.

Q: What about the effect of the 1973 coup on regional relationships?

SCHIFFERDECKER: There was initially a period of tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan and also with Iran. At that time Iran was still a friend of the United States and we put a lot of stock in our relations with Iran and didn't want to see tensions with Afghanistan or with Pakistan, for that matter. So, there was a period of time when we felt that this new regime of Muhammad Daud was behaving in ways that cranked up the existing tensions between the two countries. Afghanistan also had problems with Iran on the division of waters between the two countries, the Helmand River. The tensions with Pakistan over Pashtunistan issue were larger and created more problems. What happened was that in both countries, relations were repaired and made actually stronger. Bhutto came to Afghanistan on an unannounced visit. He flew from Pakistan to Kabul giving one hour notice that he was coming and the Afghans were unable to say "no" and it turned out to be on a smaller scale, a Sadat visit to Jerusalem. In any case, because of Bhutto's charisma and personality he was able to overcome some of the tensions that the two countries had. Later the Shah of Iran began offering economic assistance to Afghanistan which the Afghans became interested in and that tended to diffuse some of the tensions between those two countries.

Q: So actually it was sort of similar in the case of both the important neighbors and us in terms of a little dip and then a resumption of kind of normal, positive relations?

SCHIFFERDECKER: Yes. Except in the case of Iran. I mentioned earlier that there was some Russian suspicion that Iran was acting on our behalf to wean the Afghans away from Russia and that may have contributed to nervousness on the part of the Russians that when their cohorts staged a coup they felt constrained to protect that investment they had made in Afghanistan and come to the aid of the fledgling Communist regime in 1979.

THOMAS STERN
Political/Military Security Assistant
Washington, DC (1973-1976)

Thomas Stern was born in Germany in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from Haverford College in 1950 and graduated from the Maxwell School of Public Affairs in 1951. Mr. Stern's Foreign Service career included positions in Rome, Bonn, Korea and Washington, DC. He retired from the Foreign Service in 1980. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: To my mind, that was one of Kissinger's main failings. For some reasons, he turned a blind eye to the Shah's insatiable appetite for weapons.

STERN: At that time, our foreign policy in the Middle East rested on the "two pillar" theory. One was Iran and the other was Saudi Arabia. For reasons that I have never fully understood, the Shah could procure anything he wanted. What I don't think Kissinger fully recognized was the large number of Americans that were required to set up the military establishments in both Iran and Saudi Arabia. We were involved in building infrastructure, in training, in maintenance, in everything to do with running a large military establishment. The Americans were U.S. government officials, American military personnel and private American contractors. We over-ran these countries. The Americans were obviously quite useful to the Iranian and Saudi governments; they could not have acquired and maintained and built their military capacity without large American assistance. Neither country had the technical capacity to handle the kind of build up that they sought. But it is not very clear that all this massive assistance was very useful to our national security because thousands of Americans living in a culture so foreign and different from what they were accustomed to tended to raise tensions with the local populations. The contractors, particularly in Saudi Arabia, tried to insulate their personnel from the local populations by building self-sustaining little cities in the desert, as ARAMCO had done, but there was bound to be some contact with the native people. These were not always positive as you might well expect. Many of our people were hard working, hard playing construction types and they would have had great difficulties with Muslim restrictions. Our presence therefore was not always a positive factor; it may in fact been one of the negatives that brought the Shah down. I never had a sense that there was any strategy behind Iran's procurement; it if it was new toy, the Shah wanted it. And he got it.

But with the exception of Iran, all other requests whether for arms or security assistance was, were scrutinized rather thoroughly. We turned down a number of requests for Latin America, particularly for advanced jet fighter planes. We tried to minimize the modernization of the air forces in Latin America. They didn't need the newer planes for defense purposes; they didn't have the infrastructure or manpower to fly and maintain a new fleet. There were some requests that just didn't make any sense at all. As a general proposition, the Defense Department usually supported requests, partly because in some cases, the larger the orders a manufacturer might have, the lower the cost per unit. Fortunately, the Department of State had the final word unless

the case was appealed to the NSC, which happened rarely. I also remember that we denied security assistance to Lebanon, which even at that time was a powerless force and its modernization might just have increased the internal frictions among the various religious sects. It certainly, even with modernization, could not have held off the Israelis or the Syrians, so we saw no justification for providing assistance. There were some other examples of our denials, but I just wanted to make it clear for the record that the Department, and PM specifically, gave each request, for security assistance or commercial arms sales, a thorough review.

We in PM did not win all the battles, but most of them. I had an officer director, Dan James, who was ideologically very much opposed to security assistance. He was a wonderful foil because I could always count on him to oppose most requests by the Bureaus for funds for military assistance. It is always useful to have a "devil's advocate" on your staff. I did not accept his arguments in most instances, but he did stimulate all of our thinking and at least was some sort of a brake on the insatiable appetites of the Bureaus.

One day, I was in my office, minding my own business, when Roy Atherton, then Assistant Secretary for the Near East, came by with a few members of his staff and asked whether I would like to go along with him right then for a meeting with the Secretary. I didn't have the slightest idea why the meeting was being held or what the subject matter was and Atherton did not enlighten me. But I went and walked into Kissinger's office. The first thing the Secretary did, in his usual charming way, was to say: "What is he doing here?" pointing at me. Roy explained that the issue to be discussed was a security assistance matter and he thought that I should be involved. It turned out that Kissinger wanted to see whether it would be possible to use some security assistance funds to finance a factory in Egypt to produce spare parts for Soviet military equipment. The Soviets had become disenchanted with their former clients (or vice-versa) and had ceased to provide military equipment to the Egyptians, who were left with a lot of weapon systems which could not be used for the lack of spare parts. I assumed that Sadat had asked Kissinger whether we could finance production line (and most probably technical advisors) that would produce at least spare parts if not complete systems so that his troops could be armed. When it became clear to me what the subject of the discussion was, I then understood why Atherton had asked me along. He and his staff did not want to say "No" to the Secretary. So when the question was asked, everybody turned and looked at me. In light of the silence, I said: "No, Mr. Secretary, I don't think that can be done". That did not go over very well. Kissinger scowled; he was not pleased with the answer. I didn't have the law in front of me, but I was pretty sure that the Congress would not have viewed the use of the taxpayers' money for such purpose with any great enthusiasm. Furthermore, I thought it would probably be public relations disaster when the media would have uncovered it. That episode was in part an illustration of the Department's view of security assistance. It did view it as money for "improving relations" between the United States and the recipient country. We were never able, in some cases, to answer satisfactorily, at least in my mind and to Congress, what the U.S. got in return. If we had a military facility, that was easy. If it strengthened our alliances, such as NATO and South Korea, that was easy. We used to talk about "stability", about UN votes, freedom of navigation, landing rights, etc. but the arguments in some instances there were not concrete quid-pro-quo for the assistance and the justifications were soft. The funds were just general "sweeteners" to make the life of our representatives overseas a little easier. I don't want to leave the impression that this

was the case for the majority of the program; it was not. We had sufficient justifications, whether it was for base rights, or modernization of allied forces, or equipping foreign forces that were under some threat of attack. But there were a number of smaller programs that were suspect.

Q: What about military assistance to Israel? You were in PM when the 1973 war was fought. What was the impact of that event on security assistance? I remember that our military was very unhappy when we moved their equipment, particularly from Europe, to help the Israelis.

STERN: I had just reported to PM a couple of months before the war started. I am not sure that I was even responsible for security assistance when the war began. But I did know that we had an annual very rigorous review program with the Israelis to review their security assistance requirements. A team of their Treasury and military experts would come to Washington for a few days and the U.S. government would review both their financial condition and their military requirements. It was the only country which was subjected to that kind of thorough scrutiny. These sessions were very much like budget hearings chaired by PM with Defense and Treasury representatives in attendance. Then I think there were separate sessions with DoD and Treasury as well. So it was as thorough a process as we had. We had a sort of a "benchmark". We wanted Israel to be both economically and militarily sufficiently viable to insure its continued independence, but we were also careful about creating any feeling among the Arabs that an arms race was being fostered in the Middle East. I think that was always one of our objectives which became more complicated when we began to assist the modernization of the Saudi Arabia forces. Iran was never much of a problem because the Israelis had close contacts with the Shah and I think viewed him as a supporter, or at least as a stabilizer, in the area. Jordan was the real problem because it was the neighbor which felt most threatened by the Israelis. We walked a fine line when we provided arms to the Israelis and the Jordanians. We tried to provide a level of military assistance which would permit the development of a recognized self-defense capability, but one that would not be so overwhelming that its neighbors would feel threatened. It was a difficult challenge, particularly when it came to air power. To maintain a "proper" balance got us into some difficulties. I mentioned Jordan's concerns. To balance some of Israeli air advantage, we decided to provide Jordan with some surface-to-air missiles and launchers. The Israelis objected vigorously and there were many members of Congress who supported them. We finally compromised and provided the Jordanians launchers that were not mobile; that is, we took the wheels off and the launchers were then fixed in one spot. These negotiations took months and were at the time a *cause celebre*. Our Saudi program was also the subject of much debate, which was partially resolved by building only air force bases far removed from Israel. Not all of these events took place during my tour in PM, but we had enough of these kinds of issues to make life interesting. The Saudi bases were not financed by the United States, but we had to license the technical assistance that was required. So we were, and still are, quite intrusive in the Middle East. Syria and Iraq were not a problem for us because they were essentially clients of the Soviet Union, from where they got much of their equipment as well as from France, I believe. Neither country in the early 70s was much of a threat militarily because oil had not yet become such a major foreign exchange earner.

We did try to enforce some limits on the modernization of the Israeli army before the '73 war. That permitted us to talk with some justification about a balance of power in the Middle East.

There were Israeli requests that we did not satisfy. For example, we would never provide cluster bombs because they were obviously offensive weapons. Furthermore, there were requests for sophisticated weapons that would have to be taken out of the inventory of our armed forces and before 1973, we did not do that, as far as I knew.

There was always a question of who would be the first, second, third etc. recipient of American production. That was not an Israel issue alone, but applied to many of our arms sales. I used to be briefed by representatives of our military production companies (e.g. Northrop, General Dynamics, General Motors) on their production plans. Almost always, our own military received first priority. Sometimes, Defense had to share some of the production with foreign buyers, particularly NATO and some other close allies. A shortage of production capability required us to referee at times, although I don't remember that ever being a major problem. But in most cases, the foreign buyer just got into line and had to wait his turn. Production was a problem especially for advanced aircraft; other weapons systems could be pretty much accommodated to meet both production capabilities and the delivery demands of the foreign buyer. As I said before, I can flatly say that economic considerations, that is the economic welfare of American companies, was never an issue that we considered either in making resource allocations or approval of arms sales. We were accused of doing so, but it was never true.

So as Deputy Director of PM, I became acquainted with a number of American arms manufacturers. I became especially well acquainted with the Northrop Company for a number of reasons. One was that one of their Washington representatives was a former military officer with whom I had served in Bonn. Secondly, and more importantly, Northrop was the only American weapon system manufacturer who had developed a system with its own resources essentially and exclusively for export purposes. I am referring to the F-5 family of fighter planes. All other manufacturers were using government funds for R&D work and whatever export sales they made were a by-product of their production for the American military. Northrop, on the other hand, explored the needs of non-NATO countries and developed a plane which met their defense requirements. I regretted the fact that our government did not support the F-5 program more. Our Air Force refused to buy that plane for its own use, although eventually I think it did buy a few to simulate the Soviet air force. But essentially our military turned its nose up at the thought of buying a plane which had been designed to meet the needs of smaller countries. Foreign countries therefore viewed the F-5 as an inferior weapon system because the US air force did not procure for its own inventory. It preferred F-4s and later F-16s and F-20s. These were weapon systems which the non-NATO countries really didn't need. They were far too advanced for them and the F-5 was a perfectly adequate system for the defensive purposes of most countries. The major difference was, at the time, the flying range which was not really an issue even for a country like Korea. In fact, the F-5 was a very good platform which would have served some of our own Air Force's needs quite satisfactorily. And it was a lot cheaper than other fighter planes. But the F-5 did not meet DoD's requirements and therefore was not on its procurement list. That gave concern to other countries some of whom opted to buy French or British when we would only approve the sale of F-5s. As I found out later, while we were supporting the F-5 program as tailor-made for the needs of most countries, the Air Force members of Military Assistance Advisory Groups may have been giving contrary advice to their foreign military counter-parts. It was to DoD's advantage to increase the production of F-4s, F-16s and F-18s because that would

reduce the cost of each plane produced. So there were some officers who were undoubtedly pushing other planes besides the F-5s for that reasons even though we had made it clear, I think, that as a general policy we would much prefer to sell the F-5s in most cases. So we had a difficult time getting other countries to request F-5s, although Northrop did make many sales. In fact, it was the State Department that was Northrop's strongest supporter because it manufactured a weapon system that quite adequate for the most countries' defense requirements and one that was considerably cheaper than the high-tech gadget-loaded planes that other American and European manufacturers produced. The Northrop story had never been fully told; it consists of a lot of errors, particularly when it came to some of their sales processes, which included bribes (disguised as commissions), but the company had also a lot of hits. I later became acquainted with its CEO, Tom Jones, who was a very intelligent person; the Northrop story is one that should be told in full sometimes because it illustrates the best and the worst of American business.

Q: That comment brings to my mind an interview I had with Ann Swift, who was the Politico-Military officer in the Philippines. She may have picked up the American military attitude because she said in somewhat disparaging terms that the F-5 looked great on the runway. She was suggesting, I think that since it was not a Defense Department product, it could not have much good.

STERN: I think she was wrong on the substance. As I said earlier, DoD used a few F-5 planes to play the role of the Soviet fighters in simulated combat situations. The F-5 was a perfectly adequate platform for most countries around the world; its main deficiency was range, but for defensive purposes, that is not a major issue in most cases. I am sorry that we in the Department did not insist more strongly on selling F-5s rather than the higher tech planes. In fact, in many cases, we had to strip down the F-4s, F-16s and F-18s both to guard some secret parts of the plane and to reduce its combat capabilities. In retrospect, I am not sure that the U.S. government policy on combat aircraft sales was the best that could have been developed.

Q: Let me go back to the Israel situation in the Fall of 1973. Did you get involved in the resupply effort which according to some people siphoned off a lot of new equipment from our forces, particularly from Europe?

STERN: My involvement was at the margins. Kissinger kept the Department pretty much in the dark. What we knew was primarily through Sey Weiss from his Pentagon contacts. They complained both about the depletion of their stock and about the delay in the shipments. I learned later that Kissinger and Schlesinger, each for their own reasons, were at odds about the shipping issue with NSC Advisor wishing to delay the deliveries and DoD wanting to get material into Israeli hands as quickly as possible. But all I know about that issue is what I read about it later. Sey may have talked to Kissinger on one or two occasions about the issue, but we were not really involved nor was much of the Department.

Q: After the war, was there a sea-change in our assistance program to Israel? Or did that come after Camp David?

STERN: That came after Camp David particularly in respect to financial assistance. After the '73 war, we may have become somewhat less rigorous in our review of Israeli financial and military needs. We went through the exercise, but it was pretty much a *pro forma* operation. The major increase in assistance came after Camp David.

Just a summary, I might say that Security Assistance and arms sale programs served as a useful tool of our foreign relations. There were undoubtedly excesses: the Iranian program, the Saudi Arabia program (although much of that happened after my departure from PM), some of our African programs, even if small, some of our Latin American programs, also relatively small, but in general the programs gave us a level of influence that we could not have gained otherwise and I don't think that it can be credibly charged that our programs fostered hostilities or even raised tensions which would not have existed otherwise. The Latin American programs had to be given special attention because many of the regimes were dictatorial and we were not in the business of supplying arms so that the populations could be repressed. I think our military did a very good job in setting up training programs for the Latin military, which may have eventually paid off when many of the military forces in the region decided that they really didn't have a role in the political life of their countries. There are still some temptations, but we have come a long way on this issue in the last twenty years. One might make a case that by supporting the Pakistanis, we raised Indian concerns, but there were so many factors in that dispute that to single out our military assistance as a major one would be over-stating the case. We tilted much more towards Pakistan in the early '80s although even while I was in PM, there was a policy of trying to maintain some balance between the Soviet-supplied India and Pakistan.

It is never popular to be involved in programs that may cause deaths and it was particularly difficult for me in light of my Quaker education. But sometimes you have to accept human nature as it is; not every one in this world is a pacifist and a "good" person and if a government is determined to buy arms, it will do so. Under those circumstances, I much preferred that they be American arms because we were careful about what we provided and because we used the arms to influence the foreign government in not using them. People used to scoff at our position that if "we didn't supply arms, others would". But it was a fact that was shown over and over again. I never did understand the people who preferred to close their eyes and preferred a policy of neglect rather than trying to use whatever influence the U.S. might have had to reduce the tensions in an area and the possibility of outright hostilities.

I might just add one footnote to the military assistance program that has never gotten the appropriate attention. Although we used to give at least a cursory glance, we never explored sufficiently the absorptive capacity of the recipient country. We paid some attention to the financial costs and the economic consequences of our military assistance programs, but very little to the question whether the foreign military forces could in effect really use this equipment. DoD was always certain that it could train anybody and everybody to use the equipment. I think that there were several situations where the equipment was far too sophisticated for the recipients and I know of some instances when our equipment just rusted in warehouses. Also I suspect that in some cases the equipment could not be used because some spare parts were missing and the country could not afford to buy them.

Q: I think it was Bob Dillon who was the DCM in Egypt who described going to an Egyptian military base and finding that the complex American equipment required such a sophisticated supply system that the Egyptians couldn't cope with it. So it was probably both a maintenance and a supply problem.

STERN: That story doesn't surprise me. I have no doubt that some of our assistance was wasted, but we tried to compensate somewhat for the problem by setting up Military Assistance Advisory Groups (MAAGs) who bore some responsibility for assuring that the American equipment was properly maintained and used. Also the manufacturers tried to help in some situations. Despite all of that, I am sure there were circumstances in which both we and the recipient country's personnel were overwhelmed by magnitude of the problem. One of the countries that had difficulties was Iran which did not lack for American support, but the magnitude of the procurement and the sophistication of the equipment was just too great. You could see that quite clearly after the Shah's overthrow and the Iran-Iraq war. Of course, the fact that we cut off Iran from spare parts resupply had considerable impact, I am sure. We were always careful to hold spare parts acquisition to a minimum; we didn't want large stock-piles if we could help it because as long as the recipient had to depend on our provision of spare parts, we had considerable leverage. In some cases, new equipment was procured by recipient countries too quickly to be absorbed efficiently. We never had a rigorous evaluation process of this absorptive capacity which would give us in the Department of State some feel for the condition of the equipment that had been procured by the foreign government. I am not sure that it would have made much difference because the acquisition mentality of many governments was boundless, but we might have been able to steer some away from the most egregious wastes.

Our process for the determination of the allocation of the resources was a pretty good one. We had an inter-agency steering group which we used to hammer out agreements. It was called SAPRC (Security Assistance Review Committee) which had been established by Ron Spiers, the previous PM Director, and Tom Pickering, my one of my predecessors. I thought that worked very well. There were a lot of agencies represented on the committee, which met at least during two periods each year. The disagreements were worked out there; seldom did we have to raise an issue to higher levels. PM's major differences were with the regional bureaus and not other agencies. They always wanted more and were not able or were unwilling to prioritize their requirements despite our efforts to force them to do so. Their "wish" list was always far beyond that we could afford and when we asked that the amounts be brought down to manageable proportions, there were always scream of anguish from one desk or another. At times, we just had to make an arbitrary decision on a country allocation.

The three years in PM were very interesting and challenging. There were a lot of interesting problems. I learned a lot about bureaucratic processes, Congressional relations, the consequences of power vacuums at the top of bureaucracies. I was undoubtedly not qualified for some of the assignments, particularly at the beginning, but I somehow survived.

GORDON WINKLER

**Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1973-1977)**

Gordon Winkler was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1924. He received a bachelor's degree from Dartmouth College in 1948. During World War II, he served in the U.S. Army. In addition to serving in Iran and Washington, DC, Mr. Winkler served in Ethiopia and Ghana. He was interviewed by Dorothy Robins Mowry on March 23, 1989.

Q: What did you do after your African period?

WINKLER: I went to Iran.

Q: Directly?

WINKLER: Yes, in 1973.

Q: You were there until when?

WINKLER: Until July of 1977. I went there in April of '73 just after Dick Helms had taken over as Chief of Mission. He'd interviewed me for the job in Washington. I got called home from my last African trip, as a matter of fact, a week or two early, to be interviewed by Helms. He was going out. I arrived about six weeks after he did.

Q: Initially you had no particular interest yourself in Iran?

WINKLER: Yes, I always had an interest in Iran. Iran seemed exciting. I can't explain what it was. The idea of Central Asia seemed interesting to me. It also was a considerably more developed environment. It wasn't Europe, but it was a much more developed environment.

Q: From what you'd been having in Africa, of course. I did it exactly the other way; I went from sophisticated Japan to Iran, which is very different.

WINKLER: You may have had some culture shock.

Q: I did. If nothing else, I had a lot of culture shock on distance.

WINKLER: Traffic wasn't quite as bad as Tokyo's, but it was terrible.

Q: They reacted differently. They would get out and bang on your car, or whatever was going on.

WINKLER: Yes. This sounds awful, but it's a fact. I used to say that I was crazy about every Iranian I knew, and despised every Iranian I didn't know. You were treated so miserably by strangers. I found many Iranians so discourteous, so impolite. An awful lot of this, I'm sure,

grows out of my feeling about the traffic and the driving. But you know all the culture and all the idiosyncrasies of Iranians. If I pulled up to a stoplight next to an Iranian driver, I learned to try to achieve eye contact. I would lean out of the car and look at the person driving the other car, and could feel him fighting against eye contact, because if they didn't achieve eye contact, they could do anything. They would pull out and cut right in front of you. If you achieved eye contact, then they had to be polite. Their culture required it.

Q: And they did this to each other.

WINKLER: Oh, yes!

Q: I think that's got to be made clear, this is how Iranians treat Iranians.

WINKLER: This is interesting about Ethiopia, too. They often were dreadful to each other. I went to a USAID agricultural conference involving about ten embassy officers and about 20 people from the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture at a rather nice motel outside of Addis. The Americans were assigned to share a room with an Ethiopian. I was in a room with an assistant minister. I was in bed, and he came in, after brushing his teeth, and got into the other bed. There was a bed table between us. He put a gun down, a revolver, on the bed table. (Laughs) I didn't know what to think. I said, "What's that?"

He said, "That's my pistol."

I said, "Well, why is it here?"

He said, "Because I'm an Amhara," which meant that he was of the dominant--but not the biggest--tribe, and he always felt a sense of danger. An awful lot of Ethiopian men carried firearms, and they were capable of shooting each other when arguing. They treated each other very badly. To a degree, the Iranians were much the same way. The Ghanaians were not like that.

Q: I'm not sure if foreigners in Iran understood that this terrible rudeness was kind of a universal; it wasn't anti-American. I think people sometimes mixed that up. They didn't have the proper understanding of the culture or the people.

WINKLER: But it was terribly difficult not to feel that it was directed toward you; they seemed so insensitive. The Iranians that you knew socially and professionally couldn't have been nicer.

Q: How did you and Helms get on? Why was Helms sent there?

WINKLER: I gather he was sent there because Nixon wanted to put somebody else in CIA. Who was it?

Q: Gee, I can't remember.

WINKLER: Who did Nixon put in? Did he put Bush in?

Q: I think Bush was later.

WINKLER: Helms reputedly got eased out, and I gather he was asked where he wanted to go. Of course, Helms had been in the CIA for 30 years. I think he was the first career director. The CIA connection with the Shah had been very, very close for all these years, and Helms, so the story goes, asked for Iran.

He and I got along very well. Our wives were very friendly. We played tennis a good deal with the Helmses. We saw a lot of them socially. He was a fine guy to work for, because he allowed you full range. When I first got there, he said, "Gordon, you've got the experience to run the USIA operation here. If you have problems, or troubles, or need me for anything, walk into my office. If you want me to go to any kind of a social or cultural event, let me know in advance and get it on the calendar, and I'll be there. If you want me to give a talk, set it up and I'll do it. Just do your job; I won't bother you."

Q: This is a blessing, isn't it?

WINKLER: Yes. I think the fundamental reason was that Helms' previous job had been so much more complex, so much more demanding, such greater responsibility, than being Ambassador in even as important a country as Iran, that he had no ego problems. He had no need to get into everybody's hair. Other ambassadors do, as you well know. But Helms was really fine to work for.

Q: And it was an easy job for him, relatively, compared with what he had been coping with earlier.

WINKLER: Yes, I think so. He was very social. We seldom went to a party where he and Cynthia weren't there. You know what that environment was. That social environment was pretty heady. You went to dinner parties in houses with three-acre backyards covered with Persian rugs.

Q: And tureens of caviar.

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: It was exhausting. I know even in the time I was there, it got to the point that by the time the weekend days came, I was often just shaking with lack of sleep, because we always had a very early morning staff meeting, and you were out. You'd go someplace and they never served dinner until 11:30.

WINKLER: Yes, if you invited people for 8:30, that meant they'd be there at 10:00 and would drink until 11:00.

Q: That's right. I used to eat twice. I would eat in order to survive the dinner party.

WINKLER: Helms always had a sandwich before he went to a party. When I got there, I arrived

about two months before Peggy, there were three or four invitations, including black-tie invitations, on my desk when I arrived. People I didn't know!

Q: But they knew who you were.

WINKLER: They knew who I was. It was a wonderful way to get acquainted. The problem was--and this goes to the basic dilemma--that all of the people we knew, everybody on the USIS staff when I was there, and I'm sure everybody in the embassy, or just about everybody in the embassy, saw the same group of Iranians that our predecessors saw. We inherited them. We were the new generation of Americans, and we inherited the friends of the preceding generation.

The first week I was there, Jim Bill, then at the University of Texas, came through. He's written a very good book. I don't know if you've read it.

Q: I've read some reviews of it, but I haven't read the book.

WINKLER: It's worth reading. It's called The Eagle and the Lion. At any rate, Bill and I got acquainted. He came by the office and talked with me for an hour or two. He said he was doing a monograph. I'm not sure he's ever published it, but it was a monograph about the American Embassy in Tehran. It outlined his vision of the American Embassy, as having a kind of wreath or a shrub around it.

Q: Around the big campus.

WINKLER: Around the big campus. That mythological shrub was made up of all the Iranians the embassy people saw, and that shrub was the same year after year after year, and no one from the embassy ever got through that shrub. I guess one of the reasons was that the Iranians making up the shrub were attractive people, they were European - or American-educated, they were fun to be with, they entertained us marvelously. When we had parties, they would come to the house and stay late. We knew their children, we knew their uncles and their aunts. We became very close. Today, here in Washington, I think we see as many Iranians as we do Americans, because you make close ties. They made certain that they had good contacts at as high a level as they possibly could in the American Embassy, whether it was to assure getting a visa or whatever.

Q: The American Embassy had prestige.

WINKLER: Yes, it did. There were all kinds of attitudes, I think, towards the American Embassy. I think an awful lot of these people saw us as being people they could enjoy themselves with, because we were a touch of the modern world for them, where they had been educated and spent a great deal of time.

Q: They'd go to Paris for new clothes or whatever it was.

WINKLER: That's right, Christian Dior or Saville Row. We were England and America and France and Germany and Italy for them. They wanted to be around us, and they made themselves

very accessible.

Q: And they were very attractive.

WINKLER: They were very attractive, they were fun to be with, and they spoke our language. But at the same time, I think that there were dimensions in their attitudes towards us we did not sufficiently grasp. Some may have said, "These fools. Their policy has been going on for 20 or 25 years, and it can't last. Something is going to come a cropper."

The first week I was there, two of our senior local staff came to see me and unloaded. They gave me chapter and verse on Iranian attitudes about the U.S., about the Shah, and about our close association with the Shah. This was in the spring of 1973, five years before the start of the revolution. One of these staffers was the chief public affairs assistant, a man, and the other was the chief cultural assistant, a woman.

He came to see me alone, and then she came to see me alone. Then she insisted on coming in with him, and he was never comfortable talking in front of her, because I think he felt, even in those early days in '73, that she was an agent provocateur. But they both said, "Something's got to be done in your policy, in your relations to this country."

Q: You mean U.S. policy.

WINKLER: U.S. policy and U.S. relations. They both said, "You're going to lose this. Change things dramatically or you are going to lose this." Interestingly, when she was present, he wasn't quite as voluble as he was when he and I were alone or went out to lunch. (Parenthetically, I should note that he was right about her. He spent time in jail after the revolution, and she became part of it.) But I got an awful lot of this. I got to know Helms well very quickly, and I filled him in on all of this. Doug Heck was the DCM at the time, and he was first class. He was very close to USIS, and had a very clear understanding of the country. He and Helms made it very clear they wanted full reporting of "everything you hear along these lines."

Q: Back to Washington?

WINKLER: No, to them. USIS heard many things, because we knew an awful lot of people, and a lot of the people we knew were not in government. They were journalists or they were academicians. Of course, they were all in government to some degree, but we picked up a great deal all over the country. So what happened in 1978 and '79 certainly is no surprise to me.

Q: How much got reported back to Washington? Was there much in the traffic?

WINKLER: That's a fundamental question. We put everything in writing: "To Ambassador Helms from Gordon Winkler. Subject: Gleaning. Marilyn McAfee tells me that she heard this from so and so. Our BNC director in Shiraz heard this from so and so. I had lunch with S(inaudible) and this is what he said."

An awful lot of people--I'm sure you had this experience, also--would call you up, after they got to know you, and say, "Can I come over for a drink some night next week?" I would say, "Certainly. Anybody else I should have?"

"No. Absolutely not." They'd come in. The cook would come in with a brandy, and the conversation would stop until the cook got out of the room. The person would say, "Are you sure about your cook? What do you know about him?"

"He's been a cook for six generations of PAOs here. He's a pretty good cook."

"Well then, what's in the bird cage, besides the bird?" They were paranoid about the secret police.

You would get an awful lot, but the problem was that you never got chapter and verse. You'd hear an awful lot from faculty members about kids being picked up on campus by Savak and not return. But there were seldom specifics.

Q: Did you almost begin to feel as if you were surrounded by a kind of miasma of rumor or semi-rumor?

WINKLER: Yes, but there was so much of it, it couldn't be just rumor; it had to represent fact. You would hear stories about the corruption of the court and about Princess Ashraf, the king's twin sister. You would hear, "People are upset about this military build up. People are upset that there's not enough money going into hospitals and into education; it's all going to Grumman and Northrop. You've got to do something about it."

Well, this is a long way to answer your question about whether anything ever got back to Washington. The simple answer is that in spite of the fact that we were giving the ambassador regular reports, I never saw anything in the traffic. He may have been packing them up and putting them in an envelope and sending them to Charlie Naas, who was then the Iranian country director at the State Department. I don't know. I do know that I saw an awful lot more of the incoming and outgoing traffic when Doug Heck was the DCM than when Jack Miklos, who replaced Doug, was DCM, because every morning when I'd go to the staff meeting, I'd go in and see Heck's secretary, and she'd say, "Here's your file." My file had the back channel traffic and other things Doug thought I ought to see. When Miklos arrived, that stopped. I asked for it but never saw it.

Helms, half a dozen times during that period, at staff meetings would cite the USIS gleanings, and said, "I want more of that from other embassy elements." I wish I had all those memos. But the bottom line is that I never saw anything go back to Washington. Some may have; but I never saw it.

Q: One of the questions has been, "Did the United States see this coming?" They've asked that question in one version or another. By and large, the answer you get from the outside is that the Americans at the embassy were not privy to anything really important that was going on. I don't

mean to overstate it, but you see the point I'm trying to make.

WINKLER: I think a lot of us did have concerns, certainly at the time I left in mid-1977. That was about six months before things began to fall apart. They began to fall apart in January of 1978, as you recall. You were there then.

Q: I arrived as things began to collapse.

WINKLER: I knew, and others knew, it was a sick society. It was a very sick society. It became so wealthy so suddenly. It had been quite wealthy, but then when the Shah quadrupled oil prices in December of 1973, it became almost insufferably rich; the epitome of a nouveau riche society. Like in Ethiopia, the poor were very poor. They weren't quite as badly off as in Africa, but they were pitiful. Social services were terrible, rudimentary, particularly health and education. As in most developing countries very little got to the provinces.

Q: We were talking about the gleanings and the results of all that. When you were in Iran, did you travel around? I don't mean just to visit the cultural centers, but did you get out and have a chance to see for yourself at all? Or were you somewhat restricted? Fully the second half of my time in Iran, my heavens, there were only certain days in which I could even go to south Tehran. So you know how restricted I finally got. My whole career, I was interested in getting out beyond the capital cities, to try to feel what was happening.

WINKLER: I was the same way. It was very easy to do in Iran, simply because of those Binational Centers, the American-supported cultural centers. There were six or seven of them when I was there, and they were always a good excuse to get out of the capital. I don't think I ever made a trip in Iran without going to a BNC, but they made it possible to see a great deal of the country and to get to know people in the regional cities such as Isfahan, Tabriz, Mashhad, Shiraz, Abadan, Ahvaz and other places.

Q: We were talking about the fact that the embassy, Jim Bill's concept of the wreath around it, and that we talked to the same people whom we've been talking to forever.

WINKLER: The same thing was largely true in the provinces. The people one tended to meet in the provinces were not provincially indigenous. They were the same kind of people one met in Tehran. They were sent to the outlying cities to handle the major responsibilities. They were the trusted ones, of course. These people were all very metropolitan people, very cosmopolitan. So I don't think we ever really got a taste of the provinces. I think that also was a function of not having the language. That was one of the greatest gaps in our preparation for service in Iran.

Q: Well, that's Washington's problem, as far as I was concerned. I finally had three months of Persian, and everything I had heard, I even said, "Why don't you give me a good brush-up in French, which might be better for the cultural attaché?" They said no. So I had Persian.

WINKLER: Your predecessor, Bill De Myer, had excellent French, and he used it with the chancellor of Tehran University. But that was about the only person he used it with.

Q: There was the split in the educational world between those who were English-educated and those who were French-educated. But three months of Persian doesn't do anything for you.

WINKLER: That's right. You asked earlier whether we had a sense that things were coming apart. I answered by saying that I was not surprised that the monarchy was deposed. But I never had a clue as to the source, the mullahs. We never saw any; never ever. I don't know what it was like when you were there. When I first got there, there was a junior political officer who had good Farsi by the name of Stan Escudero. Escudero, I would guess, was probably a grade 5, very junior, at the time.

Escudero sometimes came to staff meetings. He didn't come too often. His boss, the political counselor, usually came. The political counselor would occasionally report that Escudero had been to a mosque and talked to such and such a mullah, had lunch with a mullah, did this or that with a mullah. I overlapped with Escudero six or seven months. It seemed to me that Helms was not terribly comfortable with this at these meetings, and eventually I learned that the Shah had told us he didn't want us involved with the religious community at all.

Q: He had told Helms?

WINKLER: That's my understanding. In my presence at the staff meeting, Helms wasn't saying to the political counselor, "Call him off," but I felt he was not terribly pleased by these contacts. That was my impression. I think he knew that Escudero was leaving, and it would die there, because there wasn't anybody at that table who could speak Farsi, and there was no way to be in touch with much of the Islamic religious community without the language. This was all about 1973 or '74.

Q: So that was a deliberate policy, really, then?

WINKLER: Yes. As far as I knew, we were totally in the dark. As far as the Shah's illness was concerned, I recall, probably in late 1973, maybe early 1974, Helms came back from the palace and reported to us at a staff meeting that he was terribly worried; the Shah looked like hell.

Q: 1973?

WINKLER: About 1973. It was early in my tour. He looked like hell, he looked like he'd lost weight, he was pale, he was acting tired. The Shah was usually very vigorous and with it and alert. Helms was quite upset and said, "We've got to find out something about this." Whether we did or not, I don't know. I have a hunch we didn't. He must have had the lymphatic cancer at that time. It's the kind of disease that people can have for ten years. Golda Meir had it for ten years until she succumbed to it. I gather he had it.

Shortly after this, the Shah went to Vienna for his annual physical checkup, and I gather we got reports that that came out very well. Apparently, the French knew before we did that he had cancer. Do you recall any talk about this?

Q: I knew by the summer of 1978, when I was there. In the summer of '78, there was a long period in which there were no pictures in the media of the Shah, about six weeks. Our friend, Farah, I can remember discussing this when I went up to the Caspian to be with her and her family. But the great concern was that there were no pictures of the Shah doing this or that or the other thing in the newspapers for an inordinately long period of time.

WINKLER: This was unusual. His picture always was at the top of page one--palace orders.

Q: And the word was out that he had cancer. This was also the reason given for the fact that he was lethargic in reacting to the fire at Abadan and all the other things that went on.

WINKLER: When was the fire in the cinema at Abadan?

Q: The fire in Abadan was in August of 1978.

WINKLER: Was it that late?

Q: That was the considered the beginning of the absolute end.

WINKLER: I figured that that was, too, when I heard about it.

Q: I've got my own stories that you and I could share, which are not appropriate for here. I think I've said it on my own interview. But that was the beginning of the end, because the Shah came out with a new policy statement at the very end of August and the beginning of September, which was placating, new approaches. But by that time it was too late.

I'm interested in what you say about Helms, because I'm a great admirer of Sullivan. I think Sullivan got all the Americans out of Iran magnificently. When I think of what happened in places like Vietnam and other things, I think Sullivan is to be congratulated. I keep wondering about Helms, who was a CIA kind of personality, whether he was swallowing this information. When I was there in 1978 to '79, we were told that the CIA was called off of any of its normal field activities at the request of the palace, and therefore we didn't have all the intelligence that we should have had. You are suggesting that Helms may or may not have reported back the gleanings that you're talking about.

WINKLER: Yes. We'd report these things to Helms, and others around the table would come in, reporting terrible situations, such as a repressive event at a university, or Governor So-and-so was stealing such and such. Helms' position, which I never felt you could argue with, was, "What you're giving me are rumors. Give me specifics. I can't go into the palace with rumors. I'm perfectly willing to take these things up with him (e.g., the Shah), but I can't go into the palace unless I have chapter and verse."

Q: He was very close to the Shah, I take it.

WINKLER: Very, very close to the Shah.

Q: Sullivan was, too.

WINKLER: Helms was . . .

Q: Probably closer.

WINKLER: I would say that Helms probably was closer because of the whole CIA relationship. He was terribly close to an official by the name of Alam, who was the minister of court. Alam had had every top job. He'd been foreign minister and just about everything else but Shah.

Q: I don't know that name.

WINKLER: He was the minister of court, a very elegant, aristocratic person. Of course, I think that Helms was terribly respected by them because of the CIA background and because Helms himself is a rather Brahman type.

Q: Yes, he's a very attractive person. I don't know him well at all, but he is a very attractive person.

WINKLER: He was a very much sought-after person. Of course in most developing countries the U.S. Ambassador is a celebrity--but Helms was special. There is a strong point of view that the CIA operation in Tehran--and you're familiar with this--was getting everything from Savak. It knew what Savak wanted it to know. What we were getting from the Israelis, I have no idea. In most countries it has seemed to me that they have remarkable intelligence gathering ability. I am sure this was true in Iran.

Q: I remember a dinner party in which I think both Jack Shellenberger and I were present. This was at the embassy. My heavens, there were a batch of Iranian military brass. Jack subsequently was invited to a lunch or something or other, and he indicated that he had been sort of told not to tamper with the military, and this was the first and only contact he had. He was surprised at the follow-up and all this kind of thing. It's almost as if people were compartmentalized.

WINKLER: We never were steered away from the military. I used to go to military bases. We were distributing publications to the military.

Q: So you had contact with the military.

WINKLER: Yes. We were setting up lectures on security issues and other issues. There was a military academy or an officer school, something like the National Defense College, in Tehran. I went over there at one point and talked with the director, I think with De Myer. We set up a series of talks. When we dealt with the military and brought somebody in to give a lecture, we always had to have simultaneous translation, because an awful lot of military officers didn't have English. That kind of made it a bit clumsy, but we did it.

Q: You never were at a post where there was this complication?

WINKLER: No. I went to military bases whenever it seemed worthwhile. It didn't seem to be a particularly significant target for USIS, because we had so many military that were dealing with them. It certainly didn't seem to me to be a potential problem area for us. The whole subject of a potential coup d'état or potential revolution was usually muted, and we relaxed because we felt the Shah would maintain control of the military, and the military would . . .

Q: Keep control of the country.

WINKLER: Yes.

Q: What about the other programs that you had? What did you feel was particularly important, and why?

WINKLER: I'll tell you what I did not feel was important--our biggest program there, and that was the Binational Center.

Q: In Tehran.

WINKLER: In Tehran. It was the largest U.S.-supported binational cultural program in the world. I thought the English-teaching was very worthwhile. We were teaching English to upwards of 25,000 different Iranians every year in the six or seven installations that were involved. Aside from that, I felt the BNC was, to a substantial degree--the cultural center, that is--a waste of time. We had a total of three officers there, including the librarian. We had a director and an assistant director. The board of directors was made up of American businessmen and the kind of Iranians who were in that wreath; Jim Bill's circular shrub. All of the board members were from the top families. These were the already persuaded; these were the people who we were close to. Most are in this country now.

Q: So we had a big operation.

WINKLER: We were talking to the converted. We'd go to great expense to put on cultural events, and very few people came.

Q: Really?

WINKLER: Yes. I would walk in to hear a pianist or a violinist or a singer, and there could be half a dozen people in the room, and maybe half of them were our local employees.

Q: Lois Roth?

WINKLER: No, Lois was not there. Phil Pillsbury, then Ted Kennedy were the Directors during my tour of duty. It was a very different country from the period when Lois Roth was there. First

of all, even before the quadrupling of oil prices, but certainly after, the indigenous cultural infrastructure in Tehran was substantial. There was that splendid opera house, there were museums, there was a concert theater. Do you recall that one in downtown Tehran?

Q: Yes, I know. Downtown.

WINKLER: We did much better when we would get cultural attraction from USIA scheduled into one of those places. I didn't feel we needed the Center at all.

Q: The Center had so much geography and it had to keep the geography filled.

WINKLER: Parking was difficult there. The traffic was terrible. Even the already converted, who might come, were so busy because social life was so intense, that they didn't come to many of our programs. The library, as far as I could tell, the Abraham Lincoln Library, was full of American kids, very few Iranians. I've got great questions about American libraries in most parts of the world, as a matter of fact, if you want to get into that. But I asked for a study of the Center after I was there a year. Jim Mocerri was USIA's director of research. He came out and spent a week with me talking about this, and he set up a research project. He brought in a firm from Lebanon to do it. The upshot of the study, which I got hold of just before I left, indicated that it wasn't a terribly valuable institution for us, that there was an awful lot of wheel spinning there and an awful lot of resources wasted.

At the time I got there, we were putting in upwards of \$100,000 a year in budgetary support, and I was able to end that fairly quickly. But we were still putting in the officers. I don't recall whether we paid any salaries of any of the locals. I think that was all being supported by the profits from English-teaching, which were unreal. English teaching was a cash register.

Q: That was very impressive.

WINKLER: That was worthwhile. I would meet people all over the country, military officers, academicians, government people, who would say, when you introduced yourself as from USIS, "Oh, yes, you taught me English." They never forgot that.

Q: For a long time I kept arguing about using the English-language teaching as a vehicle for more programming, using that. What about libraries?

WINKLER: I've got serious questions about libraries all over the world. When I was Area Director for Africa, I urged the PAOs to take all the chairs out of the libraries. (Laughs)

Q: How can you function in a library without chairs?

WINKLER: Because they should be circulating libraries and reference libraries, and people should come in, look for a book, find it, and take the book out. Obviously, serious work in a library is worthwhile, but I'd walk into those air-conditioned buildings and most people, with clothes falling off their back and no shoes, were looking at the girdle ads in the magazines. That

was it.

Q: It's a very controversial question.

WINKLER: It still is today.

Q: Yes, yes.

WINKLER: I inspected our post in Germany twice, and I very seldom went into one of those beautiful America House libraries where I saw anybody but two or three Ethiopians or Africans. That was, of course, of value, but the libraries there were aimed mainly at Germans, and I saw very few Germans in those libraries. Seriously. But the USIS Director there didn't want to give them up, and nobody else wanted to give them up. Actually, the whole question of our program in Germany is worth another discussion.

Q: Germany is a very special kind of situation, I think. I'm devoted to the written word, may I say, by comparison with other things. It isn't that I don't recognize the value of other approaches, but having spent so long in Japan, where the written word is critical, I think there are ways to go about the library situation that is useful to USIA.

WINKLER: I think the work we do in USIA is terribly important. I don't think it's as important as some other kinds of diplomacy. But it's become increasingly important. As more and more people in the world vote, we must reach large segments of the population with our messages. But USIS programs are only as good as the policies they represent. Better to have a mediocre information program and a good policy than a great information program and a mediocre policy.

Iran was one of the biggest posts in the world. At one time in the 1950s and '60s, I would guess they must have had 30 Americans and 300 or 400 Iranian staffers in USIS. When I was there, there were 15 Americans and 80 or 90 Iranians. I think we did a good job, and I think that the people who preceded us did a good job. There were no inhibiting factors. We could reach anybody we wanted except the religious community. But I'm dubious as to whether all the books we distributed, all the lecturers that we brought in, the magazines we produced, the interviews we had on television, the stuff we got into the papers, really did a hell of a lot for us in a situation where the people fundamentally questioned our policy, our role in Iran, and our motives, and where they said to us, "You people control our country and you can change things."

I felt genuinely that we didn't control their country and they had to change things themselves. Now I'm not so sure. As I think back, maybe there are things that we could have done, about which our Ambassador could have taken a more forceful approach. We did have great clout with the monarchy.

I was there during Watergate. Watergate may have been one of the best things that ever happened to us in Iran, because the way Watergate turned out was a startling eye-opener to Iranians. They just couldn't believe that a country could get rid of a President and not have a revolution.

Q: And no troops in the streets.

WINKLER: And nobody got hurt. They couldn't believe it! Peggy and I went to a dinner party the night Nixon resigned, at the home of the chief aide to Prime Minister Hoveyda. This man later became ambassador in London. He gave a very small dinner for an Englishman who was the Mideast correspondent for Newsweek out of London. Peggy and I were the only Americans there. There was this Englishman and about a dozen Iranians. The host started the dinner party by saying, "I've just got to raise my glass to the United States. Nowhere in the world could something like this have happened. It is to the great honor of American society that this exalted thing happened."

And the Englishman said, "It's an exalting thing for the whole world." I couldn't speak. I almost had to leave the table, it was so emotional. But Watergate was one of the best things that happened to demonstrate what our society is like. And this is what many Iranians hoped we could in some way bring to their country.

Q: The real strength of the democratic process and the Constitution.

WINKLER: That's right. When Carter came in and preached the gospel of human rights in a very forceful way many Iranians said to me: "Finally America sounds like we expect America to sound." Unfortunately, Carter ruined it all by public obeisance to the Shah. It's important in this connection to note that people in many cultures simply expect more from America than from other developed countries. In black Africa people would complain if an American rifle was found on a Portuguese soldier during the last years of the colonial period in Angola. We would explain that the weapon got to the Portuguese as part of their NATO membership and was not to be used in Africa. Then we thought we would clinch the argument by pointing out that the French were selling Mirage fighters to South Africa. The usual response of a black African was, "Well, that's the French. Don't compare yourselves to the French. More is expected of you." Perhaps they understood our history better than we did. When those special expectations no longer exist, we'll be in trouble.

Q: Do you think we could have changed the Shah and his proclivities?

WINKLER: I don't know, perhaps. Actually it might have hastened the revolution if Iranians knew that we were making an effort or that we weren't quite as tied in to the monarchy. What happened after the revolution might have been less dramatic, not the horror that it was. I'm not necessarily suggesting that the hostage experience would have been avoided.

Q: But by mid-summer of '78, when I would talk to some Iranians, they would say, "You Americans, you're the people who can do something about this. Why don't you do something about this?"

WINKLER: Of course, by then the revolution was in progress.

Q: It was not overt. It was not absolutely overt.

WINKLER: There were demonstrations every 40 days.

Q: I know there were demonstrations, but it was not absolutely overt. There was all this preliminary. I would say, "But there's nothing we can do. It's you who must do something about this." I can remember they would always come back to, "It's not we who can do something; it's you who must do something." All the time.

WINKLER: One of the things that most Americans don't understand or are not aware of is the conspiracy theory of human events and human actions.

Q: Yes.

WINKLER: Much of the rest of the world to a large degree believes it, that everything is a conspiracy. We can't grasp this, mainly because it really is not compatible with a culture based on individual initiative--people functioning on their own.

Q: It doesn't really work that way here.

WINKLER: No, many Iranians saw us as part of a conspiracy with the monarchy and that as the senior partner we could really call the shots.

Q: It's really very interesting. May I say, from my point of view, it was very traumatic, the whole general situation and the progress of events. You were still there when things were good.

WINKLER: Well, they weren't so good. They were good on the surface, Dorothy, but we were getting a monumental amount of criticism and complaints in face-to-face situations. There was nobody--and I don't think this is an exaggeration--there was nobody that I knew at the levels that I knew people, which obviously were at fairly high levels, in journalism, academia, and in society generally, that if I scratched a little bit, I couldn't get a great deal of criticism about the Shah (and many were closely associated with the palace), about our relationship to the Shah, about Princess Ashraf and her corruption, about the monarch's bizarre priorities, about the choking political oppression. I had the feeling while I was there that Iran was more closed than the Soviet Union. In those days we would read about dissidents, speaking out to some degree in the USSR or giving interviews. There was nothing of the sort in Iran. The really intensive negative attitude about the U.S. followed the Nixon and Kissinger visit in May of 1972. That may have been the low-water mark in relations, because they said to the Shah, "You can have anything you want, anything you can pay for," and the Shah became the epitome of Nixon's Guam doctrine. The Brits had pulled out of the Persian Gulf in 1971-72, so there was a political vacuum in the Gulf, and the Shah wanted to fill it. He wanted to fill it with American-made frigates, F-16s, F-14s, and the most contemporary electronic capability. He had plenty of money, and he quadrupled that money by raising oil prices. He was one of the real driving forces in that event. Our balance of payments were good. There were years of close to \$20 billion in orders. Top officials of Northrop and Grumman and Lockheed and McDonnell-Douglas were commuting. Practically every business in this country was at the Iranian door. Yale University was in there with a \$50 million proposition.

If they could have gotten it out of the Shah, it could have been the biggest foreign grant to any American university.

Q: From where I sat, the corruption, or the venality of the American educational institutions, as they reached out to Iran for students and grants to supply them with the wherewithal to continue their existence, I'm not even talking about the Yales, I'm talking about the other institutions who had no business to be in existence.

WINKLER: It was a rich lode. The Iranians were the biggest group of foreign students in the U.S.

Q: But what problems! The orientation and everything that went with it. Of course, the Iranians didn't want to learn; they just wanted to go be with their cousins.

WINKLER: Some of them did. They wanted to be in America.

Q: They wanted to be in America, but they didn't want to learn how to function in America, which is something else again.

What were the best programs in USIS when you were there? You told me about the Binational Center.

WINKLER: The magazine was very, very good--Marzayenow. We put it out 11 times a year. We printed 50,000 copies or so. I heard about it everywhere I went in the country: "Oh, you're the man who puts out Marzayenow." So that was excellent. English teaching was very worthwhile. Cultural and educational exchange, as it is in most countries, was very worthwhile for us. But I suppose if I was launching a USIS program in Iran all over again, I would start with Marzayenow (but probably with a new name) which was a four-color, life-sized knockout publication in the Persian language. I'm sure I would be more careful in managing distribution to make certain we got it through that "shrub" surrounding the embassy.

Q: When you would go back to Washington on the policy side, you would go back essentially to USIA?

WINKLER: I would handle this mainly on the embassy level with the ambassador and others. Of course there were letters to USIA in Washington, but the Agency never has had much policy input at any level in Washington, so the best place for a USIS director to have input is in the field. However, there really was little opportunity for modification.

Most of the time that I was there, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. He really ran it. Kissinger came a lot. We had huge press conferences and events involving him. All he had to do was wink his eye and there would be headlines in the Iranian papers for several days. I had the feeling he relished the visits; the Shah was his kind of guy, who implemented the Nixon doctrine in Iran, and the Nixon doctrine in Iran was, I think, one of the things destructive for Iranian society, because it led to domestic and foreign policies by the Shah which turned out to be

self-destructive. Our situation was going downhill for 20 years, and we did not know it. I think the coup de grace was the Nixon- Kissinger visit in 1972. You see, it made possible an effort by the Shah to chase an idea that must have been going around in his head for years--to make Iran one of the world's leading powers. This does not mean on a level with the U.S., the USSR, Japan, or Germany, but a power on a par with the U.K., France, or Italy, ahead, for example, of India or Brazil. He equated international power with military strength, and the May 1972 visit opened substantial possibilities for military power.

Q: Did you serve under Sullivan at all?

WINKLER: For about six weeks. I found him very bright and quick, very crisp.

Q: Anything final to say about Iran?

WINKLER: I won't say that I think the revolution is a success, but I think the revolution is established. I don't think the monarch is coming back, as fervent as the crown prince is. It is a revolution that completed its first decade a couple of months ago. They've had elections. They were not like American elections, but they were elections. I think it's established. I have a hunch that when the old man dies, somebody else will appear, hopefully less troublesome, but I think it's going to continue, probably for many years, as the Islamic Republic.

Q: That's a good final statement.

WINKLER: Happy. (Laughs)

Q: Happy statement. Is that your "satanic verse"? After Iran, what did you do?

RALPH H. RUEDY
Rotation Officer
Tehran (1974-1975)

Ralph Ruedy was born and raised in Iowa. Between receiving his bachelor's degree from Iowa State University and his master's from Duke University, he spent five years serving in the U.S. Navy in Vietnam. Mr. Ruedy joined USIA in 1974. His overseas posts include East Berlin, Dusseldorf, Bonn, and Moscow. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: When you were getting the USIA training and all was there sort of a dividing line and all about whether you would go into sort of the press field or the cultural field or what have you?

RUEDY: A little bit but not much. The first assignment was sort of information and cultural anyway so I didn't worry too much about that at the time. My initial assignment, USIA had a wonderful program at the time, which unfortunately went by the board. I think it was a best

practices thing where you were actually sent as a junior officer trainee. You were an extra officer at a post and you rotated through different embassy sections so I did a stint on my first assignment in Tehran as a political officer for a month and that was interesting.

Q: You were there from '70-? In Tehran, Iran from when to when?

RUEDY: Well let's see I would have gotten there in the fall of '74 and would have been there until the summer of '76 I believe.

Q: So what was Iran like? How did it strike you when you got there?

RUEDY: It reminded me in some ways of Vietnam. There was this sort of mental construct of what was happening in the country. When I went the Shah had been on the cover of Time and Newsweek and Iran was moving to become a European power within a generation or within a few decades. The oil money was pouring in and there was modernization and women were entering the mainstream and there was lots of stuff that was out there and then when you got there and looked around you thought this doesn't compute. This is a little like the Vietnam experience where when you got there you thought, Jesus, this is just not working out the way I learned back in DC. I had very much that same feeling in Iran thinking that this is not coming out the way my Time and Newsweek story said it was.

Q: How did you find the first, the political section? What did they give you to do?

RUEDY: I did an interesting report on student unrest. There was an annual student holiday the 15th of Azar and this was, according to the Persian calendar, a date for great demonstrations and an anti-government, often violence and smashing of windows and so on. So I set out to find out what the hell the 15th of Azar was all about. It was interesting because the more you got into it the more it sort of disappeared into the myths of history. There were concerns that at some point there had been a shooting by the Shah's policemen of students on the Tehran University campus, but exactly where and when they got shot was impossible to exactly...but as I say it kind of dissipated. You couldn't really put your finger on it but everybody knew the 15th of Azar was a big deal and there would be violence on campus and it would be anti-government and there would be windows smashed and there might be some shooting and God knows it would be awful but nobody ever could figure out exactly what the specific historical basis was for this particular event. It was very Persian, a kind of the more you got into it the more difficult it was to exactly define what you were dealing with.

Q: What did you do? Did you go out in the campus or could you?

RUEDY: Not much. I did a bunch of interviews and things like that. Shirley had a much more interesting time of it there because she was a faculty member of Tehran National University and she may have talked about that. You talk to faculty members and you talk to some students but not many and you know more faculty and sort of westernized Iranians and it was a lot of stuff going on. I was there for just 18 months as a junior officer trainee and we had a wonderful old gentleman who was a senior cultural adviser with USIS (U.S. Information Service). He was

French educated from an old family, very plugged in and really knew Persian society and could quote you Ferdowsi and Hafiz. He was really just a wonderful, wonderful guy. Very plugged into the politics as well. He invited Shirley and me to a wonderful Persian lunch the last week that we were there and it was a long lunch and great Persian hospitality and it was just very cultural, it was just a wonderful experience. He began talking about how things were going in Iran. He said that he feared that the day was coming when in Tehran no American would be safe and at the time that seemed like a very weird...we knew things weren't going well but that seemed like a very far out prediction. Of course, he was absolutely right on within a number of years.

Q: While you were there were you picking up some...in a large embassy there is always sort of an establishment the ambassador and heads of section and all of that, more senior officers. The junior officers often have quite a different attitude towards things and a little bit iconoclastic and all. Did you get the feeling from your fellow junior officers that we were maybe too close to the Shah or snuggling up to him or not?

RUEDY: Yeah, I think so. There were some good people over there. I remember Henry Kreist who later on you know was much involved in the hostage crisis, a great guy, he was in the political section. I remember I worked immediately with Stan Escudero who later on went to be ambassador in a number of countries, a fluent Persian speaker. I was doing my little paper on the 15th of Azar for Stan who was at that point a second or third tour political officer. I think all of us figured things weren't going well but he didn't really know, I didn't know, in what direction it was going to go. I think that most of our contacts were with more Western oriented liberal types who I think envisioned a far different future for Iran than the one that actually transpired. In looking back on it I think there were lots and lots of groups jockeying for power. I think the one thing they all had in common was we've got to get rid of the Shah and when we get rid of the Shah we will make our move and we will establish the kind of thing that we want to establish. That applied certainly to these western oriental liberal types who were more interested in a western social democracy kind of thing. It applied I think to the more traditional merchant class, the Bazaaries they were called, who were more interested in no, not this much of a military hardware and more of a traditional Persian society. It applied probably to the communists and they were certainly around the Tudeh party was in the background you know very much a factor. It applied obviously to the religious fundamentalists and they weren't on our scope as much and they certainly weren't on my scope very much and they were the ones who of course outmaneuvered them all. I think the hostage crisis was obviously part of that. By the time the crisis was over Khomeini was firmly in charge and his people who were involved in the churning immediately after the revolution, the Bazargans, the Ghotbzadehs and various others were dead or were in Paris or wherever. So the hostage crisis was kind of outmaneuvering all those people in establishing this new situation.

Q: You left there in what was it '76 or '75?

RUEDY: When was it? It would have been '76 I guess it was.

Q: What other sections did you work in?

RUEDY: I worked in the consular section for a while and that was an education. That was important to me because I did visa work for about a month and a half on student visas. Later on working as a USIA officer on student issues and stuff, I mean the whole study abroad business and you know how people got interested in studying in the United States doing those interviews on the visa line that was important to have had that experience.

I spent a month, too, working in the economic section and there oil was obviously the thing. It was good training that I benefited from a lot in my later career with USIA. It was a good program. I'm sorry State did not adopt that.

Q: Did you get involved in USIA work?

RUEDY: Yes, very much so. I did my embassy rotation which was about four months altogether and then I was an information officer type, assistant information officer type, at USIS in Tehran and worked with some wonderful people. People who were really, really sharp and went on to make great careers, were themselves second and third tour officers at the time and formed friendships that I continue to value. I haven't seen much of them lately but you know you run into them and everybody in the Foreign Service is familiar with this, somebody you haven't seen in years and then an elevator door suddenly opens and here you are and you pick up as if you never left it.

Q: What sort of work did you get involved in on the information side?

RUEDY: We had a film program going on at the time and we were involved in that. We were doing press summaries, press releases, summaries of the daily press which I would audit, edit, and send back to Washington. Also involved with the cultural center. We had a big cultural center in Tehran, a big English language program and many, many, many students that studied English at the American cultural center. That was right down by the university. If there was a demonstration at the embassy, classes would go right on at the cultural center and it was interesting. The cultural center was a major thing in Tehran. We had done big art exhibits. I remember we had a big exhibit of Paul Strand the photographer. Louise Nevelson came over and did a lecture and stayed for her opening. We had wonderful exhibits by Louise Nevelson; that was before she became rich and famous I guess, but anyway good, good stuff that was going on there. A film night that they did, I think they showed films three or four nights a week in packed auditoriums, it was very much a presence on the scene. A good thing I think, a good thing.

Q: Did you have many contacts with Iranians?

RUEDY: Yeah, quite a few. I got to know a number of people especially younger faculty members in the English department. Some of Shirley's colleagues from the university became mutual friends.

Q: Well then you left there when? Say in '76?

RUEDY: I left there in '75 and then I did a six month leave of absence to go back and finish up

my dissertation. I left Tehran and at that point I had orders to Kabul, Afghanistan. People were telling me what a wonderful assignment I had in Kabul and for a second tour officer to be assigned as center director in Kabul, Afghanistan, was a wonderful, wonderful thing and a real coup and I would love it. I gave them to understand in personnel that while this was interesting I nevertheless really would be interested in possibly serving in Germany, Europe, and went off to do my leave without pay at Duke to finish up my doctoral dissertation.

I had a six months leave of absence and I was told, in the summer of '76 that definitely I could not plan on any additional time. Six months was all I had, then I would need to go on to my next assignment. OK that was part of the deal and I went and got settled in Durham and was beginning to do my writing on the dissertation. Suddenly the telephone rang and the people at USIA personnel were suddenly on the phone asking if perhaps I would be interested in having my assignment to Kabul cancelled and being assigned to a new position which had been established at the American embassy to the German Democratic Republic in East Berlin. They needed somebody on fairly short notice and I already had German. And I should recognize that if I took this assignment it absolutely meant finishing and going out to post in December. I said, "OK, if that is part of the deal I would love to go to East Berlin." So I finished up my dissertation, felt under a great deal of pressure to grind it out and to finish it up but I did and I went off to East Berlin then in January 1977.

SHIRLEY E. RUEDY
Spouse of USIS Officer
Tehran, Iran (1974-1976)

Shirley Ruedy was born in Virginia and raised in Ohio. She was educated Ohio Wesleyan and Duke Universities and at several universities abroad. Before becoming a Foreign Service Officer in 1987, Mrs. Ruedy accompanied her USIA husband on assignments in Iran and Germany. As an FSO, she served as Political Officer in Bonn and Moscow as well as in the State Department in Washington, where she dealt primarily with Soviet Union and Regional European matters. Mrs. Ruedy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: You went out to Tehran when?

RUEDY: In the fall of '74.

Q: And you were there from '74 to?

RUEDY: To '76.

Q: What was Tehran like at the time?

RUEDY: It was a busy, bustling, noisy, polluted, fascinating – endlessly fascinating –place,

especially for somebody like me. I had had my exotic experience in the Soviet Union, but that this was a new degree of the exotic. We had had a little bit of cultural orientation, but I got there as a newly minted Ph.D. and I thought, OK, what am I going to do here? I'm going to do something; I'm not just going to sit at home. So I immediately was out knocking on doors trying to get some kind of teaching job. But I should back up and tell about one incident which was very telling. I don't remember which day of the week we arrived, but by the time we got over our jet lag it was a Friday and Ralph, my husband, had gone to USIA. I decided that I was going to go out and walk around. I was a fully educated, independent Western woman, and I was not going to stay in my hotel room cowering. So I got up, and I put on my Sunday suit and went out and started walking around. Big mistake. I got hit across the back with a steel pipe by a man who obviously didn't think I should be out on the street on a holy Islam day especially without a chador. That was a real awakening; I had to regroup and think about this again.

I still was very, very motivated to find a teaching job. I went to Tehran University and talked to the English Department there and they were very happy to see me. The Department head said he would be thrilled to have me come and teach 16th Century English literature, but they didn't have a position and I didn't have a work permit so perhaps I could come as a Fulbright scholar. I was all excited about this until I talked to my husband and he said well you can't be a Fulbright scholar because of nepotism. USIA is involved in the Fulbright program so you can't do that. I was heart-broken because Tehran University was a very exciting place, and I thought this is really cool. Then I went to another university called Meli, which means National University. It was located on the mountain in the middle of Teheran. I applied there, and they said fine we would love to have you but you're going to have to get a work permit. I went back to the embassy, and they said nobody's ever gotten a work permit from the Iranian government. It took me several weeks, months, and I got the permit.

Q: What was the problem? Was it that the embassy didn't push or was it the Iranian government?

RUEDY: The Iranians. What a bureaucracy. Byzantine does not begin to describe it. You just had to keep going from office to office. I don't know that there was anything intentional about it.

Q: That's just what Iranians did?

RUEDY: That's what they do.

Q: Well, it gave you a wonderful insight into the system.

RUEDY: Indeed. In fact, sometimes at embassy parties I'd be talking to people, and I would think which country are they in? There are certainly not in the country I'm in.

Q: What were you teaching at Meli? How did you find the students?

RUEDY: When I started teaching, most of the students had had some kind of Western orientation. They either maybe had a father who worked for the Iranian Oil Company or they had

traveled to Europe; they had had some experience with the West. No one wore chador: all the men and women in my classes sat together. They read Newsweek; they were sophisticated. Shortly after we arrived, the Shah decided that he wanted to provide universal university education to every Iranian who wanted it. Within a few weeks, the whole classroom had changed radically. I got all these students coming in from small towns and villages and the women in chadors. Suddenly, the men were sitting on one side; the women were sitting on another. They were very provincial. They didn't know what to make of me. They decided I was CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). My car was stoned. I was not somebody they wanted to have around. That was a manifestation of the Islamic fundamentalist movement, and there it was right in my classroom.

Q: How did the authorities at the university treat this?

RUEDY: My boss Faridah Sagoon was a very sophisticated, beautiful Iranian woman who had her degree from the University of Massachusetts. She was head of the English Department. She was just appalled, but frightened. Several of the teachers were also quite Western-oriented, Western-experienced and sophisticated. I would try to talk to them. What's going on here? What's happening? They were very, very careful as far as the government itself, the Shah's government. In fact, I was told to be very careful about what I said in class because every class contained SAVAK agents, that was their secret police. I could tell who they were; they were sort of stuck out.

Q: When I was in Yugoslavia we had the equivalent and they said you could always know who they were because they wore police boots.

RUEDY: Well, they stuck out. So there was an atmosphere on the campus of concern, fear, hesitancy, watching your back, even before this great sea change with the people coming in from the villages. In fact, I remember as a teacher I was required to take an oath of loyalty to the Shah's Rastakhiz Party. This was a great concern to me because I knew, I was just terrified, that this could somehow affect my U.S. citizenship. I went down to the consulate and gave them a statement saying that this was done under duress and so on because members of the Iranian government took pictures of us and so I was on record as having had to raise my hand.

Q: Was there a concern on your part, you mentioned how you were an authority on the court of Queen Elizabeth and all the intrigue and politics, and here you are in a place where the court full of the intrigue and politics. All of the literature of the time sort of revolves around this. Did you have to be careful?

RUEDY: Oh, yes. I think I mentioned that I had become a great liberal, but I was surprised and somewhat shocked at how easy it became to do self-censorship. This came in handy again in East Germany when we were advised never to talk about anything in our apartments of sensitivity. It's so easy to then really fall into that.

Q: Was anyone seeking you out to tell you how awful the Shah was? Or how awful the fundamentalists were?

RUEDY: Yes. I got it from both sides. One of my teacher colleagues lived very close to a central prison, and she told me how they couldn't sleep because of the screaming they heard from the prison. There were those who were very critical of the Shah and told me in confidence about it. There were also those who were very concerned about the social problem, what they saw as the social instability caused by this influx of fundamentalists. There were people who pulled me aside and said there will come a time when no American will be safe here. Some of the students were very protective of me. I was about three months pregnant at the time and I remember hearing that the government was going to raid our campus because there were too many free-thinkers. Indeed, they did show up in full battle gear, SAVAK, with billy clubs and I looked out the window and watched them beating up students, bloodying their heads. Some of my students came and got me and said we really need to take you to a safe place because they will think you are one of the people inspiring the insurrection. I remember they took me into an inner room with no windows and they stacked desks against the door. We stayed there for quite a long time. Afterwards when all was clear, the damage that had been done by the SAVAK raid was extensive and many students had been very seriously injured. I myself, a week later, had a miscarriage.

Q: You mentioned wondering what world the people at the receptions were living in. Obviously you were talking to your husband. Were you talking with others? Was this penetrating in the embassy, do you think? Did you have the feeling that the embassy was...?

RUEDY: The Ambassador at the time was Richard Helms. I was more and more aware, even though I was a teacher, of the embassy and the way it worked as the more people I got to know; obviously this was my first embassy. I got to know and understand what the political section did, what the CIA did, and there was a huge, huge American military presence there. I started understanding more about what sorts of jobs these people were doing. I remember feeling very superior to them, because I thought that I had more actual contact with Iranians and students and the intelligentsia and so on through my work than some of them did. I also know there was quite a lot of concern in the embassy that the messages weren't getting through to Washington about what was really going on in the country. I do know that at least one person sent in a dissent channel cable. I was asked to do some reporting on the university situation, which I did, and gave to the political section so that was my first political reporting. There was this kind of tension between people who were writing reports that they thought Washington wanted to hear and reports that Washington didn't want to hear.

Q: This is the era that now we look back on, and it is well-documented, about how the Shah would complain about negative reporting. Talk about self censorship. The embassy wasn't reporting, although of course that reporting got through, it just meant it was official informal or something else. It was a time when we really were cozying up to the Shah. Did you find yourself getting into discussions, heated or not, with your colleagues at Foreign Service things or Foreign Service gatherings?

RUEDY: Oh, yes. I felt on an equal footing; I felt that I had views and I had knowledge and information as much as they did. Some of our friends were with CIA, and they were very concerned. We had very interesting conversations.

Q: I would think that a good number of students there. I was a consular officer most of my career and particularly when serving in the European area or around the periphery you were deluged by Iranian students who were trying to get to the United States and knew that they probably weren't going to come back. This was a fact of life. So you must have been hit up by those people trying to figure out how to use you to get to the States, weren't you?

RUEDY: You know, that didn't happen so much. Looking back on it, I'm surprised now that it didn't happen more than it did, only in a couple of instances. They were obviously very concerned about learning their English. Maybe it was because the particular student population that I dealt with, either already had access to the West through their well-connected families and the fundamentalists didn't want to go there.

Q: Here you are teaching, was it 16th Century English literature?

RUEDY: Well, I was teaching a little bit of everything. I was teaching English language. I was teaching some literature. I was teaching MD students and students in the medical school and in the law school. You know I was kind of a Jack-of-all-trades, all kinds of things wherever they needed me.

Q: I would have thought that this influx of students from the villages not only would come bringing some their fundamental beliefs, but they also would not have been the recipients of as good an education. This must have caused real problems. Were you under pressure not to discriminate and make sure they all come out about the same as far as grades?

RUEDY: No, no. That may have been the case in other departments, but I think the English Department was a little different. No. There was just a lot of concern about not saying something that would irritate the government and not cause any riots among the fundamentalists. Just being very, very careful.

Q: Religion is very much a factor in so much of English literature. You must have had to tread very carefully there.

RUEDY: Yes. That was taboo. That was not something we talked about.

Q: How did you find embassy life?

RUEDY: That again was in a time of transition. I remember getting a booklet from FSI before going out to Tehran which talked about when to wear gloves and when to visit the Ambassador's wife and drop off your visiting card. And it was so. I had to go and there was a little silver bowl and drop off my card. It was still pretty old fashioned, I guess people would say today. I didn't have direct dealings with Ambassador Helms except that I was a member of his Christmas band. He had a Christmas band. I played the flute. He took great delight in conducting this group at the embassy Christmas party.

Q: What were you getting about USIA's operation there?

RUEDY: It was this huge operation. There was a huge America House which had its own movie screen and a little grill where you could get hamburgers. They had a huge area for exhibitions and then there was the place where English was taught. USIA was separate from the embassy, and it was a huge operation and a lot of activities and students lined up to get into the English classes. Lots of American movies were shown.

Q: Did you all make many Iranian friends?

RUEDY: Oh, yes, many many. Colleagues at the university were friends; they were very hospitable people. I went to weddings, I went to funerals, I was invited to homes for meals. I had one friend who asked me if I would help her with her English, and I said yes and it turned into quite a regular thing. She would come. She was well-connected in the government, and at one point I received a very official invitation to tutor one of the Shah's nephews. I was supposed to go to the palace and meet with this student. I turned it down on principle. I decided I did not want to get involved with that. Now I could kick myself. I decided that basically what they wanted me to do was to write the student's papers, and I wasn't going to do that.

Q: How about traveling around?

RUEDY: That was another thing. That was great. In the Farsi class at FSI, we had two of the future consuls; the one for Khorramshahr and the one for Tabriz.

Q: Who were they?

RUEDY: Mike Arriya in Khorramshahr and Robert Campbell in Tabriz. There was an opportunity to take the diplomatic pouch around. Since my husband and I didn't have children we often volunteered and so we ended up visiting all the major cities. Khorramshahr, Shiraz, Isfahan, Tabriz, we did a lot of traveling. I remember one very memorable extended trip when we took the pouch to Tabriz. Our friend there had a jeep and we drove around Lake Rezaiyeh, now called Lake Urmia. That was an amazing adventure. These were towns where I don't think they had seen a Western woman, maybe only on TV but they didn't have TV. Sexual harassment was a big problem and in some of the little villages in order to walk down the street I had to have my husband in front and my friend behind to protect me.

Q: Did you learn to dress in a modified manner?

RUEDY: I dressed in what I thought was a very conservative way. When I went to the bazaar, I wore a dark scarf. I also learned to wear a dark scarf at night when I was driving, because before I started wearing a scarf the Iranian male drivers would nudge my car and just harass me. So I started wearing a scarf, but even so it was not an easy thing to do, to be a Western woman – especially a blonde, I was a blonde at the time – walking around the streets. So I had to have lots of male protection. It made me very angry.

Q: This is a problem when you come up into a country where you're representing the United States and up against a different culture that doesn't accord you what you feel is your due. At the same time, this is their country, not our country. How did you vent your anger?

RUEDY: Well, I used to complain a lot to friends. I certainly did not make any scenes, because I was always very aware of the face of the U.S. so I didn't react at the time. But we talked a lot. It was a real formative influence.

Q: Did you continue your teaching at the university there?

RUEDY: Yes, I did. I taught until we left. I have to say although I did get the labor permit for a long time I wasn't paid at all. My boss said, "Don't worry, you'll be paid. I'll see to it. You'll be paid." I was earning quite good money. It was a very rich school. I was also teaching for the University of Maryland. So I was earning a good salary; I was earning more than my husband. But I wasn't getting any of it. The Maryland money rolled in, but the money from Meli University didn't roll in. I got pregnant again, and we went back to Durham, North Carolina because my husband decided to take some time off and finish his degree. We thought that would be a good, safe place to have the baby. One afternoon the mail came with stickers and seals and wax, and everything. I opened it up and it was a huge amount, for us, a huge amount of money from Meli University. I got my money long after I had left the country. I had given up on it. I thought, well, that was volunteer and then there it was.

Q: When you left the university did people say there was something coming?

RUEDY: Oh, yes. In fact, one of the FSN's (Foreign Service Nationals) at USIA took us out for a farewell lunch. He also said there would be a time coming where no American would be safe. We were very distressed to hear that some of our good FSN friends got out, especially those who worked for USIA. USIA is so public and yet I suppose it's because of the Soviet model where so many of their KGB people were put into these kinds of positions that some governments and cultures think that USIA people are also CIA people. There's always that kind of aura about them.

ARCHIE M. BOLSTER
Deputy Head of Political Section
Tehran (1974-1976)

Archie M. Bolster was born in Iowa in 1933. He received his BA from the University of Virginia and served in the U.S. Navy from 1955 to 1958 as an overseas lieutenant. His foreign postings included Cambodia, Tabriz, Tehran, New Delhi and Antwerp. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 24, 1992.

Q: Then you left from there and from 1974-76 went back to Tehran again.

BOLSTER: Yes.

Q: What were you doing there?

BOLSTER: I went back to be deputy head of the political section because the person who had been assigned to be head of the political section did not have the language and they felt they needed someone as his deputy who spoke Farsi. So I somewhat reluctantly agreed to go back to Tehran. My family was not too excited about returning to Tehran either. I did have the advantage of reestablishing ties with people I had known earlier and try to get an idea of change in the meantime and get some perspective of what was happening. I thought it was rewarding in a career sense.

Q: From a representational sense it certainly made sense to have somebody there who could give some... How had the situation changed from your viewpoint?

BOLSTER: Well, Iran had become beset with what I call a Klondike mentality. It was like the gold rush days in Alaska. There was so much money pouring out of the oil exports that the Shah and his people just had no limit as to what they saw themselves capable of doing. There was going to be a brand new airport built. There was going to be a subway system built under Tehran. Roads were going to be built everywhere. A whole new city was going to be built between Tehran and the villages up north. They were going to have a whole diplomatic enclave and the largest square in the world was going to be built up there...the Square of the Shah and the People. It was going to be bigger than the Kremlin's square, bigger than Tiananmen Square in China. All the embassies were going to have to move up there, buy land and build new embassies because it was going to be a whole new diplomatic quarter.

Just one project after another. Their desires far outstripped their ability to achieve these things.

Q: This is the thing, money is not everything. You have to have the infrastructure to build.

BOLSTER: That is right. My favorite story about that is one that was told me by an Iranian I knew who was in office machines and computers. He said that they were having all these tremendous orders for computers by various ministries, some of them competing with each other to get his equipment, etc. He said that down in Khorramshahr he had observed an enormous computer on a pallet that was to be picked up by a freight forwarder and sent on to one of these ministries. As the forklift truck neared this enormous computer they didn't have the prongs set directly inside the pallet and they just pierced the whole side of the computer. He said it was just a typical example. There was just a tremendous number of orders. In fact there were literally tens of thousands of enormous containers in the port down there. There was so much stuff coming in they couldn't find it all. You had to pay freight forwarders to go and find your particular shipment and convince someone to move that shipment before other ones, get it on the railroad and up to Tehran.

There were just so many things going on. You had a sense that things were moving faster and faster but they weren't getting anywhere.

Q: Were you there when Joseph Farland and Richard Helms were Ambassadors?

BOLSTER: Only when Helms was Ambassador.

Q: He had been head of the CIA. What was the feeling as him as an Ambassador?

BOLSTER: He was excellent really. Very much on top of everything that was going on. He was extremely organized. From his training in the CIA he was extremely perceptive at asking questions and keeping tabs on a wide variety of subjects. He was fantastically well organized. He could do in one day what would take most people three or four days. He was ready to leave at 5:30. He had cleaned everything up and written all the cables about meeting with the Shah, or whatever. Just extremely competent.

I do think that he fell too into this trap that I mentioned earlier of having more contacts with the Western oriented intelligentsia. He certainly tried to have fairly broad contacts, but I think they fell mainly in that circle. But he was receptive to information from those of us who were in touch with other Iranians. He was quite willing to have our reporting sent in, more so than his DCM, Jack Miklos who I many times had to struggle with to get views that I thought should be in Washington through him because he didn't want to say things that were too derogatory about the Shah.

Q: Prior to the Ford Administration when Nixon and Kissinger were there, there seemed to be an almost complete ban on anything negative about the Shah as far as our reporting. People in our Embassies felt under tremendous restraints. The Shah would hear of anything negative that we would report and this would cause unhappiness. And whatever the Shah wanted we would do because of money and also because of Kissinger's feeling about using Iran as one of the counterweights to the Soviet Union. Did you feel that? Kissinger was still Secretary of State.

BOLSTER: I think our reporting was accurate in the sense that we tried to give a complete picture. We tried to show areas of strengths and areas of weakness. We certainly showed how decisions were often poorly made because the Shah was not well served by his advisers. I think we showed that he had a much better grasp of world events and international politics than he had knowledge of his own country. I never felt he was all that well informed or that adroit at handling situations within his own country. He was much more at ease talking with a foreign ambassador about what was going on in his country than he was talking with a Mullah or a businessman or anybody else. He did have a wide range of people who gave him information. We had always been told that he had not only sycophants but other people who told things to him fairly straight. People he would get in to play bridge or poker or just to come by late at night to talk to him. He did have all kinds of sources, but you still had the feeling that he really was not very objective about his own country.

Some of the grandiose pronouncements about the wonderful things that Iran was going to do just became rather silly. He said things like...He didn't want to copy the West because it was falling apart. The work ethic was dead. The West was decadent and so many of its problems were the kind of things they didn't want in Iran. So they wanted a synthesis of the things from the West that were good but grafted on to basic values of our wonderful society. We were going to lead ourselves into this wonderful future where everybody was going to be wealthy.

It became more and more unrealistic, the way he talked about these things. You could read quotes from his speeches in the press and wonder where he was getting this all from and how he thought he was going to be able to achieve half...He was talking about Iran passing countries like Holland, Italy, Belgium, getting right up there among the top five or six countries in the world in terms of running world affairs, etc. It was really heady stuff. He really thought Iran was going to be one of the movers and shakers in the world.

Q: Was there any concern about the tremendous amount of American arms that were coming in there? I recall at the time that we were making a lot of oil money but we were building up a huge Iranian military.

BOLSTER: There was a great deal of concern about that. Not only within the official family but also in Congress. Remember Congress had numerous questions about whether the Iranians could use all the equipment they were getting. They even sent a couple of staffers out to look into the absorption capacity, as they put it, of the Iranian military.

Americans who were involved with it very closely had many doubts. For example, there were people employed by Bell Helicopter to train Iranian pilots down in Isfahan at an enormous base they had created. There were occasional mishaps from helicopters crashing into each other. On the one hand these people who were advising Iranians and training them were impressed by the drive that was shown. The Shah had given orders that this was a priority project. He wanted an enormous military, he wanted helicopters everywhere and he wanted them trained immediately. So the Generals saluted and went into great organizing schemes. Eventually you had all these recruits that were screened in some way. They tried to pick the more promising people and put them in a class and started teaching air dynamics and all these things.

People who saw this up close wondered how it would be possible to take some of these students who really were poorly served by their own educational background and suddenly make them into capable helicopter pilots. Helicopter training is no simple thing even for one of our young people who is very well trained in physics, chemistry, etc. through out educational system. It still takes a lot of training to become adept at flying a helicopter.

When you take somebody who had education in a rote system where you chant the Koran and chant the letters of the alphabet and chant solutions to math problems...this kind of rote learning does not really produce someone who is well equipped to learn how to fly a helicopter. At least in my opinion. They had awful times trying to educate these kids into being safe pilots. You got a number of pilots who were pretty aggressive but you weren't sure whether they were all that safe. I shouldn't sell them short. They had some very excellent fighter pilots for example that came up

in the Iranian air force, trained in the US and were very capable pilots. But that was a very determined long range program. But this helicopter business down in Isfahan was practically overnight. We kept joking about the "crash program" because there were some crashes. The people who were involved in it were just shaking their heads because they just didn't feel the program was workable. It was just going too far too fast.

Q: Was there concern within the political section about the tremendous number of American technicians?

BOLSTER: Yes, there was because in so many cases they were just not well-qualified and well-briefed before they came over. They didn't really understand what it was like to start living in a Moslem country. One of the most egregious examples was that some of these helicopter instructors had been in Vietnam as single guys. You know, young, hot shot instructors, etc. Before they left Vietnam some of them had taken instant wives, some of whom were bar girls they had consorted with. They had to leave the country almost overnight when things phased down and some of them had quickie marriages and off they went back to the States. Then they got word that there was this big opportunity in Iran so some of these people came out and some of the wives got together and formed a house of ill repute right there in Isfahan that was taking care of some of these American instructors, etc. who were foot loose and fancy free. This took place right in some of the guys' homes. The wife would entertain when the husband was away from home.

The Iranians saw this and thought this was terrible. Here the Americans are supposed to be over here showing us how to live, modern ways of living. They are showing us how to fly helicopters but at the same time they are destroying our morals because here they are just openly having this development right in their community that just flaunts itself in our faces.

That was an egregious example, but there were so many problems of people essentially coming in without any briefing on what it was like to live in a Moslem country, how they should behave. I would hear stories about American girls in shorts riding motorcycles roaring through the countryside, shopping, etc. This was just scandalous to people who have very strict standards of what women should wear.

The sensibilities were just ignored by so many of these people who came in. That in turn gave the Iranians a sort of bad impression of the West. Do we want to be so closely associated with the West or not? There were all these articles in the paper about the bad things that come with Western influence. You even saw in universities a bit of movement back to wearing the cadre, the covering from head to foot that conservative Moslem women in Iran wear. For years the Shah had been encouraging women to come out, take jobs, have the vote, and all these things, but there was this sort of sub rosa return to basic values.

I heard this all the time from people who either taught at the university or were students there that there were far more chadors seen again and that there was this feeling that because of so many bad influences from the West the way to root them out was to go back to the old ways. So there

was this undercurrent of uneasiness and unhappiness about the degree to which the Shah's government was tied to the West.

Q: But at that time how did we feel about the influence of the Mullahs and the fundamentalists? How did one view the stability of the regime?

BOLSTER: I think it has to be said that we still did not give as much attention to the religious dimension as we should have. We did occasionally talk about it and have discussions, but I think there was a feeling that the Mullahs were really pretty much the heavy hand of the past and that while we couldn't ignore their influence, they were just viscerally against any kind of progress and therefore you just couldn't do too much about it. It was just an Iranian thing that they had to resolve. The Shah was trying to diminish the influence of the clergy. We just had to watch and hope that would be the case. They would not be allowed to stand in the way of progress.

So I think in the context of the situation there we did not give enough importance to the strong influence of religious leaders, combined with some very interesting technical details, namely the cassette. Khomeini had been behind the riots of 1963 that were so heavily put down by the government and there were so many casualties. After that he was exiled from the country. Sent first to Iraq and then eventually he moved to France and we know the story of that.

While he was in Iraq, for years he was sending tape recorded sermons back to Iran by the thousands. They were distributed very efficiently by the old religious structure...Mullahs, students, etc. They would play these speeches in the mosque every Friday where people would get together for the service. They would want to hear the latest tape. Whenever the government heard about this they would go and seize these cassettes and destroy them. But there were so many, they were just proliferating all over the country because at the same time people were buying Western music...we would hear American songs all over the place. At the same time that same tape recorder could be used to play one of Khomeini's cassettes on Friday. He would rail away at the evil ways of the West.

Q: Were these cassettes raising any blip on the political section's radar?

BOLSTER: Yes, they were mentioned. But it is hard to gauge just how deep the influence is. You know they are happening and that the government is trying to seize them because they know they are a bad influence, but it is hard to gauge really how many people are moved by them. But they clearly were. An important landmark came when the Status of Forces Agreement was being debated in the parliament. This was an agreement that we had to have for our military and aid people there in case there were accidents that they would be treated in a way that would accord with our legal system. Obviously if an American military person was subject to Iranian justice this wouldn't be acceptable in his hometown or family. So we had these arrangements with the Iranian government that we would regularize the status of American personnel serving in Iran. It was really not that nefarious, it was simply a kind of agreement that we had worked out with many other countries.

But as it was debated in Iran it took on a whole different character because it was portrayed by enemies of the government as the Iranian government bowing to the West in a total way. That is they called it a return to the previous system of capitulations which you had in the Middle East where Westerners enforced their system on the countries of that area. So the Iranians said...What has happened? We have become independent, have run our affairs for all these years and now we are going right back to the same system of decades ago when the foreigners tried to control everything that happened here.

Khomeini played this to the tilt. He had all these sermons that were pointed to this particular agreement. It became such an issue in Iran that the parliament debated the issue and almost voted it down. The government had enough of control to vote it through, but there were so many people who voted against it that suddenly this rubber stamp Majlis (Parliament) which had stood up on its hind legs and fought this Status of Forces Agreement had really opened peoples eyes because it was unheard of that the Majlis would...I was fortunate enough to go there to the Majlis when they were debating and voting on this issue.

So it was a fascinating period to be watching Iranian history. I think there were so many little things like that that added up in people's mind to a gradual lost of faith in the Shah's judgment and political wisdom of how he was running the country. And they began to see him as vulnerable too. Of course, all the later upheavals took place after I left. It was in 1979 that the Shah finally left.

People have asked me if I could foresee his fall when I left in 1976 and I always say no. There was no way to see how fast he would disintegrate in terms of his power. When I left in 1976 he had military power, police power, Savak power, all these institutions were his. Yet, as I had said many years ago in my political dynamics study without institutions that give the government lasting strength his control was more apparent than real, that is his control over the situation. And that was borne out by events a few years later.

SUE PATTERSON
Vice Consul
Tehran (1974-1976)

Sue Patterson joined the Foreign Service after completing the examinations in 1974. At the time of this interview, Ms. Patterson was assigned to the National War College for senior training. Her career in the Foreign Service included positions in Iran, Italy, Guatemala, and Washington, DC. Ms. Patterson was interviewed by William D. Morgan on January 28, 1989.

Q: In the case of your first assignment, as I understand it, right after training you went to Tehran, As a consular officer.

PATTERSON: That's correct. My first position there was as head of the American Services

section. We had quite a growing number of American citizens during that time. It was 1974. The first big OPEC price hike came in October of 1973, so those were years of really rapid growth of the foreign population in Tehran.

Q: What kinds of experiences did you have as a brand-new officer? Not brand-new. Your Peace Corps experience obviously gave you some insights into foreign cultures and so on, but you were brand-new in the sense of a line-officer protecting American interests. What were some of your first impressions as a brand-new consular officer into that area?

PATTERSON: I think my first impression was being quite overwhelmed with both the variety in the daily work and the sheer quantity of work that I was expected to perform.

Q: Were you the only officer?

PATTERSON: I was the only officer in the American services section. I had four Iranian employees that I supervised. We had an estimated 20,000 American citizens in Tehran, within our consular district.

Q: Those were working there or were they dual nationals?

PATTERSON: Most of them were working there temporarily. Many of those working abroad for the first time in their lives, and this contributed greatly to the number and kinds of consular problems we had. Most were there in the oil-related industries. They had come, in large part, out of Texas and Louisiana.

Q: Was this the building up of the Shah's military-industrial base that we were encouraging him to do?

PATTERSON: Yes, that's right, and in extracting as much oil as they could, maximizing the efficiency there. Many of those people, as I say, had not had much experience living outside of the United States, and I think that many of their employers were inexperienced, as well, in the kinds of advice and preparation that they had to give to their employees to make a successful transition, especially to such a different culture as they were faced with in Iran.

Q: Did you participate in, or did they have any sort of training programs to help these Americans?

PATTERSON: Very few of the companies initially had training programs. As they began to have more and more employee-related problems, some of the larger companies, such as Bell Helicopter, developed training programs. The consulate did not participate in those.

Q: Did you sense you should have, maybe? Could you have been of help?

PATTERSON: We could have been of help, I think, certainly in helping them anticipate the kinds of problems that their employees came to speak to us about. I think, by and large, they were

aware of those problems, though.

Q: What kinds of problems are we talking about, practically speaking?

PATTERSON: Practical problems were financial, for instance. They were offered what sounded like large salaries, but were not told the amount of expense that they were going to be faced with in Tehran. So while they thought they were going to be making a killing, in fact, they found out that they weren't perhaps even able to make ends meet comfortably. That was one of the recurring problems.

Q: How did that affect you, though, in protection and welfare? What were you protecting?

PATTERSON: They came to me to say, "I want to leave. My employer won't send me back home because I've signed a contract that commits me to stay here for two years. I can't make ends meet, I can't support my family. My family is unhappy, my kids aren't doing well in school. We want to go back to Louisiana. We don't have enough money to pay our way home. The company won't pay our way back. They say we owe them money for the house full of furniture that they've provided." There were legal entanglements to their freedom.

Q: You couldn't get involved in those, though, could you?

PATTERSON: Our role was limited to one of using our good offices. We couldn't, of course, force the employer or the employee, but kind of as a service to both parties, I sometimes made a phone call and said, "This appears to be a serious problem in the making here. Is there some way you can find to be more flexible?"

Q: Did it work?

PATTERSON: In many cases, yes, it did work. I think in many cases the company felt, "Okay, we do have the legal right to keep this family here, but in our overall interests of good relations with the community and morale of the other workers, we might do better just to get rid of this particular family which is poisoning the atmosphere."

Q: Did some of these issues, especially the more serious or institutional ones, get to other members of the embassy, to the ambassador and so on? How did the rest of the embassy react to some of these, as seen by you, the protection and welfare officer?

PATTERSON: That brings me to the other observation I was going to make. You asked, as a brand-new officer, what were my impressions. I said the first impression was the sheer quantity and variety of the work that I was expected to do.

The second was a feeling of being rather alone, not having the support of really anybody. I could talk over these problems with the Embassy employees, but I didn't feel that there was anybody willing or able to help me out when I felt so overwhelmed with the quantity of the work. There was little real feeling of moral support, or of interest in what was happening in the consular

section.

Q: It sounds like supervision both immediately in your own section and maybe beyond into the embassy. Do you want to talk about that?

PATTERSON: Yes. My immediate supervisor was the consul general. We were very understaffed at that time because people had not foreseen the great build-up of work that there would be due to the oil price hike, both on the visa side and on the American Services side. So that was a problem that everybody was having to cope with. It was quite understandable.

What was less understandable was the person occupying that position of consul general, at least during my initial months there, a burned-out officer who was not doing any of the internal consular work. You could find him at most times during the day either reading a magazine or doing a crossword puzzle. It was very demoralizing to go from my office, which was a beehive of activity--we were working at full tilt from the moment we got in in the morning until we left--and walk across the hall to his office and find him working a crossword puzzle. He was not a good role model for an incoming officer.

Q: What does a first-tour officer do about such a revelation?

PATTERSON: One thing I did was resolve not to become that person. One of the ways that I have done this in my career is not to do consular work in all of my assignments. I have tried to alternate my consular work assignments with out-of-cone assignments, because I feel that doing a steady diet of consular work would lead me to burn out.

Q: As a digression to that very important point, do you think as you've gone on for subsequent years, that that's worked? In your other colleagues, have you seen the same thing happening? In other words, do you think it helps to avoid burn-out, and does the reverse cause burn-out?

PATTERSON: Yes, I think that was a good instinct of mine, and it's worked for me. Actually, it's not a subject that I've discussed that much with many colleagues, but I feel that the quality of consular officers who have been in the Service about the length that I have is pretty high, by and large. A variety of assignments is one of the things that either the Service has provided or that they themselves have initiated in that broader spectrum.

Q: Do you think the system understands that and wants to do this sort of thing in the consular field, to broaden the experiences of the individual?

PATTERSON: The system has never encouraged me to seek out-of-cone assignments with the purpose of avoiding consular burn out. It has encouraged people to take out-of-cone assignments to broaden their management experience and to broaden their capabilities for promotion, but it's been for those more standard professional motives, rather than for the personal emotional considerations.

Q: Very good. Maybe they both end up the same place, but in any event, the purposes are

different. Yours, as seen by an individual having gone through this first experience, you fortunately profited very quickly by it.

Let's go back to Tehran before we get into some of these out-of-cone experiences. You had this first very revealing experience in terms of supervision from your American Services experience. The part of that that we haven't heard from is outside, in the rest of the embassy. Was there an awareness of this burned-out supervisor, an awareness of some of these other issues as they affected the total mission?

PATTERSON: I have to think there was awareness. They'd have to be blind not to be aware. There was not any attention paid to it so far as I could see. There may have been things going on at a higher level that I wasn't aware of, but I think largely the embassy--and by that, I mean the ambassador and the DCM--were focused on other issues. Things were very lively in Iran at that time, as is obvious with all the activities that were going on in OPEC, and their attention was almost 100% absorbed by those issues. I think that they felt the consular section would just have to limp along on its own as best it could.

Q: In other words, it did not, as far as you were concerned, recognize that the issues in protection of Americans were directly related to American presence in Iran, and that there were perhaps bigger problems around the bend, which indeed there were.

PATTERSON: There were, indeed. They may have recognized it, but if they did, they never talked to us about it. Neither the ambassador nor the DCM, during my two years there, ever came to the consular section even once. It was physically separated from the embassy, but it was just about three blocks away.

Q: How did you feel the section related to the whole mission? Was it isolated--period?

PATTERSON: The whole section was isolated, period. We would go over to the eating facility at the embassy, and in that context, sit down with other people working there. That was a good time to exchange views, and was an interface. But there was no formal way that encouraged cross-semination of views about what was happening, at least at the junior level.

Q: I presume you rotated out of the American Services section to somewhere in visas?

PATTERSON: Yes. We had a very busy non-immigrant visa section and an immigrant visa section. I was rotated out of the American Services into the immigrant visa section. As it happened, I did immigrant visas for the rest of my time there.

Q: So you were never in non-immigrant?

PATTERSON: I did non-immigrant visas only about a week when I was substituting for somebody there who was in the hospital for a while. So I was spared the long-term grind of a visa mill.

Q: Before we go to the immigrant visa experience, do you want to give a quick impression of the non-immigrant visa "mill," as you describe it?

PATTERSON: We had two non-immigrant visa mills in Tehran. One was for student applicants, of which there were tremendous numbers during that period. There was great impetus for Iranians to go to the United States to study, and we ended up issuing--I don't recall now--I think it was maybe 60,000 student visas a year during this time.

Q: Why were there so many students going to the United States?

PATTERSON: The Iranian university system was just not adequate for the numbers of students who wanted a university education. With the tremendous increase in economic wealth during that period, many more families were wanting to send their children to university, and there simply wasn't the capacity to absorb them in Iran. The favorite place to go during those years, outside of Iran, was the United States. It had replaced England and, prior to that, France, as the ideal destination.

It was felt, also, I think, that in terms of the petroleum industry and all the subsidiary industries that the U.S. university education was the most appropriate for creating engineers and all those technical professions that are needed.

Q: You are talking about volume. How about quality?

PATTERSON: Quality was not high, by and large. Most of the best qualified students wanted to stay in Iran, and it was largely those students who could not make it in their own university system who wanted to go abroad. Also, for many of these students, studying in a university abroad was a new aspiration on their part, and they really hadn't prepared properly in terms of language qualification. We had an informal cut-off of what was a 13-point grade average. That equaled about a "D" in our grading system.

Q: Could you handle a cut-off line? Was that considered legal?

PATTERSON: Well, it was not specifically endorsed by the Department, but we felt that if somebody could not maintain a "D" average in their own language, in their own familiar surroundings and living with their family and all of those community supports that help a person's stability, that such a person was unlikely to be a successful student in the United States, in a foreign culture, in a foreign language. Therefore, they would be more likely to drop out of school and become an illegal alien, perhaps working illegally.

Q: The other part of your mill you were describing, I presume, were all the non-student non-immigrant applications.

PATTERSON: The non-student applications, yes.

Q: Any observation on them?

PATTERSON: Normally in a visa mill post, the principal concern is whether the person intends to return to his homeland. This was not a big problem for us in Iran at that time, because things were booming so well. We didn't really have to be as concerned as consular officers are in some of the poorer countries, or as officers interviewing Iranian applicants now must be.

Our problem there was one of just sheer volume. The consular section was not physically able to handle the numbers of people that we had to accommodate each day, and we were never terribly successful at reconfiguring the consular section in such a way that we could handle that volume. We did build a student annex on the embassy compound. The student applicants were the more numerous of the two groups, and so those people, then, were physically not a burden at the consular section. But of the tourist applicants and other people going for medical assistance or whatever, we still had such a volume that they began to line up starting at 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning, and we opened at 8:30.

Q: In addition to the volume, I suppose you had bona fides problems.

PATTERSON: We had some bona fides problems, but fraud was not one of our serious problems. Don't forget we're talking now back in 1974 to '76, when fraud was not "in" the way fraud is now. Fraud is a real sexy topic now. My most recent overseas experience was in Milan, where we had a very small fraud problem. I often felt like I was a bit of a disappointment to the Department because we had no significant fraud problems. The Department put such an emphasis on fraud, which was of course appropriate for many countries.

Q: Why do you suppose the Department felt this way?

PATTERSON: I think it was a reflection of the Reagan Administration's outlook on human nature, perhaps. That's too flip an answer, but waste, fraud, and mismanagement became kind of a slogan.

Q: It's called WFM, even an acronym that got pronounced. (Laughs)

PATTERSON: A slogan for all the government agencies. I think the stimulus for it was the budgetary problems, but I feel also it was a reflection of the philosophical outlook of the administration and perhaps, as well, their mistrust of the government worker.

Q: In your next assignment, Guatemala, you are perhaps going to face fraud a little more frequently than in Italy. I'm sure there are fraud elements there. Could I ask you to react to the argument that when you're looking at an issue which does exist--misrepresentation--that maybe the Department was looking for ways to make it easier for the officers to handle this, trying to structure it so that it's something that you could come more to grips with?

PATTERSON: Yes, I think that they were. The stimulus was a positive one. They are trying to enhance one's awareness of it. That was perhaps lacking in a widespread way back in the mid-seventies, when I say fraud wasn't "in" the way it became under the Reagan Administration.

I'm not saying that they've been wrong in emphasizing the subject of fraud; I'm saying that in Tehran at that time and in Milan, when I was there subsequently, fraud was not a serious problem. It will be a serious problem in certain aspects of the work in Guatemala.

Q: You'll probably meet your quota.

PATTERSON: No doubt. It's not something that I look forward to greatly. But I am told that non-immigrant visa fraud, at least as of three or four years ago, was not as serious a problem in Guatemala as it is in some equally poor countries that are a little farther away, because for \$90 for a bus ticket, you could get to the border of the United States and come in, just walk across the border. So you didn't have to take a chance on applying for a visa and being refused.

Q: Let's go back to Tehran now for the second part of your assignment there, which was the immigrant visa function, with which you can speak with great experience. You are now a year into Foreign Service experience, you now know what your boss is like, you know what the embassy is like. Tell us how you faced, with all this awareness, the immigrant visa function and what the issues were there.

PATTERSON: The principal issue that we faced in the immigrant visa section was one of people wanting to go on an immigrant visa to the United States, without really intending to emigrate there. What they were really looking for was to have a "green card" as an insurance policy. I think they felt (correctly, it seems) that the well-being in Iran might not last forever, and they wanted to have another option in the future, should that become necessary. So they sought an immigrant visa for the United States. It was kind of a prestigious thing to have in those days, as well, a status symbol.

Q: If you conclude this, you must have deduced from your interviews and from your awareness of their motivation, some rather interesting socio-political insights into the country as to what was going to happen. If you did gain some of these insights at the time, how did you share them with your colleagues?

PATTERSON: In all honesty, I have to say that I didn't gain the kinds of insights with enough accuracy that I would have predicted what did, in fact, happen. I think there was widespread uncertainty that the good times would last, but I did not ever intuit the kind of widespread dissatisfaction with the Shah's regime that apparently was felt. I spoke Farsi fairly fluently, and I conducted all my interviews in Farsi, but perhaps because of the kinds of questions I was asking, or their cultural mistrust of telling their true feelings to anybody outside their immediate family group, I was not privy to that kind of dissatisfaction.

Q: Did they feel, perhaps, too, that because of the extensive secret police apparatus in the Iranian Government, that there might be people in the American Embassy that would misuse their information?

PATTERSON: Yes, I think that fear was widely shared.

Q: Do you think you had some other employees in your employe?

PATTERSON: Yes, I do. At the time there was one employee who we felt fairly certainly was, in fact, working for the Iranian Secret Police. There may have been others of which we were unaware.

Q: Speaking of Foreign Service nationals, how did you evaluate their performance? What comments do you have about Foreign Service nationals as employees in what was, in this case, a very delicate mission?

PATTERSON: I have a very high regard, by and large, for our Foreign Service nationals. The extent to which we rely on them is great, and I think we go in with an initial need to trust them. If they begin to seem unreliable, then we move back from that trust. But I, at least, have never approached Foreign Service national employees with the thought, "They've got to earn my trust." I have relied on them because they have so much more continuity in their job, in how things can be done in that country, and how things have worked in the section in the past. Their knowledge of all those things is so much greater than that of a brand-new consular officer. I have relied on them greatly.

Q: What happens when you do discover that either the performance is not up to the standards you feel it should be or other problems? What did you do then?

PATTERSON: That's tough, because in many countries we don't have much latitude for getting rid of them or for rotating them into some other position where they may perform better.

I had a difficult situation in Milan with two employees at different times, neither of whom was performing up to standard. I was able to work out a premature retirement for one.

Q: When you say "we," I presume you mean you worked with the personnel officer or the administrative officer?

PATTERSON: That's correct.

Q: What kind of a relationship was that? Could you find support?

PATTERSON: Oh, yes. That was very constructive, both with the administrative officer post and with personnel officer in Rome.

Q: So these were performance problems. Any other kinds of issues about FSNs that you would generalize on from your two overseas assignments?

PATTERSON: I spent three years in Tehran, two of them working at the consulate. They were very intense years. I have, from that time, only three Iranian friends that I would take some pains to keep in touch with and visit or travel out of my way to see. Three people out of a three-year space in one's life is not really very many. But of those three people, two of them were employees

in the consulate. So that kind of a trust and liking and shared experience was really very valuable to me, and I keep up with those people still.

Q: This is both professional and personal, you feel?

PATTERSON: It was professional in Iran. It's subsequently become personal. There was little social relationship during the time in Iran. It didn't seem appropriate. Subsequently, they both have immigrated to the States and there is now more of a social friendship. I say this just to point out that I feel that the intensity of the work relationship between the Foreign Service officer and the Foreign Service national is such that it's very conducive to a trusting relationship.

Q: And yet as the responsible American officer versus a foreign national subordinate, you feel that that relationship is most management, I take it from what you said, but you have to do certain things to make sure it works. Can you give us a few examples of that?

PATTERSON: Yes. You cannot become personal friends with one or two of your employees. I think it's clear in your own mind which ones you rely on the most. But it's necessary to maintain proper relations and professional relations with all FSNs.

Q: You don't feel, then, it's a serious problem or something that a young officer especially can not easily manage?

PATTERSON: No, I think it's something that a young officer can manage. It may be something that a young officer has to remind himself or herself of from time to time--it's easy to come in young and enthusiastic, wanting to embrace a new culture, and working daily with the FSNs, people who represent that culture be drawn into a more friendly relationship than it should be, to maintain a professional relationship at the office.

Q: And with good supervision, which I hope was better when you got to your Milan assignment, you can be helped by your colleagues and your supervisors on this relationship.

PATTERSON: Yes, you can be. I think a savvy supervisor is tuned into that.

Q: Before we leave Tehran, it's my understanding that in the immigrant visa job, you had some related work with refugees, some Kurds. Can you tell us something about that?

PATTERSON: This was the most memorable part of my work in Tehran. Actually, there were two very memorable things that I did in Tehran, and I'd like to tell you about the other one, as well.

But as far as the Kurds, in 1975 the Shah and the leader of Iraq signed, quite unexpectedly, a border agreement. Prior to that, the Shah had been supporting the Kurdish rebels in their struggle against the Iraqi Government to try to get a more autonomous state. The Kurds had not wanted to undertake this struggle on their own, and the Shah had promised them assistance. When the border agreement was signed, the Kurds were left out in the cold. Part of the terms of the border

agreement were that Kurds on either side of the border had 120 days to get to whichever side of the border they wanted to be on. So there were many Iraqi Kurds who came into Iran because they did not trust the Iraqi Government to live up to the commitments it had made to Iran to ensure their safety. To my knowledge, there were no Iranian Kurds who crossed the border in the other direction.

In any case, there were many thousands of Kurds--I don't recall right now how many, over 100,000 Iraqi Kurds--who came into Iran during the time that was permitted. Many of those came without a desire to remain permanently in Iran. Some of those came perhaps thinking they would remain permanently in Iran, but then did not find a very welcoming atmosphere there. They were kept in camps, by and large, at least those who were not able to find work or not given work permits to go out and seek work. Some of them felt that they could do better in another country. Many of them made their way to the embassy and said they wanted to go to the United States. At that point, they were referred to Mrs. Patterson, who was in charge of immigration.

Q: They weren't coming as refugees, in our rubric; just people who wished to go live in America?

PATTERSON: They just presented themselves in their naive fashion, saying, "We want to go to the United States." The guard at the embassy gate didn't introduce them to me as refugees, but, in fact, I discovered after talking with them that they were. That was another difficulty, talking with them. In our consular section, there was language capability, in maybe 12 languages, but Kurdish was not one of them, unfortunately. That was a really difficult thing, because these Kurds, by and large, spoke no other language. Some of them spoke Assyrian, and a few of them spoke a few words of Farsi, but talking with them was extremely difficult.

Initially, with the first ones who came, it was very hard for me to even figure out who they were and what they wanted. But I struggled through because I liked the way they were. They were different from the Iranians just in their bearing and in the way they looked at me straight in the face. And as the numbers grew and grew--the first day I may have had one or two, and then before long, there were maybe 1,000 or more in all, with 20-30 coming every day.

Q: The word got out, "Go see Miss Patterson."

PATTERSON: Right. I knew that under the definition of "refugee" at that time, there was a category for refugees in the Middle East, and the Kurds fell into that category. So I sent off cables to the State Department saying, "We have these people presenting themselves. They qualify under the definition. What should we do about them?"

The State Department had a difficult time in responding in part, because there were virtually no Kurds in the United States at that time. To my knowledge, there was only one. So there were no groups lobbying on their behalf, in the first place, and in the second place, voluntary agencies didn't have any communities to tap into to find sponsors.

So the Department, first of all, had to make the decision as to whether we could free up some

refugee numbers to help them. Secondly, once they decided positively on that, before we could begin processing them, they had to find voluntary agencies who were willing to find sponsors for them.

I was unaware at that time of all these processes that had to be worked out, and I wasn't sure what was going on back in Washington. But I did know I wasn't getting answers. So I sent off cables every week or two weeks, and had to tell these people, "Come back. We don't have an answer. Come back." So they did; they kept coming back. That meant that my problem never went away. Anyway, I persevered, they persevered, and eventually we did get a response from the Department, saying, "Yes, we have authorized this program."

Q: So, in fact, you were then authorized to process Kurdish refugees.

PATTERSON: That's correct. I would like to add that during this waiting time, my feeling was that we did not owe anything in particular to the Kurds. I thought it would be nice if we could help them because they did fall within our definition of refugees, but I was not aware of any particular commitment we had made to them.

Subsequently, while we were processing these refugees, the one Kurd who was in the United States sent me a copy of the Village Voice, which had printed excerpts from the Pike Commission report. At that time, it became clear that we, in fact, had made a very serious commitment to these people.

Q: Who is "we" in this sense?

PATTERSON: The U.S. Government. The Kurds had agreed to resume their war for autonomy against the Iraqi Government with support from the Shah of Iran, but they did not really trust that the Shah would continue to provide his support. As it turns out, there concern was well-founded. So they sought the assurance of the United States Government that we would, in effect, guarantee that the Shah would continue to support them and that we would throw in a little support of our own.

According to the Pike Commission report, Henry Kissinger made this commitment to Mr. Barzani, who was the leader of the Kurds at that time.

Q: At the time, Kissinger was Secretary of State?

PATTERSON: No, I believe he was Director of NSC at that time. As I recall from the Pike Commission report, he instructed the CIA to carry out this covert operation. The CIA was opposed to it. They felt it was a misuse of the Kurds, because our goal was not really to help the Kurds win. We didn't think they could do that, and even if they could, I guess we didn't think it was desirable. The CIA maintained that unless our goal for the Kurds was honorable, it was a misuse of them, encouraging them in a policy that would be destructive for them, to resume this struggle against the Iraqi Government.

So the CIA did not undertake this activity willingly, but as I understand it, were ordered to do it. At a minimum, the ambassador, Richard Helms, and the chief of station at that time were aware of the commitment we had made to the Kurds, a commitment the U.S. government was unable to keep. When the Shah decided to sign the border agreement with Iraq, his support of the Kurds stopped. Our guarantee that such a thing would not happen turned out to be of no value whatever.

When I read this article that my friend here in the States had sent from the Village Voice, I really felt like a patsy. The ambassador and the chief of station left me alone to face the people we had sort of betrayed second-hand, without informing me of even the broad outlines of the background of U.S. government involvement.

Q: Had you ever gone to them to ask?

PATTERSON: No, it did not occur to me.

Q: How could you expect there to be a communication on this subject?

PATTERSON: They saw my cables that were going to the Dept. asking for guidance.

Q: Did they?

PATTERSON: Yes, I am sure that they were at least aware of the fact that there were 25 or 30 Kurdish refugees appearing at our consular section every day. In fact, at one point during this time, I ran across the chief of station in the parking lot, and he made a point of coming over to me and saying, "Sue, I want you to know I really admire what you're trying to do for the Kurds." I was kind of mystified by that comment. But when I read the Village Voice, I understood what he was talking about. I can understand Ambassador Helms' reasoning that I didn't need to know everything, but it would have been helpful for me to put things into perspective if I had been aware of at least the broad outlines of our policy over the preceding two years to the Kurds.

Q: Once this came out more openly, if you will, and you got the article and the answer back from the Department, then did the ambassador's attitude on this change at all? Did he communicate with you?

PATTERSON: No, he did not. In all candor, I must say I did not go to him and pound his desk and say, "Why didn't you tell me?" Ambassador Helms is an awesome figure, and I felt, the most junior of junior officers.

Q: Nobody in between that you could share this with? Not your section chief, we've established that.

PATTERSON: By this time I had another section chief, who was an improvement over the original one. He gave much more moral support. I can't honestly recall if I went to him to say, "Why didn't the ambassador talk to me about this?"

Q: But there's the substance, as well as the interrelationship. There's the substance of what you consider, and there's obviously historically a very important reality. It wasn't just whether the man as ambassador was a strong person or not; it was that there was an issue out there that affected the whole mission, as I see it.

PATTERSON: There was. I can't explain what his motives of silence were, but there was a complicating factor here, perhaps, in that my husband was the petroleum officer at that time. He worked day in and day out with Ambassador Helms. They had a very close relationship, and that was a relationship that needed to be kept on good terms. I don't remember consciously thinking, "Don't rock the boat on this because it could jeopardize that relationship." It may have been an unconscious consideration of mine.

In any case, I was overwhelmed at this point, and needed to get on with the program and make it work.

Q: And did you? Did the program get on its way?

PATTERSON: The program got on its way. It was one of the most satisfying things that I've done in my career. I had the help of an excellent man from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, a British man named Leslie Goodyear. His principal function was to work with the Iranian Government representatives to get travel documents for the Kurds we accepted, get them permission to exit Iran, and work also with the German Government. We couldn't issue the final refugee documents in Tehran; we did the pre-processing there. The refugees who were accepted went to Frankfurt for their final processing by the Immigration Service, so we had to work out the entry visas into Germany. Mr. Goodyear took care of that.

Q: We couldn't have an INS officer stationed in Tehran?

PATTERSON: We could have and it was considered, I believe. But it was decided, for whatever reasons, that the processing would be handled in Germany. I think, in retrospect, it would have been more efficient to have the immigration officer come to Tehran. I believe that's the way we would handle it now. The Immigration Service has become more flexible in that regard. But at that time, to my knowledge, they didn't send immigration officers outside of their permanent posts for refugee processing.

Q: For the remainder of your tour there, how many Kurds were processed?

PATTERSON: We had 750 numbers, and that meant one number per family. Most of the Kurds were young single men, but those that weren't were old married men who had 12 or 13 children, so in all, there may have been 1,000 or 1,200 people we processed.

The other person who was very key to making this program work was a magnificent Kurdish man by the name of Shofiq Qazzaz, who had been a resident in the United States in previous years and was very fluent in English. He was very much wired into the Iraqi Kurdish community. He was able to not only talk to the people about what their desires were, what their professions

were, but he also knew enough about the United States to be able to make some kind of assessment of who might fit in, who had the skill or the initiative or the guts or whatever to make it in the United States.

We had no guidelines, in contrast to most refugee programs, as to who we could take and who we could not take. Our first priority was obviously people with relatives in the United States, but there wasn't anybody in that category, because, as I say, there was only this one Iraqi Kurdish man in the United States. People who had been educated in the United States, that category didn't help us either. So we were left, really, with the numbers to use for anybody.

Q: They probably had no skills particular either.

PATTERSON: By and large, they had no skills. So Shofiq did us all a wonderful service in culling through the people who wanted to come and figuring out who might best fit where, because there were other countries who had agreed to take some Kurds. The Germans agreed and the Swedes took a handful. In fact, there were several European countries taking from this group, although the U.S. took the largest numbers.

We started the processing in May of 1976, but we ran this whole program on a very short time frame, because the numbers expired at the end of June, due to the fiscal year. When we started the processing, we were not aware of that. I think it was the middle of June, when we got a cable saying, "Anybody who's going to get taken has to get processed by the end of June." I was departing Iran on July 1, so it was a hellacious period. But it was work I did gladly, because I really believed that the Kurds were going to be good immigrants to the United States. I didn't feel that about all of the Iranian immigrants who qualified.

Q: Sounds like you put your emotion into adjudication, Miss Patterson.

PATTERSON: Yes, I had an emotional investment in this program.

Q: You said you had two things you wanted to tell us about.

PATTERSON: Yes. The other program I was involved in, which was largely at my own initiative, was an adoption program. There were a lot of Iranian babies who needed homes, and there were many American couples living in Iran who wanted to adopt. Those children are really quite beautiful.

The way I got involved, obviously, was through the immigrant visa that the American families needed for the child they adopted. The difficulty for them was to meet the requirements of the immigration law in terms of a permanent adoption. Under Iranian law at that time, there was no such thing as adoption--perhaps this is Islamic law. A child could be given to somebody who was not an immediate family member only in temporary custody. But temporary custody did not fulfill the requirements of our immigration law.

I was working with an Iranian judge who spoke very good English and had some experience in

the United States. We tried to devise a system where families could adopt an Iranian child under some kind of judicial procedure that would meet the requirements of the Immigration Act. The Iranian Parliament was undertaking a new child custody law, and the judge was trying to get language into it that would help us.

The new law came out and did allow for permanent adoption, but a home study had to be done on any potential adopting family. That presented a problem for the American families because there were very few Iranian social workers at that time to do any kind of social work, and none who could do a valid home study of an English-speaking family. So I found a qualified American social worker living in Tehran and she found several others. It was really quite surprising, the number of qualified Americans who happened to be residents in Iran at the time, who had degrees in social work and had experience in performing and evaluating home studies.

Q: And were looking, maybe, for work.

PATTERSON: They were very happy to do this. We set up an unofficial coordinating group of the Social workers. They sent copies of their documents such as school degrees and previous employment records, and we put all the red ribbons and seals and said, "Yes, these are validated documents," and sent them over to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry said, "Yes, we will accept the findings of their home studies." That's how we got this process rolling.

Q: You did this all on your own?

PATTERSON: Yes. I had the backing of my supervisor.

Q: A first-tour officer!

PATTERSON: I will say, had I not been there and done it--and I feel largely the same about the Kurdish program--it wouldn't have happened, because there was nobody else pushing for it.

Q: So your message is: junior officer, first tour, initiative welcome.

PATTERSON: Yes, absolutely. The consul general provided me the latitude to do it, and his moral support as well. Through this home study program, I think we had probably 100 or 150 Iranian children who were adopted by Americans.

Q: To your knowledge, until the occupation of the embassy, did the program continue?

PATTERSON: It did continue until things began to disintegrate and most of these American families left, the potential adopters and also the social workers who were doing the home studies.

Q: But there's nothing to say that program couldn't exist for adopting parents who were in the United States.

PATTERSON: That's true, and I should add that not all of the people who were adopting Iranian

children were residents there. We had several families who came from the States and went through the same procedures. In fact, one of those families, while they were sitting in my waiting room on several occasions during the week of their immigrant visa application for their child, met a Vietnamese refugee woman who had somehow ended up in Tehran. The Americans liked her so much that they agreed to be her sponsor in the States. The last I knew they were still all friends living up in Massachusetts somewhere. That's one of the beauties of our work...

Q: So there you are, a tertiary catalyst.

PATTERSON: Yes.

Q: After Tehran and those very stimulating and taxing problems and charges for a first-tour officer, you went on to a departmental assignment. You went to a Latin American desk. What kind of a next step was that for you?

**LYNNE LAMBERT
Commercial Officer
Tehran (1974-1977)**

Lynne Lambert was born in Ohio in 1943. After receiving her bachelor's degree from Smith College in 1965, she received her master's degree from Johns Hopkins in 1967. Her career has included positions in Athens, Tehran, Paris, London, and Budapest. Ms. Lambert was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 2002.

Q: You came back and were assigned to language training for Farsi.

LAMBERT: Yes, for 10 months.

Q: Had this been something you had asked for?

LAMBERT: Yes. I was married, and there were two suitable jobs in Tehran. There weren't too many suitable jobs- (end of tape)

Q: Your husband was David Lambert. What was he?

LAMBERT: He was with USIA.

Q: What was the situation at the time when you got married as regards who went where, what did you do? That had just been changing, hadn't it?

LAMBERT: Yes, shortly before I got married, the State Department stopped making women resign upon marriage and made every effort to arrange tandem assignments, to suitable jobs, at the same place. They also invited women who had been required to resign because of marriage

back into the Service. I think the tandem idea was fairly new when we were assigned to Tehran. The policy was that one of you had to be primary. The State Department or USIA always got the job for the primary. Then an assignment for the secondary would be considered. But of course, what tandems did was look at the assignment bid list and try to find matches and then try to negotiate the match with the embassy first and then the personnel officer. In our case in Tehran, we basically took jobs at grade. We didn't try to negotiate a better package. We were just interested really in getting two jobs in the same place.

Q: You took Farsi for a year at FSI. How did you find the language training there?

LAMBERT: I think it varies language by language. The French training, for example, had a lot of classes and a lot of teachers. The teachers often have short careers at FSI. The linguist knows the language, which they don't in the unusual languages. The method is pretty rigorously enforced. In the other languages, you tend to have maybe one full-time teacher who has been at FSI 20 years or so and it very much depends on the teacher rather than the program. I think it's very individual.

Q: How did you find Farsi?

LAMBERT: I didn't find it as rigorous as either French or Greek. It's probably an easier language than either of them. Of course, the grammar structure pretty much follows. You don't have the conjugations and declensions that you have in Greek particularly. You have to get over the alphabet, but I had already done that in Greek. Once you realize that you're going to do it, it's done. It was an interesting language. This was a culture much more different than anything I had ever known. We spoke a lot in English in class, but I think it was of some value because we learned more about Iran.

Q: What were you getting before you went out there about Iran and our policy?

LAMBERT: This was the time of the Shah. There had been a short-lived democracy which the U.S. regarded as pro-communist.

Q: This was under Mossadegh.

LAMBERT: Right. The Shah had been in exile and was accompanied back to the throne with the help of the CIA. Kermet Roosevelt, TR's grandson, worked for the CIA and was personally involved. The Shah was a young man when he took the throne and had been in power well over 15 or more years when we arrived, and he was in an extremely strong position. He had employed most of the classic dictator tools – like rotating the army leadership regularly. This was the time of OPEC's rise when the price of gas went through the roof and gas shortages were occurring in the U.S. The Shah was a very powerful international figure and was considered a great ally of the United States.

Q: You went out there in '74. You were there until when?

LAMBERT: '77.

Q: Before you went out there, what job were you going to go to?

LAMBERT: I was a commercial officer in the commercial part of the commercial/economic section. In those days, State rather than Commerce provided the commercial function.

Q: Were you picking up any concerns by people within the State Department who talked about our policy with Iran?

LAMBERT: Certainly not within the State Department. Iran was considered our ally in the area for obvious reasons. Iran was allowing us to install microwave stations in for intelligence purposes on the Iran-Soviet Union border. We were equipping the Iranian military. US exports to Iran were enormous, we looked to Iran to supply oil and be a moderate voice in OPEC, and our military involvement was increasing dramatically. Iran was considered stable. I think the Shah was considered as an enlightened ruler, although that wasn't a particular topic of conversation. He had instituted some modern ideas. Certainly Iran was considered progressive economically. A lot of that fell down later, but the progress looked real. American business was willing to invest in Iran and came back with good stories about the investment climate. Iran was spending a great deal of money improving its infrastructure. American companies established there to try to get the very big ticket infrastructure contracts – particularly airport, petroleum, subway and major road and port contracts. Contracts tended to be “turn key-plus,” which gave the US contractor considerable control and good profit. In those days, a billion dollar contract was very rare in the world, but Iran tendered quite a number of them. The Shah was certainly progressive towards women. His wife and his sisters appeared prominently. Women were in senior positions in the government. The prominent women did not wear the chador. I think these were probably the main factors in our viewing the Shah's as an enlightened regime. But, of course, geographic location and oil were much more important to us than enlightenment.

Q: Normally when you take language training, you get a certain amount of area studies but also people who had been there... You set out your network and have lunch with people who had served in Iran. Were you hearing anything about fundamentalist Islam?

LAMBERT: At FSI, not a word. Certainly once we got to Iran, we were very aware.

Q: I'm talking about before you went there.

LAMBERT: No. In area studies, we studied Islam, but it was more a historical sense and we looked at comparisons with Christianity. We were aware of the religion. I think there was more emphasis on the modernizing element of the Shah than the fundamentalist element in the countryside. A lot of the area studies was historic. Of course, the people that we knew in the U.S., our teachers and other Iranians that we met, were exiles. They had been in the U.S. for 10-20 years. They weren't that much in touch with modern Iran. But the story goes that every family covers all bases. This was certainly true when you looked at the big prominent families. They all had a leftist. They all had a communist. They all had somebody that was in the Shah's

government. They all had a business. They had money overseas. They had family in America. They covered all bases. This had been going on for many years.

Q: What was David doing?

LAMBERT: David took language with me. Then we both went to an in-country training program in Shiraz that involved a month of living with a family. We actually both got called back early, but David got called back almost immediately. Then I moved in with a different family. The original family wasn't suitable for me to stay alone with. They were more involved with the financial renting of a room than with a cultural experience. The second family was extremely wealthy, and they were wonderful to me. I learned better Farsi, of course, because I wasn't speaking English with David all the time. This was a family where the women were not veiled. They had two daughters. The wife that took me around all day drove a Mercedes. They had friends of similar wealth. We spent our evenings in people's gardens, which were often outside of the city separate from the main house. It was a wonderful, gentle way of life, obviously among the wealthy in this case, that I think had already passed in Tehran. This was what people remembered of Iran in the '60s. By the time we got to Tehran, the prices of the apartments the Americans were looking at were \$100 a week, and rising by the week. The city was very congested. The phone system was way overloaded. In the embassy, we had to search hard for talent. It was hard to find. We had to pay about \$2,000 a month to a 17-year-old who could speak a little bit of English as a typist. That was a considerable salary, even in Iran, but it was the only way the Embassy could find and keep local staff. The system was kind of exploding with the oil wealth. Again, when we first learned we were going to Iran, the American population was about 5,000, mostly women married to Iranians who had met them at university. At the high point, it was 55,000 Americans. So, there was an inflow of everybody, everything, and especially money in Tehran, which I think ruined the culture that had been there, the culture that I saw in Shiraz.

Q: Who was our ambassador from '74 to '77?

LAMBERT: Richard Helms. He left a little bit before I left, but he was there most of the time.

Q: How did you find him? Did you have much contact?

LAMBERT: Yes. He was obviously a very noble, successful individual. He was under investigation most of the time that we were there by some committee or other, mostly to do with Watergate. He had very good relations with the Shah and with the most senior few people in the government. The key relationship with the Shah really was carried out by the ambassador rather than the President or Secretary of State, as so often happens now. I don't think he felt it was his job to know deeper down in the bureaucracy. He had access to the top, so the rest of us had the access at quite senior levels. I remember having directors general of ministries (under secretary equivalent) at receptions at my home, which would be quite unusual for a second tour officer at a large embassy today. Mrs. Helms was active civically in hospital, health, and children's issues. I found the Helms formidable. I was a kid. I was less than 30 years old. The Ambassador did have a temper which he displayed on a few occasions. I did not want to be the subject of that, which is too bad because I would have admired him and liked him more had I not been a little afraid of

him. I think most of the junior staff was in that position.

Q: You were coming from Athens, where there was a division between... We had a government that really was very unpopular. How did we deal with it? Our policy was that we were much closer to the Greek government than almost any other European state. Then you find yourself in Iran, where there was a certain amount of this, too, wasn't there?

LAMBERT: Oh, yes. I think the U.S. was considered number one in Iran, and we had a more upgraded relationship than we had in Athens or than anyone else had in Iran. Kissinger visited Iran when I was there, for example. But the Europeans were very interested in Iran. The Shah was viewed as enlightened. The business opportunities were phenomenal, and the Europeans were certainly interested in the business opportunities. In many ways, one of the primary goals of most European embassies was to boom up their business - a higher goal than I'd say we had. European countries tended to have one company competing for a project whereas we often had several. We could not choose among the companies. The European company in question would often be a state-owned company.

Q: While it wasn't in your particular territory, did you run across within our officer group there any concern about the policies? I gather the policy was that we really don't report on internal matters in Iran if they are not complimentary of the Shah.

LAMBERT: What I'm aware of is that early on in my tour, I went to the Tehran bazaar. One of the older and larger mosques was located in the center of the bazaar... It was a hangout for religious people. Prayers were observed. Prayers went from loudspeakers throughout the bazaar. I got separated from the people that I was with. I got kind of mauled and couldn't understand that. People were speaking German to me. I think they thought I was German. I went home and spoke to some of my colleagues. Clearly I was concerned. That's when I learned that some of my colleagues believed that there was a fundamentalist movement and that it was growing, all the more because of the Shah's excesses. Educated professional acquaintances tended to support the Shah, but in the countryside especially and in places like the bazaar the Shah was hated. This was a sleeping lion that, as we know, eventually roared. I believe now that many students probably opposed the Shah, but I didn't meet many students. Embassy officers who thought trouble was brewing were the ones that had the jobs that involved traveling in-country. We who stayed in Tehran and had most of our access with the professional classes, as I did, really weren't aware of that. I'm not sure that our business contacts were that aware of it either, although through their families they touched every walk of life in Iran. This was a traditional response to power that went back many generations. Anyway, three people in the embassy were quite concerned about the pending trouble beneath the surface. My husband traveled throughout Iran with his job, and he was one of them. I'm personally not aware of it in Embassy reporting. I think there might have been some. I think, however, that most officers in the Embassy thought the political situation was stable, even good. Things began to unravel later in my tour, but from 1974 to probably 1976 I think the prevailing view in the Embassy was that things were fine.

Q: Rather than just...

LAMBERT: My husband and the others were probably considered radicals, maybe even trouble makers. We had American companies that began to get into trouble towards the end of my tour. The main problem was they were not being paid. One senior American executive committed suicide because of overexposure in Iran. This was something that Washington knew. Exactly how we reported it, I don't remember. On the economic side, the Iranians had overstretched. The Shah's ambitions were somewhat outrageous. He used to say that in 10 years Iran would surpass Germany. Well, this wasn't very realistic. Certainly in the balance of payments reporting in the economic section's work, we realized the fundamental weaknesses that were beginning to come on the economy from being overextended and this was reported. It was reported in kind of a measured, analytic way, but it wasn't kept from Washington.

Q: What was your particular part of the commercial field?

LAMBERT: Inasmuch as we could divide – there were only three American officers – I tended to follow the major projects: the airport, the subway, the big roads. We would have a lot of American interest in any kind of business in Iran. Also, a lot of businessmen... Most of these projects were let on what we called then a "turnkey" basis. A company would come in and design, build, equip, and manage, train, and then turn over the key... but actually, the US firms usually stayed on beyond that and managed the operation.

Q: I would think that given the proclivities of the royal entourage, there would be an awful lot of payments to the royal entourage by American business in order to get things done.

LAMBERT: As far as I'm aware... I did the Tehran International Trade Fair. One year, we had trouble getting our goods in. Our manager certainly had to give baksheesh pretty liberally so that we could set up our pavilion on time. There was that level. But for big contracts, what usually happened was, you had a 10 percenter who was your local partner or your middleman representative. As far as I know, all of the big companies had such a contact. My guess would be that what bribing was done was usually done through this person with his cut.

Q: What would you tell perspective American business people who came and asked, "What are chances and how do things work here?"

LAMBERT: That was a very long story. We got involved with a lot of companies in different areas and it took a lot of time because many of them brought families in, and the families had problems. The first discussion was usually whether the company should have a presence and if so, what life was like, what the costs were, what the schools were like, what the family situation would be, what the laws were, whether they had to pay money to establish, how much money it would cost to set up a presence. This was one set of things. Once they established, we had a very ongoing relationship with them. I think it was a favorable climate for foreign investment, but the city was so overstrained that new companies would have problems getting phone service, problems getting paid, problems with a lot of things. So, we had a very close relationship with the very large and growing American business community. We'd have a lot of people that would come in search of business. Some of them had a specific project. Some of them just had heard about Iran and wanted to know how they might fit in. All three of us would have seven or eight

appointments a day, whether they were setting up or traveling through. Some of the people traveled through a lot and wanted to see us every time they came through. The ones that were established had this, that, and the other thing they wanted to discuss. We were extremely busy seeing American businesspeople.

Q: I would have thought that in seeing American businesspeople-

LAMBERT: They were all men. There were no women.

Q: You were also getting feedback all the time. Was there any disquiet on your part or others about the growing American community there and its impact on the society?

LAMBERT: It was having certainly a large impact. It wasn't just Americans. Every nationality was coming in. This was kind of a gold rush. The foreign population of Iran was outpricing everything, basically bidding up all prices. People were making a lot of money and a lot of this was off foreigners. I think that the divide between the rich and the poor was always fairly large and got larger, and we expatriates were in obviously in the rich part. This said, we were totally outclassed and outspent by the wealthy Iranians. I've never seen such consumption. You'd go to a party, and there were multiple bands, enough food to feed a village, sometimes champagne flowing out of fountains. I can remember being disturbed about the difference. Most of our FSNs were fairly aristocratic, too. The embassy was located on a big compound. It was 54 acres. The ambassador, the Marines, the DCM lived on it. It had the commissary. It had its athletic facilities. Walking around the compound is something we all did all the time. If you spoke to a gardener, they would put their hand to their forehead and bow and practically go down to the ground. This was uncomfortable for an American. We were trying to be friendly and kind. On the one hand, to be greeted like that at the embassy and on the other to be mauled at the bazaar... There were clearly social upheavals. I think that the family life... Most Iranians were family oriented. The family had been the center of everyone's existence and it no longer was. It took too long to get to work and too long to get back and it was too hard to make a phone call. The guy that had seen his mother every lunch all of his life stopped seeing his mother. These were the wealthier people. It was a tremendous upheaval. You could see it yourself. It was difficult living.

Q: Were you seeing a change from '74 to '77?

LAMBERT: American firms were downsizing from 1976 on. There were two things going on with the government contracts. One is that initially the Iranian government wanted the most modern thing possible, state of the art. Then a company would go in with state of the art plans, proposals, which were expensive to prepare. This was a one or two year process. Then they'd be told to scale it back a little bit. Things would get not derailed but greatly postponed. Then some of the expectations of the companies on payments were not being met. Some of the very large payments which were clearly due were not being met. We were seeing a decline in Iran's balance of payments and ability to pay. They went out for some loans. I think "Newsweek" or "Business Week" had a cover saying "The Bloom Is Off the Rose." Economically, it certainly was. I think some of the companies were extremely overextended in the Middle East generally and in Iran particularly because the same pattern was going on in other Middle Eastern countries. I don't

know if they were paid or not, but I think that overambition was certainly there in the growing American presence. Then there were power brownouts. The government alleged that the power system was overextended and couldn't meet demands and so they put scheduled brownouts on. They weren't very well scheduled because you never knew when they were going to happen. But if this was something that was controlled - I don't think the power grid probably was overextended - but the street rumor was that there was sabotage going on. I think that this was the beginning of my own realization, plus listening to my husband all these years, that something was going wrong and that it was going wrong in a major, unorganized way. But again, I don't think that the embassy reported it as that. We probably did report some power brownouts, but I don't expect it occurred beyond that.

Q: The leftist group, the Tudeh Party... Mujahedeen seemed to be the term for guerrillas right, left, and center.

LAMBERT: My colleagues who traveled and my husband seemed to think that this was going on, but I personally had no firsthand experience with them at all. I'm not sure the term Mujahedeen was used at the time. I tend to think it came later.

Q: What about the SAVAK? Was this a name that got whispered around?

LAMBERT: Absolutely. They were the secret police. Again, the feeling was that SAVAK was everywhere, even inside extended families. We thought we had SAVAK within the embassy in some of our FSN employees. People had some ideas on who they might be. It was clearly something that was spoken about, but in hushed terms even within the embassy. I'm not sure I had close enough relationships with Iranians that they would pour out their hearts on this to me, but my assumption was that there was a lot of fear. There were certainly occasions in my professional capacity where people would go out on the balcony to tell you something or they'd wait to tell you until you were in the street. I think there was a fair amount of fear.

Q: The merchants were a rather potent force within Iran. From the commercial side, did we have much contact with them or did they operate off our radar screen?

LAMBERT: I think the latter. I personally had no contact with them at all except as a shopper. I think the embassy tended to frequent a couple merchants. I don't mean we didn't stroll the bazaar at large, but there was a merchant that everybody in the embassy went to and bought most of our carpets from, and there was a good reason. He was open when the embassy had its weekend off - a lot of the others were closed on Friday and Saturday. He had a rug show every week in English where he taught about rugs, allowed you to take rugs home and try them. He was considered reputable because everybody in the embassy dealt with him. It was the same thing with caterers, restaurants, and so forth. So, our contact really was fairly limited. I don't know if it's by chance or not, but the rug dealer was Jewish and wouldn't have been connected with anything Muslim.

Q: Did you take trips around?

LAMBERT: All the time. We did extensive traveling. Tehran at that time was an extremely

congested, overbuilt city. But the country was beautiful and there was a great deal of variety. The trip from town to the Caspian is one of the most remarkable, beautiful drives I've ever seen. At the time, there was wonderful hospitality and quite a lot to see. We traveled pretty extensively. It wasn't easy because it's a big country. We once went into Afghanistan.

Q: Did you have children?

LAMBERT: Immediately after.

I also wanted to say two other things. One is that my closest friends in the Foreign Service came from the Tehran assignment. It could be partly the age that I was then, the fact that we didn't have children then. It was a remarkable group of people. And the living was difficult. It was difficult to get around. It was difficult to make a phone call. I think we relied on each other quite a bit. Especially during the religious holidays, the embassy did not want us out on the streets for fear of violence. We were more self-contained than any other embassy group I knew then.

Q: In a way, you weren't under siege, but you were under constraints.

LAMBERT: Well, there were the practical constraints, such as the traffic. Then there were cultural constraints. We were in a place where there wasn't a lot to do. There were American movies. There were restaurants. But you don't have what we had in London and Paris, so we relied more on the American community and especially the embassy community. Then when the going got a little rougher during religious holidays, etc., this was an almost enforced community. The incident that I wanted to recall took place during a Shiite called Ashurah.

Q: Is this when they beat themselves?

LAMBERT: Yes.

Q: I'm told that was a dangerous time.

LAMBERT: It was. We had a group of Maryland businessmen... This was the first trade mission I'd handled. They were CEOs of large companies, several in construction. The Iranian government suggested that we take the group to a retreat about an hour outside Tehran. The club was owned by the Shah's family (normally a membership thing) basically to get these people out of the city because they were in hotels and they wanted appointments and they wanted to be busy. So, we took them on a trip from the hotel, which was the Intercontinental, to the mountain resort. As we were leaving, it was by the airport road and there was a town independent of Tehran we had to drive through, but other than that, we really weren't in any of the traffic that was involved in the holy day. There was a street demonstration going on. It was in the middle of January and people were bare chested and flagellating themselves with spiked chains. It was very bloody. We had warned everybody that this was not something to take pictures of. I don't think anybody was taking a picture, but I think somebody must have had a camera that was seen by the crowd and they turned on the minivan that was ahead of us. We had experienced some terrorism. We had had Americans assassinated in car ambushes and we had a lot more afterwards. The embassy

drivers who were driving the Maryland businessmen had had defensive training. The driver under attack floored the minivan, as did the one behind, the one I was in. They just drove through that crowd at full speed and got out of the city. Fortunately, the crowd got out of the way. I think that the drivers showed remarkable presence to do that. I know this is what they (and later we in the embassy) were taught to do, but it's not easy.

Q: I know it. Oh, boy.

LAMBERT: The van was really being lifted. So, we got out of that one and waited until after dark to go home.

Q: You mentioned that you had an unpleasant incident near the bazaar mosque.

LAMBERT: I got separated from the group. Of course, being larger than any of the Iranians and blonde and a foreigner, what happened was that somebody moving a rack of clothes questioned me. I fell. I thought it was an accident, but it gathered a crowd and almost everything was belligerent against me. I was injured slightly, but I picked myself up and made my way through the crowd. The crowd dispersed and the person pushing the rack crashed the rack into me again. That time, I realized that it wasn't accidental. I ducked into a shop and stayed there until pretty much everything was dispersed. I don't know if the shopkeeper liked it or not, but he certainly tolerated my being there. Then I took a cab home.

This was not a place where... It wasn't an easy place to walk. You drew too much attention as a woman and a foreigner. The traffic was too heavy. It was dangerous. The traffic would often drive over the sidewalk. They'd have two lanes of traffic, but the cars were a little bit smaller than American cars and they said that the lines painted on the street were for foreigners. They would get two cars in each lane, so you'd have four cars abreast. Then typically, a fifth car in the jube, which is where water used to run, the gutter system (it used to be how Iranians got their water in the city, but we had city water at that point)... When the traffic got into a bottleneck, the cars would go on the sidewalk. Americans were always having accidents because we weren't used to this - just having a paper's width almost between the cars. Iranians were always having accidents, too. The roads were very dangerous. There were a lot of pedestrian deaths. So, it wasn't really a walkable place.

Q: What about the universities? Did you have much contact with university students?

LAMBERT: I really didn't have any.

Q: You left there in '77. What was your feeling and others' about relations with Iran? Did you see things approaching a crisis?

LAMBERT: I certainly did. There was an economic crisis and certainly a crisis for American business, the ones that were heavily involved. But there were reasons for the crisis. I was beginning to be aware of a lot more disaffection. Often, when the economy is good, people are satisfied. But when the economy sours, dissent comes to the surface. I was aware of an increasing

number of my colleagues talking about trouble in the countryside. I was aware of the growing gap between the rich and the poor. The arrogance of some of the royal family was quite well-known. Some royals were thought to be benefitting from the bribery – not the Shah and his wife, but some of the brothers, sisters, cousins, and whatnot. Some people disapproved of the royal women appearing in western fashion. Then we had the power brownouts. There were some rumblings in the universities. I think at that time, the embassy considered the military intact. But there were clearly a lot of signs of trouble.

Q: Did Sheikh Khomeini's name ever arise while you were there?

LAMBERT: I never heard it. Maybe people in the political section knew it.

Q: Were mosques places that were completely off-limits?

LAMBERT: No. Iran was a very good country for tourism. You had to wear a chador. The Iranian version of it at that time was more like a tablecloth that you put over yourself and it was sort of like a mid-calf type of coverup that covered your hair. Some of the Iranian women would put it over the lower part of their face from time to time. You had to wear some garment like that to get into a mosque. There were a few mosques that were off-limits for foreigners. But certainly mosque visiting was done.

Q: You left there in '77. Where did you go?

LAMBERT: Back to Washington.

ROGER C. BREWIN
Economic Consular
Tehran (1974-1978)

Roger C. Brewin was born in Columbus, Ohio. He entered the U.S. Army in 1944. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of Miami in Ohio in 1948 and a master's degree from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 1950. Mr. Brewin joined the Foreign Service in 1951. His career included positions in Switzerland, India, Bolivia, Paraguay, Iran, and Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy on February 9, 1990.

Q: Then you were sent to Tehran as Economic Counselor. How did you manage to get this assignment, after Asuncion and La Paz?

BREWIN: I was called by Personnel while in Bolivia as my tour was coming to an end and was asked whether I wanted to go to Iran. I asked whether I could get back the following day. They said ok, but no later than that. I discussed it with my wife who was ecstatic about the idea of

going back to the Middle East, where she had served before we were married. So I agreed.

Q: You were there from 1974 to 1978, which was a very interesting period. Can you describe the situation in 1974 when you arrived in Tehran.

BREWIN: When I got there, the recycling of the petro-dollar had begun with a real vengeance. The oil price increases of the early '70s were just beginning to bring in the bountiful receipts. The country was knee-deep in Western businessmen looking for a piece of the action. It seemed to herald an era of \$22 billion of expenditures per year, every year as far as one could foresee in the future. There might have been ups and downs in the revenues and problems here and there--including problems of absorbing all the imports--but it seemed like good times would never stop.

Q: We were encouraging the Iranians to spend considerable amounts on military end items, particularly American first line equipment. How did you and the Embassy feel about this policy?

BREWIN: The Embassy's point of view was that what the Shah asked for, he got, with very few exceptions--some very high tech items which in some cases hadn't even been released to US forces. The "Nixon doctrine" governed. We viewed the Shah as the keeper of peace in the Gulf area. He was the bulwark of stability in the area. If he wanted to buy stuff from us, that was fine; we were happy to sell it.

Q: That was our policy. How was it viewed internally in the Embassy? Was there concern?

BREWIN: There were occasional manifestations of concern, but they never really percolated up to the Ambassador or in field reports. The concerns that we received were from the Congress about why a certain weapon system was being sold and why it had to be so sophisticated (e.g. the Airborne Warning System (AWACS)). The role of the Embassy and particularly the Ambassador was to interpret the role of Iran to the Congressmen. He had to point out the Shah's real needs.

Q: Did you have trouble with Congress? We had a policy which was being challenged outside the Administration. Did for example the economic section question whether Iran should be spending these huge amounts on military hardware when there were developmental needs elsewhere?

BREWIN: No; that was never a problem for my section. One of the givens in the economic section that we had to work with was that there would be significant amounts spent for military hardware and whether we rationalized it to ourselves or were looking for a pretext, I don't know, but we said--and DoD said this--there would be spin-offs from these weapon purchases in turn of economic development--for example, co-production. We thought that eventually aircraft would be manufactured in Iran. Motor vehicles would be built in Iran in greater numbers. These were all spin-offs from weapon sales. I don't think our policy caused my section any great problems. We were kept busy enough with the purely commercial, non-military business.

Q: Were there concerns about the vast influx of Americans that came along with the weapon

sales?

BREWIN: Not really serious ones while I was there. Bell helicopter, primarily based in Isfahan, had a reputation, not really deserved, for having a bunch of rowdies--Americans perfectly capable of driving a motorcycle through a mosque half naked or giving offense to the Iranians in a variety of ways. Most of these stories were apocryphal. Most Americans were put on their good behavior by their employers back in the US and most were aware that Iran was a different place by far from any place they had ever been, including the Arab world. They knew that there were sensitivities. There were exceptions from time to time, but the potential problem which some of us foresaw was the issue of Americans being held hostage in a time when the Shah might become less secure on his throne. What would we do with thirty two thousand Americans if the Shah were to go down the tube?

Q: So there was concern that the Shah might not be there forever?

BREWIN: Yes. The concern was not that one could foresee the Shah's overthrow in a coup d'etat, but when after many years he would pass from the scene by death or some incapacity. Could then the new Shah tame what might be pressures on the society? Then what happens to the Americans if there were riots in the streets or disturbances of the kind that occurred under Mossadegh?

Q: So we looked back to the Mossadegh period as a potential model for the future?

BREWIN: Yes; something to be avoided at all costs.

Q: So the large American civilian presence was a major concern?

BREWIN: It was a major concern. I was active in the US-Iran Chamber of Commerce--I was an office-holder for the period I was there--provided monthly forums for the Americans to meet. There were reasonable amounts of social outlets for the Americans--far, far more than there were in Saudi Arabia, for example. There were possibilities of interesting travel within Iran. So I never found the American community to be a difficult one to work with either in the business sense or to live with in the social sense.

Q: How were your dealings with the Iranian officials?

BREWIN: We came to understand more and more as time went on that, as Ambassador Richard Helms put it in one of his telegrams to Kissinger, Iranians had by now wanted to be treated as equal partners when they sat at the table with us. No more crumbs. This was the prevailing official attitude. The Iranians I dealt with were usually charming and very hospitable. When they said "No", they often found ways to do so in a charming and friendly manner, but it was quite clear that there was an element of nationalism present in the Iranian make up and in the Shah's government which went from top to bottom. One understood that this was present and could surface, and did, from time to time. For example, we had the US-Iranian Joint Commission--an institution that Kissinger conceived--as a mechanism in the OPEC countries through which the United States could move in basically any technically assistance on a government-to-government

level as desired by the host government. There was one in Saudi Arabia and one in Iran and one in India. That never really got going as an idea because the Iranians always seemed to be busy with other things and what was it that this Joint Commission was supposed to accomplish that existing mechanisms could not? It was clear that we saw the Commission as a petro-recycling mechanism--to get the Bureau of Public Roads into Iran, the Census Bureau, the Department of Agriculture. The Iranians said "Fine. We'll be glad to have these people, but we will pick and choose and this Commission is not to be deemed as an United States export promotion device". That was fair enough.

These were very interesting times. It was a very, very active post and section. The work-load was absolutely horrendous--day in and day out, people were seeking advice of one kind or another. In the early months, it was hard for me to give advice because of the tight control that the government exercised over information distribution. The two English language dailies in Tehran were almost worthless as a depository of any kind of information of interest to me. So we had to go out and dig for it and often that meant doing it on the social circle at night, which then became essentially an extension of the office in terms of information collection. It was probably eighteen months before I felt sufficiently sure of myself in my grasp of what was happening in the country and what was likely to happen. It was only then that I could counsel those who came in as to what they should or shouldn't do in terms of their business activities.

Q: When you looked at the economy of Iran, did you feel that viable investment were being made by the Shah and his government?

BREWIN: He was not investing enough in agriculture. There were two things for which one could criticize the Iranian government without fear of being looked at askance by your Iranian interlocutors. One was the mayor of Tehran, who was fair game because of the condition of the city--congestion and pollution. The other that Iran had turned from a food-surplus to a food-deficit nation in less than a couple of decades. The Shah seemed not to do a lot about that problem. An awful lot of money went into construction of various kinds--office buildings, homes, cultural centers, monuments of one kind or another. All of these gobbled up a great deal of money. Some of it was purely wasted. A great deal of money was spent on the beginning of a petro-chemical complex on the Persian Gulf and three or four nuclear power plants in 1978 and early '79.

Q: Did you feel any constraints in your reporting?

BREWIN: Not in my section. I think the political section was constrained; there is no question about that. They were constrained about reporting on human rights violations, on the opposition to the Shah. I think that constraint was present going back even to 1953 when we put the Shah back on his throne. Some Ambassadors were far more vehement on this subject than others--Douglas MacArthur II, for example, would tolerate no criticism of the Shah in the post's reporting whatsoever.

Q: You served under two hard-charging Ambassadors: Richard Helms, ex CIA chief, and William Sullivan, who had been sort of a "field marshal" in Vietnam. How would you compare

them in style and methods?

BREWING: I am genuinely fond of both Helms and Sullivan. Helms could be a bit remote at times but at the same time was an "open door" Ambassador--you could walk right in and discuss any problems you might have. You didn't have to go through the D.C.M. if you didn't want to. We had daily staff meetings--Ambassador, DCM, station chiefs and the counselors. They only lasted 15-20 minutes which was sufficient to apprise people of what was going on.

Both Helms and Sullivan had good relations with the Shah. Neither one was disposed to speak outside the confines of the front office what the Shah may have said to him unless it bore directly on the work of the section chief. I therefore remember seeing only one or two cable reports of Ambassador-Shah meetings during the time I was there. This was done essentially to make sure that these conversations did not get on the street or the cocktail circuit. That was understandable. It is hard to contrast them. Sullivan perhaps came to take, while I was there, a more direct "hands-on" role with the Political Section reporting because by that time, early 1978 on, it was clear that something was happening in terms of opposition to the Shah. Helms was very interested and active in meeting Iranians. He resisted the idea that he should only have the usual Iranian contacts that the Embassy and previous Ambassadors had cultivated. He struck out in new directions. Sullivan continued that practice to a degree.

Q: You left in August 1978. What was the situation at that point?

BREWING: Turmoil was clearly present by that time. People have asked me what the first manifestations were that matters were going awry. My own recollection is it started in Tabriz when the mobs sacked a government bank--Bank Melli, meaning "National" in Farsi-- leaving broken glass all over the place. Nothing happened and nothing was done to the rioters. Then it seemed to me that something was going wrong. When this misdeed went unpunished, the Shah lost face and command and control. Then he became vulnerable to other acts against the State. These episodes continued throughout 1978 and we now know what happened in the end. However, when I left, the Shah was still in power and I thought that he would continue, but I had no sense how he was going to deal with the situation. It occurred to me that "in extremis", the military might well clamp down forcefully and that the Shah would be able to survive the situation.

LANGE SCHERMERHORN
Economic/ Commercial Officer
Tehran, Iran (1974-1978)

Ambassador Schermerhorn was born and raised in New Jersey and educated at Mt. Holyoke College. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, she had several assignments in the State Department in Washington dealing with a variety of administrative and political matters. Her overseas posts include Colombo, Saigon, Teheran, London, and Brussels, where she served twice. In 1992 she was

named US Ambassador to Djibouti, where she served until 2000. Ambassador Schermerhorn was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: So you're off to Iran in the fall of '74?

SCHERMERHORN: In September of '74.

Q: What were you picking up about Iran at that point before you went out there?

SCHERMERHORN: That it was a great, staunch ally and it was a keystone in our containment policy, if you will. I mean we knew all that. The shah was this young, dynamic, modern bent on modernizing the country and you didn't really think of it as...

I also had a little knowledge of it, as I mentioned earlier, at Mount Holyoke. In the nineteenth century there were missionaries who went out and one of them had gone to the place called Domovan College, so there was a little bit of background and I had read a little bit about it, but what I knew about it seemed totally divorced from this modern kind of presentation of foreign policy. Then of course, I knew about it in World War II and how we had used Iran to funnel supplies through to Stalin, and what happened in 1946 in Azerbaijan. I knew a little bit about that kind of politics but that didn't seem to have a lot of relation to right now and what was going on.

Q: You went out there as what?

SCHERMERHORN: I went as an economic/commercial officer to a section headed by an economic counselor, and had a financial economist and two of these economic/commercial slots and a commercial attaché. We had five FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals); we had one who was kind of the senior Mr. Fix-It and we had one who worked with the financial economist with the bank and we had three who were commercial FSNs. Two of them were Armenian women who ran the commercial library and the other one was supposed to be doing WTDRs and stuff like that.

Q: The World Trade Directory Reports.

SCHERMERHORN: Right. We also had an aviation attaché who didn't spend a lot of time in the section, but we did have that. It turned out when I got there that the other economic/commercial slot was occupied by a woman and she had only been there three or four months but her position had been language-designated as Farsi. She was a tandem. Again this was one of the first of what we called tandem – two officers.

The ambassador was Richard Helms who had been out there for a year or more at that point, former director of the CIA who had gone there because of a variety of reasons. One, he knew Iran; he had been in the Agency at the... The famous story that the Agency has dined out on for forty-five years about the overthrow of Mossadegh and so on, and because he'd been at the same school in Switzerland with the shah. I don't think at the same time; Helms was there earlier and he knew the shah.

Q: There was also the story that they kind of wanted him out of town because of Watergate.

SCHERMERHORN: Right. The idea was he was going to go somewhere and what made sense, what would be sufficient stature; they weren't going to send him to Barbados or something. It had to be something sufficiently weighty, which at that time it certainly was. But again it did make sense. He had the connections.

I didn't get there until September, at that point we realized we had this cataclysmic economic event of December 1973 when OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) got together and decided to collectively agree to raise the price of oil and that had caused tremendous upheavals in the economy. It took at least six months for that tremendous transfer of capital to begin to be reflected in the actual ability in Iran to spend money. This was just about the time when the business community in the United States, and indeed in Europe, woke up to the fact that, oh, they've got money in Iran now; let's go see what's going on.

We hadn't gotten a great influx but I was about one plane load ahead of this monumental – I mean it was like sitting under Niagara Falls; there were people, businessmen, hot and cold and...everyday. In the economic/commercial office our function was to counsel the businessmen and help them, and I don't think anyone ever dreamed in the United States what was going to happen in that part of the world. It was just like, as I said, being under Niagara Falls and it happened so quickly that the Department isn't equipped to shift jobs, shift functions, quickly. We have assignment cycles, we have limitations on the numbers of positions we can have; meaning if we create more here, we have to take them away from some other place and all of this requires negotiation and study within the Department and so on.

I get off this plane and we're suddenly inundated. We had two excellent secretaries there. Most of these people want to see a commercial officer. I'm sorry, we had another position; we had a petroleum attaché and that position was also language-designated. Very few positions in the embassy were because, again, Farsi is a minimum of six to nine months to study and we don't have this float. But anyway, the petroleum which was a little bit ironic because the people in the National Iranian Oil Company, NIOC as it was referred to, generally spoke English because they had the engineering and training and so forth, but the attaché, David Patterson, said it was useful because they didn't realize he understood Farsi so when they were having their asides to each other, he could understand what was going on.

We had a trade fair going on and my colleague, Mrs. Lambert, who had been there three or four months...

Q: Who was the economic counselor?

SCHERMERHORN: Roger Bruin. He was there the whole time I was there because he had just gotten there shortly before I did. By that time Jack Miklos was the DCM, the fellow who six months earlier had said I could go there.

He was very happy and actually so was Ambassador Helms, or he said he was, because we really did handle this very well. I wasn't prepared for the volume of business but we had it down to a science and we made some handouts, to the degree that you could do that. It was an interesting enterprise, again, because you had to assess the level of knowledge, level of interest, level of ability of each businessman and tailor what you were saying because of course one of the things that they were all understanding of, "Do I have to bribe people? What about 'corruption'?" and of course this is a difficult issue because, yes, there is a certain way of doing business there that we don't condone but we couldn't say, "Yes, of course you have to do that." So dealing with that question and being useful enough to them.

Q: How did you bring yourself up to speed, because normally you've got all these people lined up but you really have to learn something about the ground and if you've got a line waiting for you, how did you do it? Did you have a chance to go out and meet the Iranian counterparts and all that?

SCHERMERHORN: We didn't have a lot of ability to do that but we went to events and there was a Chamber of Commerce there. It was interesting. The previous economic counselor there, Bill Lehfeltdt, had left in '73 and had gone to Barcelona for a year as consul general. Then I think he hit fifty and he decided to retire and take an offer from General Electric to go back to Iran and represent General Electric. Then he had become president of the Chamber of Commerce. So he was there, which maybe was a little difficult for his successor, I don't know, but he knew a lot. I don't know, you just put your ear to the ground and listen and read the papers and talk to the FSNs. I just seem to have a natural affinity for the subject matter; I don't really know how, but whatever I learned it seemed to sound authoritative enough.

Q: How did you find the American businessman who for the most part, particularly in this era was probably not too familiar with the country, coming up against a suddenly wealthy country but full of people who by chromosomes are bargainers and dealers and all of this?

SCHERMERHORN: Oh it was ships passing in the night. There was a broad range of American businessmen. There were some very sophisticated – the city banker, the whatever – and then there were people like J.A. Johns Construction – the big conglomerates – and then there was the little guy from nowhere who would come in some trade mission or come by himself. I used to try to establish before we got into the briefing what their objective was in coming here so I could tailor what it was. I remember saying that a couple of times to people, "Now what do you hope to achieve in this limited time?" and I can remember one of them sitting there and he said, "Well I just heard there was money in Iran." And I would tell some of these people, "I don't think this is the place for you," and they'd say, "Well, I'm just as good as..." and I'd say, "No, no. Can you do..." and we'd go through this. I mean I thought that I was there to encourage business but it was more important to not get, you know.

My specialty focused more and more on the housing market because in the paper in Iran all the time they said they wanted to build modern housing. There were precast systems, prefab systems, and various permutations of those things. Precut for wood. Almost all of the housing manufacturers in the northwest with wood systems came there and we would say, "Look, they

don't do wood here. This is not a medium they're familiar with, they want, that they like. If you have a precast system, poured concrete in some form, yes." Of course the northern Europeans and Scandinavians had the same problem; everybody was coming trying to sell them these wood houses and they didn't want that. But there was one. They had a partner and that was another issue. They were going to put up a factory down in Ahwaz, which is down on the Persian Gulf – the gulf; we can't call it either Persian or Arabian, it is *the* gulf because if you call it one or the other the other side gets annoyed. So Ahwaz was a town down in the gulf; you know 120 in the shade and all of that.

You asked, "How do you get your information?" Once you were there it didn't take a lot of brains to know that it wasn't going to work the way... In the summer of '75 there was a Newsweek cover story on the shah. It was a long article and in it he was quoted as saying, "I'm going to make Iran the Japan of the Middle East in five years," and I'm sitting there and I'm looking at this and I'm saying, "No, I don't think so." I said, you know, Japan didn't make Japan the Japan of the Far East in four years; it took forty years of Meiji restoration.

Q: There was an awful lot of backup prior to this. It took a major dynasty to get it going.

SCHERMERHORN: Right. Two generations of schooling. Well it was the schooling. And this is the thing that in Iran people didn't understand; you could come in and invest in a factory, but you weren't going to get a workforce because you didn't have a middle class in Iran. What we would call a middle management class would be the sons who had gone off to study in Europe or America. When they went back to Iran they weren't going to be middle management in a factory; they wanted to sit behind the desk.

So you didn't have people to translate the vision of what you wanted to create down to a workforce that was able to carry it out. It was purely education. This is the problem in so many other countries. So I was very skeptical already that the shah was going to succeed at what he was doing.

Meanwhile, on the political side, SAVAK is there and one of the very interesting things in...

Q: "SAVAK" being the?

SCHERMERHORN: The secret police. Well, not so secret, but the police who were considered to be quite repressive and so forth, and were. What wasn't probably very well-known then, but is now, I think, is the SAVAK had established a relationship with the Mossad and the Israelis had people there advising them and they had a lot of liaison and exchange, which was very interesting. The shah recognized the Mossad as experts in their field and he wanted... Anyway, we had these wall to wall businessmen and it really was quite fascinating but it was very exhausting.

Q: How did you deal with the problem of – you can call it by a number of names: corruption, bribery, grease, baksheesh, whatever you want to call it. If it's there – I mean we have strict structures – in fact, was there the Foreign Corruption Act; had that passed?

SCHERMERHORN: It was '72. It had been enacted already, but...

Q: So you had this, yet we weren't the only people there. I mean you had German businessmen, English, French, and some of these there were no holds on what they could do. How could we help our people to be competitive yet follow our guidelines?

SCHERMERHORN: That was difficult and I think at the very top-end of the market, when you're talking about very big projects like petrol-chemical plants or oil refineries or something, that's where the ambassadors and the governments got into it and that was probably pretty difficult for us to be competitive. I don't know.

Q: Well you could always have a partner.

SCHERMERHORN: I was going to go into that issue. They had laws about joint ventures but they wanted at least fifty-one percent to be Iranian. Of course most American investors were not anxious to do it on those terms. And so you'd say, "Look, this is the way it is and if you can't handle that you're not going to be able to do a joint venture." But I said there are a lot of ways that soften that. I mean you may not have fifty – you'll have forty-nine or less – but what you do is structure it with a management contract for you that allows you to get as much out up front as you can out of the venture so if things go wrong you have control. The answer is the fifty-one percent is not because they really want hands-on management, it's because they wanted something to come out of this. You can bring your lawyers in and do all of this."

I don't know. Obviously if people were going to offer bribes they weren't going to tell me and I would say, "Well, yes, in some cases people may expect things but you have to negotiate around that. I can't help you do that." I think, again, where a lot of this could be dealt with is in these cultures any kind of business enterprise is looked at as a vehicle to support the extended family. So maybe you didn't give them a bribe but you hired eighteen second-cousins or something like that. You probably had to do that anyway but you had made a virtue out of it by saying...

People couldn't get used to this; Americans would come in and I think the Europeans were a little more sophisticated, but they would come in and they were very used to going into a negotiation and you start at point A and you go to point B and C and D, and I'd come in and they'd say, "Well I thought we agreed to that and then they came back and we're back where we..." and I'd say, "Look," and I got to put this in my briefing up front, "you're used to a very linear progression but you have to understand it's not going to be like that here. You may both start at point A but then he's going to go to D instead of B, and Q and X and back to F." This is a concept that Americans really couldn't assimilate very well; they had great trouble. They said, "But you know, we agreed," and I said, "Well that was yesterday, but this is today." It's a very different cultural thing and it's very hard.

Q: Were you able to point them towards Iranian, if not partners, consultants who could take them through this?

SCHERMERHORN: This was a problem where the numbers of functioning entities who had the

level of sophistication or expertise and just the size, the volume, of business to be an effective partner were not that great and everybody was banging on the same people's doors.

Q: Did you find yourself looking at particularly the Germans, the British, and especially the French? What sort of games were they playing?

SCHERMERHORN: Well the British had longstanding relations there and there were a lot of British. Interestingly enough, there were a lot of Italians and one of the reasons for that is that in the '50s the heir to Umberto, Vittorio Emmanuel, I mean they got turfed out of Italy but the prince got involved in business ventures in Iran with the shah's family. And the Italians, in terms of engineering and everything, they're superb. Where the U.S. had the expertise was logistics management and large-scale logistics and movement. I mean like petrol-chemical plants and that kind of thing. Of course the Italians had the engineering expertise. They had inroads there and there was a certain Italian community there. Again, Italians, after the war when things were so bad in Italy, some of them went there. So that was one element.

Then I would say after that there were Germans, because a number of Iranians had done their education in Germany, before the war, in the '30s, Germany was one of the primary places and a lot of Iranians in the older generation if they spoke a western language it would be German. French was spoken because it was the language at one point. There were Dutch, there were everybody. At the highest level, I'd say the French always dance to their own tune. So, yes, that was a problem. However, what Americans had was products that people wanted. Irrespective of the bribery issue, on merit, often they wanted American products and then it would depend on how well you could negotiate a package.

Q: How did you feel the money was spent?

SCHERMERHORN: Well, what became apparent – again, by the middle of '75 I had been there a year – was here you have, and this was especially true of these big urban planning projects and so on, architects coming in and urban planners and they're talking to ministers. The shah has told the ministers, "Spend the money. Make it green. Make it modern." So they'd talk in general terms, the architect would go away and think, god, here I am; I'm in heaven. Finally money is no object because money they wouldn't discuss. So they'd go away and draw up their plans and come back and this was happening and the minister would say, "Oh god, it's terrific. It's wonderful. Just what we want," and then he'd say, "How much?" and the architect would say, "Oh, well, twenty million," or whatever, and he'd say, "I didn't say you could spend that much." So there was a real miscommunication here about that. And this was just at the time in '75 when they began to realize that, yes, they had a lot more money than they'd ever had before, but it was not an infinite supply and they had to plan. And of course a lot of it was miss communication and so on. That was beginning to be a problem between reality and nirvana.

Anyway, this housing minister, at one point he said to me, "Well you know, Miss Schermerhorn, people ask me about corruption. They're really very rude, you know. What I really would like to say to them is, 'Well yes, we have people who take a fee for certain services that they perform,'" but he said, "You know, when an American company walks into a negotiation there's the

principal and he's got his lawyer and he's got his accountant and he's got his public relations advisor. This is the same thing; you just label it differently. It's structured into you." And I thought that was a very interesting insight; a commentary, too.

SCHERMERHORN: Again, this shows cultural semantics, if you will. I always cite that when people say, "Was there corruption in Iran?" and I say, "Well, it's a question of semantics and interpretation."

Q: How about the hand of the royal family?

SCHERMERHORN: Yes. That was supposedly in everything you did but I didn't see it directly. I'm sure that many of these companies that were prospective partners probably had the invisible hand of somebody behind them and who knows what went into the treasury and what got dispensed without further ado to various people.

Q: It's much better than to come up against somebody who gives just an absolute bureaucratic answer. There's nothing worse because it's not real helpful. You can't establish a dialogue.

SCHERMERHORN: I've tried never to do that in any of my jobs and I think I've been pretty successful because as I said, they started saying, "We want to talk to these women." Of course many people would come in and then say, "Well of course I've seen you but I want to see the ambassador," and I'd say, "Well I can't take you now," or sometimes I'd just say, "No. I'm sorry. There are so many people he can't see you." I would use my judgment; if I thought it was somebody he should see for whatever the reason might be – either their product or service had merit or whatever – I would do that. I would just write a little memo and say...And finally, after I had been there awhile – he was so good to me, really – he said, "You know, I really respect your judgment. You don't bother me with people and when you do, you're right. They're the people I should see."

Q: Did you get letters, telegrams, from congressmen saying be sure to treat my constituent very well, and all that?

SCHERMERHORN: We did, but the pace at the time was such that people often came on such short notice that they didn't...The Department of Commerce was packaging people in these trade missions and after a few attempts with these horizontal ones which were impossible to do in the timeframe they allowed, various field offices would be marketing their constituents, "We'll take you to the Middle East where all this money is floating around. We'll do Iran; we'll do Saudi Arabia; we'll do Bahrain; or Egypt," – they didn't have the money, but they'd throw that in for good measure. And they'd say, "We'll do a week," and it would be impossible to do the pace of getting information and meeting and the press of all these people. It was very difficult to do anything. But at one point I started saying to people, "I don't think you need to be here," and at one point I started saying to people that would be complaining, "Well, we're not making progress as fast on this joint venture," and I said, "Well, maybe you're the lucky ones." It was clear that it was not taking off the way people had thought it was going to in '74 and '75, by '76.

Q: Was the problem one of inability to absorb?

SCHERMERHORN: Yes. The absorptive capacity, as I said. They didn't have the personnel; they didn't have the know-how. Just impossible to do things in the timeframe that Americans... And again, what we have to understand, and it's showing up even more now, is Americans' business frame of reference is totally short-term, whether it's what to report to the shareholders, whether it's what to... We're very goal-oriented and if they can't get there from here in the timeframe they want, it's frustrating. The whole financial picture is based on completing these things and then of course it doesn't look good in terms of earnings if they haven't done it. Anyway, as I said, that was twenty-five years ago.

Q: Yes, we want to talk about the politics. We've talked a lot about the commercial side and there may be more you want to talk about, but then we want to pick up sort of the politics as you were observing the developments there, and also the social life and how this affected us. The other thing was that were you picking up any reflections, though it wouldn't have been in your particular parish, the ability to report accurately on what was happening in Iran, because there were restrictions and problems there?

SCHERMERHORN: Absolutely.

Q: So why don't we pick that up next time.

Lange, we talked about your economic work, along with Lynn Lambert, in Tehran. What sort of observations were you picking up or views of the political situation in Iran?

SCHERMERHORN: Well, we had a big MAG group there so we knew we had a big military presence and obviously we were giving a lot of military assistance to Iran and Ambassador Helms there clearly had great access with the shah; there was a good working relationship. Some of the people in the embassy felt a little miffed; they said he doesn't pay any attention to what goes on in the rest of the embassy and I used to reply to that, "Well that doesn't bother me. I think he's doing what he's being paid to do." To go around being touchy-feely in the GSO or something isn't really... But, maybe my view was colored by the fact that I dealt with businessmen who would want to see him and I would be very selective about... you know, I'd usually tell them that wasn't necessary or wasn't possible, but if I thought it was somebody who should see him I would write a little memo and he would do it and one time he said to me, "Oh no, any time you recommend someone I will see them because I trust your judgment." He was very kind to me and I admired him very much. During '76 and '77 that was when he was being called back to testify and he was gone for very extended periods.

On the local political scene there was a lot of wry, sort of bad humor about SAVAK, the secret police, and again I guess the embassy wasn't so focused on human rights in those days – that was before the Carter administration – so even though people heard allegations that SAVAK was doing things that wouldn't survive the light of day, I don't think that the embassy got into that very much. There may have been some individual cases that I didn't know about that we made representations about, but basically that was an internal affair. Then again, something I learned

from the economic side, you're looking at this country and you're seeing that there's no middle class to speak of and then there are these great illiterate, impoverished masses of people. So, the ability to create this modern society that the shah wanted clearly was not going to be easy or quick, and of course this meant that there was a large illiterate, impoverished mass out there that were available to be manipulated if there were people to manipulate them.

There was a political officer who spoke very good Farsi and in fact could go out in the bazaar – he had dark brown curly hair...

Q: Who was this?

SCHERMERHORN: Stan Escudero. So he could fit in very well and he went out and he did a lot of field work. We also had a consul in Tabriz who also spoke very good Farsi and several other regional languages.

Q: Did you get any of the feeling, having been a junior officer in Saigon – I mean you became sort of an expert before the deluge – that there was a split between the upper and lower ranks within the embassy about how things were viewed or not?

SCHERMERHORN: For all that it was a large embassy we didn't actually have that many substantive officers. I don't know. In the economic section we were just so inundated with this daily work of these American businessmen – Looney tune businessmen sometimes.

Q: Where Kagnev Station was the complete focus of our time. It was a radio communications center.

SCHERMERHORN: The demise of Lumumba and Mobutu – that was based on geo-power politics. But again, Kissinger had a plan and the threat of nuclear war was still a pretty big thing in people's minds; maybe not quite as much as it was in the '50s when we learned to live with it for a while, but still, it colored everything. And again it was the idea the shah is the shah and he's our man and if he's not there, who is there? No one could imagine who else could take his place because the unthinkable was that he would be overthrown. Again, I think that in a way now the Agency has dined out for fifty years on Mossadegh in 1953 and Iran, and that was still a thing well, see, we were successful at averting the problem and therefore we've averted the problem for all time. He's a fixed star, the shah, and it's not going to happen again.

Q: Although this wasn't in your work, did you get involved with Iranian students going to the United States?

SCHERMERHORN: I didn't personally because I wasn't doing consular work.

Q: But I was just wondering whether you were hit by Iranian business contacts who would say, "Can you get my son a visa?" or that sort of thing?

SCHERMERHORN: Yes, but you know, when you go into a country and you have that problem,

you have to deal with it very sharply right in the beginning because if you get a reputation for being receptive to saying, "I'll see if I can do anything," then it never ends. So you just say, "I'm sorry, that's not my department. You'll have to go..." and you'd be very helpful and say, "This is what you need to do. You need to go here and get this piece of paper," and everything. Businessmen who were of sufficiently high degree, they were probably going to talk to the ambassador, the DCM, anyway. I didn't get the visa issue there; I did get it in my subsequent posts, however, which we'll get to at some point.

The thing is I was often asked after I left when things had fallen apart, "Why didn't anyone know what was going on?" and I'd say, "It's not true that no one knew. There were people who knew that things were not right." But I said, "What I think took people by surprise was not that by early 1978 it was clear the shah was in trouble," I think it was clear, "but the pace and the speed of what happened unraveled so quickly." Because, again, the commotion and this underground group, the technology now, twenty years later, is e-mail and voice and cell phone, and then it was cassettes. But there was now horizontal communication around the world around like-minded whatever. I think SAVAK was certainly looking at dissident Iranians or even Iranians who had not publicly dissented but were outside the country. They were really focused more on people inside – and that, as it turned out, really wasn't where it was going to come from – or in conjunction with something else.

Q: While you were there what was the social life like? Particularly, was there much contact with high society or how did this work out?

SCHERMERHORN: There was a certain elite in Iran, which in the days before 1973 when it was a kind of sleepy kind of place and there wasn't a lot of money sloshing around, there was a very nice social life apparently. But by the time we got there it was so busy that at our level we didn't get into this. I'm sure the ambassador and the DCM got invited to things, but people didn't pay much attention. Also there were some very canny Iranians at that point who increasingly probably had their fingers to the wind there and a lot of the wives would go for extended periods to Europe and shop or whatever it was, but the periods got longer and the frequency got greater. Part of it was they were literally awash in money so they could do it more often, but also it was some people hedging their bets more and that was, I think, a sign that we didn't pick up on very much.

Q: You left there in '78.

SCHERMERHORN: Well my tour was three years. There was back and forth because at some point between the time I got assigned and the time I got there, the tour changed from three to four years or something and it wasn't clear which one I was under. By that time we really knew we were dealing with so many people, they were happy to have me stay. I don't remember exactly now but I guess whatever I thought I wanted to do next hadn't materialized or anything. So anyway I stayed and it was January and they said okay, so it was actually three-and-a-half years that I was there.

Q: You left there when?

SCHERMERHORN: In early January, just as Carter came on that trip.

Q: You weren't there during the Carter – this was the five thousandth year of the Persian state?

SCHERMERHORN: Oh, Persepolis. No, that was in 1973 when he gave that huge extravaganza. When you say “society,” there was quite an active Italian community there; a lot of European businessmen, but particularly Italians. I think I may have mentioned this earlier, it was in part because the son of Victor Emmanuel, the Savoy Prince; he had gone and done business and he was roughly a contemporary.

I think in terms of the embassy it was probably the happiest – in the sense that people got along well and we had a lot of fun and probably my closest friends in the Foreign Service come from that period because it was a challenge to be there in this very busy, busy period. We got there and the housing market had gone crazy so people had to live in temporary housing; there were a lot of little pressures but everybody dealt with it very well and it was fun.

Q: Was there any concern that you were picking up about the large number of American technicians? We were bringing a lot of helicopter mechanics and all of this in and they're trying to live the life of Waco, Texas or something like that?

SCHERMERHORN: Well that was mostly the Bell helicopter contract which was centered in the city of Isfahan, which is a very beautiful Persian city some distance from Tehran. I had a kind of strange outlook on that. I actually came across some people to whom I had issued immigrant visas for their alien wives in Saigon but when I met them in Tehran they were there with a different alien wife via the Mexican divorce. I got to calling it the Southeast Asian floating crop game because the people who were doing contract work for one of the big contractors or whatever it might be often they had started in the Korean War and they had a Korean wife and then they went to Okinawa and there was an Okinawan wife and then it was a Vietnamese wife and then it was something else. I think, though, they lived in a pretty compartmentalized way there; I mean they weren't in Tehran. Isfahan is not the holiest city but it's sort of a cultural icon and a conservative city so they may have been a bit of a problem.

Q: Had any of the incidents later that became so important, like the fire at the theater and that sort of thing, happened while you were there?

SCHERMERHORN: No, but I think it was just before I got there we'd had a couple of military people killed; their car was ambushed and so on, and of course early in the '70s the ambassador...

Q: Douglas MacArthur.

SCHERMERHORN: MacArthur. His chauffeur had been trained in defensive driving and they tried to ambush the ambassador's car but the driver was able to foil the attempt and got some great award for it. So security was always on people's minds, but again that's why I said people

knew there were some problems but I don't think they realized the depth. And there were kind of two sets of problems; there were the dissidents in the country and the Khomeini faction outside that was organized the Tudeh party, again, that goes back to the Mossadegh times and the post-war period. But as you said, those were the bad guys. I don't think actually, as it turned out, that the Khomeini faction and the fundamentalists had any real dealings; that was incidental. But, yes, there was a lot of confusion about what was happening.

Q: As with most revolutions; you look at the French and the Russian revolutions and both then, if you look at how the thing started and how it ended, the revolution was essentially a fight within the revolutionary movement and you never know who's going to come out on top.

SCHERMERHORN: It starts with the moderates and then the extremists take over and the moderates fight each other.

Q: And the extremists fight each other. It's '78 in January and the time had gone, whither, Lange?

SCHERMERHORN: I knew then that I was getting an assignment but it wasn't going to start until the summer so I went back to the Department and my colleague, Lionel Rosenblatt, who I mentioned earlier here who had been in Sri Lanka and then in Vietnam, at that point he had gotten very... Oh, I should mention, while I was in Iran I'm listening to the radio on May 1st, 1975 as they detail the fall of Saigon and the lifting off of the embassy staff from the roof with the helicopters and all of this. Lionel had distinguished himself along with another young FSO, Craig Johnstone, by going back to Vietnam on their own to try to rescue the Vietnamese who had worked for them in something called the Phoenix Program which was very controversial.

Those were Vietnamese people who if the connection with that program were known definitely would have been executed, so they did go back and manage to save quite a few. From that experience Lionel got very involved in the issue of Vietnamese refugees and the boat people. So anyway, he was at that point working with a fellow called Shep Loman and Hank Cushing, an AID officer, and they were working on the boat people. When I say "working on," I mean trying to lobby the upper echelons of the State Department and the Congress to admit these people as refugees and to get countries of what they call first asylum so that they weren't floating around in the China Sea in boats forever and ever. So he said he wanted me to come and work with them, which I did from February to July.

Q: What was the situation in '78 January to July with the boat people? What did you find how things were working and not working?

SCHERMERHORN: Well it was very chaotic at that point. There had been some emergency legislation to admit refugees above the quota but there were many more refugees in various places in Southeast Asia than we were going to admit; and so a great part of their action was to work on the countries of first asylum: Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, etcetera. This was a very hard sell because these countries didn't want to be inundated with these people and they felt if they gave first asylum it would only have a magnet affect and attract more

and more. And of course the Thai, that was the most important because they...

Lionel is truly a brilliant operator. They didn't just work with tunnel vision on one issue. He had tentacles out everywhere. One of the things they did was there was a journalist writing for the New York Times called Henry Cam and he was working out of Bangkok or Hong Kong and he did a series on the boat people. So this office started a campaign to get him nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for this series, and they did. It was lobbying important people and he won the prize. But the idea was to raise the consciousness of people on the importance of the issue as they saw that as a humanitarian responsibility of the United States as an unanticipated consequence of what had happened.

Q: You were there about five months. How did you find the system was responding to this?

SCHERMERHORN: This was now the Carter administration so there was an interest and an emphasis on humanitarian affairs and in fact this refugee office was under this newly created bureau with Patt Derian and people. So yes, there was an interest in the administration and they were supportive of Shep and Lionel working on this issue and trying to make something happen, but as I said it was not easy because we're talking about masses of people and trying to get the Congress to agree to let in almost as many Indo-Chinese – mostly Vietnamese and a few others – as our total immigration quota for the year. You may know more about that.

Q: I didn't really get involved with that. Was there much response at the Department?

SCHERMERHORN: You know, you didn't have a lot of dealings other than the East Asian Bureau because the memos were trying to lobby upper management to make some kind of...I mean it wasn't a Department issue per se.

Q: You did this for?

SCHERMERHORN: Five months or whatever. We wrote memos and we wrote letters to people. I mean there was a lot of autonomy in the sense that they were making this their mission to deal with it, but people weren't really directing how they were doing it. As I said, Lionel and Shep are both very creative people and they were leaving no stone unturned, but some of it was a little unorthodox by usual Department standards. It was much more making something happen, which again is kind of a theme that I've warmed to in my Foreign Service career.

The early view, thirty-five years ago, was you're a diplomat; you're there to record, to be a liaison sharing opinions back and forth, or whatever, factual exchanges in your government. But when I first came in I didn't conceive of any of this as being an active advocate for things. What I call making things happen. But I became converted to that idea that it's more important we do that because you can have a policy or not, whatever it may be, but sometimes, especially when you're working in the developing world or with bureaucracies, you've got to move and take the first step because if you don't, nobody else is going to do it either to make something happen. And this is a good case here where I think with the refugee issue we began to move much more from the traditional view of diplomacy into advocating issues that were again not in the

traditional sphere of diplomacy as we thought of it pre-World War II and in the '50s.

WILLIAM D. WOLLE
International Relations Officer, Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1974-1978)

William D. Wolle was born in Iowa in 1928 and received his B.A. from Morningside College and an MIA degree from Columbia University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1951 and served in Iraq, England, Lebanon, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Kenya. He was appointed Ambassador to Oman in 1974 and to the United Arab Emirates in 1979. In addition to his overseas assignments, Mr. Wolle served at the Office of Near East Economic Affairs and as officer in charge of Arab-Israeli Affairs. At the time of his retirement in 1986, he was a senior personnel officer. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Well, how did you view Iran? Again I go back to my earlier experience in the area. There was concern in places like Bahrain that the Iranian influence was not necessarily a benevolent one because the Iranians were making noises about having their influence rather than say the British. How did we feel about that in the Omani context at that time?

WOLLE: First of all there had long been a good relationship between the Iranians and the Omanis. A lot of the older Omani business families were of Persian ancestry. When the Sultan asked the Shah for help and received it, in terms of a few thousand troops to join the other forces in Dhofar in early 1975, that proved successful and relations were very good between the Sultan and the Shah.

The country that was suspected of being a trouble maker was Iraq. The Omanis for the first few years had refused to allow an Iraqi ambassador into the country. About half way through my time in Oman they did see fit to accept a resident Iraqi ambassador and with it propounded certain restrictions which technically affected all diplomats in the country. You couldn't go beyond certain points, you had to get permission to do this and do that, but when we inquired about that we were told to just pretend those aren't in effect. "They are there for your new colleague." I think the suspicions about the Iraqis eventually proved rather true.

Q: What were the Iraqis suspected of doing?

WOLLE: The Iraqi claim on Kuwait was part of it. Beyond that, it was felt that Iraq wanted to expand down the Gulf, to expand its influence to replace the British to the degree they could in terms of security matters, contracts, and simply become a new semi-imperial presence. But Iran was not suspected of anything of the sort and ties were good.

ALBERT A. THIBAUT, JR.
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1975)

Albert A. Thibault, Jr. was born in Massachusetts on August 5, 1941. He received his BA from the University of Windsor in Canada in 1962, his MA from the University of Toronto in 1963, and another MA from the University of Pennsylvania in 1964. He entered the Foreign Service in 1969. His career has included positions in Guinea, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Saudi Arabia.

Q: Well then, you came back in '75.

THIBAUT: That's right, I came back in '75 and spent a few weeks on the Iran desk. The only thing I remember about that is Charlie Naas, who was the office director, called me in, welcomed me, and pointed to my desk. I was only there while they were scurrying around to place me elsewhere in NEA. And he immediately said, "Well, you'll be working on ...," I forget what it was. I said, "I know nothing about Iran." He paused and looked me in the eye, saying, "You're an FSO, aren't you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "End of discussion." He was right. That brief exchange told me instantly what being a U.S. Foreign Service officer is all about, including esprit de corps. I have never forgotten it.

JOHN ALLEN CUSHING
English Language Instructor, School for International Training
Rasht, Iran (1975-1977)

Mr. Cushing was born in New York City and raised in New York and Hawaii. He graduated from Reed College and continued studies at a variety of institutions in the US and abroad. After service in the Peace Corps, he held a number of positions as English language instructor before joining the Foreign Service in 1988. Mr. Cushing served abroad, variously as Consular, Political, Economic or Public Affairs Officer, in the Dominican Republic, Korea, Benin, Papua New Guinea, and Trinidad & Tobago. In Washington, Mr. Cushing served as Korean Desk Officer. Mr. Cushing was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: You were in Tehran from when to when?

CUSHING: I wasn't in Tehran; I was up in Rasht. I did a year at the Navajo school from August of '74 to July of '75. That was extremely isolated and very difficult for my wife, a very difficult introduction to the United States and so we heard that the School for International Training had a contract to teach the Iranian navy. This is rather convoluted. The Shah of Iran had bought these four Fletcher class destroyers from the U.S. Navy and in order for the Iranian crews to be trained

to run them, they had to know English. The Shah, never doing anything halfway, decided that every new recruit in the navy would learn English. So there was a navy language school in Rasht.

So the U.S. navy got the contract and then subcontracted it to the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army subcontracted it to the Defense Language Institute and the Defense Language Institute subcontracted it to the School for International Training.

So I heard about that and I signed up and we got accepted, so we went off to Iran. After some ridiculous training at the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, which was compulsory so we just suffered through that as best we could, I did get to see the Alamo anyway.

Then we were over in Rasht, Iran, which is not too far from the Caspian Sea. That's where the main navy language school was.

The Shah had this idea you should teach every single kid coming into the navy English for three months, find the best students, send them to another school up in Bandar Pahlavi (as it was called then), which was up the coast, and then the best of those would be sent to Lackland Air Force Base near San Antonio, Texas to take advanced language training, after which he would have enough crews to run the four destroyers and they would all know English and then they would be trained. So that was his idea. He never did anything halfway.

A similar story was he decided that every child in Iran should have a glass of milk once a day so he bought this enormous herd of cows from New Zealand. His advisors said, "Why don't we buy ten cows and bring them to Iran and see how they do?" He said, "No, no. Every kid in Iran needs to have a glass of milk once a day" so he bought these thousands of milk cows and they all died. He said, "These cows are no good. I'm not paying for them."

Q: So you were teaching navy people from when to when?

CUSHING: From August of '75 to the end of July, '77.

Q: What were you getting from this? You certainly had enough experience.

CUSHING: It was interesting to live in Iran. We traveled a bit, saw Isfahan, saw the ruins of Persepolis near Shiraz. It was quite interesting, actually.

Q: You were getting very close to the revolution there.

CUSHING: Yes.

Q: Were you picking up any indicators of that?

CUSHING: Yes. Three contractors in Tehran were killed by the mujaheddin. Actually, earlier I think they tried to kill the deputy chief of mission at the embassy. He was supposed to go

somewhere but he didn't feel well so he sent an Iranian employee in his place so the Iranian got killed. Up in Rasht the police raided a house of a terrorist cell and got into a big gun battle with them and captured a number of them.

Also there was a hotel in Iran where we used to go to the lobby to drink beer and play chess. I wasn't there at the time but a terrorist came to the door with a hand grenade. He was going to throw it into the lobby but there was an off duty policeman who shot him just as he pulled the pin so the fellow dropped the primed grenade after being shot and blew himself up.

One of the Iranian teachers at the school was buying a pair of shoes and had just come out with this new pair of shoes and there was a gun fight right in front of the shoe store so as he was coming out of the door, this dead terrorist fell into his arms. So yes, things were popping.

The big riots in Tabriz began in March of '78 and we were already out of there by then.

Q: When you left in '77 did you have the feeling you wanted to get the hell out?

CUSHING: I thought two years was enough. The School for International Training contract ran only the first year and then there was a different group of sort of fly-by nighters who took over the contract for the second year and they left, so it was going to be very extremely haphazardly run and I was going to be under the direct supervision of an extremely obnoxious and arrogant Iranian navy admiral, Admiral Faroktollah, and I thought, "I don't want to do this." He was a real schmuck. The Iranians tend to be very whiny and defensive and feel persecuted. I didn't want to be any part of that, so I left.

They actually asked me to stay. They liked the work I was doing. I was a teacher the first year and then I was director the second year so I scheduled all the classes, assigned the teachers, supervised the exams, sent in the reports to the navy headquarters and so forth. They liked the work I was doing and they asked if I would stay but then this particular admiral said, "God damn it. Who asked Cushing to stay?" I was on my way out by then and I thought, no, I don't want to work for this guy.

ULRIC HAYNES, JR.
Manager, Columbus Engine Company
Teheran (1975-1977)

Ambassador Haynes was born and raised in New York City and educated at Amherst College and Yale University Law School. Before serving as US Ambassador to Algeria from 1977 to 1981, he worked with the United Nations in Geneva, the Ford Foundation in Nigeria and Tunisia, the State Department and the National Security Council in Washington, D.C. After his ambassadorship, Mr. Haynes continued to be heavily involved in business and academia. The

Ambassador was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2011.

HAYNES: It is very much a different world. But remember, this was a major Fortune 500, multinational company. So, in every one of my executive positions with the company, I was traveling around the world and did not feel what might otherwise have been the culturally stifling environment of a small Midwestern town. And ultimately, I was posted abroad.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about -- you were in Tehran from when to when?

HAYNES: Let me think now. '75 to '77, just before the Shah was overthrown.

Q: Well, when you went out there, were you getting any premonitions of impending doom or not?

HAYNES: Not initially. However, over a very short period of time it became abundantly clear within months of my arrival in Tehran, the Shah was in trouble. There were some indicators. For example, the Shah never went anywhere in his own capitol in an automobile. He always went from place-to-place in a helicopter. There were always three helicopters on the landing pad when he approached, and it was only at the last moment that he decided which one he would take. So nobody but the Shah himself knew in which one of the three helicopters he was when all three helicopters took off. Also when we first got there it was abundantly clear that it was not safe to be critical, even in private conversation, of the Shah. And certainly not even critical before your own household servants. But, in a short period of time, suddenly there were a profusion of jokes about the Shah and how stupid he was and how shaky he was on the throne -- something that I never heard when I first arrived. And these were just minor indicators, minor but important indicators of, of how uneasy he was on the "Peacock Throne" of Iran.

Q: Well, did you have any concern about the huge presence of American technicians and all in the country?

HAYNES: A lot of concern. For example, while we were there, shortly after we arrived, there were three American executives from North American Rockwell Company that supplied military planes to the Iranian Air Force, who were ambushed on their way to work and assassinated. As a result, whenever I went from my home to my office I chose different times of day and different routes. And, in this connection, I had a driver, a chauffeur, who drove me to work and drove my children to school and who actually lived in our compound. The very day that these North American Rockwell executives were assassinated, he didn't show up for work. And he never showed up for work thereafter, never even coming to collect his wages. And that made me very uneasy, I can tell you, because while I couldn't prove it, I had to think that there was more than just casual significance to his failure to turn up for work the day these men were killed.

Q: Boy. Did you have much contact with the embassy?

HAYNES: Yes. I belonged to a group of American businessmen in Tehran who tried unsuccessfully on several occasions to meet with Richard Helms who was the ambassador at the time to tell him of our concerns for the deteriorating security situation that we were seeing in the

capitol. But Ambassador Helms refused to see us.

Q: I mean that seems -- yeah, normally an ambassador has close ties with the business community -- American business community. That's part of his job. I mean this is not --

HAYNES: But unfortunately, a whole succession of American ambassadors had closer ties to the Shah and his cohorts than to the American business community. As a result, the American Embassy in Tehran ultimately ended up having a vested interest in perpetuating the myth that the Shah was not in trouble. It's not unusual sometimes for an ambassador -- unfortunately -- to become so enamored with his host government that he is uncritical.

Q: Yeah, well there's a story going around -- you probably heard it too -- about one of our ambassadors, political appointee to Morocco, who referred to the king as "our king," you know.

HAYNES: I've heard that. Also a similar story about a couple of our ambassadors in Saudi Arabia.

Q: Yeah. I mean this is of course "localities" gone mad, but the -- I mean later you were in a -- as an ambassador you could understand, I guess your ruler -- who was the ruler when you were there in Algeria?

HAYNES: Houari Boumediène.

Q: He wasn't a very lovable person, I guess.

HAYNES: No, he was pretty much a dictator. Algeria was, when I was there, and still remains to this day, a totalitarian state.

Q: Well, we'll come -- obviously come back to that. What was life like in Tehran when you were there?

HAYNES: It was unbelievably social. It was as if Iranians and the expatriate community knew that the end of the Shah's rule was eminent and, my God, the dinner parties, the socializing, the women -- I saw Iranian women who love jewelry, taking their jewels out of their bank vaults and wearing them at these dinner parties. It was breathtaking. You've never seen such socializing. And of course at the same time, a lot of the very wealthy Iranians were, were sending their money, and these women were taking their jewels, out of their country. Many of them went to the South of France, and a lot of them came to the Los Angeles area. To the point where today Los Angeles is referred to by Iranians as "Tehrangeles".

Q: Oh my God, yeah.

HAYNES: There are so many wealthy Iranians currently living in, in Los Angeles, all of whom made their wealth during the time of the Shah.

Q: Well now, did your company employ many Iranians in Iran?

HAYNES: Well, I was there as it -- not because we employed that many. I was there in Iran because it was a convenient base from which to communicate with the Arab world and Africa. At the time, Lebanon was in upheaval. Actually, I was supposed to set up an office in Beirut, but there was so much strife going on in Beirut that we changed our plan and moved the office to Tehran. But it wasn't that we had so many employees there. It was that the Iranian market was such an important one for us, both military and commercial. Just before I arrived we had sold 4,500 Cummins engines to Iran in International Harvester trucks. And that of course meant that we had considerable commercial interests in Iran that the company was interested in preserving and protecting.

Q: In the Arab world did you have ties to Iraq, or was that a Soviet satellite?

HAYNES: We didn't do that much business with Iraq. We did a huge amount of business in Saudi Arabia, where we had a major Saudi distributor. And in Beirut -- in Lebanon also. Trying to think where else. And that was -- that was a major --

Q: How'd you deal with Israel?

HAYNES: Well, the Arab nations, not Iran, but the Arab nations had a boycott of companies that dealt with Israel. And even though we continued to deal with Israel, because of the importance of our businesses to their commercial development, the Arab nations never enforced that boycott. It was a selective boycott, as they often tend to be.

Q: Yeah, I know. How'd you find dealing with Saudi Arabia? I know they all require a partnership or a sponsor or something?

HAYNES: Oh yes. At that time, I couldn't even visit Saudi Arabia on business without being invited by one of our Saudi business collaborators. I had to have an invitation from a Saudi. Just couldn't go there for tourism or, you know, casually.

Q: Mm-hmm. Well --

HAYNES: IT was a very closed society as it remains today.

Q: How did you find doing business there?

HAYNES: It's very different from doing business in the United States, because -- and this is true of most of the rest of the non Anglo-Saxon world. Time is precious for us Americans and Anglo-Saxons. We come, we have business to do, we do it in a certain period of time, and we get out. That's not true in the Middle East. To this day, you go, you spend days drinking coffee and chatting about nothing of relevance to what you brought you there. And they take the lead in the discussion. You don't determine when to start talking business.

Q: No. There's the old --

HAYNES: Difficult to get -- and this of course created problems back home where majority of the people you were dealing with back at your headquarters in the United States, particularly in Columbus, Indiana, didn't understand why it took so much time to conduct business in the Middle East.

Q: Yeah.

HAYNES: Why can't you get these people to agree to something that's in their interest? It doesn't work that way.

Q: Yeah. No.

HAYNES: By the way, the conduct of foreign policy is very much conducted in the same cultural manner from their point of view.

Q: Well, did, did you have much business in other parts of -- well, I mean, how about Egypt at the time?

HAYNES: Yes. Egypt was less important. But yes, we had a distributor in Egypt. We had distributors in the United Arab Emirates, in Oman. All of these were countries that I visited during that time in, in the conduct of the company's business.

Q: Well, were you doing business in sort of Sub-Sahara Africa too?

HAYNES: Yes, very much so.

Q: Now how was that going?

HAYNES: Well, it was, it was growing rapidly. We had distributors in Senegal, in the Ivory Coast, in Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon, Angola, South Africa and Kenya. That was a very interesting diplomatic challenge too, because at that time Angola was very much in the Soviet camp. I traveled to all of these places during my time in charge of that region.

Q: Well, did you have programs of training mechanics or was it unnecessary?

HAYNES: We helped our distributors develop local training programs. It was very important that we maintain the quality of our engines by having trained mechanics on the spot. And that was also a cultural challenge particularly in the oil rich countries of the Middle East. When something broke down the Arabs just threw it away. They didn't repair it. They bought a new one. And that's what they did that with their own automobiles. As you drive through Saudi Arabia you could see very expensive cars abandoned in the desert, some of them only had a flat tire.

Q: Well --

HAYNES: Part of the job was to inculcate in our customers the importance of preventive maintenance of the engine and of timely repair.

Q: Well, I would think also, I mean, you know, part of our whole system here in the United States is when you get something there's a supply of spare parts. You know, if your car goes down, they'll pull up a Chevy gear or something like that. You know, these are all pretty much available.

HAYNES: Yes. The sale of spare parts was a very important part of our business.

Q: I would think you'd have all sorts of problems with customs and that sort of thing. I mean everybody's hand is out for a bribe.

HAYNES: Well, it depends on who you're dealing with. If you're dealing with the government, no problem with customs. If you're dealing with a very powerful, a local businessman, no problem with the customs.

Q: Of course I would think with a Cummins engine that you would be -- it would be sort of a wide open market for these, because there's so much need for generation of power and all, all over the place, because there's --

HAYNES: Oh no. No, we had competitors. Caterpillar was a competitor. We had Japanese competitors, Chinese competitors. It wasn't a captive market for us.

Q: What about the French? The French were always difficult in business or politics and how did you -- were they in the market?

HAYNES: Much less -- from the point of diesel engines, much less than the Americans. But the major difficulty with the French was not -- was not on their side, and I'm coming back to something I've touched on before, the *enormous* inability of American businessmen to deal in a foreign language, even one as popular as French. That puts us at a distinct disadvantage in doing business with countries where the working language is French. And in much of Africa that is the working language. But you know, we've got to go back to deal with a basic and fundamental problem in our public education system where the study of foreign languages is disappearing. It's incredible that in this day and age, when the need is greater than ever before, the availability of foreign language instruction is shrinking in our country.

Q: Yes. You left in what, '78, just before the Shah left?

HAYNES: I left in '77.

Q: '77. Was there a really feeling of relief? Were you getting out because of the situation?

HAYNES: Yes, the situation was so critical and dire that I didn't ask the company for permission

to come home with my family; I told them that we were evacuating on a certain date and shutting down the office. And we did so several months before the overthrow of the Shah, and were able to get out intact unlike many expatriate Americans who waited much too late.

Q: Did you just plain shut down your business or were you dealing with it from outside?

HAYNES: Well, our distributor was still there. So, yes, in effect, we were dealing with it from outside.

Q: How did your distributor fair?

HAYNES: Oh, he ultimately had to shut down and flee the country.

Q: What happened to all the Cummins engines?

HAYNES: I have *no* idea. But I suspect that they're all sitting in a graveyard somewhere. I don't know whose engines the Iranians are using for their trucks in their oil industry. But, they're not using Cummins engines.

Q: Well, when you came back in '77 what'd you do?

HAYNES: Well, I hadn't been back more than a couple of weeks when I had a call from the White House asking me if I would be interested in an ambassadorial appointment.

JOHN D. STEMPEL
Deputy Chief of Political Affairs
Tehran (1975-1979)

Dr. John D. Stempel was born in Pennsylvania on July 26, 1938. He graduated from Princeton with a bachelor's degree in 1960. In 1965 he earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Stempel served in the U.S. Navy from 1960 until 1962. He entered the Foreign Service in October of 1965. His postings included Guinea, Burundi, Ghana, Zambia, Iran, India, and Washington, DC. Dr. Stempel was interviewed in 1993 by Kristin Hamblin.

Q: At this point in your career you seemed to change gears. How did Farsi language training in your eventual assignment as deputy chief of the political section in the embassy in Tehran, from 1975-79, actually come about?

STEMPEL: Two things happened. I was now the father of two children and Africa is a great place to have kids when they are small, but when you start to think about schooling, and my daughter had already started school, and more importantly orthodontists, and there was one in Cape Town and one in Cairo, and that was not easy to do. And also because I wanted to do a

different area. That came along just about that time a fellow named Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State who decided that he didn't want people to be entrenched in a region and developed a policy called GLOP--Global Outlook Program. This said that if you served in Mexico, it is time to go to Iceland.

The upshot was that when I put in my bids to do hard language training to go elsewhere... I think I put in for Indonesian, Serbo-Croatian, and Farsi because those were three hard languages and if you got the languages you automatically got an assignment there. Well, they gave me Farsi language training, which was ideal for me because I am not naturally gifted for languages, but I work hard at it. However, Farsi is not a difficult language. It is an Indo-European language that got an Arabic alphabet grafted on to it after the Muslim conquest of Iran in the eighth century, or something. I got the full ten month course. There were some people who took it for six months and could speak it as well as I did, but I got a good foundation for it. And then I went out to Iran and that first year I was not the deputy political counselor, I was the local affairs reporting officer. But when Archie Bolster left Tehran, the ambassador had liked the work that I had done so much, he made me the deputy chief of the political section. The political counselor at that time left, and neither of my two bosses, the senior political counselors spoke Farsi so I was sort of the lead Farsi speaker in the embassy at that time.

And, of course, when I came to Iran, Iran was in the middle of a boom that had been triggered by the quadrupling of the oil prices in 1973 and Iran's big problems was how do we get stuff in with six week backlogs of imports from Abidjan, etc. And the Shah was sort of in his heyday. But the problems which would cause difficulties were already there, the difficulties of moving society up a level on the development stage. And the beauty of the situation was that I had three and a half years or so to develop friendships, develop contacts, meet people. And Ambassador Helms, who was my ambassador until December, 1976, for a year and a half, and then Ambassador Sullivan came in in June, 1977, were both people who encouraged us to get out and talk to people. I didn't have restraints put on me that some had complained about in earlier periods. The Shah didn't want us talking to dissidents. We didn't advertise who we talked to and Ambassador Helms told us to be discrete about it. And so over the course of that three years I met some very interesting people. People who had been traditional dissidents. And wound up knowing Shahpur Bakhtiar who became the Shah's last prime minister, I had been talking to him for several months. When the revolutionary government came to power, lo and behold, I knew six of the initial revolutionary cabinet, including the prime minister and his chief deputy. So we were not as ignorant of what was going on in Iran as some of the people in the federal administration would have led you to believe at the time. That is one of the reasons that I wrote my book on Iran, to indicate that we had been familiar with the problem. The trouble was, the whole Iranian revolution was one where there was a lot of ambiguity, so people saw what they wanted to see.

Now, what I saw from 1975 to the summer of 1978, when things begin happening, was a society desperately grappling with the problems of modernization and from the time that a recession set in in 1977, a period where social change merely created tremendous pressures and tensions, and a willingness to go back and look at fundamentalist solutions, which seemed absurd to those of us who had experience with it. But it is not the kind of thing that is totally different. When the economy gets bad in Kentucky, there is more social unrest, there is more bible thumping

preachers going out and talking, and this is not all that different, you see. And we had our periods of social unrest in the 30s with the Depression, the veterans march on Washington, etc.

And that was what being in Tehran was like. Now, because I spoke Farsi and worked hard at it from the moment I got there, I was one of the group of people that got outside of what James Bill [ph] noted Iranologist calls the crust. That is, I wasn't limited by what the Iranians who spoke English wanted us to hear. So, I, and a number of my colleagues got out, and got quite a different picture of what was going on by speaking Farsi, sitting in the tea houses, traveling around the country and seeing what was happening. It was fascinating history and made fascinating information for our people. And, as I said I discovered in my book, there was the problem that we would find information, pass it on up the chain, and it would get used in different ways or in inappropriate ways or totally ignored in some cases.

There was an incident, which I think I mentioned in my book, of information that I had gotten and our security people had gotten the same information from two different sources...and it went up through both chains of command. By the time the principals, the Secretary of State and the director of CIA, had gotten together for a meeting they had totally opposite views based on the same information. And I learned later that this was because Stansfield Turner, who was the head of the CIA, simply disregarded what his analysts were telling him.

Q: So the miscommunication, you would say, came between the embassy and the top people in Iran, and then to Washington?

STEMPEL: Well, there are two different kinds of generic problems in diplomacy. One of them is where the embassy gets so hooked in with the ruling group that it simply by both formal and informal sanctions doesn't deal with people who may be coming up. And that is what happened to our embassy in Havana when Castro came to power. We had no knowledge of him, he was totally outside the pale. The other problem, generically, is what happens when the embassy discovers something is happening but tends to be discounted in Washington. They are saying this, but it can't possibly be that bad. Remember, Iran and Washington were tremendously linked during the Shah's time. American business was very active there and people just didn't want to believe certain kinds of things. And there was enough ambiguity around that it was hard to assert that X was certainly going to happen because there was a tendency of things to happen and then we didn't know everything that was going to happen. The Shah's illness, for example. He had successively concealed that from his own wife for four years, and we did not find out definitely about it until the autumn of 1978 when we got a break from another country's intelligence service.

Now, in the process, though, we had found out about it in the sense that we had heard stories to that affect. There was a moment in the spring of 1978 when you could buy reports that the Shah had everything from heart burn to lymphomic cancer, which he actually had, to lung disease or a stroke. And there were doctors' pictures appearing in the press and it was just an interesting situation. What you had was a revolutionary movement that had failed twice before. In 1953, the Shah came back in with the help of a whole lot of people, including minor help from the CIA and British intelligence, and overthrew Mossadegh and the communist groups around him. There was

another attempted coup in 1963 when Ayatollah Khomeini got his ayatollah stripes in effect, which was put down by the Shah. The 1978 coup was an attempt again by many of the same people who had been involved in 1963 and who now had 15 years more experience and were ready to rout out the Shah. And the Shah couldn't make up his mind whether to conciliate or coerce and he got it in the wrong kind of rhythm so that when he was tough, people thought he was a bully, and when he was trying to be conciliatory, people thought he was weak.

Q: When you first arrived, what was the general feeling of the diplomatic personnel and others you were working with about the close relationship between the Shah and Henry Kissinger's?

STEMPEL: Well, it was a big plus because it was literally true that there wasn't a cloud on the horizon in Iran until the fall of 1977. And even then it was manageable and most of the people regarded the problems with the militants as temporary. This is not what you will get in the revolutionary history, you know, history that is written by the winners...but there was always unrest. Whenever you have a monarchy and that close to the cockpit of the various forces...the Russians always had an entrance, were always mucking about there. The Middle Easterners had an interest there. Iran was the one country that had supported Israel during the Arab oil embargo in 1973 on the quite legitimate grounds that the enemy of my enemy is my friend. The Shah wanted Israel's help to keep the Iraqis from being difficult. When that relationship fell out, when the Ayatollahs decided to totally oppose Israel, then, of course, the result in a year and a half was the Iran/Iraq war with an Iraqi attack on Iran. So the politics of the region is really Byzantine and difficult to deal with.

But when I got there, the Shah was clearly modernizing his country, clearly in control. Yes, there were opposition groups and guerrilla groups that were shooting Iranian officials and killing Americans, so we were riding in security vehicles, but the country was developing like crazy. And it wasn't until they hit what you might call the normal kind of recession that you really had this tremendous social unrest building up. It is more complicated than that. For example, the agricultural sector was never well taken care of, so that those who had been traditional supporters of the Shah through all the previous revolutions were disaffected and alienated. And the Shah, as Marvin Zonis, the noted scholar from Chicago, said, took all the credit and now gets all the blame. In other words, if you insist you are the guy who brought everything good, then somebody is going to stand up some day and say, "Yeah, but are you the one who is also bringing the bad stuff?" And after 37 years you make enemies and that is what happened. And the Shah, I think, was quite ill and had his own personality defects which have been written about since then. He was not a strong person. His twin sister, Ashraf, was the strong force in the family. In fact, his father has been reported saying that it is too bad Ashraf wasn't a boy, they were twins.

And in fact, it was Ashraf and General Zahedi more certainly than the Western intelligence people that brought the Shah back to the throne in 1953. You know people tell stories for their own benefit. The Shah wanted everybody to know that he had come back with support from the West and Alan Dulles, who headed our CIA, was not above trumpeting an American victory in that part of the world for his own budgetary and political reasons. But the guy who was actually involved, the senior man on the American side, Kermit Roosevelt, has written a wonderful book about that which said in effect that as interested as we were, for all the physic support we gave

them, we were really pretty peripheral. They wanted to bring the Shah back and they did it. And if we helped a little bit, fine, and it probably didn't hurt any of us in the long run. But it wouldn't have happened that way unless the people wanted it. That is what he told Eisenhower and Churchill after it was over.

Q: What impact did Americans living in Iran at the time and working for defense contractors, and various enterprises, have on the Iranian society and how did you protect those people? I know there was a lot of terrorist activity.

STEMPEL: Well, it had a very deleterious effect. In fact, Ambassador Helms, who had been ambassador since 1973, even before I got there had been trying to keep the American presence down. As he said, "You can tell I failed miserably as it has reached 53,000 in 1978, of whom 25,000 are in Tehran." But the worse part was the level and quality of the Americans which was not always the best. A lot of people working in the military related industries were refugees from Vietnam. A couple of them in Isfahan opened houses of prostitution, which in a very strict Islamic society went down very badly with the natives. Before I got there, there was an American teenager, who rode his motorbike through the Grand Mosque in Isfahan, etc.

The reason we couldn't keep the American presence down was because the modernizing Iranians wanted them. What nobody realized or realized too late was that this set up a gulf between the modernized Iranians, those who had been in contemporary business, and the traditional Iranians who saw the Americans, quite rightly in many cases, as defiling their culture and customs. Now, the Revolutionary government calls this the Westoxification of Iran. In other words, Iranians became intoxicated with things Western. You know, there were blue jeans, tight skirts and shirts, and devout Muslims really didn't like this. Some of them put up with it, you had varying degrees of loyalty to Islam expressed by the senior leadership just as you have in a Christian society. There are some people more committed to their faith than others.

And all of this was in a society which was in the process of change and development. And as part of that change, of course, more people from urban areas came to the cities creating slums as bad as any in the world in south Tehran and some of the other cities. It was from this basis that the revolutionary movement got its impetus. And it was the ineptitude of the Shah's government, particularly in the 1978 period, that really allowed these forces to play an important role.

Q: How did State Department policy change from Henry Kissinger to Cyrus Vance and how did the embassy react to this change?

STEMPEL: I think the important thing to remember is that it wasn't Vance and Kissinger per se. Nixon, as President, and Kissinger, as Secretary of State, were very, very close to the Shah. When Jimmy Carter came into office...first of all he was an outsider. He had run and won as an outsider. Cyrus Vance was an insider, but he was very committed and concerned with the problem of human rights. The Democrats developed their human rights policy largely as a way of getting at the Soviet Union. But these things take on a life of their own and now we were looking at other areas. But it was clear, even from President Ford's time, that the Americans were focusing on the behavior of their allies and human rights. And the Shah's behavior had not been

bad by Middle Eastern standards, but first of all it was a good deal more publicized because there were more Americans present, people found out about it, and the Shah was facing a threat from the late 60s on from terrorist groups in Tehran. He was taking fairly brutal action against these. And, of course, that is what he was criticized for and that's what the revolutionaries blamed his regime for.

Now, was the Shah bad? Yeah, it was bad stuff. Was it improving? Considerably during the four years I was there. In fact, compared to what followed, the Shah looks like almost a saint, in terms of his human rights practices. Amnesty International states that the Iranian revolution killed about 600,000 people in its first year. Nobody has ever suggested that the total killings in the Shah's regime ever approached more than a few thousand over a course of a 37 year regime. But the Shah felt that he wasn't being fully appreciated. The Shah was a geopolitical type like Kissinger and Nixon, and he felt comfortable with them. Jimmy Carter was someone who was worried about civil rights movement and he didn't feel comfortable with him. And the Americans put more emphasis on human rights and the Shah, I guess because he was sick, became distrustful. But at no time did Vance or the incoming Democratic Administration ever suggest that we would not support Iran on security grounds against the Soviet Union or anything else. Largely, what was going on was in the minds of the Iranians and particularly the Shah.

Q: So, when and how was the State Department alerted that the Shah was going to leave Iran?

STEMPEL: Well, there are different levels. It was clear by the summer of 1978 that there was severe unrest and it wasn't going to go away. We had sent in cables in 1977 suggesting why this was going to be so. The Shah was loosening up politically at the same time economic conditions were getting worse. As a couple of my best Iranian friends told me, if he had loosened up when conditions were good, he could have brought more people into the political system. But as it was everybody felt alienated. The modernists felt that the regime, the Shah and his brothers and cousins, were ripping off the country, which was true. There was a lot of money going into slush funds in the Pahlavi foundation and things like this. And what the vast majority of the citizenry wanted, was modern, democratic government without the Shah. What they got was something entirely different, and that was the issue. But it became clear in May-June 1978 the Shah, in effect, botched a reconciliation with Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, the other senior Ayatollah with authority. And we know now why.

The Shah's Commander of the Imperial Inspectorate was a Khomeini man and he probably was responsible for this botching of it. Because the Shah had humiliated him so many times, it was his way of getting back. And then the Shah, himself, was a little bit sicker. He was never willing to use violence. In 1963 when it became necessary to use the army, and I heard this story from someone who was with the people who went in, the Court Minister and Prime Minister went to the Shah and said, "Sir we have to use the army." And the Shah gave his usual, "We can't break the mystical bond of the Shah and the people with force." And finally the Prime Minister said, "Look, if you want to be Shah we have to let the army shoot." And then the story varies as to whether the Shah nodded his head or let them go ahead with a tacit yes. But anyway, they went out and gave the army orders to shoot and put in a curfew and it was touch and go for ten days, but after that it was over. The Ayatollah was shipped out to Iraq and other people made their

peace with the regime and they had fourteen years of unbroken progress until 1977.

But, in any event, the Shah was unwilling to use force, was unwilling to find a legitimate stand. Most people, up until November, 1977, the bulk of the Iranian people, and even at the time of the Jaleh Square riots in September 1978, were pro-monarchy. If the Shah had said these people are threatening the country, we will open up the political system, but first we have to repress the poison in the system, he could have wrapped up the whole Mullah movement, put these guys out in guarded camps in the desert, and gone on and made political changes. But he was paralyzed, he couldn't do that. And as a result they just grew and grew and when it became obvious that the Shah wouldn't use force, as I say in my book, at the time the army got mad enough and stopped protecting the streets in early November and there was a day of wild riot and chaos in Tehran, the Shah instituted martial law. But the army wasn't allowed to shoot people who violated the curfew. It took them two weeks to find this out and then the revolutionaries just came back.

Now interestingly enough, that very same night in Turkey there had been riots in 15 cities and the democratically elected Prime Minister of Turkey imposed martial law and told the army to shoot to kill. Their problems evaporated overnight. And not many people who were in Iran at the time think that the Shah could not have imposed draconian martial law and retain power. Now, what would have happened later on had he repressed the Mullahs and the revolutionary movement in Iran, then it would have been over. There might have been further terrorism and even a more difficult outcome down the pike. But he could have probably survived. What he couldn't do was be weak on one side and not be strong enough to retain power on the other. And the Ayatollah Khomeini played that carefully. First in Iraq and then in Paris where he had access to world media. Until by in large he striped away the layers of support from the Shah.

By December, when the Shah put in Bakhtiar as Prime Minister, a man who had opposed him, it was his effort to bring in an acceptable revolutionary to accept the monarchy. Khomeini wouldn't even take that. Bakhtiar lost all the revolutionary support and then it was just a question of what's legitimate. By the time Khomeini came back to the country on February 1, the Shah had left on January 15 and everybody knew he was gone for good, although that wasn't the way it was billed, 98 percent of the people celebrated. I was out in the streets often that day and everybody was delighted that the Shah had left. Everybody thought they were going to get something different.

Q: When Khomeini came I am sure there was quite a bit of celebrating. Did it seem like it was mostly very strong, radical Islamic support?

STEMPEL: No, everybody celebrated Khomeini's arrival because he was going to put in a government...he had named Bazargan Prime Minister, again somebody I had been talking to for some time, as prime minister, and a couple of his assistants, one of whom I had been dealing with for a substantial amount of time, as the shadow government. Khomeini had been there about two weeks, I guess...and, of course, the army, the Imperial Guard, was still loyal to the Shah, but there was a riot at Doshentapi Air Base on February 9 and the Imperial Guards sent two divisions down to put it down and they were bushwhacked and the air cadets distributed weapons from the arsenal there. The Imperial Guard commander was killed and then it just degenerated. At that point there is no government to take over, it just fell apart and the Liberation Movement people

moved in; two days later there was a new government. It just turned over. And then, of course, the killing started. The people went after the enemies who had been in positions and people were frantically changing sides, etc.

And, of course, we watched all from the vantage point of the embassy. In the meantime, beginning in early September, the embassy was encouraging Americans to leave. We had got it down to 25,000 Americans in Iran by Christmas, which was still far too many. By the time the Ayatollah came in after the Shah left, people then began to get the message and left more quickly. But there was still 7000 Americans and there were people who were trying to kill them. There were attempts made on several Americans. We had fortuitous outcomes in some cases. The military attaché shot two of his assailants who were going after him. And I think the way it was handled diplomatically is a real credit to Ambassador Sullivan and everybody who was there, because there were only three Americans killed and only one of those was a deliberate political killing. One was Joe Morris, the famous Los Angeles Times correspondent, who was killed by a sniper's bullet at Doshentapi. The one who was assassinated by terrorists was an oil company executive. And there was a retired Army colonel who was working in Western Iran, who surprised a burglar in his house and was killed, but they didn't think that was political.

Now, before that in the seven years leading up to that, there had been, I think seven Americans killed by terrorist attacks, including two embassy locals in 1975, a month before I got there. And three Americans who worked for an American company were shot in March of that year. So by the time I got there we were riding secure vehicles to work.

Q: In that small amount of time between that new government taking over and the embassy actually being taken over, had there been any sort of promise to your people that we are going to take care of Americans, try to make sure that nothing happens?

STEMPEL: Well you have to remember the timing. Khomeini's government wasn't really firmly in power, they were there but still trying to establish control on February 12. A radical faction of the revolutionary movement took over the American embassy on February 14, which was several months before the hostages were taken in Tehran. At that time the government sent Foreign Minister Yazdi in with Revolutionary guards to push the radicals out and restore order in the compound. However, they never left, they kept people in the compound and we were not in control of our own diplomatic space. And that continued on until the embassy was taken over...and they said that they would assure our safety. We said that we accepted the results of the revolution, we are not opposed to the Iranian people, etc. But there was still deep suspicion because of the 1953 episode. They felt that we would try to come back in with the Shah.

I left in June, 1979. As it worked out over the summer we drew down our embassy to what was a skeleton staff. But the Administration decided that our relations were good enough with the new government, Khomeini's government of Medhi Bazargan, that we could put more people back in. And then there were mistakes made. We let the Shah in for medical treatment, Brzezinski went to Algiers and met with Yazdi and Bazargan, and at that point the radicals said it is 1953 all over again and then they took over the embassy in November of 1979.

At that point our people became merely a pawn in the Iranian game. The radicals used the control of the embassy and the documents they found there to justify putting in a radical Islamic constitution. Up until that point, Bazargan and the far more moderate element, wanted essentially a European parliamentary constitution, which would give the ayatollahs a political role. But the Islamic constitution provided that the head guy in the whole set up was Khomeini, and he controlled the faithful and was the final arbitrator of all laws is the Islamic Revolutionary Council, which was all ayatollahs. So what you went back to was theocratic government by December, 1979. And, of course, things putted on for another year and a couple of months, until our hostages were released.

Q: Will you describe your own personal experiences on February 14? What exactly happened on that day of the takeover?

STEMPEL: I had been at the ambassador's request outside the embassy. I was the known contact with Bazargan and the others when it became increasingly clear that they were going to play a role, we didn't know how important. So the ambassador said that he wanted me to stay home where they could contact me. My house wasn't in a compound, we were just living out in Iran. We had neighbors who protected us and took care of our kids, etc. So I was not there. I had been out since the Doshentapi Air Base thing broke. Sullivan said, "You need to stay at home or free in case somebody does take a run at the embassy."

On the morning of February 14, I was at home and had called in to my boss, George Lambrakis, who was the political counselor and said, "George, there really is some stuff that I can't go into over the phone that needs to be known." And he said, he admits it was the worse decision he made, "Well, things look pretty quiet here, I'll send an embassy car for you." So they sent an embassy car and about an hour later we were approaching the embassy and we saw people running over. We heard over the car's two-way radio that the embassy was being fired on. I suggested that we go in around the other way...some of us never get the picture! So we went around the other way and saw a mob with ski masks on. At that point I said to the chauffeur, "Ali, I think they are going after the embassy, let's turn around and go back north." So we got out. At that point I saw something very important, and I passed it on to Washington.

The Mujahideen and the Fedayeen were both manning roadblocks. This was a union of two revolutionary groups who fought each other. But, hey, if they are together, no separation any more, they are united against the Americans.

Q: The Fedayeen was the Marxist group and the...?

STEMPEL: Well, it became more confused. The Fedayeen tended to be people who had Marxist roots to start with, but, of course, they were not the true today communists. These were radicals, sort of Chinese oriented. The Mujahideen, some of them were Marxists but many of the others had come up through a fundamentalist...I mean the Mujahideen had been a factor in Egypt and the idea had been around for years. Then they split up into different factions later. People who reviewed my book a year or two after it came out said, "Well, Stempel really doesn't discriminate among the factions very well." In fact, you couldn't at that point with as little contact as we had

had. I probably had as much as any with all the factions. The only ones who wouldn't meet with me were the hardcore communists.

So we are pulling away. I went up to an embassy colleague of mine, his house, and said, "Hey, what is happening?" And he said, "As near as I can tell from the phones and stuff, the embassy is being taken over." Oh, when we were driving down, we called the Marines and said, "Quantico Base this is [my call sign], what is going on?" He said, "Well, they are shooting up.." bang, and the radio went out. What had happened was the radio had been shot out. That was when we turned around and went north.

Well, we had no communications with the embassy. And my colleague said, "I think they are coming to get me, so we had better leave." I had a friend of mine who lived about five doors down the other side of the street, so I put on my trench coat and walked with my chauffeur through a Fedayeen- Mujahideen roadblock that was coming down the street and into Professor Lawrence's house. There I called the Swedish embassy, which was next door to our compound, and got one of my colleagues and said, "What's happening?" They confirmed that it was being taken. Then, I picked up the telephone and called the Iran Desk in Washington. I said, "Henry, we have a problem." He said, "Yes, we are beginning to get that through ham radio operations through the Kuwait and the Gulf. " I explained to him what was going on and got authorization from him to call the Prime Minister's office. I said, "Hey, guys, we have a problem here." Well, Skip Boies, at the embassy had called at the same time and they were already in the process of moving troops in to get it set up. So I stayed out of the embassy then all that day.

The next day order of a sort had been restored and they were merely looting the commissary. At that point the Iran revolutionaries were running the compound. In fact, later on we discovered that there were three groups, and I will go into that later, at this point I stayed out at the ambassador's request and tried to stay in contact with Washington. I stayed in this apartment and it took 36 hours to shut down the telephones at which point we went out and taped a line and was able to call Washington anyway.

They had started to move all the Americans out. At this point it was an ordered evacuation. The new government was just as happy to get Americans out to avoid killings, etc. The ambassador then said to come on in. I went to my house and while I was there I got picked up by the revolutionary comité. Half of these guys were people I had known, they lived in the neighborhood, and I was their buddy, you know. I went to revolutionary headquarters and said I was here, that deputy Prime Minister Entezam would vouch for me, (all this, of course, in Farsi). So they called the Prime Minister and said that he wanted me to go back to the embassy. "Well, can you take me?" "Oh, sure, sure, we will take care of that, but first the honor guys." So they had six guards with rifles shooting straight up. Well, you can figure out what happens to a bullet when it goes straight up, it is going to come straight down. So I got in the car and they fired their salute and I took off to go back home. And then that evening I came into the embassy and at the embassy's request, by now we had reestablished the phones, picked up several American families and brought them in, too. I had an embassy station wagon at the time. We jammed everything into their one suitcase and brought them back to the compound.

But at that point I did something kind of stupid, although it really worked out to our advantage. When we came into the compound, I knew there were still Iranians there, but they opened the gates and this wild guy came running out saying, "Stop, stop, stop" almost like the Groucho Marx thing. But I had just had it with all this kind of thing and scooped him up on the hood and went roaring in and stopped dead in front of a tree where upon he slide off and went splat against the tree. Well, everybody came around with guns. But the good news was this was the number two guy in the Fedayeen group who was heartily detested by the number one, who was also the brother of the number three. As far as number one and three were concerned, I had done Allah's work that night...humiliated and slam-dunked this guy. Besides, I spoke Farsi and they knew who I was by this time. So our citizens went over to where others were camping waiting for their evacuation flight. And they assigned number three to be my bodyguard, because he didn't want anything to happen to me. Well, number 3 had been a Greco-Roman wrestler who had won a gold medal at the Asian games. He was about 5'8", a lot shorter than I was, but muscular. This guy could crush tire rims with his bare hands. And he followed me around to keep track of me. But it was also good for me because nobody fussed with Amid.

For the next two or three weeks Amid stayed with me by in large. We went out and settled housing leases for the embassy and I moved down to an apartment right next to the compound. It was at that point that Skip Boies, who was the ambassador's assistant and I, as the Farsi speakers, got called in as the mediator between the various groups in the compound. There was the main Fedayeen group. Then there were the air force Homofars, sort of warrant officers, and then there was a group of people who were sent to guard the ambassador, who Skip Boies learned later on were the Muhjadydeen team that had been assigned to assassinate the ambassador in a prior incarnation. So he says, "Do you think I ought to tell the ambassador?" I said, "At some point you can let it be known that they were the ones who were watching out for him, but I wouldn't go quite that far."

Anyway, we got called in to mediate when fights broke out between the groups. They would accept our mediation over who was to get what, etc. because we were not part of the revolutionary coalition, we both spoke Farsi. From that point on it was simply drawing down the American force. The Iranians had taken over our military base and much of our military files. We had gotten back control of our embassy at that point. In the process then we burned practically all of our records. We were operating on what we called a day's take for about a month and a half. In other words, we would not keep any files. We would burn everything after a day that was in anyway classified or confidential. And we shipped 15 tons of files out on one of the military evacuation flights. Now, fast forward ahead. The military mission shipped a couple of tons back in later on and those were the files which provided most of the fireworks after the...

Q: They shipped ones that were highly classified?

STEMPEL: Old files being brought back in to enable every day work at the embassy. You see, a false impression developed from June through August or September that we that we were back on an even footing, things were back to normal. And those of us who said it wasn't so, were told that we were just disgruntled disaffected characters. I remember Bruce Laingen, a very good friend, going out and saying, "Well, we can't be too suspicious of these people." He was the

chargé, the boss, he was a hostage for 444 days. Now granted, it took some extraordinary stupid behavior on our part to lead to that. But still, the point was that we were not looking at the real world as it existed from say mid to late summer of 1979 on through the hostage takeover.

Q: Well, you left Iran in June?

CLYDE DONALD TAYLOR
Economic Development and Financial Officer
Tehran (1975-1979)

Ambassador Clyde Donald Taylor was born in Columbia in 1937. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in 1959 he received his master's degree in interdisciplinary studies from American University in 1961. His career has included positions in Panama City, Canberra, San Salvador, Tehran, and an ambassadorship to Paraguay. Ambassador Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in January 1996.

TAYLOR: ...Move over to my next post, to Iran, where the seeds germinated very quickly because of an intense industrialization, and then we under predicted - an interesting contrast.

Q: Well, then you left there in '75 and you went where, to Iran directly?

TAYLOR: Directly, yes.

Q: From when to when were you in Iran?

TAYLOR: I was there in Iran from August of '75 to June 30, '79.

Q: It was sort of moving you into a completely different field.

TAYLOR: Well, I wasn't really eligible for "GLOping;" which we were doing in those days.

Q: Could you explain what "GLOP" is?

TAYLOR: It was Kissinger's notion after he visited Mexico, where he found an embassy where as he put it, full of officers with only Latin American experience, having a distorted view of the world and U.S. interests, who needed to broaden their experience. So the order was the people should not spend more than I think it was two consecutive tours in a geographic area; that they needed to be moved around. And so that's what happened. The intelligence community followed this notion some years later, but we started it. And so while I hadn't had successive tours, I was frankly just looking for a good economic job, trying to do it without language instruction, but if I needed it, fine. There were openings at my grade level in Lagos, Hong Kong, and Tehran. At Lagos, I'd be working for a former boss that I liked, but that's not a good thing to happen. Hong

Kong, they weren't sure whether the position might be closed or something. So it was Tehran.

I arrived in Tehran at the zenith of the oil boom; the oil prices had gone sky high. Prices were very strong because of OPEC, the income was enormous, and even a highly populated country like Iran suddenly found itself with the wherewithal to accelerate its industrialization.

As I say, the zenith had just been passed when I arrived, and they had just announced their first five year plan retrenchment, because the prices were starting to drop; they'd peaked early in that year. And so my predecessor, Walt Lundy, I think had done the first analyses of the retrenchment, and I could build on it.

Q: Your position was what?

TAYLOR: I was the Economic Development and Financial Officer, which was maybe one of the longest titles in the Foreign Service, but it meant I had a State Department Financial Officer position, combined with whatever was left from AID's economic development job. And we looked after residual AID matters, some loans that hadn't been fully disbursed, and AID was determined to disburse them, although the Iranians had no intention of disbursing them because now they were lending money overseas.

It was interesting, though, when you look at the resources around the world. I discovered quickly that I was doing in my job what five people were doing in Caracas. We had a very large Economic-Commercial Section, and I was doing all the trade analysis, plus all the economic analysis, plus the external economic relations, and I had one FSN...

Q: Foreign Service National.

TAYLOR: ...Foreign Service National. And I then I also had to supervise a shop with two AID employees that managed participant training out of Afghanistan, where they speak a close cousin language to Farsi. Again, this was a fascinating tour, more exciting professionally perhaps than personally, because living in Tehran was difficult. It was a very polluted city. I was on a death list within two weeks of arriving; we always went to work with guards; there were three people killed at the Consulate in July, the month before I arrived, there were people killed during my time there. So it was...

Q: Who was doing the shooting?

TAYLOR: These were anti-Shah groups, both Marxist oriented and maybe some that weren't so Marxist oriented. But it was a fascinating tour, because one was watching a society of better than 45,000,000 people that had always been a vertical society; there was a king with the power structure resting on the exercise of his power, and when that failed in latter years and people realized that power wasn't being exercised, that's when the Shah's political death was really inevitable.

It was a country that had a majority of minorities. The glue was Tehran and the efforts by the

Shah's father and the Shah to try to make a nation out of disparate groups, the Arabs in the south, Kurds in the northwest, people with a view north toward the Caspian, very, very distinct groups. Even in those days in the late '70s, there was 55 percent adult illiteracy, a very rural country, a country dominated by the bazaar class of merchants. And when they were offended, that helped erode the Shah's power in 1978. I found a country so different from El Salvador, that certainly had this sense of independence from the U.S., and had a sense that it could determine its destiny much more, to a country, Iran, where the hidden hand theory was at its most dominant. It had been the British and the Russians that had always, in the view of the Iranians, had determined their fate, and increasingly since World War II, it was now viewed that the U.S. was the one controlling their fate.

The irony of serving there was that yes, we had a strong position with the Shah, mainly as his weapon supplier, but the Shah and his advisors were great strategists, and they wanted to diversify their areas of support and supply. And so, they would buy non-lethal things, non-lethal military from the Russians, and they certainly tried to find ways to compensate with Europeans for a very lucrative relationship that we had with them on weapons. It put those from our private sector dealing in non-armaments in a very difficult comparative situation to Europeans. We found this particularly in the buildup of the nuclear trade, but as well, in a whole lot of areas such as communications and other kinds of machinery tools.

I can remember when the Shah one time was upset over a weapons decision, the headlines in the paper was that there would be a total embargo on imports from the United States. That does not sound consistent with what the American people were given to think our relationship was with the Shah, that we each had our hand in the other's pocket, and that there were no frictions. This kind of friction was the extreme of it, a threat of total embargo. But it was not that unusual; we had a lot of rough spots in our relationships with the Shah's government, because they frankly tried to bully us using the leverage of our very strong weapons relationship.

Q: You were still there during the Kissinger-Ford and even into the Carter administration, where there seemed to be great constraints coming out of Washington, enforced, you might say, by the Shah, of only reporting the sunny side of things and all that. Was this a problem during your time?

TAYLOR: That would have been a greater problem, I think, on the intelligence side, and that's been dealt with a lot, I guess, in the post-Iran Revolution writings. There were certainly constraints on contacts, that I'm more familiar about from reading than I was party to, being in the Economic Section. What is clear to me is that if we were to have those kinds of contacts, we would have been hard pressed from the resource side. We had three people in the State Department Political Section.

Q: Was this deliberate, do you think?

TAYLOR: It was a consequence of having scores and scores of people in the rest of the Political Section. In our State Department assets, we had the political counselor, who supervised a mid-level political officer, and a junior officer who handled mainly biographic reporting and UN and

similar affairs. We had a State political military counselor as a separate section; if you added that, we had four. I will give credit to those in my day like John Stempel, who spoke Farsi and who got out and talked to the Bazaar class and to religious dissidents and to the National Liberation Front people. Sometimes those contacts produced complaints from the Shah's government, either directly or more often back through our intelligence people.

But we just didn't have the muscle power, certainly from the State side, to have that breadth of contacts. You go to the Economic side, I was one officer. If I made one extensive field trip a year in my four years, which is what I did, I found that I was buried when I got back to the office. And yet here was this massive industrialization, and our people in the consulates, in Tabriz, Shiraz, and Isfahan, were so absolutely over their head with work that we got very little economic reporting out of them. We were very conscious of this deficiency. I argued from the moment I arrived for just half of a position more, so that we could do more reporting on the industrialization process.

Q: Here was Iran, which was a major area of interest to the United States. It was not a period where we were cutting down as much, say, as we are today and all, and yet here there were these very strict personnel restraints. You mentioned the other side. It's no secret that we had a large CIA involvement, which often was working out of the Embassy. Some countries get dominated for one way or another, by the Agency. I was in Greece from '70 to '74, and the CIA used up an awful lot of resources. Was this your feeling in Iran?

TAYLOR: Well, clearly the fact that we were asked to train SAVAK...

Q: That was the secret service of Iran.

TAYLOR: ...the intelligence service of Iran, that we were accorded a lot of access to the government of Iran, and the fact that Iran had universal foreign representation, and was a border country to Russia, offered an enormous target of opportunity for our intelligence services; everything from signals intelligence to human, to what have you. So we had an enormous array of intelligence resources in the country, and most people in the Embassy had but a vague notion as to what that array was. They were astounded, when the government fell, to learn of all the installations around the country, and most were astounded to even find out how much was in the Embassy.

But if you just look at the economic development, I think what happened was that here's a country that had a modest economy, that was a very modest trader internationally, and certainly with us, that suddenly took on a boom based on oil revenues, and we did not adjust State resources. And to the extent we adjusted them, they were only in the area of commercial promotion, so that we had a trade center there, we had commercial officers very overworked, and the other areas that grew, such as Civil Aviation, Science and Technology, those were handled by non-State officers. Those should have been handled by State officers. Again, State wasn't staffing up. And so we were very derelict, I think, in properly staffing our Embassy so that we could have had both a political and economic assessments to understand what was happening to that country.

Q: Well, one always hears that the Shah basically said, "If you want information, I'll give it to you." And in a way, the State Department kind of went along with it.

TAYLOR: Well, I found the information collection game there not to be so much governed by that. I found that we ended up using the same techniques we use in most places, and that is that we understand the jealousies between the ministries, we build our contacts. When I arrived there, I in advance asked for a list of contacts I should develop, and in the first six weeks, I devoted four hours each day to calling on people. I established those contacts, and they paid off. The successive Ambassadors had acquiesced to what I thought was a terrible relationship, and that is that only the Ambassador and perhaps the DCM could call on Cabinet members, or Ministers. What that meant was that the counselors of Embassy were virtually without their own set of Iranian Government contacts, because the next level down, my level, we dealt with the Under Secretaries.

So if we were to operate on the basis of "the government would tell us what we needed to know," you would have a very overworked Ambassador, and perhaps DCM, who had to spend a lot of their time with visiting firemen, and visiting both the official and private sector, and really didn't have, even with superb people like Helms and Sullivan, didn't have, you know, that kind of time to go and do in-depth reporting. We had excellent, successive Petroleum Officers, too, while I was there, who covered that industry. I covered central bank, industry and commerce, all the financial aspects, the private banking sector; I was spread pretty thin, but I could fill our home with Under Secretaries from a number of ministries, Finance, Agriculture, Commerce, Planning, Central Bank and what have you. And perhaps the fact that we had close political relationships helped getting information, but I tend to think I had no easier time getting information there than I did in El Salvador and Australia, because there's always a tendency by governments, including our own, to guard your information until it's in the general public arena, until you publish it, and our effort is to try and get it before it's published, and to also establish a sense of its credibility, and then to get a sense of what it means. And to do that, you're not so much influenced by some overarching thing that says "We will tell you what you need to know;" you're really influenced by your contacts and by your own ability to ask questions.

I had an excellent relationship with some of the press, first time in my career, and it was particularly the non-American press. The American press, frankly, in that experience of working very closely with them, tended to be a sponge relationship; they wanted everything they could get from you, and there was very little reciprocity. I had very close relationships with some of the BBC and Financial Times people, who would be inclined in our relationship to call me and say, "Clyde, I'm seeing Minister So-and-so tomorrow, anything I could ask to help you out?" And I had a relationship like that with The New York Times, but that person left and was not replaced.

So I used a whole multitude of things. We also had a good relationship with the OECD embassies, who relied very heavily on our reporting. It was a very good example of where our Commerce Department was saying, and a lot of our critics in Congress were saying, that if you want to see how commercial promotion is done, look at how the Brits and the Germans want to have you do it. But it was interesting that while we were there, those same embassies sent serious

businessmen over to our embassy to talk to me and to talk to our commercial officers, because we knew more. And when I did my economic trends report every six months, it went back by pouch, and then was distributed. We distributed to the OECD embassies, and I know a large number of them sent it back by cable and had it in hands of people much faster than our own government did.

Q: As this thing developed, was there concern among you and others about the arms we were selling and what this was doing to the Iranian economy?

TAYLOR: It was a very interesting experience in that in, oh, I'd say it was around 1976 or so, there was a, I believe she was an economist at Columbia, who had developed a thesis that there were secondary benefits from expenditures in the arms industry, the defense industry, not just relative to Iran, but anywhere; that there were technological spinoffs. And our government was desperately looking for ways to justify to the Congress and to the public this very high level of arms sales to Iran. Folks in State's INR (Intelligence and Research Bureau), and I guess in Political Military Bureau, latched on to this. I can't recall whether or not this economist woman visited us, but certainly we had her writings, and I remember being formally asked, tasked by our front office, in a memo written by our political/military counselor, to do an analysis of what we could identify as the secondary benefits to the Iranian economy.

We didn't have sophisticated econometric tools, nor could we go out and survey and collect a lot of the data one would want, but we did an analysis looking at various sectors, and tried to see what kind of employment had been created by defense industries, what kind of technology and education it had driven. And while we gave some credit to military expenditures, our primary finding was not one that our masters wanted to hear; it was that the best benefit of the expenditure in the defense industry in Iran had been a deflationary benefit. That by taking money out of circulation and tying it up in very high cost goods, that drove very little in the way of other demands on the economy, we had helped cool what otherwise would have been an overheated economy because of the spurt in oil revenues.

Now, that analysis was good for that time in history, and I feel very comfortable with it, but it was not welcomed.

Q: I'm sure it wasn't. Speaking of the ambiance of the Embassy, was there concern over the large number of Americans who were servicing this military equipment, helicopter mechanics, etc.?

TAYLOR: Well, we had somewhere around 46,000 Americans there that we could identify, and probably some we missed, who stayed there even after the revolution, who were married into Iran; that's the community we put it into. A large number of those, certainly when you got outside of Tehran, where they did not live in enclaves, did live in small towns created for the expatriate workers, such with Bell Helicopter which was building a turnkey helicopter production facility in Isfahan. A lot of the housing was in enclaves, or the Americans lived together in compounds, had their own schools and medical and things like this. But you have to put this in context, because the Americans were part of a massive Western influx into Iran. I mean, there

were lots of Brits and French and Germans and what have you, all there on a lot of service contracts, turnkey operations in the communications field, electronics field, you name it. So the Iranian was very buffeted in terms of their lifestyle in a place like Tehran. I had a number of close Tehrani friends, people raised in Tehran, who said that the pace of life was such that it was very hard for them to sustain their traditional extended family get-togethers at the patriarch/matriarch's home on Friday nights. It's just hard because too many of the family members would have foreign visitors in town to look after; it took you an average of 45 minutes to an hour to go short distances at night. The traffic jams were enormous; Tehran went from 250,000 to 1,500,000 cars in three years. I mean, this was - I'm understating when I say it was a boomtown. It was an enormous boomtown.

So the foreign influx was just part of this enormous transition in the country where you had a massive migration from the countryside into cities. You had a terrific building boom - housing, offices, roads - and the Iranian's expectations were driven by the reality of being able to have as many jobs as they could feasibly handle. So even unskilled people could have two to three jobs. Educational opportunities opened broadly, and the government was providing these free. Very Western kind of situations existed where young men and women went to school together, and dressed in very modern styles; a very modern economy. Paul Theroux described Tehran, though, as "a city grafted on a village," because below it, it was still very traditional, poorly educated and socially conservative. This extremely difficult transition of moving from a rural, very uneducated environment to an urban, high-pressured Western influenced situation of course gave the seeds for the sociopolitical explosion that occurred.

Q: Did sort of the Economic or your office look at this, this was political, or...

TAYLOR: Well, it's interesting. We certainly looked at it, and I have a smattering of it in my files, having kept but the eight economic trends reports I did. There was in the format in those days, I don't know if it continues, a requirement to have at least a paragraph on the political context. And I gave great care to that, and many times had real arguments over that paragraph.

Q: This would be with your supervising officer?

TAYLOR: Well, yes, just as to how far you could go in an unclassified document. But I look at those paragraphs in retrospect with some satisfaction, because you can see in those eight semi-annual reports a progressive description of a society and a political economy with growing stress and tension. I wrote of the digestive problems of this force-fed industrialization, of the dislocations, of the value clashes between the West and the traditional Iranian society. So while I would not pretend to say there was a prediction of revolution, there was very clearly written appreciation for tension and for unfulfilled expectations, for disequilibrium, so that any businessman reading those would know that they were not investing or dealing with a society anchored on a stable structure and social mores.

Within the Embassy, and particularly after there was a major riot in Tabriz in February of 1978, we had a strongly divided position within the Embassy between political and myself over the causes of those riots. I argued that there was a strong economic component to the riots. My

colleagues rebutted that, “You know, there’s no famine, no hunger or anything like that.” I said, “No, I’m not saying that, but just several months before, a major industrialization development there by the Italians had shut down, and had left 5,000 men unemployed. I’m not saying it was a one-for-one, but the fact that you had the beginning of an economic downturn, expectations were now affected; people could not find the second and third job; and the real annual wage increases in the low 20 percents per year were no longer occurring.”

And my point was that those riots would not have occurred a year earlier, or even six months earlier, but it was because of a fast decline in what the economy was doing. And certainly by the summer, these signs were much more pronounced, by the summer of ‘78. Yet it was at that point that the draft national intelligence estimate was circulating that is now famous, or infamous, saying that Iran was not even in a pre-revolutionary state. And fortunately, State Department took that position head on, disagreeing with it. That is not to say that the Embassy was so clearly on record that things were bad, but we were reporting in the summer of ‘78 that the Shah was behaving extremely erratically. He spent the whole summer in his Caspian residence, he didn’t do the normal things such as receiving foreign visitors, going to place things at tombs and things like this; there were all kinds of rumors that his visage was being dubbed on TV, and rumors about his illness or even death were occurring in that summer. No one knew, of course, that he had cancer. It was clear that he was acting in new, strange ways.

Q: Would you talk about from the time until you left how things played out from your perspective?

TAYLOR: There’s been a lot written about what happened in Iran, but some of it has not been written yet. There was a major theater fire down in Bandar Abbas; I think it was, down on the Persian Gulf, in which four or five hundred people died and a lot of debate as to what caused it. In the Muslim tradition you observed mourning 40 days after a tragedy or anyone’s death. To observe this tragedy there was a demonstration in Jalai Square in Tehran; I think it was September 4 or 5.

Q: We’re talking about ‘78.

TAYLOR: ‘78. Commemorating that. Those demonstrators were shot at, and a riot ensued, and demonstrations ensued, the first time that had happened in Tehran.

Now back up about a year and let’s look at some things that had happened. As the government continued to try to adjust its economic policies and its budget to the diminished revenues, it turned to economist and Finance Minister Jahangir Amuzegar, to be Prime Minister. He made some decisions approved by the Shah, that did not get a whole lot of attention at the time, that we reported, and I put a lot of emphasis on. A serious one was to end the subsidy to the church, you’d call it, “church,” we used that term, to the Islamic religion, which was about \$80 million a year.

There was a dispute up in Mashhad, a large city on the northeast border, over a major public works. It was, as I recall, a highway going to through the downtown.

And what the government did was far too cute. They took the appraisal values given by the Bazaari's (the bazaar shop owners) for tax purposes as the basis for indemnification for this road project. As I say, it was just too cute. And that reaped them the enmity of the Bazaar class. The Bazaar class was already under enormous tension because of an erosion of what they saw as their traditional role in the Iranian society. Their traditional role was to control commerce, and through their guilds they controlled trade and what have you. Clearly when, and this can be argued academically, when you have an oil boom and the oil is generated by a State-owned entity, the revenues pass through the Government. Now, a different means could have been found to pass that money, but what was occurring was that the development programs were Government-run. And so a lot of State entities were born in virtually all sectors, energy, communications, electronics, transport, and so forth. They moved very heavily into the trade side, obviously. They drove a lot of the trade. So not only the relative importance of the Bazaar guilds was challenged, but their absolute status was challenged. They no longer were secure in say their x-millions of dollars in trade in shoes, because shoe factories were being set up under development programs, replacing much of their production.

This was an enormous change in the political calculations of the country, because even though you had a king and a vertical form of government, it had its own type of social contract. It required that you listened to and you tried to have some harmony with a major elite, which was your Bazaar class. So now the Amuzegar government caused and reaped the animosity of this Bazaar class, as well as from the religious class that was tightly linked to the Bazaaris. Then in the summer of '78, the government challenged some writings by Khomeini. At the same time this was occurring, the government was trying to liberalize politically. They were creating a more open political situation, encouraging people to become politically active in political parties. They were giving a broader parameter for reporting in the press. This is not to say that SAVAK was not still around, but clearly, some of these openings by government would force SAVAK to back off a bit. I remember talking to Iranian friends, people who had had graduate degrees from the West but very strong roots in Iran. A typical conversation would be, "Well, look, you are part of the technocracy, your life has always been guaranteed, your livelihood, by being apolitical, do you see what's happening to your country? It is now becoming modernized, you're being told by your government that your political activism is not only okay, but it's being encouraged. What do you plan to do?"

They would reply, "This is too big of an unknown, too big of a risk; we'll watch and see what happens." Those who were or had been in National Liberation Front party of Prime Minister Mossadegh, that had been overthrown with U.S. support in 1953, were somewhat encouraged by this development, but their front was not given any overt green lights by the government, although they were by implication being told that they were okay to be politically active.

It was interesting to identify people as you got closer to your contacts, who had clear abilities, who had performance records that would suggest that they should have risen higher in their organizations, in their government jobs, than they had. And if you would develop that kind of close relationship, as I did with several, I would be told "This was as far as I could go because my father, or even I, am identified with the National Liberation Front. And so while I can go so

far, I can't go any higher." These 1978 political openings occurred, but there was very little response from those who had the ability, the social awareness and the training to try and make an impact on the Iranian society; they were, with some reason, too nervous to do it.

I can recall that certainly by the fall of '78, the analysis was quite clear that here we had a confluence of two very difficult developments: One on hand, economic recession, again, not that there were lines of people at the soup kitchens, but a substantial erosion in economic opportunities and a slowdown in improvements in wages; and on the other hand, at the same time you had the Shah who was allowing a political opening with more tolerance and expression and assembly and political activity. I think any political scientist looking at that would see that as a recipe for an explosion. This would be like having an overly constrained teenager let loose in Las Vegas with a pocket full of money. You do not take people who have lived for centuries under a vertical situation where their decisions were made for them, where they were not given the opportunity for assembly, for political activity and expression, except under very tight constraints, and suddenly start lifting those at the same time when they had real grievances. And that's what developed very quickly in 1978.

Another very serious development that I think was misread by some of us was that when the incident occurred at Jalai Square September 5...

Q: This was the shooting. You know, you're told that as soon as you shoot at a mob, you've lost. I mean, this is one since the Russian Revolution and all that. Shooting at a mob puts a magnifier...

TAYLOR: What happened next is again maybe in the same area of a strategic maxim as you've just stated one. And that is that when you establish marshal law, if you don't enforce it, you'll witness the beginning of the end. The Iranian government established a very normal kind of marshal law regime with curfews, with limits on the number of people that could assemble, on the type of gatherings that were permitted, etc. When the first challenge to marshal law occurred, it was not met with any enforcement. Follow-on curfew violations likewise went unpunished. I was one of those in the Embassy that said, "We're now talking about months before this government is over." We weren't speaking in favor of government suppression, we were just making an observation that you do not have this boiling undercurrent in this society with a traditional respect for power, and fear of power, and then have a non-exercise of power with anything other than a bad result. We learned subsequently that the Shah, facing his irreversible cancer, had wanted to accelerate the industrial revolution and the social revolution, so that he could pass governance on to his son. This was an enormous risk, and of course, proved to be disastrous and his undoing.

There were times even after September, certainly up until early November and Tehran's major fires, when the case could be made that the Shah could still have turned it around. This could have been done by a heavy exercise of power in a society that was still accustomed to respecting power, and by some very conspicuous concessions: by the removal of some key military leadership, and by giving some clear concessions to a more conservative society. Maybe not to Khomeini himself, but to curbing some of the more excesses. For example, the tapes of

Khomeini that were circulating through the mosques, in which he decried the secularization of society, referring to the blasphemy by the Shah's government. They gave as an example a major investment down on one of the Persian Gulf islands that the Islamist would view a Sin City. The Shah's brother was involved, and they were going to set up a pleasure palace down there, with Parisian floorshows and everything else that was suggested with it, as a place where the Iranian, particularly the Iranian male, could go and have fun. And these kinds of things, and the lifestyle of the Shah's twin sister Princes Ashraf, who was active in the international woman's movement, were fodder for the accusation that the Shah was anti-God, was a blasphemer to Islam, and was leading the country in a perilous way.

So concessions in that area of lifestyle, as well as in some of the conspicuous military areas, I think up until maybe early November, might have worked. At least, it would have bought the Shah some time. Unfortunately, the Shah was not taking advice from either the British ambassador or the American ambassador. The Shah's ambassador to Washington, brother-in-law Ardeshir Zahedi, who as the Shah would say to Ambassador Sullivan, has no idea what's happening here, had the ear of Brzezinski. He was telling Brzezinski that the Shah was still in total control.

Q: Brzezinski being the National Security Advisor of President Carter.

TAYLOR: So you had back in Washington an enormous chasm developing between the NSC and the State Department, with David Newsom, Under Secretary of Political Affairs, and the NEA Bureau very much identified with Ambassador Sullivan's analysis, that things were in a precipitous decline, that this succession of prime ministers was not what was needed, and what was needed as we got further into this revolutionary period was to find some way to cut the losses of both the West and the Iranian people. And these proposals included overtures to other elites in Iran, as well as to the Khomeini people. Those ideas were not accepted by the White House. And those ideas were advanced in the early fall of 1978. This recall an unusual thing: we had a very talented and workaholic ambassador in William Sullivan. He took a month's vacation in August, unusual for him, especially at a time when things were not looking good. He was criticized. But when he came back and we were into marshal law and engaged his considerable talents, policy suggestions were submitted, but they were not adopted.

We had the General Heiser Mission that came out, that was done over the objections of Ambassador...

Q: General Heiser?

TAYLOR: General Heiser came out of EURCOM over the objection of Ambassador Sullivan, but of course, he was ordered from the White House, and we had to acquiesce. He came to Iran in late 1978 and dealt with the high military command. The high command was not in touch, or at best in denial. It was reporting very minor defections and few problems of loyalty in the military. Our own intelligence was reporting enormous defections as we got into the October-November-December period. So we had terrific contrast between what the military command was telling the Shah and telling General Heiser or us, and what we knew to be happening from highly credible

intelligence.

Q: I'm thinking this might be a good time to stop now. We're talking about the October-December period. You've already talked about the split between the State Department and the White House, particularly the NSC, and what was happening, and their approach. I'd like you to talk about what then followed from this period, just as you saw it, and how the revolution developed and also about Ambassador Sullivan and how he worked. Do you want to put anything else?

TAYLOR: Well, maybe we want to back up on a couple of observations. Ambassador Richard Helms was there when I arrived, and he was succeeded a year later by Ambassador Sullivan. The contrast was enormous. I have great affection for both men, and it was easy to give your loyalty and support to them, because they had enormous talents. They reflected their cultures very clearly in the way they approached the role of Ambassador. Ambassador Helms had been Director of CIA; he was used to dealing in a very closed, compartmentalized fashion. Recall that I said that under terms that we accepted, unfortunately, ambassadors tended to have all the top contacts. It was interesting that when Ambassador Helms would have a session with Minister of Industry/Economy Hushang Ansari, for example, or head of the Central Bank or Prime Minister, he would come back to his office and dictate a draft reporting cable. He would without exception, unless it was a very narrow area that only he had just dealt with, take the draft to his staff. We'd usually see the whole cable, and he'd ask us, "Well now, does this make sense? Am I saying things out of context? Do you want to relate this with any other reporting you've recently done?" He took a very good approach in using his staff. And the irony was that after we had been able to give our input, then we never saw the cable, in many cases, because it would be submitted in a very restricted channel, and the next thing we knew, we'd be seeing the cable referenced out of the department by someone who had access to it, and we'd have to go and fight for a copy of what finally went out. So again, this is because of his intelligence culture.

In contrast we had Ambassador Sullivan, who was known in the Foreign Service as almost unequaled capacity in the Foreign Service. Even in a place as large as Tehran, people would say sometimes that he didn't need an embassy staff; he just needed a General Services Officer to keep things running. He would have the same conversation with a high level Iranian, but he wouldn't talk to anybody in the embassy. He'd send the cable in, and it would go in just a confidential cable, let's say, with full distribution, we'd read about it, and often, we would be infuriated because we could have added something very, very useful by way of interpretation, or we could see that he had been used by the minister. This wasn't always the case, but there were many times when that cable should have had our input, and it was kind of having your noses rubbed, because you got to read this, but you had no opportunity to comment on it. So their style was just so, so different, and yet both of the men had terrific capabilities, terrific talents, and it was a pleasure to work with both of them.

Q: We'll pick it up with relations, both about what happened after the fall of '78 period, and how we saw things, but also with reference to the growing division between the outlook from Washington, particularly from the Carter White House and Brzezinski, and how we saw it in Washington.

Today is the 13th of March. Clyde, do you know where we are?

TAYLOR: We're 1978. We'd talked about the summer of '78 in Tehran, the fact that Ambassador Sullivan, who seldom took vacations had been gone a month, the Shah had been rumored to be ill, and then we had the incident in Jalai Square in downtown Tehran, where there were a number of people fired on and killed in this demonstration, and that brought marshal law. I don't know whether I said earlier that a number of us focused on that and said that if marshal law is really enforced, that it could be a significant change in the trend, because the Shah had been seen as absent during the summer; in a vertical society there had been a sense of a power vacuum, and so when in the first challenge to marshal law by demonstrations, there was not an application of the sanctions of the provisions of marshal law, a number of us in the Embassy started talking about a matter of months until the Shah's government would fall.

In the course of those months, (Jalai Square was in early September), and October and November, the situation deteriorated rapidly. In the American community there was a growing sense of panic. Remember that we had a large number, between 20,000 and 30,000 Americans just in Tehran, probably between 45,000 and 50,000 throughout the country. We had a lot of money riding on contracts; we had some arrangements that involved equity, you had large contracts, some turnkey, some others, where there would be a strong reluctance on the part of some American companies to fold their tents and run. There were tensions in every company, as there were within the official community, as to what kinds of responses we should be taking in protection of our people. We had three RSOs [Regional Security Officers] in the Embassy. It was telling during that period that two of these RSOs were involved full-time in developing emergency evacuation plans for the private sector. Yet at the time when we were finally ordered by Washington to permit voluntary evacuation, around the 8th of December, the Embassy had no emergency evacuation plan.

Q: Everybody has an evacuation plan.

TAYLOR: They do now, but we didn't have one in 1978. There were about 1250 U.S. military in the Military Assistance Mission. They were requesting permission to send out of country their high valuables; that was denied by leader Major General Gast.

Q: When you say "high valuables," what's that term?

TAYLOR: Well, that could be everything from precious memorabilia to, maybe you've got a collection of valuable coins, or what have you; these are just high value items, things that you would either find impossible to replace, or they have such worth that you wanted them protected outside of the country.

Q: Your silver, for example.

TAYLOR: Yes. And there was a legitimate tension between those who saw that whatever we did would be very loudly interpreted in the local political environment as a weathervane of how we viewed the political situation. There's always that tension between sending destabilizing political signals on the one hand and saying, "But wait a minute. We have American lives, dependents, children, also to protect." Well unfortunately, this tension was always resolved during that fall in favor of our political weathervane, and how we would maybe affect the events.

The large American school - it was I believe the largest overseas school with 3400 Americans in it - started to function very sporadically. As we would get incidents, demonstrations, in areas that were near the school, or warnings that there would be such, school would be closed. So the families started being very much affected by this. Then we were going without electricity. During that period we would typically be without electricity from let's say about nine o'clock at night until in the morning. And then as time went on, we even started losing it during the day. We started having trouble getting bottled gas, which was the standard form of cooking. I can remember we saved our bottled gas for our Thanksgiving dinner that year, and a lot of people were using barbecuing, like charcoaling, just to make their food.

I'm trying to paint a picture of a community that was being very loyal to their private sector bosses and to the government, but for good reasons, were nervous. And I'm saying also that the private sector was being much more prudent in taking steps to plan for evacuation for problems, whereas the official community had their head in the sand.

Finally, toward the end of November, we had a period...I forget the date now, November around the 22nd or so, when Tehran burned. You may remember the pictures; they were front page all over the world; large buildings burning, where the anti-Shah forces would just pull furniture out of stores and office buildings and have immense Parisian type fires in the streets, burning the barricades kind of thing. One of these was just off the entrance to the Embassy on Avenue Takti Jamshid. So this kind of environment was just building. At that point there were two wives of U.S. military stationed in Tehran that did a very significant thing. They went back to Washington; one went to the Washington Post, and her visit resulted in a very strong article condemning the posture of the Embassy, the Ambassador, and the military, for not being concerned about their people in Iran. And the other one went to her Congressman and Senator, and in effect, did the same thing on the Hill. So the Department found itself faced with a lot of inquiries, and from what these two women had presented, well reasoned positions, and yet they also found themselves feeling that they hadn't been well informed by the Embassy, because they were not aware of this tension back there.

So what ensued from all this was that the Department ordered Ambassador Sullivan to permit voluntary departure. I've already said I admired both ambassadors I served under there, but anyone who knows Ambassador Sullivan knows that he is very protective of his prerogatives, and he was extremely upset to have this decision taken away from him.

Q: Were people in the Embassy so under his thumb - and I'm not using this necessarily in the derogatory sense - but so disciplined that they weren't saying, "Hey, come on now, let's... You've got a weak Shah, you've got a deteriorating situation, and you know, we've got families,

and goods to take care of as well, and this is what the private sector is doing.”

TAYLOR: I should add that during this entire fall period there was never a town meeting or anything like that in the Embassy; no effort to really communicate with employees, so it was all people going to their supervisors, talking to each other, and again, the word from Embassy leadership, Ambassador, DCM, counselors, was one very strongly saying that we had to be careful what we did and what we said, because the political situation was fragile, we had a lot of equity in the Shah's future, military, private sector investment, what have you, and we didn't want to do things that could just accelerate the deteriorating situation.

So I know it seems improbable, we were also all working our butts off. I remember an interim EER done on me...

Q: That's Efficiency Report.

TAYLOR: Yes, that talked about in a period of about three months, close to 200 situation reports that I had done on the economic scene. It was a frantic time, because we had a massive exposure there, and a lot of interest in Washington as to what was happening to that exposure, as well as to what was happening in the Iranian environment due to these political changes and currents.

Q: One other question before we go on: first place, was there a Mrs. Sullivan?

TAYLOR: Yes, Marie Sullivan was a very much liked woman; she was not in the role of an activist ambassador's wife, where she had her own meetings and her...

Q: Because sometimes there's, you know, the wives get together, and I would think the ones, particularly with the children and all this, would have...I mean, sometimes this can be...well, it turned out to be important, because of what the military wives did.

TAYLOR: I'll give you an answer by an anecdote on this. In any event, the Department ordered this voluntary evacuation, the Ambassador was furious, but he had to comply. Very short notice; let's say we got the word on the sixth or seventh, and we were told that the decisions had to be made within 24 hours, and the evacuation would occur, as I recall, on the eighth of December.

I remember in the Taylor household, my wife being super organized, already had our Christmas gifts wrapped, they were under the tree and what have you, so we had a very early Christmas. We went home and had Christmas with the tree and everything, and because she taught school there in the joint American school, she planned to just go with the children as far as Frankfurt. A number did that, although the vast majority went on to the U.S.

What was interesting, though, was that we were visited by the front office in the Embassy, and I can remember being told, as others were, "Well now, Clyde, this voluntary departure is for the fainthearted; this isn't for people who are really professional diplomats, so we hope you and your family will find it appropriate to stay." Again, this reluctance to communicate to the Iranian environment that we were beginning to leave, or taking the situation so seriously, that meant that

we were taking some steps to look after our own people.

Well, as it turned out, in a lot of ways, we really bristled on that, because our children were frankly getting to be a concern to all of us. The street situation was very precarious; as often happens when children feel the tension in this situation, they react in a hostile way. I can remember scenes in that period when American students who were mooning out of the school buses the Iranians because they were angry over what they were having to put up with. All their sports activities, their after school activities were canceled; school itself was episodic in being open or not, and they saw their lifestyle just crumbling. At best they were being confined to their homes at the end of the school day, if they weren't home all day.

Q: Just for the record, "mooning" means to expose one's bare behind; it was a form of insult that was particularly popular in this period.

TAYLOR: Only someone of our generation would think we'd have to explain that.

But there was a strong feeling here that both the Ambassador and DCM, neither of whom of course had no children there and who lived on the embassy compound, just failed to appreciate what the situation was like for those of us with families. Our children were about 15 and nine, something like that. At the end of the day, everyone with children took advantage of that opportunity to voluntarily depart except one family, and this person was with the intelligence community and responded to this pressure to stay.

As soon as this happened, questions occurred as to, well, what happens if the new Prime Minister, who represents some anti-Shah, if not strongly anti-Shah, some other factions, manages to calm the situation? At least, we ought to be thinking about the possibility of our dependents returning, and of course, a large embassy like that had a lot of people in the pipeline, people coming. I should mention that the evacuation of families coincided well with a period in mid-December of Shiite Muslim religious observation that occasioned expressions of grief, self-flagellation and the potential for heightened anti-Western demonstrations. Well, it was a total surprise to some of us to see an Embassy notice, preceded with zero discussion, that declared what the policy on dependent return would be. The policy was that anyone who had left voluntarily could not come back, but that people who were in the pipeline, including those with dependents, would be allowed to come.

Q: Sounds like sort of pouting...

TAYLOR: It was a policy of pure vindictiveness. There had been zero discussion of this, again, we'd still not had a town meeting about security. John Stempel was the AFSA representative, he was...

Q: AFSA being the...

TAYLOR: The American Foreign Service Association.

Q: Which is equivalent to the union.

TAYLOR: Our union. He was the AFSA representative, he was the number two in the Political Section, I was number two in Economic. He and I sat down and worked on a draft cable to AFSA on this policy. And we gave AFSA the background of the security practice of the Embassy through the fall, and then we specifically dissected that new policy statement, and we sent this cable in, and we asked AFSA to take this issue to management in the Department and get this policy rescinded, because we found it vindictive. I was told by a number of people that it was the most read cable in the Department for about a week; it created a firestorm, but nothing like it created in Tehran. We were accused of not having discussed it with the Ambassador and DCM and with the Administrative Counselor.

Q: The DCM at that time was...

TAYLOR: Charlie Naas. Ron Mills was the Administrative Officer. He came down looking for me and wanted to pound me physically; very, very upset. We met with the Ambassador at his request and we frankly just said we didn't feel we had any choice but to send this cable in, because the embassy notice was out and circulated, and the policy was in effect; there had been no discussion on it, and so we faced a fait accompli. Our only recourse really for overturning this thing, we felt, was in Washington, the same source that had established the voluntary evacuation.

It wasn't surprising that the Department within a week ordered the Ambassador to rescind that policy on returned dependents. It left a bad taste; I've got to say at this point that my personal relationship with the Ambassador and DCM were still very good, and to this day, I respect both of them, because they didn't...in the ensuing months that I worked there until both of them were gone, and after that, this did not affect relationships. They were very professional about it, although the Ambassador felt very hurt by this incident. But I have no regrets over what we did, because it was forced on us.

As events developed, things continued to get bad in December. I don't know if it's been in any of the books, but the first penetration of the Embassy occurred on Christmas Eve. The Embassy, a little over 20 acres, is surrounded by a five-foot wall. We had word that there would be an attempt at penetration, and a lot of officers and Marines were armed and they were positioned just inside the walls at the appropriate time, and when the first people came over the walls, they saw this and retreated, and that was the first attempt.

The next penetration, of course, everyone knows about, because that was on Valentine's Day. The government fell on the 11th of February in 1979.

To back up, I was surprised to learn in January that Assistant Secretary of Treasury Fred Bergston had strongly requested my presence at the annual Treasury Attaché's conference in Washington the first part of February. The Ambassador and DCM had been sitting on this because of all these events; suddenly I was told after the middle of January that they thought that this would be good for the U.S. government for me to go, because there was a very strong interest in the economic issues owing to the large U.S. exposure in Iran. And the relationships I had with U.S. bankers in Tehran was such that I probably knew more about the bank exposures than the

U.S. Comptroller did. So I remember leaving on a C-5 that took me as far as Athens...

Q: C-5 being at that time the largest military transport.

TAYLOR: Still is the largest military cargo plane. And that day I think there were five military planes, C-141s, one C-5, leaving, and so I went on that as far as Athens, talked to some U.S. bank regional offices there that covered Iran, and went on to London, met with U.S. banks there, then on to Washington, arriving, as I recall, around the 7th of February, and of course, the government fell a few days later.

Just as a side note, it's interesting to see how you respond psychologically to a situation like this. I was living in an area of Tehran called Dariush. I, now a geographic bachelor, still had a very large home. I'd picked up a man servant, a Sri Lankan, who had been working for our Science Attaché, since I really needed someone to watch the place while I was gone during the daytime. He was a Muslim, which I thought was good, but he was not a Shiite Muslim, he was Sunni, and that difference was usually identified pretty quickly. We'd had specific death threats in the fall when the family was there, put under our front door, telling us first to leave, and then that we were going to be killed, and then it got very pointed just toward me. But I left him there just to watch the house when I went out of the country in February. I remember an incident when I was in London on the way back. I was in one of the English taxicabs and there was a backfire from a vehicle; I hit the car floor just like I was in a war zone, and I just mention that because your body develops these protective mechanisms.

Q: I found when I came back from Vietnam, when I would hear something, or a helicopter, you know, I mean, there were instincts, and I'd never really felt under tremendous threat, but you know, you just react.

TAYLOR: Well, I didn't sleep as well, because I was missing the night noise. When my children were there, my son developed a diary; he would sit up in protected windowsill and write a diary; he could identify the type of tanks, the type of shooting that was occurring just several blocks away on major thoroughfares. That was the environment.

Q: By December of that same year, when there was a freeze put on and all that, what was the banking environment as you saw it at that time vis a vis other countries?

TAYLOR: Well, the banks had a real mix of exposure. Unfortunately, a lot of them had longer term exposure, as the situation deteriorated in the fall they were trying to close out their short term exposure, and of course a good bit of the lending had sovereign guarantees, so that gave some degree of comfort to some banks, but if they faced a revolution they didn't know whether those debts would be honored or not. The biggest concern, as I alluded to earlier, was on the part of American firms that had equity relationships, because you don't redeem those in a period of civil disturbance; you've already elected to be in there for the long term. We had a constant flow of requests to the Embassy for our best information, our guidance as to what was happening. Before the government fell, there were already a multitude of incidents where workers would take action against management, including foreign management, to make demands, to voice their

perception of grievances. This frequently involved taking management officials hostage. So there was already a lot of turmoil in the community, and this is why a lot of firms were evacuating their people in the fall. The amazing thing is how the word wouldn't reach some people. We even had people sort of coming what the Department of Commerce would call, "new to market," making inquiries about opening trade, because the dominant word in some parts of the world was still that Iran was the booming economy, and you ought to develop trade there. So our advice continued until the time I left June 30 of '79. It had to meet three different audiences: those who were still opening trade for investment with Iran, those who had trade or contract relationships, and those who had equity relationships.

Q: Clyde, you're talking about dealing with different audiences asking for advice. Here you have an Embassy policy that doesn't want to destabilize the situation, and yet here you are as the person people come to, I'm thinking of American firms, saying, "What should we do? Is this a good place or not?" I would think that there would be a...you know, there's Embassy policy, yet there's common sense, and you're paid to give the best advice you can. What were you doing?

TAYLOR: During the period of actual turmoil in the fall, of course the events themselves really swamped advice that someone would offer; I mean, the world news and television was covering the fact that there were riots, and there were deaths, and military defections and fires and things like this, so that was a very strong message. Where your question takes greater significance is after the revolution, and we're trying to maintain ties; I'll get into that when we get into 1979. I was just amused that back in that period, though, that there would still be some people looking at entering the Iranian market. Most, of course, who were there, were concerned about cutting their losses, looking after their people. There was an anti-foreign surge that Khomeini and his people had driven, the kind of thing that resulted in the EDS Corporation people being held in jail, for example, but where the workers would accuse management and go to government and claim that there had been corruption and bribery and what have you. This started in the fall even when the government was still very fragile, and it became a real big feature after the government fell and you had the new Mehdi Barzagan government.

Let me return to...I'm out of Tehran now, I'm the only assigned person to Tehran who's not in Tehran, because I'd gone to this Treasury conference. The Iranian government fell and the Embassy asked me to delay my return until the security situation clarified. So I started working on the Iran task force in the Department. I read all the communications, including the tightly controlled ones. The Valentine's Day seizure of the Embassy is still not sufficiently appreciated for the seriousness of its threat to our employees. I've had hostages tell me that compared to their 444 days, that brief part of the day on February 14 when they were held was really the time they thought they were going to die, because some were lined up against the wall, and they thought they were going to be shot. So it was a very traumatic experience. As you know, it was negotiated, and the people finally left.

Do you remember, at that time the Ambassador to Afghanistan, "Spike" Dubbs was killed at the same time. And then in the aftermath of all this, we had evacuations throughout the Middle East and what you might call the Golden Crescent Islamic area. Well, back in the Department, of course there was intense focus on what was happening in Afghanistan and Iran. The President

and National Security Advisor Brzezinski, that we would seek to maintain relations with Iran and the revolutionary government, had decided the policy at the highest levels. This was done because we felt we had such strategic interests in the security of that area. We were concerned about the soft southern flank of the Soviet Union and their access to the Middle East oil. We felt that by establishing a relationship with the new government, we could put some brakes on what was becoming more and more evident, mainly an Islamic fundamentalist surge in that part of the world.

So the White House had not accepted the Department's view on this, or Ambassador Sullivan's view. Under Secretary of Political Affairs, David Newsom, from everything I know, was very much aligned with Ambassador Sullivan's view that during the fall of 1978 we should have been reaching out to the Khomeini forces and the more moderate military to try and arrange a coalition government. We might have been able to preserve the security structure by making concessions to the Khomeini Islamic group in terms of cultural/lifestyle issues, and thus prevent a hemorrhaging of the economy and of the country's people assets by emigration. This would also have involved at least a temporary departure of the Shah. As I said earlier, those views were rejected in all or large part by the White House, the main reason being that Ambassador Zehedi, the Shah's son-in-law, prevailed on Brzezinski with contrary views, characterizing all as a passing sort of cycle in Iran, and that the Shah really could re-exercise control whenever he chose to.

In any event, in reading the cables from Iran and trying to appreciate the status of our people there, certainly the feeling among the rank and file of us in the Department was that the policy of trying to maintain relations with this new regime was a mistake. And certainly if we did it we shouldn't be approving the size of Embassies that we were approving. We were not giving enough attention to the security factors of the Embassy.

This came to a head when the American Foreign Service Association requested a meeting with the Department's management; the Under Secretary was Benjamin Reed at the time. I remember being asked by AFSA to attend this meeting where they would be discussing particularly management and security policies in Kabul and Tehran. So I agreed to come. I remember it like it was yesterday. We went into a conference room at the Department and Ben Reed was there and he had head of Security; it may have been Carl Ackerman, I'm not certain. But he had all of his senior people in management on one side of the table, and AFSA was on the other, I was asked to sit next to the president of AFSA, which surprised me. And then when the meeting began, Ben Reed said, "Now, AFSA, you requested this, the floor is yours." And AFSA turned to me and said, "Well, our lead speaker is Clyde Taylor, who is assigned to Tehran, and who's been back here for the last month," and I was floored.

Well, something I had seen recently was very much on my mind, and so I used that as my presentation. I had seen a very tightly controlled cable from Ambassador Sullivan that listed his 10 priorities; none of the 10 related to achieving the security of the compound. We knew from being in a constant telephonic linkage to the Embassy, and from reporting, that there were three competing Revolutionary Guard forces inside the Embassy compound. One had occupied the Residence and was living on the first floor, and the other two were watching the perimeter and

interior of the compound. They went where they wanted, they were ripping off the commissary, and they were walking at will within the Chancery. And they were at a not always low level of warfare against each other. Under any objective assessment of that Embassy, it was not an Embassy. An Embassy has to have an integrity that permits the operations by the foreign government in a secure way that is uninhibited by foreign factors, and this was not the case. I have been told that you'd just look up from your desk, and there would be one of these Revolutionary Guards in your office. They were inspecting people's material when they came to work, they had intimidated our FSN's so that almost none of them were working. So I, when I spoke to this meeting, went over this, and said that I found this really unfortunate and inappropriate, that our number one concern, if we wanted to maintain any diplomatic presence there, to securing the integrity of our Mission. The message went over very well.

Forget that scene, because nothing came immediately out of that meeting. There had been already a request from the Shah, who was in exile, to come to the United States for medical treatment. Ambassador Sullivan had been asked his view. He sent in a turgid response that was so strong that Department leadership said they couldn't use it with the White House or in the Congress because it was such an angry cable, and in fact, it was saying, the idea was stupid beyond belief. But Sullivan took a very strong position that you could not simultaneously have seek to maintain a Diplomatic Mission and then do something as self-damaging as admitting the Shah, which would immediately jeopardize your Diplomatic Mission and its personnel. It was a very strong message, but I read it, and the language was deliberately intemperate, because Ambassador Sullivan had let his Irish temper be verbalized in that message.

I mention this because I was asked when I returned to the Embassy to meet with the Ambassador and ask him, and plead with him, to send another message, one that would present his views, but in a more user-friendly way. And I went back on March 5; this was about four weeks after the government had fallen. I was the first person to go in - I believe I was - after the government had fallen.

That's worth a little diversion and story. I was met at the airport by the head of the major Revolutionary Guard force; his name was Mashala. Occupationally a butcher, he had been a guard in the prison when Khomeini was held as a prisoner, and they had developed a friendship; this was back in the '60s. After Khomeini had his triumphant return in January, Mashala became a man of some note, and he was on the front cover of Newsweek and Time with Ambassador Sullivan. Well, my colleagues back at the Embassy had told him about my return, and they had said that I was a very devout Christian, and since Muslims, at least in theory, respect Christians, because we are seen as "people of the Book," and revere all but one of the same Prophets, Mashala insisted that he was going to meet me at the airport. So here's this fellow, he's about 5'4" and about as wide. At that point, this group had appropriated about 80 percent of our large motor pool, and he was driving one of the cars himself. After I cleared the airport and was welcomed by some colleagues, I found myself with the honor of going back to the Embassy with him driving. I was in the front seat of the car; no one else was with us. He never came to a full stop in the entire...what is it, about seven miles...from Merabad Airport to the Embassy, usually doing about 55-60, one hand on the horn. From my point of view, I'm 6'2", I didn't think he could barely see out the window, he was so short. I had long ago accustomed to Tehran driving,

which I still think is the worst in the world, and did not have white knuckles, but I did have them that day. That was my return.

I returned to my house and relieved my Sri Lankan houseboy and found him a job with the Irish Chargé. I removed all my effects, all that I could, and brought my car down to the Embassy. The first day I appeared for work, the next morning, I came to the back gate, and here was a Revolutionary Guard, who told me to open my briefcase. I told him I wouldn't. We had a standoff, and I at least convinced him to accompany me to the RSO, and I told the RSO that this was an Embassy compound, and I was not about to be opening my briefcase to a non-U.S. Government employee. Well, I mention this because being the first person to go into what was still a traumatized embassy, this was a very telling experience. From then on, I kept encountering situations that were just unacceptable and bizarre, and I felt I was useful as someone who had not been through that terrible Valentine's Day experience, of putting my foot down and saying, "This ought to be stopped, we've got to make this correction."

Well, I met with the Ambassador on the request for another cable, and he just laughed; he said no way was he going to send another cable, the Department would live with this cable, period. In the course of time before the Ambassador left, I and several others met with him to try and argue for actions that would resolve the insecurity of the Embassy; these three guard forces that we were finding increasingly were drawing fire from the outside, were in strong friction with each other inside the compound. The Homafar group, young military technical personnel that were mainly in their teens, were doing such things as shooting over the heads of our Marine guards as they would do their morning run inside the compound. Mashala was known for not being able to shoot straight. They all had weapons; RSO had at least tried to teach them how to use their weapons. One revolutionary shot his own foot; I mean, some of them couldn't hit the lid of a garbage can three or four meters, but they were all armed, as was the entire city, having liberated about 400,000 small arms. We learned shortly that these revolutionaries inside the compound were going into the area where we ran the minimal consular operations, mainly to help some key people with visas. We learned that they were copying the names and numbers of passports and what have you, which was very much endangering the Iranians; and yet, we weren't able to stop that.

They were going into our commissary and robbing us blind; they were taking 10 percent off the top of the sale of a lot of the things that were being disposed of that were in excess. It was really an untenable situation. The argument made by Ambassador and DCM was that our best protection from other outside revolutionary forces was by having these forces inside the compound, the reasoning being that their status with us gave them status, they had their piece of territory to protect, it involved protecting our lives and our operations, and therefore the Ambassador had no intention of making this a major issue with the Barzagan government.

Q: By the way, were any of the other embassies having the same trouble, or was it just the U.S.?

TAYLOR: No, no, it was just the U.S. Well, the New Zealand Embassy did have some problems, and they sent all their people out, and then they came back, and later the other embassies had problems. But during this period in the first months of 1979, really, the focus was on us. So we

made this attempt to try and get the internal security situation looked at. Things improved to the extent that we were able to at least operate inside the Chancery without the guards walking around. When I went back to my office, I noticed that there had been what looked like a 50 caliber machine gun bullet went right over my desk chair; had I been sitting there, and it was lodged up in the wall. We had mounted a very strong barrier in the Embassy after the Valentine's Day incident that would protect the whole Marine guard desk from anything as powerful as 50 caliber. We secured the downstairs entry by putting cabinets against the door with full sandbags, secured windows, and I remember having to live in my office with sandbags going up halfway on all the windows to the point where all the plants I'd brought in from home died from lack of sunlight.

When I returned I was the Senior Economic/Commercial Officer. The Counselor had left. After the Ambassador left, and Charlie Naas became Chargé, I was the second ranking person. The biggest immediate work challenge was the fact that our FSNs weren't working; they had been intimidated at the gates and were not employed; we were still trying to pay them. And so I tried to address that question as to how we could employ them; a lot of them were on the Commercial side, and of course, we didn't have businessmen there to serve. I'm still pleased with the idea that developed for bringing them back. And it was difficult to communicate with them all, but telling them we expected them back and we wanted to honor their loyalty and pay them and engage them; we knew it would be essential that we keep them busy. So we brought them back and had them update the World Trade Directory Reports. Now, that might sound like a crazy idea for anyone knowing that standard Department of Commerce report that talks about the status of businesses, but stay with me a second, and it proved to be a brilliant stroke.

We brought them back, and we parceled out the names of companies and had our FSNs start calling around. Well, this accomplished many things: it supported our policy that we wanted our presence known, that we were going to be there for the long haul. Imagine being an Iranian manufacturer, banker, retailer, what have you, and getting a phone call from the Commercial Section of the American Embassy in that environment. Too, since a lot of the people we were calling would have been moderate, probably not pro-Khomeini people, it gave them a sense of encouragement, which was another reason why we were there; we were supposed to be there to give moral support to the Barzagan moderate government; we were supposed to be there to avoid leaving a political vacuum that the Soviets could fill, and I think some of this has been lost in the literature. Before that, we were also there to protect this very sizeable U.S. business exposure, billions of dollars in loans and equity. We were there to try and preserve a security situation, because we viewed Iran as strategically important. But next and last factor is one that I've not seen given much play, and yet, I think it was the principal reason that the White House decided to keep an embassy there, certainly one of that size, and that was to protect the minorities in Iran. There were populations of Ba'hai, who were considered heretics of Islam; there was an Armenian community of a couple hundred thousand, maybe; a Jewish community of maybe 100,000 and a few thousand other Christians. These three groups, the Jewish, the Armenian, and the Ba'hai, were extremely vocal and active in Washington in asking our government, asking our Congress to protect their civil liberties, their status in this period of turmoil, and that is clearly a humanitarian thing. But I don't think the degree of that pressure has been recognized as we saw it played out.

So anyway, in that environment, our FSNs came back and started calling businesses. We not only advertised our presence, our filling that vacuum, our being there, but we acquired very interesting information for our assessments. We would find out if a firm was in fact operating, and if so, at what level. Were they getting their supplies, what were their inventories like, were they doing any banking, how did they do their outstanding contracts. All these kinds of questions gave us some very interesting grist for our reporting, and at the same time, our FSNs felt vital again, and engaged in the Embassy. So I don't want to over exaggerate that this was a beautiful thing, but it served a lot of purposes. At the same time, I was asked to call on more than half of the Cabinet, the Ministerial level, to communicate our policy. We acknowledged that we were seen as having been aligned with the Shah's government, we recognized that there was a new government, we wanted to take into account the government's new policies, particularly their emphasis on the agrarian economy, their new value system, and we were prepared to adjust to the new realities. We wanted very much to help Iran protect its territories, sovereignty. We respected their sovereignty; we would be there to help them in their economic issues and what have you. Whether we agreed with the policy or not, we carried it out to our best abilities.

This was a fascinating experience. For one thing, there were more green cards, that is, people who had permanent residency status in the United States, in the Cabinet, in the post-Shah Cabinet, than there ever had been. I remember calling on Mahadi, the new Minister of Commerce. He was a very pro-Khomeini Iranian. He was still operating an export-import business out of Manhattan, New York; he was a green card holder, very anti-U.S.

The meeting that stands out the most was with the new Minister of Agriculture; he had his Ph.D. from the University of Washington, had been in the States somewhere like 26 years. I remember he said to me even before I introduced myself and made some introductory statements, "Well, Mr. Taylor," in flawless English, he said, "Which government of the United States do you represent?" Having been around there a little while, I knew which way this person was going, and I said, "Well, I represent the only government we have in Washington." He said, "No, you're absolutely wrong, and you know it. There is the Jewish government in the United States, and then there is the pretend government of the United States, the one that doesn't have any power. There is the Jewish media and there is the one that pretends to be objective." And he delivered himself at length on his views that our Jewish citizens of the United States had the more powerful economy and government and what have you. I managed to deliver some of our message and then in a very civil said, "Mr. Minister, I sincerely regret that you were in our country so long and yet you learned so little about us."

But it was interesting, though, to meet with these people who were so Western in their education and not surprisingly, though, they were part of that very anti-Shah group that had been demonstrating for years in the United States. At the same time, we saw a flowering of English language newspapers in Tehran. A lot of these Iranians who had been either self-appointed exiles or real exiles because of their anti-Shah activities now returned because they thought that democracy was in full bloom; a lot of them did not have Farsi verbal skills. So they were producing newspapers in English, and it was interesting to watch even in the not quite six months...I was only there about four and a half, I left June 30...the level of disillusionment that

was rapidly settling in among the thousands that came back.

At the same time, you had a massive emigration; estimates run as high as 2 million, and that is still the biggest loss Iran suffered by the revolution. It was that the cream of their society, their better educated, their doctors, their engineers, and their financial wizards, who left. But there was...you must appreciate the fact that they had this terrific, very optimistic group that returned, thinking that they could now participate in building a new Iran.

Q: Well, they came back with this idea, with the Embassy, particularly the line officers and all, I don't think ever were as taken, because they just didn't have the contact with the Shah and the family. Looking at that, was there any optimism within the reporting ranks that something might be happening?

TAYLOR: The Embassy staff was of two minds, certainly after the fall of the government. There were those that were sort of led by at that point the country director, who had been the political military counselor there, Henry Precht. He and they felt very strongly that we could have a bifurcated government in Iran, that the old Mossadegh National Liberation Front people, of whom Prime Minister Barzagan was representative, would be allowed to run the secular state; that they would be able to attract managers, economists and the technocracy to some extent as the Shah had had, and they would be able to restore the economic moorings and operate a secular government. Khomeini and the clergy would, but this view, agree to be allowed to operate in the cultural and value areas, which would show up in certainly some clashes in the area of censorship and what kinds of, maybe what range of political expression might be allowed. Certainly, you would have a rejection of a lot of the Western corruption that had been so widely advertised during the months of 1978 as having corrupted the Iranian youth and people. But there was a strong view that this was a viable possibility. And I don't want to come across as saying that it was so easy to take the other point of view, and I'm not an Islamic scholar.

But I was with those of the contrary view, not seeing a coexistence of a secular government with a Khomeini Islam as feasible. Khomeini was not then a widely read scholar outside Iran; he was not considered in Iran as a particularly a powerful intellect, but he had a very strong following, because he had taken a courageous stand against the Shah early on. But those who read his writings knew that he was really not a typical Shiite Muslim. The main difference between Sunni Islam and Shiite Islam is their approach to governance. And this is a simplistic statement, but the Sunnis believe in the integration of Church and State, and the Shiite Muslims do not. Khomeini was a variance, a departure from the traditional Shiite view, in that he espoused an integration of Church and State. Those also who had read him more thoroughly than I, who had just read some English translations of his writings, were influenced by that position when forecasting the prospects for Barzagan and the secular government to be able to operate in their own area and without interference. We did not see this as a recipe that was going to succeed.

Obviously, if you held the other view, you would be fortified in your belief that our diplomatic presence there was viable, that we could have an influence, that we could protect our contracts, our exposure, and that we would have a degree of influence on protecting minorities, and in securing the security apparatus, this terrific military that we had helped build in Iran. Well, this

was a debate within the Embassy. I would say that most of us...I should mention there was a massive evacuation, and we took a large embassy down to about 70 people. I smile here, because 70 is considered a medium size embassy, and most of us thought that that was very much too large, but when you look at it from the point of view of meeting those objectives that I listed, of political vacuum, security and watching the military situation, protecting the human rights, and advancing economic interests, all these things, and then you add to that the security component, because we did maintain the Marine guards and what have you, we could find work for 70 to do.

But nonetheless, we veterans felt strongly that we had too many people there. My political officer colleague John Stempel if not coined made popular the observation that what we really needed was one officer and a German Shepherd. A number of us thought we should have turned over our presence to an foreign embassy with a U.S. interests section at that point, because we viewed ourselves as being so integral to the revolution as to be distasteful to the Iranian revolution and thus ineffective. I mean, there was nothing said by the revolutionaries against the Shah that didn't almost in the same sentence include an epitaph against the United States. The daily demonstrations in front of the embassy railed "down with the Shah and the Satan Carter and United States." It was sad to see that a lot of the American wives had to prove their having voted with their feet to stay with their Iranian husbands by being out there and at your doors chanting anti-American slogans.

Anyway, we went through those months of early 1979 with what was, as I said before, not a real Diplomatic Mission, that we didn't have integrity. We were trying to achieve limited objectives with the Barzagan government, trying to exercise influence on the status of contracts to see that payments were made. In my role I was working very hard with Central Bank; most of the people had been changed at this point; to try and see that the payments were made against our huge FMS account.

Q: FMS?

TAYLOR: Foreign Military Sales. You know, a typical payment might be \$800 million. The last one of those payments that was made occurred because of an arrangement we had made that added some oral signatures to coded messages by banks that permitted the transfer, and the person that authorized it at the Central Bank then became one of the few I did an affidavit on to help get political asylum; a very courageous, intelligent person.

But we found increasingly evidence that the Barzagan government was impotent. It would come up with a program to rejuvenate the economy and nothing would happen. It'd come up with lines of credit to stimulate commerce, and those lines of credit weren't used. The Khomeini forces were either sustaining chaos or successfully frustrating the government. If the government tried to provide relief to those who had been affected by the revolution or what have you, the Khomeini people would provide their own relief lines and see that the government lines were frustrated, because they were vying for influence in society. You had at the same time, recall, parts of Iran that still were not totally responding to the central government, as Iran is full of factions. It was a very turbulent period.

Q: Did you and the embassy have a feeling that maybe the White House, Carter and Brzezinski, were being unrealistic or responding more to political pressure? The concern for the Jewish community, concern for the Armenian community and all, or just maybe personal ties to the wrong people or wrong advisers or something? One has the feeling that there was a White House looking at this, and there was the Department of State looking at this.

TAYLOR: Well, when you have a Diplomatic Mission in a country, and you have an array of U.S. private sector companies, a lot of them very prestigious, General Motors, Ford, DuPont, what have is an illusion that you can still exercise influence. The White House and the Hill just plain lacked the realistic perception that this U.S. exposure and presence was somewhere between being hogtied and impotent. The American Consul who would in a benign environment call the court or call the jail and ask, "Is John Doe there, are you holding him?" I wouldn't get through now, there would be no answer. I mean, a call from the Embassy, if they'd even been found out talking to the Embassy in a government office, could jeopardize your life. This was a time when...

I should have referred to this. When I came back on March 5, I still found an Embassy that was operating as if it were, to some extent, in the old environment. There were some people who were having lunches with Iranians and doing representational vouchers, giving all the information about the Iranians, failing to recall that we had no security in our files, and that our FSNs were under enormous pressure by the revolutionaries and they might reveal this. And I remember saying, "We have to operate as if we're in the Soviet bloc, and you put down 'Lunch with Iranian businessman,' or you put down 'Lunch with Iranian.' You don't start identifying people, because you're setting them up."

So there was a whole change in attitude that took awhile to develop. Anyway, there was this expectation in Washington that we had influence. I can remember the extent of how ludicrous some of this would occur. You would typically go to work in the morning and you would see a cable; I remember some would have well over a hundred names, where the Department would come and say, "You're asked to ascertain the welfare and whereabouts of..." These weren't Americans, these were the Iranians, Ba'hais, Armenians, Jews, and this became a predominant workload of our Embassy, this constant flow of cables asking us to ascertain the welfare and whereabouts of these Iranian minorities.

Q: I would think that just their asking would put them in greater jeopardy than they already were.

TAYLOR: Well, what we would tend to do, of course, we would go to the Jewish leaders and try and find out; we would go to the Ba'hai leaders if we could. That wasn't always easy, either; these people were under scrutiny, they were living in a reign of fear themselves, but no, we would not go to government and ask. We might feel secure with some people in the Bazagan government, certainly the Foreign Ministry, we might have some sense of security if someone were already in a judicial process, to make some inquiries. But what I want to emphasize is just the incongruity, I mean, just the bizarre nature of these types of requests, of thinking that the American Embassy was still exercising some influence and could affect the outcome of these

people's lives. I think we did an amazingly good job in responding to these lists. Yes, we could go in with information on some, but we could certainly go in with information about the environment in which, say, the Ba'hai community in Shiraz found itself. But all this just documents the view I had that this was one of the, maybe the prevailing reason for why we kept our Mission there.

Q: Lifestyle...

TAYLOR: Yes, in Tehran. I want to get into the implications of a very inappropriate personnel policy we had, and because we continued to do it, and we had dependence on volunteers. And then...I'll try and be careful on this, because you hate to criticize people, but when we veterans left, there was a real change in terms of attitudes at the Embassy.

Q: Well, let's go into that. Also, let me ask one question. This was a time when back in the States you were seeing arrows pointing through Iran and Afghanistan towards the Persian Gulf by the Soviets. The Soviet invasion and takeover of Afghanistan had started and looked like it was going to be a success. What were you all reporting about Soviet influence in Iran at that time? We're talking about Soviet armies could run down, and we were beginning to get ready to put forces in.

TAYLOR: Let me say a word about lifestyle. All of us, almost all of us, moved into an apartment house that was on a little alley at the back of the compound. I was on the first floor, on the street level. What was interesting, I would say on an average of four nights a week we would have revolutionaries come up that alley, going around the compound shooting in the air, sometimes lobbing grenades into our compound, all of which documented that these Revolutionary Guard factions inside the compound, which represented...the one in the Ambassador's Residence was alive with Bazagan, and then you had Mashala and his people were from a very central alignment with Khomeini, and then you had the Homafar, which came out of sort of the Warrant Officer class. They were the ones that led some of the defections, the early ones. They had three different factions, and enormous rivalry within all of Iran, but certainly inside this four- to five-million population Tehran. And so it bolstered the view of some of us that thought we were losing much more by having these competing Revolutionary Guards present inside the embassy compound; they were drawing fire from the outside. We did have high buildings on the sides of the compound, referred to by Ambassador Sullivan, that would make us vulnerable to sniper fire if we didn't have these guards, but that argument could go either way.

But what was clear from my first floor presence in this apartment was that I was within yards of teenagers carrying M-1s.

Q: M-1 being a rifle.

TAYLOR: Yes, and you get, to a certain extent inured to this shooting almost to the point where if you don't hear the noise you don't sleep well. But these were very hectic days; we typically were working, I'd say, 14-16 hours. We ran eight hours ahead of U.S. East Coast in time, so when I got home would be when the East Coast started working. I would get calls well into the night from U.S. companies, asking all manner of questions and wanting to talk about the situation. We

would sometimes to cook communally among us bachelors; we would maybe have some movies and things like this in the compound. General Gast was there on the compound with some of the military people, and the military had access to some store of entertainment. We had some of the military traditions, like a "dining in" event that they planned for us; there were things done to try and boost moral, but we were certainly confined in terms of what we could do outside the compound. I to this day honor those Iranians who were still hospitable during that period. I was invited to the homes of several. When I went, I would have an Embassy car take me within four to six blocks and wait until that driver was completely out of sight before I would walk to the house, and then I would return by taxi, to try and protect these treasured friends. Again, I don't know if other officers did this, but I think coming in from the outside so to speak on March 5, I found it perhaps more a given to operate with a changed mentality.

I remember very clearly when Senator Javits around Easter time in 1979 introduced a resolution in the Senate condemning the human rights atrocities by the new revolutionary government...

Q: Senator Javits was from New York.

TAYLOR: He was from New York, and his wife worked for Iran Air, so there was a lot of accusation that he was in a conflict of interest, that he was representing a pro-Shah form of government airline. What was very much known in Iran, of course, was that he was Jewish, and so his action was seen as an insult to the Iranian revolution even though what the resolution said was right on the money. The result was, we had our closest brush with what could have been another Embassy takeover, in late April.

We had an estimated 40,000 people demonstrating outside the Embassy. On any given day we would have hundreds out there, but this was the truly scary event. I had picked up an invitation, longstanding, from two officers with the Bank of America to go up to the Caspian on that weekend. I missed this event, which was described in great detail by my colleagues as very scary. But the visit to the Caspian was interesting. One of the bank officers had been in the Peace Corps in Iran, had very fluent Farsi, was married to an Iranian. He was going up to his in-laws' beach place on the Caspian. And I asked him, "There are a lot of roadblocks and what have you, what's it going to look for three Americans, one with Embassy credentials, traveling these roads?" They assured me that this was nothing to worry about, that we were going into areas where there wasn't this militancy, so I did go up there that weekend. Surprisingly I got an okay to travel from our RSO. It was a nice break from the tensions of the compound. One thing I'll always remember seeing on that trip had to do with caviar, to which I was somewhat addicted. Under the Shah, there was a fiercely strict conservation regime enforced that we saw had been completely reversed by the revolution. People were fishing the sturgeon freely and gutting them on the beaches. We bought superb quality caviar for the equivalent of maybe \$2.00 a hundred grams, right on the beach.

Anyway, that entire period was one of building disillusionment that the Barzagan government could succeed. They seemed to try a good range of reform efforts, including various to achieve economic rejuvenation, and nothing seemed to be working.

Meanwhile we were all well aware that the Department was trying hard to find a successor to Ambassador Sullivan, who had left. And Charlie Naas, the Chargé, was scheduled to leave. Ambassador Walt Cutler came through to look us over, having been the designated Ambassador-to-be. But because they were irritated by the Javits Resolution, Iranians withdrew their agreement.

So there was a desperate search to find at least a permanent Chargé. In the course of this, I was asked by the Charge if I would let him put my name forward as his replacement. I was completing a four-year tour, and felt like I'd done my duty and I was now going to be away from my family for five months, so I declined.

Then Ambassador Bruce Laingen was identified as the permanent Chargé. He and I overlapped for but two weeks. I remember the two Fridays he was there, because that was the tradition day of worship, the Christian having adjusted to the same day that the Moslems observed their day of worship. And the community Protestant church that I had gone to had been desecrated and taken over in the revolution. Since our pastor was still in Tehran, we were having services on the German Embassy compound, where they had a chapel. And Bruce Laingen and I, for the two Fridays we were there together, went to services there. I mention this because of the irony of it. My "friend," Revolutionary Guard chief Mashala, who you'll recall respected a religious observance, personally provided us with his escort of confiscated or appropriated motor vehicles, and guards with their Israeli Uzi machine guns and dressed in fatigues. It must have been an incongruous sight to see this motorcade of cars arriving at the German compound and these Revolutionary Guards leaping out with their Uzis providing escort for two American diplomats going to church. It's something that still brings a smile to me when I recall it. One who puts a value on preparing oneself for worship would see the challenge in this, that you'd be delivered by these revolutionaries almost to the door of the church. But that was part of all these beautiful contrasts that occurred there.

I've talked about our lifestyle. I want to talk about the personnel policy, because it was a very wrong one, and one that continues to this day in many circumstances where we have a very difficult Mission. Here we had made a decision not only to keep the Embassy, but to keep a sizeable embassy functioning under very a difficult situation. We were being staff-starved in key areas as people's tours ended, and everyone knew we were going to get in this situation. What we found was, to our increasing frustration, that any attempts to recruit, to line up replacements, particularly Foreign Service people, because other agencies had their problems, too, were being frustrated by our personnel system. We had a woman who was scheduled to replace our sole section secretary to serve the now reduced section of four officers. And we had actually received her first travel message, in I think the December-January period, before the government fell. We were watching her progress and were surprised that we didn't get a cable saying that she had managed to curtail her assignment. Then we received the second travel message which indicated she was coming, and she actually came, even after the Embassy had been taken in February. She told that she been called a number of times by her Career Development Officer and her Assignments Officer, who tried to get her to reconsider, to curtail her assignment, saying that she was crazy to go to a place like this.

Well, I mention that because it was incumbent upon me to try and see that the staffing of the

Economic and Commercial Section continue, as it was on other parts of the Embassy to try and assure that we were going to have successors. I could see that by late spring (I left June 30) that no one had been identified to replace any of us. That could mean that by September, when Barbara Schell would leave, we would have no section. I specifically went in with a proposal that was endorsed by at that point probably the Chargé that the Department look at tandem couples without children or with children who could be in boarding schools. This was an Embassy of sufficient size that we could get assign tandem officers in separate sections. We were trying to get the Department to do some strong marketing or directed assignments. We also urged the Department to do some directed assignments to make certain we got the good quality people. To our disappointment, the Department stayed with a voluntary assignment policy, and one that was not very proactive in terms of trying to fill out the approved staffing with good folk.

Now, what does this produce? We were a Class One Mission, the largest category of Missions that also reflected a degree of identified U.S. interests. The Department did not change that category, and that category and size of mission drives the staffing pattern, so that Section Chiefs were at what now would be the Minister Counselors, the old FSO-1 level, where you had not only danger pay but the old 10 percent differential we had been getting due to pollution. So you had high allowances, you had family visitation after three months, and a mission with inflated position classification and diplomatic titles. What effect did this have? This attracted three types of people, and I don't want to make judgments about the actual individuals who served in that time. I'm talking here in generalizations as to what tended to motivate people to extent or to come there on either permanent or TDY basis. You had some who came to save a career; knowing that value is usually given to not just how well you work in the Foreign Service, but where and under what circumstances.

Q: Where you get extra points for being in difficult places.

TAYLOR: Exactly. People pay attention to the fact that you were in the front line in Viet Nam, or what have you, or you were in a mission that was under siege. And if your career was in the doldrums, there were people motivated to come to Tehran who thought that they could save their career.

There were some who thought that, certainly in the earlier days, but even now, that they might save a family situation, even by being apart. And we had a couple of tandems stay or come, think that might be good for their marriage.

But quite clearly, the strongest motivation was from those who came to save money - you couldn't spend it - but also to acquire a performance record in a job that bucked you up you considerably, because no one was assigned there higher than what is now the O-1, in days the O-3 rank.

Q: Equivalent to Colonel.

TAYLOR: And yet they were serving in jobs that were one and two ranks higher; certainly, if they were Section Chiefs. What also happened is that certainly by summer, you were losing

veterans. If you look at the people who were held hostage, apart from Vic Tomseth and Mike Metrisko and some military people, you had a large number who had arrived in the summer. Now, these motivations naturally affect attitudes that show up on the job. And I don't want, again, to say that X officer was guilty of this, I'm speaking in generalizations, because I think it's worthy to look at this because you have unintended consequences from a personnel policy.

When I made my weekly assessment and reissued the guidance to businesses, those who would still be "first to market," those who had contracts and those who had equity, I can honestly say I did it with no relevance to my status, because I knew I was going to complete my four-year tour there in the summer, and I was prepared to leave any day. In fact, in the chat within the Embassy, particularly as we focused on the potential for the Shah entering the United States, a number of us had said, "That's when we buy our own flight ticket, if the Department doesn't give us one." There were a number of us who felt that, because while we carried out our policies, in our hearts we didn't. In our work, we did; in our hearts, we thought that we were there in a mistaken policy. So we weren't there at that point wanting to complete a performance cycle, wanting to complete a year to save money, wanting to complete a year so we could save our career or what have you. And I think that the departure of the veterans had a profound effect on things.

I'll give you an example. Within almost days after I left on June 30, companies in the U.S. had tracked me down to my home in Washington and were asking my views about Embassy policy, because suddenly they were getting guidance that was changed almost 180 degrees from that put out when I was there. I think it is known generally that in the week in which the Embassy was taken in November of '79, we had families en route, dependents en route to return to Iran, or to go to Iran for the first time. Why was this? Because among the new cadre of people there were those who felt that any day that there was not a crisis, that there was not an outbreak of security problems, that was evidence that security was improving. And I can tell you that among the veterans, there would have been if not a consensus, there would have been a majority view that that didn't tell you anything. That just meant that the Khomeini folks' targets were still internally focused; that they were fighting among themselves. We believed as a virtual absolute that the entry of the Shah would be enough of a trigger to just...

Q: The entry of the Shah to the United States for medical treatment.

TAYLOR: Exactly. It wasn't that any of us felt that we shouldn't show a humanitarian gesture, it's just that we felt you can't have your cake and eat it, too. If you wanted to exercise that humanitarian gesture, then you ought to close your Tehran diplomatic mission; you could not do two things. You can't see an anti-American feeling brought to the forefront by taking care of the Shah and expect that the Iranian populace was going to respect the rights and movements and operations of 70 people in Tehran, or other Americans there.

So to repeat, I think we pursued a flawed personnel policy, and it was difficult to staff. There were people there that were still on TDY status, but anyway, enough said on that.

I want to give honor here before we leave Iran to Bruce Laingen. He very quickly seized the problem of the Embassy's integrity. When he arrived in June '79, he found an embassy still with

three competing groups of Revolutionary Guards inside the compound, ripping us off, stealing, going at will around the property, and he used perhaps the one leverage that was there all along, to address it. The Iranians were extremely desirous that we resume consular operations. They wanted their people to be able to travel; those that they would approve to travel. And so he used that chit to establish one, approved Iranian guard operation for the Embassy compound that would be under our authority and operate under our terms. And I really give him credit for that. And to my knowledge, that was operating by sometime in July, within about a month or so after he'd arrived.

Do you have any questions about Iran?

Q: How did we see the Soviet threat? It seemed like the Soviet Union was on the move at this time, particularly with Afghanistan, things in Africa and all that. Within the United States, there was a feeling that maybe the Soviets are going to do something. But how did you all feel about it?

TAYLOR: Well, by saying that there was an enormous attention to the protection of minorities, I certainly don't want to diminish the attention given, certainly by our strategic thinkers in Washington to the geopolitical and Soviet issue. We had in Iran under the Shah, what was it, the world's the fifth largest military. They had the third largest C-140 fleet in the world - U.S., Germany, and I think Iran was next. We had an awful lot of security apparatus there that could fall into the wrong hands. Certainly Iran had a big oil/gas industry and reserves. You're absolutely right; the Soviets did seem to be on the march. There was a lot of concern, and of course, our intelligence capabilities diminished enormously after the fall of the government, but there were all kinds of rumors and stories as to what efforts and successes were being achieved by the old Iranian communist Tudeh Party in that still stirring pot as to who was going to achieve ascendancy and strong influence on the Barzagan government.

There were, within the Islamic community, those that felt that they could have at least an alliance with the Communists against the U.S., but the dominant Khomeini people were not in favor of that, and that's what finally won out. Also, the Tudeh Party had its own factions; it tended to be very dated old Marxist in its leadership, and so it had its revolutionary element that was also there and hard to track.

There was an aspect of what was happening there that I may have referred to in an earlier sitting, and that was that the Iranians represented in my experience the country that most adhered to the hidden hand theory; that is that their fate was determined by exogenous forces, that they had little role in what happened. So it was that discounting that tendency, their view often bordered on the incredulous. It was amusing to witness in the early period in 1979 the number of serious senior Iranians who still believed the United States was in control. I can remember people who had been at the Under Secretary level or owners of companies who were still in Iran, hadn't fled yet, in those early months of '79. When you would speak to them, they would say, "What's happening to your plans? I mean, you obviously saw this Soviet threat in the area, you saw the resurgence of Islam, you saw the weakening of the Shah, and it's a pretty interesting strategy you U.S. have, to support the Islamic revival as the best bulwark against the Soviets. But it looks like your man

Khomeini is out of control; when are you going to rein him in; he's now really doing some damage to Western interests."

And I'm not putting words into these conversations. We had many of them that ran this route, and after I returned to the U.S. and kept in touch with Iranian friends, I was still getting this belief that this was still part of our plan, and it's just so typically Iranian. As I may have said earlier, I only know one Iranian, at the level of power broker, at the end he was a Minister and briefly head of the Central Bank, who told me that he does hold the Iranian society accountable for not having filled political vacuums and opportunities and what have you. I'm talking about Iranians here who had the benefits of two cultures; most of them had their Ph.D.s in the West, but they had deep roots, had grown up and had worked many years in Iran; they weren't among those who couldn't speak Farsi. No, these were in leadership roles in Iran, who held these views.

Q: One further question before we go, because the gentleman keeps cropping up in American political life, and that's since you were dealing with commercial stuff, can you talk about your experiences, if you had any, with Ross Perot?

TAYLOR: Well, I have read the book, seen the movie, what is it, *The Eagles Have Landed*, is it?

Q: Something like that. It's about escape from Iran.

TAYLOR: I think it's *The Eagles Have Landed*. That's an outrageous episode; it's a story of individual courage, but of inane bluster and chauvinism on the part of a U.S. company. Some background first. It would have been difficult for any U.S. company or foreign company to operate successfully in Iran without engaging in what someone could have called bribery. We know how difficult it is to define bribery. Paying for a service - when does that cross the line and become bribery? In Iran, there was a general reference to the Shah's brother; the Shah's brother was infamous for having his 10 percent in a lot of concessions and joint ventures. So when EDS says that they were not guilty, they were innocent of the charges of corruption and bribery which the revolutionaries accused them of in that 1978 period and which resulted in the incarceration of I think three of their executives, Americans, and their passports being held by the Embassy, that's a debate. I would not take a prima facie case that they were guilty, neither would I take one that they were innocent; I'd want to know what the criteria were for judging it. But they were not alone. There were a lot of foreign executives, U.S. and other Westerners, who were accused of this because in the environment that was going on, everyone was questioning authority; a lot of management groups were under attack.

At the time Ross Perot planned and executed the escape of EDS' three executives, shortly after the Shah's government fell, the Embassy had as one of its highest priorities to make arrangements for the orderly departure of some 10,000 Americans and dependents that wanted to leave. There was another batch that were married into Iran's society that stayed. This was a very high priority. Now, recall that when the government collapsed, all the police and precincts and security posts in Tehran had been overrun and an estimated 400,000 arms ended up in the hands of private citizens. The Revolutionary Committees/ Khomitees became sort of like neighborhood governments. When you went to move your personal effects, let's say you got them into a truck

and you had an arrangement to take them to the airport where they would go maybe on a U.S. C-141, you would find that as you moved from neighborhood to neighborhood there would have to be payments, and there would be things written on the containers to indicate that that this has now been approved to go from this Khomite into another neighborhood. It was a gerrymandered situation; there were competing governments, it was not a stabilized situation.

We had worked with the Barzagan government to put together mechanisms for the orderly departure of people and their possessions. Remember, the figure was some 10,000. When Perot pulled off this rescue mission, going into a major prison in Tehran and getting the three executives out and over the Turkish border, he effectively shut down that entire agreement. Of course that is not in his book, it is not in their movie, it's not been much in the press, that this "heroic action" to save three people jeopardized 10,000 Americans, and it was only through heroic efforts that we were able to keep that arrangement, to restore that arrangement, because the Iranians took this as a great insult to their revolutionary integrity and apparatus. I'm not one who admires that rescue operation.

Q: Well, you left June 30, 1979. Where'd you go?

TAYLOR: Well, you remind me of the departure itself. In the revolutionary time, when I would do an awful lot of briefing of journalists, I remember one time I was called by Ambassador Sullivan, and he said, "I'm hearing from people how you're describing the revolution," and I was afraid that my cleverness had caught up with me. I was telling people that the three pillars of the revolution were greed, hate, and hypocrisy, but I was doing that with serious analysis: it was a new group that wanted their turn at the till, that was the greed; the hate was a very deep hatred by the anti-Shah people, both the liberal political side and the very conservative Islamic side; and the hypocrisy was, of course, the very conspicuous use of religion to justify the actions taken. And Sullivan chuckled; he liked it.

I recall that because you're talking about my departure. I arrived at Merabad Airport allowing four hours to leave. Merabad inside was a crush of people. There was, in fact, if barely recognizable snake line that would take you up to the counters run by the Revolutionary Guards that you had to pass through before you ever got through to the immigration tables. I would have never gotten on the plane, even though I'd allowed four hours, except for an entrepreneur porter with a dolly who made his livelihood as others did of helping foreigners - and getting a lot of money from them - by jumping into the queue. I was fortunate that one of these encountered me, and having already taken up the leather luggage belonging to some Italian businessman, and he saw this other foreigner and thought I would add to his take that day. I was down to about 600 rials, which was about \$4.00 or something at that point. He threw my luggage on and he jumped the line up to these Revolutionary Guards and almost spat when I gave him all the money I had left. I got to that table, and I saw what I had heard about now happening: the Revolutionary Guards were making everyone open everything they had, take off your boots; in the case of women, open your purses, and then just frankly confiscating anything that was Iranian. They were taking your jewelry, they were taking rugs, they'd certainly go through any files you had. All of this, they said, belonged to the Iranian people. Well, I just had clothes and stuff; they weren't interested in that, obviously I wasn't taking anything back of Iranian identity. But they

were demanding to open my suitcases, and I was standing there waving my diplomatic passport, because we had been told by the Barzagan government that our visas were still recognized as valid, and so they just kept ignoring me, and I kept standing there and telling them I wasn't going to open my suitcase. And they finally got tired of me because I guess I was blocking lines, and after about 20 minutes let me go. When I got on the British airlines flight, it was rather poignant that one seat was vacant because one of the passengers had had a heart attack and died in the airport. I don't know what the temperature was, with this packed humanity, but I was soaking wet from my underwear and socks out. It was quite an experience; and we passengers were all glad when we took off, later clapping when told we'd left Iranian air space.

GEORGE LAMBRAKIS
Deputy Chief of Mission
Tehran (1976-1979)

George Lambrakis was born in Illinois in 1931. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1952, he went on to earn both his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1953 and his law degree from Tufts University in 1969. His career has included positions in Saigon, Pakse, Conakry, Munich, Tel Aviv, and Tehran. Mr. Lambrakis was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2002.

LAMBRAKIS: Roy Atherton told me I should go to Iran, and I went along. Iran was very quiet at the time.

Q: You were there from when to when?

LAMBRAKIS: I was there from 1976, late September, through the revolution, until April '79. The revolution started at the end of '78. February '79 was when the Shah left.

Q: Well then when you arrived, what was the situation as you saw it?

LAMBRAKIS: Well the Shah seemed to be in great control of things because in 1953 he had taken control. He had a strong SAVAK in control. The military were very powerful. When I first arrived, I asked the CIA station to see the file on the communist party, the Tudeh. They said, "We don't have any." They don't exist anymore. They have gone abroad." So what are the problems? Well there are these two radical groups that occasionally assassinate an American. Actually, since we were driven back and forth from the embassy to work, we kept changing our routes and doing it at different times so as not to be picked off by anybody. But these terrorists seemed to be not very powerful, and not very popular. Those times, you must remember, in the '70s, there were left wing groups all around the world doing this kind of thing. The Shah seemed in control. What we then got involved in was the Carter human rights policy which was pressing the Shah on human rights.

One of the interesting things about Iran was that I only heard two people ever defend the Shah. Of all his huge number of ministers, big businessmen, and others that I met, only two ever defended him, and that was in a meeting with the American and British ambassadors and me sitting in. We were six people. Apart from that, every time we went to visit a minister or an official lower down they would say keep doing what you are doing, pushing for human rights. Everybody assumed that you could safely push for human rights without the regime tumbling, and we did. Of course what followed was the famous article in a newspaper m'Qum (ordered by the Shah) attacking Khomeini, which set on a series of protests, which were put down by force, which 40 days later resulted in memorials for the people killed in other parts of Iran, which were again put down by force and resulted in further memorial riots. This kind of built up. But even in the summer before the revolution, I went on home leave; the ambassador went on home leave. We didn't really think that this regime was unstable.

Q: When you arrived there, you know I have heard that the Shah had reached an agreement with us that we were not to report on the internal affairs. Did you find yourself under constraints?

LAMBRAKIS: When you say that, that is not it exactly. First of all I don't think there was anything like an agreement. We reported on internal affairs. We openly saw the protests, the left wingers, and the non-violent lawyers and so on, some of whom were beaten up by the Shah's men and things of that sort. We would do things like organize parties to which we would invite them and see them in the context of a party. The only time that the Shah intervened was when John Stempel, my deputy (I was political counselor), and I started visiting a middle man who would put us into contact with the religious people. He was a Bazaari, and the Bazaaris and the religious people were close. We had trouble getting to the religious people. They would not see us directly. We did this semi-openly. We simply drove to the man's home in cars ourselves. We did not try to make this a CIA operation. We drove there, talked to this guy. He would bring in guests, and we drove back. But of course the Iranians picked it up, and the Shah brought it up with the ambassador and said, "Why are you seeing the opposition?" The ambassador said it was necessary. We would continue doing it, period. My first ambassador was Helms, the former director of CIA. Then he left. There was a five month interim with Chargé d'affaires Jack Miklos, in which I was the acting DCM. Then Charlie Naas came as DCM under the new ambassador, Bill Sullivan, who had come from East Asia, and who brought a new CIA director there who was very quiet, to the point that a lot of people thought I was the CIA station chief. (Members of the French community there are still convinced of that.) We were at that point worried, but not seriously, about what might happen.

Q: Did you have, then there wasn't this thinking about you are not supposed to report on dissident moods and so on.

LAMBRAKIS: Well the Shah didn't like us meeting the opposition, but frankly there wasn't that much opposition to meet because the religious people wouldn't meet with us, and as it turned out they were the serious opposition. Mind you there were the remnants of the Mossadegh period whom we did meet. Actually John Stempel had more meetings with them than I did. I met some of them; he met some of them; other people met some of them. We reported on it. As it turned out, you know, the Shah tried to make them the heads of government and it didn't last. In 1953

the religious movement had come on the side of the Shah after sitting on the fence because they were anti-communist. In 1963, when the Shah carried out his White Revolution, he attacked them where it hurt, and threw some in jail. One of their leaders, Khomeini, eventually got kicked out of the country. All of that turned them, radicalized them, but even as late as '75, '76, '77, '78, there was a pro Shah religious group and an anti-Shah religious group. The Shah talked about the Blacks and the Reds together against him, and he was right, because they were working in parallel together. It reminds me a little bit of Weimar Germany where the left and the right worked against the center. He made a big mistake in getting Saddam Hussein to kick Khomeini out of Iraq. Khomeini went to Paris where he had much better communication with Iran by telephone, and carried out the revolution by telephone. I think that is the first and only telephone revolution we have had.

Q: Were we aware, I mean was Khomeini in our sights particularly?

LAMBRAKIS: Yes, up to a point. Well as Charlie Naas, once said, "In the old days, when the SAVAK was a little more brutal, Khomeini would never have made it to Paris. As he was leaving his home in Iraq a truck would have been coming in the other direction, and that would have been the end of him." But at this point you see, the Shah was very ill. We didn't know it. (Even the French embassy didn't know it, though he was being treated by a French doctor.) He was preparing for his son to take over. He wanted to get rid of all possible opposition. The Shah was doing this and he was not being as brutal as the SAVAK might have been in the past. I think it has always been peculiar that all the people that he sent to America and elsewhere for education were against him, all the students. Why, because he was a dictator, but a fairly benevolent one. I am reminded, that the New York Times, which had kept a bureau in Tehran, decided nothing was happening and closed it at the end of 1977, at the time that Carter came and talked about the stability in Iran compared to the instability in the region. Two months later was the beginning of the revolution. It was much later that the New York Times had to send Nick Gage from Athens to cover the revolution. He came to people like myself and others to get contacts.

Q: Was there a point where you said there is a revolution going on?

LAMBRAKIS: There was the so-called Jaleh Square massacre in September which happened just as I returned from home leave, in which the opposition claimed there were thousands killed. In fact there were probably a few hundred killed. That was a very serious event, and it led to the Shah changing his government and appointing a military government. We knew then that things were very serious. Let's face it, from February, 1978, on we knew that a revolution of some kind could occur, and what we were working for was to deal with the religious people and to see if the loyal religious people could overcome the opposition religious people because we didn't want to see the Shah overthrown. On the other hand when the key moment came, whether we should push the Shah to use the military against his people, I wrote a cable which said on behalf of the embassy, "We don't want to be remembered as the people who pushed the Shah to kill his own people, which we will always be remembered as." This was the time when Somoza in Nicaragua had turned his army on his people and lost. But at the same time we were aware that something was brewing, and we were trying to head it off by meeting left wingers and others, by pushing the

Shah to stop torture, to stop whatever else was being done. In other words somehow to mollify his rule and get the opposition people involved. So, yes, we thought a revolution could take place but was unlikely if we managed this way.

After Jaleh Square, I think that is when we began to be scared because when you start putting in a military government and throwing out your best politicians, and turning some of them over to the mob, and trying them, which is what he did next, you know then you are on a downward slope. There was no doubt about it in December of that year when by various counts almost a million people marched out chanting Khomeini's name. At that point of course, non-essential Americans were evacuated, but the American ambassador could never be heard suggesting there might be a revolution. In fact I appear in the Shah's memoirs. Why? Because on specific instructions from Bill, I mentioned to an Iranian Senator that things were changing in Iran. At that time we were playing with the idea of possibly approaching Khomeini in Paris, which was finally turned down by Washington. That senator reported it to the Shah, who writes about it in his memoirs and says, "Lambrakis of the American embassy says things are going to change," and he accuses the Americans of undercutting him. We never undercut him. We did play with the idea very late, of approaching Khomeini. But I might also add that I think it was in my next to last meeting with our middle man, who was bringing us into contact with religious people and the Bazaaris, that two of the Bazaaris, very prominent ones, said, "We are going to Paris and we will talk to Khomeini, and we will try to calm him down." Then they came back, and we had a meeting with them and they said, "He is an impossible man. We can't do it. He won't listen."

Q: I have interviewed Warren Zimmerman who was in Paris at the time, and he was designated to be the first to approach Khomeini.

LAMBRAKIS: He was the political counselor in Paris.

Q: Now did you have a, often when you are going through a challenge to a government, you find in an embassy you get a traditional split. The junior officers want to get out there and do things and see things change. The most senior officers realize you don't mess around with relations easily. Were you seeing this there?

LAMBRAKIS: I think that is so. What I did at the time I was DCM, which was quite a bit before that, but comes into that theory, in the beginning of that period, I set up, with the agreement of Jack Miklos, a weekly meeting with everybody, just free flowing talk. We would also get the consuls to come in. We had three one man consulates in Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahan. They would come in and chat. We didn't keep notes. I just reported orally. There was a feeling out in the field of things moving.

Q: Have you ever interviewed Mike Metrisko?

LAMBRAKIS: Yes.

Q: And somebody else.

LAMBRAKIS: Our consuls in Isfahan and Shiraz too. Also junior guys.

Q: They of course were seeing, and the view from the certain localities is always quite different. I mean they are not sitting around a court and an administrative capital.

LAMBRAKIS: Sure. Well, I had the head of the French secret service at the embassy there, who is a very good friend of mine, stayed since, who came to see me with the Greek ambassador on one occasion and said, "Things are really getting out of hand." But even his own ambassador wouldn't believe him. He had been traveling around the country. In fact it was at a party that I made a public bet with him that the Shah would still be around next April, or later. The bet was a meal at one of the most prominent restaurants in Paris, which I eventually had to honor. I paid him. I took him and his wife out to dinner. But there was the feeling that no matter how shaken things might be, this was not the first time. After all, things had happened back in '63 when the Shah had gotten on top of them. There was no reason to imagine that he couldn't again even though it was dicey. Actually what you are pointing out took place in a different way. Yes we did get this feeling, but we also had to appear to be supporting the Shah. All it took in Tehran was for the ambassador or a senior U.S. officer to begin to appear to be doubting him publicly; we felt this would simply become a self-perpetuating prophecy. After the revolution the guys in my political section - some of whom had just been in Iran before and had been brought in because they spoke Farsi, and were sent as reinforcements - differed from me. There I must say I am proud I was right, and John Stempel and others were wrong. But they were reporting back to Washington that the communists were about to take over. They were convinced of this. And here I have to tell you my most dramatic moment, which was after the revolution. In February, when the embassy was taken over and we were all held hostages.

Q: February 14, 1978.

LAMBRAKIS: '79, Valentine's Day. After the revolution wins, the Shah leaves. We were still there. The embassy was attacked.

Q: You weren't there.

LAMBRAKIS: Yes, I was there. I was still there, and the embassy was attacked. We moved into the secure part of the embassy first. I wrote it up for the State Department magazine. A couple of us wrote articles for the State Department magazine which I have lost copies of. We were standing around in there, and all hell was going on around us for a couple of hours. The Marines were shooting. There was tear gas in the ground floor of the embassy. We were locked one floor up in the secure part of the embassy, the communications room. I was on the phone with Washington telling...

Q: You were saying you were talking to Washington.

LAMBRAKIS: Yes as we were there, to the State Department, While people were telling me to hunch down in case a bullet came through the window. That was the day of course, on which our ambassador to Afghanistan was kidnaped.

Q: Spike Dubbs.

LAMBRAKIS: Spike Dubbs, and was killed.

LAMBRAKIS: Right, and so Washington had two things happening at once. Of course, we had a lot of people still in Tehran. We managed to get word out of what was happening by telephone to the “good guys” both in the government and one of the religious Ayatollahs in Tehran who was not a Khomeini follower. Nevertheless the ambassador decided we had to surrender. He was afraid they would set fire to the embassy. So we stood around, 50 of us, with our hands up, with six or seven of these guys with tommy guns sweating, very nervous. They searched us and apparently were discussing among themselves whether to shoot some of us or not. I didn't speak enough Farsi to understand that, but one of my colleagues did. At one point a shot was fired into the room and they almost shot us. Everybody hit the floor at once. Then we started telling them what jerks they were thinking we were shooting at them. What had happened is the good guys had arrived and, to call attention to the fact that they shot into the room. Then we were marched out and became their prisoners. The others were sent away, and the good guys released us and then guarded the embassy. That was that day's affair. Mind you a couple of the attackers had been killed and it took us awhile to get a wounded U.S. marine released from the hospital where he was being treated and held.

I had had a personal threat against me two or three months before which the CIA had picked up in Paris and which turned out to be false, but nevertheless my family had been evacuated before the others, and I had been moved to a little apartment next to the embassy compound. The young Thai woman who had been taking care of our kids, was still with me. On February 14, the attackers invaded my apartment on the way to taking over the embassy. They apparently had her on the bed and were ready to rape her when they were called away to join the fighting. It was a pretty nasty day for us. But because our files were not touched, because our CRU, our communications room, was not invaded, that set the scene for six months later in the major November hostage takeover when the other bad guys came in. The assumption was that we will give up easily because they are not necessarily going to do anything bad. Meanwhile, I got transferred, in April.

But before that happened, after the February takeover, Sullivan sent me on behalf of the embassy, along with the CIA chief and the top MAAG general with the first plane that was allowed out, to report to Washington what was happening. In Frankfurt, I was picked up by General Huyser, who had been there during the revolution, whose job had been to calm down the military. Anyway I intended to stop in Paris for a night with my wife, but instead I was met in Frankfurt by the general and his plane and taken directly to Washington. Henry Precht was director of Iranian affairs at the time I was going to be staying with him, but there was a huge snow storm in Washington. Nothing was moving. I got put into a hotel a few blocks from the State Department. The next morning I was told that the Secretary of State wanted to see me in the morning, and that I was to appear at the White House for the main conference in the afternoon. I was in my little loafers from Iran. There was about two feet of snow everywhere. No cars were moving. Happily one of the guys working in the hotel was a riding enthusiast and he had boots which I rented from

him for a week. I walked around Washington in big boots, reminiscent maybe, of a general Patton.

At the White House meeting everybody but Carter was there. The Vice President, Mondale was there. Brzezinski was running it. It was long, complicated. Our CIA guy froze when questioned and could not say anything. The main point, the main problem that arose, was: will the communists be taking over or not. The CIA was convinced they would. I was saying no, they won't. I said the religious people may mess up the economics, but they have the security situation under control. The meeting ended a couple of hours later, and I was asked to come back and talk to the CIA the next day, which I did. Professor Bowie from Harvard was working under the CIA director, Admiral Turner. Turner and Bowie had me in, and they really grilled me on this. "Why do you think it won't happen? We are sure. Your people are reporting it is going to happen." I steadfastly said, "No, it is not going to happen. The communists are not that powerful, and the religious guys really control." That was really important in thinking about the place.

Obviously before the revolution the key difference in Washington was between Brzezinski and the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. Because Brzezinski wanted us to push the Shah to use the army; Vance didn't. Bill Sullivan, as he says in his book, was on the telephone, I remember, once with one of them, once with the other. Each one claimed to be speaking on behalf of the President. He ended up siding with Vance, and we did not push the Shah, who told the American and British ambassadors, "I do not want to turn my troops on my people," because he still thought he could stave it off. He was worried about what people would think of him in the future. I don't think anyone imagined a religious government running a major country in the 20th century. Even Khomeini was saying he didn't want to run the government. "I will go to Qum and let the government run the country." As you know, Bazargan and other former Mossadegh people were originally supposed to run the government, and they did until the second crisis, the main hostage crisis in November. Then Bazargan disappeared, and the religious radicals took over.

Q: Well then by that time you had left.

LAMBRAKIS: I left in April and this took place in November, the second hostage crisis.

Q: Then, I am looking at my watch. Briefly can you just say where you went the rest of your career.

LAMBRAKIS: Okay, let me just tell you one last story about the hostages. Mike Metrisko, you mentioned, he was one of the hostages. Before I left Iran, I had sold my car to a Japanese diplomat and I had four new tires sitting there, and I said to Mike, "If somebody comes around, could you just sell these tires for me." Mike Metrisko was then captured. Mike was almost hanged in Tabriz, but then he was made a hostage. Fourteen months later the released hostages came to Washington, and many of us (who had been volunteering also on the Iran working group) went to see them when they first arrived there. We were all in this big hall full of about a hundred people. Mike was across the room from me, and he came to me sticking his hand out. I stuck my hand out, and the first words he said were, "George, I never sold your tires." I always thought that was a great story, and a great reflection on Mike.

DAVID C. McGAFFEY

Consul

Tabriz (1976-1978)

Acting Political Consul

Tehran (1979)

David C. McGaffey was born in Michigan in 1941. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Detroit in 1964. His career has included positions in Farah, Manila, Kabul, Tabriz, Isfahan, Tehran, and Georgetown. Mr. McGaffey was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 1995.

Q: We're talking about a period in Iran where later there was much criticism because there was too much control from the top and only one voice was being heard, not picking up the fact that it was a country getting ready for revolution.

McGAFFEY: Yes and that one voice spoke only to the Shah and saw things with the same limitations as the Shah saw them. I had already been assigned to Iran as my next assignment as principal officer and consul in Tabriz. The ambassador almost broke the assignment. He didn't want me but with a message from Ted Eliot saying that I was a promising officer and did understand discipline, he decided to allow me to come. I went to Iran for my next assignment.

Q: You were there from '76 to '79?

McGAFFEY: Yes, also an interesting period.

Q: Yes, a very interesting period. First place, you went as the consul in Tabriz is that right?

McGAFFEY: That's correct.

Q: First what was the situation in Tabriz and how did the consulate work?

McGAFFEY: It was a very small consulate. I had one vice consul and a small local staff. They had cut down drastically. It had been a major center with a large AID program but as Iran got rich the AID program disappeared so the economic staff disappeared and everything had been reduced. They had been considering making it a consular post only to do consular duties but there was a war between the Kurds out of Iran with Iraq. There was also the very large Soviet border, a permeable border with the Azerbaijanis on both sides, and there was all the commercial traffic and personal traffic to Europe through the Turkish border. They felt that in addition to a vice consul who would do consular work, they needed a political officer, a real Foreign Service officer, to be the principal officer and monitor basically those three things.

There was also the principal question in the mission in Iran, internally, of what happens after the Shah? Everybody in Iran knew that the Shah was working himself out of a job and that there were going to be significant changes when he left. He had scheduled his departure for '80 when he was going to abdicate in favor of his son so there was a need to do reporting to find out what was going to happen. Since the Shah's wife was from Tabriz and there was a different national group in the empire because of the Kurds, the Azerbaijanis, and the Armenians all potentially troublesome, they felt they wanted reporting.

Unfortunately I got very mixed signals and was very lucky in the handling of it. Almost the very first message I received was a cable from State Department addressed to Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, etc., (I was an individual addressee) which asked for an assessment of the attitude of the people of my district toward the Shah. I went out and interviewed people and I wrote that I found the attitude significantly different with the different population groups but none of it was very happy. I sent it in through Tehran because I had no communications facilities. About two weeks later I got a rocket from Washington saying you had a request, an instruction for a report and the due date was two weeks ago. When are you going to send the report? I called up Tehran and found out that Ambassador Helms had asked that all the reporting from the consulates be sent to him. He read them and decided that this was not quite the correct view so he had sent the embassy report and put in there a line saying this represents also the consulate reporting.

I called him up and said "Sir, this was addressed to me as principal officer and I've now gotten another one demanding my response. I feel that I should send in my response. I have also seen embassy Tehran's response and while that may be true in the capital district among Persians it does not accurately represent what I am seeing out here." He said, "Are you questioning my judgment?" I said, "No sir. I am suggesting that my observation is of different fact and that difference may be important. Washington has asked for my view and I feel I ought to send it." He said, "No." I said, "Well the secretary has put up this back channel for information and it will go in directly to him. If you don't wish to send it officially I will send it through the back channel."

Q: This is the so called open forum?

McGAFFEY: Yes, through the open forum. It had a different name but I've forgotten what the name was. He said "If you send that, this is the last assignment you will get in the Foreign Service. Do you realize who you are speaking to?" He detailed his employment history as head of CIA, etc. He said, "You are directly defying my authority. You have no right to do so and you will back down or you are through." I said, "I am sending it sir, I am sorry." The next day he was indicted on Watergate issues by a grand jury in Alexandria and he forgot to take the time to discipline an obstreperous young officer. My report did go in. The DCM became chargé. He called and said "What was the resolution on this?" I said, "We talked about it and I said that I would prefer to have it sent in officially but if not I will send it in through the open forum. Ambassador Helms disagreed and I said I would send it one way or the other." He said, "I don't think we have to go that far" so we sent it officially.

Q: On this, how did you feel? Were you getting contact with the political officers at the embassy and all? How were they feeling? Were they feeling under constraints?

McGAFFEY: They were feeling under tremendous constraints. The absolute rule under Helms was that the only person that could talk to the Shah was the ambassador. To speak to any minister you must be the head of a department and only with the permission of the ambassador. Any other contacts with government officials had to be done at the appropriate level by rank under the direct approval of the head of an office. People were hearing things, were writing them up and were finding them ignored. They were not being sent in. There was a major use of memcons.

Curiously enough where I found the greatest frustration was among the CIA officers in Tehran because their commission was explicit and unalterable. They were to look only at the threat only from the Soviet Union: communist infiltration, support, sabotage, pressures for change from the Soviet Union. They had much wider access and were talking with military officers, union people, religious people, but they were not allowed to report on anything except the Soviet threat. They were passing things to me which I was sending in to my friends, my colleagues, in INR and elsewhere who understood the source even though they could not cite it. I would put "I have heard" and they would understand what that meant. But there was a great deal of information in the mission that was just not being reported.

Q: Often when this happens it gets reported. This was true in Vietnam under Graham Martin and the last days of Vietnam, and under Howard Jones in Indonesia with Sukarno. What happens is that there is the use of official-informal letters, or informal-informal letters, or visits come out. In other words, one doesn't really stop the flow. What happens is at a certain point the ambassador becomes essentially discredited by those that have to use information, by those who have to make decisions. There is this flow underneath.

McGAFFEY: One of the things that often contributes to that underground flow is that different agencies are reporting different things. Specifically the DCI, the intelligence community depending on reports from the CIA stations, is reporting something different than the ambassador is reporting. The DIA is another important source. But we had an unusual situation in Tehran where the ambassador who maintained very strict controls over the Foreign Service reporting, was a former head of the CIA. Through direct command and through his contacts he exercised at least equal, if not greater control over CIA reporting and had somebody who agreed with his mind set as the defense attaché.

Q: One of the jobs of political officers in the Foreign Service is to analyze what the mind set is, why people do things and all in foreign countries. You can't help but also apply you might say this same analysis to your own place particularly if you have a very strong minded arbitrary ambassador. What was sort of what you and others were feeling about Helms? Why was he acting in this way?

McGAFFEY: He was a true believer and felt that the Shah was the major force for change in Iran. He was the leader of his country and the man who would bring development, democracy and strawberries and cream to the whole region. He was the picked U.S. surrogate and had the support of a president of the United States, Mr. Nixon, who came out, met the Shah, and turned and said to the ambassador and to Pentagon representatives "Give him whatever he wants."

It was not a matter so much of suppressing different impressions of the same information, bureaucratically he was very effective in that he suppressed contact. Where perhaps a strong minded junior officer might hear something in the bazaar from a sweeper in the ministry of whatever, he would go in and speak to his boss who had just had an hour long meeting with the minister of whatever. Where the two images differed, they would assume that that junior sweeper from the ministry was either ignorant, or not in the know, or pushing a different agenda because they had it from the horse's mouth. There was nobody else speaking to the Shah so nobody reported any doubts in front of the Shah. There was nobody else speaking to the ministers and the deputy ministers.

There was a very similar thing with the consulates and the embassy. If a consulate reported something that was at odds with what the embassy was reporting, the embassy, the ambassador, would have a note attached to the bottom saying that while this report is interesting and perhaps even dangerous, they had checked it out with senior authorities and found that it does not correspond with the facts as best they can determine so it should be read as a view from some individual out in the provinces. It might help fill out the edges but it's not the truth.

Q: I'm dwelling on this because I think the situation in Iran, I'm really talking about from the American professional point of view, was particularly bad and that you had a awful lot of frustration of people feeling that the real story wasn't getting out. Probably nothing would have happened anyway other than we might have gotten our people out of there sooner but other than that the situation in Iran was being stifled really coming from the top. It was the president and Kissinger who fell in love with the Shah almost and they had an ambassador who wouldn't tell what was really happening.

McGAFFEY: No, who believed. He did speak up but he believed. There were particular issues in which Helms and the Shah differed and Helms would be very forthright on those issues. But it was still a single voice speaking to a single man and Helms, with Kissinger and Nixon, believed that the Shah was the best and greatest hope not only for Iran but for the U.S. in the area. Nobody was interested in retailing stories that would cause the Shah problems when they were just minority opinions. As I know from personal experience, Helms as an individual was willing and capable of using his contacts to threaten the careers of anybody who upset his apple cart.

Q: What about the mullahs and the religious side, can you tell me how you observed during your '76 to '79 period the spread of it?

McGAFFEY: I was in Tabriz for only one year. Toward the end of my first year I got a call from the DCM in Tehran, I think it was Charlie Naas. Basically what he said was that there was real trouble in central Iran, in Isfahan. What we've got down there right now as principal officer is somebody who knows consular regulations backward and forward but has not done any reporting about anything other than the number of visas issued since he got there. They asked if I would be willing to trade places with him which means that people in Tehran were looking at my reporting. They felt that I was able to do something and that they were aware of things going on even if the consulate was not reporting.

You are right, and reporting was going to Washington mostly in the forms of memcons, official-informals and the like. I know that the assumption in the mission was that these were being read and Helms' reports were being considered one-sided. I found out later that that was just not true. People were not getting to airgrams, memcons and things or if they did they just never added them up. Anyway, I did not have a great deal to do with the mullahs in Tabriz.

Q: It was also not a center for it?

McGAFFEY: No. I knew the ayatollah of Tabriz. I had talked with him a lot about Islam and my background but I dealt much more with the principal clergy of the Armenians. The man in Tabriz eventually became the patriarch, the pope of the Armenian church worldwide. He was a useful contact and a source of much information on the Armenians. The Kurds were considered heretics by most Muslims because their sect, the Alawi, practically deified the Ali, the son-in-law of the prophet. I didn't have much to do other than regular social contact with the clergy.

Q: What was the situation vis-à-vis the United States with the Kurds at that time?

McGAFFEY: While I was there the situation changed dramatically. When I was assigned to Tabriz the United States, through the CIA and the Shah, was directly arming and supporting Kurdish separatists that were headquartered in Iran in the Tabriz district in their war with Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The Shah considered Saddam Hussein his major enemy and the United States, as a friend of the Shah, was willing to support the Kurds as a surrogate fighter against Saddam Hussein. While I was in Tabriz, Saddam Hussein and the Shah signed a peace treaty delineating the border and settling major issues including ownership of some oil fields. With prospects of changing the eons long war relationship between the two countries, as of the date of the signing of that secret treaty (a total surprise) the Kurds were cut off absolutely. Even things in the pipeline that they had paid for just were not delivered. The intelligence support, and warnings of attacks were cut off along with everything else.

The Iraqis who had been informed that this would happen, opened a major offensive against the Kurdish villages causing a major flood of refugees into both Iran and Turkey. I date from that period the formation of two very separate political wings among the Kurds. They had been fairly well united in their war with Saddam Hussein but the reaction of the Turks and the Iranians was very different. The Turks tried to shove them back into Iraq where they were being killed and used a lot of force. The Iranians let them come in and said as long as you don't cause any trouble for us, we won't cause any trouble for you. So the Iranian side of the Kurds maintained their hatred for Saddam Hussein, deeply distrusted the U.S. and Iran, but didn't hate, and were willing to consider other than military solutions because they were disillusioned with war. The Kurds centered in Turkey hated the Turks, hated Saddam Hussein, and moved to a terrorist option which has been a split that has been maintained ever since.

At any rate, I knew Barzani, the leader. I knew his two sons and after he died I continued to meet with them. They felt that the fault was the Shah's and that he had somehow persuaded the United States to take an action that was contrary to U.S. interests. They tried to use me as a channel for

this view. In fact, the U.S. was very much aware of the implications of its actions and was willing to make a sacrifice of the Kurds for our other interests.

Q: This, of course, was the period of both Nixon and Kissinger, who were very much realpolitik and there wasn't much hand wringing over anybody who got caught in...

McGAFFEY: It was a bi-polar world and what happened in the fringes was important only in so far as it affected the struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Q: Then you moved down to Isfahan. Could you describe what Isfahan was like at that time?

McGAFFEY: I moved to Isfahan because of rumors of trouble.

Q: This was in '78 wasn't it?

McGAFFEY: Right. It is old Persia and in the province of Fars from which the land, the language and the people get their name. It has a history and a feeling that it should be in charge of Iran and the world for that matter. It has old monuments, old archeology, a long established tradition. They felt that Tehran was a nothing village that had just pumped itself up. It saw itself as very much the center of religious life with the oldest established schools for the mullahs and the like.

The city and region was struggling with the Shah's modernization. The Shah had selected Isfahan as the site for the headquarters of the military industrial complex. He built the largest air base, the base for the army helicopter divisions and training, major factory complexes that were related to the military and other factory complexes that were unrelated. There were some 27,000 foreigners, Americans and otherwise, that had been moved in to support this new industrial military complex in what had been a town of about 100,000. The Iranian population had boomed to about 400,000 with all the military and the employees.

It was a totally disjointed social setup because the influx was almost 100 percent young males and Iranian social structure is very, very dependent on external social controls. The grandmother sits and whips kids into shape. People are punished for infractions and they are never taught any personal discipline. It is always social controls. All of these young men came without families, without wives, without mothers, without a village, and without any mechanism for defining the social rules. There were lots of liquor stores, lots of theaters, lots of nightclubs, lots of prostitution and drinking but no structure to control it.

Isfahan is also the home of the largest population of Christians and Jews outside of Tabriz. The Jews had been brought over by an early king and established there as the goldsmiths, the illuminators, and the skilled craftsmen. They became very wealthy and were therefore a target of envy. The Christians had a ghetto of Armenian Christians which was very large. Again, they were well educated and an object of envy. Particularly for these relatively uneducated young men who were brought in working in the military or working in the factories and had nothing to do with their lives outside of it, one of the things that they did was pursue women. A woman

without a veil was assumed to be a prostitute. The fact that most of the women without veils were either Jews or Christians or my family added to the tension.

The Americans brought in some 14,000 of the 26,000-27,000 and they were no prizes. Bell Helicopter was the largest single employer and had 7,000 of the total. It had targeted people with helicopter experience in Vietnam, specifically targeting those who had married a Vietnamese or Thai or Burmese wife and had taken them back home to west Texas or Tennessee and found they didn't quite fit in. They brought these people here, built a ghetto for them and expected them to behave properly without any incentives, so there was an awful lot of social tension.

Because of this, in Isfahan I did have a lot of contact with the religious because I was looking to the religious authorities as one of the centers of possible mediation of these tensions. I got to know the ayatollah very well. After I had talked with him, at his request I talked.

Q: Which ayatollah was this?

McGAFFEY: The ayatollah of Isfahan, not Khomeini, who was not a real ayatollah. At his invitation, I taught a weekly class at two of the largest schools for the mullahs on the Bible. I became a member of the faculty and could talk to the senior religious on a regular basis. I found some very disturbing things because what was happening was that there were men wearing the clothes of mullahs coming in and preaching political things at the mosques. "False mullahs" they called them. Whether they were false mullahs or merely mullahs who were social zealots who were preaching a different thing, I never could determine. What is a false mullah since there is no official clergy? Among other things, they were Khomeini's people or people who were preaching in the Khomeini name.

What I found was a military that had no idea what the Shah wanted, angry young men who just wanted things to be good with a very unfocused anger, students and businessmen who were very upset about the lack of authority, responsibility available to them under the Shah's Iran. I also found constitutionalists, mostly middle class, who felt that the Shah was moving much too slow on social and political reforms, and traditionalists who felt that all of this change was terrible. Everybody was angry. It was unfocused, it was not targeted but it was real and incidents would blow it up so I was very concerned about possible incidents with Americans. It felt like the beginning of a revolution and I reported it as such to Tehran and apparently so did Shiraz and the junior officer in Tabriz. We went up and had a conference with the principal officers in Tehran and Tehran said that they have just not seen any such evidence. This was after Helms had left but there was still a chargé.

Q: The Carter administration had come in by this time hadn't it?

McGAFFEY: About this time the Carter administration came in. One of the incidents which made people explode was Carter's first announcement about human rights and the importance of democracy and everything else, had given a great deal of feeling of support to democrats, Christian Democratic Party people, the middle class, business, and the students. Then he made an announcement after some incident that happened elsewhere saying that he supported the Shah

100 percent. They felt betrayed and they translated that as anger at Americans. They didn't know what the Americans were saying.

Q: Were you there at the time when the Shah had his millennial meeting of

McGAFFEY: The 2,000 year anniversary in the tent. I was not present at that celebration outside Shiraz.

Q: Did that sit very well, do you remember?

McGAFFEY: Actually I think that it became a cause celebre but at the time it seemed to suit people fine. It was the kind of thing that you expected the Shah to do. It was showing off Iran and himself. You expect an oriental despot to do a bit of showing off. They didn't understand Jimmy Carter and his self effacing. Was he saying that he was weaker and poorer than the Shah?

At any rate, what we had and what we were reporting from the provinces was an incipient revolution. We had a big conference in Tehran and they said we just need more evidence. There are no indications of this in Tehran. We are just not hearing it. So we went back and continued to report. In effect, we had in Isfahan a successful revolution. The Comité came into being and just took over. The military withdrew to its bases, the government withdrew, the policemen were afraid to go into the crowded areas and so the Comités began to patrol the streets.

Q: Comités being?

McGAFFEY: Groups usually centered around one or more religious, that are there to promote social discipline, to enforce "right behavior" and to overthrow the Shah, if necessary, if he didn't reform. They were certainly there to smash up liquor stores that were serving Iranians, close down movie theaters that were showing pornography. It was a religious political amalgam. Some of them were the followers of various religious figures who were carrying out instructions. Some of them were bunches of students who wanted to throw their weight around and who co-opted a religious figure and said you're it. Eventually in Isfahan the ayatollah organized the comités in the central city under his authority and they became a disciplined group for the city and provincial government. On the outskirts there were the more radical and more dangerous ones who were the first ones with guns, well supplied. Tehran and the United States continued to say that there was no evidence other than regional disorders and uncertainties.

At about this time I had to take the step of asking the military who were providing security on my post, to withdraw and got the ayatollah to send his people over for security. This was done very quietly because the embassy said that an announcement of this would look like the United States was on the wrong side. But it was on the request of the military who felt that their people were a target sitting in front of the consulate.

Q: What about the Americans here? Here you have this group, I know it well, that gather around where there is a large military and other types of expenditure of the United States. One could almost call them the boomers. They can be very unruly, very difficult. One hears stories about

motorcycles being driven up into mosques and all of that. What were the problems you had as the consul in Isfahan in dealing with Americans who were moving beyond their ghetto and getting into trouble outside?

McGAFFEY: I was negotiating for release from various comités an average of about ten Americans a week. Four guys would go out, pick up a girl and take her out with a case of liquor in the car with obvious intentions. They would maybe be stopped by a patrol of comités and they would be arrested. They would scream for the consul and I would have to go and persuade them to my care.

The worst incident was a little bit later when I actually organized an evacuation. I had quietly negotiated flights directly into the Isfahan military air base for company-chartered planes so that they wouldn't go to the airport and it could be done quietly. I had moved people into a hotel in central Isfahan so they could go in convoy rather than try to collect from the individual homes. The first flight out was supposed to be at four o'clock in the morning. I went and did a bed check (I know these people) about two and found one room empty. I went out and found a jeep had been stolen. We caught the guys as they were leaving a brand new mosque which had just been completed in the center of a new residential area. These were people scheduled on the first flight out. They had taken a ladder and some buckets and on the marble side of this new mosque had written "Jesus saves you fucking ragheads" and were going to sneak back to their beds and leave town the next morning. Between two and four, they spent the night whitewashing the mosque. For some reason, their names slipped off the first flight and they didn't get on until the last flight out.

They caused trouble. They would go into the bazaar and be yelling back and forth at each other. They would wear inappropriate clothing, and they would laugh at the Iranians. They would be drinking and displaying in public and they caused a lot of difficulty. We worked out a modus vivendi. The comités would arrest them, throw them into a dirty cell and let them sit. Within four hours they would notify me and I would come and get them out.

Q: What about Bell Helicopter and any other companies, one thinks of Ross Perot's company and all these? Talking about at your level and your area, were they concerned about what was happening and trying to do anything?

McGAFFEY: Bell Helicopter had no interest whatsoever. As long as they were getting paid, they paid no attention. Their headquarters was in Tehran. Their payment was coming out of the military procurement. Their senior officials left Isfahan and I found out, for example, that since no one knew the quality of the people that they were dealing with, they had seized passports of every employee and had them locked in a safe in Tehran. When I had to evacuate these people, no passports were available so I had to issue passports, crossing my fingers, for some 7,000 people, working at midnight, my wife typing and me putting pictures on. With these 7,000 people there were approximately 125 by the end (because I had tried to get the others out earlier) non-American citizen spouses for whom no embassies existed in Iran, certainly nothing in Isfahan. Since I had gotten these flights into the air base and they were going to go directly out to Greece, I took them some sheets of parchment and I wrote out "I, David C. McGaffey, consul

general of the United States in and for Isfahan, do declare that Hung Mon Sui, a citizen and national of Thailand, is traveling in the company of American citizen spouse so-and-so, passport number such-and-such. I request all officials to give her every assistance and allow her to pass unimpeded.” I put a seal on the top and a seal on the bottom and stretched some ribbon and I said “This is worthless but see what happens to it.” The State Department was very upset when they found out that I had issued these.

Q: All of us do this. These are non documents that you have to issue sometimes.

McGAFFEY: Bell just ignored their people. On the other hand Grumman went out of its way to make sure that its people were safe and were informed. They gave early departure to anybody who wished it. They urged dependents and people with medical difficulties to leave early. They were consulting with me on a daily basis and they were the ones who did the arrangements for the actual charters and the flights. I persuaded Bell to pay for the flights that were carrying mostly Bell employees but they were unwilling to do anything to make any arrangements because it might upset the Iranians who were paying them.

Q: When did you leave there?

McGAFFEY: I left in May. The Shah left in January.

Q: We're talking about '79.

McGAFFEY: Yes.

Q: Let's talk about the sort of end game from your point of view, not what happened afterwards. What determined to get the Americans out of there?

McGAFFEY: About the same time that I was sending messages to Tehran, I gathered the heads of all of the companies and told them my feeling and my disturbances and suggested that it might be a good idea to send people with difficulties on leave. Interestingly enough there was a fairly large Israeli irrigation project and two days later I called the companies back to find out what action, if any, they had taken after this meeting and I couldn't find any Israelis. Every one of them had left two days earlier. Most of the American companies took limited action. Then there were almost daily demonstrations and it was a matter of seeking authorization from Washington, which was not forthcoming, to declare an evacuation, working with the companies on lowering profiles, and the like. I arranged for example for dealers in food stuffs and basic goods to go out to the American compounds to prevent the need for Americans to go into the markets.

Eventually, against the recommendations from Washington, I felt that I couldn't guarantee the safety of the children and closed the American school. At that point, a lot of the women and children left. I worked with Iranian authorities to restrict work areas and transport and the like. We had by this time violent demonstrations on a daily basis. Places where Americans were known to frequent got firebombed at night, not while they were opened but when they were closed. Unfortunately that included my home. I lived above the store at the post and they didn't

realize that, so they firebombed the consulate underneath the bedroom of my children. I finally got authority for my wife and children to leave with one suitcase each in a military transport.

Then two incidents happened which convinced people. A bomb was thrown into a bus carrying Bell Helicopter employees and, for the grace of God, it got smothered. There was one casualty, an American who got a piece of shrapnel in his behind. Because the location was amusing, people somehow accepted that without panic. Then a mob surrounded the Grumman building and I believe by accident, but who knows, set fire to it. Two Air Force officers, who I obtained a silver star for eventually, went into the burning building, collected the employees, got them out a back way and got them to my residence. There were no injuries but the building was a total loss. At that point there was agreement for evacuation but the roads between Isfahan and Tehran were no longer safe. They had been taken over by radicals and there was a lot of shooting up. I was unwilling to authorize a drive to Tehran. Tehran by this time had decided there was something going on and was authorizing commercial flights out. That was when I got the aircraft into Isfahan through the air base.

Just in time for the second flight I had some 400 Americans in this hotel. One of these characters who had volunteered to be a late departure was going around to all of the families slated for departure and saying "The company is forcing me to stay here but I had to move out of my place. Could you sell me some things cheap so I could furnish a little flat?" He was buying up for pennies the property of everybody that was leaving and selling them through an Iranian taxi driver. He and the taxi driver got into a fight in front of the hotel and he pulled out a gun and shot the taxi driver who was trying to knife him. Within minutes the rumor had it that Americans were standing on the balconies of the hotel shooting at Iranians going by and they had killed 15, etc. By the time I got there they had drums of petroleum stacked along the bottom floor of the hotel and were planning to burn the whole place down.

I called the military and asked for an escort to arrest the guy and take him out of there. The military refused, so I called the ayatollah and he sent over six of his mullahs. We finally got the guy out of the hotel, both the Iranian in there wounded and the American. At that time we got the mullahs and the American into the car but I didn't get in so I was seized by the mob, shot, stabbed, hanged and had both of my kneecaps broken. They then tried to run me over with a truck and the truck put one wheel into a drainage ditch and tilted up on its side so I was able to roll under the truck and begin speaking to people. I talked my way out of that and got them to arrest me and take me to the ayatollah. He gave me refuge and treated my wounds.

About that time Tehran decided that there was justification for an evacuation order so we got full support then. We got everybody out and I closed office as soon as every foreigner was out of the district who was willing to leave.

Q: I might add that this was when you get later an award for heroism for this.

McGAFFEY: Yes, the one time that I screwed up trying to get an American out of a bad situation I got a medal. All the times that I succeeded, they ignored.

Q: I would have thought that towards the end, as far as closing up the post, it must have been pretty hairy up to the very end.

McGAFFEY: It was extremely hairy. We had men with guns in the building objecting to things like my burning up my passports and visas. They were threatening me and my family until I got them out. We had prospects of incidents that could have resulted in multiple deaths. For one month every morning the man at the garage at the school would call me and say "Should I send the buses out?" At four o'clock in the morning I would have to decide yes or no and put the lives of all of those kids at risk. It was hairy. It was terrible. By this time they had named me consul general because the Soviet representative was a consul general and they didn't want him ranking me. But I was the only western diplomatic representative and I was the one who everybody looked to. I was one of the few people who could talk to the military, and to the governor, and to the ayatollah, to all of the various authorities. I felt every day as if very inadequate shoulders were carrying a lot of lives.

Q: How about getting the Americans out of there, were a lot digging their heels in?

McGAFFEY: About 20 individuals elected to stay. Probably 15 of those were married to Iranians and the other five were young people who had good contacts and felt they wanted to stay. Because it was gradual, the most vulnerable ones left first. The fact that others had left and the fact that tensions were increasing made it a matter of just scheduling them to get them out.

Q: How did you get out of there?

McGAFFEY: When there was nobody else left, I and my remaining staff piled into three cars loaned to us by the ayatollah that were festooned with some 25 people from his comités with heavy weaponry. We drove to Tehran and we had more weapons than anybody at the roadblocks. I got into Tehran and found out that meanwhile the embassy had been taken over by security comités who almost had a fire fight with my comités.

Q: Just to finish off this part, were you in Tehran long?

McGAFFEY: When they found out my physical condition they medevaced me as soon as they could to Greece, which was where my family was. I was there for about six weeks. As soon as I was capable again, they sent me back to Tehran because they needed somebody who could speak the language and knew something of the history because everyone who had dealt with the Shah was persona non grata. I went back as acting political counselor in Tehran, acting DCM I guess for a while.

Q: How long were you there?

McGAFFEY: Until the end of September. I left about 40 days before the final takeover. I was there for three takeovers. I helped get the release of the people from the first takeover when I was still in Isfahan but left before the 444 day one.

Q: How did you find the embassy by the time you got there when you came back from Greece? What was sort of the mood of the embassy?

McGAFFEY: It was badly divided between those who felt that the worst was over and things were coming back to normal, and those who felt that there was no government, there was no social control and we should all get out. Bruce Laingen had been brought in as chargé and accepted the feeling of those who felt that the worst was over and tried to build up to a normal staff. I and the acting DCM both sent exit messages recommending that the embassy be closed and were asked what would happen if the U.S. admitted the Shah. I said there would be a disaster but it was one of two opinions. We had people lined up in lines for visa applications who were handing their guns to friends so they could get into the line, apply for the visa and then go back and pick up their guns and demonstrate in front of the front door. It was a very confusing situation.

Q: I was just looking at the time and we have to stop at this point. I don't know if there is anything else, there is an awful lot I suppose about Iran but if you want to talk any more about Tehran at this point we can cover that the next time, then we will pick up thereafter. We're talking about up through September '79.

Today is the 30th of January 1998. It has been a while. Was there anything else you can think of as far as going out of Tehran? You left in September was that it?

McGAFFEY: That's correct. I went to Greece, picked up my family and went off to Harvard for a year.

Q: When you were taking off in September what was your feeling about whither? You said we probably should get the hell out but how did you think things would work out on departure?

McGAFFEY: On departure I felt that Iran was going to have to go through a long period of turmoil before it got its own act together. I had already been through personally two takeovers of the embassy and had seen others. I certainly knew that any Americans behind were at risk but I in no way predicted the 465 day takeover or whatever.

Q: I am not sure if we covered this before because we haven't listened to all the previous tape, just the last part, but what were American firms doing by the time you got out of there?

McGAFFEY: American firms basically had left. Everyone had been evacuated who was willing to go. We had a roster, if my memory serves me, of about 42 people who stayed in Iran for various reasons: they were married to Iranians, or there were two students in Isfahan who were studying political science who felt that the risk was worth the unique expertise that they would get. All of the American companies and organizations had pulled out. There were just individuals left. The feeling was that there would be no place for American business or for that matter for real diplomacy until the Iranians fought it out among themselves and decided what kind of a country, what kind of a government, what kind of a future they wanted.

Q: Did the embassy get involved with the problem that occurs when you have something like this and that is American women married to Iranians who have children. Some of them may have wanted to get out but the children couldn't leave. Was this a problem or not?

McGAFFEY: At the time that I was there and up to the time that I left, we definitely got involved but it was not particularly a problem. It was just a matter of making late night appointments so that people could renew passports and the like. Most of the American women married to Iranians were married to people of the class who were very nervous about the way things were going and were not at all upset about the thought of their wives and children getting out until things calmed down. There were later some problems but at that time it was just assisting Americans and getting documentation so they could leave.

Q: You were off to Harvard. What were you taking?

ROBERT M. BEECROFT
Bureau of Political-Military Affairs
Washington, DC (1976-1979)

While Ambassador Beecroft served as Political Officer at a number of posts in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, his primary focus was on Political/Military Affairs, both in Washington and abroad. Later in his career he served as Special Envoy to the Bosnia Federation and subsequently as Ambassador to the Office of Security & Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) operating in Bosnia & Herzegovina. A native of New Jersey, Ambassador Beecroft served in the US Army and studied at the University of Pennsylvania and the Sorbonne in Paris before joining the Foreign Service in 1967. Ambassador Beecroft was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: When you left in '79 I assume this was before all hell broke loose both in Iran and in Afghanistan, what was the state of things at that point when you left?

BEECROFT: The Iran hostage crisis had begun and the Soviet brigade in Cuba were front page news. Those were the death knells to our hopes for ratification of SALT TWO. The treaty was observed by both sides for years, even though it was never ratified. There was a lot of frustration on the delegation, because we knew it was a perfectly good treaty in that it capped further expansion. It didn't mandate reductions -- it took START to do that and Reagan deserves credit for that -- but at least it stopped the expansion of launcher numbers. And we really came out ahead on that score anyway, because right in the middle of the negotiations -- it must have been 1978 -- we announced that we were going to deploy cruise missiles. The Soviets said, well, how are we supposed to count those? You see, an arms control treaty of that scope is mainly about counting rules. It's not just about capability; it's about counting rules. The fact is you can't count cruise missiles because unlike an ICBM, they're small. We could put 30 cruise missiles on a rotary launcher inside a B-52, but we said, oh no, it still counts as one. And the Soviets

eventually bought it.

WALTER F. MONDALE
Senator, U.S.-Iran Policy
Washington, DC (1976-1980)

Vice President Mondale was born and raised in Minnesota. A graduate of the University of Minnesota and its Law School, Mr. Mondale served as State Attorney General before his appointment and subsequent election as United States Senator from the State of Minnesota. Elected Vice President of the United States in 1976, Mr. Mondale served for the duration of the Carter Administration as active participant and advisor. President Clinton nominated him United States Ambassador to Japan, where he served from 1993 through 1996. Throughout his career Mr. Mondale has contributed substantially to the welfare of the nation in both the public and private sectors. Mr. Mondale was interviewed by David Reuther in 2004.

Q: At the same time [of the Cultural Revolution in China] in a different spot on the globe, you had the whole changing government in Iran that we had to adjust to. The administration let the Shah into the United States. That was a trigger for a whole bunch of events in Iran. How do you recall the decision to let the Shah into the United States?

MONDALE: Very painful issue. William Shawcross' *The Shah's Last Ride* about what he went through the last few months. The President was concerned and said so at least in private that if we let the Shah into America, it might trigger a reaction in Iran and I believe there were some American officials in our Iranian office that had communicated their concerns to the State Department. Carter was very concerned about that. In his book, he writes about how people were encouraging him to allow the Shah in for health care and he asked them all, "If the Iranians react negatively, if they should seize our State Department officials there and make them hostages, then what is your policy?" The room went dead, if not ashen.

Kissinger was very heavily involved in here, calling around. David Rockefeller was very heavily involved. There were others, I'm sure, but those were the ones that I remember because at least Kissinger called me personally, and he called a lot of people personally, saying that not to allow the Shah in was a national disgrace, that America is not a police state, the Iranian radicals are trying to isolate him, but the man is sick and he should be able to come to a hospital that can do something for him. That idea carried the day. I must say, I went along with it at the end because I found it humiliating that these people could press the United States to do something that was really different than the openness that is so essential to our country. But what Carter feared happened and really changed our lives and may have been fundamentally responsible in throwing us out of office.

Q: Paid a fairly high price.

MONDALE: Well, others paid a higher price, but once that revolution started and our hostages were taken, we were largely... Try as we will, we couldn't find a pattern for their release. We tried the ill-fated rescue mission. The rest is history. It really sort of consumed us for the better part of a year or maybe more.

Q: That's an interesting observation. Does that happen at that level of decision-making that an issue can be so consuming and takes up your time and other issues fall off?

MONDALE: It wasn't that we wouldn't have time to do other things. We did. It's that the international environment wasn't willing to think about other things. Being vulnerable as we were with our hostages, other countries knew we were vulnerable. This was a good time for them to negotiate on things they wanted. Our adversaries knew we were pinned down there and they, too, thought this was a nice new spring of opportunity for them. The news about this swamped everything. If you wanted to start a new initiative, people learning about Iran, that's when "Nightline" started as a program reporting on the Iran hostage situation and they had a program that ran every day to make certain that "Nightline" got a good show at our expense, burning flags or moving of our people around blindfolded and all that stuff that we remember. So, it wasn't that we couldn't do other things. It was that the sort of milieu that ensued from the capture of our hostages and the way they played the game really paralyzed us. I forget the timing right now, I think that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was part of that.

VICTOR L. TOMSETH
Principal Officer
Shiraz (1976-1979)

Political Officer
Tehran (1979-1981)

Victor L. Tomseth was born in Oregon in 1941. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon in 1963 and his master's degree from the University of Michigan in 1966. After joining the Peace Corp and going to Nepal he joined the Foreign Service. During his career he had positions in Thailand, Iran, Sri Lanka, and was ambassador to Laos. Ambassador Tomseth was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: As you cast your eye around to get another arrow in your quiver, what brought you to Farsi and to Iran?

TOMSETH: I had been to Iran a couple of times for short visits. It just seemed like an interesting place. Certainly at that point, it was getting a lot of attention, again, largely because of Henry Kissinger- (end of tape)

In that last year I was on the Thai Desk, the second half of 1974, I knew I was going to be reassigned somewhere the next year. Personnel had asked me about some things, including a couple of things in Africa. I wasn't really sure I wanted to go to Africa. So, in the fall, trying to be proactive about GLOP before I was GLOPed, I came to the conclusion that I would throw my hat into the ring for Farsi language training. It seemed to me that it was sufficiently far out of Southeast Asia to satisfy the requirement. South Asia was the other possibility. That was a different regional bureau, but I wasn't sure that that was really going to be far enough removed from Southeast Asia to convince people in Personnel that it met the requirement. But it seemed to me that Iran would and it seemed to me that it would be an interesting place. So, I put in an application for Farsi language training. Lo and behold, Personnel came back and said, "We are prepared to do this if you are prepared to go be principal officer in-" At that point, the post was in Khorramshahr, but they were going to move it to Shiraz. I got out the map and found out where Shiraz was and said, "Sure, that sounds fine to me. Sign me up."

Q: You took Farsi for how long?

TOMSETH: It was supposed to be the 44 week course. If I had known anything about Iran, I would have recognized the first day of language training that here was something that was very telling about Iranian society. They had two teachers who couldn't stand one another. The result was that rather than shift people between these two (There were seven of us who started at the same time.), they put four with one and the other three with the second. We didn't go back and forth. We, in effect, had two groups. I wound up with a couple who were there for just 24 weeks. In February, they left. There was one other 24-weeker in the other class. So, at that point, I went into the class I had not been in and the group I was with was way ahead of where they were. So, I was just spinning my wheels.

At that point, I went to Charlie Naas, who was the director for Iran. This was in the context where I knew that I was going to a post that issued visas. I had been in the Foreign Service for 10 years and I had never issued a visa in my life. I said, "Charlie, I've got a proposition. If NEA will support me when I go to FSI and say I'd like to get out of this language class early and go to Iran so that I can work in the Consular Section for a month or two so at least I know how you issue a visa when I go down to take charge of this post (I knew that they were always looking for people in the Consular Section in Tehran.), then I will do this to help the Consular Section out." Charlie's reaction was very interesting. He said, "Young man, my opinion of your intelligence just dropped precipitously." That I would volunteer to go into that consular mill in Tehran. But he did agree that NEA would support me with FSI. So I asked FSI if they would let me go right then.

Now, there was one part of the language program.. The last six weeks were with an Iranian family in Iran. So, I left FSI towards the end of March and went out to Iran and did another six weeks of language training in Shiraz living with an Iranian family. Then I went up to Tehran and worked in the Consular Section for a couple of months before reporting for duty in Shiraz the first of July.

Q: Were you married by this time?

TOMSETH: Yes, I had gotten married in 1969 in Thailand.

Q: Did you have children?

TOMSETH: We had a son. He was then six years old.

Q: How did it work out with that?

TOMSETH: I went out and stayed with this family for six weeks while my wife packed up. That was not the first time she wound up with that chore. Then they came out when I came up to Tehran to do this consular stint. Then we went down to Shiraz together in July.

Q: How did you find living with an Iranian family? How did that work?

TOMSETH: Very well. This was a fairly well to do Shiraz family. They had a couple of teenage sons. They took me right in. Persian hospitality can be absolutely overwhelming. They took me right in. Maybe it was the Peace Corps volunteer background or something, but I am fairly flexible about these things, so I didn't have any great difficulty making myself a part of that family. I stayed in touch with them throughout the time I was in Iran. Unfortunately, they, like so many Iranians, were among those that had to hightail it out of the country in 1979. They wound up in Los Angeles, materially in comfortable enough circumstances, but I think they were people that really didn't want to be exiled. They wanted to be in Iran and had a pretty hard time of it psychologically.

Q: When you were doing consular work... With my background as a consular officer, Iranian students going after visas were a phenomenon. I'd get them in Yugoslavia, Greece, and Italy. Everywhere I've been, they were wandering around looking for visas. This was a real consular situation. How did you find dealing on the line in the Consular Section?

TOMSETH: Well, it was a gut wrenching experience. It certainly made me (and I have ever since been) extremely sympathetic to the job that consular officers have to do - and particularly junior officers. So many of them, this is their first Foreign Service assignment. They are put on the line where people are prepared and almost enthusiastic about lying, cheating, anything they can do to get what they want. How one can maintain some perspective on humanity to begin with, but the particular society out of which these people come in particular is a challenge every day that they get up and go to that job.

Q: Did you find that in the long-run, this was helpful to understand Iranian society?

TOMSETH: Yes, absolutely. While it isn't the whole picture, that isn't all that Iranian society is about, it does demonstrate a very important dimension of Iranian society. I used that experience both from the Consular Section in Tehran and then later in Shiraz in the political reporting that we did from Shiraz and then subsequently when I was political counselor in Tehran about the nature of Iranian society and what that means, for example, in terms of the kind of negotiations

that we found ourselves in in the spring and summer of 1979 after the Shah had left and we were trying to deal with this new Islamic revolutionary regime in Iran. A lot of what I had learned on the line in Tehran and in Shiraz dealing with visa applicants was relevant to that.

Q: You were in Shiraz from when to when?

TOMSETH: From July of 1976 until February of 1979.

Q: Could you explain what Shiraz was like when you arrived there? What was the importance of Shiraz?

TOMSETH: I had served in a couple of constituent posts in Thailand, in Chiang Mai and Udorn. These were so-called "Special Purposes Posts" in the absolute sense. They did almost no consular work other than renewing an occasional American passport. Their sole reason for existence was to do political reporting.

The consular posts in Iran were also Special Purposes Posts. Their main function was supposed to be political reporting, but they had always done consular work as well. In the old days, in the 1950s and 1960s, that meant occasionally issuing a visa. Even as recently as 1972/1973 when the consulate in southern Iran was still in Khorramshahr, Mike Hornblow, who had been principal officer, told me that anyone who came in for a visa was invited into the principal officer's office for a cup of tea for the interview and while the visa was processed, that there were that few. But by the time I got there, Shiraz, this little constituent post in southern Iran, was doing 10,000 student visas a year.

Q: My god. Who were the students? One always thinks that the intellectual elite would be up around Tehran. Where is Shiraz?

TOMSETH: If you go due south of Tehran to the Persian Gulf, about 500 miles as the crow flies, you come to Isfahan, and then another 500 miles almost due south from Isfahan is Shiraz.

Q: Were you opposite the Straits of Hormuz or anything like that?

TOMSETH: Not quite. The Straits of Hormuz are a little further east.

Q: Were you a seaport?

TOMSETH: No. You had to drive about four hours to Bushir, which was the closest seaport. Shiraz sits up on the plateau. It is about 5,800 feet high. It's in the Zagros Mountains. You go down this escarpment to the coast and Bushir. It is about a four-hour drive.

Q: Is this a tribal, national area, within the Iranian nation?

TOMSETH: To go back for a moment to your earlier question about elites, Iran has always been a country where provincial centers were quite important and had their own elites. It is not like

Thailand, for example, or Burma, where elites were a phenomenon of the capital city only. So, you have these centers like Tabriz, Khorasan, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Karmon in the central desert that all have their own societies that were quite well developed and at different points in Persian history, they might actually have been kingdoms as part of the larger Iranian cultural heartland. So, you do have those things.

Shiraz, sitting in the Zagros Mountains, is a tribal area. There are a lot of Turkish-speaking groups, the most important of which are the Khaskai, who live in that area. Their traditional economy was pasturing their animals in the mountains in the summer months and taking them down to the coastal areas during the winter months.

Q: 10,000 students is a hell of a lot for a post... Going to the United States is a pretty sophisticated step for anybody.

TOMSETH: Well, the consular district is the southern 40% of Iran. That included cities, Shiraz itself, Karmon, Afaz, Khorramshahr, Abadan, and Khuzestan Province. That is the center of the oil industry. So, there were a lot of people in the 1970s who were making a lot of money because of the oil industry more than anything else, but also development projects in other areas. In Karmon, there was a large (At that point, it was supposed to be the world's largest.) open pit copper mine being developed in Karmon. There were a lot of military base construction activities in places like Bandarabas and Bandarshapour. So, there was a lot of money being generated and turned people who essentially were peasants but might have owned some land into overnight millionaires. So, they had the wherewithal to send their children off to the United States. Particularly if they had male children, they had an incentive to get them out of Iran so they could avoid the draft.

Q: When you arrived there in 1976, what was the feeling that you got from the State Department about the Shah and whither Iran at that time?

TOMSETH: Richard Helms was ambassador. A fellow named Jack Miklos was his deputy chief of mission. When I went down to stay with this family, I through them met a lot of the local elite in Shiraz and the area. The wife of this fellow came from one of these nomadic tribes. She was not Khaskai. She was from a smaller tribe. So, they introduced me to some of these people as well. I remember the first time I had... There is a dish in Iran called "calipatche." It is the head and feet of the sheep. The first time I had this, my host's father-in-law, who was the head (the han) of this little tribe, was in visiting. It was a breakfast dish. When it was served, the han - perfectly seriously; he was not trying to get to me - said to hosts, this family I was living with, "Be sure to give him an eye." That is one of the better parts. I had no difficulty with the eye. The ear was much more difficult. It is gristly and it still had hair in it! In the six weeks that I was there, from meeting all these people, I began to get some impressions about how at least this class of Iranians felt about the regime. It basically was, well, we are willing to go along with it until something better comes along, but we won't have a moment's hesitation in abandoning the Shah if it looks like there is something better on the horizon. I wrote that up when I finished up my language training and gave it to Henry Precht, who was then the political-military officer in the embassy. He thought it was great and wanted to send it out as a cable. It did go out, but Jack

Miklos called me into his office and told me that "You know, The New York Times and The Washington Post can and do report everything that is wrong with Iran. We see our mission here to tell Washington what is right about Iran. This piece is not really helpful in that regard." I thought, "Well, this is going to be interesting," but I was very lucky in that there was an inspection going on just at that time. The inspectors came down very hard on senior management regarding reporting. They concluded that the Political Section was reporting only good news about Iran when there might be some bad news out there, too. As a result, when I went back down to Shiraz after doing my Consular Section stint, I was able to report as I saw things. We did not have cable capability in Shiraz. We had to send all our stuff up to Tehran. The political counselor or Jack sometimes would sit on these things that we sent out for... In some cases, it was a few weeks, until the next time I came out. Jack and I would have an "Is the glass half full or is it half empty" conversation and then he would let it go. But the only reason he would because of that inspection that occurred just at the time that I was coming up from Shiraz from the language training to work in the Consular Section.

Q: This was a carry-over from when Kissinger and Nixon had gone to Iran. From what I gather, the order came out "Don't delve too deeply into the society. We'll get our confidential or internal information from the Shah's regime."

TOMSETH: Yes. It wasn't nearly so simple as a single conversation between Kissinger and the Shah. But basically, what had happened was, an agreement, in effect, that the embassy would not have any direct contacts with political dissidents, that SAVAK, the state security agency, would share all of the information that it had on dissidents with the station. That way, we would know all we needed to know about opposition, dissident political views in Iran.

Q: It was really incredible.

TOMSETH: It really was.

Q: This was a theme that comes out. One can obviously have the fact that one is misinformed or not very astute at doing that, but to deliberately cut off your right hand. That is what we usually have to look at to understand the opposition. If you don't, you are really asking for trouble, which we got.

TOMSETH: One of the consequences of that was that, in the Carter administration and particularly as the revolution got underway in Iran and we realized that we needed to have our own contacts with some of these people, because the policy for a number of years had been that we wouldn't and that we would rely upon SAVAK for information and political dissidents knew that and were very reluctant to have any contact with people from the American embassy or the consulate in Shiraz. They assumed that we were in bed with the state security agency.

Q: In Shiraz, besides the visa business, what were your responsibilities?

TOMSETH: There were basically three things. The visa function. I came out of my Consular Section in Tehran experience and this inspection with a view that we needed to do that in the

most professional way possible.

The second thing was, we had in our consular district an American citizen community of probably 10-12,000 people. They were scattered across the consular district. They tended to be in clusters, but they were widely dispersed within this fairly large consular district. Again, that was one of the things that I left Tehran understanding was an important part of the work - that we needed to service that American citizen community. One of the things that I instituted was a traveling road show, that we would actually send people out on a circuit ride on a regular basis.

Q: Who were these Americans? What were they doing?

TOMSETH: They varied. In Khuzestan, which is sort of down in the southwest corner of Iran, they were oil people. In Bushir, they were building a nuclear power plant. In Bandarabas, they were mostly military-related sorts of things. There was a small military group there, but there were Lockheed and various other defense contractors. Most of the Bell Helicopter people were in Isfahan. That was its own consular district that was basically just Isfahan. In Karmon, they were copper mining people. In Shiraz, you had some academics at the university, some medical people at the major hospital, some military people, Grumman, and what they called "technical advisory groups," but they were military people who ran the FS sales program in that particular area. So, it varied. Most of them were private sector. A lot of them were defense contractor or oil people. Some were academics.

Q: Did they cause problems? You think about Islamic society and oil or military people... They are Americans that are pretty unsophisticated running around with their motorbikes, beer, and girls. Did this cause a problem?

TOMSETH: No, we didn't have too many problems. It wasn't like my ambulance-chasing days in Thailand when this judge advocate-type and I ran around to courts and jails trying to save young GIs. I think part of that was the oil industry people, a lot of these people had a great deal of experience in the Middle East. They had worked in Saudi Arabia, in Iran, wherever. Then the companies themselves for their non-executive white collar personnel, generally, they would have them work three weeks on, 10 days out. They would fly them back to Houston for their R&R. These guys knew it, so they did their honkeytonkying in Texas, not in Iran. The military people tended to be career types. They weren't fresh GIs. So, they tended to keep their nose clean.

My colleague in Isfahan had a lot more problem with the Bell Helicopter people. Bell Helicopter didn't do what the oil companies did. They were there for whatever their tour was. They tended to have a lot more of the traditional kinds of problems.

Q: That is held out as one of the contributing factors to how the Iranians... When they talk about Americans not fitting in, you hear about Bell Helicopter.

TOMSETH: I think it's more complex than that. We can talk about it if you want.

Q: Why don't we come to that as the time goes on? Did you get involved when the Carter

administration came in ? Did this cause any change or not?

TOMSETH: There were several changes that occurred more or less simultaneously. One was the change of administration, but there was also a change of leadership in Tehran. Helms left. I personally always had a very good relationship with Helms. From my point of view, he was not my problem. It was much more Jack. Bill Sullivan came to replace him. I knew Sullivan from the time when I was in Bangkok and he was ambassador in Laos. Charlie Naas, who had been the country director for Iran, came out to be his DCM. Charlie was much more sympathetic to the idea of honest political reporting. The Carter administration's human rights policy tended to be an encouragement for that. So, in Shiraz, I think we felt a lot more comfortable in doing the sorts of things that we had been doing anyway in terms of reporting that had been difficult in terms of getting them through the pipeline to Washington.

It didn't make that much difference in terms of the willingness of people to open up. There was still a very widespread assumption that whatever was said to us was probably given back to SAVAK. But my personal approach to political reporting is to do a lot more listening than asking. I would spend a lot of time drinking tea and just listening to what people had to say, letting them determine the agenda of the conversation. In terms of time use, that may not be the most efficient way to go about it, but in the Iranian context, I found that that was a more effective way of getting at what was really on people's minds. It was just to let them tell me what they thought about things, whether or not it fit a preconceived agenda that I might have in mind. So, a lot of the reporting that I offered up on Shiraz was that sort of thing. It was based on these kinds of conversations, rather than going in to meet with a political party leader and asking questions from a menu of things for a half hour.

Q: How would you end up sitting with somebody and having a conversation?

TOMSETH: We had a national employee who actually was on the payroll of SAVAK, but he was a very social guy. He had worked for the consulate for a long, long time. Wherever we went, he knew lots of people. He would be an introduction to people. Then those people would be an introduction to more people and so it went.

Q: Was there a SAVAK man who would come around and say "What's cooking" or tell you? Was there an official contact with SAVAK?

TOMSETH: There was. He didn't come around, but I would go see the local head of SAVAK in Shiraz, Karmon, or wherever from time to time. They certainly knew what we were doing in terms of traveling. This national employee would tell them regularly. He would file his reports.

Q: He was the equivalent to an announced SAVAK person or was it just that you all knew that he was?

TOMSETH: We knew it was and it was subsequently confirmed.

Q: How did you find the writ of the central government, the governors and all that you would

make your normal calls on? Was it a centralized government?

TOMSETH: That was one of the interesting things. As I said a moment ago, Iran has a long tradition of regional centers that, depending on the political circumstances, have frequently enjoyed considerable autonomy from whatever place considered itself the capital of the country. Starting with Reza Shah, the Shah's father, and certainly pursued by the Shah himself, there was an attempt to centralize everything to the point where no important decision was made without the Shah's direct involvement in it himself. That is the way people in places like Shiraz often viewed these provincial governors, as an outside interloper to begin with. Besides that, they have no real authority. If something important has to be decided, it will be decided in Tehran. There was a great deal of resentment of that organizational structure. Many of these local notables' family history there is about as important as any place I have ever been. Some of the local notables in Shiraz knew very well the history of their families when not too many generations previously it was some great-grandfather or great-uncle who had been calling the shots, not somebody who fancied himself the Shah of Iran.

Q: Also, was there the attitude that Pahlavi, the Shahs, were basically Russian interlopers?

TOMSETH: Not Russian, but Reza Shah had been a non-commissioned officer in the Cossack Brigade prior to World War I. Then when the Bolshevik Revolution came along and the Russians withdrew from that and the Cossack Brigade was incorporated into a national army, he became an officer and quickly rose to general. But a lot of these people, particularly if they had connections to the Khadjahr Dynasty, which he replaced, or were from these local families like the Khavamis in Shiraz, thought "This guy was just a peasant from Mozanaran Province. He is nobody in a social sense that we have to give very much respect to."

Q: Did you get involved at all in the huge celebration that the Shah had?

TOMSETH: That was in 1971. As it happened, one of those times that I was in Iran prior to being assigned there was just after he had crowned himself King of Kings, Light of the Aryans, and marked this 2,500 years of Iranian kingship. That was done at Taktijamshid Persepolis, just outside of Shiraz. So, when I got there in 1976, one of the de rigeur tourist stops was to go out there and go through the tents where the various heads of state had been put up.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point. We are reaching a very interesting stage. I would rather start fresh on this. We have talked a bit about what you've done in Shiraz and the social structure there. I would like to ask again early on, what was your impression of the White Revolution, whither Iran at that time, and get into the religious side and the real guts of what happened, but also local students and all that.

Today is May 27, 1999. Victor, what was your impression of the reforms that the Shah had been putting in place, the White Revolution and other reforms, from the Shiraz perspective?

TOMSETH: The original agenda had a relatively limited number of points. I think there may have been 14 to start with. Many of them were fairly basic to any developing society. One was to accelerate the spread of literacy. Another one was a land reform program. I think any political leader in a developing country out to pursue a program of modernization would have to address those kinds of things. In the initial years of the so-called White Revolution, there was a lot of activity aimed at those kinds of things, with a great deal of support from the United States during the 1960s. Some of these things were fairly successful. The literacy campaign was one where Iran went from a situation in which barely 10-15% of the entire population was literate to one in which at least statistically they claimed by the mid-1970s that over half the population was literate. Certainly among the school-age generation in Iran, the rate of literacy was a lot higher than that.

Land reform, too, brought about some fairly major change in rural areas of Iran. When I got there in early 1976, even these things that I think any political leader in a developing country would want to pursue had disruptive effects on Iranian society as well. In the area of literacy, for example, some of the things that came out of that was that you had, given the Iranian extended family situation where you often had three or even four generations of people living under the same roof, you could have and frequently did have a situation in which the parents might be illiterate and the children not only were literate, but were aspiring to higher education. That creates a kind of tension within the family setting without doubt.

Another thing that had happened as a consequence of this was to accelerate the process of urbanization. The best education, of course, was available in urban areas. So, you would get families who had been rural for generations when they had children who were suddenly part of this culture of literacy, they would want to see that they got the best education possible. That meant sending them off to the cities. The exposure of these people who had been totally conditioned by a very traditional rural environment in the big city, whether that was Tehran, Shiraz, or Isfahan (It didn't really matter that much.), could also be very destabilizing in terms of the social situation.

In the area of land reform, certainly the Shah didn't win any friends among the elite families that had been large landowners earlier. This family that I lived with in Shiraz was one of them. I remember one time the wife in this family complained bitterly to me that they were allowed to have only one village, that was all they were allowed to have under land reform, and could that possibly happen in the United States? Even more important than alienating the so-called "Thousand Families" (Actually, there weren't 1,000 families in Iran. It was something less than that.), was the institution of Shia Islam had been a big landowner as well. The Olqaf was probably the single largest landowner in all of Iran. A lot of that agricultural property particularly was taken away in the course of land reform under the White Revolution. Additionally, many of the ulema, Shia clergymen, were also big landowners. Many of them lost much of their property as a consequence of land reform. Again, this important segment of Iranian society was alienated by that particular provision of the so-called White Revolution. This was in circumstances where in Shia Islam, the very essence of the faith, is highly skeptical of any temporal power. There always had been a great deal of tension between the Persian monarchies on the one hand and the religious establishment on the other because of aspects of the Shia faith system. So, when you

had land reform depriving powerful members of the Shia clergy of their land, that simply exacerbated this tension between the monarchy and the religious establishment.

But by the time I got to Iran in the mid-1970s, there had been additional points added onto this White Revolution. Some of those things were much less calculated towards the development process per se than the political system that the Shah was attempting to entrench in Iran, specifically a very powerful absolute monarchy. That also, depending on the segments of Iranian society, on balance tended to have an alienating effect much more than an effect of including people into the process that the Shah was attempting to implement in this so-called White Revolution.

Q: Discontent is a very difficult thing to measure in the Foreign Service anywhere. You are never sure whether you just happen to be with a bunch of people who are grouching. You can go to the fanciest country clubs of the United States and end up talking about how they are ready for revolution or something. Were you able to get any feel for this? Were we able to report it, if so?

TOMSETH: In the two and a half years I spent in Shiraz, the political reporting that the consulate did was very much focused on this societal malaise that in significant part was a direct function of the nature of the regime. But an aspect of it is cultural as well. The Iranians tend to be very dour in their outlook and complainers and want to engage in all kinds of conspiracy theories. So, it was often difficult to separate the political mood from this cultural background noise that was there. But in the reporting that we did, there was a very heavy emphasis on the notion that the support for the regime might be a mile wide, but it was only a few inches deep and that if something better were to come along, that large portions of the population would have no hesitation in abandoning the regime for whatever that might be. Being able to detect that is not the same thing as predicting that in 1978 there will be a revolutionary movement in Iran that will result in the overthrow of this regime. Part of the difficulty in coming to that conclusion, that we are really on the brink of a revolution, is that the Shah had been around for a long time. He had been on the throne since 1941. He had been through a number of political crises during that period, all of which he had weathered. So, if you are a Foreign Service in the embassy in Tehran or one of these consulates in the Mofasole, and particularly if you are somebody like me, who was not an old Iranian hand, you're reluctant to predict Armageddon as just around the corner. But if there was a theme of the reporting that was coming out of the consulate during those two and a half years, it certainly was that there is a negative side to what is happening in Iran and that negative side could very well have political consequences at some point.

I think what distinguished that reporting was that very early on I got a lecture from mission management about the responsibility of the U.S. diplomatic mission in Iran to report the good news because there were plenty of others who were prepared to report the bad news. Just through the happenstance of fate, if you will, I found myself in a position where, in fact, I could (and two vice consuls who were there with me) report on negative aspects of what was going on. As the revolution then began to build in 1978, in Washington and Tehran, just by virtue that that reporting was a different kind of message than had been coming out of the embassy tended to catch the attention of some people.

Q: I am told that another element in the Iranian equation are the bazaaris, the small merchants. What was their role from your Shiraz perspective?

TOMSETH: Again, at the point I arrived, the bazaari class were a bunch of very unhappy campers. Again, as part of this White Revolutionary process, some of the additional points that had been added onto that in the previous several years struck very much at the interests of the bazaaris. There was a lot of focus on building up state enterprises and building a kind of economic structure that was very non-traditional. I wouldn't say it was Western, but the theory was that it was patterned on what had happened in the developed world rather than the traditional small trading kind of activity that typified the bazaar in Iran.

Additionally, a lot of these people tended to be traditional in their adherence to Iranian culture. That meant that they were pious, that they gave money to the local mosque, that they didn't fly off to Paris as the glitterati in Tehran or the larger cities did to buy their underwear, and they tended to look upon those people who lived in Sheneran and the upper part of Tehran or in areas of these provincial cities where the modernizing elite tended to congregate as just about as foreign as all of the foreigners who had been brought into Iran as part of the effort to modernize Iran rapidly, particularly after the oil price increase of the early 1970s. This is why I said the other day that even in a place like Isfahan where you had this large number of Bell Helicopter and ancillary activities to that operation, a large number of expatriates who were not necessarily the best representatives of their own societies, that wasn't all there was to the story. Yes, they were a group of foreigners that engaged in behavior that often was offensive to this very traditional component of Iranian society, but there were also Iranians who were, in effect, foreigners in the midst of their own society. Often, the focus of these traditional elements in Iranian society tended to be much more on that Iranian elite than the foreigners in their midst. They could see this elite as really the cause of aspects of things that were happening that they didn't like and that the foreigners, in effect, were simply the symptoms. They weren't necessarily the cause of it.

Q: How about contact with them?

TOMSETH: As I said the other day, getting people to express their real feelings was always difficult in Iran because of the assumption that whatever might be said to somebody from the consulate would go via a very direct pipeline to SAVAK, the state security organization. They had some reason to believe that, not that I or my American colleagues were going to report on them, but there were Iranian employees in the consulate who were on SAVAK's payroll, so they had to be careful.

But being in Shiraz was an advantage in a way and particularly because we made a practice of traveling extensively within the consular district. Hardly a week went by when one or another of the three Americans that were assigned there were not on the road somewhere else in the consular district. Again, through one of these local employees, particularly even though he was on SAVAK's payroll, he was a very gregarious person who had been with the consulate for a long, long time and knew a lot of people, and he did provide at least an entree to elements of society that people in the embassy in Tehran had much more difficulty penetrating. I think, over

time particularly, that we were able to get to know some of these guys and that some of them would open up a bit. You would hear their stories. A lot of the reporting that we did out of Tehran was just that, the stories of people without always identifying who they were other than that "A bazaari or a group of bazaaris that we have seen over the past month are saying these sorts of things." Particularly as things began to go south in 1978, that kind of reporting captured an audience in Washington that increasingly began to doubt that the good news that the embassy tended to focus on was necessarily the right story about what was happening in Iran.

Q: What about SAVAK? It was more than just the secret police, wasn't it? It was the police, wasn't it?

TOMSETH: No. There was a police force that had several different branches. SAVAK is an Iranian acronym that stands for the "Sasmani Italat Kayshfar," the "State Security and Intelligence Organization." That is basically what they were. They were the secret police and a kind of domestic CIA.

Q: Did you have a feeling that our CIA representation in Tehran was kind of in bed with the SAVAK? Were you able to report on the concern of the people where you were about the SAVAK?

TOMSETH: Yes, that was not a problem, reporting on what people were saying about SAVAK. We didn't have any source of information about what went on. SAVAK had arrest powers. They could arrest people. We didn't have a source of information that would give us any kind of accurate picture of what went on in SAVAK detention facilities, although you would hear from people who said they had been in one or they knew somebody who had been in one about what they claimed went on. But reporting that sort of thing was not a problem.

In terms of the Agency being in bed with SAVAK, yes, they were, as a matter of national policy. That was something that had not been decided by the station or even the Agency, but rather, as my military friends like to call them, national command authorities, including the head of the Agency, no doubt, but certainly involving the Secretary of State and the president, the White House.

Q: Did you have much contact with the reporting officers at the embassy?

TOMSETH: Yes. Because we did not have a telegraphic capability in Shiraz, Tabriz, or Isfahan, everything that we reported was an airgram or a memorandum of conversation. Those all had to be sent through the embassy in Tehran. The Political Section was the conduit through which they went. Again, after that spring of 1976 inspection that occurred just as I was arriving in Iran, the Political Section was not inclined to try to hold those things up. It went to the next level up. After that inspection, nothing that I or my colleagues in Shiraz wrote in the time that we were there was ever deep sixed. It might be held until the next time I could come up to Tehran and, as I think I described the other day, the DCM and I had our "Is the glass half full or is the glass half empty" conversation. But then they would go. Obviously, there was a disagreement between the Political Section and the consulate in terms of what we were saying about how things were and

what they were saying.

Just to give you an example, one of the things that had happened just before I got to Iran was the Shah had created a party. This was his latest iteration of a number of things he had done. At one point, he had created two political parties and then there had been no political parties. Then, just before I got there, there was the creation of a political party. It was through this political party that day-to-day government was to take place. It was a [majlis], a parliament. Everybody immediately became a member of this party. The Political Section in Tehran took this seriously and regularly reported on the activities of the Rastacris Party. Sitting in our little provincial abode down in Shiraz, we didn't take it seriously. It was just the most recent manifestation of the Shah's attempt to manipulate the political process and it didn't have any real meaning in terms of what was happening politically within the country at large. So, there was a debate between the Political Section and the consulate about the role of the Rastacris Party over a couple of years until the revolution really got underway in 1978.

Q: That reminds me of when I was consul general at about the same time in Naples. We used to get requests down to find out what the people down there thought about the latest maneuvers in Rome and they couldn't have cared less. It was all the CDU and the ministers changing things and nothing changed. I think the Italians had a very clear eye, certainly down in Naples, about what went on, but we were reporting in great detail this exquisite minuet in Rome.

I would think there would be some problems within the embassy Political Section that you might be picking up. The idea of an embassy saying, "Well, the newspaper is going to report all the bad things, so we have to balance it out by reporting all the good things" is a recipe for disaster. Supposedly, nobody is getting these things coming in from two frontals balancing them off. We are trained observers who are supposed to be reporting things as they are rather than trying to create a balance.

TOMSETH: Yes. Well, there was. It actually went back several years before I got there. One of the times that I had been to Iran prior to actually being assigned there was in 1971. At that point, there was a relatively junior officer in the Political Section, Stanley Escudero, who was a very good Persian speaker and traveled extensively around the country. I think he had a view which ran contrary to dogma in the embassy. I remember talking to him in the fall of 1971 when I was there. He was very frustrated about his inability to get what he was seeing and hearing as he moved about the country into the embassy's political reporting.

When I got there in 1976, there were three State Department officers in the Political Section, one of whom was on his second tour. He had been there in the 1960s. I think a lot of what he saw going on in Iran he found rather troubling, but he was not able to get that through the political counselor. The other person was a mid-level officer, more junior than the person on the second tour. He had gone through Persian language training the year before I did, but like me had no particular background in the area. He was an enthusiast. He was one of these people who took the Rastacris Party very seriously. So, intellectually, he didn't have any trouble with this notion that there was good news to report from Iran.

Q: You were in Shiraz until when?

TOMSETH: Until February of 1979, just shortly after the Shah had departed and Khomeini had returned to Iran immediately from Paris. He had been in Iraq for many, many years prior to being kicked out of there in mid-1978 and going to Paris.

Q: Part of the phenomenon of Khomeini coming back was the distribution of cassette tapes, exactly the kind we're recording this on, of his sermons. Was this something that you were seeing in Shiraz? Was this something that was raising our concerns?

TOMSETH: Well, it was no secret about how he was getting his message across to the populace in Iran. It was through cassette recordings. He would give these sermons or homilies first from Nadjef in Iraq, where he was, and then Paris. Somebody would bring one back and copies of it were made and they went everywhere. It was 20 years in advance of where we are with the Internet and e-mail today. But it was no secret that SAVAK knew that this was happening, the embassy knew that it was happening, but there was nothing anybody could really do about it. It proves a lie to George Orwell, if you will, that these technologies, rather than enslaving people, which is what Orwell worried so much about, really have an ability to set people free. Whatever you may think about the regime in Iran, in a way, this revolution was a very liberating experience for the vast majority of people. It gave them an opportunity that they had not had for decades to really engage in political self-expression, if you will.

Q: Were we able to monitor the effect of these things in Shiraz?

TOMSETH: I think what no one did a very good job of prior to the beginning of 1978 was gauging the effect that these messages from Khomeini were having within society at large. To pass these things around was potentially a criminal offense. I mean, anyone caught doing it was subject to arrest by the police or by SAVAK and winding up in jail. So, one of the stops on the distribution route certainly was not the consulate or the embassy in Tehran. But you did hear snippets of this sort of thing. You would hear that Khomeini in his last sermon from Nadjef had said this or said that. It was going around. We were certainly aware that there was something out there, but we in the consulate and the embassy, wherever, and SAVAK, too, for that matter, really had great difficulty coming to grips with the impact that these messages were having on society at large. That was only manifested when in early 1978 there began to be a series of overt demonstrations, demonstrations in the street, which were greeted, met with force on the part of the regime. There were inevitably casualties of one sort or another. Very quickly in 1978, you got into this cycle of demonstration, the demonstration being put down by force, a number of people being hurt or killed, and a 40 day period of mourning at the end of which there would be another demonstration maybe not even in the same city. The first one of these was in Qom, which is about 100 miles from Tehran and a religious center. But the next one was in Tabriz, clear up in northwestern Iran. They occurred in Isfahan, Meshed, Khorasan in northeastern Iran, and ultimately even in Shiraz, which had a reputation of being the most laid-back of these provincial centers. That cycle built in intensity throughout 1978. At that point, yes, it was possible to begin to measure in some quantifiable way the impact that these sermons and homilies that were coming back via cassette recording were having on the society at large. But at that point, it was

almost too late. Certainly by the summer of 1978, the phenomenon had taken on a life of its own. I think even the Shah began to recognize that and realized that the only way that it could be stopped would be with massive casualties throughout Iranian society and, for whatever reasons, he was not prepared to inflict that on his country. I think there are a variety of reasons.

Q: We have taken bits and pieces. You left in early 1979 to go up to Tehran. There was this revolution going on. How did we observe it from Shiraz, not the ebb and flow, but the flow of this revolution?

TOMSETH: In the course of 1978, I think the reporting that the consulate did tended to be very much the same kind of reporting that we had been doing for the previous year and a half, which was very much observation of what's going on in southern Iran in terms of this building revolutionary phenomenon. There was no single center for this revolution. You had this cyclical pattern of 40 days of mourning after an event in which people had been killed and injured, but you never knew what place the next manifestation was going to burst out. That made it difficult, I think, for the embassy and certainly for a consulate to describe this as a nationalist phenomenon. It was kind of like the six blind men describing an elephant. You've got a hold of your part of the elephant, but saying something meaningful about the animal as a whole was always very difficult. It was only in the latter stages of the year that the embassy began to try to come to grips with that based upon reporting that it was getting out of the consulates, although I have to say that the vast bulk of that reporting tended to come from Shiraz. There was almost none from Isfahan and relatively little from Tabriz, unless something particular happened, and then they would report on that.

They were being prodded by Washington on this. The Iran desk at that point was headed by Henry Precht, who had been in the embassy prior to going back to Washington. Then Henry had taken Charlie Naas' place when Charlie had come out in 1977 to be deputy chief of mission. Henry had been one of those people when I first got to Iran in 1976 who had some doubts about what was going on. When I had written up my experiences as a language student in Shiraz, he was one of the people in the embassy who championed that sort of thing. In a staff meeting, he actually argued on behalf of the embassy sending that in as a report. Throughout 1978, Henry, from his position as country director, was pushing the embassy to try to come to grips with this phenomenon. I think certainly by the summer of 1978, Henry had come to the conclusion that, well, 38 years of success notwithstanding, maybe this time the Shah wasn't going to make it. It was a couple more months before the embassy, Bill Sullivan, the ambassador, came to that same conclusion. But by late in the year, the embassy had reached that conclusion and was desperately trying to come to grips with the phenomenon on a country-wide basis and to anticipate, if the Shah goes, what's next, what happens, what kind of a situation are we going to be confronted with? What does that mean for U.S. policy? What does it mean for the relations with the United States?

Q: I would think that two of the most critical elements would be the ones that you almost by definition would be excluded from. One would be the military and the other would be the mullahs. When you're looking at revolution in a religious country, where religion obviously is playing a major role, was there a mullah movement that we could discern or was this just

general repugnance on the religious part of the Shah?

TOMSETH: There were all kinds of mullahs. My language teacher in Shiraz, her father was the Imai Jome. He was the senior mullah in Shiraz, the person who led the Friday prayer at the most prominent mosque. I didn't have any difficulty seeing him and talking to him about all sorts of things. He was a relatively enlightened person and not necessarily a toadie of the Shah, but somebody who had a broader world view than many of these people. The more common kind of mullah though was somebody who tended to see the outside world and certainly the United States in very negative terms. Even if you could get one of these people to agree that the phenomenon of Americans in Iran was really a symptom of something more fundamental and their problem was with that fundamental issue more than the United States, there wasn't much inclination to want to talk to Americans. The one aspect that helped us out a bit in this regard was that in Islam, of course, the clergy marries. The biology being what it is, roughly half of the children were males. Mullahs no less than anybody else didn't want their sons going into the army. So, a lot of them were our consular customers for visas for their children. We used this actually to gain some kind of access to people who otherwise would not be very willing to talk to people from the consulate. Now, it was difficult to get into a discussion of "And by the way, what are you telling your parishioners about the Shah," but it was possible to sit down with them and have a cup of tea and sort of talk about things in general. So, to a degree, we had some access to these people, but I would be the first to admit that it was difficult and it tended to be rather superficial.

The Iranian military was a little bit different. The government as a policy had a general no fraternization with foreigners approach. But there were a few relatively senior officers who were given dispensation from that policy. We could talk to them. They weren't necessarily a very good source about what people in the trenches thought and particularly what their draftees thought. But we did have scattered here and there the U.S. military advisory teams. They often worked with contractors on specific weapons systems or other kinds of military equipment that we were selling to the Iranians and training people. A lot of the trainees were non-commissioned officers, draftees. Through these American military advisory teams, one of which was in Shiraz and right across the street from the consulate, and through the contractors, we could often get a little bit of a picture of what the people that they were dealing with, who tended to be much lower ranking and in some cases were draftees, were talking about. So, we got a little bit of a picture of that, but it was not easy.

Q: Did you have the feeling that in many ways the Iranian students who wanted visas to go to the United States were equivalent to our draft protestors in the United States during the Vietnam War? In other words, was it education that was driving them or was it just to get the hell out of Iran?

TOMSETH: Well, it was to stay out of the army. Being in the army in Iran up to that point had not been particularly onerous. They hadn't fought any wars since the 19th century. Maybe there was some skirmishing in the early 20th, but... It was a couple of years of taking orders from somebody you might not like very much and doing things that most Iranians didn't find particularly useful. There was great cynicism about the military among the population in general.

Most people just didn't want to serve in it.

Q: That reminds me of when I was in Greece. This was the attitude of the wealthy Greeks.

TOMSETH: It wasn't just the wealthy in Iran. It was anybody who could get out of it used whatever resources he had available to get out of it. Again, with the boom in income fueled by oil wealth in the 1970s, more and more people were able to get out of it. Sending your male children abroad to study was a popular way of doing so.

Q: Were they going to essentially good schools or was it the equivalent of second-rate? What was your impression?

TOMSETH: The Iranians had been coming to school in the United States for a long time, certainly since the end of World War II. Initially, they tended to be exclusively the children of the elite. Often, they wound up at the best universities in the United States. I remember, when I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan, there were a number of Iranians there. They were certainly getting fine educations. But by the early 1970s when you had tens of thousands going every year, the vast majority of those were going to places that, if you had any kind of vital sign, you could get accepted to these schools. Many of them were dependent upon foreign students. If they didn't have foreign students, they would not have survived.

Q: How did you see the actual developments? Was it pretty apparent at a certain point that the Shah wasn't going to stop this?

TOMSETH: In late August and early September of 1978, there were a couple of incidents that for me were convincing that this wasn't going to stop. One was a theater fire in Abadan, which is down on the Persian Gulf. It's where the Iranian National Oil Company was headquartered. To this day, I'm not aware of any evidence that proves conclusively one way or another what that theater fire was all about. But it was clear that the exit doors were locked. A lot of people were trapped inside. The death toll on that was quite high. Immediately, rumors started circulating that this was an act perpetrated by the regime. Then in early September in Tehran, there was a demonstration in one of the city squares where the military moved in and started firing on people. In fact, it was alleged that they were firing from helicopters on the crowd. Several people were killed. Again, if they were being shot at from helicopters, I would have thought that the death toll would be much higher than it in fact it was. (End of tape)

This Jalay Square incident in Tehran... It didn't really matter whether one person was killed or one thousand were killed. In effect, they were martyrs and the military had been directly involved in this. This was not police action against the crowd, but military action against it. Again, the reaction - and this time it was almost on a national scale; there were demonstrations almost everywhere in Iran against what had happened in Jalay Square... With these two things happening in rapid succession, the conclusion that I came to in Shiraz was that this regime was not going to make it, that the Shah simply had lost so much credibility and the military had lost credibility. At the same time, it was clear that the regime was not prepared in these demonstrations that popped up all around the country in the wake of Jalay Square, the military was not prepared to put those down with crushing force. To me, the way seemed clear that there was just going to be more and

more of this. Each time that it happened, the regime was going to find itself in a weaker and weaker position. On the basis of that conclusion, I went to the embassy... We had 4,000-plus Americans in the consular district. I said, I think it's time that we start telling these people that we don't see any improvement in the situation and that they need to come to conclusions either institutionally through a company or individually if they were not, about whether or not they wanted to continue in Iran in circumstances where the outlook was for continuing deterioration in the situation. The consul general agreed with that approach.

Q: Who was that?

TOMSETH: Lew Gelps. The security officer agreed with that. But Bill Sullivan (And at the time I could understand intellectually where he was coming from. Subsequently, I developed a lot more sympathy for where he was coming from.) felt that if the U.S. mission went out officially to businesses and the American community generally and said, "You need to start thinking about packing your bags," that would set off a phenomenon itself that would only spiral downward and contribute to what was happening politically. So, he would not agree to taking that as an official approach. But what he did was turn a blind eye to what we did unofficially. I and the two vice consuls started telling people, "Look, here is what U.S. mission policy is, but I am going to tell you how I personally see this situation and you can draw your own conclusion." Over the next couple of months, we circulated around the consular district and spread that message.

The result of that was that for the companies, the oil companies, Lockheed, Grumman, and people like that who had to have fairly substantial presences in the district, that they for the most part started removing dependents. Some of them even began to cut down their staff personnel, to start looking at who was really essential to their operation. That made a great difference in early 1979 and in February of '79 particularly when the Shah's regime collapsed and this new revolutionary government came into place. We didn't have 4,000-plus Americans in the consular district anymore. We had a few hundred.

Q: Where the other consulates doing the same?

TOMSETH: To a degree, I think. In Tabriz, there were far fewer Americans. Isfahan had a lot more. The Isfahan consular district basically was two provinces, Isfahan and Gazed. Almost all of the Americans were concentrated in and around Isfahan City itself. In late 1978 and early 1979, the numbers of people there went down as well. In percentage terms, this was probably less than in the Shiraz consular district, which was essentially the southern 40% of Iran.

Q: How about the leaders of the American business community? We're really talking about American corporations which had defense or some other type contract. I suppose they had their own political estimates, too: checking with the embassy maybe below the embassy, what is really going on, that type of thing.

TOMSETH: I think it was, in general, much more true of the companies operating in the oil sector than some of the defense contractors. Those companies had lots of experience in Iran and in the area.

Q: Well, they had been around the block and been through a number of things in 1957 or 1958 in Iraq.

TOMSETH: Yes. Also, those companies tended to have their country headquarters not in Tehran, but in the oil area, in Khuzestan Province basically, either in Afwaz or in Abadan.

Q: Were you in Shiraz when the Shah left?

TOMSETH: Yes.

With regard to the American community, I should add one other point. In December of that year, in the Islamic calendar, Muharram fell in late November/early December that year. Ashiraz is sort of the big day for Shia Islam.

Q: This is when they go around beating themselves and yelling and all that.

TOMSETH: The martyrdom of Ali. I think that fell on December fifth or sixth of that year. The certitude was that there would be massive demonstrations all over Iran on Ashiraz. There was concern that these demonstrations might erupt into something that would be focused on the American community. Washington, again, I think, in part because of Henry Precht's prodding, actually directed the embassy a few days in advance of this to have an authorized departure, to allow dependents who wanted to leave to leave. The mission management didn't want to do that, but when Washington told them they had to, they didn't have any choice in it. A lot of the U.S. government dependents chose to leave on that occasion. That was also a very clear signal to the private sector Americans who were there. That prompted them to sort of redouble their thinking about whether or not they needed dependents around and contributed to the departure of a large portion of this American community in Iran, which may have been 50,000 at one point. In any event, my wife and two children were among those who departed. So, we were planning on going home for Christmas that year anyway. When they left, I said, "Well, I'll catch up with you at Christmas."

In the meantime, Ambassador Sullivan probably in early November had also come to the conclusion that the regime wasn't going to make it. He was directing an effort in the mission to start thinking about life after the Shah. One thing that he did at that point was, he asked me if I would be interested in coming up to Tehran after the first of the year to be political counselor on the theory that I had in my time in Shiraz a skeptic about the regime and also was one of a relatively small number of decent Persian speakers in the embassy. One of the things that they had found out as they began to change the policy about contacts was that many dissidents weren't English speakers. So, he wanted to think in terms of building a cadre of people in the embassy who presumably could relate to whatever came after and could speak to them in their language. So, he had asked me in November if I would be willing to do that. I didn't have to think very long to say "Yes." So, the idea was that I was going to go home at Christmas, come back after the first of the year and, in fact, start closing down the consulate and move up to Tehran. basically, that is what I did. I joined my family in Oregon for the holidays and came back through Washington

right after New Year's for a little bit of consultations before heading back to Tehran.

Q: What were you getting from the desk when you went back before going to close the post as far as talking to... The country director was Henry Precht, wasn't it?

TOMSETH: Yes.

Q: What were you getting from him? He was seeing both what the CIA was saying and...

TOMSETH: As I recall, the most useful information that we were getting via the desk (And by late 1978, a task force had been set up. This was no longer just a desk phenomenon.) was information about the interplay of forces in Washington: who was doing what, who wasn't doing anything, and who favored one course as opposed to something else. There was a lot of toing and froing in that sense going on in Washington in late 1978. That leads up to this rather interesting development in early January that I started to tell you about.

When I came through Washington right after New Year's, Sullivan, who, as I said, had concluded that the Shah wasn't going to make it and that we needed to start preparing for whatever came after, one of the things that he had been pushing was the idea that we need to set up some kind of contact with Khomeini, who by this point was in Paris. By the first of the year, he had convinced Vance that this should be done. Vance had tapped Ted Elliott, who had just retired. He had been ambassador in Afghanistan and had served in Iran. He was to be the Department's special envoy to go off to Paris to meet with Khomeini. Among the entourage in Paris was a guy named Ibrahim Yazdi, who actually was an American citizen or permanent resident. Through him, this had been set up. In any event, when I showed up in Washington, I was asked if I would join Elliott to go to Paris on this mission. So, I got my ticket. We were literally within a couple of hours of heading for Dulles Airport to fly off to Paris when Carter, who was then in Guadeloupe (I guess this was in the days before the G7. They had a G4 and they were meeting down there.) and Zbigniew Brzezinski was with him. Brzezinski had been one of these people who had argued that, no, the Shah isn't going down. All he needs is strong backing from the U.S. and he'll pull through. Vance had already cleared this mission to Paris with Carter, but Brzezinski convinced Carter to change his mind. So, word came back from Guadeloupe that we were not going to Paris, so rather than fly off and meet Khomeini, I got on the plane and went back to Tehran and down to Shiraz and proceeded to close down the consulate and get ready to move up to Tehran.

Would it have made any difference? That is questionable, but I think very clearly, we missed an opportunity to open up a channel of communication. The failure to do that was very much a phenomenon of Washington not really having a policy on how we were going to approach this situation in Iran. It really depended on the day or even the hour of the day what we were going to do. That continued right up to the end.

Q: Also, the fact that we didn't do this... I have just been rereading some of the things that Bruce Laingen was saying... One of the things that led to your hostage situation was the perception from the rulers in Iran, is the United States going to try to reinsert the Shah? In other words, rather than our saying, "Okay, this has happened and we accept it?" The very fact that we didn't

try to talk to Khomeini was maybe a minor piece, but it left that endowed about were we going to accept this.

TOMSETH: I think that is absolutely true. The failure to open up that channel of communication, whether or not we would have been able to communicate very effectively through it is another issue, but the failure to even open it up was a very serious lacuna as we proceeded in the course of 1979, tried to convince this new regime that we accepted what had happened and that what we were interested in doing was building a new kind of relationship with Iran, one that was based upon what had happened in Iran and not to try to go back to the status quo, which when we get to November of 1979 we can talk about. I think that sort of led this one student group to act as they did.

Q: When you went back, you actually shut down the post?

TOMSETH: Yes. I think we closed the consulate for business by the end of January and then began the process of packing up everything and closing down finally. I was supposed to go up to Tehran on February 10th. On the evening of the ninth, the tape that you referred to (It actually was a video tape of Khomeini's return.) sort of set off the final act. Khomeini had come back on the first or second of February, as I recall. He had decreed a provisional revolutionary government. The government that the Shah had left behind when he left on the 19th or 20th of January was still in place. That night (There was a small air force installation right in the middle of Tehran.), a group of non-commissioned officers were watching this tape of Khomeini's return to Tehran. A group of officers came into the room and told them to shut it off. A fight ensued. That set off a period of three or four days of fighting in Tehran and in other cities around Iran that ended with the Shah's last government folding its tent and the provisional revolutionary government being very clearly the only government in Iran.

Iran Air was not flying at that time. One of the tactics of the anti-Shah forces in late 1978 and early 1979 was to shut down all sorts of things (electricity, telecommunications) and Iran Air was one of them. So, the way I was supposed to get from Shiraz up to Tehran was, one of the U.S. Air Force C-12s which were parked at Doshantapay... This fight broke out at Doshantapay on the night of February ninth and by the morning of the 10th, there was no way that anybody from the embassy was going to be able to get the plane and come down to Shiraz and pick me up. So, I wound up staying down there for about another week, which in one sense was fortuitous. On the 14th of February, there was an attack on the embassy in Tehran. I otherwise would have been there. I missed that as a consequence of not being able to get out as scheduled.

Q: I'd like to go back to a couple of things. All these students going to the United States... Did you have problems of the students coming back with American wives and having children and not being able to get out of the country?

TOMSETH: Well, that hadn't been a phenomenon long before the revolution ever.

Q: This is just a pure consular problem.

TOMSETH: Right. I don't recall that there was any increase in those kinds of problems as a result of developments in the course of 1978. We did have a case of that sort pop up every once in a while. The American female spouse of an Iranian when she came back to Iran with her husband was regarded as an Iranian citizen. Her American citizenship was not recognized. Under Iranian law, no female could travel abroad without the written permission of either her spouse or parent or a male guardian of some sort. That applied to the children as well. So, we did have these "Not Without My Daughter" cases that arose. There weren't a lot of them, but there was some frequency.

Q: Were you able to work something out?

TOMSETH: Well, more often than not, yes. There were a few cases in which people left illegally. We would give them an American passport and they would then make their own arrangements to get out of Dodge, as it were.

Q: Iran was in turmoil. You have this pressure of all classes trying to get particularly their sons out of the place. This might have been quite a blow to the people who just wanted to get their sons out. Here was a source of visas that you were shutting down.

TOMSETH: That's right.

Q: How did this work? Would you find yourself issuing a hell of a lot of visas in a hurry?

TOMSETH: I don't think we were issuing, as long as we were issuing visas, any more or less than we ever had, but there was a great deal of consternation in Shiraz and in the consular district that this consulate was not going to be operating at least for a while and how were they going to get their visas?

Q: Were you getting people who were from the wealthier classes, the ones more identified with the Shah saying, "You're deserting us" and that sort of thing?

TOMSETH: Yes, although, I think, that phenomenon was much stronger in Tehran than any of the provincial cities. There was by the end of 1978 a very substantial exodus of people from Iran. I think one of the most telling signs that the end was near was when I came through Washington right after the first of the year in 1979, the Iranian military had marshaled all of its air assets to start flying their families out. Plane after plane was arriving at Andrews Air Force Base with the dependents of senior Iranian military officers on board.

Q: When did you get up to Tehran then?

TOMSETH: A couple of days after the 14th. Iran Air began flying again and I was able to get a commercial flight.

Q: Could you have driven up or was this considered dangerous?

TOMSETH: It was a possibility, but generally regarded as probably not the best idea.

Q: What was the state of the embassy when you arrived up there to your new job?

TOMSETH: Uninhabitable. What had happened on the 14th was... The embassy was on a large compound, almost a city block. By that point in the 1970s, it was largely surrounded by high rise buildings. So, people had gotten into these buildings and began firing into the embassy compound. A firefight went on for a couple of hours before the last group of people in the main chancery building surrendered and were taken out of the building by these armed people who carried out the attack. As it turned out, there were probably three different groups involved in the attack. They had only very loosely coordinated with one another. In fact, in purely political ideological terms, a couple of the groups were very much at odds with one another, but were able to cooperate on this attack on the embassy. There were six people killed in that attack, none of the American staff, but a couple of FSNs (Foreign Service nationals) and a couple of Iranian contract personnel, the cleaning crew who were on the premises, and a couple of the attackers, who almost certainly were shot by Marines as they retreated from the perimeter of this compound into the main chancery building, something we never admitted to.

Q: Yes. I've never heard that before.

TOMSETH: But the evidence suggests that they were not killed in a crossfire, but were probably shot by Marines defending themselves. In any event, the building had been shot up. In the chancery building itself, there was a great deal of tear gas that had been put down as the Marines retreated to the basement to the first floor to the second floor where the communications vault was. That was the last thing that went down. Virtually all of the files had been destroyed or if they had not been destroyed, an effort was made to go into the building and get them out and out of the country. So, we were operating... The Consular Section actually was in another building off the compound several blocks away. That was shut down. So, we were not issuing any visas in Tehran. Not only had the consulates been shut down, but this operation in Tehran that had been issuing over 100,000 visas a year was also shut down. Needless to say, that caused a great deal of consternation in Tehran.

Security on the compound was actually being provided by these three groups that had shot their way into the embassy on the 14th. That was part of the deal that was worked out when this same Ibrahim Yazdi, who by that point was foreign minister, had sort of rushed to the embassy in response to frantic phone calls from the embassy and had negotiated a settlement with these groups whereby they released everybody they had taken captive, but then were left on the compound to provide security for the compound. So, when I got there, the tasks at hand were to try to put some kind of embassy operation back together, to deal with this so-called security force, which as I said was actually three different groups which immediately started feuding with one another, and to try to deal with all of the material possessions that had been left behind by the American community in Tehran, which was several thousand (probably seven or eight thousand) people first when Khomeini had come back and then this fighting that had resulted in the collapse of the Shah's regime. Just prior to the 14th, there had been an airlift organized by the embassy, the State Department, to get as many people as wanted to leave out of the country.

Many people had literally gotten up from their breakfast and gone to the airport to get on one of these flights. So, there were apartments all over the city that had to be sought out, goods removed and packed up. People had abandoned their cars at the embassy. Those had to be disposed of. They had turned their pets loose on the compound. Something had to be done about them. So there were all these housekeeping activities that had to be taken care of. One of the decisions that Washington had made in the aftermath of the attack was that people had been so traumatized by the experience that the best thing to do would be to get as many people out of there as possible and to replace them, initially with TDY (temporary duty) personnel and ultimately with permanent replacements. So, we had just a relatively small cadre of people left over from the old mission, a constantly rotating stream of people coming in on temporary duty for a week or two at a time, trying to do all this housekeeping work, dealing with this security force that we were fearful might start shooting at one another at any point, and to try to get some kind of embassy operation going again. My role as the new political counselor was to try to organize the political reporting in the midst of all of this when we couldn't get into the chancery because of the tear gas. We had no records. We had no communications other than very rudimentary temporary communications that were set up. The volume that that could handle was very minimal.

Q: The ambassador was still Sullivan?

TOMSETH: Bill Sullivan was still there. He stayed until about the middle of April.

Q: How was he reacting to all of this?

TOMSETH: Superbly. He had had great difficulty with the State Department, Warren Christopher in particular. He came back in April of 1979 and resigned in the midst of great bitterness and went on to do other things. But as a leader in those circumstances, he was a rock during that couple of months that he remained after all this had happened.

Q: What was the problem with Warren Christopher, who was Deputy Secretary of State?

TOMSETH: Well, Christopher, in effect, had become the Iran Desk officer in the latter stages of 1978 and early 1979. I think Sullivan's view, rightly or wrongly (I'm not really in a position to judge.), was that Christopher was very much a part of this gang in Washington that couldn't make up its mind about anything having to do with Iran. A lot of the business that was conducted between the embassy and Washington in the final stages of this was done over the secure phone. It was not via cable or anything in the written record. I understand that there were a number of discussions that Sullivan and Christopher had over the secure phone that were very acrimonious.

Q: When you arrived there, all this activity was going on, but it sounds like a real chaotic situation. What sort of government were you dealing with? How were you organizing your political reporting? What was happening?

TOMSETH: Khomeini while he was still in Paris had actually named a prime minister, a fellow named Mehdi Bazargan, who was a figure out of the 1950s and 1960s and had been in Iran most of that time. He had not gone into exile. Bazargan actually was a Western-trained engineer, not in

the West, but in the Western mode. He was fairly open to the idea of working with us. He had appointed a number of people that also were relatively easy to deal with. This fellow, Ibrahim Yazdi, who had spent many, many years in the United States, was the foreign minister. There was a deputy prime minister named Amir Antazam, with whom we also had a lot of dealings, who was very easy to deal with, to communicate with. The big problem was that this was a government that was in charge of very little in a meaningful sense and was constantly being undercut by Khomeini himself. The government's principal rival was a whole plethora of so-called revolutionary committees. There were revolutionary committees everywhere. These were groups of people who were largely self-appointed. They often were based on a local mosque. They did everything. They manned the checkpoints, which were all around the town. They insinuated themselves into government ministries. They controlled specific areas of geography around the city and, indeed, around the country. There were revolutionary committees in other cities as well. So, the provisional government was constantly trying to deal not only with embassies like us and sovereign powers, but the domestic sovereign powers as well, these revolutionary committees. What happened over the next nine months or so was that the authority of the provisional government steadily eroded. The power of these revolutionary committees, at least a number of them, increased. The result was that nobody was in charge and everybody was in charge. So, getting any kind of a decision was extremely difficult. In terms of how you get a political section back in operation in those circumstances, I must say, it was a challenge. Part of the challenge was that we didn't want to just focus on the government. Our feeling was, that was part of how we got into this mess in the first place, dealing only with the government, but to try and reach out to others, to these revolutionary committees, to the mullahs who often were very influential people in the committees. Again, it wasn't easy. There was a great deal of mistrust. The feeling on the part of many of these people was that whatever we might be saying, the U.S. was the embassy, that it was difficult to distinguish, and the U.S. embassy was the manifestation of the enemy in Iran, that there really wasn't any difference between the U.S. government and the Shah.

Q: History always weighs heavily on us. You immediately go scurrying back and look at the Bolshevik Revolution. You would have been looking for, my god, when are the communists going to come up and seize. This was in the middle of the Cold War. Was this in your minds? Were we really looking hard at seeing how they might be the most organized source?

TOMSETH: Well, there were some people who certainly were concerned about this. I think this is one of those instances where Henry Kissinger was right, in a way- (end of tape)

The role or the influence of the Communist Party in Iran, this is one of these instances where Kissinger had a point with Global Outlook Policy, that being an area expert or a narrow specialist can often result in a degree of myopia that actually prevents you from seeing things contemporary in their full perspective. Those who tended to be most concerned about the Tudeh (meaning "People"), the Communist Party, were people who had experience from Iran in the 1950s and 1960s when the Tudeh actually meant something. But in the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the one thing that SAVAK did fairly effectively was to break the Tudeh. They rounded up and in one way or another dealt with the leadership of the party fairly effectively. Coupled with that was the policy of the Soviet Union, which in that same period was basically to develop as

good a relationship with the regime as possible. In effect, they sold out the domestic communist party in Iran for the sake of tank sales and things like that. For people like myself who didn't have this background, being sort of new and naive, it wasn't very difficult to see that what we really needed to be worried about was not the Tudeh but newer radical forces, whether they were the so-called Islamic Marxists, as the Shah called them, the Mojadin A-Halq, and the Fedehin A-Halq, or these more traditionally-based but nonetheless revolutionary Islamic forces that had sort of emerged in the course of the revolution. I think that certainly personally and for my colleagues in the Political Section, who included Mike Metrisko and John Lemer, both of whom had been Peace Corps volunteers in Iran, we were much more focused on these contemporary political forces rather than the Tudeh, which to us seemed a phenomenon of the past. But establishing contact with these people was not easy.

Q: We closed down our consulates and it sounds like a bunch of political lords with these revolutionary committees, it sounds like we were fairly well limited to Tehran, weren't we?

TOMSETH: To a degree, although we tried to get people out. One of things we used was the pretext of checking on our properties in Shiraz, Tabriz, and Isfahan. We didn't own these things, but we had kept the leases. The hope was that eventually it would be possible to reopen these posts. So, we would send people out from time to time to check on them. But one of the great concerns in the spring and early summer of 1979 (You mentioned warlords.) was the phenomenon of the fissiparous tendencies in Iran. This is a country that had often sort of flown apart. You had nascent movements in the Kurdish area of Iran and, to a lesser degree, in some of the Turkish-speaking areas of Iran, that looked like they might be going that direction in the early months of 1979. Again, we tried to get some handle on that phenomena as well in the political reporting that we were doing.

Q: What about the Kurds? The Kurds are always, along with the Palestinians, the problem in the Middle East. Were we able to make any contact or get any feel about the Kurds?

TOMSETH: Yes, actually, Mike Metrisko, who, as I said, had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran and had from those times some fairly good Kurdish contacts, was a very useful asset in trying to get some feel for what was going on. Ultimately, what happened in Kurdistan was basically the long, sorry history of the Kurds, their inability to cooperate with one another. In the end, they defeated themselves through internal factionalism. Even though the regime in those early months was hardly in a position to do much about a separatist movement in the Kurdish areas, what happened in Iranian Kurdistan in those months was that the whole thing imploded because of internal factionalism among clan leaders.

Q: You mentioned this problem with Christopher and, I take it, probably Brzezinski was probably in there stirring things up, too. Did we know what we were doing? We always want good relations with a country. Here it is, yet you have the Shah floating around. Do you think we were making any sense to anybody who was trying to deal with us?

TOMSETH: Incoherence was a constant background noise. For those of us in the mission, the marching orders were really not too complex and comprehensible. Whether or not it was a

mission impossible is another matter. I can talk a little bit about something that happened in May and June of 1979 just before Bruce Laingen arrived on the scene that illustrated the situation that we were dealing with.

Basically, what we were told to do (and it made sense) was to try and sort out all of these things that had been left behind in the hasty drawdown. Part of that process was to convince the new powers that be in Iran that our intentions really were honorable, that we really did accept what had happened in Iran, and that we wanted a positive relationship with that new Iran. That is not difficult to grasp. It leads to certain logical steps in terms of embassy operations. Those included sorting out all of the military contracts that the previous regime left behind. The provisional government, one of the things that it quickly realized was, even though they might think that the Shah was wasting the national patrimony to a very large extent, buying all these weapons systems, that even a revolutionary Iran wanted a capable, professional military establishment. That meant going through these and figuring out what you wanted to keep, what you might want to scale back, and what you wanted to do away with. They needed our help to do that. We had the expertise. Over the course of the spring and summer, we actually developed not always a very happy, but a fairly well functioning interaction with the Iranian side in a process to go through these contracts.

Another thing that we knew we had to do and was very much wanted on the Iranian side was to get a consular operation operating again. We weren't going back to that, from a security point of view, indefensible building that we had rented for the consular operation. That meant we had to build a new facility on the compound. In the spring and summer, that was done. By August, we had a new facility. We had gotten consular officers into place and we opened up for visa business to Hozanahs and large crowds, including a lot of the new revolutionary establishment that were just as anxious as they had ever been to be able to get their children and themselves visas so that they could travel to the United States. Those sorts of things were... It was fairly obvious what we had to do. Over the spring and summer, we did it. Washington for its part recruited new people to begin filling up those positions that had been vacated in February. We were using a small crew of holdovers and TDY personnel to man during the course of the summer.

Is this a good point to talk about May?

Q: Why don't we talk about May and then we'll stop at this point?

TOMSETH: Okay. One of the things that we, the U.S. government, did to demonstrate our desire to work with the new regime and at the same time to have some continuity in the relationship was, as Bill Sullivan left, a new person was appointed to succeed him. That was Walter Cutler. We sought agreement and got it from the provisional government. He had a confirmation hearing in late April or early May. In May, he was just about to come out to Tehran to take up his duties. During this same period in Iran itself, they had revolutionary courts all over the country dispensing Judge Roy Bean justice. In late April, a prominent Iranian businessman was executed after being tried by one of these revolutionary courts. That led the U.S. Senate to adopt a Sense of the Senate Resolution, sponsored by Jacob Javits of New York.

Q: I think that businessman was Jewish.

TOMSETH: He was. This resolution was condemnatory of the activities of the revolutionary courts. That prompted demonstrations outside the embassy. We had, once again, huge crowds and Marines on full alert, and a skeleton crew manning the barricades. Charlie Naas by this time was charge d'affaires. When that happened, the government called him in and he and I went to see Amir Antazam, the deputy prime minister. Antazam said, "In this atmosphere, we think you should have Ambassador Cutler wait a little bit before he comes out to post." So, we sent back a cable to Washington conveying that message and Washington said, "Okay, he will wait a little bit." Then a week or so later, Antazam called Charlie in again and we went off to see him. Antazam said, "Well, we've actually been looking once again at Walter Cutler's curriculum vitae and we have come to the conclusion that he is not really the best man to have here in Iran. He has served in Vietnam."

Q: At a very low level, as an ambassador's aide, I think.

TOMSETH: "And he was your ambassador in Zaire. We just really don't think it would be best to have somebody who has been in these U.S. puppet countries come to Iran." Charlie told him, "That is not a message that is going to go down very well in Washington, but if that is the message you want us to send, we will do it." We did.

But in the midst of that, we had these demonstrations around the embassy. Real questions about the viability of this approach that we had been trying to pursue since February... Charlie convened a couple of sessions of people who had been there - myself, Phil Ghast, who was the head of the MAAG (Military Advisory Group) mission, Mike Metrinko, and a few others who had been around for a little while - to talk about our posture. Even with these TDY people, we had at any given moment 50-60 Americans in the embassy. This whole incident with the sense of the Senate resolution and the second thoughts about Cutler coming to Iran raised serious questions about the viability of our approach. I remember at one point in one of those meetings, I suggested that maybe what we ought to do is cut back to six people with a dog and we make the dog chargé and just sort of hunker down and see how things go for a few months. But in the end, the consensus that came out of those meetings (and I must say, I adhered to that consensus) was that Iran was just too important a country to take that approach. While we all knew that there were risks, we could not control many of the things that affected the situation in Iran (for example, the U.S. Senate or the revolutionary courts), that the stake that the United States had in Iran was so great that we had to give it our best effort. That consensus very largely shaped the approach that we continued to take from June of 1979 up to November, when the second attack on the embassy occurred.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. We will pick this up the next time. You talked about having the meeting to decide whether we should really draw down or try to keep going. What was the argument for not... It's an important place, but did you feel you could do anything by having a full-scale or moderately scaled embassy?

TOMSETH: These days, after the experience of the late 20 years, I think we have learned some

things. I often think that the human race is pretty slow when it comes to learning experiences, but in the last two decades, I think we have learned some things. These days, I think there is a much greater willingness to think in terms of cutting staff way back or even closing down operations - as, for example, in Khartoum, where a decision was made a while back that we would, in effect, remove the staff from the embassy in Khartoum, keep a few people in Nairobi, and maybe have visitors fly in from time to time. The situation on the ground in Sudan itself was such that we simply could not have a viable full-time operation in Khartoum.

In 1979, the Foreign Service didn't have the body of experience that it does in 1999. I think, as a consequence, there was much less willingness to challenge conventional thinking. That might be the case today. I know that certainly applied in my own case. While I could make a joke about drawing down and be half-way serious about it, it was not possible for me to entertain the idea that you were going to have an embassy operation in a country like Iran that really had been a linchpin of U.S. Middle East policy for such a long time, that wasn't a full-blown embassy.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time. The decision has been made to maintain the embassy. We're in May of 1979.

TOMSETH: By early June. It was just after that that Bruce Laingen then came out. He was caught on home leave and asked if he would be willing to come out to Tehran for a couple of weeks while they tried to figure out what to do about the Cutler situation.

Q: Today is July 1, 1999. I'll let you pick it up.

TOMSETH: We had left off in May of 1979 at a point when the Senate had passed a Sense of the Senate Resolution critical of the revolutionary courts operating in Iran, which in turn prompted the provisional government in Tehran to ask first that we delay the arrival of Walter Cutler, who had been named as our new ambassador to Tehran and had just been confirmed by the Senate, and then shortly thereafter to request that we not send him at all and rather put forward another candidate.

That in turn led the State Department to ask Bruce Laingen, who had just finished his tour as ambassador to Malta and was on home leave in Minnesota, if he would come out to Tehran for a couple of weeks or so while Washington tried to figure out what to do about the issue of Cutler and the Iranian request that we not send him after all.

Q: What was our reading on the Cutler thing? Was this Cutler or was this just wanting to make a point?

TOMSETH: I think what happened was that when the Javits Resolution prompted them to ask us to delay his arrival, some people went back and looked at his career assignments up to that point and saw in those assignments things that caused them to wonder if they went ahead with this, if they wouldn't be vulnerable to accusation of accepting someone or some group Iran would object

to.

Q: He had been in Vietnam in the late 1960s.

TOMSETH: And he had just been ambassador in Zaire. I think what some people in the government became worried about was that they would be vulnerable to criticism from political rivals within Iran that they had accepted somebody who had served in these countries which at the time were viewed by some, probably many, Iranians as essentially American stooges.

Q: Something we did not cover was the series of trials and some executions that were going on. I think the thing that really spurred the Javits Amendment was that some fairly well-known Jews were killed.

TOMSETH: One in particular.

Q: During this period, up to May or so, how did we see the Iranian justice system?

TOMSETH: The justice system was operating like virtually all other parts of the system. In the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the last government that the Shah had appointed in February, all sorts of groups seized bits of power that were lying around. That certainly included the judiciary. There was this general notion that Iran should be an Islamic republic. That gave the clergy a step up on potential rivals for claim to the judiciary system. Their argument was that in an Islamic state, Islamic clergy as the foremost interpreters of Islamic law, should constitute the legal system. So, a number of them set themselves up as judges and operated courts that were very much independent of one another and independent of anyone else, for that matter. People were being brought before these courts in substantial numbers and given a very quick summary trial with, by our notions, no due process whatsoever. Frequently, they were condemned to death and taken up on the roof of the building and shot forthwith. In terms of minority communities in Iran who were subject to this kind of "West of the Pacos" justice, there were several Christian denominations - Armenian, Assyrian, and Zoroastrian Christians. There is a small community of Zoroastrian Christians still in Iran. And there was a Jewish community, which in 1978-1979 probably numbered somewhere between 60-70,000 people in Iran. They were by and large left alone. The real targets of these revolutionary committees and courts were people who had been closely associated with the previous regime. If they happened to be a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian, that wasn't going to save them from this Islamic justice. But as near as we could discern, there was no attempt on the part of the courts or the committees to go after a religious minority per se - with one exception, and that was the Bahais, who by the likes of the Muslim majority, were not a religious minority, but rather apostates. The Bahais suffered very severely at the hands of these courts. But in this one case, there was a very prominent Jewish businessman who was hauled before one of the courts and accused of spying for Israel and promptly executed. That led to this Sense of the Senate Resolution sponsored by Javits that was passed in early May of 1979.

Q: Did you find yourself under any pressure from those who were unhappy about what was happening in Iran in the United States to turn this into "These Muslim fanatics are going after

the Jews?" This always arouses a significant political force, if you can show this. Did you have to be careful not to overdownplay or you would be in political trouble back in Washington?

TOMSETH: It was a very difficult political problem. These were not insignificant numbers of people who were being brought before these courts. Many of them were executed in circumstances where by no reasonable argument based upon internationally accepted standards of justice were they getting justice. Nobody was inclined to sweep that under the carpet. There was certainly pressure from the United States from all sorts of groups to try to do something about this. The reality was, we had virtually no influence to do anything about that. The government itself had no control over these courts. But in the case of this one Jewish businessman, that prompted a particular kind of pressure that in some respects, I suppose, was more urgent than coming from any number of other groups, constituencies, in the United States, whether they were human rights-based or religious-based or what have you, to try and do something about the situation. What we found we could do - about the only thing we could do - was to try to have as extensive contacts among these various communities as possible and stay in regular touch with them to hear from them how they felt the situation was in terms of potential jeopardy at the hands of these courts.

In the case of the Christian denominations and Zoroastrians, at that time, in the spring and summer of 1979, most people seemed inclined to make their peace with the new regime, to try to ride it out. Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians, too, although, I think, in other Muslim countries they would not be regarded as people of the book, in Iran, they would, and while they might be second-class citizens in this new Islamic republic, there was the intention of the political leadership and the religious leadership, too, I think, to recognize them as a constituent component of the Iranian body politic and to accord them certain rights within that political system.

The Jewish community was a little different. There had already been a pattern of emigration to Israel or, to a lesser extent, to the United States, and to Europe. I think a number of people in the Jewish community were not terribly confident about the future and saw, to put it crassly, an opportunity in these circumstances to generate sympathy, support, and a willingness on the part of members of the international community to facilitate the emigration of Iranian Jews who wanted to go to Israel, the United States, or wherever. In effect, that is what happened. I can't tell you what the size of the Jewish community in Iran is today, but even during the course of the spring and the summer of 1979, our best guesstimate was that that population fell from somewhere between 50-60,000 to perhaps half or even less of that number.

Q: Prior to the overthrow of the Shah, how close were Israeli-Iranian ties? Was it an immediate, abrupt cutting off? How did this work?

TOMSETH: Starting with the second half first, yes, the break was immediate in February of 1979 when this new regime came to power. There was a competition for power and the provisional government was only one of the competitors. But with the fall of the last of the Shah's governments and the emergence of this new constellation of forces, the break in relations with Israel was immediate and complete. The building that the Israelis had used to house their embassy was given to the Palestinian Liberation Organization. They immediately set up shop in

place of the Israelis.

Under the Shah, the principle of the Iranian government's foreign policy was what is in the interests of Iran. It wasn't religious-based at all. There was a certain sensitivity to their relationship with Israel. Israel did not have an ambassador in Iran. But they had a functioning embassy and an aid program. They provided various kinds of expertise to the regime in support of its development program and in support of its national security program, most principally to SAVAK, the intelligence and security organization that under the Shah achieved a great deal of notoriety in terms of its suppression of political dissidents.

Q: We're still talking about around May. Were all of you thumbing through your "Carlyle's French Revolution" or something? Were you looking at this and figuring out where this one went? It seems almost like a classic revolution.

TOMSETH: It was. I think there was considerable apprehension among staff - or at least the staff that was going to be there - because at that point in May, we had a relatively small number of people who had stayed on after the February attack and an even smaller number who were going to stay long-term. These were supplemented with people who came in on temporary duty assignments of anywhere from a week to six weeks. But there was a corps of people who had been around for a while and a few of us who were planning on staying long-term. Among that group, there was certainly a great deal of apprehension that the revolution even at that stage had begun to eat its children.

In the aftermath of the Javits Resolution and Cutler imbroglio, Charlie Naas, who was charge d'affaires at the time, convened a couple of meetings for people to sit around and talk about the situation and try to come up with some ideas about what could we do, what should we do. I recall in one of those meetings that I suggested that it might not be possible to operate a full-blown embassy, to reopen the Consular Section as was planned, and that instead, we perhaps ought to think about reducing the number of people that we had to a very small number and just sort of hunker down and try to ride out this revolutionary storm that obviously had not - the process had not - completed itself. I think I suggested that we cut back to maybe six people and a dog and we make the dog the charge. That was obviously facetious to a degree, but only to a degree. But in the end, the consensus that emerged from those meetings - and a consensus that I certainly willingly acceded to - was that what was at stake in Iran was too important to not at least try to make something of the situation, to try to develop this new kind of relationship with the post-Shah Iranian powers that be. That was the course that we pursued during the summer and fall of 1979.

Q: What about how we proceeded? One doesn't overdue these past revolutions, but the French Revolution and to some extent the Russian Revolution, you see that when a group finally does consolidate its power, it starts moving out. Did we see Iran going off into Afghanistan, Pakistan, or Iraq? Was that coming down the pike?

TOMSETH: There was a certain amount of rhetoric from the very beginning about taking the message of the Iranian Revolution international. But the reality on the ground in the spring,

summer, and into the fall of 1979 was that the domestic situation was so chaotic and that the need for consolidation and indeed the struggle for some share of power in the process of consolidation was so all-consuming that one didn't really need to be terribly concerned about the rhetoric about spreading the Iranian revolutionary message internationally.

Q: With the Javits Amendment, much has been made of our acceptance of the Shah and what that would do. Did our embassy have any input before the Javits Amendment came out? It would strike me that this would be seen by those on the ground as being provocative and it might screw things up for the rest of the Jewish community.

TOMSETH: Up to May, to the best of my knowledge, the embassy as an institution was not explicitly asked by Washington for its views on admitting the Shah to the United States. I know that Bill Sullivan certainly had discussions while he was still in Tehran with Washington about the Shah. This was after the Shah's departure in January and before Sullivan's departure in early April. At the time the Shah left- (end of tape)

There was a general agreement among all of the players on the U.S. government side that when the Shah left Iran in January of 1979, he would go to the United States, that that was not an issue that at that time was contentious. But the Shah himself chose not to. He went initially to Morocco and then to Egypt for a while. By March or thereabouts, I know that Bill Sullivan felt that for the Shah then to go to the United States would be potentially very harmful to the policy that Washington had decreed, which was to try to make a go of it with the new regime in Iran. But again, I don't think that was ever put on a piece of paper. These were telephone conversations that Sullivan had with the State Department. But that view was shared in Washington. I know that Henry Precht, who was the country director for Iran at that time, certainly felt that having missed this window of opportunity when he left Iran initially, that for the Shah to come to the United States before this revolutionary process in Iran had really run its course and there had been a consolidation of authority in Iran would certainly jeopardize what we were trying to do. But it was only after the Javits Resolution that the embassy's formal views were solicited on that score. This was probably in early July. When that was done, Bruce Laingen had arrived. It was in the form of a cable that was sent to Bruce for him alone. Bruce, to his everlasting credit, said to himself, "I have just arrived here. I am not going to answer this question without consulting with some people in the embassy who have been around longer than I." He did that. He did talk to several people. Phil Ghasst was one of them. I was one of them. There were probably a couple of others. On the basis of those discussions, he formulated a response, which was that, yes, at some point, the United States should be prepared to accept the Shah in the United States, but that should not come before the situation in Iran had been clarified, and that a government that really was in charge was in place. That was certainly not the case with the provisional government. At that particular juncture, I do not think that it was yet generally known that the Shah had cancer. That came to light, at least publicly, only subsequent to that message to Bruce in the summer of 1979. He was, however, asked again, I think in September, and the answer was essentially the same, that if the Shah were to be allowed to come to the United States prior to a sorting out of the situation in Iran, it could be very dangerous to the policy that we were trying to pursue, a policy that was decreed essentially by Washington of trying to build some kind of a new relationship with the new Iran.

Q: Did the reaction to the Javits Amendment sensitize the embassy, you all, to the fact that the Iranians, those that were struggling for power, were looking at how we were reacting and using this to inflame things? What we were doing in the United States had its effect on Iran?

TOMSETH: I don't think that came as any great surprise because of the reaction to the Javits Resolution. There had been any number of other indications prior to that that people did pay attention to what was going on in the United States in terms of the view of what was happening in Iran and that one faction or another would always be ready to try to use that for their own domestic political advantage. Just as some of these things, I think the Javits Resolution had far more to do with politics in the United States than it did with the situation in Iran. I find it impossible to believe that a very large majority of the Senate really believed that this resolution was going to make any difference at all in terms of the treatment of the Jewish community in Iran, but it was very important in terms of the Jewish constituency in the United States.

Q: But you all had no particular input before this happened?

TOMSETH: No.

Q: We keep coming to this from time to time, but let's talk about our perception at this point. The Soviet threat to Iran... later on, newspapers were having big red arrows going through Iran down to Khorramshahr and all that. What was the feeling about what was happening in Iran and what the Soviets might do about it?

TOMSETH: I think you have to back up a little bit and look at the relationship between Iran and the Soviet Union in the latter years of the Shah's regime. That had become - not that Iran ever trusted the Soviets - but the Shah had decided that he wanted to have some kind of a relationship with Moscow. That included in the security area as well. He did not want to be totally dependent upon the United States as a source of arms. He had very purposefully gone to the Soviets for some Iranian weapons procurement, particularly armor and artillery. So you had that as a background when the revolution occurred. Again, examining the rhetoric of the revolution, I think those of us in Iran felt that while there was a particular focus on the United States because of the special relationship that we had enjoyed with the Shah and his government, that there was no propensity on the part of these new forces to get in bed with the Soviets. One of the standard slogans that was shouted in all these demonstrations that were constantly going on in the streets or Tehran was "Nashark Nakharb (Neither East nor West)." It's a slogan, but it is indicative of a mindset. I don't think that there was any real sentiment in Iran, particularly among the Islamic forces, for having a closer relationship with the Soviet Union than the Shah had, and maybe not as close as he had. What the Soviets were thinking in terms of possible advantage in Iran as a consequence of this is probably more complex. I don't doubt that they saw an opportunity to get a greater degree of balance in terms of Iranian foreign policy than had existed for decades, at least in terms of how Iran related to the Soviet Union on the one hand and the West on the other. But I'm not sure that they had any great schemes for pushing those arrows through Iranian territory to the Persian Gulf.

Q: How was the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan playing during this period? Was this just not of particular interest?

TOMSETH: Well, the Soviets weren't overtly involved in Afghanistan yet.

Q: We're talking about 197-

TOMSETH: This was 1979. The coup that overthrew Daud was in April of 1978. The Communist Party, it was generally assumed that the Soviets had a lot of influence with the Communist Party. But the Soviets weren't physically involved in Iran yet. That didn't happen until December of 1979.

Q: As the situation was evolving, how much of an albatross was our whole military procurement program? This was a lot of money, a lot of commitment on both sides, and all that. Was it a writeoff? We're we going to let things just rust and go on? We must have been pressured by Bell Helicopter and other people to do something to straighten this out. How much was this an issue?

TOMSETH: In the embassy, I don't think we saw it so much as an albatross as an opportunity. Fairly quickly, the provisional revolutionary government realized that some of what the Shah had been doing, they would want to continue in pursuit of what they themselves regarded as legitimate national security requirements. But the dilemma for them was, did they need all of the stuff that the Shah had signed up for? Their general view was, probably not. That thought process presented an opportunity for us, the embassy, to work with the provisional revolutionary government in trying to sort out all of these issues: what do you want to keep; what do you want to continue; what do you want to cancel? For that reason, we kept on in Tehran a small military presence outside the Defense attache's office, a sort of residual MAAG, which was a key component of our team in negotiating with the Iranian government what to do about these various weapons systems procurement contracts and all of the ancillary support that went with them. Throughout the spring and summer, we saw these negotiations, as difficult and as frustrating as they often were, as a way of moving the peanut forward in terms of building this new kind of relationship with Iran.

If I may jump ahead a little bit, one of the ironies of the seizure of the embassy on November 4, 1979 was that that morning, there was a meeting scheduled with the Legal Affairs people in the foreign ministry to talk about the status of this residual military assistance group that we had operating in the embassy. One of the first things the new government had done after February of 1979 was to void the military assistance agreement that we had with Iran that had existed since the 1950s. That agreement had provided the status for the MAAG. So, we had asked the Department for information on other situations where we didn't have a bilateral military agreement, but where we did have a military assistance program, for use with the Iranians on how they might, in effect, give these people some kind of status within the diplomatic mission without having a bilateral mutual security arrangement. Ann Swift was supposed to go with Bruce to that meeting, but she had been out of town over the weekend with some friends from the New Zealand embassy and had car trouble and they were late getting back. So, I wound up going with Bruce to that meeting on the morning of November fourth. It was while we were in that

meeting that the attack on the embassy began.

The meeting itself actually was quite positive. It was a very productive meeting. We came out of it thinking that we had made some real progress towards an arrangement that would give these nine, 10, or 12, however many there were, military people that were housed in the embassy some legal status within the overall U.S. diplomatic mission. We came out of that meeting only to find out from Mike Howland, the security officer who had remained with the car, that there was an attack underway at the embassy.

Q: Going back to this period, Bruce Laingen arrived... When he arrived, was there a feeling of, okay, maybe this is a new start, or things are cranking up? What was the spirit of the period?

TOMSETH: Bruce had come on the understanding that he would be there only a short time. That was our understanding as well. But his arrival was very much welcomed. Charlie Naas was certainly liked and respected by people in the embassy, but he himself felt that he needed to get out of there, that he had been through all of this trauma over the previous year and a half or so. So, Bruce arrived as a fresh person. He is also a very good person. He had some Iranian background. He had served in Iran in the 1950s. So, he was a kind of breath of fresh air in terms of staff morale and leadership. He was somebody that people immediately had the greatest respect for. So, even though we didn't think he was going to be there very long, his arrival actually was a very positive boost for the embassy staff, those of us who were more or less permanent and TDYers alike.

Q: Can you recreate the briefing when he got there? What were you telling him?

TOMSETH: I am sure we must have had some kind of initial formal brief and that we had for him a briefing book, but I think probably more important than that were the series of meetings that Bruce had [in Washington and Tehran].

Q: What was the feeling?

TOMSETH: Perhaps, at least by my lights, the most important aspect of his initiation, if you will, to the Iran that he had arrived in was something that had been developing over the previous several months in terms of the way most of the people in the embassy looked at the situation in Iran and the way the desk looked at the situation in Iran.

The previous year, Henry Precht, who was the country director, had been right virtually before anyone else in the State Department in terms of where things were headed in Iran. He before anyone else in Washington came to the conclusion that the jig was up for the Shah, if you will, and that we, the U.S. government, really needed to focus our attention and our energies on not trying to figure out ways to keep him in power, but how we were going to deal with everything that was going to follow.

Having been right in 1978, I think Henry was wrong in 1979 in that he tended to focus on the good news in 1979 rather than the bad news. It was kind of like these "Is the glass half full or half

empty" discussions I had had a couple of years earlier with our DCM, Jack Miklos. When Bruce came out, he had been briefed by the desk, so he had that view. I think that in the discussion that he had with people in the embassy when he arrived, we tended to try to focus him on, yes, there are some positive things. We won't deny that. Indeed, these negotiations on the military contracts in a way were one of the positive things. But there are a lot of things that are very troublesome about the situation: the revolutionary courts, the dissidents in Kurdistan, the fact that power was so badly fragmented throughout Iran and that we had that right on our own embassy compound in terms of the security force that had been left there after the first attack on the embassy in February in which we desperately wanted to get off of the compound, but we couldn't find anybody on the Iranian side with the authority to tell them to get off.

Q: What was the core of the permanent staff that was going to stay on?

TOMSETH: By the time Bruce got there in late June, the holdovers that we knew were going to be there longer term were myself; Mike Metrisko, who had been our consul in Tabriz and had come down to join me in the Political Section; the Army attache, Leland Holland; the Defense attache, who was also the Air Force attache, Tom Schaffer; and Barry Rosen, who was the Press attache and also, like Mike Metrisko, a former Peace Corps volunteer in Iran and a good Farsi speaker. Additionally, some of the people who were going to be there permanently, new people, had begun to arrive. I think John Lambert had gotten there by the time that Bruce arrived. Mike Howland, who was one of the security officers, had arrived. He was going to be there long-term. Certainly within a few weeks of Bruce's arrival, quite a few more of those who were going to stay on longer term began arriving as well, some of the people who had been in language or other kinds of training prior to coming out. So, even before he got there, but certainly in the initial weeks of his time there, we began to develop a core staff who were going to be around. In the Political Section, that included myself, Mike Metrisko, John Lambert, and Ann Swift, who got there more or less the same time that Bruce did. So, we were fully staffed in the Political Section by the summer of 1979.

Q: Were there any decisions made on consular affairs?

TOMSETH: Well, the most important decision early on, back in February, was that we would reopen a full service Consular Section. We made a commitment to do that. The Consular Section had been in commercially rented space in a building off the compound. In light of the security situation, it was deemed that that was not tenable, that the new consular operation had to be on the compound. So, in the spring and most of the summer of 1979, there was a major construction project to renovate the building that had been used as the Recreation Association kind of all-purpose building on one corner of the compound into a physically secure Consular Section. That opened up the last week of August or the first week of September. By that time, we had pretty much a full consular staff, although there were a few temporary duty people still there in November when the attack occurred.

Q: Were the Iranian students in the United States, both going there and in the United States, at all a force during this period?

TOMSETH: Well, there was a huge Iranian population. I think after the attack, one of the things Carter did was direct the INS to do a census. The INS came up with 50,000+ Iranian students at that point. Prior to that, some of these students had come back to participate in the revolution or after the fall of the Shah to sort of get on the revolutionary bandwagon.

Q: Well, many of them had been demonstrating yearly against the Shah in the United States.

TOMSETH: I can't give you any hard numbers on this. The number that chronically demonstrated against the Shah while they were students in the United States far exceeded the number that came back to Iran. But there were some that came back, no question about it. We encountered some of those people right away. In the foreign ministry, for example, the current foreign minister was one of those people who had gone to the United States as a student. He was a medical student. He had come back and was made a senior foreign ministry official.

Q: Was this at all a tool...

TOMSETH: In Tehran, we were sort of aware that some Iranian students were making a nuisance of themselves in the United States, but when had they not made a nuisance of themselves? From our perspective, they weren't a very significant factor in terms of the situation on the ground in Iran. If you were going to be a player in that situation, you had to be there. You couldn't influence it from the campus at Berkeley or Ann Arbor.

Q: How were we seeing the situation? We're talking about Bruce arriving, the summer has come, is the glass half empty or half full... Were things beginning to coalesce or was it still chaotic? How did you see developments?

TOMSETH: More chaos than coalescence. There were some things that were happening that suggested the possibility that this process could lead to the creation of a government that would actually be in charge. One of the more important dimensions in that situation was, there was a constituent assembly that was appointed and was meeting to draft a constitution. The progress was painfully slow, but they were meeting and they were making some progress. So when, for example, in September, when Bruce was asked again about the possibility of admission of the Shah to the United States (and by this time, his cancer was certainly public knowledge), Bruce responded that if that were to occur before there was a government clearly in charge, he wasn't just blowing smoke, that there was some expectation that this process could lead to that kind of outcome. We didn't expect that to happen terribly quickly, but there were developments that were leading in that direction. Certainly, on these negotiations on military contracts, they were often very painful, very frustrating. You would think that you got something sorted out and go to the next meeting thinking you were going to move on to something else only to discover that what you thought had been decided was on the table for negotiation yet again. But if you looked at the course of what had been happening over the previous several months, it was pretty clear that we were making some progress on that front. So, the news wasn't altogether negative by any stretch of the imagination. But the pervasive reality in a political sense, even in the fall, was this tremendous factionalization of political power. I used to like to say that no one was in charge and everyone was in charge. You had in Tehran, for example, in virtually every government ministry

and office a revolutionary committee, self-appointed, that existed to second guess the decisions of whatever the institution's leadership said. So, if the foreign minister made a decision about something, he could not be sure at all that he wouldn't be second guessed by the foreign ministry revolutionary committee.

Q: During this period, were we seeing a possible leadership? We're talking about some names or groups that we felt were beginning to move and might eventually form a real government with whom we could deal?

TOMSETH: Well, there were people that we were dealing with in the provisional government. I suppose in our heart of hearts, we hoped that some, if not all, of those people would emerge in prominent positions in a permanent government. Those people included people like Mehdi Bazargan, the prime minister; Ibrahim Yazdi, the foreign minister; Amir Antazam, one of the deputy prime ministers. But we knew very well that these people were by no stretch of the imagination on the commanding heights of the political process in Iran, that there were others in the religious leadership who were far more powerful, but it was very difficult to have much contact with those people. They tended to not want to deal with us at all. One exception to that was a guy named Ayatollah Beheshdi. He was much more educated than the typical Iranian clergyman, or at least more broadly educated. He had not only a religious education, but a secular one as well. For a number of years... There is a large Iranian mosque in Hamburg, I think, in Germany. He had been in charge of that mosque for five or six years. So, he had lived in the West and he spoke German. As I recall, he even spoke some English, although I don't think his English was nearly as good as his German. He was prepared to receive people from the embassy. Bruce called on him several times. Another one was Ayatollah Montazeri, who at one time looked like he was going to be Khomeini's successor, but sort of fell out with the more conservative religious leadership. He is still alive. He lives in Iran, but has not been a political factor for nearly 20 years now.

But aside from these two or three people, most of the religious leadership really didn't want to have anything to do with us. Try as we might, it was very difficult to establish any contacts among them.

Q: Were you getting any either arranged or gratuitous visits from dignitary personalities in the United State to come and try to put things right? I'm thinking of Jesse Jackson and that ilk.

TOMSETH: No, not really. A lot of them came out of the woodwork after November fourth, but in the spring and summer of 1979, there weren't too many volunteers to come out to Iran and put things right.

Q: What about the French, German, British, and Canadian embassies? How were they seeing things? What were they doing? Were they in a different category than the Americans, we being the "Great Satan?"

TOMSETH: There were a number of countries that had very important economic stakes in Iran. The ones you named were certainly among them. Japan was another one. Those embassies

tended to focus on how do we protect our economic interests in Iran? With the exception of the British, they tended not to have a whole lot of political baggage. In the case of the Germans, it was one of these accidents of history, I guess, that they actually were in fairly good odor. A number of Iranian dissidents, including religious Iranians, had found a sanctuary in Germany during periods of the Shah's rule when it was not comfortable to be in Iran. To a degree, that was also true of France.

Q: The Ayatollah Khomeini lived in France.

TOMSETH: Only for a very short time. He had spent most of his exile in Iraq. It was only in the summer of 1978 that the Iraqis kicked him out under pressure from the Iranian government. At that point, he went to Paris.

Q: So, the other embassies were keeping their heads down and taking care of their commercial interests.

TOMSETH: For the most part. The British were a little different in a couple of respects. One is, next to the United States, they were probably considered by more Iranians as at least a lesser Satan-

Q: They had the big oil interests in Mossadegh and all that, a lot of baggage there.

TOMSETH: Right. But a lot of their influence had really waned over the intervening three decades from the time of Mossadegh's fall and the fall of the Shah. But the British, too, unlike most of the European embassies, had a cadre of Persian specialists, people who spoke the language and really knew the country well.

Q: Were you sitting down and jointly reading tea leaves with the Brits, for example?

TOMSETH: Certainly with our colleagues in the British embassy Political Section, we did. We found them among all of our diplomatic colleagues the most well informed about what was going on. You could meet with them and they would have things to tell you. When we met with the others, it was sort of a one way street. We were the ones that were providing information and not getting very much in return.

Q: Was the Political Section getting out into the streets, into the souk and other places?

TOMSETH: Actually, we were. By July, we had our Political Section in place. That included all four of us who were Persian speakers. Certainly Mike Metrisko and John Lambert were virtually bilingual. At the risk of immodesty, mine was not bad. I had been there over three years and I am a fairly good language student, so I spoke fairly good Persian. Ann Swift was newly arrived and hers was not as good. But she is a good language student, too, and she was out and about and meeting a lot of people.

Q: Did this pay off at all?

TOMSETH: Well, no, in the sense that all of the contacts that we had, including limited contacts among the religious leadership, didn't do us a damn bit of good coming November fourth! But certainly in terms of the ongoing political reporting that the embassy did, yes, a lot of that material fell into the hands of the students when they seized the embassy and was subsequently published. Rereading that record, I think the Political Section actually looks pretty good.

Q: What about these demonstrations? Were they going on all the time?

TOMSETH: Yes. Again, jumping ahead just a little bit to the morning of November fourth, that was an anniversary of an incident that took place at Tehran University that year before. There was going to be a demonstration at the university that day to commemorate the anniversary. One of the main streets leading to the university went right in front of the embassy. So, in the morning staff meeting, there were some who were in favor of closing the embassy down with just a skeleton staff on hand just in case some of these people marching by the embassy en route to Tehran University might get some ideas to do something. Prescient political analyst that I am, I argued that if you close down the embassy every time there is a demonstration in Tehran, you might as well close it down permanently because hardly a day goes by when there isn't a demonstration in some part of the city about something.

Q: In a way, one has had a surfeit of demonstrations so that they were almost meaningless, weren't they?

TOMSETH: Not meaningless, but we, again, at the time of the Javits Resolution, there were demonstrations that were focused specifically on the embassy. We did stand down the staff and had just a few people in the embassy and recalled the Marine guards to be on duty when that happened. But if it was a demonstration like that one at Tehran University, which was not particularly aimed at us, yes, you'd get kind of blasé about these after a while. There were so many of them - if you were going to worry about every one of them, you would spend all your time worrying about demonstrations.

Q: Having been bitten by the Javits Resolution, were we sending back stuff saying, "Fellows on the political side, cool it. We're here and we're vulnerable, so don't rattle the cage from the safety of Washington?" Was this part of our litany?

TOMSETH: I was probably more naïve 20 years ago than I am now, but I wasn't that naïve. No, we did not do that. We recognized that the Congress was going to do what it feels it needs to do for domestic political purposes and railing against the tide doesn't do a bit of good.

Q: Moving through the summer and up through the early fall, was anything happening that we haven't covered?

TOMSETH: A couple of things. I can give you examples, one good and one not so good. In August, we finally got rid of that security contingent. It took another paramilitary group to get them off the compound.

Q: -you're talking about revolutionary Iranians who were sort of camping...

TOMSETH: Right. After the attack on the embassy in February, there were actually three groups that were assigned by the foreign ministry to protect us. For a time, they all had free range of this rather large compound. By the summer, that had dwindled down to a single group. The first one had got its hands caught in the cookie jar very early on at a time when the provisional revolutionary government still had some authority and they were removed within a couple of weeks or so. Then a little later on, the two remaining, one forced the other out. Being on the embassy compound was a cash cow for these. Neither group wanted to share with the other.

Q: How was it a cash cow?

TOMSETH: Well, we had a lot of things that we were disposing of, collecting household good of people who had left literally from the breakfast table, packing them up, getting rid of things, a lot of government property that had to be disposed of. Because these guys controlled who could get onto the compound, they could charge and did. So, if somebody wanted to come in and bid on vehicles we were auctioning off, they had to pay these guys off to even make a bid. There were a number of things like that. Even before we reopened the Consular Section, we were issuing a limited number of visas. These guys got into that. They became fixers beyond the perimeter in terms of how you might get your passport into the embassy. But in August, after a great deal of pleading and wheedling, the foreign ministry turned to another paramilitary group to put this group off of our compound, which they did.

Q: And they didn't replace that group with themselves?

TOMSETH: No. Iranian police were then assigned to patrol the outside the perimeter the way you would expect. This was very much in anticipation of the reopening of the Consular Section. In fact, I think that was probably the single most effective point of leverage we had with the foreign ministry. We said, "We're not going to reopen the Consular Section unless these guys are gone." A lot of people wanted that Consular Section reopened.

The thing that was not so good and sort of demonstrated our continuing vulnerability just a week or two before the Consular Section opened up in the evening somebody in a drive-by shooting put a rocket propelled grenade through the wall of the Consular Section. That brought home a couple of messages. One was that this sort of thing could happen at any moment. The other one was that even though this was supposed to be a hardened facility, that grenade went right through the wall.

Q: Prior to November fourth, had the Consular Section opened up full blast?

TOMSETH: To a very enthusiastic reception. Yes, it opened up the last week of August or the first week of September. There were literally thousands of people lined up every morning. Tehran prior to the revolution had been issuing over 100,000 non-immigrant visas a year. The visa issuing operation had been almost shut down from February to when it reopened in the late

summer. So, there was a great deal of pent up demand.

Q: I would have thought that there might have been counter crowds of screaming Bazaaris or what have you saying, "You're traitors. You're leaving the country. You're the elite. What are you doing going to America?"

TOMSETH: A lot of this was insurance policy. There were Bazaaris and mullahs. Everybody was out there. Nobody was exempt.

Q: Was there the feeling that this was an insurance for us, too? The fact that we're doing this would mean that we would be less likely to be shut down or have something happen because we're handing out these things?

TOMSETH: Well, it certainly crossed my mind and I think the minds of others that given the nature of Iranian society and the pervasive view that nothing endures and that the world basically is a pretty hostile place, that is why everyone needs an American visa, was a reason why a lot of people would not want to see relations with the United States broken entirely.

Q: Would this move us to November fourth?

TOMSETH: Yes, basically. Not much happened between the first of September and the lead-up to the embassy takeover. Yazdi, the foreign minister, went to New York and met with Secretary Vance there. My understanding is that Vance was prepared to tell Yazdi in that meeting that we would like to submit Bruce's name as a replacement for Walter Cutler, but the meeting proceeded in a way that it was not a terribly positive meeting. Vance for whatever reason chose not to do that, to make that proposal during that meeting. As a consequence, it never was done before the decision to admit the Shah in late February.

When that decision was made (This was about two weeks prior to the embassy takeover.), as did the Javits Resolution, it prompted a reaction in Iran that included demonstrations outside the embassy and a lot of criticism of the U.S. There was a great deal of concern in the embassy about where all this was going to lead. Right up to just a few days before the embassy takeover itself, the fourth was on a Sunday and on the preceding Friday, there was supposed to be the biggest demonstration up to that point at the embassy on that Friday. At the last moment, the religious hierarchy directed that the demonstrations should take place somewhere else at a square a couple of miles away from the embassy. Some people did show up, but extra police had been put on the guard around the embassy and nothing got out of hand. My interpretation of that was that we had probably gotten over the hill on this one. When the religious leadership itself seemed unprepared to risk an incident that might seriously disrupt the relationship. That is the way I read the decision to move it somewhere else. Then, I thought we had a pretty good chance of getting through this most recent crisis. What I certainly had not factored into that calculation and I don't think anyone else had was at the same time, Yazdi and the prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan, had gone off to Algiers for the 20th anniversary celebration of the Algerian revolution. While they were there, they had a meeting with Zbigniew Brzezinski. That was a meeting that we in the embassy had encouraged as one of these things to indicate that we are, maybe slowly, making some progress in

this endeavor to build a new relationship with Iran. I guess that meeting probably was on Thursday. The next day, on Friday, there was no Friday issue of the papers. That is the holiday. But on Saturday, there was a picture in all the papers of the prime minister shaking hands with Zbigniew Brzezinski. The next day, this student group carried out the assault on the embassy. I am convinced and have to be persuaded by some pretty powerful evidence to the contrary that the decision to admit the Shah to the United States is not what provoked that attack. It was a convenient excuse. But what really prompted this student group to move when it did was that photograph that appeared in the Saturday paper. This was a group that did not want to see our policy succeed. It did not want to see us be able to have a significant relationship with the new authorities in Iran. Their objective was to try and break that nexus. When they saw the prime minister shaking hands with Brzezinski, they saw that as evidence that, in fact, we were succeeding and that they needed to do something quickly to check that process.

Q: We're talking about a student group. One always thinks of our opposition student groups always coming out of a Marxist university. Even at our own universities, we have Marxists who are turning out these activists who are going out and doing things. I take it these students were a different breed of cat.

TOMSETH: Yes. Well, at that time, there were probably hundreds of student groups operating on campuses in Tehran and some of the provincial cities as well. Some of them were classical Marxists. Some were what the Shah used to call "Islamic Marxists," this group that is now based in Iraq, the Mojadin Al-Halq, that sort. They claim to be religious, but a lot of their political doctrine certainly is Marxist-inspired.

But this particular group of students were not. Their ideological basis was traditional Islam. If you looked at where most of those students came from, that was understandable enough. These were kids who were not for the most part in the top universities. They were not at Tehran University, but rather in a couple of the technical schools. They tended to come from very traditional provincial backgrounds rather than from Tehran, upper middle class backgrounds. So, their ideological compass really wasn't particularly surprising when you understood who they were.

Q: During this time, up to this time, what was the role of Ayatollah Khomeini from our reading?

TOMSETH: The consummate fence sitter, as he continued to be. This was one of the reasons why it took so long to resolve the hostage crisis. One of the keys to Khomeini's political success was that he succeeded in convincing all sorts of people that he was the indispensable person in terms of making a decision, but he would avoid making a decision for as long as possible. He recognized how fragmented the political situation in Iran was and that to make a decision in those circumstances almost inevitably meant you were going to alienate somebody. So, what he would do is wait as long as he calculated he could before making a pronouncement on one issue or another that people were looking to him for guidance. He often couched that in the most obtuse kind of rhetoric so it tended to be very difficult to figure out what he really meant. He always left himself a way out in that regard. That is the way he reacted to the admission of the Shah to the United States. He wasn't categorical... He was very critical of the United States, but he wasn't categorical in terms of what Iranians should do about it. Even when the embassy was

seized, it took him 24 hours or so before he decided that this on balance was probably a good thing, not a bad thing. He didn't immediately come out and support it. Also, in that same context, on our side, one of the things that the Carter administration did was try to put together a small negotiating team that included Ramsey Clark. They were dispatched. They were all the way to Istanbul or Ankara before Khomeini finally let it be known that if they arrived in Tehran, that no one should deal with them. He didn't say they couldn't come, but if they did come, no one should negotiate with them.

Q: Were you getting a feel up to this time about the role of Brzezinski and the National Security Council being on a different course than the State Department or not?

TOMSETH: No, not at this point. There had been substantial differences between Brzezinski's view and at least his key staff people on how to deal with the Shah prior to his departure from Iran on the one hand and the State Department on the other. But with the seizure of the embassy, I didn't get any sense that there was any significant internal difference on how to approach the issue. In fact, my impression is that Carter, being Carter, he himself decided fairly early on that he was going to put the highest priority on some kind of a negotiated resolution for the sake of the hostages themselves. That is a policy decision that I certainly cannot oppose, but I recognize that it wasn't the only one available. In terms of U.S. national interests, it may not even have been the best policy decision. From my personal interests in it, I fully support it!

Q: It reaches a point where national policy be damned and what about me?

We're up to November fourth, 1979. Could you talk about that day?

TOMSETH: Yes. As I mentioned earlier, we had previously scheduled this meeting in the foreign ministry to talk about the status of this residual military group in the embassy. Bruce Laingen, our charge, and Ann Swift in the Political Section were scheduled to attend that thing. Again, as I mentioned earlier, Ann was late getting back into Tehran because of car trouble, so I wound up going to the meeting in her place. When Bruce and I came out of the meeting, Mike Howland, one of our two security officers who had gone along with us, had just received over the car radio word that the embassy was under attack. We actually got into the car and started back, but Al Golasinski, the other security officer who was at the embassy, said that we should not do that, that what they needed was help. So, we turned around and went back into the foreign ministry and to the foreign minister's office. Yazdi had not yet arrived back in Tehran from that meeting in Algiers, although he did show up later in the day. So, we initially met with this fellow, Kamal Kharazi, who is currently the foreign minister and then was a relatively recent returnee from the United States who was in the rough equivalent of our under secretary of political affairs position in their ministry. Our request was that the government do what it had done in February, which was send a senior person to the embassy, preferably with force to back him up, to retake control of the embassy and the compound and return it to us. I think it was a measure of just how much authority the provisional government had lost during those intervening eight or nine months when the reaction that we got to that request was, "Well, we'll do what we can," but there were no promises made that someone like the foreign minister would rush to the scene as he had done in February.

The other thing that we asked for in the foreign ministry were for phones. We were talking to people in the embassy over the car radio, but we needed to have better communications than that. We were given a couple of phones in the outer office of the foreign minister to use for that. So, the discussion sort of alternated between repeated requests to the foreign ministry officials for the government to do, in effect, what governments are supposed to do in those kinds of situations, protect the diplomatic missions that are accredited to them, and talking to people in the embassy about what was going on and what they should be doing. We also used one of the phones to set up a line to Washington so we could talk to them.

As I said, Yazdi came back during the course of the day. I don't remember whether that was before Bruce finally gave the last people holding out at the embassy instructions to surrender or afterwards, but it doesn't really matter.

At the embassy, what happened... This was a compound of 20-odd acres. It was most of a very large city block with a number of buildings on it. It wasn't just the main chancery building. It had a separate consular operation in a hardened facility. Actually, it proved to be better designed to keep people out than the chancery, which had also undergone a major upgrade in its physical security after that February attack. But it had the ambassador's residence, the DCM's residence. There were some smaller houses where the communicators lived. And there were a number of other buildings that housed the general services operation, the motor pool... So, there were people scattered all over the compound. In very short order, some of these people who were not in the chancery or not in the Consular Section began falling into the hands of the student attackers. When they came over the fence, it appeared that they were armed with nothing more lethal than clubs and things like that. They very quickly got their hands on weapons from some of the Marine guards that were posted out on points on this compound. They threatened to kill the people that they had captured unless those who were still holding out surrendered. So, finally, Bruce told the last group that was caught in the communications vault of the chancery to surrender.

In the meantime, there was the issue of documents. In diplomacy, no less than in the military, I guess you always fight the last war. One of the consequences of the February attack was that a lot of documents were shredded and others that were then quickly locked up were subsequently removed from the country. We operated in the spring and summer with only a minimal record. And we had gotten the compound back without anybody ever attempting to open the safes that had been closed. So, there was great reluctance to give the order to start shredding this stuff. Probably a half hour went by before people were told to start shredding. Then as it turned out, the volume of paper that was on hand was far greater than the capacity of this rather primitive (in a mechanical sense) technology that we had to get rid of it. So, the consequence of that was that a lot of documents were not shredded. Even those that were went into non-terminal shredders. They just cut the things into strips, which allowed the students subsequently to paste them together.

Lastly, which we didn't know until much later (and there has never been an adequate explanation for why), apparently, there were classified materials in the embassy that nobody knew were there,

things that dated back years. We assumed that we were operating basically on documents that had been generated subsequent to the February attack, with the exception of some older records that were in the biographic files, but those were not particularly extensive. But obviously, there existed in the embassy an extensive archive that went back several years. The only explanation that I can think of is that in the aftermath of that February attack, even though the security people came in and went through safes and we thought everything had been shipped out to Germany, I think they may have missed some safes. There is one office in particular where I think that might have occurred. That had been the office of the fellow who handled political-military affairs prior to February. He was evacuated in the aftermath and never came back. His office was subsequently occupied by the chief of the Military Advisory Group. I think it's possible that Phil Ghasht just never had any occasion to open up those safes, so they were never opened. Because he was sitting in the office when the security people came in, they never opened them. I can't think of any other explanation for the volume of documents that weren't even shredded that fell into the hands of the students.

In any event, when the last people surrendered, we had very briefly continuing telephone contact with the embassy and spoke to a couple of these students who had been in the group, but they weren't interested in getting into a negotiation with us and quickly hung up the phone. We called back several times. They would answer, but then shortly after that, they wouldn't even answer the phone when we called. So, we lost all contact with the embassy.

We were talking to Washington throughout this period. After the surrender of the embassy, our negotiation with the foreign ministry (By that time, Yazdi was back.) had shifted a little bit. We kept pressing the point that the government had an obligation to do something about the situation to protect diplomats who are accredited to it. But we also began to press them to allow us to stay in the foreign ministry. Yazdi said, "You can't stay here. It isn't safe for you." Bruce would say, "On the contrary, our view is that the only safety we have is in your hands. You have an obligation to protect us." That went on for a number of hours. Finally, about eight or nine in the evening, Yazdi conceded the point that they were obliged to protect us and he said we could stay overnight in the foreign ministry. We would be their guests. He also said that there would be a meeting of the government and this rather shadowy Revolutionary Council that was dominated by the religious leadership that evening. He was confident that, by morning, things would be sorted out. What happened the next day (not first thing in the morning, but in the next day) was that the provisional revolutionary government collapsed and Iran no longer had a government as such, although in fairly short order the Revolutionary Council did appoint people to be responsible for the various ministries. Initially, a fellow named Abdul Hassan Benasad was the person put in charge of the foreign ministry. He was subsequently elected president in the first elections after the constitution was completed in 1980, but ultimately fell out with Khomeini and is now in exile in Paris, where he had been in exile during the Shah's time. We were able to get a hold of Ayatollah Beheshdi, who was on the Revolutionary Council, this mullah I spoke of a little bit earlier. We talked to him both about the situation at the embassy compound, but by that time the initiative from the Washington end to send Ramsey Clark and Dick Miller out to Tehran and we sought his agreement that they should come, which we got. Subsequently, we spoke with others that he designated as the people we should deal with in terms of getting the aircraft into Tehran. As I said earlier, Miller and Clark had gotten as far as Turkey before Ayatollah

Khomeini, who was down at Qom, issued a statement that didn't forbid them from coming, but said, "If they do come, nobody should meet with them." For all intents and purposes, that was the end of that initiative.

In the first few days, we felt we had some role to play, which was conveying communications back and forth between Washington and whomever we could find in the leadership who seemed to be in a position of some authority. There was also an issue of a few people who were not caught in the attack on the embassy. That included five people who were in the Consular Section. The militants never succeeded in breaking into that building. They tried and at one point got up on the roof and actually broke a window into a restroom and had started to come in through there. There was a Marine guard posted at the Consular Section and he put a tear gas grenade in the restroom and they blocked the door from the outside. After a while, the students seemed to give up. The people inside didn't hear anything more at the doors or on the roof. Dick Morefield, who was the consul general, said, "Okay, let's just walk out of here. We'll do it in groups of three and four. We'll go out through the public door," which was right on the street, "and walk away." So, they started doing that. Five of them actually got away. The rest of them were caught and wound up being held with the rest. But five of them managed to get to one consular officer's apartment, which was only a few blocks away. From there, they called the Iran-American Society, which was the binational center operated by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), where there were two Americans, the director of the center and the fellow who ran the English language program. From the foreign ministry, we had called the Iran-America Society that first afternoon, so we knew that they were there, and found out from them that these five people in the Consular Section had gotten out.

Additionally, there was a temporary duty secretary who had been scheduled to leave that morning. Iran, like a lot of Muslim countries, required an exit visa. When she got to the airport at about 5:00 a.m., she was told that her exit visa wasn't in order and that she would have to get that fixed before she could leave. So, she had gone back to an apartment building immediately behind the embassy compound that we used as a Marine house and had some apartments for temporary duty personnel and had gone to bed in an apartment on the top floor. Even though the students quickly got into that apartment, when they got to the one that she was in, she hid in a closet and they didn't find her. So, she was there. She had gotten in touch with the Iran-America Society. We found out from them that she was in that apartment. So, we were talking to her from the foreign ministry.

Then lastly, the agricultural attache had his office in a building that was adjacent to the embassy compound, but not part of it. That building had a couple of other embassies in it, including the Swedish embassy. He had taken shelter with the Swedes and, again, had been in touch with the Iran-America Society. We found out from them that he was there, so we were talking to him. I think during that first afternoon and evening and into the next morning, our expectation was that this was going to be sorted out. So, we were basically counseling these people, the secretary, the five consular officers, and the agricultural attache, to just sit tight for the timebeing. Same thing with the Iran-America Society people, although we were telling them that because that was a known location that if it looked like trouble was brewing, they should get out of there as quickly as possible. But during the course of the morning, the secretary, Lillian Johnson, was getting

more and more apprehensive about her situation. She was right next to the compound, could see what was going on, in a building that the students had access to. She really wanted to get out of there. Even though we thought she would probably be better off just staying put, in the expectation that there would be some kind of negotiated resolution, we said, "Alright, we'll try to get you out of there." Mike Howland, the security officer, had a couple of Iranian friends who said they were willing to go and try to pick her up. So, they drove their car into the alley between the compound and this apartment building, brazenly walked into the building, went up to the top floor to her apartment, gave her a chador (She was very blond and blue eyed.) and she put this garment over her head, pulled it up around her nose and bit it with her teeth Iranian-fashion, and went down in the elevator with these two Iranians, got into the car with them, and they drove her over to the Iran-America Society. About five minutes later, after a couple of false alarms, the students showed up at the Iran-America Society and took all three of them hostage, took them back to the embassy compound. About two weeks into this, the student group, thinking that they were going to win American public opinion brownie points, released most of the women and most of the African-Americans. Lillian was among the people released after two weeks. They flew from Tehran to Frankfurt, where Lillian found her luggage waiting for her. It had gotten on that plane on the morning of the fourth when she had not.

I was on the phone with Kate Kobe, the director of the Iran-America Society, when the students showed up and had the not very happy duty of telling her that they should not resist, that they should surrender and go with them. But when that happened, we concluded that we really needed to do something about the five people in the apartment, which was very near the embassy compound. We really weren't worried about the agricultural attache. He was with the Swedes and we figured they would make sure that he was protected. So, I called the British charge and told him we had these five people and asked if he would be willing to hide them in their housing compound, which was way up in northern Tehran, for a day or two until we could get this thing sorted out. He agreed to do that if we could figure out how to get them there. So, Mike Howland called upon his Iranian friends once again.

Q: Mike Howland was where?

TOMSETH: He was in the foreign ministry with us. He called up his friends, who got in their car and went to the apartment, got these five people, and drove them to the British compound. Great people! It's just amazing that they were willing to take this chance.

Q: Unlike other things, here you were, in the belly of the beast at the foreign ministry, but there was no particular feeling that everything was being bugged and it was going somewhere? You relied on the disorganization, the lack of connect, between the foreign ministry and the students who were taking over?

TOMSETH: In the first 24 hours, yes, but we immediately assumed that these were not secure conversations. That became relevant in a couple of days. I think maybe on the second or third day, the sixth or the seventh, the British embassy, which was downtown on a compound like ours, was also briefly invaded, but not occupied. When that happened, the British charge called me and said, "You have to do something about your people. It's not tenable for us to keep them in

our compound any longer." As I said, at that point, we assumed that there was at least a possibility, if not a certitude, that these discussions were being monitored. So, the question became, how can we move these people again without compromising their situation. The solution we hit upon was, I knew- (end of tape)

Q: You knew a Thai cook?

TOMSETH: Yes. He worked for three U.S. Information Service employees who lived right next to one another in houses in Tehran. At that point, we thought surely this was going to be resolved in a matter of a day or two; all we need is some place to hide them for a brief period of time. So, I called up this cook and speaking to him in Thai asked him if he would be willing to take charge of these people for a few days until we could get things sorted out. He agreed immediately to do that. So, he took charge of the five from the British and put them in one of these three houses that he had access to. They stayed there for four or five days, at which point the students had begun going through Personnel records and figuring out where people lived and going house to house. One day, a group of them showed up at one of these houses where the cook worked. Fortunately, it wasn't the house where he had put the five. But they questioned him about the Americans that he worked for and he said, "Well, as far as I know, you have all of them." After a while, they went away, but he immediately told the five that they probably would be back. The senior of the consular officers, Bob Enders, called his colleague at the Canadian embassy, John Sheardown, and asked John if they might come and stay with him. I guess John's reaction was, "Bob, why didn't you call earlier?" So, Suntai, the cook, helped move them to the Canadians. There they remained until late January, when those five plus the agricultural attache, who in the meantime had joined them with the Canadians, were sort of smuggled out on Canadian passports.

With regard to the monitoring of the conversations, we assumed that there was certainly a possibility that that was occurring, but we didn't get confirmation that, in fact, that was being done until July or August of 1980, by which time our phone privileges had been cut way back. But every couple of weeks or so, they would let us speak to our families in the United States. One day when Bruce was on the phone to his wife, a fellow from Protocol... Protocol had been put in charge of us in the foreign ministry. It was only appropriate, I suppose. This young fellow from the Protocol Department rushed in and said, "Ambassador Laingen! Ambassador Laingen! You must hang up! We've run out of tape." I often wonder about those conversations that I had with the Thai cook, if they ever figured out what language that was.

Q: During these very early days, what sort of reaction were you getting from Washington? Did you have the feeling that they were trying to figure out what to do?

TOMSETH: Well, we were all trying to figure out what to do. As I said, in the first few days, we thought we were still players in a process, messengers for the most part, but players nonetheless. When Khomeini decreed that no one should meet with Ramsey Clark and Bill Miller if they came to Tehran, I think all three of us realized immediately that we had no more role and that whatever was going to be done about this was solely in Washington's hands. I think at that point, too, for the first time, I realized that this wasn't going to be a matter of just a few days, that we were going to be there a while, although I never expected it was going to be more than a year.

Q: Once you realized that you were no longer really players, what did you do?

TOMSETH: Well, that was the major challenge. Life for us in the foreign ministry was a lot easier than it was for people in the embassy. Clear up to the time about three weeks before everybody was released and we were turned over to this student group as part of the settlement that had been negotiated with the help of the Germans and the Algerians, the fiction in the foreign ministry was that we were their guests, but it became obvious that if we tried to leave, we would not have been allowed to do so. So, in that sense, we were hostages, too, but it was more like being under house arrest than being in the situation that people at the embassy found themselves in, where they were really shut off from the world. As the guests of the ministry, they gave us a radio so we could listen to Voice of America, BBC, and things like that. I was allowed to sort of go out into the outer room where the Iranian security guard was to watch the local evening news with them. We had phone privileges, unlimited for several months. We got newspapers. The ministry itself provided us with "Le Monde" and "The Herald Tribune." We could get the local newspapers. Depending on the conditions, people were allowed to come in and see us, mostly diplomatic colleagues, but in fairly short order as various do-gooders jumped in to try to resolve this situation, they were allowed to come in, too. We had a rather startling variety of people that way, all the way from this right-wing republican congressman from Idaho to Hilarian Kapuchi, who was the Maronite Catholic that the Israelis threw in jail for gun running, and Kurt Waldheim. It was really quite a crew that marched through there over the months. They were allowed to come in and see us. But the real challenge for us and for people in the embassy was to get up in the morning and "How do I get through another day? What do I do to fill up the time?" We found a variety of ways to do that. In very short order, some of our diplomatic colleagues started sending in books. Reading was a major timekiller. When the first box of books came in, my reaction was to look through it and see what titles or authors looked interesting, but in fairly short order, when a box came in, you looked for the thickest ones first. It didn't matter who wrote them or what they were about. Somebody sent in some paints. It turned out that Bruce was a fairly talented artist. Somebody sent in a kind of multipurpose gameboard. It had some chess pieces. Mike Howland knew how to play chess, as do I, so we played chess. I taught the other two backgammon. We had cards and played a lot of "hearts."

Q: As you were listening to the news, were you surprised at the reaction in the United States or did you see it making any sense?

TOMSETH: I guess the thing I found most surprising was not that there was an immediate outpouring of support for the administration in its effort to resolve this thing. I think that is the way most Americans react to any crisis no matter who the president is. But what was surprising was the length to which it was sustained. Americans tend to get bored fairly quickly. This went on for over a year.

Q: 444 days.

TOMSETH: Yes. If the reaction of the reception we got when we got back to the United States in January of 1981 is any indication, it didn't seem to have really diminished much at all during that

period. So, that was a surprise.

Q: What about at the foreign ministry, did you become guests who became sort of a pain in the neck? How did this work?

TOMSETH: No, not really. As I said, Protocol was put in charge of us. Initially, the chief of Protocol was an old school diplomat, a very cultured, very refined, very decent sort of person. He would come in at least every couple of days or so to chat with us and try to cheer us up. But over time, virtually all of the people from the old regime were replaced by more revolutionary types. So, that relationship didn't become hostile, but it wasn't as friendly as it was initially with some of these old school diplomats.

The people we saw the most were actually the guard force. This was the ministry guard force. They were professional military. They were army non-commissioned officers. They varied a great deal individually all the way from very strong supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini to people who had absolutely no use whatsoever for the new order. In time, people felt comfortable enough, not in the presence of the colleagues, but with us, talking about these sorts of things. There were a couple of middle aged ladies who were part of the char force and they would come in periodically to sweep things up. They spoke no English, but I would chat with them a little bit. They were certainly not ill-disposed towards us. I think, on a personal level, they thought it was not a good thing that we were being kept there. That probably increased over time. Eventually, certainly after diplomatic relations were broken in April of 1980 and the Swiss took over representation of U.S. interests there, the ministry would allow somebody from the Swiss embassy to come in once a week for about an hour and they would bring mail. So, we started getting photographs of our families and pinning these up. These women, who all had families of their own saw that we had families, too. That gave them a more human dimension to the relationship, I suppose.

Q: Were you getting any reaction when we froze funds? Was anybody from the foreign ministry talking to you about "How should we make this approach" or using your expertise?

TOMSETH: In the first few days, yes, but that ended essentially when Khomeini shot down the Ramsey Clark/Bill Miller initiative. The only other time where we got involved at all was in March when it looked like an initiative to sort this out under UN auspices might actually work. By that time, Sadak Khopsaday had taken over responsibility for the foreign ministry. He came down a couple of times to talk to us about how he envisioned this playing out. What it involved was a UN team going out to Tehran, taking testimony from people who claimed to be victims of the Shah's regime, and in exchange for that, the students were going to agree to turn the people they held over to the foreign ministry and they would be brought to the ministry and then they would be turned over to the UN and everybody would fly off into the sunset. Well, that never got any further than taking testimony from the victims of the Shah. But prior to the attempt to implement it, Khopsaday did come down and talk about how from his perspective he saw this thing playing out. But other than that, no.

As I said, outsiders were allowed to come in and see us. So, any number of would-be negotiators

popped up over the months, including the UN. That included initially three people. There was a Syrian, a Sri Lankan, and an Irishman, who were all jurists who came out. We were always part of the itinerary for these groups. They would come in and talk to us about it. So, we saw those people. But with the Iranians, no. After those first few days, with the exception of that one period in March with Khopsaday, we really didn't have any substantive dialogue with them.

Q: If I recall, wasn't there a threat to try you all as war criminals or the equivalent thereof?

TOMSETH: Yes. It depended with the moment. It ranged from trying everybody, all 60-plus, as war criminals, to individuals. Bruce and I were fairly high on that list - Bruce because he was charge d'affaires. In this "den of spies," he was sort of the chief spy. They were interested in me, I think, not because I was political counselor, but because after the February attack to sort of confuse people, we switched offices and I wound up in the office that had previously been occupied by the chief of station. So, I think some of them assumed that I had that connection.

Q: What about the rescue attempt, the Desert One? How did that play from your perspective?

TOMSETH: We were probably, aside from the 40-so people that were on the bus that drove through the middle of the rendez-vous point in the Dashdakavir, we were probably the first people in Iran that knew that this had happened. We had a radio courtesy of the foreign ministry and listening to the early morning VOA broadcast, the lead item that morning was that there had been a rescue attempt. Initially, we told security guards this. Initially, they were incredulous, but then it was picked up by Iranian media, too. That had a rather traumatic effect on them. I think they realized that, assuming the rescue plan included the three of us, and they had gotten as far as Tehran, whoever would have been on duty probably would have been dead. Although I have been told that we were included by people involved in the planning process, I still have my doubts. I am not a rescue planner, but to me, the logic of a situation where you have a logistics pipeline 1,000 kilometers long and the end of it is in the middle of this very hostile environment in Tehran where you have 50 people in one location and three people in a location several miles away, you don't divide your force. You go for the most lucrative target. But, as I said, people who were involved in the plan said that we were included, so maybe we were.

Q: Did that change what happened? Did you find yourself with more guards and that sort of thing?

TOMSETH: No. We assumed that all sorts of things could happen, the worst probably being that we would be turned over to the student group. They had made a number of attempts to get their hands on us over the preceding months. It certainly had an impact on the guard force. Our relationships were rather distant for a while, but eventually we sort of fell back into the old patterns. In fact, very little happened to us as a consequence of that. About a week or so before, a table tennis table had been brought up to this room where we lived. It was actually the formal dining room in the foreign ministry. One of our diplomatic colleagues who had been allowed to come in and visit us apparently had complained that we weren't getting any exercise. So, the ministry had brought in this table tennis table for us to use and get some exercise. That was taken away, but that really was our only punishment: they took away the ping-pong table.

Q: How did the end-game play out?

TOMSETH: Again, the three of us in the ministry because we had access to information usually were fairly up to date on what was going on. Sometime there would be a lag of a week or two before we would get the real inside skinny about something that was going on, but we had a pretty good idea the whole time of what was going on in terms of the negotiating process. So, in probably August, the German ambassador came in and told us that they had been approached as a possible mediator. This came about because one of Khomeini's son-in-laws had lived in Germany for quite some time and he had a lot of contacts in the German government as a consequence of that. So, we were aware of when that initiative began in the late summer of 1980. Eventually, it was moved over to the Algerians because the Iranians had second thoughts about the Germans' revolutionary credentials and thought the Algerians were fellow Islamic revolutionaries just like they were. In that regard, they were sorely mistaken, as they were about a number of things. But nonetheless, the Algerians took on that role.

A number of things were happening. A constitution was drafted. A president was elected. Finally, a parliament was elected in the early summer of 1980 and it began to meet in the latter part of the summer. But I think the really critical event in this process that made it possible after such a long period of time for a consensus to be built was Iraq's attack on Iran in September of 1980. The lesson in that for Iran was that it was totally isolated internationally. The only countries, despite this absolutely blatant aggression on the part of Iraq, that stood up for Iran were Syria (not because they liked the Iranians, but because they hated the Iraqis), Libya (although tepidly so), the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen, which then existed, and North Korea. With friends like that... So, over the next few months as this war settled into the pattern that it had for eight years and Iran was desperately scrambling to get spare parts for its F-4s, its F-5s, and its Russian tanks, and having great difficulty in doing it, and getting absolutely no sympathy from the international community, a consensus began to build around the notion that, in fact, time was not on Iran's side in the hostage crisis, that it really was something that they needed to get rid of in order to fight the war with Iraq. When that happened, something the administration had done very early on, which it had no effect at the time and really no effect up to that point, did begin to matter. That was freezing Iranian assets. There were \$20-odd billion that were frozen in one place or another. That money had become important to Iran because of the war. So, the final negotiation really boiled down to how much were we worth? I remember one time, probably in December, there had been talk about monetary compensation to hostages when they were released. At one stage in the negotiation, I think it was the Iranian prime minister who said, "We want our \$20 billion back before we release the hostages." Washington's reaction was not only "No," but "Hell, no!" I remember turning to Mike Howland when I heard that on the radio and saying, "Well, Mike, at least we know what we're not worth."

But for the three of us, the final event was the deal that was cut through the Algerians, which included that the three of us would be turned over to this student group. They made an initial attempt to take us out of the foreign ministry on Christmas Eve of 1980. That broke down as we were led out of the building to this van they were going to take us away in. One of these students grabbed hold of Mike Howland's sweater and was going to shove him in the van. Mike is a fairly

good sized athletic person. He turned around and decked this guy. At that point, the leader of the group, who was a kid, 20 or 21 years old at most, I suppose... By this time, they had all effected wearing military fatigues. It was the middle of the winter, so he had on a heavy jacket. He pulled out a gun that I think probably weighed almost as much as he did and said, "You cannot do that! You must go back upstairs!" So, fine with us - "We would just as soon spend Christmas in the foreign ministry as wherever the hell you're going to take us." So, we wound up staying there another week before they came back.

In the interim, the Algerian ambassador in Tehran had had a chance to come in and brief us on where the negotiations stood and assured us that a deal had been worked out that would lead to our release. So, the second time, we went off with these guys. In doing so, I was really confident that barring an accident, by January 20th, they were going to let us go - no later than that. I think Bruce and Mike were a little more dubious about that, but in any event, we went with them and they hauled us off to jail for three weeks. "Go directly to jail. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200." Then a night before everybody was released, we were taken from that jail to a place that has been described as "the foreign ministry guest house," but having never been in the foreign ministry guest house, I couldn't tell you whether it was or was not. Everybody else had been gathered there by that point. It was from there that we were taken to the airport on the evening of the 20th and flown out of Iran.

Q: Was the jail a real jail?

TOMSETH: Oh, yes.

Q: Was it run by jailors?

TOMSETH: No, it was in the hands of this student group. I have been told that it was a jail used by SAVAK in the Shah's regime and it could very well have been. But it was a facility for confining people there, there is no question about that.

Q: How did you find the students when they took you over?

TOMSETH: Well, by the time we fell into their hands, it had become ritualistic. They weren't going to let the three of us, including the chief spy and probably his major henchmen, get off scott-free, but they never attempted to interrogate us. The whole purpose of it was to sort of give us some revolutionary discipline. That was the circumstance of the jail itself. It was the middle of the winter and there was no heat. It was really cold. The food was really pretty basic. But one of the giveaways that they were getting ready to let us go was when they would bring us our bread and tea in the morning and it came accompanied with Geritol and vitamin pills and all sorts of things like that. They obviously didn't want us getting sick during this period that they were keeping us in detention.

Q: What about the American election of 1980? Did you see this as being a factor? Were you watching this?

TOMSETH: I saw it as a factor, in a sense, somewhat different than, I think, the common view may be, which is that the Iranians were deathly afraid Ronald Reagan was going to bomb them into the Stone Age. I don't think they gave a rat's patootie whether Reagan was going to drop bombs on them. They knew that Carter could have dropped bombs on them and that wasn't the issue as far as they were concerned. But because a consensus had emerged that this was an issue that was working against Iran in a chronological sense, the timing of the transition was very important. I think what a number of them realized was that if they allowed this to slop over into a new administration, that that new administration would take some time figuring out what its approach would be, whether that was a week, six weeks, or three months. Couldn't tell. But it was time that Iran simply didn't have anymore.

Q: We're talking about a war going on the whole time.

TOMSETH: Exactly.

Q: So this was not-

TOMSETH: And a war that wasn't going very well from Iran's point of view in the initial months.

Q: I thought we might stop at this point. The next time we'll pick it up, we've really moved to the time you were in jail and you were just meeting with your fellow hostages for the first time. I'd like to get your impressions of what you were getting from them and their experiences that you were hearing and how finally you left and then something about during this whole time your communications with your family and what you were getting from that and how that affected you. Then we'll talk about the homecoming and then go on from there.

TOMSETH: Okay.

Q: Today is July 28, 1999. Vic, we've got you to when you're in jail, right?

TOMSETH: Yes. Bruce Laingen, Mike Howland, and I went to jail the day or second day after New Year's 1981. That actually followed an attempt on Christmas Eve to move us out of the foreign ministry which aborted. But in the meantime, the Algerian ambassador had been allowed to come into the foreign ministry and brief us on where they stood in the mediation process aimed at trying to get some kind of a resolution. So, when this student group arrived the second time to take us away, I think all three of us had had a chance to make some kind of an assessment of where events were heading. For my part, at least, I was fairly confident that this was all just part of the end game and that barring some kind of an accident, by the 20th of January, which was the date that the administrations would change, we were all going to be set free. So, being turned over to this group and going to jail was not - at least for me - nearly as traumatic an experience as it might have been at an earlier point in the crisis. During those approximately three weeks that we were at that jail, there were various signs that, in fact, that assessment that

this was just the final stage preparatory to releasing everybody during those three weeks there were a number of things that happened. The behavior of the student militants indicated that that indeed was what was going to eventuate.

Q: This was the first time you were up against these militants. Often, as time goes on, people change. Do you think they probably changed and became a different group than they had been at first?

TOMSETH: During the course of the year-plus that this had now been going on, there had been some personality changes. From our position in the foreign ministry, we were aware of those - at least in a general sense - because we did have occasional visitors who would come in and tell us about what they perceived to be happening. We did have access to the local media. We had a daily Tehran newspaper. We had a radio. In the evening, I would go out into the little anteroom to the area where we were living and where this group of military NCOs who provided the security force at the foreign ministry had their main base. They had a television set in there, so I could watch local television with them. It was clear that there had been some personality changes in the group. But the core group was very much intact. But a lot of things had happened in the intervening 14 months that very much affected the attitude of these people. Not the least of those events was the war with Iraq. A number of them when that war began saw the war as a higher priority than whatever it was that they were trying to accomplish through prolonging the hostage crisis. When we were taken to this jail, in conversations that I had with several people, that was quite clear. At least some as individuals wanted to get rid of this because they were anxious to volunteer and go to the front.

I think another factor that had begun to impinge increasingly on some of these people was, they were students, after all. Notwithstanding the view in some quarters, most of these people were 19-21 year old college and technical school students in Tehran. A number of them had begun to realize that being hostage takers wasn't necessarily furthering their education and professional objectives in life. Again, in jail, I heard several of these people complain about the fact that they had missed more than a year in their education. There was actually one rather funny event in jail that brought this home. A couple of them came to me because I could speak Farsi and they wanted help with English, but they wanted somebody who could explain points of grammar in Farsi to them. I asked one of these fellows, "Why are you studying English? It doesn't seem to me that that is going to be of any particular use to you in your Islamic republic." He said, "Well, no, it's important for my studies. In fact, I would like to go abroad to continue my studies. I would like to go to the United States." I said, "Well, aren't you afraid if you went to the United States that somebody would take you hostage?" This young fellow said, "I hadn't really thought of that, but maybe I should."

Q: While you were watching T.V. with the NCOs, you were there when Iraq attacked Iran?

TOMSETH: Yes, I remember it very well.

Q: It would be very interesting to hear how a group of professional military people were viewing this attack.

TOMSETH: The war for Tehran started about 1:30-2:00 in the afternoon on September 22, I think. We had just had lunch. The weather was quite nice. It was moving into the fall period and had gotten a little bit cooler. By that time, we had developed some fairly complex personal relationships with some of these people that we saw every day. Mike Howland, who was one of the two security officers in the embassy and with Bruce Laingen and myself at the foreign ministry, had gone up on the roof. You could get to the roof of this three story building from the area where we were held. He had gone up there with one of these NCOs to get some sun. While they were up there, the security person had a new weapon that he was not terribly familiar with, a sidearm. But Mike knew it. So, they had taken the thing apart and Mike was showing him how to put the thing back together. Just as they were doing that - the foreign ministry was about a mile or a mile and a half northwest of Merhabad Airport, the main airport in Tehran - two Iraqi jets came in and bombed the airport. Then as they were flying out to turn to go back to Iraq, they came right by the foreign ministry. Bruce and I were sitting in the room just below where Mike was up on the roof. Looking at that out the window, it looked like they were flying at just about the level of the foreign ministry. I think they were probably a little bit higher than that, but they were quite close. It was quite evident what had happened, that they had bombed Merhabad Airport. But up on the roof when that happened, this Iranian army NCO who was putting the weapon back together threw it up and pieces went everywhere. He said, "Oh, my god, I'll really be in trouble now if we can't find this thing and put it back together. This is official issue equipment." So, he and Mike were scrambling around the roof trying to find the parts to his weapon. Bruce and I were downstairs and immediately surmised what had happened. A couple of the other security people burst into the room. They weren't sure what had happened. So, we had a discussion with these people.

Q: I would have thought the immediate reaction would have been that these are American planes.

TOMSETH: No. Tensions with Iraq had been building up in the days previous. I don't think that among that group anyone suspected that it was Americans. But the real question in their minds was, would Iraq actually dare to carry out a daylight bombing raid on Tehran? The answer to that was, yes, they would. But in the immediate aftermath of it, minutes after it happened, I recall that Bruce and I, joined by Mike and the other fellow on the roof when they found all parts to the gun, came down discussing what this was and coming to a consensus in fairly short order that, "Yes, indeed, those were Iraqi jets that just bombed your airport."

Q: What were you getting from this group about feelings towards Iraq just before and as this thing went on? Was Iraq becoming the Great Satan?

TOMSETH: There has never been any great love lost between- (end of tape)

These were professional military people in the foreign ministry that provided the security force. I think their immediate reaction was "How dare these dirty Arabs attack us. We will quickly teach them a lesson." But in the early stages of the war, it didn't go very well for the Iranians. They were not well prepared for it. I guess my own reaction was, of all the potential enemies that

might have attacked Iran at that particular point, it would have to be the Iraqis, who themselves are... Subsequently during the war with Iran, they proved themselves tenacious on the defense, but the Iraqis haven't had much of a military reputation for offensive operations since the time of Nebuchednesser, I think. Given the disarray that existed in Iran at the time the Iraqis attacked, it should have been fairly easy to roll on through Khuzestan in the southwest corner of Iran. It was late summer. It's ideal tank country. And the Iraqis never penetrated more than about 50 kilometers into Khuzestan and then only after long, protracted set-piece battles. They didn't perform very well at all. But from the Iranian point of view, I think there were a couple of things that became evident quite quickly. One was that they did not have the capability of throwing the Iraqis back quickly because of the disorganization in Iran. The other thing, which ultimately was very important to resolution of the hostage crisis, was, they found they didn't have any friends internationally. Here was about as blatant an act of aggression on the part of Iraq against Iran as you could ever hope to find and yet the only countries that immediately jumped to Iran's defense in this were North Korea; the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, which still existed at that point; Libya, although not with a great deal of enthusiasm; and Syria, not because the Syrians liked the Iranians, but because they hated the Iraqis. And that was it. The rest of the world sat on its hands on this one. The conclusion increasingly as the rest of the year wore on among the Iranians was that this hostage crisis was largely responsible for it. It was critical in providing a catalyst which led to the emergence of a sufficient consensus in Iran to wrap this thing up.

Q: Did the spare parts of American... Did you ever hear any reflection of the problem that they had a lot of American equipment?

TOMSETH: It wasn't just the American equipment, but that certainly was a constraining factor in Iran's ability to counter this attack. By that point, it was a year and a half since the collapse of the Shah's regime. Even in the months prior to that, there wasn't a great deal of attention being paid in the military to exercising, maintenance, and that sort of thing. So, yes, they very quickly ran into very severe shortages of spare parts, not only for the American equipment, but for other systems that they bought (French, Russian, whatever).

Q: When you got to jail, were you able to talk to your colleagues at this point?

TOMSETH: They separated us and put us into individual cells. We did not see one another the entire time that we remained in that jail. We were aware, however, that the others were there. The way it was set up, there was a corridor with cells on either side of it. The restroom was down at the end of the corridor. To go to the bathroom, you had to summon one of the jailors. We could hear when one or another went down the hall to go to the bathroom, but we were not able to talk to one another.

Q: How did you find the guards? Were these still students?

TOMSETH: All of the guards that I saw while in jail were college students. I don't recall that... There were a few people a little bit older who had insinuated themselves into the group after the seizure of the embassy who had an importance in terms of the group policy, but I did not see any of those people.

Q: Were there any young Ayatollahs involved?

TOMSETH: This group had a cleric who was their senior mentor. He showed up at the embassy several times. We saw him on television more than once when he was over there, but he never appeared at the jail while the three of us were there. In the last nearly 48 hours, they had moved us out of the jail and taken us to where everybody else, as it turned out, was located by that time. We didn't see anybody in the policy position while we were there either.

Q: How did the end-game work out for you?

TOMSETH: I guess it must have been about a day and a half or so before we were released in the evening of the 20th. We were moved from that jail to this building that some people have speculated was the foreign ministry club. I had never been to the foreign ministry club, so I couldn't tell you. But it was not a jail and it was a lot more comfortable than jail had been. Bruce and I were then put back together at that point. Then the night of the 19th, I guess, I think that was the second night we were there. I think we were taken there the night of the 18th. During the day, they had given us shaving gear so we could clean up. Then the night of the 19th, they came and got Bruce and me individually. As it turned out, the first thing when I was taken out of the room was, I was taken to a room where there were some medical people. They had some medical equipment. I was given a very cursory physical exam. All this while, one of the students who had taken me out of the room and led me down the hall blindfolded to where these people were was there, but at one point, he stepped out of the room for some reason. All of these medical people had been talking to one another in French. Based on what we knew about the Algerian role in the mediation effort, I presumed that they were Algerian. So, when this fellow stepped out, my French is not terribly good, but I know enough to have been able to ask these people, "Are you Algerians?" They said, "Yes." That was enough for me. That was pretty clear something was going to happen very shortly. Then after that physical examination, I was taken in to... A moment ago, I said we didn't see any policy people, but in fact, this was the one occasion where we did. There was a young woman who had been a high school student in Philadelphia and who was referred to as Mary by a lot of people, including the international media, after a while. I think her name was probably Maryanne or something like that. She is now a vice president of Iran. She was interviewing each of these people and it was being taped on video. Her questions basically were "Have you been well-treated during your time in our charge," that sort of thing. But as I was being led in for that interview, I met John Lambert coming out. This was the first time that I or any of the three of us had seen any of these people since November 4, 1979. We just passed in the hall, I said, "Well, hello, John. How are you doing?" He said, "Well, I think I'm doing okay." End of the conversation for the moment. Then I proceeded in for this interview with Miss Mary. I don't think I was a very cooperative interviewee. I wasn't abusive, but when she asked me had we been well-treated, I told her I didn't think being held hostage for 15 months was particularly good treatment under any circumstances. I think a lot of people who went through this process did essentially the same thing. As a propaganda technique, it must have been a dismal failure for them.

In any event, I went back to the room and Bruce and I spent the rest of the night there and most

of the next day without anything happening. Then about 5:00 p.m., one of these young people sort of burst into the room and said, "You must get ready. We're going to the airport in 20 minutes." Bruce and I both said, "We need our shoes. This was a technique that they used on everybody. They took their shoes away to impede escape attempts. So, this fellow disappeared and about 10 minutes later came back with a whole bagful of shoes and dumped them out. We rummaged around there. Bruce actually found his, but mine were not there. I said, "My shoes are not here." He said, "Wait one minute" and off he went and 10-15 minutes later came back with another bag of shoes and dumped them out. I rummaged through those and they weren't there either. I told this fellow, "My shoes are not here" and he said, "Well, are you sure you had shoes?" Yes, I went to this meeting at the foreign ministry barefooted a year plus ago. But eventually, I found a pair that more or less fit, so I took those. At that point, there was still a lot of scurrying around. Twenty minutes went by. An hour went by. Eventually, I suppose close to three hours went by before they finally got thing sufficiently organized that we were taken out blindfolded and put into vehicles and taken off to the airport, where everybody was sort of run through a little gauntlet that, I think, appeared on international television later, up to the gangway.

Q: The gauntlet being what?

TOMSETH: Student militants who were shouting "Death to America" and "Death to (all sorts of people)" as we went through. I know several people said they sort of answered back as they went through. My attitude was, "Look, I'm leaving. You guys are staying here. I don't really have anything to say to you at this particular point." But everybody got on to the airport. Then there ensued a lengthy process. There were Algerians on board. There were Red Cross people on board, I think. There were some Iranian foreign ministry people that I recognized. They several times went through to make sure that everybody was there. That in itself probably took 30-45 minutes. So, by the time we got underway, it was well past 9:00 p.m. and was sometime after the actual swearing in ceremony had taken place in Washington.

When I got back, there were a lot of people who told me that the Iranians purposely dragged this out until Carter was out of office and Reagan had been sworn in. Frankly, I don't buy that. I think the 20th was very important. The actual hour that we took off was far more a function of disorganization on the Iranian end than it was a sense of purpose on their part to drag this actually into the Reagan administration. I think they did want to humiliate to the last possible minute Carter and his administration. There was no doubt about that. But I really don't accept the premise that the release was delayed purposely to slop over into the Reagan administration. When they came in about 5:00 p.m. and told us we had 20 minutes to get ready to go to the airport, I think they really meant that we had 20 minutes to get ready for the airport. What they didn't realize was, they weren't ready.

Q: During all this time and even earlier, were there further attacks on Tehran by the Iraqis?

TOMSETH: Oh, yes.

Q: And were you concerned that this thing was going to screw up things? Even at the airport...

TOMSETH: No, not really. There were a number of air raids on Tehran in September/October. They may have even extended into November. But over time, they dwindled away. You don't do much damage with two aircraft. I think virtually every raid had a very limited number of aircraft. I never saw more than four and usually it was two that would come in. They would drop a bomb here or there. There was a refinery just outside of Tehran. They tried to hit that with modest success. I think they bombed the airport at least once again after that initial raid. No, we didn't worry that this was going to screw things up. I suppose we might have been a little bit concerned, given the skill of these Iraqi pilots, that they would drop a bomb on us. But we weren't even too worried about that. No, I think we all felt that, in terms of our selfish personal interest, this was a development that was going to lend momentum to the process of finding a resolution to the hostage crisis.

Q: On the plane, this was the first time you really saw everybody.

TOMSETH: Yes.

Q: Were you all counting heads? Was there an accurate count of who was held and who wasn't?

TOMSETH: Oh, yes. I think long since that it had been figured out how many and who they were. After the April rescue attempt, I don't think anyone ever had a very clear idea on where people were at any given moment in time. But the presumption was that, by that point, there were 52 people left. That is what the Algerians and the Red Cross were determined to establish, that they had 52 Americans on board. They had a manifest and they were checking off names as well, but I think probably the number was more important than the names. They figured if they had 52, they had everybody. Yes, I think, for Bruce, Mike, and I, and the others, too, you sort of had a mental roster in your head that you were checking off people as you greeted them on the plane. But I think the focus among the group was not so much on counting as reestablishing the human link with colleagues. Not only for the three of us or the other 49 as well, they had not seen most of the other people either in the intervening 444 days - I guess with a few exceptions. There had been a couple of Christmas dos which most people were allowed to attend, but it really was the first opportunity for most of them to see and to talk freely to everyone else as well.

Q: What was your impression of the condition of them as you established contacts? You had been isolated and, all of a sudden, you see them.

TOMSETH: As I have said earlier and I always stress to everybody, the conditions in which Bruce, Mike, and I lived in the foreign ministry were far better than anything our colleagues at the embassy had to endure during their captivity. But very early on, because we had access to media, I remember, in "The New York Times," there had been a series of articles... I think Steve Pachenic, who is a psychiatrist and at various times has been a consultant to the State Department and actually was in a State Department position for a while in the Bush administration was one of the sources that whoever did this series in "The New York Times" had relied upon. Pachenic's immediate assessment was that "If this thing drags on for more than a few days, every one of them will be vegetables. They will all succumb to the Stockholm Syndrome,"

which is named after this bank robbery in Sweden in the 1970s where it went awry and the robbers took a number of staff into the vault and held them there for a couple of days and, to the surprise of people when the thing was resolved, by the end of this crisis, the staff people who were being held by these bankrobbers had almost totally identified themselves with the robbers, with the people who had taken them hostage. At the time those things appeared (We got them in "The Herald Tribune" in the foreign ministry.), they just made me mad - and I think the same with Mike and Bruce, too - no way on God's green earth were we ever going to identify with these people. But our conditions were a lot different than they were for people at the embassy. I was prepared to see among this group of people at least a significant number of them who might very well have succumbed to the Stockholm Syndrome over a period of nearly 15 months. But in fact, I think all three of us, what we thought we found on that airplane was that most people had been quite strong. They had dealt with this very effectively. As difficult as it had been, they came through it in remarkably good shape in a psychological sense. It wasn't universally true. There were a few people who obviously had had a very difficult time during their captivity who did need some professional counseling help for a period of time after they were released. But by and large, the most overwhelming impression I had of that group, seeing them for the first time in over a year, was how remarkably strong they were in a psychological sense.

Q: How did the flight out go?

TOMSETH: That was great! On the way to the Turkish border, we had an Iranian Air Force escort, which I think people were of two minds about. The Algerians, in a precautionary mode, had brought two aircraft in and did not decide until the last minute which one they were going to use to actually ferry people out. Then both planes took off so that there would still be some uncertainty as to which plane actually had these people. It didn't take too long to get to the Turkish border. But I remember when finally we got underway and started moving down the tarmac to takeoff position, there was a great cheer in the cabin. Then when we went down the runway and got airborne, there was another great cheer. Then when we passed over that Turkish frontier, there was a third great cheer, at which point the Algerians on board broke out bread, wine, and cheese, and there was a great cheer for that as well. Then there was a brief refueling stop in Athens before we moved on to Algiers where the actual transfer from Algerian custody to U.S. custody took place. But that whole flight, particularly after we got out of Iranian airspace, was celebratory.

Q: Were you mixing and mingling?

TOMSETH: Yes, everybody was up and moving around and exchanging - I started to say "stories;" I'm not sure it was stories - information. In my own case, one of the people I talked to first was Tom Hearn, who had had a particularly difficult time because of his Agency affiliation, which was found out right away. Tom had come in the summer of 1979. He got there in July, I think. His previous post had been Nigeria. In those months up the embassy takeover, he and I used to have friendly bantering discussions as to which nation was the most deceitful - the most difficult to work with - the Nigerians or the Iranians? I had been in Iran for three-plus years at that time and was often very frustrated at trying to get things done. Tom insisted that as difficult as the Iranians were, the Nigerians were much worse. So, when I saw Tom on the plane, the first

thing I said to him was - and having in mind how difficult it had been for him with the Iranians - "Now, tell me, Tom, do you still think the Nigerians are more difficult to deal with than the Iranians?" He thought for a moment and said, "Yes." So, he hadn't lost his sense of humor.

Q: Were you all looking for people who really might have been in difficult circumstances psychologically? This was you all's responsibility in a way. Were you looking at that?

TOMSETH: Yes, that was certainly the case to a degree. In a couple of cases, I think we had a pretty good idea who might have been most vulnerable. Tom was one of those people. We knew that he had been identified and that he had been held in solitary confinement for a long period of time. But he was one of the strong people. There were a couple of others who, for one reason or another, we thought or even knew had had a difficult time. One was Barry Rosen, the press attache. He had been on television a couple of times complaining about his physical well-being and his mental well-being. Another was Steve Lautenbach, who was a very young first tour junior officer who was in the general services operation in the embassy. He had come in the late spring. So, he had been in Tehran for maybe five or six months. Bruce and Mike, too, had all seen a fair amount of him. He was having a hard time even before the embassy was taken over. So, yes, we were concerned about how well had he done and what was the state of his mental health after all of this. He wasn't in terribly good shape. He was one of the people who did need some counseling help, but he, as far as I know, is still in the Foreign Service. He went on and recovered from this and has made a career of the Foreign Service.

Q: Good for him.

TOMSETH: So, even he, as difficult as it was for him, I think, made a full recovery.

Q: Did you find any bitterness? You were at the executive level. Did you have other people there saying "How did you guys get us into this" and that sort of thing?

TOMSETH: Well, I know this is something that - not so much because he was worried that people were going to blame him for getting them into this, but because he felt a great sense of personal responsibility for this - I think Bruce was very much concerned about that aspect, that he... He can speak for himself. He has spoken for himself. I'm sure you've already talked to him. But this whole thing was something that weighed very heavily on him. Maybe people weren't saying everything they felt to my face, but I didn't find an inclination on the part of anyone in the embassy to hold senior management in the embassy accountable for this.

That was not the case with the Carter administration, however. There were a lot of people who were very critical of the Carter administration for the decision to allow the Shah to come to the United States for cancer treatment and not do anything in Tehran other than to ask the government to do what governments are supposed to do in the case of diplomatic missions accredited to them. As you probably know, Carter came to Wiesbaden. I can sort of understand why he wanted to do it, but it wasn't a very happy occasion. Some of these people who did hold the administration responsible for what had happened were pretty forthright in telling him, expressing their views. Maybe it made them feel better. I'm sure it made him not feel very well

and I'm not sure what purpose it served.

Q: Obviously, people were coming out bitter. My understanding was that you had a certain amount of pressure coming from both Rockefeller and from Henry Kissinger on letting the Shah in. So, it wasn't really a Carter thing. There were a lot of forces in the United States coming from all sides.

TOMSETH: Undoubtedly, David Rockefeller and Kissinger were the most prominent among the friends of the Shah in the United States, of which there were many - Democrats and Republicans - who throughout the spring and summer of 1979 put a lot of pressure on the Carter administration to do something about the Shah's situation. That became politically irresistible when it became public knowledge that the Shah had lymphatic cancer and he needed better treatment than was available in Mexico at that particular juncture.

Q: How did the handover and all go in Algiers?

TOMSETH: Actually, it was the high point of U.S.-Algerian relations. It was very moving kind of thing. The Algerian foreign minister, who died a few months later in a plane crash, made some very nice remarks. Warren Christopher had come as the senior U.S. representative. He gave a very nice response and there was then an opportunity for our group and the people who had come from Washington and the American embassy, who had a contingent there, to mingle with the Algerian government officials, most of them foreign ministry people to be sure, who had been involved in this. It was a real love-in and was very moving, I must say. It was a high point in U.S.-Algerian relations. One of the ironies of all of this was that initially, it had been the Germans who were in the mediating role, just by a fortuitous happenstance. One of Khomeini's son-in-laws had some German contacts and it was through them that in the summer of 1980 the Germans got involved. But then the Iranians weren't all that comfortable with the Germans. They really wanted an Islamic revolutionary part in that mediation role. They asked if the Algerians couldn't take the Germans' place in this regard. That is how the Algerians came in. But the irony of this is that the Algerians, at least those government representatives involved in the mediation effort, were revolutionary, yes, but Islamic, no. Their interest in doing this was not as a favor to Iran, but because they saw it as their opportunity to improve their relations with the United States. It was a major fillip to U.S.-Algerian relations.

Q: Could you talk about the processing? You had your love-in in Algiers and then went off to Wiesbaden?

TOMSETH: Yes. We went on a U.S. military aircraft to Frankfurt and then they bussed us to Wiesbaden, which is 30 or so minutes away. By the time we got there, it was the early hours of the morning, I suppose, local time, which was a couple hours behind Tehran time. None of us had had any sleep for over 24 hours. But all of the staff at the base in Wiesbaden and at the hospital turned out. There was a big crowd at the airport in Frankfurt. But one of the things that struck me about Wiesbaden was, it was quite clear that the intention of everybody was to be as nice as possible to this group that had been brought in. There were all sorts of things: food, all the back issues of the news magazines, videotapes of news broadcasts, they had set up a phone

bank so you could get on the phone and talk to your family in the United States (no restrictions on how long)... But they sort of shut us off from the rest of the world. I know my objective was "Let's get back to normal as quickly as possible." I won't say I resented it, but I didn't appreciate being put in this cocoon, as nice as it was, in Wiesbaden.

Q: Wiesbaden has been used for hostages and all. I don't know what the feeling is, but this is how they've been operating. There haven't been any occurrences recently, but that cocoon... This is what people have gotten who have gotten out of Lebanon as hostages. They put this up, I think, out of the goodness of their heart, but also they're not quite sure...

TOMSETH: I think most of it was well-intended. I think there was also an operational concern that they wanted to be able to do both a substantive debrief of people before they got caught up in everything. Okay, I understand that. But most of it was driven by good intentions. The idea was to sort of ease people back into normality, but certainly for me, I felt, as nice as the conditions were there, that it was sort of like "Hostage Crisis Stage Two." Well, it didn't last very long. It was just a few days. But in very short order, I was anxious to get out of there. One of the things... Al Francis, who had been my mentor as a junior officer in Thailand some time before, was then the political advisor or foreign policy advisor to EUCOM. He had come up to Wiesbaden and was at the hospital when we got there. He had secreted in a six pack of beer. That is what everybody needed. They needed to have a beer!

Q: I think we tend to overwhelm people with counselors and with smiling nurses and all this. When you're talking about adults, they're adults.

TOMSETH: Yes.

Q: What were you getting from your fellow embassy people about how they had been treated? By this time, you had had a chance to mingle and talk with them. What were you getting from them?

TOMSETH: I don't think that we were terribly surprised in the aggregate about what it had been like. So long as we were in the foreign ministry, we actually got a great deal of information, essentially as much as anybody else had, regarding what things were like for people there. When Richard Queen, who was this young junior officer who had come down with multiple sclerosis and had been released in the summer of 1980, got back, he had a lot of information that he was able to give people in Germany and Washington about what it was like. In due course, the three of us in the foreign ministry had access to that information as well. What was new information were the individual specifics that people had to tell about their personal experiences during that period of captivity. But again, while that was new information, there were no revelations in terms of the overall picture that the three of us had had of what it was like for them. I then and certainly subsequently have had occasion to get to know even more people who were held as POWs in Vietnam. I think without question, the physical conditions that people endured in Vietnam were, in aggregate, far more difficult than hostages in Tehran. By that, I mean not the three of us, but the others who were held. But from a psychological point of view, I think that life for those people in Tehran on balance was probably more difficult than it was for most POWs in Vietnam. In Vietnam, they at least had some fairly regular communications that gave them a sense of what

was happening in the outside world, but these people really underwent a very high degree of sensory deprivation, if you will. They had very little news about what was going on in the world, particularly in the first six months or so that they were there. In the first three or four months, there was almost no contact with one another. They might be able to see one another, but they weren't even able to talk to one another. I think that psychologically, that must have been very difficult to endure. That again is one of the reasons why I was so really pleasantly surprised to see how well the vast majority of people had stood up under these conditions. They really, as a group, were remarkably strong people.

Q: Had anything prepared you for this hostage thing? All of us who had been in the military at least had that name, rank, and serial number training. When I was in the Air Force, I got very little, but at least you were kind of told what to do, discipline, and all that. Had there been anything in your Foreign Service experience that prepared you for this?

TOMSETH: Not really. Up to that point, the State Department had not done a lot of institutionalized training for dealing with terrorism, at least in a general sense. I think certain individuals who were going into particularly difficult situations might have gotten at least some briefings prior to doing that. But we don't live in a vacuum. By 1979, there had been enough terrorism about in the world that anybody who reads the newspapers and watches the evening news had some idea of what it is like to be a victim of terrorism, to be taken hostage. I suspect that everybody was able to draw on that to a certain degree.

But in my own case in response to your specific question, I think probably the thing that helped me the most was not anything I had gotten in training or experience in the Foreign Service, but rather being a Peace Corps volunteer, not that being a Peace Corps volunteer was like being a hostage. What that had done for me at a relatively young age without a great deal of any kind of experience other than growing up in smalltown Oregon was show me that I could live in fairly spartan conditions. It taught me how to be dependent upon my own resources for dealing with that. That, I think, was very useful. As I think I said earlier, the great challenge of going through this thing was the boredom, answering the question that you woke up with every morning: "How do I get through THIS day" and thinking up ways to fill up that time. Again, by virtue of that Peace Corps experience in Nepal, where there wasn't a lot of external stimulants that came to you as you sat there passively to entertain you. You had to think of things to stay busy and keep occupied. That probably was more relevant than anything I had experienced in the Foreign Service to that particular situation.

Q: When you were in Wiesbaden, what about debriefing? Also, did you feel that there was any attempt to make sure you didn't get out and make some outrageous statements or something like that? Was there the public relations spin?

TOMSETH: No. In my own case, quite the contrary. In this cocoon that they had put us in, that included keeping the media out. But there was a fence around the hospital and people, even though it was January and was pretty cold - these were people who had spent a great deal of time indoors over the last 15 months - the very first day people were out walking around the grounds of the hospital and these media people were shouting questions across the fence. Some of these

people who were rather bitter about the Carter administration's handling of not the hostage crisis, but sort of getting them into it, were shouting sound bites back. There was a feeling in some quarters that this wasn't very good press. Not in really any terribly organized fashion, but in fairly short order, there was a consensus of people from Washington (Bruce was involved in it. People in Wiesbaden...) that maybe what we ought to do is make a few people available to talk to some of these media people in depth. I was one of the persons chosen to do that. I drew CBS, I think. So, I actually got off the compound as a consequence. Morton Dean and I went for an hour and a half ride while they did this interview. It was an opportunity for several people in the group (Ann Swift was one of them, as were two or three others.) to really talk about the experience in some detail, rather than to shout these one liners across the fence to people asking questions. So, at least in my case and the case of a few others, no, it was quite the contrary. The hope was to try and get some kind of multidimensional picture of what things had been like out to the media in fairly short order.

Q: I take it by this time there was no particular concern that "We don't want to upset the Iranians because of diplomatic relations?"

TOMSETH: No.

Q: You're shaking your head.

TOMSETH: I don't think there was any... Certainly not in the new administration. There was no visceral inclination to be nice to the Iranians. The actuality was that in those very early days, I don't think the Reagan administration had really thought through what kind of a policy it wanted towards Iran. The basic attitude that I encountered to a degree when we were in Germany, but certainly as soon as we got back to Washington, was, this was something that happened on Carter's watch and the less we have to do with it, the better.

Q: Coming back to the United States... At some point, you might want to talk about how this hit your family.

TOMSETH: My family had left with most of the U.S. government dependents in early December of 1978, almost a year before the embassy was taken over by this group. I had been back to see them a couple of times during that period. In fact, I had just come back from one of those conjugal visits when the decision was made to admit the Shah to the United States. I think I got into Washington on a Friday (Maybe it was Thursday night.) and was scheduled to leave for Tehran that evening. Henry Precht, who was then the country director for Iranian Affairs, was also going out to Tehran. We were on the same flight together. When we got to Tehran, he told me that that Friday, the decision had been made to admit the Shah. He said he had thought about telling me before I got on the plane, but decided to wait until we were in Tehran. But when my family left, they went to Oregon and initially stayed with my mother. But within a few weeks, it became apparent that they weren't going to be able to go back anytime soon. So, we wound up buying a small house in Oregon. My wife and our two children lived there until the late summer of 1980, at which point my wife decided that she wanted to come back to Washington, where most of her friends were. She is not from Oregon.

Q: This is very difficult. She is Thai, isn't she?

TOMSETH: Yes.

Q: Being there in Oregon, there is not a big Thai community. I would have thought it would be difficult under any circumstances.

TOMSETH: Well, you have to know my wife. She is not terribly dependent upon the Thai community wherever she goes. She likes Thailand just fine and she has lots of Thai friends, but she has far more American friends. So, the size of the Thai community in Eugene was not a factor for her. But being close to people that she knew the best, Foreign Service friends, and particularly after the seizure of the embassy, rather than spending hours each day on the phone talking to people in the State Department - well, she was going to have to do it on the phone largely when she came to Washington, but it was a lot more convenient to do it in Washington. She decided that she would rather be here for as long as it was going to take to sort this out. So, in August of 1980, she moved the children back to the Washington area.

In Oregon, the media were relentless in tracking down family members of people in Iran, wherever they were. Some of them chose to develop really intimate relationships almost with these people. There were a few where the media people almost moved in with them. My wife, even though her father was a journalist and owned a couple of newspapers in Thailand, didn't really care to have a whole lot of truck with these people. While they were still in Oregon at one point, she came out of the house one morning to put our son on the school bus and there was a media truck with a group of reporters who stuck microphones in her face. She said, "I don't have anything to say to you" and she called the police. They were very good. They came by the house at regular intervals to make sure that she wasn't being harassed by the media. But she had relatively little to do with the media, whether during her time in Oregon or after she moved back to Washington.

Again, our circumstances were different. One way or another, we had a regular stream of communications with our family members, initially by phone any time we wanted it, but even at the end or almost to the end, prior to going to jail, by letter and occasionally even by phone.

But I thought during that time that for the family members of the others particularly, in a way, it was almost more difficult for them than it was for their hostages. As difficult as it was for the hostages at any given moment, they always knew what their individual circumstances were, as hard as they might be. The family members didn't. They didn't have a lot of information. I think that must have been awfully difficult for these people to deal with.

Q: I've had a long interview with Sheldon Kryz, who was the point person-

TOMSETH: He was executive director in-

Q: Executive director of NEA. He was talking about the difficulty of dealing with a very difficult

situation and it was something that really happened that was part of the standard operating procedure for the Department of State. What were you getting from your wife when you came back about how the support system worked?

TOMSETH: Walapa and Sheldon became very close during that period. Her view is that the State Department in general made every reasonable effort, particularly in circumstances where there wasn't any standard operating procedure for dealing with situations like this, her view is that the Department made every reasonable effort to try to ensure that the families were kept in the information loop, that whatever information the Department had, they would try to share that just as quickly as possible with the families. She thought that Sheldon in particular was a real rock in terms of being always in touch and supportive of people, certainly in her own case. He was in touch with her all the time, even when she was three hours away out on the West Coast. Others I know didn't necessarily feel that way. There were some who were quite critical of the State Department and thought that compared to Defense, for example, a lot more could have been done. From my perspective, I think that people who feel that way are overlooking some key facts, one of which is that the Defense Department has resources that the State Department doesn't have to deal with this. One of the things Defense did was they assigned somebody as each family's liaison officer. That person had responsibility for daily contact with their family. What is overlooked, I think, is that Defense has a lot more people to draw upon than State.

Q: Particularly when we're not fighting a big war, what do you do with all these people? We are essentially fighting a war every day all over the world. I think you're also talking about an era which is different than maybe 30-40 years ago. That is, you've got to blame somebody and the government is the person to blame. This is true in almost everything. It's an attitudinal thing.

TOMSETH: Yes. We're all victims.

Q: What was your impression of how she felt about the family support group here in Washington?

TOMSETH: Particularly after she came back to Washington, she was relatively actively involved in that, not as prominently as a few people like Louisa Kennedy and even Penny Laingen, who were much more in the public eye, as was Catherine Keo. Bill Keo was actually the headmaster at the International School in Islamabad who had come over to look at some things that we had gotten just a week or so ago before from the International School in Tehran, some band instruments particularly, and wound up being caught in this, but was not an Embassy Tehran staffer per se. But Catherine Keo, his wife, and Louisa Kennedy particularly, and Penny, to a degree, and some others were very much in the public eye.

Q: Louisa Kennedy was Morehead Kennedy's wife.

TOMSETH: Right. I think she felt that this was a good thing for developing a sense of solidarity and mutual support among family members. In Walapa's case, one of the things that she was particularly concerned about was that the tendency was to think nuclear family (wives and children), but maybe not so much brothers and sisters and parents and in-laws. My wife was very

concerned that my... My father had been in a nursing home and he died while this was underway. She was very concerned that my mother be kept in this as well. The State Department organized several family meetings around the country during this period. I know on a couple of those occasions, she asked if my mother could go to that rather than going herself. I think they may have gone to one or two of these things together.

Q: Then we come back to Washington. This is an important national - almost international - occasion. Could you talk about what happened?

TOMSETH: Yes. After a few days of medical checks and debriefings in Wiesbaden, we went to West Point as initial landing in the United States. The spouses came up to West Point for that period. I guess we were there for a couple of nights. Then we came down to Washington. I think for me, coming in to Stewart Air Force Base in New York and then driving the 20 miles or so to West Point, in a way, was a more impressive experience than coming down to Washington a couple of days later where there were throngs of people. It seemed like everybody in Washington was out on the street. But this area in New York is fairly rural. It was the middle of the winter. And yet the whole 20 miles was lined with people to greet these buses as we traveled from the air force base to West Point itself. For me, that was more moving, seeing all of these people out in rural New York than large numbers of people in Washington, DC, where you are much more likely to find large numbers of people, let alone the tickertape parade that they had in New York a week or so later. But all of those things represented a single phenomenon and that is the way the American public united around this hostage crisis issue. There probably aren't very many events in a historical sense where that sort of thing happens.

But coupled with that was... This wasn't apparent on the first or second day, but certainly within a couple of weeks, it was clear that as joyous as everybody was that this had worked out well, they wanted to move on. It was "Okay, we've done this and now it's time to move on." Again, at least for me, that very much accorded with my own wishes. I had no particular desire to become a professional hostage. I wanted to get on with my Foreign Service career.

Q: When you got back, did you get any impression about how Washington (the State Department, the White House, and all that) was dealing with you?

TOMSETH: I think you have to make some distinction between the State Department on the one hand and the administration on the other. As I said a moment ago, I think the attitude of the Reagan administration was that this is basically something that happened on Carter's watch and the less we have to do with it, the better. That was evident in the White House ceremony the day that everybody came back from West Point. It was a nice, moving ceremony, but I had the distinct impression that Reagan and his political people viewed it as something that they needed to get done and over with, that it wasn't anything that they were doing with a great deal of enthusiasm. The same thing happened a few weeks later in the State Department when, after a decision had been made about what they were going to do to recognize these people and the decision was made to give everybody the Certificate of Valor, Haig was Secretary of State... It was the same thing. He showed up late for the thing. He wasn't very well prepared in terms of his remarks. The overall impression that you had of him making these remarks was, let me get

through this just as quickly as I can. So, you had that on one side. That was a bit disappointing, although I can understand it from a political point of view.

The State Department, on the other hand, institutionally, the Department's inclination was to do everything it could within reason for these people. What that translated into in terms of the assignment process - and I think you also have to couple with this the attitude that was evident in Germany, which is, these are damaged goods in a psychological sense. You have to put a protective cocoon around them - what that meant for virtually everyone was that they were put into training assignments of one sort or another. I went to the Senior Seminar. Several people went off to university training and things of that sort. Senior Seminar is a great program and I hope it lives a very long life, but I'm not sure that that is what I needed at that particular juncture.

Q: In a way, it's somewhat passive.

TOMSETH: It is.

Q: You're getting back and you've been kept passive for some time.

TOMSETH: The other thing is that most of these training assignments begin in the summer. My advice to junior officers is, if you're ever going to be taken hostage, don't get released in January. You're out of the assignment cycle, at least of a lot of these training assignments - well, for most assignments. What that meant for me and everybody else was a series of make-work assignments to fill up the five or six months before going into the Senior Seminar in August.

Q: A real dead space for an active person.

TOMSETH: It was, although one of the things I did was go on the speaking circuit. I talked to university groups and rotary clubs. I really enjoyed it. It was nice to get out and see a lot of the country, but it was good therapy. too.

Q: What were you saying? What was your message?

TOMSETH: What people wanted to hear about was what it was like. So, my remarks were focused to a large extent on what it was like because that is what they wanted to hear, but the message I was trying to get across was, this is basically something that can happen in the process of international relations and that as a nation and the State Department as an institution, you cannot let the emotion of an event like this really drive the foreign policy. The policy should be based upon what national interests are and in the case of Iran, there is a national interest that we really shouldn't lose sight of. I think we've had a very difficult time keeping that national interest in view over the last two decades. But there have been people all along and it's sort of come to the fore again recently as some people have hoped that what is happening in Iran itself may, if not immediately, at least eventually, present an opportunity to sort of move on. But it's always been difficult. During the Reagan administration, one of the things that happened... After the Senior Seminar, I could go up in NEA in an office director position. Going to the weekly bureau staff meeting and seeing what was going on with the Iran-Iraq War at that time was very

disheartening. The basic policy of the Reagan administration was "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." I always felt that just because we've had a falling out with the current leadership with Iran doesn't make us friends with Saddam Hussein. That's not a bed I would ever want to get into. But we did to a very large degree during the course of the 1980s.

Q: Alright. We'll come back to that. One of the very basic themes of this whole oral history program is to build up an institutional memory and to make it useful for policy planners. Did you find when you came back (and using others' experience) that there had been an effort on the part of the State Department to say, "Okay, let's look at how we dealt with Iran?" How could we have done it better? What lessons were learned? By inference, whither our relations with Iran? Here you came back, you were a Farsi speaker. You had been in the beast.

TOMSETH: Not a lot. The one effort I recall (and this was actually a couple of years or so - maybe even more than that - after the fact), INR used some of its money to do a series of seminars in which they got some academics and State Department personnel and other experts involved to look at the cultural dimension of politics. Iran was one of the case studies that they did. I thought this was very good. In Iran, I don't know how cogently or eloquently, but both prior to the collapse of the Shah's regime and then in that period from February up to November of 1979, I tried to make the argument that what this revolution is about in a very significant sense is cultural issues. What had happened in Iran in the 1960s and 1970s particularly was that a ruling elite with the Shah at the top of it had, in effect, made themselves as alien to the majority of Iranian culture as all of the foreign experts that they had brought in. Khomeini's message to a lot of Iranians was not so much a religious message per se, but a message that said, in effect, look, the great danger of the Shah's regime and the West particularly (even more so than the Soviet Union) is that Iran is in danger of losing its soul, that if it goes the direction the Shah wants to take it, it won't be Iran anymore. It will be sort of an ersatz France, Italy, or the United States. It won't be, in a cultural sense, that thing that is important to you and me, the real Iranians, as opposed to this westernized elite that sits at the top of the political power structure.

Q: Did you see at the time or since a way for the Department of State to analyze how things went and to make corrections? The military at least may be accused of fighting the last war, but what they do do is analyze the last war, what went right, what went wrong, and try to make adjustments for that. Did you see anything at the time? This was a major political diplomatic disaster however you want to talk about it. Did you see any effort to respond to this?

TOMSETH: Very little. One of the things that happened ex post facto, after the seizure of the embassy in Tehran, was with regard to our relations with Libya. A decision was made that circumstances are just getting so difficult that we're going to close down the embassy. We didn't break diplomatic relations. We closed down the embassy. I would like to think that the experience in Iran had some bearing in that course of action, but aside from that, I really saw very little that suggested a serious effort to try to analyze or discover what are the lessons learned from this Iranian experience. Part of that may be that the resolution of the hostage crisis coincided with a change of administrations, that if the Carter administration had continued in office, there might have been a greater willingness to go back through this and see what are the lessons that we can draw from the experience, but I didn't detect much of an inclination in the Reagan administration

to do that. As I said, the overwhelming attitude from the very outset seemed to be that this happened on Carter's watch and the less we have to do with it, the better.

Q: Did you find in your talking to groups around the county an inclination to say "Let's go out and bomb the hell out of them" or get revenge?

TOMSETH: No, not really. The one thing that I encountered fairly regularly that I tried to argue against was the notion that this was resolved because the Iranians were afraid of the Reagan administration, what Reagan was going to do to them that Carter wouldn't dare to do. I think that is nonsense. The Iranians, given the psychological mindset in Iran at that time, I think they were perfectly prepared in a rhetorical sense at least to face anything that the United States was going to throw at them. If nuclear weapons started coming down, their minds might have changed in fairly short order, but they weren't in a mood to be intimidated by military threat. The personality of the president had nothing to do with that. It didn't matter whether it was Carter or Reagan. What really allowed for a resolution of the crisis was a consensus that emerged in late 1980 that time wasn't on their side in this, that they really needed to get rid of this albatross, particularly to prosecute the war with Iraq. Yes, there was an inclination to humiliate Carter to the maximum extent possible. Yes, the 20th of January became a very important date because of the change of administrations, but not for the reasons that a lot of people seem to ascribe to it.

Q: What was your impression of the books, the treatises, that have been written about this from either the academic press or something like that about the situation?

TOMSETH: I have not read all of the books that have been written on this period. Particularly in the last few years, there have been several that have come out, a few of which I've read, but not all of them by any stretch of the imagination. I think the ones that were done at the time or in the immediate aftermath without exception are not very good. Some of the ones that were done more recently... I think of one that James Bill did maybe six years ago is pretty good. It's pretty dispassionate in its analysis.

Q: So often, when I talk to Foreign Service people who have been involved in events, they said, "You just got it wrong." Again, part of what we're trying to do is get the feelings on the ground. Often, they ascribe emotions, plans, etc. to Americans who were doing things that just aren't true.

TOMSETH: Yes. Among people who were writing at the time is Nikki Keddie, who is very interested in the cultural dimension of politics. She wrote some articles and a book or two in the late 1970s. I thought she had a lot of insight into the Iranian cultural personality, if you will. But the straight political science kinds of things that were done at the time and in the immediate aftermath of it, I don't think were really terribly good.

Q: Did you get any feeling about the Iranian community in America during this time?

TOMSETH: This wasn't the Iranian community in America, but in the early summer, June or so (It might have been after the Iran-Iraq War started.), a group of Iranians took over an embassy in

London. I think it was the Iraqi embassy. It's possible they did that before the war started, but it was probably after. In any event, this thing went on for a few days before it was resolved. In the meantime, there were all sorts of Iranian students out there demonstrating and being pro and con. There was a joke that started circulating in the UK that one of our British colleagues got brought into us in the foreign ministry and it was a question: water covers 7/10 of the surface of the earth? What covers the rest? The answer was: Iranian students.

Q: I know. As a consular officer in Belgrade and Naples during the crisis when you were being a hostage, I got a call from the visa office saying, "Would you like to have Iranian students come from all over to use your facilities?" I said, "Hell, no! I don't want to touch them with a 10 foot pole."

TOMSETH: "That is an honor we'd rather decline." There were a lot of Iranians here. One of the things that the Carter administration did after the embassy was seized was direct INS to do a census. They came up with over 50,000 here on student visas. God knows how many actually were here. These were students, let alone the others. We know lots of very decent Iranians in Iran and in this country, too. I think life wasn't particularly easy for a lot of Iranians in the United States during that period through no individual fault of their own, although collectively the Iranians have a great capacity for being their own worst enemy. Some of the demonstrations that were going on in the United States in the aftermath of the seizure of the embassy were not well calculated to win the hearts and minds of the American public.

Q: Was there any thought at the time that maybe we made a mistake and we should have taken, as we did during World War II, the Iranian diplomats in the United States and at least put them in the Greenbrier Hotel or someplace like that?

TOMSETH: Well, there was some discussion of that. I don't know how serious it ever became, but certainly in the early days when we had regular telephonic contact with Washington, we had the impression that there was actually some consideration here in Washington being given to the idea that the embassy staff would be interned and that that might then provide a basis for some kind of negotiation for an exchange.

Q: In a way, looking at this, this would allow for- (end of tape)

You were saying the conclusion...

TOMSETH: The conclusion that was reached without a great deal of difficulty is that what might have worked in World War II and previous international conflicts was not going to work in this situation because of the particular nature of the psychological dimension of the situation in Iran itself. Interning the embassy staff here wouldn't have had the least bit effect on the group that had control of the embassy staff and would not have been very likely to have much influence on the religious leadership, particularly Khomeini, to make some kind of decisive intervention that would, in effect, overrule the views of the student group at the embassy.

MYLES GREEN
Deputy Director, Iran Affairs
Washington, DC (1976-1978)

Political Military Counselor
Tehran (1978-1979)

Deputy Director, NEA, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1979-1982)

Myles Greene was born in Georgia in 1925. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946, Mr. Green received his bachelor's degree from Yale University and his master's degree from Johns Hopkins University. His career in the Foreign Service included positions in Mexico, Iran, Lebanon, and Turkey. Mr. Greene was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2002.

Q: Well, maybe this would be a good place to stop, Myles, I know you have to leave in a few minutes and before we get into it it's probably better to stop at this point and we'll pick this up in 1977 when you're going to be in doing Iranian affairs. You did it from '77 to when?

GREENE: Okay. I didn't do it very long because, not knowing that we were about to have a revolution, I went in '78 to Tehran again as political military counselor. I was there through the revolution; we can talk about that.

Q: Oh, absolutely. Okay. Great.

This is March 25, 2002. Myles, you were on the Iranian desk from when?

GREENE: '76 to '78.

Q: '76 to '78. What was the situation when you were, in the first place, describe where the Iran desk fit into the...

GREENE: The Iran desk was in NEA on the fifth floor, more or less directly below the assistant secretary's suite. I was called the deputy director. It was a terrific office. Charlie Naas was a fine guy, the director.

Q: That's N-A-A-S?

GREENE: That's correct. Dutch. I know when the Carter administration came in and the new secretary arrived, Phil Habib who was the under secretary for political affairs, was taking the new secretary around to show him the place and came to the Iranian desk as an example of a really well run desk. He wanted the boss to see what a really good desk was. So it was. Charlie was a good boss, relaxed, efficient and we did a good job within policy limits. Those limits had been

established some years before in the Nixon-Kissinger regime, namely that Iran was a highly valued ally and we should do all we could to keep them that way. Nixon had established certain countries around the world to which we would give some responsibility for regional stability and Iran was it for that area. It also meant that anything the Shah wanted to buy in the way of military equipment we would say, "Please go right ahead," even though there were some laws that required more of an examination. Kissinger had said *carte blanche*. Charlie and I used to joke when we'd get these letters from anti-Iran people and our replies would practically have the same opening sentence, something about through six administrations this has been a great friend of ours and blah, blah, blah. That was our usual reply. Charlie was away a lot and so I was often acting director. I was also the political military person there which meant that part of my work was working with this guy Robinson, the head of the military sales office in PM. I called him Robbie.

Q: Who was that?

GREENE: Everybody called him Robbie. He was civil service. Anyway, in that connection my one unhappiness occurred. This is an interesting example of the relationship between a desk within the bureau and the regional affairs office within that bureau. The political military person in the regional office for NEA happened to be Henry Precht, who had just finished four years as the political military person in Tehran and was still very, very interested and knowledgeable about it. One of the few requests by the Shah to purchase equipment that raised any eyebrows was for four or five AWACS, which was a big purchase.

Q: This is a very large plane equipped with fancy radar.

GREENE: That's right. And so, much more than usual that request resulted in people looking seriously about whether the Shah should have this fancy equipment at which point Henry Precht stepped in. He didn't have any business in Iran affairs, except whatever a regional officer is supposed to do, he grabbed the ball and I was very uncomfortable. I told Charlie I was very uncomfortable at this. Henry's a good friend, still is, one of my best friends, but in the end I would say the decision to sell, that is at our level, the working level in the State Department, the decision to go ahead with the sale was as much Henry's words as it was the desk's word. Henry was known for stepping into business.

Q: Why, this is a very complicated system which needs an awful lot of maintenance and really when you're talking about maintenance, you're really talking about American maintenance.

GREENE: Yes, AWACS.

Q: AWACS, yes. I mean getting somebody into this, getting Iran into this, I mean would probably have been of marginal value.

GREENE: That's right. Well, as I say, we were still coasting under the guidelines established by Henry Kissinger that we not raise serious questions, that Iran was our partner in that region and that included defending or not defending or being aware of any trouble up and down the Persian

Gulf, Iraq. The Shah seemed to think that AWACS would help him do that job. Most Iranian purchases breezed right through, but these AWACS raised questions.

Q: When you arrived there, was the fact that, I'll say the fact, but you can dispute me on this, that there were had been for some time instructions not to be overly critical about reporting on internal matters within Iran, was this a problem?

GREENE: Not at that time, no. Of course, our signals were still what I had said; the Shah was the man. I remember Ambassador Helms, who was just in his latter months as I arrived on this job, wrote what he called his farewell letter to the secretary.

Q: Well, it would have been Kissinger.

GREENE: Kissinger, yes. A farewell letter about four single-spaced typed letter, which in effect said things are just dandy here. I see this partnership continuing for far off into the future. The Shah is a reliable intelligent partner and we're lucky to have him. That was the gist of it. But, I got a carbon copy, that old fashioned term, and now on the bottom the drafting officer was Jack Miklos as the DCM and who had previously been the director of Iranian affairs and was very good at this job of selling Iran.

Q: It was Jack Miklos?

GREENE: M-I-K-L-O-S. He lives in San Francisco now. A long time FSO, later deputy assistant secretary. So, that was the gist of that job. We had a good office. A number three person office, this was the only time in my Foreign Service that unusual that I encountered somebody who was on drugs. I don't even remember this guy's name. He was supposedly the economic and AID person working in our office and he would just disappear for hours on end. Charlie had all kinds of problems trying to ease him out of the job. Then the new ambassador who succeeded Helms was Bill Sullivan and he of course came through the desk for briefings we became acquainted. Charlie had his eye on being Sullivan's DCM, which he became and then he said, "Would I like to come." So, Charlie went to Tehran as Sullivan's DCM, in the spring, this was '78. I followed soon as the political military counselor. The next six or eight months were very strange, to say the least. First of all my wife was finishing a degree at George Mason, so our 14 year old son and I went out awaiting my wife's arrival. I had knew to what degree Sullivan or anybody in the U.S. government knew that the Shah was ill, that he had had cancer and that that might be the reason he was trying to push off responsibility and prepare his son to be the new Shah. It has since been said that the British ambassador knew. My man work was with the MAAG.

Q: Military assistance group?

GREENE: Yes. The head of which happened to be Phil Gast who had been a colonel back in the Air Force in my late lamented brief assignment on the State-Defense exchange program. So I knew him. He was a two star general by then and was very helpful to me. I was just beginning to get to know some of these military people when stirrings began on the street. This was October.

Q: '78?

GREENE: '78. Yes. But it still didn't seem that serious. It was at this time that the embassy suddenly became aware of the fact that it really didn't have any useful contacts with the religious mullahs and ayatollahs in Iran. There were maybe one or two contacts that John Stimple had, but that was about it. There had been an FSO, an excellent language officer, who was not there at the time. He was back here on some job in Washington.

Q: Who was that?

GREENE: Stan Escudero. He later became ambassador to one of the new countries, Turkmenistan I think, one of those places. Anyway, Sullivan said we need somebody who has some contact with these religious people. Escudero came out on temporary assignment and reestablished some of his contacts. It soon became clear that Khomeini, a name just coming to the fore from Iraq and then Paris, was the man who was going to take advantage of all this increasing unrest. It was Sullivan's position, and therefore the embassy's position, that there's this man who has considerable influence here, we should make some contacts with him. This was the crux of the disagreement between the embassy and Washington and Zahedi, who was the Iranian ambassador here in town. He was not even doing business with the State Department, but with business with Brzezinski in the White House. They were the ones who were trying to keep the Shah on, while Sullivan was saying we have this man in Paris, let's contact him, let's talk to him and see what's going on. We really didn't.

Q: I think Warren Zimmerman was in Paris and had some contact with people around.

GREENE: Yes, well, that may be. But the fact is there was a serious disagreement between the embassy and Washington.

Q: Well, going back to the time you were the desk officer, did you have, what was your estimation of the role of the Iranian embassy and its importance?

GREENE: Oh, it was very important. The ambassador was very important, the embassy didn't amount to very much, but the ambassador was Zahedi, a former son-in-law of the Shah, a hard charger. In an Iranian sense, a charming man, not exactly my cup of tea, but he was very socially active, spent lots and lots of money on parties and lunches. Occasionally he would come to the State Department and I would often be the one to meet him at the front door and take him where he was going, but he really didn't pay much attention to us to tell you the truth. His business was with Breshinsky and, whenever possible, the president himself.

Q: This would be Carter?

GREENE: This was Carter, who had come into office questioning Kissinger's idea of this close relationship, but it was just a few months before he began to swing over to more or less the same pattern that we had been following. In fact, in '78, no, no, '77 Carter invited the Shah for a state visit to Washington. This was the way things had been for ten years.

Q: While you were on the desk was there disquiet about the American Iranian relationship and its future at all?

GREENE: There were always people who said what are we having such a close relationship with this dictator, that sort of thing, but in official circles I don't know of any. There were Iranian students where in town who did not like the Shah. I know when the Shah came for his state visit and we had the usual ceremony from the grounds to the White House there was tear gas fired from outside the fence by some student demonstrators. These were people with connections to what was beginning to develop in Iran.

Q: Back now to...

GREENE: Back to Iran. Back to Tehran. I was just beginning to get into my duties and they seemed interesting. I had had quite a bit of experience with military affairs, and then everything began to slow down and increasingly the embassy was focused on these demonstrations in the street. It's an ancient custom in Islam that when someone is killed, 40 days after that event there would be some sort of commemoration. So, when someone was killed in October, there was a march in the streets, 40 days later some more people were killed and 40 days after that there was an even bigger demonstration. Increasingly what we would call warrant officers in the military, people in between noncoms and officers, who did a lot of technical work and had been trained by us to run the machinery that we sold the Iranians, began to join some of this. Their lower middle class status was frustrating. About November in the very large American community in Iran, particularly in Tehran, word began to spread and some private citizen said that maybe we should go somewhere else for a while. I'll never forget one of the more prominent businessmen I saw shortly before he left, he said, "Gee what a shame, so many business opportunities here." We began to cut back a bit on the size of the embassy, not very much into early December. By early December we were sending a lot of dependents home. My wife had not even arrived. I had this 14-year-old son with me and he left with a bunch of high school students on a plane and went home. I had been planning not only for my wife to come by Christmas when she finished her degree here at George Mason, but also our daughter, who was in college, to spend Christmas holidays with us. My wife and everybody else decided she better not come. My daughter said she was coming, so she came and was practically the only dependent in the embassy. They roped her into working two weeks in the consular section because they needed help. She thought it was quite an adventure. During all this time my job was, I was about to say the bottom fell out, but that's not quite true, but there was less and less to do with the political military affairs. More and more the embassy was concentrating on what was going on in the streets. I don't know the details of Sullivan's argument with Washington, but General Hiser who was a four star general in Frankfurt, commander of European forces out of Germany, was sent to join Sullivan and move into the ambassador's residence with him and the two of them together would handle personally much of what was going on. I remember once I was with the ambassador for something or other and I said, "You know, I really don't know what's going on. If you want to use me in anyway, you should bring me in." I thought it was very forward of me, but he said, "Yes, that's right." So, that evening he invited me over to the residence with General Hiser and I heard their evening conversation, telephone conversation with Washington and became a little more aware of what

they were doing. I was never really used a lot. Charlie was involved almost 101% with problems of the American community, evacuations of various sorts. The political officer who had been brought in who knew religious people was very busy contacting them. The regular political section was also busy, as was one guy in the economic section following the collapse or near collapse of several Iranian banks. In general the embassy was totally focused on what was going on. By early January, more and more people left, including my daughter. There was shooting going on. There were large fires of old tires that really stink and sometimes those of us who lived in the area north of town, where most Americans lived, couldn't even get downtown to the embassy. Then in late January the Shah left, Khomeini arrived shortly thereafter. We had contacts with Bazargan who was the prime minister, we knew him. Amazingly enough the foreign minister was an American citizen, a dentist from Texas who had decided he wanted to be on that side. So, all these people just in a matter of a few days were moving in. Having not been to the embassy for several days, those of us who lived in the northern suburbs decided that we would go into the embassy in order to catch up on what was going on. The embassy car came up for us and we were working when all of a sudden this crowd of people came over the wall of the embassy, and this was sort of a dry run for what happened later. The so-called students had guns and they started running around the compound, shot up the reception area of the ambassador's residence, went into the embassy restaurant, killed two Iranians there. I was with the ambassador when a marine out on the compound called on the walkie-talkie and said, "Sir we are surrounded. Should we shoot or what?" He said, "Put your guns down." I always remember the reply from the marine, he said, "Ay, ay, sir" and he did. But there was a lot of tear gas around. Those of us who were in the building went into the code room. All these years, I had never been into a code room. It was interesting. The code clerks had this heavy sledgehammers with which they were breaking up all their equipment. Hundreds of thousands of dollars I'm sure. The political counselor was on the phone trying to contact the foreign minister to come to do something. Finally the students broke into the steel door and we were herded into the ambassador's secretary's office and all were told to lie down flat on the floor face down. A number of women started crying. It was pretty sad. By then the building was filled with tear gas. So, we were all eventually taken out. While we were standing around huddled in the parking lot along came the foreign minister and some Ayatollahs or some such people and told the students to leave us alone. They all left, amazingly enough. The embassy grounds were pock marked with shots and empty tear gas canisters and quite a bit of damage. I'll never forget, about dusk, this all took about eight hours, this was February 14th, the same day that Spike Dubs was murdered in Kabul. About dusk the British ambassador came walking in, walked across the grounds and said, "Where is your ambassador?" We told him where he was and apparently offered the facilities of their communications system to us, which we used for some time, some days. I had ordered some printed invitations, you know the usual Foreign Service things, and the guy who was my contact with the printers said, "Well, what about this? We placed this order; you got to pay for it." I said, "I don't know if I really need them right now." But, I paid something and we eventually got an embassy car that took us home. Charlie called me that night and we had a little conversation, of course I didn't make the decision, but somebody decided that we better get almost everybody out and so we did. With the exception of the ambassador and DCM and their secretaries and code clerks and three political officers and a few other people like that, security officer and marines. Everybody was told to go. Pan American, which still existed then, was going to come and get us, plus some civilians who were still around. The story was, and I think it's true, that Pan Am stewardesses refused to come

in. They said they didn't want to fly into Tehran. So, the planes came in without anybody except the pilot and the co-pilot and somebody else. All of us who were leaving moved down to the embassy compound for the last day and night and took off with a brown bag sandwich or two for the next day. That was the end of my Tehran experience.

Q: Were you getting on the political military side and we had all sorts of military attaches and all, were they angled to take a pretty good temperature of where the military was going? Was it seen that the military was no longer much of an instrument?

GREENE: At the senior levels yes, I think it was increasingly so. About this time the then Deputy Secretary of Defense, this was probably in December, came on a long scheduled visit to Iran. Why in the world he would want to come then was beyond me, but he called on all these senior people, senior generals and admirals and he sensed that there was a great division between them and everybody else below them. I think a lot of these most senior people in the military were again beginning to think about their own skins.

Q: Well, then, I mean you being the political military officer, were we concerned with all this hardware that the Shah had accumulated or was most of it sort of on its way?

GREENE: The decision on what to do about that was taken to Washington namely that we would stop the flow immediately. Probably there was some on the way, but much of the big orders, including the infamous AWACS, had not arrived. This has been one of the points of dispute even up to today, trying to settle the claims back and forth of who owes what to whom. There are still court cases going on. Getting out this enormous American community was very well done. Sullivan left in May and Charlie was in charge into the summer, but really didn't want to stay himself. His wife wasn't well; there were troubles of various sorts. So, he was eventually replaced and we had no ambassador at this time when we still had pretty good contacts with the new government. It was Washington's thinking, and Henry Precht pushed this very hard, that it was time to start restaffing the embassy some. This was August of '79. So, some of the people who were eventually caught in November as the hostages for those famous 444 days had recently arrived. Some had only been there two or three weeks as we had just began to restaff the embassy. I was fortunately not there.

Q: When you left, did you see this as a situation that could be remedied or did you see that?

GREENE: What situation?

Q: In Iran was, I mean from our point of view?

GREENE: Not really. I saw that we had that following this ten or twelve years of supposed reliance on Iran had clearly been a mistake. When I got back to Washington I of course had no assignment and people didn't quite know what to do with all of us who arrived. I spent several weeks writing a paper on the whole military sales program to Iran and how it had actually been handled: Namely stamped, approved and done, as opposed to the following law. It was pretty widely circulated. I think it was appreciated.

Q: Was there any concern that our policy of avoiding doing what we were supposed to under the law meant that those of you who are involved are doing something illegal?

GREENE: No, I don't believe so, I was never aware of it. The various correct pieces of paper were signed and this guy Robinson knew what was going on, but in theory it was his office which was supposed to turn the necessary bureaucratic wheels for any sort of foreign military purchase. In the case of Iran it was just done.

Q: Well, you came back in '79?

GREENE: March of '79. As I said, nobody knew what to do with us. We were quite a number of FSOs arriving without assignment and I spent a little time helping Henry Precht on the desk. I wrote that paper and I took a little vacation and then someone I knew in INR said, "Well, there's this guy who is leaving, the head of this South Asian section of the NEA division of INR." I said, "Well, that includes Iran. I certainly know about Iran, but I don't know much about India and Pakistan, Bangladesh or whatever." I said, "Sure, I'll consider the job. I really want a job, but I don't know if that's what I want." I was interviewed for the job and it was offered and it turned out to be, along with my political officer job in Ankara, one of the two best jobs I ever had in the Foreign Service. The director of the NEA part of INR [Intelligence and Research] was George Harris, who was a former CIA person who'd come into the State Department on sort of a lateral transfer, a very bright guy, who did not like running an office, did not like the daily grind. He liked very much to go out and brief people. He'd travel a lot and would brief Egyptian officials, and Israeli officials and things like that. So, very quickly I was running the NEA office, even though there was officially no deputy director's job there. Before long George and Phil Stoddard who was the next up the line arranged for there to be a deputy director's position in this office and I became it. It was sort of a Mr. Inside and Mr. Outside thing in that I really ran the office for three years. It was great fun.

Q: This was '79 to when?

GREENE: '79 to almost '82.

Q: '82.

GREENE: I have a strong background in Iran. Turkey by that time was in EUR, so we were not bothered with Turkey particularly. We had about 20 or 25 people in the staff and put out a daily highly classified briefing for the secretary and for the White House and we of course, maintained contact with other intelligence agencies all around town, got involved with a lot of the CIA studies on that part of the world. George could have run it, but he didn't really want to and I thank him forever for letting me do it.

Q: Well, I mean, you got a couple of things that were going in that area. One was the whole

hostage crisis and all that and then you had what happened in Islamabad and all and then you had Afghanistan.

GREENE: That's right. The hostage business. Our daily brief piece of paper that we put together from INR for the secretary, famous or infamous for saying, "You guys really don't know what you're doing to try to get these hostages out." We kept explaining to the secretary the complications of the situation there and that the high level things that they were trying really weren't going to work. A lot of people toward the end would say, "You know, INR really should shut up." But, we were right all the time, we were absolutely right. I had a lot to do with that.

Q: Well, what was the issue more or less?

GREENE: The issue was whether the means being used by the White House to try to break loose the 50 or so hostages were going to get anywhere. I personally did not have any plan of action; all I knew was what they were doing wasn't getting them anywhere. I was going to say something about Afghanistan, but let me go back to Iran a minute. The Iran desk officer for INR had a Ph.D. in Iranian studies. I had a lot of knowledge and we thought we knew what we were talking about. Phil Stoddard up the line seemed to agree with us and I know that when Carter approved the idea of trying to rescue the hostages, send in this group of troops with helicopters, I knew from my job in Iran that my files sitting there, probably shredded by then, contained at least one whole file on the problems of this particular kind of helicopter in sandstorms. That sand got into helicopters very easily. There's lots of sand in Iran and that was a risk and that was precisely what happened, if you remember.

Q: Oh, yes.

GREENE: Why in the world people didn't, I did not know. Phil Gast, who I had followed to two assignments was by then a three star general and he was, I think, the director back here in Washington the rescue attempt. We used to see CIA a lot and we generally agreed.

ROBERT A. MARTIN
Political/Military Consulor
Tehran (1976-1978)

Iran Working Group
Washington, DC (1978-1982)

Robert A. Martin was born in 1931 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received a bachelor's degree in international relations from Yale University in 1954. He then entered the U.S. Army. Upon completion of his military service in 1956, Mr. Martin entered law school at the University of Pennsylvania. His Foreign Service career included positions in Washington D.C., Belgium, Vietnam, Iran, and Germany. Mr. Martin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September

8, 1994.

Q: Then what did you do, we are talking about mid 1976?

MARTIN: I was preparing, as was my wife, to go off to Iran. I to become the political military counselor and Joanna to be in the political section. We did leave Washington to do that in August, 1976 and I can remember vividly arriving in (Inaudible) airport in Tehran after a number of delays, having gone through London, and arriving about midnight local time to be joyfully met by the person I was to replace, Henry Precht, who had been the Pol/Mil counselor there for a number of years and was very happy to be leaving.

Q: What was the political situation like as you saw it and from what you were getting from the desk and other places as you and your wife were going out there? We are talking about when you arrived.

MARTIN: Certainly in all the reading-in that I had done prior to our departure, I had no sense of what would happen, the beginnings of which were underway prior to our departure two years later in August, 1978. I had no sense of that at all. I was going to be involved essentially with the foreign military sales program which was the center piece on the pol/mil side of our relationship with Iran. It was huge. Over the years of the seventies, prior to the Iranian revolution and the return of Khomeini, it had involved many, many billions of dollars of purchases of military equipment and support by the government of the Shah. It really was the center piece of our relationship in all important respects. The amount of money alone made it that without any question. When we arrived, Richard Helms, the former director of the CIA, was the ambassador and he was there in that position until essentially the end of 1976. We arrived on a Friday evening and Saturday being a work day in Iran, I was greeted the next morning by Henry Precht to took me out and began me on my rounds meeting on the American side the military heads of the Army, Navy and Air Force sections of the Military Advisory Assistance Group. I had already met in Washington the head of that group who was a two star Air Force general, but the others I had not met.

The activity was very intense, but as I say there was no sense that I perceived, nor my wife, of what was coming only a few short years later. She had a very interesting time there, and this really is indicative of the fact that what was coming, although it was almost certainly below the surface to some degree, was not readily apparent, because one of the things that she had to follow was the status of women in Iran. The Iranians had really done some remarkable things in that regard in having someone as alive and vital and interested in all that as the empress, was tremendously helpful. Over recent years it had been possible for women in Iran to go abroad for education, and many of them had done that. And there were some tremendously well educated women who were making their way not only in the private sector but also very definitely in the public sector, in the government, itself. It was one of the great tragedies and great sadnesses of the Khomeini revolution that it just chucked all that away. Certainly the women in Iran have suffered probably more than the men because of that.

Q: During the time you went out there I remember there was in the press, but also in the Foreign

Service, quite a bit of disquiet or unease about what the hell were we dumping all these arms and things like that on the Shah? The feeling was that this was being over done. What were you getting and what were you feeling about this as you looked at this initially?

MARTIN: In general terms, after the fact, after we had left in August, 1978, in discussing the situation in Iran and what had been going on under the Shah and what the reaction had been, I was prepared and did vigorously put forward the case...certainly I couldn't speak for all the Iranian people, but it was clear to me, and I had gone around the country to a considerable degree because I went to virtually every military facility and location in Iran, and in the process I got to see a large amount of the country. I must say that I was very impressed that with the military buildup and the huge expenditure of money on weapons and systems and support for them, at the same time there was a very, very large expenditure of money tied in with this in building roads and schools and facilities to support better health for the people and trying to make the lives of the general populous better, more comfortable, whether they wanted to be drawn toward the 20th century or not. And there was an awful lot of support for this. There was, as you can appreciate, a great deal of lack of understanding, misunderstanding about much of this. But generally it was having a very good impact on Iran as a country. The infrastructure was being built up, facilities and things to support the population were ongoing and making good progress.

At the same time, sure, there were a lot of people making a lot of money and there clearly was corruption on a very large scale, I guess one would have to say. But I still say one could make the case that what was entrained was going to be greatly helpful to Iran and the Iranian people. That being said, all of this got started when the Shah's father, who had been a sergeant and had worked his way up, took a lot of land from the Mullahs years before and the Mullahs had been biding their time waiting to get theirs back and Khomeini represented this. The cassette power...

Q: We are talking about sending sermons on radio cassettes and surreptitiously brought in through Iraq.

MARTIN: One might argue that the great mistake of the Shah and his regime was sending Khomeini out of the country. If he had stayed in the country he would have been far less significant as a political power. But he went out and word came back through cassettes and other means and the Mullahs were able to feed on the unrest that was certainly there and build on it and the Shah ultimately got overthrown. I thought that one could make a very objective case that what was ongoing with all its imperfections was useful in terms of bringing the country and the people towards, at least, the 20th century.

Q: One of the concerns that I heard was that there were far too many Americans there. These were not sophisticated diplomats, they were helicopter mechanics, etc. who would ride around on their motorcycles, etc. There were just too many and it helped fracture the society. Was there concern at that time, or was that something that was felt later on?

MARTIN: There was concern about that. It would have been clearly better had the Iranians been able to do everything on their own, but that certainly was not the case. You mention the sorts of Americans that were probably most evident as part of the huge Bell helicopter program that was

ongoing. These people in the numbers involved would not have been available had we still been in Vietnam. Many of them were what I came to call, and I heard this from somebody else, "bamboo bums," who when Vietnam and Cambodia collapsed were looking around for the next possibility and it turned out to be Iran starting in 1973 after the oil shock. It is now quite clear that one of our tactics was to make up for the money pinch that we felt as a result of the rise in prices by selling the equipment, weapons and support to principally Iran and others in that area. When that was successfully done, it required large numbers of support personnel to come in and in terms of the Bell helicopter program particularly, they were not a very savory bunch. Most of them had come from Vietnam. Many of the ones in Tehran, for example, and in many other parts of Iran, working on different programs were much less of a problem in the ways you were outlining a minute or so ago. But I guess it was just a function of the large numbers that were involved in the Bell program, essentially principally concentrated in one area, that led to an exacerbation of the sorts of problems that you were suggesting. But it was to some degree true with all the programs, and we were aware of it. There were efforts to try and shape the situation up through the companies in frank discussions with the company management, both at the top in terms of headquarters that would come to visit for various reasons, and the people who were running the programs in country.

On the Iranian side, there were a lot of qualified people who picked up what was needed very quickly. Some, just like in any group of people, the example I gave related principally to the Iranians who were trained to operate the F-14.

Q: Those are the top of the line fighters.

MARTIN: They are terribly, terribly difficult to operate. They have two crew, a pilot and a weapons person. Many Iranians went off to be trained in the United States in that system. They came back and in terms of American Air Force personnel who were in country who I talked to, they were amazed at the ability that some of the Iranians, probably 20 percent, had in just being able almost intuitively to work the system, pick it up and do it exceptionally well, better than many Americans. But the top 20 percent was not all of them and they had some problems and they needed support. The F-14 is a very tough system to operate and takes a lot of support.

As well as large weapon systems such as the F-14, there was also programs in terms of logistics and in terms of supply management, all of which were training cadres of Iranians to do these things. And again, many of them were very adept at it picking it up very quickly, but it continued to require some number of Americans in terms of the training and in trying to pass along the acknowledge that would enable the Iranians to take over. But it was going to be a long process and had not ended by the time we left in August, 1978 and not too long after that the whole thing collapsed.

Q: What was your impression of the top Iranian military brass?

MARTIN: Very competent. The head of the Air Force, General Rabie, who subsequently was shot, was an extremely competent man. His top people were the same. The Army people that I met I was less impressed with. The Navy people, again at the top, were excellent. They were the

ones that I was dealing with. The commanders-in-chief of all the Iranian services, the equivalent of our JCS, that was the level of the Iranian that I was dealing with. My principal contact was General Tufarnian [ph], who happened to be an Air Force officer but was in charge on behalf of the Shah of all the procurement of both the weapons, the supporting systems, the logistics and the supply, etc. He was in charge of all that. He was my principal contact, but I regularly saw the Air Force people and the Navy and Army.

I must say, even with the advent of the election in 1976 and President Carter coming in, and the new laws relating to foreign military assistance and sales, the effort to clean up that act and put some bounds on it so that it just wasn't an American export effort that would have made some sense in larger terms relating to arms supply and possible over buildup of arms around the world that could lead to conflicts of one sort or another...after that legislation was enacted, we scrupulously adhered to its provisions and I continued to be amazed at the ease, indeed, with which a proposal could meet all the legislative provisions and still push a project forward. Although you had to get the ambassador and the political side of the House on board and take into account all sorts of considerations as to what this impact might have in terms of regional situations, arms levels, etc., it was always possible to craft your package in a way to meet all those provisions and be supportable. I must say, this was mainly on the Air Force side because they were the big dollar programs...the F-16 program, the AWACS program. I never ceased to be impressed with the head of the Air Force section of the MAAG because he was very, very adroit, very good, in terms of new programs or ongoing projects. He would always be in touch with me. He would always before the fact have the presentation of the Air Force side of the MAAG done up and ready to go. He would come over to the embassy and put on a dog and pony show briefing me individually before we got into discussions with the Iranians and putting together the package that would meet all the requirements of law, but also make it possible to push the particular program along. He was really good at that. Unfortunately, he has become more renowned in recent times because it was Dick Secord.

Q: Who was involved in Irangate--Iran-Contra arms deal.

MARTIN: He was a very able guy.

Q: All this stuff was going into the Iranian military. What was the purpose, what were we thinking? Were we concerned about the Soviet Union, Iraq, the Shah being too aggressive and trying to move elsewhere in the Persian Gulf area?

MARTIN: As I mentioned earlier, certainly part of it was a counter to the oil shock of 1973 in dollars and cents terms.

Q: What you are saying is they would be taking Iranian oil dollars and buying US things with them.

MARTIN: Right. Another result of the way things were evolving was that for general military purposes we did not have as much resource available and we were looking for "islands of stability" to quote President Carter in some comments he made in his over the end of the year day

and a half visit to Iran arriving December 31, 1977 and leaving in January 1, 1978. We were clearly looking for allies we could rely on in various parts of the world and in this particular part of the world, Iran was to be such an ally to us. If it were armed to the leading edge with sufficient equipment and trained personnel to take on various tasks that otherwise would probably have been left to us, that was viewed as a plus. So the idea of having Iran, in military terms, with its socks up was good. As I say, at the same time, it seemed to me that part of the impact on the Iranian side was new roads, new schools, new health potential for the people and bringing them along in a variety of ways irrespective of the military buildup would have been a good thing, but would not have happened without it because much of that infrastructure was done to support aspects of the military, but it had a very positive, more general aspect to it as well.

Q: Richard Helms was the ambassador when you arrived?

MARTIN: Yes. We arrived in the third week in August and Ambassador Helms and his wife left between Christmas and New Years in 1976. One point I might make about Dick Helms, who I really got to know and admire and respect very greatly. A week after we arrived on Saturday morning, the last day of August or so in 1976, one of the contractors that was supporting one of the programs on the military side, Rockwell International, three Rockwell employees were being driven to work and were assassinated. That certainly made clear that there was some considerable potential that had serious consequences in terms of the American involvement on the military side in Iran. Unhappily, this car full of Rockwell employees went at the same time, the same route, the same everything, day after day after day and it was easy to set them up. Sunday morning at staff meeting, since our weeks began Sunday, he made the comment that it was a tragic situation and something certainly to aim to avoid in the future. But he also made a comment that I will never forget, "You know, even if they varied their route, even if they had done this, that or another, if somebody wants to get you they get you. There is no way you hide. You just can't do it unless you divorce yourself from the world." I found that very interesting to contemplate at a later time.

Then, for six months in the early part of 1977, there was not a new ambassador, Jack Miklos, who had been Dick Helms' DCM, was Chargé. In the spring, Bill Sullivan was named to replace Ambassador Helms and Ambassador Sullivan arrived in late May or early June, 1977. An interesting aspect of that was the pol/mil aspect of embassy business was still (inaudible), so I would be working very closely with the ambassador and I happily had known him in the past for some years. It turned out that there was one other person in our large American family who worked with Ambassador Sullivan before, and that was Dick Secord. The night they arrived at the VIP welcome area at (Inaudible) airport, Secord and I were there, with many others, and it was nice to see Bill Sullivan again. Dick Secord had worked with him in Laos when Secord was a major and involved in some of the activity that was taking place from Laos into Vietnam.

Q: First, let's talk about Helms. One of the stories that comes out, under Kissinger/Nixon, that the political section felt under constraints not to report the dark side of the corruption, the work of the secret police. It was supposed to be positive reporting. Did you feel any constraints while you were there?

MARTIN: I certainly didn't feel any constraints of that sort, but my job really had nothing to do with that. I was so busy in terms of the huge number of programs that were ongoing which for the entire two years I was there were the main attraction for visitation to Iran. The number of congressional delegations and congressional staff people that came out during the two years was just immense. So I was control officer for some visitation almost the entire two years I was there. It wasn't every day, but far and away larger control officer duties on my part than any other dozen people in the embassy. It just continued with regularly the whole time. Not only the House Foreign Affairs Committee but Armed Services and the Senate the same thing, staffers of one stripe or another coming to look at one thing or another.

Q: Were you picking up information about problems with corruption or Savak, or anything like that?

MARTIN: I certainly didn't have any since about what Savak was about. I had a good relationship with the CIA station chief and his deputy, who was an old pal of mine, and knew a number of people on that side of things, but I didn't have the time and they obviously to the degree that they may have been involved or known about various things that you are suggesting, weren't going to share them with me or anyone else. So I didn't have any sense of that.

With respect to corruption, it was clear that there was some corruption, but I couldn't put my finger on it as to specific details or how it may have been carried out. As I mentioned earlier, there certainly was some people who were profiting very greatly from the strides forward that Iran was making under the Shah. The money was there to be spent. Tehran, not too many years before we arrived, had been a pretty sleepy town. The pace of life was not very rapid. During the time that we were there it was in a constant state of building frenzy. I used to say, it didn't happen quite this way, that you could almost drive down the street and look to the left and look to the right and on both sides you would see buildings start popping up out of the ground. Roads were being built out from Tehran leading to new building complexes of one sort or another, whether they be great houses for this new wealthy class or business construction. In fact, Tehran wasn't a very attractive place in that respect because there was so much dust and dirt, so much building going on. It was claimed that if you wanted to see Iran, you had to leave Tehran and go to other Iranian cities.

Q: Did you get involved in the Carter visit? Was the visit to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the Peacock throne?

MARTIN: The 2000th anniversary that you mention had occurred sometime before so Carter's visit was not the center piece of that, but it could be looked at as a part of it. But it was principally on our side, the idea of the President coming and spending a day and a half there and in the process King Hussein of Jordan flew his own plane to Tehran in order to have a visit with Carter in the area. Carter wasn't able to travel around to every place that might have been useful and Iran was a center piece. As I said earlier, one of the things that Carter said in his remarks at the airport was noting that Iran was a "sea of stability in an ocean of discontent and uncertainty." Of course, all that came crashing down around Carter's ears less than a year later. He was reminded of that frequently. But that was the general underpinning of it. There was so much

going on in terms of these military assistance programs, etc. and boosting Iran as a great friend in this part of the world. So, the Carters came and it was a grand visit. King Hussein flew his own plane and brought our ambassador there, Tom Pickering, who was an old friend and stayed with us over the weekend. It really was a fantastic occasion. I wasn't involved other than having to be at the airport with embassy staff for the meet and greet upon arrival and departure the next day. The talks and all the rest of it involved Ambassador Sullivan and the DCM, and President Carter and his party on our side principally. There were discussions not only with the Shah and his key government officials, but also King Hussein. There were some others, but I can't remember who they were.

The degree of security along the roads between downtown Tehran and the airport and around town was quite considerable and very noticeable and quite impressive.

Q: Did you notice any difference in the view of Helms, which you would pick up in staff meetings towards the situation and the Shah, and that of Sullivan?

MARTIN: I didn't notice anything precisely. I must say, Dick Helms coming from the background he came from was pretty close to the chest in his modus operandi. Indeed, I was getting my feet wet during the early months I was there, and he was essentially winding down. The degree of ambassadorial involvement in the programs just was not required or called for during the Helms period, as it became during the Sullivan period, for a variety of reasons. There were some programs in discussion and getting started and difficulties that emerged over time and Sullivan was around before and had a background that fit in much more to the pol/mil side of things than Helms. Henry Precht, my predecessor, had much involvement with Helms during his time when problems arose, but during the five months that I was there before Ambassador Helms departed, there weren't any problems. I was getting into things and hadn't developed the degree of involvement with the Iranian military that quickly grew as 1977 came upon us. The various intensity of several potential programs heated up with discussions and negotiations and visitations about them. So there was a lot more going on as we moved into 1977 that hadn't been the case that Helms was there. I mentioned the AWACS earlier...

Q: AWACS is Airborne Warning Control System.

MARTIN: We were very interested in having Iranians buy into that program. We had it, of course. NATO got involved with its own AWACS element. But in terms of dollars and cents it would have been very useful to get yet another buyer and the Iranians fit into that very nicely, so there was huge interests on our side. They had great interest in it too because it would enhance their capabilities and Iran is a very large country with demons all around in various guises historically.

So that was a big program, and there was the continuation of the F-14 program, getting the Iranians better into that. The Bell helicopter program which was mainly located in Isfahan that I mentioned earlier. There was a huge logistics program centered in Tehran and going out around the country that Lockheed was involved in. A big Navy program was coming along. And that sort of thing led to a much greater involvement on the part of Ambassador Sullivan than had been the

case with Ambassador Helms.

Q: You left there when?

MARTIN: We left, as we had arrived, the third week in August, 1978.

Q: What was the situation by that time? Had there been a change?

MARTIN: It was beginning to change. The initial problem was very starkly evident in Isfahan in the early days of July when there had been some unrest apparent. But there was little evidence in quite so stark terms up to the point when we left. We went back from Tehran through Brussels because my wife was going to take up a job in the European Bureau working in the NATO office and we were to spend several days there so she could meet some people and get some sense of the programs that she would be involved in at the NATO end of the line. We left on a Friday, on Saturday morning, the big headline in the International Herald Tribune was about a tragic fire in Abadan where a bunch of fanatics, crazies, I guess, had sealed the doors and then torched a motion picture theater and the people inside were fried. So that was yet another stark evidence that things were beginning to unravel to some degree. That intensified as we got past Labor Day and into September, and indeed, by the middle of the month there were manifestations in Tehran, itself, in the south part of the city involving some of the military on the Iranian side who in the face of some unrest on the part of the civilians...some tried to bring things under control while others were not prepared to deal harshly with their Iranian colleagues. That was not a very good sign from the standpoint of the Shah. There had been much thinking that if the Iranian military had stood firm, the Shah could have got the situation under control. But, of course, he, by that point was very, very sick. This had been ongoing for some time but not apparent, at least to me nor to many people on our side. We know now that CIA and the embassy didn't have much sense of what was coming in the stark terms that we eventually got to. Certainly reports were going in about problems, but not the degree that would have given a sharp indication of what was to come.

Q: What did you come back to?

MARTIN: I came back and initially, because by the time we finished home leave things really were unraveling in Iran, I spent the next three or four months working in the Operations Center in the Department as head of what became known as the Iran Working Group. Henry Precht, my predecessor, was the Iran Country director and he was busy as could be dealing with the day to day problems on the desk and dealing with Congress and dealing with everyone in a sort of public way. We needed a working group, and there was one going by the time I got back, but based on my experience I was asked if I wouldn't sort of take over the Operations Center part of it. Since I did not have at that point a regular job, I was able to work odd hours and help out in a variety of ways that were indeed very useful.

One of the things that we had was an open telephone line between the Operations Center and the embassy in Tehran almost 24 hours a day, and were able to keep track of things. You will recall that, I guess it was in late September, there was some problem at the embassy in terms of the

initial takeover for a very brief period, several hours. That was worked out and the takeovers left the compound and things were brought under control. Subsequently, of course, in November, the compound was overrun and the hostages were taken.

Q: November of 1979?

MARTIN: Yes. So the initial embassy takeover must have been in early 1979 and not in September, 1978 as I had suggested. And, indeed, by the time the hostages were taken in November, 1979, Ambassador Sullivan had left during the summer, and his replacement to be had not arrived. So we had a Chargé there. The DCM had left and the incoming DCM was Bruce Laingen, the former consul general in Shiraz. Vic Tomseth had moved up to become the political counselor. One of their colleagues was with Laingen and Tomseth at the Foreign Ministry when the embassy was invaded by the mobs and taken over in early November, 1979. Laingen and Tomseth and the third chap spent the hostage period at the Foreign Ministry.

Q: In 1979 you moved away from the working group which grew and grew and grew.

MARTIN: In February, 1979 I took over the political/military office in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research which at that time involved the general purpose forces and the conventional military side, but did not get into the nuclear and strategic side. That was another office in INR. Later, in 1979, the director of that other office left to return to the Central Intelligence Agency and on his departure it was decided that they would combine that office with the conventional forces office, and I was the director of the whole thing. This made a lot of sense because it meant that all the political/military subjects were handled by one office and we could support the entire Political Military Bureau more effectively than having a couple of offices, at least that was the idea. And it worked out very well. Of course, it was a lot more fun having the additional issues.

Q: What were the prime areas that you were working on?

MARTIN: The Iranian situation was obviously an issue to be tracked very closely. The Soviet incursion into Afghanistan took much of our time. The various strategic and nuclear issues related to the ongoing negotiations at that time. Further episodes in the SALT negotiations leading to SALT II, following the agreements that had been reached from the initial talks in the summer of 1972. By 1979 the talks had turned to what was called START, the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, as well as support for the various consultative commissions that were part of each of the agreements that had been struck from the standpoint of discussions with the Soviets about how the agreements were being implemented and efforts to achieve more effective, efficient verification. We tracked all of that. Clandestine nuclear efforts by several countries were very much of interest to us, a prime example being Pakistan where we had a very good intelligence, we thought, as to what was going on there. It enabled us to deal with the Paks in rather candid, frank terms, but the Afghan invasion by the Soviets changed that equation because it turned out that higher priority for us was the ability to use Pakistan as a means of moving equipment and weapons to the Afghan resistance. That took a higher priority than trying to slap the wrists of the Pakistanis over their efforts to acquire a nuclear capability. So the political equation changed, not what we did, but the ability to use some of the intelligence we had

effectively.

Q: Were we getting good intelligence on the Israeli developments in nuclear things? We haven't dealt with the Israelis the way we did with Pakistan and South Africa.

MARTIN: In the nuclear area, including Israel, Pakistan and South Africa, the packaged product reflecting all the various bits and pieces that came to our attention was, as you suggest, never so packaged so starkly and clearly as might have been possible. There was always a lot of hedging involved because you couldn't be categorically sure, but it was clear that progress was being made by the three that you mentioned, as well as some others.

But it was an interesting time to be involved in that set of issues from the perspective of the intelligence side of things, and I was really hugely well served by some supremely competent, capable people who had lots and lots of experience across the board in all the political/military issues. Indeed, a number of them gained great renown as briefers and would brief the Secretary and all the Department notables. Occasionally they would brief foreigners as well if it seemed necessary. Of course, there was some sanitization of the content, but we were able to put on some very impressive dog and pony shows in terms of what we knew as to what was going on and how we could predict possible future courses, particularly relating to conventional activity.

Q: In the period you were there, 1978-82, there were two conflicts, both practically on top of each other, that were going on of particular interest. One was the situation with the Soviets trying to put down the Afghani resistance. Was there a change in how you viewed the situation in Afghanistan from the time you arrived and the time you left?

MARTIN: Well, it was obviously of considerable concern to us as to what the real Soviet intentions would be. There didn't seem to be much to be gained in going into Afghanistan even if you take over Afghanistan without proceeding further. What the further would be was not a very happy prospect from our perspective. It did not occur immediately, but it seems to me it wasn't too awful long before you began to hear comments about the Soviets' Vietnam. Mired down and horrible problems and the reaction back in the Soviet Union as to casualties, which were not well known and frequently not known at all by the families and friends for long, long periods. The Soviets withheld that information. The use of minorities in Afghanistan, perhaps as cannon fodder, for example, was something that was not too well known, or certainly wasn't aired back in their home areas. But over time the idea of Afghanistan being a real threat began, it seemed to me, to recede and the idea of the Soviets having got into a real quagmire began to grow. Certainly the effectiveness of the resistance, as we were able to move weapons and equipment in to support them, grew markedly over time. It took some while for that to occur but when it did, it was really very quick and got the Soviets' attention.

As we found out later, there were certainly many on the Soviet military side who didn't want to go in in the first place and would have preferred to get out much earlier had they been able to, but it didn't happen that way. So Afghanistan as a problem other than a drain on the Soviets and complicating our relations with Pakistan in terms of the proliferation issue as opposed to keeping them happy and hence a ready conduit for equipment and supplies to the resistance on the other

side, it didn't appear to be a great potential threat beyond Afghanistan.

Q: The other conflict was right next door and that was Iraq's attack on Iran. What were our concerns on that and how did we look at it during the time you were in INR?

MARTIN: Our posture in general terms certainly was to try and hope that the conflict Iran-Iraq would ameliorate the impact of Khomeini and the revolution that led to the American hostages and our departure from Iran. So, what the United States was doing was to try to insure that at worst it was an even contest between Iraq and Iran and probably we saw some benefit in pumping up the Iraqis in various ways so that they would be able to beat up on the Iranians effectively. In hindsight we now know that we were doing much more than was well known to support Iraq in a variety of ways including provision of intelligence information to help them. We may have come to regret this now, but at that point decisions had to be made and they were made in the direction of trying to assist Iraq to make it at least an even fight and perhaps tilt it in the direction of Iraq being able to pound Iran to ameliorate the situation and lessen the effectiveness of Khomeini and the revolution.

Q: What was your impression of the information you were getting from the CIA?

MARTIN: On Iran and Iraq?

Q: Well, really all over and including intelligence from the military as well as the CIA.

MARTIN: To digress slightly, the United States has so many channels and has mounted so many efforts to gather information and has been so successful in that that there is just a huge, huge, huge amount of various sorts of information, both photographic, and electronic communications, well above and beyond the human intelligence, of which there is a huge amount as well. But it is very difficult really to gather all that in and get on top of it in a way to be able effectively to use it. So that is one aspect of the intelligence side of things.

At the same time there certainly is a proprietary view of the intelligence that the CIA gathers in various ways, or that the National Security Agency, mainly picking up communications, electronic intelligence, gathers. In both cases, some of the most rarefied intelligence would be kept in a very rarefied form to be disseminated to a very rarefied level. But it is hard in most cases to do that effectively for very long because more and more people get to know about possible possibilities and begin putting two and two together and coming up with a sense of what might be available. So you can go back and press to try and test whether there is additional information of various sorts available from these various collection entities, the CIA, the NSA, the Defense Intelligence Agency on the military side...we have come now to admit to the National Reconnaissance Organization which is run both by the CIA and Defense to pick up the photographic intelligence from the skies, the spies in the sky so to speak.

The fact of having critical intelligence that would change something on any given issue is not too frequently the case. It occasionally happens, but generally issues can be addressed very effectively and accurately on run of the mill information that comes from open sources a great

deal of the time, augmented by the rather pedestrian clandestine collection, not the creme a la creme, much of the time. It is not too frequent that a critical piece of intelligence is gotten through some very delicate means is going to be crucial to a policy decision. It happens occasionally, but not very frequently. So this sort of racy stuff that would be very sexy and known by only a very small number of people is probably not too significant in policy formulation terms, although it is interesting or nice to have something that very few people have, or at least that is the sense one has until it becomes rather routine to have access to that sort of thing. But it doesn't make a huge amount of difference. There are occasions when we do get something and we have been pretty good at keeping the wraps on some fairly significant sources of information during my experience. I can't go into that sort of thing here, but it is not too frequent where that is a critical part of the equation in policy formulation terms anyway.

DAVID E. LONG

**Director, Near East and North Africa, Bureau of Intelligence and Research
Washington, DC (1976-1982)**

Mr. Long was born in Georgia and raised in Georgia, Oklahoma and Florida. He was educated at Davidson College, the Fletcher School and the University of North Carolina. Entering the Foreign Service in 1962, Mr. Long studied Arabic and was posted to Khartoum. Subsequent postings were Jeddah and, for further Arabic language studies, Tangier and Beirut. Mr. Long became one of the Departments senior Arab and Middle East experts, serving in INR as Director and on the Policy Planning Staff. He authored several books dealing with Arab and Middle East matters as well as on Terrorism and Counter- Terrorism. His expertise brought him visiting professorship at the University of Pennsylvania and the Coast Guard Academy. Mr. Long was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: So you then went to INR and the Near East dealing with not only the Gulf but also Iran from 1978 to when?

LONG: Well, I was there until I went to the Policy Planning Staff. Well, I went to University of Pennsylvania for a year and taught. I think that was in '82. So up until that period I was in INR first as an analyst for the Gulf, all the Gulf States including Iran, and I took Iran on. It was not really part of my job description, but as I said in the last session, I took that on because we needed somebody and I plotted with the division chief for South Asia. Then I became the division chief for the entire Middle East and North Africa subsequent to that, so I got a promotion in the middle of it.

Q: Let's talk a bit about INR from your perspective. INR plays different roles at different times. How was INR being used in this '80 to '84 period from your perspective in the Near East.

LONG: My perspective is that INR has historically been under used. It was a mixture of full-time civil service people and Foreign Service people. I was a Foreign Service Officer who decided to stay full time because I wanted to teach and write and do things on the side. Because of my background both in the Foreign Service and knowing what the Foreign Service needed or Foreign Service people needed in the Policy Bureau, and also have gotten a degree, having taught, having written, having a different perspective on political analysis than the usual Foreign Service Officer, I felt that there was a way that we could increase our contribution. There were a couple of like-minded people, a couple of whom I helped recruit from the outside as civil servants to come into INR. Basically what we tried to do, rather than to compete with the policy bureaus, Near East Bureau in particular, about crises, when they, or of course everybody, wanted to be on the leading edge of whatever was in crisis. I felt that by the time the crisis started there was no way you could influence it, because people already had their mental images of the nature of the problem and what solutions were best. This was then melded in with what the political leadership wanted to do about that problem, good, bad or indifferent in our professional opinion, and then that was the party line and everybody had to hold to the party line. To try to say, "Hey, guys, I think you're barking up the wrong tree," was futile. So what I did as an analyst and then later on as a division chief, was to try to look ahead and see what kinds of potential problems were on the horizon that nobody was paying attention to, because everybody, as you know, was putting out a fire and were so busy working 24 hours a day putting out today's fire that nobody was looking at tomorrow. I don't mean this in an *ad hominem* way at all. It's just the nature of the work.

We would look at situations and grind out papers, very short papers, that would give a structural framework – I was very big on constructuralization – that people would more or less buy into because there wasn't anything riding on it anyway. It was no threat to them, their careers, their promotion or anything to say such and such looked like it was in bad trouble, whereas if it were in bad trouble, you would already have your concept of what it was and what should be done about it. So by the time, if the time arose, and it didn't all the much, but we were fairly good at, among the thousands of wasted things we did, finding the ones that would be the next crisis, like Iran.

There wasn't much of a crisis going on when I joined up with George Griffith, who was the division chief, but there soon thereafter was. I think we were able to make a tremendous mark, because when a crisis did arise, they were playing in our ballpark even though they were playing the way we would play it. We did this on numerous issues, particularly the issue of the Shah.

I remember in October before the revolution we had a conference and we stacked the deck. It was at all objective. We got scholars who we knew thought the Shah had bit the dust already. George wrote a paper, George Griffith, the division chief, full of gloom and doom, and we made it look like it was an academic paper but the academic didn't want to sign his name to it because, you know, academics don't like their name on anything inside government, so everybody bought that. We never actually said that; we just implied it. I remember that the assistant secretary for Near East, Hal Saunders, a great guy, driven guy, he came down and he was going to put in his perfunctory 10-minute opening-up-the-conference stint and then he was going to go back and do some real work. But he stayed; he stayed for the whole thing. We knocked their socks off. At the end of that conference, we were the only part of the Department of State that said this guy's in

serious trouble and we'd better start looking at what may follow him. And sure, the security types, CIA, those people were already doing – that's their job – but at the policy level we weren't. So that's perhaps a more dramatic example. There were a lot of less dramatic examples.

Q: The information that you were getting from Iran, I gather, was quite tainted, because you were supposed to think right. The CIA was certainly trying to push the Shah is there, he's going to stay in, and we weren't supposed to talk to the opposition. I've talked to Henry Precht, who said he was practically frozen out because he was saying, "You know, this guy might not last." It wasn't they didn't want to hear it; they wouldn't hear it. It was a very unhappy situation at the time.

LONG: This comes back to the nature of analysis and the nature of intelligence as a source of information for your analysis. What I was teaching my guys to do and what I was doing was saying, "Don't take anything at face value, even if your mother tells you." Always say, "Why did the person say that? What was the person's motive? What are the empirical facts here, and what's opinion, and how plausible is it?" – you know, that kind of approach." So sure, the information was tainted, but the tainting was in how it was interpreted, even by the people who reported it, the agents if it were intelligence. We didn't disbelieve it, we didn't believe it, we analyzed it. We wrote analytical papers that the policy people could not find where we were pro or anti any policy – we were just saying, "Bang, bang, bang, here are the facts, here are the views, here is the plausibility..." An example is that in Iran every 40 days after somebody dies there's a memorial event – I'm oversimplifying this thing...

So after the third 40-day uprising, it became pretty clear to us that these were not isolated events. A big, tough thing for analysis, when you're not trying to do the long run 20 years from now that nobody cares about, is when your isolated events constitute a trend. This is not easy to do except being a Monday morning quarterback, but we said, "This may not be but it looks like a trend. If it is, it ain't good, it's bad, it's getting worse, and we might be on the final slippery slope here." We didn't say the Shah was going to go, we didn't say, "Your policy's bad." We just commented on a series of empirically observable facts that suggested that they might not be isolated, that they may actually be a trend and the next 40-day one is going to be even bigger than the last one. That's how we did that. Sure, they didn't like what we were saying, but we were the only group that could get into print. Henry Precht more or less agreed with us, although from where he was sitting on the policy side he was fighting us, because he was paid to. So there were plenty of people that thought that, but no one could get into print. One of the great things about INR in that period was we could get into print. Our boss said, "If you can verify your analysis and make it reasonable and make it convincing and don't take a policy stand on it, we'll print it," and he did. So that was just one case of many where we raised a little cane and where I think we made a minor impact perhaps, but a difference.

THEODORE A. BOYD
Information/Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1977-1979)

Theodore A. Boyd was born on October 9, 1941 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He served in the U.S. Army from 1959 to 1964. Throughout his career he has held positions in countries including the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Iran, Nigeria, Ecuador, Togo, and Cameroon. Mr. Boyd was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 2005.

BOYD: By that time we had two sons — one son was born in the Dominican Republic in '75 and the other was born in '76. In 1977 we were reassigned from La Paz to Tehran.

Q: Were you in Tehran from when to when?

BOYD: Tehran from '77 to early '79. We were there during, we were there for the...

Q: First take over?

BOYD: No we were there for the Shah's departure and then the families were evacuated before Ayatollah Khomeini was due to come in and then all non-essential personnel were evacuated in February '79.

Q: How did you find, I mean going there were you told this was going to be a difficult post?

BOYD: Yes, we were told it was going to be a difficult post. When we went for the security briefing, they said: "If you are assigned to this place this is what you do in the event something happening. If you're assigned to Tehran make sure your insurance is well paid up because they don't take hostages." Then they showed us pictures of bullet ridden cars. Reportedly, once people who were going to Tehran opted out of the assignment once they saw the pictures. At that time conventional "wisdom" was that the Shah had everything under control and the Islamic unrest could be quelled and there was no real need for anybody to learn Farsi because all the really important people spoke major European languages — either French or English or both. That proved to be incorrect.

Q: What was your job there?

BOYD: I started out as Assistant Information Officer and wound up being acting cultural affairs Officer. When we arrived, Tehran had the largest expatriate American community in the world. The Tehran American School had enough students to field four high school football teams. There were about 50,000 people working at various aircraft companies — Hughes, Bell, Sikorsky — to name a few. Then things went downhill.

Q: How did that affect you as the...?

BOYD: I was still relatively junior and when they were saying "Yankee go home" they consider me to be American. There was a moderate sized African diplomatic community there because of Iran's membership in OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries). Côte d'Ivoire,

Ghana, and Nigeria were represented. Most of the time I was seen as someone from West Africa I was not affected.

Q: Where did you live?

BOYD: I can't remember the name of the area but it was...

Q: Were you on an American compound?

BOYD: No we weren't on a compound, it was a duplex. One family lived up. One family lived down. There were separate entrances. we were escorted to work in armored vehicles because there had been a few untoward incidents.

Q: How about your neighbors, did you get any feeling from them?

BOYD: No, I remember seeing the neighbors down the street and my wife was teaching the neighbors English and they were cautiously voicing opinions about what the Shah was and wasn't doing.

Q: During your work did this...were you working with university students at all?

BOYD: There were lots of university students. Most of them were trying to get to the United States so we did a lot of programs on "If You Want to Study in the U.S." At that time Iran had the largest foreign student population in the U.S. because they were trying to train a lot of geologists and petroleum engineers, or at least they were sending them over here to study and if they did — that's another story. These were the privileged people; these were not the fundamentalists or the Mullahs.

Q: Were you getting any reflections of the fundamentalists or the Mullah group and all?

BOYD: Yes because the CIA told us Khomeini had tapes going out and the government was trying to suppress the distribution of the tapes. There was a feeling of unrest and a feeling that perhaps the powers that be were pushing too hard to become Westernized and losing sight of what somebody felt would be the correct path.

Q: Where was your office? Was it in the embassy or outside?

BOYD: No the office was separated from the embassy. Our office was next to the Indian embassy. It was within leisurely walking distance of the embassy. When the unrest came and everybody left it was announced that the CIA station was next to the Indian embassy, so they trashed USIS but luckily we had gotten out. Then again remember information and intelligence overseas at that time were what, considered synonymous.

Q: Yeah, I think if I recall that the first major take over was on February 14?

BOYD: That was the first day...

Q: 19...

BOYD: 1979. We were “going to stay the course”. At the time we were reporting realistically until we got instructions saying that Washington didn’t want to read any bad news. There was a take over February 14th by counter insurgents and then the insurgents retook the Embassy. That’s when we got the instruction: “There will be two Pan Am 747s coming to evacuate you. Be on one of the planes.” I was on the plane that went to Rome. My luggage went to Frankfurt.

Q: And then what happened?

BOYD: I went to Frankfurt, got the luggage and then came to Washington. That was on the President’s Day weekend —the blizzard of ’79. There was a two-foot accumulation of snow.

Q: And then?

BOYD: That ended that chapter. When people asked me “What do you think we should do in Iran?” I said, “Get out.” And then they said, “That kind of opinion will ruffle some feathers.”

Q: What was your experience during this takeover?

BOYD: When I was driving to the Embassy I got stopped by a wild-eyed radical and he pointed a large bore handgun at my nose. Luckily somebody came over and said he’s OK and I got through. That was my experience during the takeover. Families had already been evacuated to safe havens. I drove to the embassy, parked the car, got on the plane and left.

Q: Did you find the embassy before...what was the feeling within the embassy?

BOYD: Again in retrospect somebody missed the call because everybody was being told that “We’ve got this under control, don’t worry.” And then we didn’t have it under control. A major stumbling block was the fact that nobody at the embassy, none of the officers at the embassy spoke Farsi and they were relying on somebody else’s agenda.

Q: Yeah. What about you? Did you find that the student’s regime had turned on you or not?

BOYD: No because the people I was dealing with were looking to get out and I was helping them. Also, I was working with Fulbright professors and when things got really bad we had to get them out. They were grateful when they were able to leave. After the fact, when they got relocated they were less grateful. Once they were safe again they complained about the treatment they had received.

Q: Yeah. So we are talking about...

BOYD: We are talking about ’79. In ’79 we came back here. I went to the Office of African

Affairs in USIA for a while until I got an assignment as Branch Public Affairs Officer in Kano, Nigeria, which was then the country's second largest city. I was the director of the American Cultural Center and the official American presence in northern Nigeria.

LOUIS P. GOELZ
Consul General
Tehran (1977-1979)

Louis P. Goelz was born in Philadelphia on February 25, 1927. After military service he graduated from La Salle College and Georgetown University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1955. He served in Lima, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo Belen Para, Mexico City, Nuevo Laredo, Tehran, and Seoul. He also served at INR, and the Visa Office and was assigned to the NATO Defense College for a year. He retired in 1992 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in July 1992 and February, 1993.

Q: *And then you had a real plum of an assignment.*

GOELZ: I got the assignment as Consul General in Tehran until '79.

Q: *That was good timing, you got out before...*

GOELZ: I was there for the first takeover of the embassy which was February 14th, '79 but I got out in April--well, it was November before the hostages were taken.

Q: *What was the political situation? And then we'll move to the consular situation in Tehran at that time.*

GOELZ: During the time I was there you could see the government just falling apart. When I was there the Shah was still in power, and he had one government after another, different Prime Ministers trying to solve the problems but obviously they were not doing very well. Khomeini was the important factor. He had been in exile out of the country, and just before the end, I guess December or January, Khomeini came back...well, came back I guess about February and then all hell broke loose, the government fell and Khomeini took over.

Q: *Who was your ambassador at that time?*

GOELZ: William Sullivan.

Q: *Did he pay any attention to the consular side, or were you pretty much on your own?*

GOELZ: He was overwhelmed, of course, with the problems of the government and everything along the line. He took an interest in the consular section, but if things went smoothly, then he

didn't interfere. The DCM also, Charlie Naas, I think you probably know. Charlie Naas was more interested in what we were doing. We all got involved together, the three of us, in getting people out of Tehran. There were about 60,000 Americans in Tehran at the time things started to fall apart. Now, neither our government, nor the Iranian government, wanted anything done about clearing everybody out. So what we did, we met with companies one by one--well, not one by one, usually five or ten at a time, I would or the Ambassador would, trying to convince them to drawdown the people that they had; that the situation was beginning to deteriorate and the sooner they got out the better everybody was. Not everybody left, but an awful lot of people did.

Q: Was there initial resistance on leaving?

GOELZ: Sure. There was a lot of money in Tehran. All these companies were making money off the Iranian government, and they didn't want to lose it. A lot of people just wouldn't go, they just wouldn't leave. They had been warned, they had been called in, the companies themselves were asked to drawdown. And as things started deteriorating, more and more of them went out. From the time we evacuated after the first takeover, we only had about 3500 Americans to evacuate, that's from 60,000. So we had been very successful in drawing down there. There were a lot of other problems--kids in school, all kinds of things.

Q: During this were you involved in the case that's become quite famous again recently because of the presidential candidate, Ross Perot, who is the head of some computer firm, or something.

GOELZ: EDS. Did I know Ross Perot? Yes, I did, only too well. I was the one who had to deal with him primarily. EDS had been in Iran for several years, and they had some contracts with some government agencies. One particular one, the government took-- the magistrate, Badgar, took exception to the way it had been handled and brought the company into court and wanted \$13 million refund for monies he said were not properly spent. Now, EDS did not want to pay the \$13 million, of course, they claimed everything was in order. But Badgar arrested two of the principals of the EDS firm who were in Tehran, and confined them, and then was starting to bring charges against them. At that time Perot, himself, came to Tehran against our wishes, and against our advice. But he showed up there and tried to get them out. There was some talk about him paying the money if that's what it was going to take at the very end there. But then, of course, we had the revolution and the jail fell. He was able to get his people out through the country and into Turkey where he flew them back to the United States.

Q: What was your impression of Perot?

GOELZ: No comment.

Q: You're shaking your head.

GOELZ: Mr. Perot is not the easiest man in the world to deal with. I have to give him great credit for taking care of his own people. Mr. Perot likes things done Mr. Perot's way, not anybody else's way whether it's governments, or individuals, or whatever. He wants his way, and that's all he wants.

Q: What about on the visa side?

GOELZ: On the visa side, one of the things that we did, which I guess we're bearing the results of today is, that there were an awful lot of student visas issued. There were a lot of visas issued of all kinds, of course, but the biggest chunk of visas issued while I was there were student visas. We had a special annex just to handle these cases. We had them by the hundreds every day, people who wanted to go to school in the United States; who were qualified to go to school in the United States, and a lot of them being sent by the Iranian government. Iran was sending more and more people to the United States than any other country for study. They had very previously been sort of oriented towards Great Britain, and then perhaps Germany. But at this time they were all reorienting towards the United States, and not every student, but the majority of the students went to the United States for study abroad.

Q: Did this cause problems? Or is this just a matter of dealing with numbers, or were there a lot of not eligible people coming up?

GOELZ: Most of them were qualified to go in because they were all in the upper middle class. Now the top students did not go because the top ten percent of the government of Iran kept in Iran and educated in their own universities. There were those right after that, the next 20, 30, 40 percent, but most of those went to the United States. Some went on family resources, others went on government grant.

Q: Then you weren't feeling that you were dealing with, during the period you were there, people who were using the student visa thing to flee?

GOELZ: Not particularly at that time, no, because they had over a period of time been doing this. It was customary for students to come to the United States to study and then return to work, and they had good jobs waiting for them in their family business, or in the government because the government desperately needed technocrats. And anybody who was doing well was just about confirmed in a job when they came back.

Q: Was immigration much of a problem?

GOELZ: Not at that time, no. Later on, of course, the same thing with the students later on, as the situation started to deteriorate, people were trying to get out any which way they could, and not all of them were qualified for the visa they applied for.

Q: Were you there at that time too.

GOELZ: I was there during the period...

Q: Could you explain events as far as your experience when the first takeover came?

GOELZ: We were expecting problems. As I say, we evacuated most of the Americans, got most

of them out. We got the dependents out of the embassy and drew down to a certain number of people. We were successful in getting a lot of visas issued and continuing up to just about the very end. Then the Army, which had been protecting us, withdrew one day and sure enough, over the walls came down--Mujahideens, whatever you call them--came over the walls and took the embassy the first time. Not everybody was in there, but some of us were because of the situation. And we spent an hour and a half on the floor with bullets flying over our heads.

Q: *Who was firing?*

GOELZ: These people taking the embassy.

Q: *Were we defending it?*

GOELZ: No, the ambassador was very, very shrewd in handling the situation, and I attribute to him the fact that we didn't have any Americans who died. He kept telling them that he was in contact with the Marines, and had some Marines in one of the outposts and he's saying, "Surrender as soon as you can, surrender as soon as you can." So the idea was, that is, people were moving in over the walls and into the area, and he was telling them not to fire on them, to just surrender. So they surrendered, and one by one they took it. They were around the building. Those of us who were left inside--they took one part of the building--those of us who were still left inside ran the gauntlet up the stairway through the bullets to the vault where we held out until the end in the vault. And then in the vault we had to negotiate with the surrender. We were willing to surrender all along but these guys are firing at you, and it's pretty damn difficult to surrender when somebody is shooting at you. We had a local employee in the consular section who got out front--you've got to give him credit, God he did deserve yeoman duty, and talked to them and arranged the surrender. So we all surrendered, and then they took us to another location in the compound. The compound was completely occupied, and then they eventually took us down. A couple of times we thought we were in deep trouble; they lined us all up against a wall, and we were saying, "Oh, here comes the second Valentine massacre." But it was to protect us because there were snipers on taller buildings who were firing down into the compound and this wall would protect us from those snipers. So they actually had no intention of doing any harm to us after they got ahold of the embassy.

Q: *As you were going through this, what was the consensus among the Americans, or at least in your mind, what were they after?*

GOELZ: They were after the embassy, they were taking it over, there's no two ways about it. They felt that we didn't belong there, and they wanted it, and they took it.

Q: *How did it resolve itself?*

GOELZ: That's very interesting. Nobody, I guess, can swear to it, but it appeared to me that the temporary government allowed these people to do this, or encouraged them. Because then what they did, they came in afterwards, disarmed those people, and stayed to occupy the embassy, coming to be our "saviors". This was on February 14th, I left the beginning of April, and then the

compound was still occupied by about four separate groups of guerrillas, some of whom used to shoot at each other at night.

Q: After the takeover, what happened to consular activities?

GOELZ: After that first takeover we got busy to evacuate. We were allowed to operate somewhat in the embassy. They went through the buildings, they confiscated everything they wanted, and they had guards everywhere, and we were in touch with the Department, and the Department arranged for transportation, for planes to come in to take the people out. So we organized a program for the evacuation of those American citizens who wanted to leave. As I say, we had about 3500 of them, including incidentally, other Ross Perot employees--other than the two he took out through Turkey.

Q: You left when?

GOELZ: The beginning of April.

Q: April of '79. It sounds like there was every reason in the world to get the hell out of there. I mean get the whole embassy out of there.

GOELZ: The embassy was reduced to just a few people, and those of us who had been through all this were gradually replaced one by one. They brought other people in, and they were negotiating with the Iranians themselves during this particular period of time, and tried to reclaim, and were reclaiming parts of the embassy for their own use. It was a very unusual situation all the way around.

Q: Were you still issuing visas? Or was that pretty well stopped?

GOELZ: No, we issued visas fairly regularly--well, not as many visas, but people would come in for visa services and we would take care of them. We weren't doing immigrant visas at that time, we were doing just strictly non-immigrant visas.

Q: How did you deal with your more junior officers? It must have been a difficult time to keep everybody to their tasks.

GOELZ: Well, yes and no. Our Foreign Service officers are remarkable people. I found that over a period of time, and they all responded very favorably. We didn't have anybody who said, "No, I'm not going to go out there and do this, or that." In the evacuation we set up, I took care of the one at the embassy, my deputy and a few other officers were out at the hotel near the airport. So we had two places for these people to report and we would process them and then send them on out. We were getting them out any which way we could, issuing passports for Americans who were going out to document them and we were writing them by hand. We had no typewriters or other facilities. You do what you have to do.

JACK SHELLENBERGER
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1977-1979)

Jack Shellenberger was born in New York on December 28, 1927. After serving in the U.S. Army for three years, he received his bachelor's degree from Northwestern University in 1952. He joined the foreign service in His career included positions in Nagoya, Moulmein, Brussels, Lagos, Tehran, Ottawa, and Tokyo. He also served in the Voice of America. Mr. Shellenberger was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt on April 21, 1990.

SHELLENBERGER: So that was, those are the highlights of my years with the VOA in '73-'77. I had been looking forward to another posting overseas and I know Cliff Forester had thought that I might take Manila. There was the opportunity to take the PAOship in Paris and I think my tilt was toward the Paris job because I had had 5-1/2 years of West Europe involvement not too long ago. But then one day the Director called me in, Keogh, and I guess Gene Kopp was with him. Just the three of us. And he said, we want you to go to Iran because from our point of view, U.S. point of view, Tehran is more important these days than Paris or Manila certainly. And I said, well, I feel very inadequate to go to an area and into a culture I know nothing of. Don't worry, you're a fast study. I had inspected Laos and Israel a couple of years before and on our way from Laos to Israel we stopped in Tehran and stayed with Gordon Winkler, the PAO. He showed me this variegated USIS structure that included a huge institute for teaching English, and a printing shop which is one of the best in Iran which produced our monthly magazine in another building. And in a third building in northern Tehran, great art galleries and more English teaching and the Abraham Lincoln library, a gorgeous facility. The set-up in North Tehran with the library had these galleries that were used to hang works of local artists or imported art shows and highly impractical for any other use, they were so high, the ceilings were so high they didn't lend themselves for conference events.

Q: It's very interesting that PAOs have had a completely different opinion as to the value of the library and the Center; and of the general programs carried out there at different times. Bernie Anderson was greatly impressed with their operation but that was the day when the center was downtown and apparently available to everybody. By the time Gordon Winkler got there, the new one which you speak had been built up on the hill. He felt that it was not very productive and that USIA was spending far too much money on it because it was out from the area where most users could have full access, and in addition only the elite was ever using it.

SHELLENBERGER: That certainly was my impression. And my comment to Sandy Rosenbloom, who was my fellow inspector in 1975, was here's a post that I don't want to ever have to inspect, or to run. And now two years later there I was, saluting and saying, yes, sure, I'll do it. But I was not eager to go to Iran. And on arrival I found it dismaying in many ways. The conversations at most of the receptions and cocktail parties and dinners among Iranians had to do with what they had bought in the United States by way of property and how close were they to getting a green card in order to go to the United States permanently. That's the sort of banter that

one finds troubling and depressing in a country that looks superficially like California, whose cities beyond Tehran are garden cities. A culture of great dimension and depth.

The other bothersome thing for me on arrival was to discover that not only did I have a car that was armored with special plastic, meaning you can't roll down the window, but also a bodyguard with the driver in the front seat who puts his .45 right there between himself and the driver. I wasn't fearful but I just found it put the society in some question as to what it was about and where it was going.

As the time passed in Tehran I felt more and more bearish about the ability of USIS to do much with anyone who was not already converted, and proposed that there be significant reduction in the USIS operation. Well, that rang bells in Washington and somebody was dispatched to see what had gone wrong with this PAO who is cutting back the AMPART program by more than a third and who was suggesting that we didn't really need this or that. I remember we had the meeting with the Washington representative for whom there was no such word as no. And no such words as it can't be done. It can be done and will be done. Events soon proved the likelihood that we were going to be reducing because the riots that began in early '78 and then crescendoed until the end of '78 meant that we were going to be drawing down. I believe by the fall, late fall, we had dropped the three positions from USIS that I proposed a year earlier.

Q: Had Bill Sullivan come in as Ambassador by that time?

SHELLENBERGER: Sullivan arrived shortly before I did in July of 1977. So, yes, he was there. He I'm sure did not expect this to be the culmination of his career, his distinguished career, but it was. He had the misfortune of being on home leave through three months of the summer '78 when the concept that things were falling apart was being demonstrated day by day.

Gary Sick, in a book called "They All Fall Down" has a very vivid account of the relationship between the organs in Washington and the Embassy in Tehran as to what was being exchanged and who was really making policy and where was consensus? Well, there wasn't. Brzezinski had his agenda as National Security Adviser; the State Department had a different view; the White House had, in the form of Carter, because Carter had this weird rapport with the Shah and the Shahbanou. He had a White House lawn welcoming ceremony amidst tear gas. I'm not sure that's happened with any other major ruler, being forced off the balcony because of the clouds of tear gas. And then not long afterwards having the Carters stop in Tehran on New Years Eve of 1978 and throwing away all the material that had been prepared by way of what he might say in a toast, throwing it all away and pronouncing Iran an island of stability in a sea of chaos.

Q: This had been primarily USIA prepared material that had been made for his use?

SHELLENBERGER: Combination political and USIA. We were in the drafting loop and I'm not sure who--because there was also somebody writing in Washington for him. So like most of these visits by presidents, the mix of words that goes into the final speeches comes from many players. But I think Carter was in such rapture at being in this palace among this friendly family, the Pahlavis he felt, well, this guy has got it together and he won't fall, he'll survive.

Q: You mentioned the divergence of opinion in different areas in Washington. What was your feeling as to Sullivan's point of view vis-a-vis what was coming out of Washington, out of the State Department and out of wherever else in Washington?

SHELLENBERGER: Well, in the first half of his time there--now understand, he was only there for less than two years--he was feeling pretty spunky. He'd been given his marching orders. As he puts it in his book, the thing that Carter wanted him to do first, as soon as he got there, was to make sure that the Westinghouse people got the go-ahead in their bid on building several nuclear reactors in Iran, and that secondly that he help the White House persuade Congress that the sale of AWAC planes to Iran be approved. This was parallel with the Nixon concept of Iran being our strategic listening post in the region, and especially looking at Soviet machinations. And indeed Iran was a listening and observation post looking North to the Soviet Union. Unfortunately it did not look closely into south Tehran.

So Sullivan had a succession of Congressional people, high level people, coming to Tehran because Tehran and Iran by the rhetoric of the times was America's important player in the region. Indeed, we had some 48,000 military whether under contract or in civilian roles, training Iranians, an enormous number of helicopter technicians. The American community in Iran was huge. It was very insulated, had its own playgrounds and its own school and its own TV station with American fare. The average American could come to Iran and never know that there was anything untoward in the city or in the country.

Q: In other words, the Americans did not live among the Iranians. They lived almost entirely in an American ambience.

SHELLENBERGER: They may have lived among the Iranians, but I learned something else about Iran. It is a country of high walls. The first thing you do when you acquire a property is put a wall around it. A house is less important than the wall. The wall keeps out. So they may have been within an Iranian community, but those walls were there. And the wall, mentally, certainly closed off the kind of contact that is possible and does happen in other societies.

Q: Do you feel that Sullivan in the later stages of his incumbency there sensed the ongoing fall of the Shah? Did he become pretty well convinced that this was all going downhill to ruin?

SHELLENBERGER: In Gary Sick's book he portrays Sullivan as being ambivalent. Some cables he's very optimistic about the Shah, having just visited him and reassured that the Shah is composed and that he is making the sorts of changes that are going to withstand or at least deter those who would seek his overthrow. But then he would privately perhaps in back channel cables say the thing is hopeless and we should start cutting a deal with the opposition people. The Shah got wind of that and he turned to Brzezinski who had a special relationship with the Shah, or at least the Shah so thought, and by the end of 1978 the mission of Dutch Hyser, a General from NATO who had at one time been the head of the U.S. military assistance group in Tehran, was dispatched by Brzezinski to see if there was a military solution to the disorder. And Hyser describes in his interesting book how the military had been groomed to be independent of each

other. Each reported to the Shah but they were not used to being a collegial body, it was not like the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and to get them to agree on anything--.

Q: You mean independent, you're talking about the air force versus the army versus whatever other branch they had? Or individual generals, high ranking officers within the military acting differently, thinking differently?

SHELLENBERGER: The high ranking officers had little knowledge of what the other was doing and little knowledge of where the other was coming from. Each sought to ingratiate himself with the Shah and the Shah kept them as counters, the air force countering the navy and the army countering the air force. They were kept in these rigid separate cones, so to speak, and here's Hyser trying to find out if there's a consensus among them as to what to do about what's happening in the streets. Some had the idea: let's play hardball; but others were not convinced that that would work. I know that Sullivan felt that some kind of transition was inevitable away from the Shah's rule, and that turning the military loose, the Army loose, on those in the streets would mean just no end of bloodshed. There already had been plenty of that.

It was approaching a nightmare. Also, there was something bizarre to have Hyser in one office reporting to Brzezinski on what he was finding and in another office Sullivan reporting to the State Department on his thinking and the two phones seemingly not connected. The division of reportage coming from the Embassy in Tehran confirmed in the Shah's mind that the United States didn't know where it was coming from.

Q: I've heard some people say that even though they were convinced that a revolution of some sorts was coming and that the Shah was going to fall, that there was very little appreciation on anybody's part that it was going to be the kind of religious dominated enterprise that finally occurred. Does that correspond with your view of the thing?

SHELLENBERGER: The question is discerning. And to give you an example of how we misread the religious ferment is the arrival one day in my office of Jonathan Randal of the Washington Post. He said, I hear this name Khomeini, Khomeini. What can you tell me? What information do you have about this Khomeini? He was in Iraq at that time. And it was clear we had nothing on Khomeini. The files on the Ayatollah had ended at the time of his departure from Iran in the early '60s. He had gone into exile and then according to our official knowledge to virtual seclusion. And so here he was resurfacing a decade or more later on and nobody knew. Nobody knew about him or his followers.

The Embassy was under the impression that the Shah had, up until '77, had been paying the mullahs sufficiently to keep them at bay. But he had eased up on those payments, or perks, and the sense of the religious community was that the Shah's program for the future would further erode their influence in education and in the culture. And to the Westerner, the answer is, well why not? That's modernization, modernization is good. It means roads and schools and hospitals. But that's not necessarily shared by people who are of a different culture. So that, no, we were sanguine about the Shah and his modernization and did not count the mosque as being anything more than a place where the unemployed would come and get shelter.

Q: As the pressure against the Shah, the discontent, began erupting into riots and bloodshed, who was it expected would be the, you might say, the "point people" in the revolution against the Shah if it came?

SHELLENBERGER: There were two so-called point groups. One were the Bazaari, the people who ran the bazaars, the merchant class, the wheelers and dealers. And the other were the remnants of the National Front, which represented a stream of political thinking dating back to the Mossadegh era in the late '40s and early 1950s. The National Front had a Socialist bent; the Shah thought they were infiltrated by the Communists and therefore watched them carefully through his secret service. But the Embassy under Sullivan's prodding tried to get to know the Bazaari and the remnants of the National Front and the other intellectuals who seemed to have some vision for an Iran that would be freer and still, if not a military ally, have at least a stable relationship with the United States.

The problem was it left out the whole Khomeini equation. And by the time we began to consider what to do about his group, his inner circle, Khomeini was now in Paris, his every word was picked up on cassette and the cassettes were played in every mosque throughout the country. Interesting, the BBC was the first I think to park a correspondent beside Khomeini's house in the Paris suburbs and reported in Farsi every day on what went on.

Q: Was there any admonition as far as the Embassy was concerned that the Embassy and staff generally and USIA particularly, or part of the Embassy staff, should not consort with the religious group, should not get themselves mixed up with them. I've heard it said that there was some feeling on the part of the Embassy that we should stay clear of the Mullahs.

SHELLENBERGER: There was a certain nervousness in the Shah's Palace when reports would circulate that Americans were seen hobnobbing with mullahs and other dissidents. But I think they were more concerned, as we were, with our approaches and overtures to the Bazaari and the National Front, thinking, from the Shah's point of view, that these represented a potential for leftist influence and we, looking at it not as an alternative to the Shah but as a potential threat to the stability of our relationship. Yes, we were somehow not admonished but I remember the warning, as it were, a warning that came to one of my colleagues whose husband was teaching English, that his job might be in jeopardy because of the people he and his wife were seeing who were National Frontish-liberal types.

The problem in dealing with the religious community goes back to one of the basic lacks of the Foreign Service. People with language skills and the cultural awareness in that Embassy were few and far between. I remember getting Barry Rosen to come over as Press Officer because he had Farsi, reading and spoken knowledge. It was a great effort, full of bureaucratic hurdles, because he was not in the Foreign Service. But we got him there finally in November of 1978 when everything was going down.

Q: It turned out rather unfortunately for him.

SHELLENBERGER: For him it was a double whammy because the first whammy occurred right after the total breakdown of public order in February and after some days of chaos he and I ventured to the Embassy in an ordinary (my driver's own personal) car, so as to not be seen in an official vehicle. And we were in the Ambassador's anteroom when shots were heard. Eventually we crawled down the corridor to the communications vault where we all, maybe 30 of us, hunkered down and shredded paper and waited to see what the government, which was installed at that time--.

Q: Had the Shah fallen?

SHELLENBERGER: The Shah had gone off for what he said was a vacation but no one believed he would ever return, not at least without some kind of a bloodbath. We were immobilized in this--it was again surreal. We had telephone contact with the Foreign Ministry and also with Washington from that vault, describing our plight. The government of Bazargan (installed by Khomeini) was saying, don't worry, it's one of these lawless groups. Well, every block had a lawless group, it was anarchy. And sure enough, the group that had invaded the Embassy was seeking to kill the spies because that is what Radio Peace and Progress was broadcasting and urging the people of Tehran to do. Peace and Progress, of course, was the Communist Party's radio station that for years was the most bellicose and most given to disinformation.

Q: Who were they identifying as the spies?

SHELLENBERGER: The Americans in the Embassy were a nest of spies and Satan's den. We in the meantime, by the way, had contributed to the negative image by changing the name of the USIA to USICA. The USICA was immediately perceived to be, well, that's the CIA, that's the building. My building was USICA and my building was therefore the spy headquarters for Iran for the United States of America. And even though we took down the sign, the posters around our building all pointed arrows at us. My Farsi language instructor no longer could come to my building to teach because she was so fearful of what might happen there.

Getting back to the vault, in due course we surrendered, even though at least one security officer who had a shotgun said, let's just open the door, I'll plug them, I'll at least get some of them before they get us. Well, Sullivan said, just put your weapon over there with the others. We had gas masks on at that time because the tear gas that the Marines had tried to use had now come up through the crack under the door of the vault.

We were paraded down the hall to the Ambassador's anteroom where it all began and then sure enough, another shot or two and we were all under tables and desks. I remember the desk I got under had been graced by a Molotov cocktail just sitting there like an ashtray next to the typewriter.

Then we learned that there had been a deal struck. Those who had invaded the Embassy would be permitted to leave quietly without punishment if they would release us. And indeed that is what happened. We were paraded down the stairs, out to a courtroom, the final remnants of the deal were consummated, that is, the invaders were able to leave one by one, always keeping one there

with his gun to shoot the Ambassador, shoot some of us, if any of his colleagues had been seized.

We then walked over to the Ambassador's residence. This time we weren't herded, we walked on our own, and a head count was taken to determine who was missing, who was hurt. And of the hurt ones, I believe there were two workers in the commissary were shot dead.

Q: These were Iranians or Americans?

SHELLENBERGER: No, they were Pakistani.

Q: Pakistani.

SHELLENBERGER: There were many third-country nationals in Iran because there was a lot of money and Iranians didn't like to do the kind of scud work that goes with a country that is fast modernizing. So imported labor was used, it was cheaper. And it caused, again, more resentment among the Iranians that their people in the rural villages would flood into the cities and discover that there aren't any jobs even though one out of every four Tehrani had an automobile.

The Ambassador's house had been trashed. It was just vandal-like work. Anything that could be destroyed was. The only thing I remember that wasn't touched was the grand piano. And I found myself once again under it after some further random shooting occurred. A Marine was one of those injured and was in the hospital.

In due course, Sullivan and I and Barry walked over to the gate where a huge crowd of media had gathered. The Ambassador made a statement to one representative of the media who was let in, describing our experience.

Q: Was this the foreign media or was this the local media?

SHELLENBERGER: The local media was not evident. They were mostly foreign media as far as I could determine. He made a short statement to the effect of what had happened, that the government had sent in force to relieve us, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, a man named Yazdi, and that for all practical purposes, except for the cleanup and the Marine, the day was over.

Barry and I decided there wasn't anything more to do in the Embassy, the tear gas made entry there impossible. So we mentioned to the DCM that we were just going to go back to my place. And he said, how will you do that?

Q: You mean your office or your home?

SHELLENBERGER: My home. No, I couldn't go to the office because I had been told it had been invaded and was being held by yet another group. Barry said, We'll take a taxi, which is what we did. We walked out the back gate of the Embassy and down an alley, caught a cab. Barry has a beard and we both wore ski caps and so I don't think we looked like foreign

diplomats at all, we hoped not.

In Iran, the taxis pick up people as long as they have space, if they're going in that direction. And sure enough there was a space in the front seat and in hopped a woman, middle aged, and she was carrying the latest newspaper, one of the Tehran newspapers, which headlined the invasion of the Embassy. She was telling the driver. Of course Barry knew what she was saying. She was saying, I hope they killed them all, I hope they got every one of them. We, sitting there hearing this, were grateful when she got out of the cab. The driver also echoed what the woman was saying, it's a good thing, it's treating those Americans the way they deserve. We dropped off near my residence. Walked in about 5:30 in the evening and I smelled the delicious odor of roast beef and I saw a fire crackling in the fireplace. There was no heat because oil deliveries were very few and far between.

Q: What time of the year was this?

SHELLENBERGER: February. It was cold.

Q: Pretty chilly?

SHELLENBERGER: Very chilly. But the day was now a memory. I remember calling my family who had been evacuated along with all the other Embassy families a month before and communicated with USIA. I got of course a lot of calls from the media. But it was quite a day. Memorable.

I came out of Tehran for two or three weeks R&R, but they really called it consultation, in late March. That flight to New York was memorable. The Pan Am, which had resumed flights, was absolutely, couldn't have been more helpful and gracious when we got ready to get out of there. We went to the airport very early in the morning, 5:00, still dark, in a convoy. Because again the regular forces of law and order were dispersed and each neighborhood had its own law and order.

Q: What was the military doing all this time? Anything?

SHELLENBERGER: No, the military had returned to the barracks, effectively. And the leaders had all been put in jail. They were keeping a very low profile. What you had the beginnings of were the revolutionary guards, who were armed from the arsenals that belonged to the military. And they ran the neighborhoods, as komitehs.

We got to the airport and with a lot of pushing and shoving because it was utter chaos and jammed, the Pan Am helped thread us through the various procedures. One of the revolutionary guards wanted to take my passport because he said I couldn't go, it didn't have an exit permit. Again the Pan Am agent who was Iranian knew somebody else and that person came and retained my passport. We got in the Pan Am mini-bus and were driven to this Boeing 747 and all the cabin attendants were there waiting to greet us and ushered us up into the front, first class, of this marvelous plane and served us champagne and orange juice, whatever. It was a wonderful way to go.

The group included the DCM, Charlie Naas, myself and John Stempel, a political officer, and the Time correspondent who had been through it all with us. We flew directly to Rome, Italy where again we were given VIP treatment, taken to a special lounge for a buffet, and then taken on to New York. Bruce Van Voorst was the correspondent; Bruce and I then flew on to Washington. And I guess I was the lead-off speaker at the Director's meeting the next morning, or a morning or two later.

Those are the Tehran memories.

Q: Did you go back to Tehran at all at that time, or not?

SHELLENBERGER: After two or three weeks, yes, I went back in April with a great deal of trepidation. I had a sense it might be a one-way trip. I did not feel at all good about going back. I was fatalistic about it, and stopped in London, I remember, to enjoy some theater and dinner at Simpson's on the Strand because I didn't really think I'd get back through London again.

But I found in Iran something verging on a normalcy that I had despaired of when I left. For one, the climate had changed, the actual climate. It was spring, the weather was kinder, and there was flowers. That flowering of nature seemed to give optimism another chance. We were now a small little band of four, myself and Barry, Chris Snow who was the Iran-America Society director, and the head of the English teaching program, Scott Murbach. That program, by the way, had resumed! The teachers and students wanted to continue after the revolution. And at the Iran-America Society, the library was reopened and was functioning. So from the FSN point of view, not too much had changed. What had changed is that they all, along with all other Iranian or foreign service nationals at the Embassy, were offered permanent residence in the United States along with their severance pay.

Q: When we stopped, you had just said that the one thing that had changed was that all the local employees, the foreign nationals, had been given permanent visas to the United States.

SHELLENBERGER: And severance pay. So much of the time of my remaining four months in Tehran was to work out the FSN severance pay and their treatment. Each case had a sorrowful overtone to it because even these people had, like the rest of the Embassy, no knowledge, no sense that things were as bleak as they turned out to be. And their own fortunes were in doubt, given the fact that they had worked with the great Satan.

Q: Was Khomeini in the country by then?

SHELLENBERGER: Khomeini had come back in January, right after the Shah had departed. Some had predicted he would go to his home in Qom and be quiet now that the Shah had effectively gone and all of his authority, that he would retire to do things religious rather than remain engaged in the day-to-day management of government. That was the case and that continued to be the case until the second takeover of the Embassy in November. And then he injected himself on the political scene and made himself the political arbiter of Iran.

Did government function in this interim period? Was it approachable? Obviously all new faces. I made the rounds and was received correctly if not cordially. I remember going to the Museum of Modern Art which had been a creation of the Shahbanou to get a deKooning painting back to its rightful owner in New York. And the painting was on loan to this museum, which had been closed. The people in charge, as is often the case after a revolutionary takeover, consisted of a komiteh, one of whom was a knowledgeable art curator, and the other two were simply thugs. It was very strange to deal with these people. But in point of fact, the deKooning was returned, without damage.

I similarly negotiated the return of my building. But that was a little more difficult and frightening. We met with the komiteh who had assumed responsibility for it, having been invited to tour the place accompanied by armed guards. And I'd never seen vandalism to that extent anywhere in my career. They had ripped and shredded and torn apart. Anything that was usable they had taken out. But things that they considered unusable they slashed or burned. In my office I had a photograph of William Faulkner. Faulkner rarely signed photographs; this was one to me. And it was gone, along with a film I had made in Japan called "Treasures of Japan." These are items not replaceable. And a bottle of champagne that we were saving to celebrate someday something. It was a mess, very, very depressing.

So we--I say we, John Stempel, the Political Officer, and I sat down with this very aggressive komiteh who wanted to know exactly what went on in that building, that CIA building, and wanted the list of names of people to whom we sent the magazine, so forth. Fortunately our DRS was sufficiently broadbased so that many of those in the present new government were on our lists from the Shah's time. So they really couldn't suggest that anybody on that list was necessarily a puppet. Although that did happen later on, I understand, when all the documents that were seized when the Embassy went down in November, were pieced together and they brought cases against some of those whom the regime thought were too soft on relations with America.

The weekends were interesting because Barry Rosen had this notion that we should get out of town and go around. One of us, Scott Murbach, the English teaching specialist, had a nondescript car. So we'd get in and go off to places that were outside of Tehran and enjoy tea and palaver with the hosts. Always received cordially. Not correctly, cordially. Those were very--.

Q: Did you dare talk about anything political in those forays out into the countryside? Or were you dealing primarily with branch posts of USIA or what?

SHELLENBERGER: We were dealing, no, with villages that were around the fringes of Tehran, up in the mountains. It was nonpolitical. We did acknowledge that we were Americans and then they might mention they had a connection with America, relative. But as for the present or past regime, no. There was no animosity.

Q: Did you get any indication as to what their feelings were or were they pretty mute on the subject?

SHELLENBERGER: It was so early in the new regime's tenure that they couldn't really get a fix on what was different except that the uncertainties of the last months of the Shah's regime were dispelled. Deliveries now were taking place. The power did not go out every night as had been happening. The lines for kerosene were not as long as they had been. So there was a certain euphoria that those terrible days of uncertainty and shortages and outages were over. Of course that didn't continue very long once you had the Iran-Iraq war.

I left Tehran on July 31, without incident. I had a carpet that I had bought maybe a year before and I had it under my arm and I prized it. It was a carpet that I had grown to like not as a possession but as a comfort. And they suggested I had to give it up. But again, somebody in the airport knew the ropes and said I'm a diplomat and therefore can go out with his carpet. If I'd not been a diplomat, they would have taken it away from me. I flew to London and there I was, back in London which I had thought I'd never see again. By this time Chris Snow had become the Cultural Attaché in London, so I reunited with him. And then flew on to Southern California and stayed at my brother-in-laws place, and then began home leave.

THOMAS B. RESTON

**Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Deputy Spokesman
Washington, DC (1977-1980)**

Mr. Reston was born in New York City and raised in Washington, D.C. He was educated at Harvard University and the University of Virginia Law School. After practicing law he turned to newspaper reporting, then became active in Democratic Party national politics, working with Senators Eugene McCarthy and Hubert Humphrey. In 1977 Mr. Reston joined the Department of State as Deputy Secretary of State for Public Affairs and was the Department's Spokesman. Mr. Reston was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: How about the Iranian, first the expulsion of the Shah from Iran and then the hostage thing? How did that affect you?

RESTON: That took over my life for about a year. The relationship between the United States and Iran and the Shah of Iran was a very close relationship and it was the subject of some controversy inside the Department. Before this all erupted in public, for instance, there was a big controversy about how much weapons we should be selling to the Shah and whether, in fact, he was buying so many weapons from us that it was just unbalancing his budget and his ability to pay for them, as well as for his other responsibilities. We were very concerned with stability in the Gulf and felt that if the Shah were well armed he would be able to play a role in keeping stability in the region. When the popular unrest started surfacing there was kind of a constant bureaucratic struggle inside the State Department. I think everyone wanted to save the Shah's government, but there was a strong disagreement within the Department as to whether the Shah should be permitted to clamp down, as he clearly wanted to do, or whether we should continue to

encourage the Shah to pay more respect to norms of international human rights as a way to try to soften and gentle the situation down and allow him to get through that period of crisis. Of course he did not get through the period of crisis. He did have to leave Iran. How to deal with what was really a humiliation for the Shah and a humiliation for American foreign policy and kind of a dangerous situation in terms of the kind of government that seemed to be emerging in his place was a nightmare for us. Not only that, there was the added complexity that once the Shah left, under the guise of needing medical attention abroad, he went to Panama and he felt lonely there and the former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was pressuring, putting enormous pressure on the U.S. Government and on the State Department to allow the Shah to come to New York for medical treatment for his cancer, which we acceded to. I can remember going to see Vance the night that we decided to do that and saying to him, you know, I don't really have a part in this decision, but I can tell you this is just going to raise unshirted hell for us in Iran and for me in the briefing, as indeed it did. It was the final thing that kind of, the final straw that caused their domestic politics to become unhinged and ultimately caused the hostage problem for us.

Q: How during this crisis, how did the press, both American and international press, respond to this? Did you have the feeling they were looking for flaws in our dealing with this or did they understand the major problems and feelings Ayatollah Khomeini and that form of government which we still haven't been able to deal with?

RESTON: No, we haven't. The press corps, any press corps takes on the coloration of the people it covers and the press corps at the State Department both foreign and domestic are an exceedingly sophisticated bunch of people. I think that they probably had a full understanding of the difficulties that the government was facing. You know, our principle problem for the first year of the hostage crisis was finding someone credible to talk to that you could negotiate with. I think the press corps understood that. Nevertheless, they also understood the news value of a government that seemed to be completely at sea and not capable of bringing this crisis to a conclusion and they knew that they were possessed of a major and fascinating international story which struck emotional chords in the American public because it was a humiliation for the United States. They pursued it relentlessly. What are you doing? Why are you getting no place with it? What do you intend to do next? Can you trust this intermediary? How could you trust this intermediary? It went on and on and on. It was like just a constant drumbeat for a year and a half. Right from the beginning, right until the very end. It was a terrible pressured situation for my office in particular because in the first six months or eight months of the crisis the channel of negotiation between the U.S. Government and the people who had taken the hostages really ran through my office. They would make a statement in the basement of the embassy in Tehran and we would respond to it in the press conference. They would respond to us and for lack of a serious diplomatic back channel, that was where the negotiations were taking place. It was an incredible frustration to the State Department which obviously didn't feel that the briefing room was the proper place to have such a negotiation, as indeed it wasn't, but we were incapable of finding another way to talk to them for a period of time.

Q: Well, did you find yourself being in the center of this thing, you get all sorts of operators, the Washington hands, foreign hands, everybody who thinks they've got the way, you know, there's nothing worse than a situation that just drags on and you have people who sort of come out of

the woodwork who often basically confidence type people. You had some of that in Iraq. Did you find yourself dealing with some rather peculiar, or oily or slippery characters?

RESTON: Oh, I think there were some, yes, during the hostage crisis. There were people claiming that they had a channel into somebody in Tehran. The trouble was that these guys in the basement of the embassy were not really part of the Iranian government or at least it was convenient for the Iranian government to say, listen, we have no control over those people, we can't help with this situation. There were people coming out of the woodwork with suggestions of setting up meetings in the Netherlands and here and there. Obviously we were soliciting opinions from people who knew the region well, who knew Iran well. I used to, I had a number of friends who were very familiar with the Middle East and of course this was the normal subject of conversation, it was the main thing that was going on. We were all trying to find a way to deal with them and until it got in a proper channel with Warren Christopher in our embassy in Algiers, it was a kind of a mess. He finally got it in a proper channel and was able to bring it to resolution. When I left the Department -- I had been very close to Warren Christopher while I was there -- and I asked for a photograph of him, a signed photograph, and he said yes and I said, well, I want to choose the photograph. I chose the photograph of him signing the agreement that let the hostages out, but it was only a picture of his hand signing the document. It was not a picture of his face and I asked him to sign that photograph because I felt that his hand was present in so much of the work of the Department in those days, but never his face.

ARTHUR W. HUMMEL, JR.
Ambassador
Pakistan (1977-1981)

Ambassador Arthur W. Hummel, Jr. was born in China in 1920. In 1928, his family moved back to the United States. He returned to China to teach in a Catholic missionary and was interned by the Japanese following Pearl Harbor. When he finally returned to the States, he enrolled at the University of Chicago, where he received his master's degree in 1949. In 1950 he entered the foreign service. He has served in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Burma, and Ethiopia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 13, 1994.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about that. What was our reaction and, as you saw it, the Pakistani reaction to the continuing crisis in Iran? We had centered our attention on the hostages, who were held for 444 days. However, there were obviously other things to be concerned about. There was a militant, expansive Shy force in Iran which wanted a worldwide, Islamic revolution on their own terms. How did that sit with you?

HUMMEL: As far as the Pakistani Government was concerned, they desperately wanted to maintain good relations with Iran. They were not going to destroy their relationship with Iran to benefit the Americans, even though it might be reasonable from our point of view to do so. We kept asking them to put pressure on the Iranians to release the hostages, to give them improved

treatment, or whatever--all of those things. The Pakistanis may have tried to do something privately, but, quite frankly, they would just waffle in formal communications. Privately, they would tell us that they didn't have any leverage and, because of their relationship with Iran, they were simply not in a position to be stern with the Iranians.

MICHAEL METRINKO

**Visa Officer
Tehran (1977-1978)**

**Consular Officer
Tabriz (1978-1981)**

**Iran – Evacuation
Tehran (1981-1983)**

Michael John Metrinko was born in Pennsylvania in 1946. He graduated from Georgetown University in 1968. After entering the Foreign Service in 1974, his postings have included Ankara, Damascus, Tehran, Tabriz, Krakow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and special assignments in Yemen and Afghanistan. Mr. Metrinko was interviewed in 1999 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Today is May 31, 2000. Mike, so 1977. You're off to Iran. I think you talked about how you got the job, didn't you?

METRINKO: Yes, I got the job because the personnel system made a mistake. I think I did talk about this.

Q: I think you did. So well then, when you arrived in 19. . . Did you get any briefing or anything else at all.

METRINKO: About Iran?

Q: About Iran.

METRINKO: No, I never had area studies either. Of course, I didn't really need them.

Q: I mean were you picking up anything in the corridors about the situation there, whither Iran and all that?

METRINKO: I was a lowly untenured officer going off to the visa section in Tehran. It's not likely that anybody would even have spoken to me. They did not give briefings in those days to untenured junior visa officers. I went to Iran. I wanted to go there because I'd liked the country so much in the Peace Corps, I had lots of friends there, thought I could have a good interesting time

there. And also thought that I could be a pretty decent officer since I spoke the language, spoke two of the languages of the country, and knew a lot about the country. I arrived in Tehran in March of 1977 and was assigned to the visa section as a visa officer. It was a very different kind of consular work than I had done in Syria, certainly very different from my rather gentlemanly approach to consular work in Ankara. Tehran was almost a factory type visa situation, a "visa mill," with many, many hundreds of Iranians every morning lining up to get into the visa section. I think we got to 900-1000 on many days, too.

Q: Who were they?

METRINKO: Everybody. We had a huge military exchange program with Iran, so Iranians were being sent off to the United States for training. Iranians had now gotten access to oil money. They were getting scholarships, fellowships from the Government of Iran, and their own families had the money to send them off to school in the United States. The Iranian school system could not handle the population of graduated high school seniors, and for each person who went you had a mother, a father, a brother, or a sister who wanted to visit. So we were up in the high thousands of visa applicants every year. And getting deluged by it. Needless to say, the Department had not kept up with the anticipated demand. There were very few consular officers at the post - very few State officers. There were a couple of Agency officers who were also assigned to the visa section. But I was one of, I think, three regular State officers assigned to the visa section, and for the first several months, from March until I think July or so, I worked in the visa section. It was an interesting job. It caused me some problems. I saw one side of the Foreign Service that I thought was rather sad. I got involved in a fraud investigation of my own boss at the time, and she was moved out of the section because of the implications of fraud in her activities.

Q: What happened? I mean, I'm trying to figure out how the Department in those days dealt with

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METRINKO: Handle it? Cases like this - I won't use names - but what happened is shortly after I arrived in the section I was introduced to the Consular Section "expediter" (quote-unquote), who worked out at the airport and basically helped people from the embassy process through the airport. He would come in every day with several up to a stack of passports and request visas for various people and claim they were all given to him by the head of the airport, the head of security at the airport, or various important people for us at the airport. We were under orders to process these as quickly as possible because it was important for the embassy, orders directly from the head of the visa section. That was fine. I didn't like the expediter. None of us did, among the American officers who were doing visa work, but we were told basically to do whatever he told us to do on visas because his position was so important for the embassy. One day, several weeks after this, he had brought in a stack of passports. He left them with the secretary in the visa section. She came to me a little while later and said some of these passports, the applications aren't filled out. I looked at one, and there was nothing on it to allow me to determine what sort of visa the applicant should get - no purpose of visit to the United States, nothing at all on that. So I asked her who he had said had recommended the visa applicant, and the secretary said he said it was the head of the airport, and I said, "Call the head of the airport,

tell his secretary we have to get in touch with this applicant because the we have to ask the applicant a few questions." My secretary came back five minutes later and said, "I just got off the phone with the head of the airport himself, and he told me that he has never met Mr. Barrimi, the expeditor, he doesn't care to meet him, he doesn't know anybody who works for the American Embassy, and he has never in his career sent passports to the American Embassy to request visas for anyone else." Well, I wrote this up and marched in quite proudly to the head of the visa section, who reacted with almost a fit of rage and how dare I question this guy. He was doing a rough job for the embassy, I should never have called the airport up, I should never have bothered her about this, and from now on she wanted all the passports directly to her and she would take care of the visas. As soon as the workday was over, I went over and talked to the Security Office, told the RSO what had happened. He asked me and another American officer to start photocopying all the visa applications now being signed by our boss. Within a couple of days he had enough ammunition. He had called in the visa applicants who were getting these visas, interviewed them, discovered a whole range of people paying money to get their visas. Well, the RSO summoned the head of the visa section over, and apparently she refused to cooperate. She was removed from the position immediately and put upstairs doing projects, but she stayed there for another couple of months. And the FSN who had been doing this was fired. I was given her job as an untenured officer. That was fine. I was there for about a month, a month and a half, doing that work when quite by, again, personnel and bureaucratic chance, the position of head of the consulate in Tabriz opened up. The person who was there already got an assignment. He was leaving to go to another city in Iran as principal officer, and Tabriz required a principal officer. They looked at me and asked me if I'd be interested in going out there since I spoke Turkish and Persian, and I agreed. And off I went to Tabriz.

Q: Well, let's talk first about when you arrived in '77 in Tehran. What was the political situation like at that time?

METRINKO: Political situation, do you mean inside the embassy?

Q: No, the political situation outside.

METRINKO: The political situation outside the embassy depended upon who was looking at it. If you were the ambassador, if you were the ambassador's Political Section, if you were the DCM, everything was bright and rosy. If you had any contact with the people of Iran, it was not so bright and rosy. In fact, it was bloody awful, but since so few people over in the front office or the Political Section or the Econ Section of the embassy spoke Persian, and since they had such limited contact with normal Iranians, they didn't seem to realize this. I'll give you an example. Shortly after I got there, I started getting in touch with my old friends, and in the course of a few weeks I saw an old student of mine who had become a police officer, and he was also on the escort for the Shah. His roommate was one of the Shahs "Immortal Guards," one of the Shah's personal bodyguards. That was one. I got in touch with the former head of my school. I had been a teacher just outside of Tehran, and the president of the school invited me out for dinner one night, and we had a nice long talk about the situation. And the third one was a visa applicant who had come in requesting a visa and claiming he wanted to go to the United States so that he could dispose of his art collection.

The three cases are interesting. The police officer, who was a member of the establishment, closely tied to the Shah's entourage, security, the first night that we met and many, many times thereafter, gave me a large number of anecdotes about how people disliked the Shah, how he disliked the Shah, how there was a tremendous rift in security services that were supposed to be protecting the Shah, how some of the police had an agreement with leftists, opponents of the Shah, to not interfere with each other, basically a hands-off policy one from the other, and how, as he said, "I wouldn't kill the Shah myself, but if I saw somebody else pulling the trigger, I would turn and look in the other direction." That's coming from one of the Shah's guards.

Q: *Why this animosity?*

METRINKO: In his case, the great disparity in money in the country, the way most of the people lived, the 95 per cent at the bottom and the 5 per cent at the top. The number of people around the Shah who were deeply corrupt, basically thieves, and he could see this all day long with his own eyes during his professional duties - the bribery, the corruption, the attitude towards Iran, towards other Iranians by the shah's entourage, by the court - that was his reason.

In the case of the university president, it's very interesting. I started to talk to him... The president had both known a student of mine quite well when I was in the Peace Corps. And I had asked about this student when I came back, when I saw some of her fellow students, and had been told she had gone to the United States, that she had gotten a fellowship from the school and was off to the States getting a doctorate, and that they had heard this from her family. That's fine. This particular student had had a great deal of political trouble when she was a student. She had been arrested. I had seen her getting out of jail when I was a teacher there. She was a very bright, very personable student too, which was why she attracted attention. Great girl. I congratulated the president of the school and just said, "Hey, by the way, you know, it was great, I'm glad you gave a fellowship to [So-and-so] and that she's in the States studying now." He looked at me and said, "She doesn't have a fellowship. She'd dead." "What do you mean, 'She's dead'?" He said, "She was executed in prison." Her family tells people she has a fellowship because they're afraid to let it be known that their daughter has been executed."

Well, I wrote both memos up. The third memo I wrote up was about the visa applicant who, as it turned out, had a great collection of primitive Iranian art, old Iranian religious art, and when he showed me pictures of it during his interview and told me that the Shah's wife and folks from the court would come to look at it and they would send important dignitaries in to see it in his home, I asked him if I could see it some day when he returned from America. He agreed, that was fine. Why was he going to America? He said, "There is so much trouble happening here, so much is brewing here, I see it around me and I see it in the court, and I see it with my rich friends, that I think the country is heading for a major collapse. This collection of mine is my baby. It's my child. I've been doing this my whole life. I don't want it destroyed. I'm going to America to try and find a museum I can present it to." I wrote that up.

Now, I wrote all three memos in longhand because I didn't have access to a classified typewriter. This was back in the old days when you had to type... And I gave them all to the ambassador's

staff aide who was going to find a typist for me, and that was fine. I had written them all up, and they were all in fine copy and had all the addressees and everything else on them, and he was just going to get them typed so that I in turn could get them approved by the consul general. Well, that was fine. It didn't think about it because he was gone for a couple of days, and then I got a call, a sort of panicky call, from the main embassy. The chancery building was about two blocks from the consular section. There was very, very little connection between the two. Our work building had no generator, was always surrounded by a mob of visa applicants, American citizens trying to get services, a crowd of people who would sleep out in front of it all night long waiting to get into the early morning line. The embassy was set back. It was on (quote) "a compound." We were immediately open to the street. But I got a call to get over immediately to the DCM's office about my memos. I was kind of puzzled. I was waiting for them to come to me so I could send them in the clearance process. I called over to the staff aide and discovered that he had given them to a secretary in the admin section to type up. She had assumed they were cleared. She had done them in final, dropped them into the pouch, which had then gone off, you know, addressed to various people in Washington, and had also done copies to go up to the DCM's office and the Political Section, which had gotten the copies of these memos after they had gone into the pouch and the pouch was already en route. The Political Section and the DCM blew up because I was working behind their backs and what right did I have to write these? And why had I done this and why hadn't I gotten it cleared, etc., etc, and who did I think I was, what did I know, and they knew so much better, and all this was stupidity, and what was the name of the member of the Shah's guard who was betraying the Shah with his friends? Well, I refused to give that, of course, because I knew that they would turn his name over to SAVAK and he then would have been killed or put in prison. I wasn't going to do that.

I had caught holy hell, but as it turned out, the Department reacted in a different way. I had a call from the Department, a private call to me, from an officer on the Iran Desk, who said, "I found your memos fascinating. They're very unlike what we've been getting from the embassy, from the Political Section. I want to know more about this, and would you please continue to write, just send them directly to me, and I will make sure they get seen."

Q: *What did you do?*

METRINKO: As it turned out, I was sent off to Tabriz shortly after that, and what I wrote from then on were telegrams that went through the normal clearing procedures. I wasn't about to start to these intrigues now.

Q: *I realize you were all sitting off by yourself there, but were you able, or did you ever talk to some of the more junior members of the Political Section? Were they shaking? There was this thing that was pretty well known, that it had been made rather firm that we were not to report anything nasty about the Shah and all that.*

METRINKO: That was definitely policy.

Q: *I mean this must have gotten under the skin of a lot of people.*

METRINKO: I don't know if it ever bothered the political section. I doubt it.

Q: *Who were they?*

METRINKO: George Lambrakis was the counselor. John Stempel was the deputy. I never saw them.

Q: *Who was the DCM?*

METRINKO: The DCM initially was... oh, gosh... You know, I know the name so well, I could picture... No, Miklos.

Q: *And how about the ambassador at that time?*

METRINKO: The ambassador had just arrived, and that was Ambassador Sullivan. Put it this way. Lambrakis and Stempel changed slowly over the next year and a half. Miklos never changed, and he left a few months later anyway. And the ambassador changed dramatically, but it took about a year and a half, in his views. Now, can I blame them? Then, I did; now, I do not. To send people to a country like Iran without the language, without any real grounding in the society and the culture and the history, without any sense for the feel, the smell, the touch of Iran, and to expect them to somehow become prescient when they are surrounded by high walls and security concerns that prevent their getting into society, prevent their wandering around the country - perhaps that's not fair. I don't know how to overcome that in staffing an embassy. If you have an ambassador who's served in the country as a junior officer or, better yet, served in the country in a non-government capacity, that's great. But if you only have somebody who came up through the system and who was always in a different part of the world and they don't have the language or any of the regular human contact with that society, they are never going to understand it.

Q: *And plus the fact that we had a mindset. Some countries you can go in and, you know, who cares? I mean, that's the wrong way, but there's room for you to exercise your judgment and often coming in that way you can be a sort of disinterested observer, but Iran had this mindset.*

METRINKO: Iran had a mindset and there was another problem, too. Iran did not have a decent press at the time. The Iranian press in English was amateur. It was high school newspaper quality. You got nothing from the Iranian press. The Iranian academics printed things, but that was also childlike. It was not what you'd call very professional or high level. And we were so imbued with the idea that the opposition were bloody and violent that nobody was going to listen to what they were saying. The Shah had convinced us of this; the SAVAK had convinced us of this. The CIA was convinced of it. Therefore, why would you pay attention to somebody who was basically a barbarian? That's the way they would look at the opposition groups. That being said, the American press, American journalists and American academics, were even far more to blame. They had been suckered into the Shah's system. And one of the most enlightening things that I saw through the revolution was a long list of the American journalists who had been accepting gifts and bribes from the Shah's government. It was great. When you know that a prominent journalist has gotten a large gift from the Shah's government, it has to affect her

reporting about events.

Q: *Oh, yes.*

METRINKO: And it went on and on like that. So was it only the embassy? No, because an ambassador also gets his information not just from his political officers and his consular officers and his economic officers. He gets his information from the *milieu* and from the press and from the journalists and the academics. If they have all become prostitutes, which in the case of Iran most American journalists and north American academics had become, then you can't blame the ambassador.

Q: *Well, now, who was consul general at the time you were there?*

METRINKO: The consul general when I arrived there was Ward Christiansen, and he was replaced by Lou Goeltz a few months later. Ward I hardly knew at all. I mean, I knew him - he was good, he was okay. Lou Goeltz was really something great, and I got to know Lou very, very well because he would come up to Tabriz once I got there.

Q: *Lou replaced me in Seoul, for example.*

METRINKO: Lou was a great guy.

Q: *Very professional. Okay.*

METRINKO: Oh, the DCM, by the way, changed. Miklos left in the summer of 1977 - no I guess toward the end of 1977 - and he was replaced by Charlie Naas, who was incredibly open-minded and professional.

Q: *Let's still stick to Tehran. The group you were around, did they have any reflections of the religious community, the mullahs, Khomeini, and all that, or not, at that point?*

METRINKO: Iranians could be religious. The people that I knew were not militant religious. A lot of them were deeply personally religious. They would fast, they would pray, they would go to Mecca. They were not militant about it. The name Khomeini did not really become prominent in public, out loud, until the year 1978.

Q: *This was not a topic among your friends, and all that.*

METRINKO: No, the friends of mine who were anti-Shah - and there were a lot of them - never discussed it in religious terms. They were basically secular people who were opposed on political grounds because they wanted more freedom or they wanted no more censorship or things like that. Those were my friends. Now that's also a self-selected community.

Q: *No, but I mean this was true of... I think this is so typical of the Foreign Service type because you don't find, with the exception maybe of a devout Mormon or somebody like that who also is*

very limited in his sphere, we don't have those roots into the religious community, and neither do we... and I mean, anyway, we're Christian.

METRINKO: We don't associate religion and politics. No one associates religion and politics in that way in the United States. A foreign diplomat is not likely to come here and pay a call on the local cardinal. He might pay a call on one of the Christian Evangelists - maybe not.

Q: But also, I think it would be very hard for somebody from Great Britain, for example, to come and to understand Jerry Falwell or something like that, who from the historical perspective is a fundamental Christian of the far right. I mean they don't even speak the same language.

METRINKO: Now, I can go on later about the religious community and the history of it and what a profound effect that group has on politics later.

Q: We'll come back to that. So you're off to Tabriz, when?

METRINKO: Tabriz, the very end of the summer, early autumn of 1977.

Q: Let's talk about the setup there, the consulate. Who was consul, what did it do? And then we'll talk about the situation.

METRINKO: The physical setup of Tabriz was spectacular. It was one of the grand old consulates. The Tabriz consulate sat on approximately 15 acres of walled in garden. It had 1200 trees inside the wall. It had an Olympic-size swimming pool, a six-car garage, a guest house, an absolutely lovely home, and a beautiful office building surrounded by gardens and landscaping and tree-lined driveways, fountains, bird ponds, fish ponds, a volley-ball field, a field for playing football, a rose garden, grape arbors - the whole bit. It had been laid out by an American architect when America was flush with money, in the 1960s, laid out and set up principally, I think, at CIA pressure, because it was built to serve as a border-watching post. It was right on the Soviet border. I was only 45 minutes by car away from the USSR border. I was also fairly close to the Turkish border, about an hour and a half to two hours, and not that distant from the Iraqi border. It was a very strategic location. What happened, though, was that satellites popped up just after the place was built, and it had been designed for 10 American officers - it went down to one. They had two American officers the year before I got there. It was going to be sold, closed and sold off in a big land exchange deal by the embassy, which is why they hadn't bothered to staff it. But then the closure got delayed because the land deal started to fall through, and they suddenly had to find someone to put out there. There I was sitting in the Consular Section. They put me out there. It was a great job. Instead of going out for a few months - you know, to close the post and be a holding action - I went out there and the revolution started. And it started in Tabriz, which I guess was fortuitous.

Q: You were the only American there, right?

METRINKO: The only American State Department person. There was a small American detachment at the Air Force Base, and we also had an Army attaché there. They were separate.

We were all friends. I saw them socially. There was no sort of chain of command with us. We were all independent.

Q: Talk about Tabriz in the context of Iran at that time.

METRINKO: Tabriz probably had a population of close to a million people, which for Iran made it the second to third biggest city in the country. It would have been Tehran and then either Isfahan or Tabriz. Tabriz was a Turkish city. It had a very distinct identity. People in the city spoke Turkish. It had a heavy Armenian population as well. There were Christian churches there, as there were in most cities in Iran. But it was very non-Persian. It had traditionally been the capital of Azerbaijan. It had also, in the days of the Qajar dynasty, before the Pahlavi dynasty came into power, been the city where the crown prince would sit and rule until his father died in Tehran. So the city had a rather proud tradition of being the seat of the second person in power in the country. That had changed. One could say it was an industrial city, a lot of factories around it, oil refinery, good connections to all of western Iran, and it was the city where, if you were going by land to Europe, you had to pass through Tabriz, or rather the outskirts of it. The roads came through the city. At one point I think it had been far more important. Before airports started carrying passengers and freight, everybody came through Tabriz. Everything entering Iran from the west passed through Tabriz, through the bazaar there, through the roads there. Planes had done away with a lot of the heavier traffic, but still there was a fairly constant flow of people and goods through the city in both directions.

Q: At that time, up in that corner of Iran, was anything going on? You know, there had been Kurdish revolts and all that. One always says it's a rough neighborhood, and you have Turkey and Iraq and the Soviet Union and Iran all up there. Anything going on there at the time you got there?

METRINKO: The Kurds were quiet. They had not had any insurrections in quite a while. Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who was the last of the great Turkish guerilla leaders, had been defanged and actually he was living in Virginia at that point with one or two of his sons here. He died in the United States, in the year 1979. But he was quiet. The Kurds were quiet generally. Smuggling, of course, a lot of back and forth across the border. There is always smuggling, but in general no other activity from the Kurdish areas. Turkic or Turkish nationalism was not really a factor, I don't think. There was so much happening in the country, and there were so many alternative methods of expression that that had ceased to be important for a while. And the Shah was actually not bad in that sense. He treated all the other nationalities equally - rather dismally at times, but fairly equally. And his wife, of course, was half Turkish extraction, so that helped. Other than that, no, the borders were quiet. The people on the Caspian were quiet.

Q: Were the Soviets messing around at all?

METRINKO: The Soviets were not messing around. They had a major project, the electrification of the railway project. There was a rail line that went directly from Tabriz up to the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Trade Mission in Tabriz had approximately 200 Soviets attached to it, which made it fairly large as a trade mission, matched with the one American over at the consulate. But

the embassy really believed that nothing was happening in that whole part of Iran, because apparently the Shah had told them so, and that all power and all activity was centered in north Tehran, therefore.

Q: What about listening posts?

METRINKO: No, nothing was there.

Q: That was done on...

METRINKO: I didn't even have communications facilities. I had a telephone, and I eventually got a telex line, which I actually never used. By the time it came in it was moot.

Q: When you went out there, what were you doing?

METRINKO: I was told to go out, spend several months there, that the whole property was going to be sold, and that I was to be involved in wrapping it up, ceasing services, sort of closing down bits and pieces of the consulate, and helping the Department close up this post, and I would come back and they would give me another assignment in Iran. And that was fine, except that when I got there the land deal collapsed. The Iranian entrepreneur with whom the embassy had been dealing could not get his act together or his money together, and the big exchange, where he was going to take the land in Tabriz and give the embassy something in Tehran and put up a building for a new embassy or a new consulate, all this, it just never happened.

The revolution period started fairly quickly. I arrived in let's say September of '77, and the first major rioting broke out in February of '78, pretty close on.

Q: As you went there, talk a bit about getting settled in.

METRINKO: There was a very good FSN (Foreign Service National) staff at the consulate, both the support staff - the people who did the gardening (We had two full-time gardeners plus three part-time), a good guard staff of local employees, a good maid, a good cook, a very good driver, a very good admin person, a superb guy, who ran the whole compound as if it were his own house, and he'd been brought up on the compound because his father before him had worked there - and a very good, what we called then "provincial advisor." This was a senior FSN whose job was to give advice and guidance to the American officers. This one was great. He knew everybody in the area; he knew all the governors general; he knew all the police officials and everyone else; and basically he helped me go out to meet and brief people, introduced me to people. We had a small visa section that I also handled, which processed just enough visas in a normal workday - 15, 20, 30 visas a day - that it kept me in touch with a lot of people who needed visas. People would come to me because they had to. And also there was a strong feeling that the United States was Iran's biggest ally; therefore, the local officials, local business people who had a lot of back-and-forth with the United States would come through.

Q: Were you having a problem with refusing people there?

METRINKO: We had a refusal rate, but we never had the lines or the sort of pressure that came up. It was literally enough for one person to handle.

Now I had a good Iranian social life, because there were the normal people who always had the American consul to their homes, to their receptions. The officials were basically friendly. I was also correct in my dealings with them. I mean I met them. I would pay calls on them, introduce myself. I was responsible for the seven states of western Iran, so I had a huge consular district, which I visited fairly frequently. I would go off for a week at a time with a car and a driver, and when I would go off like that, normally somebody from the embassy would come and sit in my place for a week or so. It worked out well. I got to most of the provinces, many of the cities. In fact I started a regular routine of certain cities at certain times of the year, and I would also do visa work when I went to those cities, instead of having the applicants travel two or three days to get to Tehran. It worked out. I had a very pleasant time. People were receptive. I also had probably better contact with the normal people of the city than most of my predecessors. I spoke Persian and Turkish, and as far as I know I was the only one ever assigned there who spoke both languages.

Q: Well, did you receive any directions or instructions about what to do. I'm talking about other than political. I mean on reporting. Did you find the embassy said, "We want to know what's going on up there"?

METRINKO: Instruction from the embassy and contact with the embassy was minimal. No one in the course of my entire posting - well, how many years there - from September of '77 until February of '79 - I never had a visit from the Political Section. No one cared. The political section did not visit the western part of Iran. I had visits occasionally from other sections of the embassy. USIA, for example, came out quite often because they had professional duties out there. I'll tell you an incident about a phone call I had. I'd been out there for several months. It was early one morning. I was passing through the front hallway of the house. The phone rang. I walked over to pick it up. When the phone would ring at night or on holidays or before we turned the switchboard number over, it would ring in the house, and then it would become part of the switchboard over in the office building. But if I was there alone I would answer the phone. I picked up the phone, and on the other side was someone who introduced himself as the new DCM. And I was struck dumb because in my several months there I had never had a call from the front office of the embassy. So I almost didn't know how to react. But neither Mr. Miklos nor the ambassador ever thought there was a reason to call or contact one of their constituent posts. Never.

Now I had a short brief list from the Political Section of things they wanted me to... You know, the grand reporting plan. Prominent on that was evidence of Turkish nationalism, a couple of other things like that. How do the people in the western provinces feel about this or that? There was nothing significant, and it would all be considered minor reporting today.

Q: I'm probably belaboring the point because it does become very important, obviously. Was there anything, So how's the shah doing out there?

METRINKO: They weren't interested, and "how's the shah doing out there" did not become a subject for reporting until after the rioting in the city in February of '78. Then it became a subject for reporting. Up until then they would not have welcomed, nor did they ask for, nor did they want anything about local feeling toward the shah.

Q: Well, going back a bit, I don't remember where you... We talked about the effects of the "white revolution," or not...

METRINKO: We haven't talked about that.

Q: Okay - well, I mean, you'd been there before. Were you seeing an impact of what the shah was trying to do that was highly touted in the United States?

METRINKO: Yes and no. I can give you two stories about the white revolution from Iranians whom I knew well. One was from an old friend of mine who had been one of the Shah's tutors when the Shah was a young kid. Talking about the white revolution with this guy once, he looked at me and said, "Michael, you don't think that we really lost anything in the white revolution, do you? What happened was that we knew what was going to be happening, that the Shah was going to be confiscating or picking up large estates. In our case, we turned everything over to Imam Reza." This means the religious shrine in Mashad. He said, "We turned it all over to them, and then we rented it back in perpetuity from them for a small fee every year so that when the white revolution came, we owned nothing, lost nothing, kept everything." That was his example. He was a major landowner, too. The White Revolution hit the middle class of landowner and the sort of top rung of the peasant class who had bought land. It hit the village landlords, who maybe had one village or half a village. They lost. Their land was divided up. What you would see - and I saw this over and over... I have lots of pictures of this. What I used to see in the Peace Corps in the villages, were large homes which had been abandoned and had fallen into ruin, because they had been the village landlord's house. And a lot of resentment in that class of people... I can't think of what the right term. "Village landlord," I guess, would be the only thing I could say. That class deeply resented the white revolution. They had lost. And I remember a friend, an Iranian friend who was the president of one of the banks in my Peace Corps site, taking me out once to show me where he had been brought up, and we went into his old home in the village. His father had been the local landlord, and his grandfather. The home that they had had there had been a very large village home, but apparently a quite nice, spread-out villa. It was in a state of total ruin. The roof had collapsed, the windows were all gone. They'd abandoned the home because they no longer had the land to support it, and instead of becoming a landlord himself he had had to get a job in a bank. His father was sitting on the floor of his house in the town. People like that deeply resented the Shah and what he had done because they knew the Shah had not lost. The Shah himself did not lose money during the white revolution. He did not give up what he owned.

Q: It was not only the Shah, but the -

METRINKO: - the upper, upper crust.

Q: *The upper class around him.*

METRINKO: Iranians knew this. So what he had done was sacrificed a lot of support in the solid middle class at the time, the landowners, in order to pacify the United States and a couple of other Western countries.

Q: *Well, when you arrived, prior to the riots and all that, was this... One always hears about, one talks about the Iranians and the bazaaris. Was the merchant class an important factor? They would strike me as being a junction of all sorts of things going through there.*

METRINKO: Well, people talk about the *bazaris* as if they come in a strange color or can be identified because they have bubbles around their heads. It's probably a misnomer. *Bazari* means someone who is associated with the bazaar, the market. In some cities you had big covered markets - Isfahan, for example, that makes it a very good one. Khorramshahr had a small one. Tehran, or course, had an immense one. But these were the merchants and traders; they weren't necessarily the businessmen. Businessmen, the big entrepreneurs, had offices in office buildings. Now, communications were changing. The bazaars were *nexi* of old communications routes. That's where the camel trains went. That meant near a bazaar it was impossible to find parking along the narrow, winding roads, a sort of mass, a labyrinth of small alcoves and shops and little houses and little buildings all tied together under tin roofs. A lot of bazaar merchants were very, very wealthy, yes. A lot of people who were not in the bazaar, who were businessmen with offices in regular office buildings, with their fax machines and their telephones and their TVs, were also very wealthy and prominent. They both existed. They were often the same people as well. One brother might have his place in the bazaar, sit on the floor there in his stall and sell carpets, and the other brother might be sitting behind a big Louis *Quatorze* desk his office building two miles away using a fax and telephone. The one in the bazaar also had a fax and telephone, but it was probably a little bit dusty and behind a bunch of carpets. But they both existed and they were both part of the business scene.

The *bazaris* were concentrated more and they tended to be more involved in guilds and associations, which gave them discipline and, therefore, power. For example, you would have the rug merchants in one section of the bazaar and copper merchants in another section of the bazaar, people who dealt in towels in another section, people who dealt in wood furniture in another section. Because they were grouped in sections and because they had communication, because they tended to go to the same places to pray and because they could be reached as a group fairly quickly, they had discipline, and therefore the perception of power. Businessmen who were off in secluded offices could be reached by telephone, but there had been a breakdown of that visible type of unity.

Q: *Well, now, who were sort of the power brokers in the area where you were? The military? The Shah's governor?*

METRINKO: The government administration ran like this. There were in Azerbaijan Province, or in this case in East Azerbaijan Province, there were a fair number of military bases, each of which had a commander. There were a fair number of generals in the area. I knew several of

them. In Tabriz there was an army base. There was also an armory in Tabriz. There was an air force base out near the airport. We had an American military attaché, an Army guy, assigned to the military base in the city. We had several Air Force guys assigned to the air force base. There was a governor general appointed by the Shah. There was the equivalent of a county commissioner, *farmandar*, also appointed. There would be a city mayor, also appointed. There weren't too many elected positions - in fact, I can't think of any offhand. Members of parliament were elected. But there was only one political party, so the political party headquarters also, of course, had a head, also appointed. That was the power structure. Of course, the national police would have a general in charge of the police force there. SAVAK would have someone in charge of the SAVAK office. These were appointed career positions.

The interesting thing about the network of appointed government positions is that they weren't aloud to talk to each other very much. The Shah had a phobia about his generals meeting each other, and if you were assigned as a general to an army base or air force base, etc., you were not allowed to leave the base without the permission of the Shah's office. Now this is strange. This means that if you are a general and you are in charge of the base at, for example, Ajabshir, you couldn't leave it without getting permission directly from Tehran. I had a case once where a general from that particular base called me up, very pleasant, very apologetic, said that his son's school in America and the school required another affidavit of support from the father. The father had this all ready, the proper documentation, but he was supposed to sign it in front of me to get my notarial seal on it. Would I allow him to sign it in his own office and to send it to me with a driver? I said, well, why? Why don't you just drop it off some day when you're in Tabriz? And he said, "I'm not allowed to leave my base unless I get permission from the Shah, and I don't want to call his office up to get permission just for this. It's awkward, and they would have too many questions." So I said sure. I signed it that way. Consular officers are not supposed to do this, but in this case, I knew who he was.

Q: But this must have given the generals a great feeling of lack of trust.

METRINKO: Oh, absolutely. I'll give you another example. The governor general, a civilian, of the West Azerbaijan Province, based in Rezayeh, told me this story. Part of his province, the road through his province that connected all the cities of his province ran very briefly, just for a few kilometers, through another province. It ran through the Kurdish province, and in order to go to one of the cities in his province, he had to go, for a couple of kilometers, into another governor general's area and just continue on the asphalt highway. He did not have permission to do this. He could not leave his province, even if he were doing it in order to get to another part of his province. And he told me that in his time as government general he had never succeeded in getting permission to use that road to get to the last city in his province. Therefore, he had never seen that city. Same reason. The Shah...

Q: What were you getting at this point in your own mind? What were you picking up about the Shah as far as... Was it the Shah? Was it the group around him? Was he a weak man? Was he megalomaniac?

METRINKO: Well, I was picking up that Iran was a house of cards, that there were a great many

people, including people high up in the system, who did not like it, did not know what to do about it, but that the whole thing might come tumbling down - certainly that the Shah himself was no longer competent, that he did not have the training or the ability to run such a large country in the autocratic way he wanted to run it. Business people would tell me about having to bribe the Shah's brothers and sisters if you want to get permission for any major development plan. There were a lot of major factories in Tabriz. You were required to turn over a portion of the shares of the company or part of the deal, a slice of that pie, to a member of the Shah's family in order to get permission to get it done. The mayor of the city of Tabriz, brand new mayor, appointed by the Shah, in the early spring of 1978, when there still was not really... I was introduced to him in a military setting. There was a large lunch being hosted by the Iranian military officers of the city. I think it was in honor of the participants in an international weight-lifting championship or something like that. I'd been invited as one of the foreign diplomats, but most of the whole crowd of about 100 people at the lunch were in military uniform, and I was seated at a table with the few civilians. I was there. I think the Turkish consul was there, the Turkish consul being the only other diplomat. And I was seated directly across from the new mayor, who had just arrived and whom I had not yet met. We started to talk, and... Oh, no, I have to pinpoint this more directly - it was at the time that the Shah was going to be visiting the United States. And I don't recall when that was now exactly, but he was coming to visit Carter in the United States. But before the visit. And the new mayor, who did not yet know me, and surrounded at a table with military officials and other officials, looked at me and said, "Well, how are Mr. Carter and Mr. Shah doing together?" He said it like that. And I just looked at him because I thought he was making maybe a mistake in English, and I said, "Well, they seem to be doing quite well, and I understand the Shah's going to be visiting the United States soon." And the mayor looked up and said, "Good, then he'll have a place to escape to when he has to leave Iran." He was the mayor of Iran's number two or three city!

Q: Were you getting any information at this point of the mullahs? I mean, one hears about the tapes of Khomeini and all that. I mean was this a name that was being bandied about?

METRINKO: The first time, I think, that anyone in the 1970s reported the name of Khomeini in open telegram reporting was me. The name was used during the rioting in Tabriz in February of 1978. I could hear crowds screaming *Khomeini, long live Khomeini!* I had never seen his name in print. I didn't know who it was. I asked. I was told. I reported it in a long memo. In fact, it was an aérogram, I think, on the subject of what happened in Tabriz.

Q: Well, could you talk about that. I think we've come to that point now.

METRINKO: What had happened?

Q: Yes. I mean from your perspective.

METRINKO: I'll talk about it from my perspective then, and I'll tell you a story that I heard from an ayatollah many, many years later about the same incident. What happened was that in February of 1978, as we found out, 40 days after demonstrations and rioting had swept the city of Qom, the religious center, Tabriz started to riot. The rioting was unexpected. Buildings started to

burn. Crowds were running in the street. I had a lot of protection around the consulate, but we didn't know why it was happening or what was happening. We just knew there was rioting going on in the city. I had a security guard force, a personal security guard provided by the Iranian police of three Iranian sergeants. I sent them home because they had gotten so tense and worried looking that I didn't want to be responsible to them. And I figured if something was going to happen to the consulate, I'd have a better chance of getting away if I didn't have them getting in my way, so I suggested that they just go back to their own homes, that it was better for them not to be there. They left. The rioting went on for the next two or three days. I was reporting, of course, all the time by phone to the embassy from what I could see. It was not conducive to wandering around the city. You don't go out into riots. And nobody seemed to really know what was happening. But I was just hearing things from my friends. Why are they rioting? Well, it's against the Shah. Why? It was all very unclear then. But the rioting took 70 or 80 buildings. They burned them out. The political party headquarters was attacked, gutted, ransacked, looted. They got into the governor's palace and apparently surprised the governor in his pajamas. He ran out the back door. A large number of banks were burned, and the contents, the paper contents, the files of the banks, the desks, were thrown out into the street so that for several days you could see bank documents sort of blowing around the streets of the city. Why it had happened - ostensibly because they were honoring the anniversary of people who had been killed in Qom 40 days previously. The people who had been killed in Qom were being mourned. The demonstrations in Qom had been kept very quiet. There was nothing in the press about it. No one knew about this. Certainly I don't think the embassy knew about it. If they knew, it was only in the most... But Tabriz was too big to hide. It lasted too long, too many foreigners witnessed it, too many people had photographs, and the newspapers ran pictures of it, ascribing all the problems to hooligans in the city. I wrote a long report on the subject claiming that there were social reasons, economic reasons, and dissatisfaction reasons, mentioning the name of Khomeini, that he was a religious leader whose name the people were using when they were rioting. I talked about the population, the unemployment, other reasons that would lead to rioting like this. The embassy sent my report out, but the Political Section added a line to the bottom of it saying they did not agree with my analysis and that basically this was not portent of anything to come; it was just a sort of one-time deal. I've always treasured that comment by the Political Section of the embassy. I only saw it much later.

Q: You said you talked to a religious man, an ayatollah, many years later.

METRINKO: Well, back in the year, I think, 1986, I was on the Iran-Iraq Desk. I was the deputy director of Northern Gulf affairs, and we were talking to odd ayatollahs who would come to the United States and various other religious figures from Iran. A surprising number of people who portrayed themselves as representatives of Khomeini would come in. In this particular case, a very close associate of Khomeini's came in, Ayatollah Haeri. He was an ayatollah, who came here for medical reasons. I had asked before I pushed the visa through the system if he would be willing to meet with us when he arrived in the States. He agreed. This was a man who had spent 17 years of his life living in the same house as Khomeini. His father had been Khomeini's mentor. Khomeini had studied in the house with this man's father, who was one of the grand, grand ayatollahs. This man himself had become Khomeini's companion. His niece was married to Khomeini's son, Khomeini's son Mustafa. Now, there's a reason for mentioning the name.

Khomeini had two sons, Mustafa and Ahmad, Mustafa being the older. Mustafa died unexpectedly. He died very unexpectedly and in such an unusual way that the story immediately spread that he had been assassinated by the secret police, by SAVAK. This sparked rioting. The rioting ended up eventually sparking rioting in Tabriz which then was followed by the 40 day cycle. Many 40 days followed one another, so that soon you had constant rioting and the revolution. When this ayatollah was in Washington, we were having lunch at the Tivoli Restaurant in Rosslyn and we were talking about people I had known during the days of the revolution whom he also knew. I made a reference to one and the unusual way in which he had died, another ayatollah, and he said, "No, no, no, Michael, that's a story just like the story about Mustafa's death." And I said, "What do you mean, the 'story about Mustafa's death'? Mustafa, Khomeini's son, was killed by SAVAK, wasn't he?" And he said, "No, I was in the room when he died. Of course he wasn't killed by SAVAK." He said, "Michael, Mustafa was very fat man," and he stretched his arms out. "He was very, very fat, and when Mustafa ate, he would eat with both hands." And he pantomimed at the lunch table in the Tivoli Restaurant somebody pushing food into their mouth with both hands, and he said, "Mustafa was sitting there, we were eating together, and suddenly he clutched his heart and fell right into the food. He had a heart attack, and he died of gluttony." He said, "We were afraid to tell his father what happened, so we said SAVAK killed him. And then people started to protest, and they started to demonstrate, and suddenly we had a revolution." He said, "Michael, you don't think we planned the revolution, do you?" And was that the reason for it? No. Was it a spark? Yes.

Q: Was the consulate threatened at all during all this?

METRINKO: Oh, yes, sure, very often. During the initial period in February, no. We had enough police guards around, and the army was very unsure of itself, but they were all standing. The revolution had not yet spread to the army. This was brand new. This was the start of it. This was a full year before Khomeini returned, so the army was intact. The army stood guard; other people stood guard. And basically nothing happened to the consulate. During the course of the next year, of course, the consulate was hit, under attack severely once. Other times we'd be hit by demonstrators who sort of walked by or demonstrated in front. But severe attack - once, with one of the small buildings getting burned, too. And then finally in February of '79, the second attack that ended up with my going to prison in Tabriz.

Q: After the February '78 riots and all, streets are finally cleared and all, what were you doing? Going around finding out what happened, why?

METRINKO: That, but also business as usual. It was a very unusual aberration, we thought, initially. I believe that I was right that it was a reflection of many deep causes, economic, political, etc. etc., but as an incident it seemed to be over. It's just that it wasn't. It started happening again, and it happened more and more often in different cities of the country, and Tabriz was especially prone to this. But it did not stop normal life. I mean I had my parents visiting for three months in the year 1978, when shortly after they arrived martial law was imposed on the city. But I had other visitors all through the year. I had an inspection in the spring of 1978, when everything was bright and sunny and the garden was beautiful and all the roses were out. The inspectors had a good time in Tabriz. But at the same time, things were popping up

all over the country; it's just that the embassy didn't realize it because it was happening in places where we had no diplomatic presence, but it was happening and starting to happen more and more in towns and cities where we had people that witnessed it.

Q: Well, sort of business as usual... Tell me what you were doing, how things developed.

METRINKO: What was I doing? Well, I was getting to know my area, my consular district. I was traveling up and down the whole length and breadth of it. I had routine consular business every day. I had a very large number of Americans scattered around the consular district. I had a big contingent in the city of Khorramshahr; I had Americans in Rezayeh. I had Americans in Hamadan, Americans all over Tabriz.

Q: What were they doing?

METRINKO: A lot of them were there on contract. I had some American wives married to Iranian husbands. I think I got to know every single couple in my whole district like that.

Q: How were they doing? Because this is not confined... When I was in Saudi Arabia we've had this trouble of Americans marrying foreigners, particularly - well, almost anywhere - and having children, and breaking up with the husband, can't take the children. Were you having any of those problems?

METRINKO: I myself did not see that. What I had were perhaps 20, 30 couples, but in general they appeared quite happy. In general, the women spoke good Persian, the American girls, and they were from a surprisingly educated and well-off class of American girl, the ones that I knew. In fact, I'm still in touch with some of them, some of the couples who are still married. But as an example, we had an American woman doctor in Tabriz married to an Iranian doctor - people like that. It was quite a decent, sort of an impressive group of women. I know all the stories about American girls that go off and marry the oily foreigner and get treated badly and get beaten up and lose their babies, etc. There wasn't very much of that that I saw myself. Iranian law was heavily weighted against women even then, and we did almost nothing in weighing in against these laws. Not only the Shah could do no wrong, but if you were a woman in Iran and married, your husband had full control over your ability to travel. You could not apply for an exit permit or a passport without your husband's permission. If you were married to an Iranian man, you were *de facto* an Iranian citizen. It was conferred automatically, so the American girl from Oklahoma who married Ali and came to Tabriz, as soon as she entered Iran, she was an Iranian citizen and was subject to the rules about getting written permission from her husband to travel. Women were discriminated against in divorce, certainly, discriminated against in inheritance certainly. The idea of Iranian women at the time - even Iranian women - if there were a divorce did not gain custody of the children. They went to the man's family. If there was a death, if the husband died, the children would also go to the man's family, not to the wife's. But I don't recall any cases that we had where this was an issue.

Q: How about the other American who were on contract? Because one hears about in other places like, was it Isfahan or whatever... Well, the Bell Helicopter mechanics and that sort of

thing. Did you have any problems of that nature?

METRINKO: I had Bell Helicopter. There were a few problems. I would say today they were minor, and I don't really recall any. Nothing as exciting as some of the things in Isfahan. I had a fair number of American military personnel, one of whom had his spouse with him, but they were, again, a fairly good group, well tuned into the local society, with Iranian friends, spoke a little bit of Persian, no problem [communicating] at all - just the opposite, pretty responsible and respectable. And that included a network of what we called "team houses," houses that were occupied by American military personnel spread around various towns and cities of the country. We had several of those, but again pretty much settled into local society. Other American presence? Basically that was it. We had people assigned to the refinery, a number of American teachers. In fact, another Foreign Service colleague of mine is someone who started out being a teacher in Tabriz for the Iran-America Society. But no great difficulty with the American community at all. That was a pretty sharp group of people that were there for good reasons.

Q: How did things develop, then?

METRINKO: In what sense?

Q: Well, I mean you were going to have a revolution and you were going to end up in jail in a while, and I mean how did things -

METRINKO: Why did it go from the rosy rose garden to -

Q: Yes.

METRINKO: I keep asking myself. I was promised a... The demonstrations spread. There was extreme dissatisfaction with the Shah. People thought initially that Carter was opposed to the Shah. People in Iran who disliked the Shah saw this as an opportunity. I think if you were a revolutionary it was basically serendipity. The Shah was losing it. He was feeling uneasy because he knew he had cancer - maybe. His family's ability to be corrupt had reached a saturation point. His brothers and sisters were scraping every dollar they could get out of everybody. The channels of communication were improving, which meant that, I think, a lot of people were getting information that they hadn't had access to. And there must be a certain point at which, when you've sent a lot of your country's students overseas, point of return at which what they've learned there has started to have a real effect on them and on their peers back in Iran. Enough thousands of students have left Iran and had returned with very different feelings about the Shah's government, perhaps, than when they had left Iran, that it was all reaching a bubbling point. And you had this very charismatic, very strong religious figure in Iraq, the Ayatollah Khomeini, who was there to pick up the reins. So it was all coming together.

Q: Well, were you seeing a change?

METRINKO: Oh, sure, yes. More and more open comments by people, a lot of open comments. People starting to talk openly about their dissatisfaction. If the Shah would change, or if he would

allow a constitution, if he would allow a free parliament, if he would allow this or that. And then, slowly, people were talking about life without a Shah, which had been unthinkable for a long time, and scraping up old grievances.

Q: Was there any thought of, talking about life without a Shah, what would replace it?

METRINKO: No one that I remember talked about replacing the Shah with a theocracy. But then again, I wasn't involved in religious circles. I was involved in secular circles and people who were religious even, the ones I knew, would never have thought of replacing the Shah with a religious Shah, a religious autocrat. It just wasn't part of their thinking - as it was not part of the thinking of many of the other religious leaders in Iran.

Q: Well, then, sort of step by step, when do we sort of come to the next development?

METRINKO: Developments, well, you had this pervasive spreading of anti-Shah discontent, anti-government discontent, even among members of the government. That was happening. As more and more people started to speak, others found their courage to speak or to think about alternative forms of government. That was happening. There had been a very big breakdown of Iranian society, Iranian culture, that had taken place in the earlier '70s because of the oil money. An awful lot of people had become rootless. They no longer had connections with the villages or the small towns because they had left to find jobs in the bigger cities. If you were on the streets of Tehran, if you walked down the streets, you could see hundreds and hundreds of people who were milling aimlessly around the streets. They had nothing to do. They were probably job hunting, but in the meantime they were walking, walking slowly, just sort of staring around them. A lot of these were young guys who'd go out into the streets like that. But you had the fuel to immediately set off a demonstration in any city on any city street. It was always there, sort of like people smoking around gasoline tanks. Eventually it's going to catch. These guys who were walking around, they were the gasoline. All you needed was a spark.

Q: What?

METRINKO: They were there, that was the fuel. And once you'd start a little wildfire, it's very hard to control.

At the same time, there were other interesting things happening. One of the old SAVAK leaders, the guy who was in charge of the United States, Rafi-Zadeh, but who was involved in SAVAK during this period, in his book, wrote about how SAVAK itself would create incidents during this period and spark demonstrations so that they could get the Shah to give them more power and more money. And he talked about SAVAK people going out and smashing car windows and starting little fires so that the Shah would think he really needed SAVAK. That was happening. It wasn't all just unplanned on the streets. There were people who planned demonstrations.

I talked to - this is going to sound... It's good street tactics. After the revolution - the revolution's still going on, but after Khomeini came in and we were starting to cozy up to the new revolutionary government - I had a lot of talks with people who had fought on the streets, fought

in the revolution as members of various groups. I remember one long conversation one night in Tehran with a guy who had been part of a leftist sort of guerilla group. What his group would do when they wanted to set off an incident, they would infiltrate the soldiers. I mean, Iranians all served in the military, so Iranians knew how to be a soldier. It was easy to buy uniforms. You could go to a tailor and have one made. You could buy them. A lot of Iranians had their uniforms tailored for themselves rather than take the stock issue, so this was not a problem. And all you had to do was shave your head, put on a uniform that you got from the tailor, and you were a soldier again. Well, these guys from this particular group would infiltrate groups of soldiers, especially during periods of confrontation with crowds, and they would set off the first spark. They would shoot. So the crowd would respond, and then the soldiers would respond against the crowd. But a lot of that was set off by revolutionary infiltrators.

Q: How about in Tabriz? What was happening in Tabriz?

METRINKO: More and more chaos in the streets, factory closings, strikes, universities and schools are being closed. And a whole series of 40 day events followed one on the other but more than every 40 days, where there would be a little flare-up, something would get burned, something would get smashed, a car would be overturned, tires would be burned in the streets, marital law would come in.

Q: Well, now, you're a young man speaking Farsi and Turkish, and I would think you would have had a bunch of other young men, young women, who would - you know, you're a foreigner, but you can talk to us, so you would have a group.

METRINKO: Yes, I was out every night. Or they were over at my house every night.

Q: Yes, it's natural. They want to see what you're doing, and they exchange things. I would think you would be sort of a center, a beehive of activity, at least -

METRINKO: I think I was either out or had people over like that to my house every single night of the next year and a half.

Q: Well, what were you getting from that?

METRINKO: Just as I've said, increasing anti-Shah sentiment, including from people who had every reason to support the Shah's government, but they wanted something else. They wanted the Shah out of their lives, or they wanted him castrated so that he couldn't affect them any more. They were tired of all the hand-clapping, tired of all the "long live the Shah."

What I did in order to meet a lot of younger people, I started meeting them at sports activities, I started meeting them because they came to the consulate, or I'd meet one who would introduce me to others; but what I also did, the consulate had a huge swimming pool, an Olympic-size swimming pool, dressing room, bathrooms, etc. Now my predecessors had always used it either for themselves or they had used it for the foreign community. There was a small British community especially that used to love coming over to the consulate and using the pool and the

tennis courts. I thought this was a bit silly. I saw no reason at all to run the American consulate for the benefit of the British expatriate community. So what I did was to get in touch with two swimming coaches from the local high schools, and I turned over the whole section of the consulate recreation facilities, the swimming pool, the wading pool for children, the tennis court, which was separate from the house - I turned that over to these guys and opened it up to people in the community. We passed out word in the immediate geographic area of the consulate that anyone who wanted to use the pool, the tennis court, could do so on certain days of the week. I think it was on four days of the week. And we had family days and we had bachelor days because Iranian families, married women, etc., young women could not mix with Iranian bachelors. So I had it set up differently, and basically turned it over to the coaches to run, with a lot of help, of course, from the FSN staff, who were aghast that I had done this. And the British community was not only aghast but desolated and incensed that I had done this. But because of this I had a constant stream of young, old, every type of Iranian coming into the consulate grounds and using the recreational facilities. I figured I couldn't use the pool at all - I was always in the office - so why have it filled with all those cubic tons of water. It worked out well. It was used for a long summer, a very, very long summer, a beautiful summer, and 50 or 60 young kids from the area, according to the coaches, learned how to swim in that period.

Q: Well, we're going to stop in a minute, but I just thought I'd fill in this. What would you reply - now here you are, you're the American representative in this area, people are getting more and more... as more and more discontent, our official policy was strong support of the Shah and all, and the Shah and the embassy were far away - what were you saying?

METRINKO: And I was getting precious little guidance. Basically, I was trying to play it cool. I would sit and listen. If they were very, very close friends - and this means if they were friends I had had from Peace Corps days, because my Peace Corps site had been in that district, too, and they were people I really liked and trusted - then I would tell them how I felt about the Shah. But if I gave American policy it was support for the government and people of Iran. It got to be a bit embarrassing towards the middle of the year, but that was the American policy.

Q: Well, Mike, we'll stop at this point, and just to put where we are, you've taken us up to really through well certainly through almost through '78, would you say? Or when did Khomeini come back?

METRINKO: Khomeini came back in February of 1979. We want to talk about a couple of things that went before then.

Q: Okay, would you put down what you want to talk about?

METRINKO: I want to talk about Jaleh Square, and the impact that had in Tabriz. I want to talk about the Cinema Rex fire in Abadan and the impact that had in Tabriz, what they meant for the revolution, and some of the strange circumstances that surrounded both incidents. And then I want to talk about the report that I had of mass defection at the Tabriz Air Force Base and how the embassy responded when I passed on the news.

Q: All right. Well, we'll do that, then, and continue this. Great.

Today is the 23rd of June, 2000. Mike, we're going to talk a little about some of the things that you were involved in, reporting, observing on, in Iran really before Khomeini came back. So that was the air force defection, the Cinema Rex, and there was a demonstration in a square, I think.

METRINKO: The first is an easy one, Jaleh Square. Jaleh Square is a large public square in Tehran. There was a confrontation there in 1978, and during the confrontation a large number of people were killed by soldiers. Soldiers opened fire, shot into the crowd, and I've heard all sorts of varying estimates. I don't know the number now, but the estimates were significant. Because of what happened at Jaleh Square, the country shifted very perceptibly against the Shah, against the Shah's army, and towards Khomeini. Among the rumors that started immediately because of Jaleh Square, was one that the Shah had brought in Israeli soldiers and they had done the actual shooting. This rumor spread through the country, and this kind of marked a real watershed in the way people looked at the Shah. What they would say was, he couldn't get Iranian soldiers to shoot Iranians, so he brought in soldiers from Israel. A couple of weeks, maybe a month later, in Tabriz, I had a new guard detachment assigned to protect the perimeter of the consulate. And these guys used to come and sit in the house, and we'd play cards etc. They'd use the washing machine, the dryer, and basically they were always around. I've noted that the consulate was a large area. They had to patrol the whole inside, outside perimeter while they were staying in the guest house at the consulate. Well, I was sitting playing cards one night, and I noticed that two of them sitting there, there were patches on their fatigues that had been taken off. I could see where there had been something on their shoulders, and it had been removed. And just out of curiosity, I said, "What's missing from your uniforms? What did you remove?" And one of them laughed, and he said, "Oh, we had a lot of trouble with this. We had a custom in the army where each platoon would adopt the colors of a foreign country and use it as a patch on their uniforms." For example, there were soldiers whose platoons used the American flag or the Norwegian flag or the Italian Flag, and he said, "Our platoon had the Israeli flag, and we were assigned to Jaleh Square. We weren't allowed to talk to people, and when the shooting started and we got involved in the shooting, everyone thought we were Israelis because they could see the symbols on our uniforms. So afterwards, when we got out of that trouble and we were reassigned to this province, to Azerbaijan Province, our commander told us to remove those colors from our uniforms." But that was the reason that that rumor started, and just the fact that somebody was wearing the flag of another country or a symbol of another country proved important in switching public opinion against the Shah.

Q: Oh, boy!

METRINKO: Simple things. That was one. Cinema Rex. The Rex Cinema was a movie theater in the town of Abadan.

Q: This is a big refinery town.

METRINKO: It's a big refinery town in Khuzestan Province, a southern Province. Khuzestan Province had been rather uninvolved in the revolution. It had been quite quiet there, possible

because people were well employed, there was lots of work, the economies were going full-tilt, it was an Arab ethnic province, not particularly Persian, more Arab. So even the religious leaders there were not as tied to Qom and other places and to Khomeini as they might have been. It was also a rather secular city because of all the oil workers who were there. One evening, the Rex Cinema caught fire when there was a movie going on. When people tried to get out, they discovered the doors had been locked on the outside. Everyone in the theater burned to death. A couple of hundred people died. There was an immediate outcry that the fire had been set by the Shah's secret police. Now using logic, there was no reason for them to have done so, but hysteria, the story went all around the country that the Shah's SAVAK had done this. They were responsible for the death of all these people, and various explanations were given - that there was an anti-Shah rally going on, the film being shown was anti-Shah, etc., etc. But the fact was that a great number of people burned to death, and had been locked inside the theater. Now, immediately, of course, the theater manager said that the reason the doors had been locked on the outside was to prevent people from sneaking in and seeing the movie for free, but they running from the lynch mobs and they didn't have too much time to talk. When Khomeini came back, he sent down, of course, a very pro-revolutionary governor general to Khuzestan Province, and a good friend of mine became the new mayor of Abadan. He went down with the general. His first priority, he was told by the new governor general of the province, was to completely investigate what had happened in the Cinema Rex fire. His conclusion when he completed the study was that the fire had been set by revolutionaries, members of the clergy, or people acting under the direction of members of the clergy as an attempt to stir people up against the Shah. When he presented the study to the revolutionary governor general, he was told to keep the report sealed, never to refer to it again, and to forget that it had been done - period. But that too, that particular fire, really caused a lot of bloodshed. And I guess people understand now that it had probably been set by the revolutionaries themselves.

Q: Were they setting it all as a protest against secular things like movies?

METRINKO: Who knows? Against the idea of the movie - they were trying to burn down cinemas all over the country. The fact that there were a couple of hundred people locked inside and that they turned out to be the brothers, cousins, uncles of the people who were setting the fire, that was something else again. It was unfortunate.

The last incident, the report of a defection at the air force base in late 1978. A friend of mine who was an Iranian assigned to the office of the commander of the air force base in Tabriz called me up one day on a Friday and he said he had to see me immediately. He had something he wanted to tell me. I invited him over to the house, and he came over. He was in the inner-circle staff of the base commander, and he told me that something very unusual had happened - it was the local Sabbath, so [part of] the base had been closed for normal business - and that a large number of pilots had walked in, stood in line, and one by one handed in their resignations, saying they could no longer support the present government. He said the base commander had received all these resignations and asked the pilots to wait. He had then called up a friend of his who was the base commander at Shiraz, where the same thing was occurring. Pilots were handing in their resignations saying they couldn't support the Shah's regime anymore. And my friend told me that these two generals had decided to go along with the pilots. The commander in Shiraz and the

commander in Tabriz asked the pilots to withdraw the resignations and just hold tight until they could take over the base, until they could really switch, when it became critical at the time. The pilots had agreed. They had withdrawn their resignations, and the whole thing was being kept very, very quiet.

Well, I had to report this to the embassy. There was only one way I could do it. There was an old way of communicating information called one-time pads. I don't know if you-

Q: *Oh, yes.*

METRINKO: I used a one-time pad and sent a message, called it in by phone. I had never done one of these before, so it took me a long time to write it. The person on the other end who had to decipher it had never deciphered one before, and it took him an equally long time to decipher it. But they got the message. He called up the DCM and took the message to the DCM's house. The DCM was playing cards with a group of other people. They contacted the ambassador. The ambassador read the message and turned to the U.S. military commander there and asked him if he could get corroboration of the message. They called the base at Tabriz. The one who answered the phone was the American bartender at the base bar, and the base bar - this was the bar in the U.S. Air Force team house at the base, where they ran an open bar, even in the middle of the revolution, in the middle of all the anti-American uproar that was going on in the country, they had an open bar to serve alcohol at the American tea house on the base, a base which, of course, had just seen a massive resignation of people opposed to the government. The Air Force guy told me this story later. General Gast said, "Sergeant, the American consul in Tabriz just sent a message in to the embassy here saying there's been a mass resignation of air force personnel. Do you know anything about this?" The guy said, "No, Sir, I haven't seen anything like that, Sir." He turned to the guys in the bar and said, "Does anybody here know anything about a lot of pilots resigning today?" And the people at the bar, of course, all said, "Man, what are you talking about?" Of course, the pilots who had resigned that day were highly unlikely to be sitting at a bar drinking alcohol. So he went back to the phone and said, "No, general, nothing at all like that here." The general went back to the ambassador and said, "My people in Tabriz totally deny that any such thing happened." And I got summoned to Tehran a couple of days later by the ambassador. I assumed he wanted to discuss the message and what to do about it. Instead, I was threatened with being thrown out of the country if I ever started a rumor like that again - period. I went back to Tabriz.

Q: *The ambassador at that time was -*

METRINKO: - Sullivan. And I was accused of starting rumors, being anti-Pahlavi government etc., and reporting lies, and of being unprofessional. Of course, about a month and a half later, when the commander of the air force base arrested the army commander and a couple of other major military figures in Tabriz and sent them off to die in Tehran, and when that air force commander became the first Minister of Defense under Khomeini, people chose not to remember that I had already written a month and a half ago that he had turned coat. I later asked, by the way, because I met other officers who had taken part in that, who had been involved in Tabriz, and I asked them what had happened that day (this was way after Khomeini came back and the

government had changed), and I was told that everything I had reported was absolutely accurate, and they couldn't understand how I had known about it because it was being kept secret.

Q: Did you feel there that our army people in Tabriz, the ones that you knew, were on good enough terms to... Were there people who might have known about this? Or were they pretty well isolated?

METRINKO: I would think they were pretty well isolated. To the best of my knowledge, not one of them spoke Persian or Turkish, and so they could only communicate in English. Some of them were pretty good guys. I'm not saying that they weren't - especially the Army attaché was a great guy, and pretty much clued in - but they were not supposed to do reporting and they were not trained reporting officers. They were there for their technical skills, not as political reporters. And they really did not have a great sense of what was happening in the country.

Q: There was a politico-military officer, wasn't there, at the embassy?

METRINKO: In Tehran? I've no idea. In the entire time that I was in Tabriz, for the whole two years, the whole period leading up to the revolution, no one from the... The DCM came once or twice to Tabriz, but no member of the Political Section ever came to Tabriz. No member of the Pol-Mil Section ever came to Tabriz. No member of the Economic Section ever came to Tabriz. Or to western Iran as far as I know.

Q: Why not?

METRINKO: They weren't very good officers, and they didn't speak Persian, and they didn't like to travel. And they thought that everything was happening in the capital in Tehran or at the Imperial Tennis Club. It's quite simple. How's that for being harsh? It's, I still think, true.

Q: Shall we move to Khomeini coming in, or is there anything else we should talk about? Was Khomeini a name? We may be repeating ourselves a little bit. I heard later that this sort of thing was really part of the revolution. I was waving an audiocassette, I heard that tapes were sent of Khomeini's sermons and all that. What are we talking about? Early '79?

METRINKO: Khomeini returned to Iran in February of 1979. The revolution really started approximately a year before that.

Q: Were Khomeini's words out there by this time?

METRINKO: In a report that I wrote in February of 1978, I referred to Khomeini and said that was the name that people on the streets were chanting - "Khomeini return" and "Long live Khomeini." And so his name was very well known. Even I had heard it. Very well known at least a year before that to the public. And I'd say to just everybody in the public, whether pro or con.

Q: Well, what happened when he came back February of '79? What was the reaction in Tabriz?

METRINKO: It's a bit complicated. First, when he returned, the armed forces did an official surrender of all their powers to the new revolutionary government and to Khomeini.

Q: When did the Shah leave? Had the Shah left some time -

METRINKO: Sure, the Shah left several weeks before that.

Q: Let's talk about the Shah leaving. How did this play out in Tabriz?

METRINKO: When the Shah left, there was a fair amount of euphoria expressed by the people on the street. When we say the people of Tabriz, Tabriz is a city of a million people. There was a public reaction in the streets by the pro-revolutionaries. What people felt in their hearts, of course, is impossible to know. I think a lot of people were still afraid of this sort of unrest and the loss of power, loss of security. Tabriz had undergone an occupation by anti-Shah forces following World War II. Right after World War II, when the Soviets were still refusing to leave Iran, Tabriz had been taken over by a Turkish nationalist movement, and the Shah's army had had to recapture Tabriz. It took quite a while, too. It wasn't a one-day or one-month thing. A lot had happened in the city during that takeover, and a lot of the people did not want to repeat it. A lot of people had been executed, and a lot of people had been killed. There had been a certain amount of destruction. So older people, anyone who remembered World War II, was sort of unwilling to go through that again. They may have felt very queasy about the change in government. Younger people, pro-Khomeini kids, pretty much of a generational split, pro- and anti-Khomeini. Older ones tended to not approve.

Q: How about the younger ones who weren't very religious?

METRINKO: It didn't matter if you were religious or not. If you were young, then you were a revolutionary. I can't think of anyone who was young and not revolutionary. It just went without saying. It was part of the mystique of the man. And he had appeared to be a man for all seasons and all political thoughts. He had not said he was coming back as a religious leader and as ruler of Iran. He was coming back to retreat to Qom and to give spiritual advice to people. He wasn't coming back to be a government. He did, in fact, return and take over the government, but no one could know that. Even his followers may not have realized he was going to take over. It took him many, many months to consolidate his political power, and that started to turn many younger people off, Mujaheddin, Fedayeen, other groups like that. But in the beginning, when he was still being brought back, and when he was just arriving in Tehran or Iran, he was not... all the younger people were for him.

Q: What happened in Tabriz when the Shah left and Khomeini came in?

METRINKO: The Shah left, and there were small parades and demonstrations on the street, lots of people going around and shooting guns up in the air saying, you know, "Long live Khomeini!" "Death to the Shah!" - that sort of thing. And lots of people passed by the consulate during that. My own guards at the time were Kurdish who were very upset and angry. But it passed.

Q: They were upset and angry at the -

METRINKO: They were very pro-Shah, personally pro-Shah. And they couldn't understand why he had left. In fact, they had a confrontation at the gate with a group of demonstrators who were there to say "Death to the Shah." They had a confrontation at the gate and were about to open fire. I stopped it.

Q: Well, were you getting anything from the embassy as this developed?

METRINKO: Oh, there was nothing. The embassy was caught up in its own problems. I had been given a choice. Long since, I had been told by our DCM that I could leave there whenever I wanted, and that I should head for the Turkish border and not come back to Tehran. I had told him that I would stay in Tabriz until I could get my prisoners out of the Tabriz prison. And he understood that. I just felt responsible for these American prisoners.

Q: How many were there then?

METRINKO: I had four Americans, two West Germans, an Austrian, and an Australian.

Q: These were business people?

METRINKO: They were students, basically, from Europe who had smuggled cars into Iran in order to sell the cars to a car gang there. And it was easier for foreign students with foreign passports to bring them in than for Iranian students. So they used foreign students to bring in the cars. And they were in prison for close to a year at the time, getting on to a year.

Q: What were you doing for the prisoners?

METRINKO: What was I doing for the prisoners? I'm not sure if we talked about the prisoners before or not, why they were in prison and the fact that it was the police that were actually doing the car smuggling.

Q: No, I don't think so. Why don't we talk about it?

METRINKO: What happened was on one day in the spring of 1978, I had the inspectors arrive in Tabriz to do the inspection of the consulate. My mother and father had just arrived on a visit the day before. My cousin and her fiancé were arriving that day, the same day as the inspectors, and I also had house guests from the embassy. The whole group got together. We were sitting in the living room of the consulate having lunch, and I had a phone call from the police saying they had just arrested two Americans. I went down with the... You know, one of the inspectors wanted to accompany me. We went down to the police station, and indeed, there were two American boys who had been arrested. They had been picked up because their passports looked strange. We looked at the passports, and it was quite clear that something had been scraped or deleted from the passport. And I started to talk, and they immediately started talking about the whole story, how they had answered an ad in the paper in West Germany, and had agreed to drive cars in a

convoy back to Iran. They were paid, I think, \$200 apiece plus their road expenses, and they were going to be given tickets to leave Iran at the end of their trip there. They got to Iran; they turned over their passports and the German cars they had brought in to a dealer at the Tehran airport, and then instead of getting on a plane and leaving quickly, they decided to cash in the tickets and they were going to go back slowly by train. Well, unfortunately for them, the customs people at the border of Iran and Turkey weren't clued in to this little gambit and had stopped them when they were doing a customs check because the passports looked funny and sent them back to be questioned by the police authorities in Tabriz, the nearest big city. And they ended up in my lap. And it was clear what was happening. They had brought in cars, smuggled them in. Even though they would not have called it smuggling, every else did, including their lawyers. I went back, got rid of the inspectors the next day - that was fine - and sent the letter, actually, the draft of an article, to the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper in Germany suggesting they run it to stop other Americans from getting involved in this scam. I was, of course, in touch with the embassy. The *Stars and Stripes* ran the article, said it was a warning from the American consul. It did not stop a couple of other Americans from getting involved and getting arrested the same way. And the other Europeans and the Australian I mentioned. They were in jail, unfortunately, during the very time that the revolution was brewing. And there wasn't enough interest in the prosecutors to really investigate this crime. Also, things were starting to collapse, and bits and chunks of the justice system were falling down, falling apart. It was like pieces of an old building. There were so many people being arrested in the demonstrations that the fact that there were a couple of foreigners, a couple of Americans, in prison meant nothing. There were massive political problems going on in the country, and also, as I found out later in the year from my police officer friends in Tehran, the real reason the police weren't investigating this was that it was the police that were behind the crime.

Q: These would have been the Shah's police.

METRINKO: The Shah's police. It was a great way to make money. And my friend, who was not involved, knew some of the people who were. It was like an open secret in the police force. What was happening was that if you bought a foreign car in Iran, the customs and duties levied on the car were extremely high. You'd pay 100 or 200 per cent more than the value of the car. So if you bought a Mercedes-Benz that cost \$15,000 in Germany at the time, then you would pay at least that amount. Thus, a \$10,000 or \$15,000 European car came to \$20,000 or \$30,000 or even more in Iran. This made cars extraordinarily prohibitive, but Iranians, who were status-conscious, wanted foreign cars. The police in the traffic division had access, of course, to records about which cars had entered the country and had customs duties paid on them. They also had access to the records which showed which cars had been destroyed in automobile accidents. Now, they put two and two together fairly quickly and realized that once a car was destroyed, it was wiped off the books. Customs was no longer due on that car, since the customs had already been paid. So they got lists together of high-end cars which had been destroyed but which the customs duties had been paid on by the owners, and they started ordering similar cars - make, model, year - from Germany. For example, white Mercedes-Benz from 1974, four-door sedan, Mercedes-Benz 2000 - whatever. They would order these cars from car dealers in Germany, had them brought in. They had front men, of course, who would take the cars from the students who brought them in. If a foreigner used his passport to get a car in, the fact that he had the car would be stamped on his

passport and then he was given a certain number of days or weeks to take it out of the country or to pay customs on it. Now they were bringing these cars in as tourists so they wouldn't have to pay customs. They would turn them over in the airport parking lot to a front man, who would also take their passports and with varying degrees of skill, remove the marks in the passport which indicated the person had a car. You could do this skillfully, or you could botch the job. By the time my four Americans and the four Europeans were arriving, Australian and three Europeans, the person who was cleaning the passports for the gang was botching the job, just sort of scraping things out of the passport and erasing it, not doing a skillful job at all. So the eight people got picked up. The police, on the other hand, weren't eager to investigate the ring because the ring was them. Therefore, these guys were going to sit in prison, uninvestigated, for the rest of their lives, and the police...

Well, the revolution was also occurring. I was visiting them regularly, sending my FSNs in to visit them, providing them letters, this that and the other thing. One of them had a relative who was in the House of Representatives, who was a congressman from Texas. One of them had a father who was an Army colonel in Germany. The Army colonel's response, by the way, when I informed him that his son had been arrested, was, "I showed my son the article you had written that was in the *Stars and Stripes*, and he told me he was going to Iran to take a car there and he told me not to worry about it - everything was taken care of. Let him learn his lesson."

Q: Sometimes in a fluid situation, foreigners... the consuls' best ploy is that after everything has died down is to say, "Let's get these guys out of there. They're a pain in the neck for you, a pain in the neck for me. Why don't we just let them drift away?"

METRINKO: I tried that.

Q: When I was in Saigon, I was letting people... I mean, I worked with the prison authorities, they would send them to me, I would send them on ships to work their way to the United States and tell them to be sure to show up when the South Vietnamese authorities would call them for their trial.

METRINKO: I got one of them out like that. He was up in the prison in Baku, and that worked. He got out on bail and was told to show up again for trial. He never returned. The others were a problem. The jail in Baku, no one ever paid attention to it, nobody even knew it was up there. It was a small town. One could deal with the authorities there. The prison in Tabriz was a different situation. It was very closely watched. It was filled with political prisoners at this point. Everybody was looking at it and observing everything in it. The prison authorities could not have released Americans and Europeans without a hell of a lot of trouble ensuing for them. And also, the justice system, like I said, was disintegrating around us. I realized nothing was going to get them out when I went in to prison one day and... They were all, by the way, assigned to the hospital part. I had gotten them into the hospital wing of the prison instead of the main area. It was far more comfortable. But when they told me that an old man had said to say hello to me, that he knew me and was in prison with them in the hospital wing, and I said what's his name, they told me the name, and I realized it was the uncle of the empress of Iran who was sitting in prison, and the Shah was still in Tehran! When the Shah's wife's uncle is in prison, you know

things are really going bad for the authorities.

Q: By the way, were you looking after the other Europeans?

METRINKO: Oh, sure. I had contacted their embassies immediately, had told them what was happening. And sometimes the Australian would come in or the Austrian consul, but basically I was looking after them too. I would go and visit them and I'd call up the Austrian, I'd call up their embassies and tell them what was happening. As the revolution got very hot and heavy, the prisoners got themselves into a real quandary. Their rooms in the hospital wing were being used by the Iranian prisoners as a place to store weapons. Yeah. And I knew this, and all I could tell them was, "Don't tell the authorities. If you get caught by the authorities, say you had no idea what was happening, that you didn't know the stuff was there. They won't do anything much to you all," and I said, "If I turn this information over to the authorities, everybody in the prison will know it was you who told me, and you'll get killed by the prisoners. Just play it cool, live with it, there's nothing you can do about it, and this government is dead anyway, it's going." I also by this point - this is January of '79, roughly - I knew the prison was going to be broken into. My revolutionary friends told me they had plans to break into the prison. I had done everything I could to ensure the safety of the Americans in the prison. I knew that in times of revolution and prison breaks you can often get your Americans out. It happened in Lebanon. It happened in other places. So I went to the prison on what turned to be one of my last visits and said, "Look, guys." I gave them all small maps to my house that I had done. Each one had his own map. I just said, "I will stay in Tabriz until you get out of prison. Once you get out, don't join in the fighting, just get out the door as fast as you can and get to my place, and then we'll get you all out of Iran." Well, within a short amount of time, the prison indeed was broken into. Four of them showed up at my house that day. In their prison uniforms, uniforms that said "Tabriz Prison." And the other four showed up the next day, and I signed a receipt for them. They were delivered by one of the local mullahs, who had found them wandering in the streets and had kept them for one night and then arranged to deliver them to me. Unfortunately, by that point it was impossible to leave the city of Tabriz, because when the prison had been broken into, the city had gone totally crazy. The armory had also gotten broken into. Everybody was running in different directions. City officials were getting arrested. There was absolutely no law and order. So we could not get on the highway in an official car with diplomatic plates and try and get to the Turkish border. They simply stayed there with me in Tabriz.

Q: To finish off that part, how did that play out?

METRINKO: How did that play out? I had guards for couple of days from one of the local mullahs, and then it got really bad because there was so much gunfire going over the city. The compound adjoining the consulate compound was the property of a family associated with SAVAK, the secret police. They were holed up in that compound, a number of them, and they had a running gun battle going with members of the revolutionary forces. So we had running gun battles going over the compound for that day or two. We just basically kept our heads low, stayed inside the house. We were stuck in the basement during this period. There was fighting going on all around the city. The army had dissolved. The air force, or course, had gone over to the side of the revolution, *really* over to the side of the revolution, and so they arrested everyone else in

uniform. People were being arrested all throughout the city. Phone service was spotty. I could not get through to the embassy. This is the time when the embassy had been taken also, February 14th. And the only people I was in contact with - I had a radio that allowed me to get in contact with the U.S. armed forces net in Kuwait. I could talk to a military attaché in Kuwait. He was the only person I was really in touch with for about two days or so. I knew that I was supposed to leave and get up towards the border; I just couldn't do it. There was no physical way to do it. And I think it was either February 14th or 15th, the consulate was attacked by a group of guys in air force uniforms. They used their G-3s, a sort of Uzi-type automatic, on all the windows in the consulate, so all the windows went down. They arrested me and the eight former prisoners and took us off to a new revolutionary prison.

Q: So what happened then?

METRINKO: In the revolutionary prison we were put into a large common room with a fair number of Iranian former officials. In fact, one of them I had known. He'd been a contact of mine. He was a police official. And they were running kangaroo court trials, trying people, and finding them guilty, and hanging them outside the door. They would come in, call someone to trial, and hang him outside. It was rather interesting.

What I had done, just as the windows came crashing down, I had been in the office building, and I had seen these people jumping over the walls. As soon as they jumped over the wall, I made a dash for a phone, got down behind the desk since bullets were going over, dialed the phone and got the mother of a friend of mine. This was probably the first time in the history of the phone system of Tabriz that dialing once actually connected with something. I got this woman on the phone, told her the consulate was under attack and to tell her son and her son-in-law. I put the phone down, and the military guys got in, the new revolutionary guys, got in at that point and arrested me and took me off to prison with the other Americans and other Iranian prisoners. We were in that room and watched people being hauled off for trial and hanging for pretty much a day. Then my friends showed up and got us out. My friends had gotten to the prison even before I had got there. They had searched it and not found us. They had gone on searching because they knew what was happening. They were doing the same thing to other people themselves. So they had a very good idea what of was happening to me. They had then done a search of the hospitals, a search of all the other holding areas, detention centers - and there were lots of them. People were being hauled off and arrested all over the place. They had gone to the city morgue. They had looked at the bodies. And then they tried it a second time around, and the second time around, towards the end of the day, they found us at the first prison and had a big argument with, of course, the new prison authorities. These were all guys who knew each other. They had all been in these street gangs during the fighting. It didn't mean they liked each other, but they all knew each other and they all had their own revolutionary credentials. And my friend got permission for me to leave. I refused to leave without the other eight, so eventually he got us all and escorted us out. He took us first to his family home and then back to the consulate, which he had been assured was in safe hands and under protection. And I chose to go back to the consulate as well.

Well, unfortunately, we were delivered to the consulate, they left, and the safe hands rapidly became unsafe hands again. When they left the Air Force showed up once more and basically put

us under house arrest. We were under house arrest there for about a day, basically kept in chairs in the living room, not allowed to talk to each other, not allowed to move. The guards who were holding us did not know that I spoke Turkish. They thought I might speak Farsi, but I was communicating only in English because I didn't want them to know I could speak their languages. And a couple of them started to talk in Turkish about how they would have to kill us but they would wait until all these various inspection teams- (end of tape)

I held that piece of information to myself. I didn't want to tell my other prisoners because they were in a state, at this point, of jars of pudding, or at least little bags of pudding. And by chance, someone who was obviously of officer rank came in to do a walk-through quick inspection. As soon as he walked in, I just took a chance. I stood up, said I wanted to show him something in the back room, and before any of the other guards could say anything, I took him to a back room and told him very quickly what was happening. I had to trust somebody. And he looked at me and said, "Make a phone call." First he said, "Wait, I can't do anything right now." He said, "Just play it cool for a little while; I'll be back very shortly." And he took me back, put me in a seat, and he turned to the guards and he said, "I have to come back because he has to show me something about the communications system here." And he came back about 15 minutes later, took me into a room where there was a telephone, and said, "Call your embassy." I called the embassy. The embassy I also got in touch with very quickly, again, surprisingly, because communications had been so bad before. I got the ambassador's staff aide on the phone because the embassy was in the middle of a massive evacuation at the time, told him very quickly what was happening, that we were in trouble and needed help from the central government, and they got somebody from the embassy to the prime minister immediately. In the meantime, the officer who had allowed me to use the phone, took me back again and had told me, "I can't do anything. We have to change the guard force. I have to get guards that we can trust. It may take a little while. I can't do anything until then because if I try to take you out now, they'll kill me." So he went and got in touch with a university professor who was one of the revolutionary leaders. They came in and changed the guard force, just calmly, with guards that they knew. Things got a bit more relaxed, and then I'd say that same day we got the news that the plane was on its way, that the new prime minister's office was sending a plane to pick us up, and they did send in a cargo plane for us.

Q: Where did they take you?

METRINKO: Back to Tehran. It's quite funny, by the way, the professor who came in and saved us, when I did the report on this I used the first part of his name - you know, "Professor So-and-so," Professor Rajai - and that was how I knew him at the time. He later became far better known in the United States as Rajai Khorassani. He was the Iranian ambassador to the United Nations for a number of years. I don't think he's ever mentioned the incident in Tabriz. In the report nobody would have traced it to him when they found it because I'd used a different version of his name. But there he was, saving American lives. Of course, he had a lot trouble here from our authorities.

Q: Oh, yes. Well, then, what happened?

METRINKO: What happened? I was not allowed to take any of the consular seals or anything

else. They had been in the house with me. That was taken from me. Although I had the bag because I thought I was going to be leaving to go off to the Turkish border, so I was taking the consulate seal. I had destroyed most things - plates, seals, ribbons, etc. - but I had the one seal, and I think the cold seal, too, from the consulate, that I was going to take with me. I don't know why. A lot of good they were going to do me. One doesn't think. I had this little bag with a wad of money and a gun, for example, though I didn't know how to use a gun. That was taken from me before we got on the plane. Some of the items eventually showed up here, by the way, in the United States, years and years later - not the gun, but the consular seal. Somebody's mother, years later, called up the Swiss Embassy in Tehran and said, "When my son left Iran he left a box of things here in his room, and I've just gone through it, and I realize there are some things that belong to the American Government. I don't want them in the house. I just want to turn them back over to the authorities." And so they turned over the Tabriz consulate seals. Of course, all visas from Tabriz were canceled immediately from that day, because the seal was no longer in our hands.

Q: *What happened?*

METRINKO: The air force cargo plane took us back to Tehran. We were delivered into an ambulance at Tehran at the airport, taken by ambulance to the American Embassy. We arrived at the embassy, which was in the throes of a massive evacuation. It had finally sunk in to the embassy staff that a revolution was occurring in the country, and they had decided to order an evacuation. It took a while. That evacuation was going on. I turned over my four American prisoners immediately to the evacuation staff, and they were whisked out, and they left Iran that day. They were given new passports, and that was it. They left Iran and were taken back to Germany and processed out. That was those four. I got the Australian, the Austrian, and the two West Germans back to their embassies. I know the Austrian and the Australian left the next day on evacuation flights. That was fine. I had always assumed the others had gone, too, the West Germans. Months passed, and in the late summer... the embassy, of course, was open. I stayed on at the embassy and started to work. Late summer, an Iranian friend of mine, whose name was Shokrai, told me another story. He was from Tabriz and had a German wife, and he had been in jail in Tabriz, too. He was the CEO of a major factory there. He'd been put in jail by the revolutionary authorities and then bribed his way out. Anyway, he called me and said he was in Tehran and could we have lunch, and I went out and had lunch with him. He said, "I met two of your friends in prison when I was in Tabriz." And I said, "Who?" And he said the West Germans. And I said, "Oh, they've been gone for months and months." He said, "No, they just left about a week ago." I said, "What do you mean, 'about a week ago'? I brought them here and took them down to their embassy and they were going to leave the next day." He said, "No, what happened was that they went to their embassy, and they got in front of the consul general there and told them what had happened to them, and he said, 'Where are your passports?' And they said, 'We don't have passports. Our passports were taken from us when we were arrested.' 'But you must have passports.' And they said, 'We don't have passports. They're in the prison back in Tabriz. We've escaped from there. We want to go back to Germany now.' And the German consul said, 'But I can't do this. You must have passports. I can't just send anybody out of the country. I want to see your passports. Go back and get your passports.' So they went back to get their passports. They got re-arrested in Tabriz and ended up spending that summer also in prison. Then they were

finally released. My friend Shokrai had met them because he spoke German. He was called in to translate for them whenever there was a problem because, of course, they spoke no Persian, no Turkish, only German and some English. And he said, "When they left Tabriz, they told me they were going to go back to Germany and they were going to kill their consul." Personally, I hope they did.

Q: Well, now, okay, so we're moving into March or so by this time?

METRINKO: That was February when I got back to the embassy. Moving into March...

Q: March 1979.

METRINKO: March of '79.

Q: What was the situation at the embassy, and what were you up to?

METRINKO: The situation was this. Khomeini was in Iran. The Bazargan government was trying to pull its act together. The embassy had drawn down to a very, very small number of people. I think at this point we were about 15 or 16 Americans, and that included the Marine guards. There was almost nobody there. I had stayed on, and I was now a political officer again, you see. I was having a great time, actually. I had a nice office, a good job. I was supposed to be reporting on military and police trends, various other things like the response out in the provinces to the ongoing revolution. I went back to Tabriz and officially received our consulate properties back to the American Government. It was an interesting trip back. I went in there and was met by Iranian friends, and they took me to the consulate, and the authorities there officially handed over the keys - well, they didn't have keys as such, but officially handed over the property. And I actually stayed in the consulate with the Iranian Revolutionary Soldiers force. I slept on the floor with them for a couple of nights in my old living room, since my old bedroom had become a stable. You know, just slept on the floor with the guys in the guard unit. It was an interesting time. And eventually, they also left, and we restored the FSNs, but we never reopened the consulate. The FSNs would go there, and they cleaned the place up, but the signs were down, and there was a big question about what we were going to do. We had no idea, but it seemed unlikely we were going to reopen it as a consulate. That was fine.

Q: From what you got, what was the temperament in Tabriz when you were there?

METRINKO: Everything was up in the air. At this point, of course, there was a bit of coldness between the Azerbaijani Ayatollah, the Grand Ayatollah Shariat Madari, and Khomeini. This was a period of everybody sort of not knowing what they wanted to do. There were a thousand political groups in the country. There were religious groups fighting with religious groups. Khomeini was in charge, but he was in charge of sort of a political kindergarten where everybody had scissors. There were constant demonstrations everywhere. There were constant kangaroo courts. Various ayatollahs were going around the country having people hanged. There were firing squads. There was trouble in the Kurdish area. There was an uprising there. We were afraid there would be an uprising in the Azerbaijan with the Turks. There was a lot of trouble down in

the oil fields. There was a strike going on down there. The Arab ayatollah in Khuzestan had been arrested and sent back to Qom, where he died, as many clergy died that year. Khomeini did a really great job with his religious rivals. He went through their ranks with a sword. They died, of course, in the privacy of their own bedrooms, of poison or other things.

The embassy was slowly rebuilding. What we were doing in late February and March was trying to find out where we were. We were getting property back. We were going around hot-wiring cars and bringing them back to the embassy.

Q: You might explain what "hot-wiring" is.

METRINKO: Oh, because people assigned to the embassy and people assigned to the military mission had innumerable cars there, and they had been abandoned all over the place, abandoned up at the military parking lot, abandoned in the embassy parking lot, abandoned here and there, the school parking lot or in front of their houses. So we didn't have the keys. The keys were all sort of in a mess. So one of the guys from the attaché's office proved to be very adept at just lifting the hoods of these cars and being able to start the motors by putting wires together. And they hot-wired cars all over that part of the city, brought them back, and we sold them. We had a used car lot in the parking lot of the embassy and would call in car dealers. We would sell cars by the dozens, and it got to be pretty interesting. We were getting rid of embassy property, closing up the property. We closed up the consulates in Isfahan and Shiraz. We got rid of the lease on the consulate in Isfahan. In Shiraz the property was ours, but that was also going to go up for sale. Tabriz was still on hold because it was such a massive property. But we were putting out feelers to the new government and being received very warmly, I might add, by most members of the new government. One of the jobs I did quite a bit of was to try and go up to the old military properties and see about getting access to them or getting them back. I got into the U.S. military hospital, for example. I was the first American to go in there, with friends of mine from one of the revolutionary committees. I went up to the old American school and helped get access there. The funniest one, perhaps, was going up to the old base at Lavisan, which had been taken from us. That's where the APO was, the commissary was, the food stores, and many of the military offices were up there. That's also where the household effects was for a large number of military who had packed out in the year 1978. Their lift vans were up there in storage, because nobody had been able to ship things out of the country in the latter part of 1978. The whole compound had been seized. And actually a rather funny incident happened when I went up there to get access. The guy who was in charge of the Revolutionary Guard group on that base was the younger brother of a good friend of mine, so I had talked to my friend, the brother of the commander, and he and the prime minister's office had told them that we were going to come up there, that somebody from the American Embassy was coming up to inspect the premises. Now, there was a philosophical problem here because the revolutionaries felt that all agreements signed by the Shah with foreign governments or with anybody were null and void. They were not binding because they had been signed by an illegal government. That's the way they felt. On the other hand, they specifically did not want Americans to take over things like military bases or large institutions again. At the same time, their own military was telling them, "We need American assistance. All of our weapons, all of our helicopters, all of our planes are provided by the Americans. We need American cooperation in getting repairs done and getting more supplies

down the road." So there were different philosophies at war here. But to make a long story short, we had gotten permission from the prime minister's office to enter the Lavisan military base. I went up with one of the army tech people from the embassy and two visitors from Germany who had come in from... I want to say Ramstein... to inspect the commissary, the APO, things like that, to see what damage there was because we were talking U.S. military facilities. All the arrangements were made. We were supposed to get up there around one o'clock in the afternoon. Fine. We drove up to the base, and in front of the driveway, going into the military base, there was a long chain, and there were revolutionary guards standing outside. I got out of the car, walked up to them, explained who we were. I was being very polite. They told me to get screwed. I explained again who I was and that this had all been set up by the prime minister's office and by Mohammed Reza, who was the commander of the military group inside, and I knew he was waiting for me. Again, they basically told me to get screwed and to leave. I went through the whole thing again. I was getting a bit angry at this point, of course, but they had guns, and I wanted to get inside. Finally, one of them - I guess he was their commander - agreed he would go in. What I had said was, "I don't care if I ever see the inside of this place. I really don't care about it at all, but your commander is waiting to see me. If he knows, and he'll find out, that I have been here and wasn't allowed to see him, he's going to be angry with you, not with me." So what happened is that the young commander went inside, came back about 10 minutes later - and all this time I was standing out under a very hot Tehran sun - told me that I could come in myself but that the others could not. I explained that I wasn't the spokesperson, I was just the translator that day, they were the ones that knew about this stuff. He said it didn't matter, that Mohamed Reza would only see me. I went back to the car, explained it to them, they said fine, see if you can get us access. I walked up to the chain across the driveway. The chain was hung at a height which was exactly too high for me to put my foot over - I couldn't have done that - and too low for me to crawl under. I wasn't about to crawl on my hands and knees in front of the Iranian Guard. And I was standing on the outside of the chain. He was standing on the inside, and in a very crude way he said, "Hurry up," but using the tone of voice and the grammatical expression that you would use for a child or a dog or someone very much your inferior, in Persian. My anger hit boiling point. I walked over to the end of the chain where it was looped around a hook, took the chain off the hook, walked back along the length of the chain so that I had the long length of a chain hanging in my hand, took the chain, and whipped it across his face. He fell on the ground, dropped his weapon, and I walked over him towards the building that I knew the commander was in. I think probably at that point the other Americans in the car had heart attacks. I had just had it. I don't know why I did that. But I did it, and I heard him scrambling up, and I heard the gun scraping on the asphalt, and then he ran up right behind me and started in Persian saying, "I'm really sorry, Sir, excuse me, Sir, please forgive me, Sir," and I just looked at him and said, "Hurry up, I want to see Mohamed Reza," and just walked in. And for the rest of the day the guard whose face I had whacked with the chain just kept saying, "I'm really sorry, I was showing bad behavior," etc., "Would you like to come to my house for dinner?" and "Please, I'd like to show you hospitality." But I guess I was reacting... I'd been a schoolteacher in Iran for three years. He was acting like the worst of my students who were looking for a beating, and I always knew that... Unfortunately, in Iran, if you're dealing with young guys and you want them to show respect, you often have to physically hit them. It's a sort of a sick society in that sense. So I just used a chain instead of my fist. It was more effective, and it worked. Today I would not do that.

Q: *No!*

METRINKO: In fact, if I had had 30 seconds of thinking and the sun had not been so hot and I had not built up my anger to that pitch, I wouldn't have done it. But I did it, and it worked. And we got into the building and established a working relationship, and from then on the military was allowed to go in and start removing things like money and their records and the medical records and other things that they had to get out of there.

Q: *Was there a beginning of developing a cooperation with the military, showing them how to run the helicopters?*

METRINKO: There was very much a beginning of a relationship with the military. The relationship with the military never quite stopped. Soon there was a winnowing out of the military. Some of the old generals had been secret revolutionaries and now were in good graces with the revolutionary government. There were also colonels who had dealt with Americans in the past, and a lot of them spoke English. Maybe they didn't like dealing with the United States, but we sort of had the monopoly, and they had to deal with us. And a lot of the relationships were not bad at all. I can think of all sorts of military officials I knew who had stayed on, usually at the colonel rank. The generals went pretty quickly, and the generals who were not actually arrested found it in their best interest to leave the country because so much was happening that you could not predict the future. As an example of that, what was happening in the country, my former landlord from Tehran, when I had been in the embassy for about six months before going to Tabriz, was one of the general directors of the Tehran electricity department, and somebody had issued a warrant, and the name on the warrant was "general director of the agency for electricity." Now it could have been used against any of the former general directors. He found out about it, immediately contacted a good friend of his who was the new revolutionary prosecutor general and said, "Hey, what's going on? You know that I'm okay." And his friend told him this. He said, "Look, I know you're okay, but I can't do anything about that warrant until you and the others get arrested and your file gets to me with your name on it. Given the number of people we've arrested already, it might take several months before your name and your file comes across my desk. Then I can dismiss the charges. Until then, anything could happen. If they catch you and put you in prison, you could be executed and I would never even know about it. So I suggest that you not allow yourself to be arrested." So my friend, like many others, simply disappeared, went into hiding. They went to stay with distant relatives no one knew. They went to stay in smaller towns, other places, or left the country.

Q: *Well, then, at your level, were you making contacts with revolutionary committees?*

METRINKO: Of course, all the time. I became quite friendly with the family of the Friday prayer leader of Tehran. I knew them. The Imam Jume'h - that was the title - the Imam Jume'h of Tehran was the highest ranking religious figure in the city of Tehran. He was the one who led the people of Tehran in the Friday prayer, a sort of mass public prayer, and he would lead two million, three million people in prayer down at the university campus. His office was right around the corner from my house. His sons and other members of his family would visit my house at night. I dealt with that committee all the time. I got to know them very well, did a lot of social stuff with them,

let them come to my house. My old Iranian friends would show up from Tabriz and Khorramshahr and other cities. They would stay with me in Tehran. I was out, I think, socially, every single night for the whole time that I was there, I mean from February until November, when the embassy was taken. I was out every night or had friends over at night, and the spectrum of contacts was all up and down, everywhere, every direction - clergy, this, that, police officials, army officials, this official, that official, merchants, friends, teachers, doctors, anything you could mention.

Q: Well, what were you reporting on? I mean, what sort of a revolution was this, as the time developed? I mean, we're moving up to the summer and the early fall.

METRINKO: Up to the summer and the early fall. Well, the spring hit. They called it the first spring of freedom. They continued to execute large numbers of people. The prisons were crammed. So former Shah officials, other people, police officials especially, army officials who had taken part in the martial law regime were being arrested. Many of them were being executed. Khomeini went big-time in for revenge. He had people arrested who had figured in his life going all the way back to when he was young, people he hadn't liked. Other people were doing the same thing. It was a time for taking economic revenge, for getting more property, for making a grab for your neighbor's house if you wanted to. So if you had clout with revolutionary authorities, you could enrich yourself pretty quickly.

Q: Was this a reflection of sort of Iranian society?

METRINKO: Very much. I can give all sorts of examples. The mother of a friend of mine was arrested and because of a neighbor's complaint. The complaint had nothing at all to do with anything political. She was arrested because the neighbors had revolutionary credentials and my friend's mother did not - she was a housewife - the punishment was that she lost a large amount of money and all the carpets from her house to her neighbors. They just wanted that. I read in the newspapers that a particular village... There was a lot of fighting going on in the small towns and cities still. And by no means did the revolutionary authorities have full control of the country, especially in the border areas. There was a small article in the paper about a particular village up near Ilam, in the western part of the country, where revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces were still fighting. Now by chance, I had a house guest for about a month, an American woman and her Iranian husband. Her Iranian husband was from that particular town. I turned to him and said, "What's going on? What does it mean, 'revolutionaries and anti-revolutionaries fighting in your town'?" He said, "Oh, it has nothing to do with the revolution, Michael. My oldest brother's wife has been jealous of one of our neighbors for the last several years because our neighbor spent a large amount of money and built a beautiful house. It's almost a villa. My brother's wife has been after my brother for years to build a similar house for her. He's refused. He thought it was a waste of money. Now that we've had a revolution, she finally got my brother to attack the neighbor so that we could grab that house. It has nothing to do with the politics of the revolution. It's my sister-in-law who wants the neighbor's house, and she's going to try and get it." Multiply that by a thousand, ten thousand, or fifty thousand incidents. And I could go on and on and on talking about things like this. The Pepsi-Cola factory in Tabriz was attacked by marauders who set it on fire. It turns out that the people who set it on fire were the workers from

the Coca-Cola plant. They were both franchises. Apparently the franchise holder of Coca-Cola decided he wanted to monopolize his marketing in Tabriz. Multiply that. And this goes on and on and on like that. It was a big power and property grab.

Q: Did you find, when you were at the embassy, was it sort of a new era of looking at this? Were they -

METRINKO: Well, initially it was a bit strange. Yes, there was a new era, but there were still the old minds looking at it. Ambassador Sullivan became very approachable, very pleasant, and very receptive to thinking - I mean, very receptive to new ideas. He had had a shock, and actually, I have always thought he was a good. He is a good ambassador. He was a good ambassador. He was just the wrong person at the time, which wasn't his fault, and he was dealt a very bad hand of cards by the White House. I think you could probably say that the White House, the NSC, various people in Congress were playing fast and loose with dealing with the revolutionaries. There were conflicting orders coming out. I don't think the Secretary of State really was all that clued into the White House at this point. I'm not sure what was happening, but certainly there were conflicts going on between the military, private American oil interests, the White House, some Americans on the various intelligence and other committees in the Congress, the Senate and the House - they did not see, they didn't have any sense of loyalty to our ambassador. They were dealing around him, behind him. He tried to be a loyal soldier to the State Department. It didn't work then. He became very approachable, very pleasant, etc., and very reflective once all the panoply of our diplomatic presence disappeared around him. He was also confined to the compound because he was so well known in the country that he couldn't leave to go out in the streets. He had a group of local guards assigned to his house, which made him almost a prisoner in his own house. It was an intolerable situation. He put up with it with a great deal of dignity and grace, and in fact put up with it for far longer than I think anyone else would have. He was smuggled out of the embassy and sent out, left the country in secret. He went to the airport in disguise, in an ambulance. Ambulances were the preferred method of travel for security reasons. If you had to get out and about... ambulances have no windows to look at the inside, number one. They can use sirens and go quickly, number two. And no policeman is going to pull over an ambulance for speeding, so you can speed and get out inconspicuously - not inconspicuously, but there's a case where being conspicuous is your best way of keeping the matter concealed.

He got out of the country. Our DCM, who became the chargé, Charlie Nass, went back and forth with the idea of should he go down and present himself to Khomeini or not. As it turned out he never did, but that was the advice he was being given by the revolutionary government, "not yet." But we were dealing very closely with all the members of the new cabinet, with the prime minister. We were dealing with a number of important religious leaders, and we visited the religious leaders. We dealt with everybody except Khomeini himself and were dealing quite closely, both socially and professionally, and things were looking more and more up.

Q: What were you getting from your contacts about Khomeini?

METRINKO: I don't know if I can answer that question any more. As the summer wore on, he had started the policy of women having to go covered. So the women were having

demonstrations. A lot of women were turning against him for that, but not a lot of women in small towns, by no means, and not a lot of women compared to the number of women in Tehran. Most Iranian women are quite happy and used to dealing with that, and the issue was really sort of an American women's issue. It's not particularly an Iranian issue. We made it a big human rights issue here out of pure stupidity, gender stupidity here, basically. It's not that important in Iran. But a certain type of woman was coming to stand against Khomeini. The Mujaheddin, the other groups, were slowly losing faith in Khomeini. They weren't being given what they thought they had been promised. They were starting to fall away, too. The Tudeh Party he went after big-time. He went after the Communists, and they were getting arrested and executed. So there was a problem there, but of course he continued to execute people who had been very close to the United States. There was, of course, a tremendous amount of hypocrisy in all of this, and the people we were dealing with in the revolutionary cabinet were by anyone's standards fairly dirty people. We were dealing with thugs, murderers themselves. We liked them because they spoke English and were educated in the United States and fought with us, and we were quite prepared to overlook all their crimes, their ongoing crimes. It always struck me as a bit funny that we could look in the newspapers and see on the front page the pictures of the bodies of our former contacts - they would run photographs of the people who had been shot by the courts - and that evening go off to some event where you were meeting the killers and deal quite closely with them.

Q: Well, one of the things that came up was that the revolution was turning anti-Israeli and anti-Jewish.

METRINKO: It was not anti-Jewish at all. It never had been. It was anti-Israeli, yes, because people in Iran, for lots of good reasons, thoroughly disliked Israel. I mean, the Iranians are Muslims, the Iranian people. What they were watching was an Israel that was committing horrible human rights crimes against fellow Muslims. An Iranian religious person, if you were a Muslim, and you saw that Muslims in Israel were having their land confiscated, were being sent to prison, were being denied all sorts of basic human rights, why should you be pro-Israel?

Q: I know because I got involved a little bit later in granting refugee status, and one of the... It was really, of course, a domestic political priority, but any Jew from Iran was going to be persecuted, and they used the case of one Jewish businessman, I think, quite –

METRINKO: Oh, that case. I knew the family well, still know the family well. As far as I recall, in the entire early part of the revolution there were exactly two Jews who were executed, both of them for what the Iranians saw as good reason. They were major business people who had been long-term supporters of Israel, financial supporters. They were picked up and arrested. They tried to bribe their way out. They might have gotten out except so many people were being executed that they were also taken off and executed along with a huge *tranche* of others.

Q: Well, they were considered "people of the book," weren't they?

METRINKO: People of the book, and the Jews had been living in Iran for 2500 years. I didn't feel any deep sense of anti-Semitism in Iran, at least not then. But what happened was that it

became... The Israeli Embassy, of course, it wasn't designated as an embassy; it was called an interest section. The revolution had been very pro-Palestinian. A lot of revolutionaries had received training in Palestinian camps, so they were anti-Israel, definitely. There was no reason for any religious Muslim to be pro-Israeli. In fact, there was every reason to be anti-Israeli, if you were religious - every reason in the world. On the other hand, there was no attempt made to go after the Jewish community in Iran. The Jewish business people who were very prominent business people who were involved in all sorts of projects with the government, big-time financiers, supporters of Israel as such, yes, they got arrested, but so did thousands of other people. And as a percentage, when you compare the two of them to the number of Jews in the community there, I don't think it was particularly significant.

And one last thing I might mention, we had the case of one American senator, Jacob Javits, who was the spokesperson against the revolution in the American Congress. He went on and on and on, always taking the floor, talking about the barbarians and the this and the that and "these murderers." He was doing it for a good reason. I understand that his wife was an employee of the Shah. She had a contract with the Pahlavi Foundation and so basically the family was sort of paid to do this by the Pahlavis. So he was acting as a shill for the Pahlavi family as opposed to expressing what was accurate.

Now, were they anti-Bahai? Yes. If you were Bahai, you were dead meat. But if you were Jewish, no. Jewish *per se*, no; Bahai *per se*, yes.

Q: Could you explain why the Bahai were targets?

METRINKO: The Bahai religion started as a reform movement in the 1800s in Iran of Shiite Islam. The problem with it was that it didn't stop at being a reform movement; it claims that its major spokesperson was actually the last of the Imams. Now, the Bahais accepted everything that had happened in Islam up until the reform movement, and then they veered off. Traditional orthodox Iranian Shiites and Muslims in general regard them as heretics because what they said was, Yes, we have Muhammad, yes, the Shiites had and all the other imams, but we have had a more recent one, who is the gateway, the path to God, etc. This made them heretics. Their founders were sent off to exile and turned over to the Turkish Empire, which sent them all to this most distant hell-hole for exile, Acco and Haifa, on the Palestinian Coast. Now Acco is a delightful, beautiful little town today. Then it was pestilential, malarial, etc., etc., and not a place you would want to go. But the heads of the Bahai movement went there, settled down there, and started to attract people from the region. There are absolutely beautiful shrines. And the movement spread. It spread through the clergy initially. The Shiite clergy have always had seeds for reform within them. They do tend to reform themselves - that is, sweep out dead wood. This was one of the movements that slowly developed into a real battle in which blood was drawn between the orthodox Shiite clergy and the ones who had gone over to the Bahai movement. That having been said, over the next hundred years, it went back and forth, back and forth. Initially, the Shah had allowed pogroms against the Bahais. There was a very famous picture of one of the Shah's generals, back in the mid-'50s - standing on top of the dome of the major Bahai shrine in Tehran using an axe to break in the tiles of the dome. It's a picture that was infamous, of course, in Iran, but that general forgot his role, eventually retired to the United States, and died quite

peacefully here in an old-age home about a year ago. And no one ever went after him for human rights violations.

Q: Well, now, what was happening with the embassy now?

METRINKO: What was happening with the embassy? Slowly we were building up. We had gotten down to about 14 or 15 people. The Marine guards were all changed. New ones came in, and each officer- (end of tape)

Q: Mike, I was asking about how was the embassy changing.

METRINKO: We had gotten rid of a lot of the embassy property. We had consolidated. We had gotten rid of the old embassy-leased property. We were really coming down to what was the meaning of an embassy, just a small group of people performing services, doing reporting, and answering to the government. When you say, "What was the embassy at this point," I have to say, up until late 1978, the embassy compound had been a travesty. We had 25 acres of land. As far as I remember it was 25, walled in, in the middle of the city of Tehran. We had an American post office on the compound, a huge one. We had a commissary on the compound, where people could do grocery shopping. We had a PX there so that people could buy things like stereos and televisions, bedsheets, washing machines, anything you wanted. And the number of people who could shop and use the post office facilities was up in the high thousands. I understand that it was 7,000 people. So imagine an embassy, which is really like a major shopping mall, and if you will, imagine a place where many of the people using the commissary and the PX were helping supply the Tehran black market. I was standing once in line at the commissary, and the woman in front of me had just purchased 85 sets of bed sheets. Now you can use 85 sets of bed sheets if you own a motel, but not if you own a private house. She was going straight down to the black market with them. She just walked in, and 85 pairs! And nobody even blinked an eye. Many times when I'd be at my Iranian friends' homes in north Tehran, and they'd pull out alcohol to serve, it would have one of the embassy stamps on it because so much of the alcohol from the embassy was going right into the black market, too. And people knew it. It was sort of a running joke in the city that if you want something from the black market, it had to have been imported into the country through the American Embassy. I completely fault the leadership of the embassy at the time, certainly the military authorities there, our military authorities. They knew this was happening. They didn't care, and they made no efforts all, as far as I could see, to stop it. Now imagine the presence of several thousand people walking in, shopping, coming out with bags of alcohol in the middle of an Islamic revolution. Shoppers would come up from Isfahan, from other places, by bus, and the buses, the women on it would be wearing shorts, halter tops, they'd step out right at the embassy compound, do their shopping, load up with alcohol, with beer, with all the other things they were buying, and they could be seen doing this. As a presence, it was disgusting, and to this day, I'd say that the people who took the embassy, well, maybe we deserved it, because it was no longer an embassy. It was not the den of snakes and the den of spies that the Iranians say it was. What we had turned it into was some sort of a cheap shopping mall, and for that alone, that place deserved to be shut down.

Q: By this time we're talking about summer or early fall. This had gone.

METRINKO: All this had gone. This had been removed, gone. The staff was far, far lower, but slowly starting to build up. Now, what we had, this was the real public face of the embassy. The Consular Section of the embassy had always been located in a building about two blocks away from the main compound, a separate building to which the public had full access. As the revolution got hotter and heavier in the year 1978, this building had to close down. It was simply under too much threat. The landlord had also told the embassy that he wanted to cancel the lease. He no longer wanted to lease to the American Consular Section. Fine. The embassy was in the process of locating a new place to put up a Consular Section. And they had located a place right across the main street from the embassy. In the meantime it's getting to be November, December. The revolution is really getting hot and heavy. Most offices are closed anyway. The Consular Section was closed down. It had to, except for emergency cases. It was not like anybody was able to leave the country anyway. It was pretty restrictive at that point for any Iranians to leave. Khomeini came back in January. People were not traveling. The airports were closed. Iranians could not leave. The Consular Section is still not open. Across the street the people who had given the new lease to the embassy suddenly announced they were backing out of the lease. They did not want the American Consular Section there. I think they were being warned by revolutionary groups not to let the embassy lease that property. There were a strip of buildings at the back of the embassy compound that had once been staff apartments. They were something like townhouses. The embassy took those and converted those into a consular section, but this took time. You can't do this immediately. There were lots of people looking for workers and contractors, and the middle of a revolution is not really the time to be able to do this well. We were continuing to process emergency cases, and any of us who had any contact with Iranian officials were getting deluged with passport visa requests from the new revolutionary officials. What happened is that the Iranian Government started to put pressure on us too to reopen. They were getting similar pressure to reopen the passport office. The passport office in Tehran had closed down for issuing Iranian passports. The passport office was reopened. The big announcement went into the newspapers that on such and such a day the national passport office around the country would be reopened. In Tehran, the office hours are such-and-such. The reopened it, and so many people rushed the building trying to get new passports that the building started to collapse. The floor cracked. The support beams in the floor. And they had to close the building down; it was condemned. They opened up a few days later at the international fair grounds in an area which was all on the ground floor, sort of open pavilion style, for the passport office. But apparently an astounding number applied for new passports to leave the country. The embassy Consular Section reopened, and within a very, very short time, we had similar lines around the embassy. I think, if I remember correctly, that if you were coming into apply for an appointment, if you wanted to see somebody about a tourist visa, to apply for one, the waiting time to come in was about a year long. Now, the American Government has a limited number of consular officers. We had a very limited number who could speak Farsi, an even more limited number who were willing to come to Tehran. There were a couple there, of course. They were doing their best. But what they were being asked to do was impossible. The pent-up demand was so high, in the millions, for visas that there was no way the Consular Section could face this. So you had lines of people around the embassy that stretched for two or three blocks, and a cross-section of society in the line. You had mullahs, people in military uniforms, police officers, this, that, people very well dressed, people in not such nice clothing, young or old, all standing in line

to get visas to go to America. And the revolutionary authorities were pushing us all the time to give visas to their friends. Because I had so many contacts in the revolutionary government, I was always getting visa requests. As I found out, revolutionary authorities were making the requests to help out former officials who had lost their jobs because of the revolution. There were a lot of intermarriages, a lot of friendships, and a lot of very strange visa requests were made.

I think I've always said that the sight of that line around the embassy may have been one of the driving forces in getting the embassy attacked in November of 1979, just because it was so huge and it was always there as a sign that many Iranians had not accepted the revolution.

Q: What were you as a political officer... You would get these requests. Who would you talk to?

METRINKO: What I did, because I'd been a visa officer there before, I made an arrangement with the head of the Visa Section.

Q: Who was that?

METRINKO: Dick Moorfield. It was Lou Goeltz originally. He was replaced by Dick Moorfield. But I made an arrangement that I would go over and help out one or two morning a week and just do interviews on the line. And when I went over there, I would take over a stack of passports that I had been given by political contacts and have them checked and issue visas then if they were good cases.

Q: This is often one of the currencies of an embassy, being able to respond to visa requests.

METRINKO: It's sometimes the only currency. In most countries of the world, there's absolutely no reason to talk to an American political officer. It doesn't do you any good. What can you possibly get from an American political officer except a request for information? And the consular officer is the one who will get you your visa or does your paperwork.

Q: I know, I was consul general in Seoul, Korea, and I hated to go to cocktail parties because I would be backed into a corner by Korean officials.

METRINKO: In Iran, if you went to a dinner party anywhere at any time, its amazing how many people by a wild chance had their passports in their pockets. You were not the guest of honor, you were the main course.

Q: Were people, as we're moving up towards November, were any of your friend saying, "You'd better watch out, this isn't going well," or something. I mean, were the signs good or bad? How were we reading the entrails of these developments at that time?

METRINKO: There's a problem with reading entrails. If you're surrounded by entrails all the time, you begin to take entrails for granted. If you only see them once, you think, "My God, these are bloody!" We had gotten used to Iran. It was normal to hear gunshots. We would hear guns going off all the time, demonstrations going on all the time, puffs of smoke all the time, sirens all

the time, crowds of people running all the time. The newspapers were filled with gore. Not the Gore that's running for President but the other kind of gore, gore and reports of battles and reports of this and reports of that. There was tension brewing with Iraq, and there was tension brewing with everybody, wild speculation, wild rumor. We'd get stopped at night by Revolutionary Guards, by the *Komitehs*. People had blockaded whole sections of the city, so as you went from section to section you'd get stopped and checked. Nothing was normal, but the abnormal became routine. In a war zone, especially those of us who had been there through martial law from the year before, it was just sort of normal. We were no longer fair judges of what was normal and what wasn't. So is the embassy going to be attacked? Were we getting information? We were always getting information that there was a threat, be careful, don't go there, etc. But at the same time, I'd been hearing this for two years.

Q: Now you must be getting new people coming in. I've interviewed - it's been a long time - Anne Swift and some others who came in, and sometimes the new boy or the new girl on the block sees things better than the person who's used to the bloodiness around.

METRINKO: They ask questions. But it depended on who you were listening to. If you were listening to Iranian business people, they wanted American business companies back. The banks wanted American businesses back. The franchise holders wanted to reopen. The American military wanted to get back in. The Iranian military wanted portions of the American military back, at least the supply and logistic portions. It depended on who you talked to. Revolutionary officials would talk about warming up the relationship, getting more support, getting this or getting that assistance from the United States. This was going on. There were people who hated us, yes, and they wanted us out, and they said so, yes, and there were people who wanted us to stay, yes. It went back and forth.

By that point I was no longer a fair judge of what was routine and what was normal. I was so thoroughly involved in the really weird, bizarre daily life that I didn't know any more. There was nothing routine. Strange things happened all the time. You know, we just got used to it.

Q: Also, one of the things that I think, and correct me if I'm wrong, but I've talked to other people who've been involved in revolutionary situations, particularly if they're a language officer and particularly if they don't have responsibility for the whole bloody community or something. I mean, they're having a lot of fun.

METRINKO: I had a great deal of fun.

Q: Yes, you're running around, and you speak the language, and you talk to people. Stuff's exciting, the adrenaline gets going, and all this, and yet the person who's acting ambassador or whatever it is, he's got responsibility for lives and everything else. So it's a different world, isn't it?

METRINKO: I was in the world of the language officer who was having a great deal of fun because I was out with a lot of friends. A lot of my friends were revolutionaries. They were in good jobs; they were moving up the ladder. I was able to help a lot of people out. That made me

feel good. The ones who had to leave the country. And it was exciting. If you have political instincts, for a political officer a revolution is like being in paradise.

Q: *Oh, absolutely!*

METRINKO: It's better than any... It's a real rush, and it goes on 24 hours a day.

Q: *Were you able to help any people get out, sort of sub rosa, in any way?*

METRINKO: We issued a lot of visas using what used to be called the "Beirut Philosophy." Give them a visa now, even though they're running because since they have property and ties to the country, they will probably come back when things quiet down. And that was the logic I used.

Q: *Well, this has been used again and again and again, including by some of these officers way back during the late '30s, of Jews and others who were leaving Germany and all. Let's give visas now, and then things will settle down.*

METRINKO: Exactly, and I think it's the way a consular officer has of sort of melding the American law and our own sense of morality. You can use this in the law and say, "Give them the visas, yes, and they'll come back." The times are temporarily difficult, but they do have ties here.

Q: *I did this after we had a bad earthquake in Naples when I was consul general. I said, "Oh, issue them visas," because you really didn't have much... The Italians weren't leaving Italy in those days particularly, but they had to get the hell out for a while. Mike, I think this might be a good place to stop because we're really moving up to the hostage taking thing, aren't we? So I'll put as usual at the end here that we've really talked about what you were doing, so let's talk about sort of the endgame, shall we?*

METRINKO: The "endgame?"

Q: *Well, I don't know, the endgame or something. But anyway, we're talking about moving up towards the November taking over of the embassy.*

METRINKO: Yes.

Q: *And we haven't talked much about some of the personalities on our side. I think it would be interesting at the end to see some of the officers you were working with. Were there any debates within the embassy? How were we seeing things.*

METRINKO: Can I give one example that ties in here?

Q: *Yes, sure, why don't we do that, yes.*

METRINKO: When you asked about what we thought was happening, the situation at the time, I

remember we used to write a weekly wrap-up of various incidents and events that were happening in the city that didn't merit a telegram in themselves but merited being reported in a large telegram - security problems, this problem, that problem, what's happening with the military, etc. And I'd do these every week, and one week the economics counselor had written his grand thought piece on why the American companies should start to think about coming back to Tehran, that things were really calming down, the business community was all set, and it was time for the Americans to come back. We got a telegram from the Department. The question was very simple. It said, the Department refers to this, this, this, this, reporting on, you know, all of the disruption in the daily life in the city and what's happening and compares it to such and such a telegram. They are incompatible. Which is correct? And if you think, if the post thinks that things are normal and calming down, and yet it's also reporting the series of incidents that you've been reporting, it's not possible. Please respond! They were right. We were in a schizophrenic world.

Q: Well, I'll put once again here, we'll pick this up, really, would you say we've gotten about to the fall of 1979, and we'll talk about what happened then, and also a bit about how you saw some of the attitudes within the embassy from different people about what was happening and all the debates within the embassy and all. And I also haven't asked about what were we picking up from the field, since we had closed Isfahan and -

METRINKO: Our consulates in Isfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz were closed.

Q: They were closed. Were we getting anything from that? We'll pick that up next time.

Today is the 30th of June, 2000. Mike, we're really coming up to the early fall of 1979. As the takeover of the embassy approached, in the first place, what were we getting from the field? All of our consulates had been closed down, hadn't they?

METRINKO: All of the consulates had been closed down. We had FSNs still in Tabriz. As far as I remember, we no longer had FSNs in either Shiraz or Isfahan. What we were getting from the field was almost zero, consisting mainly of people coming up who had been friends of the consulate principal officers. There were only two principal officers left, I mean two former principal officers - myself and Vic Tomseth - and so what we were getting from the field was very, very slim, almost nothing. My friends would come and see me and tell me what was happening in various towns and cities of Iran. I think some of Vic's friends came up, too. That was it. We had no contacts outside of that. We had no substantial military presence, we had no American presence to speak of, and we had a few coming in from the field, so it was a vast unknown area out there, except for newspaper reports, which were, as always, very unreliable in Iran.

Q: Well, now, looking over some of the people who were players in the thing, like Bruce Laingen, some people in the Political Section, Economic Section, and the Consular Section, were people sitting down at the embassy, you officers sitting around and saying, "Hey, what the hell is going on?"

METRINKO: Yes and no. You have to divide the embassy in to two groups: the very small group who spoke Persian and who went out and around the city, out and around the country, and the vast majority of embassy officers who had no Persian whatsoever or who only spoke Persian to get in and out of taxis and do a little bit of shopping. The latter group, the ones who spoke no Farsi, or Persian, were limited completely by what English-speaking Iranians would tell them. This is not only true in Iran at the time; it's been true throughout diplomatic history. If you don't speak the language, you're blind, or you're deaf, a combination of the two. I can't speak for anyone else there at all. I know that people did attend social events. I think I was out every single night of the spring, summer, and fall. Right up until the day the embassy was taking on November 4th, I was out all the time. I had a lot of Iranian friends. I made a lot of new Iranian friends. I had good contacts in the revolutionary circles and good contacts in the anti-revolutionary circles, and I would simply go out and often stay out all night long sleeping in someone's house instead of coming back to my own house.

Q: Well, now, what I gather was that during this period - and sometimes there's a revolution and the revolution happens and the new group of people take over - but this was rolling revolution, wasn't it?

METRINKO: It was rolling because, number one, we reported it as rolling but it was rolling because people kept getting assassinated or kept falling off the bandwagon or falling off the rushing train, if you will. Khomeini had come into power promising not to come into power. He had come back to Iran and had promised that he would go down to Qom and be sort of a spiritual mentor and that would be that. Instead, very quickly, within a short time after his arrival, he left Qom and came up to live in Tehran and effectively was in control of the country. Various government members, government ministers, well, the bureaucracy of Iran... Governments run by their bureaucracy. Armies, armed forces, police forces run not because of the general or the commander at the top or the senior executive. They run because of the bureaucracies or the normal people who actually carry out and implement bureaucratic actions. The bureaucracy, by and large, stayed in place, but began to be purged. So people who had been well known as royalists, people who were well known as having been corrupt or bribe-taking or whatever, or too pro-American or too pro-Western, were quite rapidly purged from the system, but this took weeks and weeks and sometimes months. A lot of higher officials, of course, were under arrest, and the arrests spread. More and more people were picked up. One would be arrested or confess or would certainly give a statement, and that would lead to the arrest of other people. So this was happening too, but it meant that the government offices were changing all the time. If a new minister came into power, he of course would bring in his friends. They would also bring in their friends. It was sort of a running crapshoot. And people did get assassinated. There were a fair number of assassinations of revolutionary government officials at the time.

Q: Was it sort of ecumenical assassination?

METRINKO: They were ecumenical, the assassinations. I can think of one or two ministers who were assassinated at the time. We had a group - not we, but Iran had a group - called *Forghan* or *Forqan*, which was apparently a far-right Islamic clerical group bent on assassinating people it didn't approve of in the clergy. There were various high-ranking Shiite clergymen coming out

and either trying to be moderate or complaining about the excesses of the revolution - not about the revolution *per se*, but about various directions in which it was going. You had people like Bazargan, the insipid, silly prime minister, complaining that he couldn't even run his office because the Revolutionary Guards were arresting people from his staff while they were sitting in their offices. It was true. But this was happening all over the country, too. You might be the governor of a province, but you didn't know if your own staff was going to be there necessarily the next day. The guy could be under arrest, or your brother-in-law might be under arrest, or your sister or your wife. And so the country was lurching along like this.

Q: What was the pattern of the arrests? Was it ideological, or was it getting kind of personal and who owed who money and -

METRINKO: It was a combination of the two, but the personal played as much or more of a role than the ideological did. Lots of people were arrested because someone felt that they could be milked like cows for their money. And it had nothing to do with their devotion to Islam, their revolutionary credentials, or whether or not they had been pro-Shah. They were often arrested because of a property grab. In Tabriz, for example, I think I mentioned that the Pepsi-Cola plant was attacked. It turned out the people who did it were the Coca-Cola plant employees. Fine. I had a friend whose mother was arrested in a spurious property dispute because the next-door neighbor claimed that the wall or something had been put in the wrong spot 20 years in the past. And it only ended when my friend's mother, to get out of prison, had to give up a significant amount of money, all of her carpets, and a lot of the household furnishings to the next-door neighbor. I had an Iranian friend staying with me who was from a small village in Ilam Province, way out in the west on the Iraqi border, and while he and his wife were staying with me (they stayed with me for about a month because they were getting green cards to go to the states), I noticed an article in the newspaper about his village, saying that revolutionary and counterrevolutionary forces were having a fight there and that the battle was ongoing. I showed it to him and asked him what was going on, and he just laughed and said, "It has nothing to do with the revolution or religion. This is my sister-in-law." His father had been the headman of the village. His brother had inherited the position, as sort of clan leader for the area. And he said, "My brother's wife has been staring at a neighbor's house for the last 10 or 15 years. She's jealous of it because it's a much better house than she has, so she's finally convinced my brother to try and get the neighbors' house away from them. It's really just a grab at a person's house. It has nothing to do with the revolution."

Q: Well, now, I would have thought that you would be a little bit like Typhoid Mary, going out every night as an American.

METRINKO: No, a lot of the Iranian revolutionaries wanted to become close to the United States or to Americans. I'll give you an example. We had a car full of American diplomats, some of the younger officers who had just arrived at the post after February. It was one day in the spring. They were out going someplace. Their car got stopped by a Revolutionary Committee group, and they were all taken to the station house. Well, they called me because I spoke Persian. They got in touch with me, the Iranian guys who had arrested them. I talked to them. They eventually all got out. They were released, and it was all done very quickly, but the commander

of the group said that he wanted to talk to me. And fine, I thought it was going to be a protest about, you know, American anti-Islamic activity or something. I agreed to see him the next day. He came and was absolutely delightful, pleasant, invited me to dinner at his house. I ended up going to his house about two days later, and when I was there, I asked him why he had harassed the Americans? And I said it was simple. He said, "I saw a group of Americans in a car, and I wanted to get to know some Americans at the embassy. I didn't know how else to do it."

Q: Let's move up. You know, there's often a divide. I've witnessed it myself. I served in Saigon, and certainly in these oral history I've done and all and just knowing nature. You have relatively junior officers in an embassy or in a fluid situation, who in a way are having a great time - they're speaking the language, they're going out, they're fooling around - and then you have the more senior officers who've got Washington on their neck telling them what they should do, how to do it, they're trying to deal with the government. And pretty soon you see a divide opening up between the younger officers and the officers with - I hate to use the term, but it's correct - more responsibility for American relations with the country there. And the officers who've got the responsibility begin to look like clods, while the young officers, like yourself, are out running around having a great time, seeing what's really happening. But was there any connect between these two groups?

METRINKO: I don't think we had that much of a divide there. We had a divide between certain individuals who saw the revolution in different ways. The senior leadership for quite a while was Charlie Nass. Charlie Nass was the DCM and the chargé. He had the most open mind of any Foreign Service officer I've seen. He would entertain any suggestion, any recommendation, any new ideas, think about it, come back with an answer that was almost invariably correct. It might be unpleasant, but it was correct. He had been there for - good gosh - at least a year before. He had gotten there, I think, in 1977, late '77. And he had seen both governments. He was great. There was no divide there. He had the most responsibility. Because we're talking about this period, I'm already saying Ambassador Sullivan was gone and thinking in those terms, Sullivan's role for the time that he stayed after Khomeini came back was quite limited. He never left the compound. He couldn't go out. He was too well known. And so he was there, but quite a bit in retreat, trying to patch things together, tie the few loose ends and then leave. Charlie Naas was there for a much longer period. The political counselor would have been Vic Tomseth. There, too, you had somebody who had been there for both Irans, both pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary. He was not slow, but he made decisions carefully.

Q: Methodically.

METRINKO: Methodically, thank you. And well. And he had the experience to back it up. He was neither pro- nor anti-revolution, or if he was, he never displayed it, very measured, very methodical and precise and good. The political officers who came in, Anne Swift and John Limbert - Anne brought a tremendous amount of experience from other posts, absolutely excellent, great sense of humor about what was going on, which really made a lot of difference in the office. John Limbert had lived in Iran for years and years before. He spoke excellent Persian. Again, a very measured, sort of almost humorous approach to all this, and no problems there either. There was no great raging debate in the Political Section. In the Economic Section you

had some differences of opinion. The economic counselor thought that things were getting better all the time, as opposed to the Political Section, which was saying this is a day by day thing, you don't know what's going to happen, we hope it's going to turn out. But the Economic Section really thought that every thing was getting nice and rosy and American businesses could come back. That led to a number of problems inside the embassy because the reporting was a bit contradictory.

Q: How about Bruce Laingen? I mean he was sort of parachuted in sort of on an interim thing.

METRINKO: He came in because Walt Cutler was supposed to become ambassador, and Walt Cutler's name had been submitted for *agrément*, but they turned him down. They either turned him down or refused to accept him. I don't know why. I no longer remember. It may have been a reaction to Javits. It may have been a reaction to something like that.

Q: They used things. He'd been in Saigon, but as a young officer. I knew him there.

METRINKO: And he was coming out of Zaire.

Q: Zaire, yes. How did you all feel? Was this felt just to be "We're going to show you?"

METRINKO: I think it basically was that, because they didn't know... The government in Iran, while its various members, the various cabinet members, the various top people in the government, were playing footsie with us and trying to things for their ministries, trying to get visas for their friends, trying to get services, trying to deal with the United States to get American business back or to deal with American businesses - the government as a whole had not yet come to a decision. And it may have also been much like today's Iranian government, where the individual components want to deal with America, but they're all afraid to say it out loud, in public.

We had that. We also had a very large and very vocal anti-American group of revolutionaries out there who wanted the relationship broken, who were afraid of an American-Iranian relationship, so they weren't about to allow or to tolerate any warming up.

Q: Were Iranians who had been students in the United States in this group?

METRINKO: Of course. To come to the United States as a student doesn't mean you will like us.

Q: Right.

METRINKO: In fact, just the opposite, oftentimes. You have to remember that a fair number of revolutionary government ministers had also been students in the United States. It did not make them good people or learned people or intelligent people. It was just a fact in their lives. One or two of them at least had American citizenship. That's not much of a source of honor for the United States.

Q: *When Bruce Laingen came in, he was supposed to just hold the fort for a while until another ambassador was named.*

METRINKO: Right.

Q: *Was there a feeling that everything was kind of on hold?*

METRINKO: It was on hold, but it was also still day-to-day. I don't know if we had in the State Department or in the White House a clear view of where we wanted to go with Iran at this point. I really don't know about that. I can't answer that.

Q: *I think the general feeling - obviously speaking for myself - was, Okay, let's get on with it. I mean, the Shah was gone, and in most diplomacy it's a practical measure. You get on with it, but you obviously are looking askance at some of the things that are happening.*

METRINKO: That's true, and it may have been true at a certain level in the State Department, but on the other hand, we had certain number of Americans who, whether or not we like to admit it, were also speaking for the American Government. I'm thinking of people like Kissinger and Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, a variety of other congressmen and senators, who were either on the take or had gotten such large amounts of money in their lives from the Shah that they were trying to get us to remain loyal to the Shah.

Q: *Yes, it's hard to turn that -*

METRINKO: And they spoke for the American Government as well. It's curious. A former Secretary of State, he'll still have the title of Secretary of State, whether or not it says *ex-* in front of it. And if you're avaricious and only thinking of your own pockets, as many of them were -

Q: *But was there still, I mean, was there a feeling that there was still Shah money floating around the United States?*

METRINKO: There was a *huge* amount of Shah money floating around the United States, immense amounts of it. The Shah had gotten out, reputedly, a couple of billion dollars. I don't know when Mrs. Javits finally left working for the Shah, but she was working for him during that summer, certainly. We had one former ambassador who had set up a consulting firm called Safir, which means 'ambassador' in Persian. There's a good book, *Paved with Good Intentions*, by Barry Rubin, about the Iranian-American relationship.

Q: *He was the -*

METRINKO: No, this is Barry Rubin, who has never been to Iran. He writes on the Middle East. But his first chapter in the book he lists all the former high-ranking American officials who worked for the Shah after they left retirement. That included a number of military, former generals, etc., former ambassadors, former Secretaries of State. And he was absolutely correct.

Q: How about our Public Affairs Section there? How were they working at that time? What was their approach?

METRINKO: I don't think I have the answer to that. They were active, that I know. Certainly the Iran-America Society in Tehran was very active. They had an office there. English was still important. It was still operating. I'm trying to think. It was not the time or the place to give your exhibits or to publicize the United States. You just hoped that you wouldn't do anything too wrong.

Q: Well, the Consular Section - who was the head of it, and what were you getting, as a political officer at the embassy, from the Consular Section?

METRINKO: The Consular Section, even when it was closed, was extraordinarily active and very, very hardworking. Lou Goeltz had been the consul general throughout the revolution. Ward Christiansen had been the consul general up until the early summer of 1977. He was replaced by Lou Goeltz. Lou Goeltz was there until the middle of 1979. Lou was replaced by Dick Moorfield, all three of them excellent officers, all very hardworking in the classic sense of the hardworking consul general who comes to work at eight o'clock in the morning and doesn't lift his head up from the desk or from the crowds of people until six or seven at night, and that's it. Their staffs were also good, and I could think of so many of the consular officers who were really stand-out consular officers - people like Barbara Scheil, who was killed in Iraq a couple of years ago, Tom Dowling, for much of the revolution, people like that, just some really sharp -

Q: Who?

METRINKO: Tom Dowling. Really sharp, good officers - hardworking officers, too. And what were we getting from them? Well, the entire consular staff had changed by very, very early in 1979. Khomeini came back, and almost the entire embassy staff had changed. In fact, there were only a couple of holdovers. There was myself, Vic Tomseth, Charlie Naas, who'd come in the middle of the summer, two of the military guys - that was it. Most of them had not been there beforehand, so everyone was changing new. All of the vice-consuls were brand new. The consul general was new. His deputies were new. And they did not yet have, that early on in the game, after a month or two months of being in Iran, the breadth of experience or the command of the language to really become useful reporting officers. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying you couldn't answer for the others.

METRINKO: By the middle of 1979, I had already been living in Iran for five and a half years. My friends were Iranian. My social life was Iranian. My eating habits, my sleeping habits, my daily routine were totally Persian. There was absolutely no reason why I should have or would have simply hung around the embassy or had, other than work life, any sort of life with the people who were coming into Iran now.

Q: Well, I'm thinking, though, you know, when you're looking at this, this is sometimes a problem.

METRINKO: Oh, yes.

Q: *And I'm not using this as a disparaging term, but an officer "gone native" -*

METRINKO: Not native.

Q: *- because you're not there in the Peace Corps; you're there to report and convey, to present the American side of things, particularly at the junior level, or relatively - you're not that junior - to report about what's going on, particularly to those who are then making decisions, particularly including at the top of the embassy and to the Department of State. And so I'm just trying to figure out how this was -*

METRINKO: No, I was making a distinction. I did a lot of reporting. My contributions were in the reporting, in the perceptions that I brought back, in what I reported from the street, from my contacts. And I had no social life with most of the Americans there because, basically, they had nothing to offer. They were brand new to the country, and they were feeling hunkered down. They didn't speak Persian, in general, and basically it would have been a waste of my time.

Q: *Well, a waste of time at one point, but also - and the other point is - at least those coming from Washington would be letting you know more about what's happening in your own country.*

METRINKO: No, no, I don't accept that. They had no more concept of what was happening in my own country than anyone else did. I kept pretty close touch with that. I always take my vacations in the United States and in Europe, and in later years, every year make sure that, when I wasn't actually living here, I'd come back every year. I came back to the United States for about a month, a month and a half, in 1979.

Q: *Were you getting any -*

METRINKO: And by the way, on my trip back to the United States, I was so thoroughly disgusted by the Department of State, that I only stayed there for a day or two.

Q: *Why?*

METRINKO: Nobody was interested, when I came back, in really talking. They all knew "the Truth," in the Washington sense. When I came back, the first day I arrived, I was supposed to spend a couple of days TDY in Washington, go home, and come back again a couple of weeks later. And when I arrived, I was asked to go to a meeting that INR was sponsoring, and that was fine, but the meeting was to discuss reporting, much of which I had done, on the security forces of Iran - police reporting, what was happening with the old army, things like that. The office director of the Iran Desk asked me to be certain to come to the meeting. I went to the meeting, and as the meeting started, I was asked to leave because I didn't have the proper clearances. This was the attitude of INR and CIA. It didn't matter if you had just been there for two years, had come back fresh from the field, and had done the reporting they were discussing. Since you didn't

have the clearances they thought you needed to sit in the meeting, they weren't interested in hearing what you had to say. Probably Washington has always been a bit like that.

Q: I think all of us who have served in the field, when you go back to Washington, you're full of knowledge and information, nobody gives a damn.

METRINKO: Nobody gives a damn, exactly. They know the Truth, so why bother asking?

Q: This is why I'm dwelling on this, about the passing of information and knowledge - personal knowledge - on: it's very difficult.

METRINKO: It's very difficult. In fact, it may be impossible. All you can do in passing information and knowledge on is to train other people. You can't really... We don't learn from other people's mistakes. We can learn from their anecdotes, perhaps, but not from their mistakes.

Q: Well, this is, in part, my little crusade with this oral history program, at least to document some of this so people who come after can read case studies back and forth and at least get an idea and have little warning bells go off.

METRINKO: I'm willing to bet the one great lesson that we should have learned - one of the great lessons - from the whole Iran experience was that religion plays a major role in the lives of many other nations, much more than it does here. If you really want to understand the political and economic and social life of another country, you also have to thoroughly understand the religious beliefs they have, how they see themselves, and the institutions that their religious beliefs have brought into being. We ignored that almost completely in Iran, for lots of reasons, but we thoroughly ignored it. We ran around scrimmaging to try to find some cleric we could talk to when the revolution finally dawned on us. And yet, having done that, having paid the price for that complete lack of understanding of another country's religion, I'm willing to bet that in most other countries we are still doing the same thing. We're certainly doing it in Israel.

Q: Well, I think one of the things, too, but on the other hand, we come from really a highly religious country. I mean, the United States has... Israeli policy is driven by the Jewish lobby plus others, which is religious-based. Our stand on a lot of things comes out of what we would call Bible-Belt fundamentalism.

METRINKO: And yet I'm willing to bet that the embassy in Israel today has absolutely zero contact with the religious establishment there.

Q: I suspect they'd have much more, because it's -

METRINKO: They never did before.

Q: But I suspect now they have or they had because -

METRINKO: Well, anyway -

Q: *We're moving. Well, we get really sort of into November, and was this a tidal wave that was predictable, or did this just sort of happen?*

METRINKO: Was I just an increasingly high tide that kept getting higher and higher and higher?

Q: *Yes.*

METRINKO: It was more of a high tide. What was happening by September, October, November was more and more street trouble, more and more demonstrations, a feeling that, okay, we've had a revolution, now what? Why aren't things improving? Why are things going from bad to worse? Why aren't companies reopening? More and more people getting arrested, long show trials continuing, a pent-up desire by Iranians to leave, the feeling that maybe the schools weren't going to open after they'd been closed for so long. A lot of sort of aimless wandering around by a couple of million school kids who didn't know if their schools were going to be open on time or not, because they'd certainly been not open for much of the preceding year, and revolutions are fine, but you still had to get on with your life, and every one else in the world has gone on for another year of schooling and they are one year closer to their degrees. You had purges that were continuing. You had - I want to say *insurgencies*, but just a lot of nationalist foment out in the provinces. Kurds, Turks, Baluchis, the Arab provinces were all getting a little bit noisy - in fact, very noisy. You had religious leaders and ethnic leaders in the provinces being attacked. The Arab Ayatollah of Khuzestan had been put under house arrest at this point. One of the Kurdish religious leaders, a Sunni leader, had been put under... no, they were looking for him to arrest him. They arrested most of the members of his family. You had this sort of thing going on. You had increasing dissension in the clerical ranks in Iran itself - you know, the standard Shiite ranks - with at one point, for example, Ayatollah Taleghani, the Friday prayer leader of Tehran, disappearing in a state of indignation over something or other that had happened. I think one of his sons or two of his sons were kidnaped at one point. You had the Mujaheddin becoming noisier, people making demands and counter-demands, and the press was a free-for-all. The press was attacking everybody, all sorts of allegations, other people being arrested. It was really very, very shaky. The social fabric of the country had been really blasted, and it hadn't yet settled down again. People didn't know what to do or who to turn to in the country.

Now that being said, you had us trying to redo a relationship with Iran. We wanted to send an ambassador there. All of this stuff about America not having recognized the revolution is absolute trash. We had never closed our embassy. We continued to provide services. We dealt with the new government on a very matter-of-fact day-to-day basis. We had never actually gone down and paid obeisance to Khomeini. The Russians had. Everyone else had. They would all go down, hat in hand, sort of bow and pay obeisance and get blasted by him, and then come back and - fine. We never had. We had been advised not to by the ministers of his cabinet whom we trusted. (And God knows why we should have trusted them.) We had reopened the Consular Section. It was under incredible pressure, with long lines, thousands and thousands of people waiting to get visas and other services. At the same time that our FSN staff was getting more and more queasy, people wanting to leave, just to sort of take off, to leave the country, to leave employment, to move to America, or to move somewhere else - because they, of course, were under the same sorts of attacks that the American diplomats were, under the same sorts of

pressure, but they had no protection. We had diplomatic status. They had nothing, and they could be hauled in and questioned and threatened with impunity. In fact, more than one of our FSNs was arrested at this point, and we had one senior FSN who spent quite a while -

Q: When you talk about arrests, are these sort of official arrests, or are these arrests by vigilante committees or whatever?

METRINKO: You can't distinguish between the two at this time because "official" meant vigilante communities. It was not yet a government, the Government of Iran, in the classic sense. It was composed as much of vigilante committees and communities and groups -

Q: Komitehs weren't they called?

METRINKO: They were called *komitehs*, yes, as a matter of fact - composed as much of collections of these and of gangs as of ayatollahs at their offices - anybody with a beard who claimed to be religious, as it was a government in the regular bureaucratic sense. There was no sort of merit examination that made you a member of a particular ministry. It was just that you had a gang of people and had been attached to a particular ministry or were using the authority of a local Friday prayer leader in your home town to go out and arrest people, but a rival ayatollah might also have his own people going out to arrest people. It was really chaotic.

Q: Was there any thought of saying, Okay, now, let's just get out of here, and let's just close down the mission - it's too chaotic - and wait? Did that really come up?

METRINKO: We had the staff to about 10 or 12 people at one point, and very soon we built it up again. I don't recall anything special along those lines. It may have happened, or it may have been considered, but I don't think it ever gained any sort of acceptable.

Q: In other words, you weren't all looking over your shoulder and saying, Boy, what are they keeping us here for? I mean, you weren't picking up this...

METRINKO: Everybody was there as a volunteer, so there wasn't that. And I've been in other groups. I have been in groups of people in different places that sat down and said, "We should not be here." This was not one of those places. What was happening was too important. There were too many possibilities; there were too many opportunities. And no embassy that I can think of pulled out later. Everybody had somebody there, and most ambassadors were there, too. It was a major political event, but it was also a fully covered political event among the press. You had newspaper reporters, journalists, magazine writers, and travel writers, and this and that and various activists from all around the world flying to Iran. It was sort of like a St. Patrick's Day parade every day of the year. Everybody was there. So there was no real sense that we should pull out.

Q: Did you find because you were out and around that journalists - not just American but European journalists, maybe others - were coming to you and saying, "Hey, Mike, take me out and let me find the real people."

METRINKO: I would never have taken a journalist out with me. I talked to a lot of journalists. Yes, there were journalists around, but I don't take journalists out like that.

Q: Did Iraq hover on the horizon as a mass, or not? I mean, was this something that was coming up on our radar at the time?

METRINKO: It was certainly coming up on the Iranian radar, because in the classic sense of the revolution, the Iranian revolutionaries were proclaiming a revolution in Iraq as well. They were trying to foment one. The comments, the speeches, that Khomeini made about Iraq and that other revolutionary leaders in Iran were making about Iraq were extraordinarily inflammatory, and I would assume eventually precipitated the Iraqi attack on Iran. There was good cause in Iraq to believe that Iran was acting seditiously inside the country. Now, whether or not there was anything military going on, there was so much border stuff going on that it wasn't necessarily Iraq versus Iran; it was the people on the border, who had always been border people - especially the Kurds along that border causing trouble - not causing trouble, just wanting a piece of the pie that everyone else was grabbing.

Q: How did the Kurds - because you had served in a Kurdish area - how did the Kurds fit into the religious setup that was developing in Iran?

METRINKO: Kurds in Iran can generally be three different religions. You have Kurds who are Sunni, Kurds who are Shia, and Kurds who are Ahli - *ali-haqq, ali-el-lahi*. It's a sect that's very strong in Kurdish areas that regards Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad, as being superior to the Prophet Muhammad. Kurds might identify themselves religiously, or they might identify themselves first nationalistically as Kurds. It depends on the Kurd you're talking to and what his own background is. There were Kurds who were high up in the government. I'm thinking of the first foreign minister, Sanjabi, who was from the Kurdish Sanjab tribe. He didn't last long. He was never allowed to enter his office building by the demonstrators who were outside of it. It was quite funny, actually. He was proclaimed foreign minister, but he could never get into his own office. He developed the very typical heart problems that officials there developed, and he scooted off to the United States. But they tried.

The Kurdish religious leader - I want to say Sheikh Hossein Ghassemlu, but the name is escaping me - was under attack by the clergy of Qom. He had disappeared. There were Kurdish uprisings, if you will, or gang warfare. You know, when a newspaper describes an "uprising," I'm never sure whether it's a gang fight, a clan fight, a clash between rival groups of smugglers, or just a lot of angry young guys on the street. You never really know, but there was a lot of noise in the Kurdish area, to the point where the Iranian Air Force was ordered to bomb some Kurdish towns. They were ordered to bomb the city of Mahabad, if I remember correctly, right in the middle of 1979. And there was fighting in that area. Now a lot of the fighting may have been simply because people who had gotten stuff from the Shah wanted to keep it and people who didn't have it wanted to grab it. I'm assuming that was a lot of the problem. It often wasn't ideological, but basic money and property, and armed guards fighting over it.

Q: Were we getting anything from the south? This might have been Victor Tomseth's area more, but the Arabs, down in what I would call the delta?

METRINKO: I was getting some stuff because I had good friends in the new revolutionary government of Khuzestan Province. The mayor of Abadan was a good friend of mine and I saw him fairly frequently. The new governor general of Khuzestan Province was somebody with whom I dealt. I think we may have gone down. I didn't, but other people may have gone down on trips to Khuzestan... Were we getting anything from them? Not in a real sense, no. But we had never really had good contacts in that province, Abadan, Khuzestan, the general oil area. The National Iranian Oil Company had always been in close touch with the United States, but a lot of the old people had gone.

Q: What about the other embassies? Was there, from your perspective, much sharing of information, or was everybody off on their own?

METRINKO: There were generally attempts on their part to find out what we knew, because most of them were too small to really be serious. For good or bad, the United States tends to have monster embassies, supermarket-type embassies. Most governments have "boutique" embassies, and if you are one of two officers at another embassy, there's not much you can really offer to the United States. Most of the embassies there were smaller embassies. We dealt quite a bit with the British, I know. The British were not bad. They tended to speak the language, and I certainly had fairly good contacts with the British Embassy in 1979. But most other embassies were small and insignificant; the Russians, of course, we never dealt with.

Q: I was wondering. At that time, of course, they would have been Soviets. Were we concerned about what they were up to?

METRINKO: In 1979, there was a great deal of concern about what was happening with the old Tudeh Party, the old Iranian Communist Party. What the Russians were doing in Tehran, the Russian ambassador had gone down to see Khomeini, and as a matter of fact, the Russian ambassador was also the last person to meet with the Friday prayer leader of Tehran, Ayatollah Taleghani, before the Friday prayer leader died unexpectedly (and probably through assassination). But he had had a long meeting with the Russian ambassador. The Russian ambassador left, and he died shortly thereafter. The Russians were in contact with the clergy. They were in contact with a lot of the people in the country. Of course, they have a very long joint border with Iran. There's a lot of reasons for them to be in contact. They have always had a very strong presence in Iran. The Russian trade mission in Tabriz had, I think, something like 200 people in it, which was pretty big for a trade mission. And they had rail connections and other connections with Iran.

Q: Well, now, let's go to the events. What happened?

METRINKO: I might add, by the way, just one more thing about Russia. I'm saying Russia, now

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Q: You keep saying Russia, and I come back with we really have to talk about the USSR, the Soviets, yes.

METRINKO: Because we can no longer say USSR, of course, we're talking about times past. There was also something that was quite significant for the Russians. And this was very much a part of Iranian revolutionary policy. The Iranian revolutionaries want to spread a revolution, of course. There was a strong group of revolutionaries who saw the revolution as starting in Iran but extending throughout the world. I've heard them talk about the "Islamic Revolution in South America," which I always thought would be a neat trick. But many, many revolutionaries felt that they could start a similar revolution in the Soviet Union. All of today's republics are filled with Muslims. There are Muslims all over the USSR, and I know that officers were assigned by the revolutionary government to Moscow in order to foment the Islamic revolution there, to start getting in touch with - if they could find them - Muslim leaders, Muslim clergy, just to start a revolutionary process going in the old Soviet Union. The Soviets, of course, knew this as well, and I don't think... You'd have to talk to a real Soviet expert about how the Russians felt at that time about the Iranian Revolution. They may have been quite fearful of it.

Q: Well, in a way, I mean, this is a turnabout. I mean, they have been playing the Communist card around the world, and all of a sudden somebody was going into what was considered their back door in Central Asia, which was quite vulnerable - at least they felt it was vulnerable.

METRINKO: And the Russians, of course, had marched big-time into Afghanistan.

Q: Yes - well, not yet.

METRINKO: Or were marching into Afghanistan.

Q: This was really after. They were there, but that came in December. But what about the events of November, now?

METRINKO: Well, we had something that happened just before the events of November. We had the prayer leader of Tehran getting assassinated. That caused major problems in the city. It happened in October.

Q: A prayer leader being -

METRINKO: Well, the equivalent of a cardinal of a city if you were a Roman Catholic. The Friday prayer leader is the person officially designated to lead the faithful in prayer on Friday. Ayatollah Taleghani was a very respected revolutionary ayatollah. He was the patron saint of the Mujaheddin. He was probably as popular in Tehran as Khomeini was. He also had something else. He had a group of eight or nine very, very revolutionary children. Khomeini had one fat son who basically shadowed his father everywhere and didn't do much else except to get involved in business deals. Taleghani had lots of lean, mean children who were out doing revolutionary activity, as heads of guard groups, other things. They were involved in the Mujaheddin. They were activists. They went out speaking. Eventually, one of his daughters became a member of

Parliament. But it was a revolutionary family, as opposed to Khomeini's family. The prayer leader - I say this based on what his own family told me, because I knew them quite well - he came home from having had meetings at Parliament one day - it must have been October of 1979. In his home he had one private meeting with the Soviet ambassador, who left. The electricity around his house and the phone lines went dead, and he shortly thereafter died. His security guard had been involved in an accident just a day or two before and gotten himself a broken leg. He wasn't there. His doctor wasn't there, wasn't allowed to get there; they couldn't contact him. This was in the days before cell phones, of course. And so the phone lines and electric lines were cut. The house was basically sealed off. The guy died. The family told me that it was poison. They were told not to have an autopsy. So one of the most powerful Muslim clergy in Islam at the time, in the Islamic world, died unexpectedly and was buried in a few hours, and the family was threatened with serious problems if they tried to have an autopsy.

Q: *By whom?*

METRINKO: By the other clergy. The reason given, at least by the family, was that their father had been opposed to the concept of "valiat-e-fagih," the rule of the jurisprudent. That's the name given to the type of the government that Khomeini was setting up, where a clergyman would be in final ultimate control of the government. And Taleghani was going to come out against this in public, and so he died. That started a lot of problems because Mujaheddin and others who really revered him - he had been their spiritual mentor - started getting extremely nervous at this point. It sort of threw things up in the air again as far as the clergy were concerned. It made it quite clear that no matter who you were, what your rank was, what your revolutionary credentials were, you could be done away with very quickly and nothing would happen.

Q: *Was the finger pointed at Khomeini? I mean, was this -*

METRINKO: Not at Khomeini. People talked about Beheshti and others, other members of the clergy. Khomeini was still sacrosanct. Even though many people considered him just a murderer, they weren't going to say it out loud, certainly not in public, because if they had tried, his followers would have destroyed them.

Q: *You mentioned the Mujaheddin. At this point, what did that mean?*

METRINKO: At this point they were a revolutionary group with a great deal of discipline. They were supporting Khomeini, supporting the government. You could always tell the difference between a Mujaheddin-held building or a Fedayeen-held building, as opposed to a standard old Revolutionary Guard-held building, because the Mujaheddin and the Fedayeen were extremely disciplined, tough, soldier-looking, military-martial-looking, as opposed to the Revolutionary Guards and all the Komiteh people. And Anti-American? Yes. Pro-revolutionary? Yes. And for the time being working with Khomeini.

Q: *Well, the slogans and things that are going back and forth all of this time, was anti-Americanism a major theme, or was this developed later on?*

METRINKO: It had been a major theme all through the revolutionary process, beginning in '78. "Death to America," "Down with America," "America, Go Home," you know, "Carter does this and does that," was constant - so constant that it had lost all meaning to us. It sort of had the same resonance as a bumper-sticker here does. You don't even read it. If you read it, you read it for amusement value, not because it has any meaning to you.

Q: Did you find, in going around, that the people who were shouting "Death to Americans," and your being an American, was there a connect there?

METRINKO: I found some hostility, occasionally, but in general I found more of an interest in making my acquaintance very often so that they could get a visa. The amount of hostility against Americans was often tinted with jealousy of America or a desire to go to America. It was always mixed and never quite logical. Iranians blamed America for a lot because they were unwilling to accept blame themselves. They were unwilling also to accept responsibility. It all went hand in hand. America was a convenient scapegoat for everything that was wrong with the country.

Q: Welcome to Greece!

METRINKO: Greece, lots of countries.

Q: Well, now, let's talk about what happened.

METRINKO: What happened November 4, 1979. I generally got into the embassy late because I would go out every night. And when I went out every night, I would not get home until 12 or one o'clock in the morning. There was an understanding that I was going to be out every night. I was one of the few people that was going out, but I was also seeing a whole wide range of people who were useful to the embassy, for reporting or to get things done. The afternoon before the 4th - it must have been the 3rd - I had been contacted by two of Ayatollah Taleghani's sons saying they wanted to meet me the next morning at the embassy, would I please be there. And I told them that I wouldn't be able to get there until quite a bit later, around 11 o'clock or so, and they were insistent they had to see me earlier in the morning because they were leaving the next day or the day after to see Yasser Arafat and they wanted to talk to me before they went there. And this was logical, knowing these two people, so I agreed to be there early in the morning. I had a lunch set up with somebody who had just come in from one of the Kurdish provinces, who had called me, an old friend, and I also had a dinner set up with somebody else, dinner with the former mayor of Tabriz. I also had... This is an aside into the Persian personality. The Taleghani son that wanted to see me that morning, about two weeks before this, had gotten me to help with a visa for a former university rector who was trying to leave the country for several months so he wouldn't get arrested. And he had brought the university rector to my house. I had talked to him. I had decided to issue the visas. I had issued visas to the rector and his wife and their kids. And the rector had come back with his wife to thank me in person and handed me a package, saying, "This is from Isfahan." The way the package was wrapped was in the same paper exactly as a box of awful Persian candy I had gotten a couple of days before. In fact, I had so many boxes of this... It's a Persian candy called *gaz* that's a very hard nougat which will pull the fillings right out of your teeth, and it's covered with cornstarch, which makes it both difficult to eat and sloppy. And I

used to pile it up on my kitchen table, give it to the maid, give it to the neighbors, etc. Sometimes even to guests. It was sort of a torture food. You'd put it out, and people would have to take a piece. Everyone knew they wished they didn't have to. Anyway, it was one of those type candies. He had handed me this large box. I put it on the kitchen table, thanked him. We chatted. I gave him his passports, etc. He left. And a few days later, I had more guests in the house, went to get some candy to put out on the table, ripped the paper off this and discovered it was a beautiful sterling silver bowl. So I got very annoyed, called him up (he hadn't left yet), explained that I could not accept the bowl, thanked him for it, but that I had to give it back, and would he please send somebody to pick it up. He was going to send somebody to pick it up at the embassy, where I had left it wrapped up at the gatehouse, on November 4th. So he or a member of his family was coming to pick up the sterling bowl. I was set up for a meeting in the morning, a lunch in the afternoon, dinner in the evening, etc. - all with either *bona fide* officials or former officials or wanna-be officials. And I was in my office waiting for my friends to call. I noticed that there was a tremendous amount of activity around the embassy. And that's when the embassy started to notice it too, in general. The noise level had just picked up considerably, and when we looked out we could see lots of heads. And suddenly the heads were coming over the walls. And that was that. We grouped people who were in the chancery building or could get to the chancery building. When I got to the main floor, people were at the doors. I was already up on the ambassador's floor, up to my office floor, people got up to that floor. And then, it was a matter of battening down the hatches. We did not start to destroy files. It was far too much to destroy anyway. I do not know what time the communicators started, but I was part of the group in the ambassador's office, a large group, some discipline, not a tremendous amount. The chargé, his deputy, Vic Tomseth, the RSO, Mike Howland, were gone, so there was some confusion over who was in charge. More and more noise outside. I picked up the phone at one point because the phone lines were still working. We were on the phone with Bruce Laingen, who was trying to give orders from the foreign minister's office, saying Khomeini had ordered that the protest be broken up immediately and that there were people on the way to help us, just to hang tight. We were hanging tight, and it became clearer that they were going to have trouble getting through because the crowds were really getting noisy and things were breaking outside. I picked up the phone, dialed the number of my revolutionary friend who had asked me to be at the meeting, and got his security guard, whom I also knew quite well, on the phone. I told him I just wanted to speak to Mehdi, and he was silent for a moment, and then he said, "Michael, Mehdi won't come to the telephone." And I said, "You know what's happening here at the embassy, where I've been waiting for Mehdi to come." He said, "Yes, we know." And I realized then that they had set me up to be there. So I just said, "Okay, I guess this is goodbye." And then he said, "Michael, I'm really sorry" (this is the security guard), and that was that.

Q: And then what happened?

METRINKO: What happened then, one of our RSOs went outside, despite recommendations that he not do so, and then shortly thereafter he wanted us to open the doors and let them in because they said they were going to kill him if we didn't. He had gone out thinking he could talk to the mob of a couple of thousand people, using mid-American English and no sense at all of Iran, Iranians, or anything that was happening. He was going to go out there and, "I am the American diplomat. You are breaking the Geneva Convention."

Q: *He didn't have a swagger stick.*

METRINKO: No, he didn't have a swagger stick.

Q: *You tap them on the shoulder and speak loudly and slowly and they'll part.*

METRINKO: Like the Red Sea.

Q: *Well, what was the reaction within your group?*

METRINKO: "Oh, shit."

Q: *Yes.*

METRINKO: It's like, what can you say?

Q: *Actually, you'd been through this... Well, maybe not you, but -*

METRINKO: No, I'd had seen it before.

Q: *And you'd had it before -*

METRINKO: I had had it before. No one else in the embassy had had it before.

Q: *Because I thought there had been that time.*

METRINKO: Yes, February 14. That group was gone, with the exception of one or two of the military, Colonel Lee Holland, and that was it. I think -

Q: *Was the general feeling of "we'll be taken, and then this will be taken care of eventually?"*

METRINKO: Yes, taken, and it will be taken care of because the government is going to come back in and break this up again. And in fact, the captors, the "students" - so-called - that had arranged all this, also believed it was going to be a one-day event. They told us that at the time, some of the more pleasant ones. They said, "Don't worry. You'll be in your own home by midnight tonight." And in later years, as they talked about it, giving interviews about it, they still say that, that they had planned that this was going to be a quickie, just to show the world that they could do it. And instead, so much solidarity cropped up for them, then Khomeini suddenly supported them, that they stayed, and that was that.

Q: *Well, then, let's talk about how you were treated and all that.*

METRINKO: How was I treated? Well, I got singled out fairly quickly. I did not tell anyone in the group, and they had no reason to know, at least initially, that I could speak Persian. I had

learned my lesson in Tabriz. You do not tell captors your entire life story and what languages you speak as soon as you meet them. In fact, you hope you can never tell them. We were taken to the ambassador's residence first, held for a while there, kept tied up. Eventually, as it came time for the... I guess the first evening I spent there. By the second day, I was taken over to the cafeteria area, where they had mattresses spread out on the floor. We were placed on mattresses, sort of forced to sit and sleep on the mattress, and at one point the group of students walked in and went up to somebody and started speaking to him in Persian. They were going from bed to bed. One of my embassy colleagues blurted out, "I don't speak Farsi. Ask Metrinko. He speaks Farsi really well." And they came over and hauled me away, and I never saw anybody again for many months. The fact that you're a Foreign Service officer doesn't stop you from being an idiot necessarily. That guy was an idiot, and I could cheerfully have killed him.

Q: *Yes.*

METRINKO: But... Then that was it. I went to solitary, and they purposely tried to separate the ones who spoke Persian and also the ones who were the heads of offices in the embassy. That was that. I went to solitary on November 6th and came out sometime in May for the first time, briefly.

Q: *While you were in solitary, you mentioned, what were they doing with you?*

METRINKO: Initially, for the first month or two, a lot of interrogation. Who do you know? What did you do? Who did you talk to? Who said what to who? I had to give them information about figures that were public revolutionary figures. I knew this or that minister. I knew the deputy prime minister. I knew the head of this office. I knew the head of that office. And I could talk about things like that. But that was about it. And we'd just go on repeating and repeating and repeating those questions. They weren't very professional.

Q: *I was wondering, did you feel they had a dossier- (end of tape)*

You were saying they would ask you -

METRINKO: Well, first they ordered me to open up my safe in my office, and I did that. If someone's pointing a gun at you and telling you to open up an office safe -

Q: *It encourages one.*

METRINKO: It encourages you. Besides, the break-in time for one of these safes is approximately three minutes anyway, so... I just saved them the trouble. Luckily, I had very little in my safe, *per se*, but of course had a lot of stuff written in other people's safes. They had my list of phone numbers from the office, but luckily, the ones in the office were very, very standard professional contacts - Ministry of Foreign Affairs people, other people, the ministry's office numbers. And the ones in the house they had not gotten. I found out much, much later, several years later, that a friend of mine, hearing over the radio the news about what was happening at the embassy, had immediately rushed to my house, gone inside, and removed every piece of

paper to be found in my apartment. It was somebody who knew my apartment well. All the paper that was in the house, including lists of friends, not lists, but telephone numbers, things like that, was removed from my house and destroyed. And that probably saved a number of people's lives. It certainly saved a fair amount of discomfort for people.

Q: Well, it certainly also shows by this time that the people who knew what was happening were well trained. This was not the normal response of somebody who has not been involved in a revolutionary society for some time.

METRINKO: They were becoming very politically savvy. The friend who went there, I think, went there assuming, as was correct, that his name was in the house and wanted to make sure that he didn't get into trouble.

Q: Well, what was your impression of your interrogators?

METRINKO: Oh, very idealistic, not too bright, not bright in the sense of having had practical experience - just sort of know-it-all students, people who were sure that their point of view was the only point of view in the world and that everything you may have done was wrong. But by this point I was used to that attitude on the part of Iranians. I had already gone through the year and a half of listening to similar people - and not well rounded, not well educated by anyone's standards, and fanatic. That's a dangerous combination.

Q: It is a dangerous combination. While you were in solitary confinement and these things were happening, were you sort of preparing yourself, mentally, how you would respond, sort of working out a game plan?

Well, now, were they trying to extract information or were they trying to indoctrinate you?

METRINKO: No indoctrination, no. They knew I was a lost cause. They were trying to extract information, especially about revolutionary officials who they think might have been collaborating with us in the embassy. So I think I must have mentioned the name of every revolutionary official I could think of. "Oh, yes, he was educated in the United States. Ha, ha."

Q: Well, in a way, I guess this is sort of compensation. You thought you were throwing, as the British say, a spanner in the works.

METRINKO: I was throwing them as many bones from their own ranks as I could possibly throw up, and each of them had I met with. "Oh, I know the deputy prime minister, yes... Khomeini's son-in-law, yes."

Q: Well, we're still talking about early days, and I guess this went through several phases, didn't it?

METRINKO: It went through several phases. I was initially kept inside the embassy, taken from room to room depending on what they were doing with the rooms. I ended up spending quite a

bit of time in small, semi-closet area in the basement of the embassy. Initially, when they had larger rooms, I would have a guard who would sit there with a gun trained on me. I always thought that was a bit stupid. Of course, they were also very careful. Gradually they stopped doing that and just kept us locked in the rooms with guards outside in the hallways, which was, of course, a lot more sensible. To leave the rooms to go to the bathroom you had to blindfolded. The first time I got out of the embassy was springtime, so from the period of November until roughly March or April I was locked up in a room with no windows.

Q: How did you get by? I'm talking more about the mental process and all.

METRINKO: I got by by doing a tremendous amount of physical exercise. When I say that, I mean a really *tremendous* amount of physical exercise. I was doing a thousand sit-ups a day. I'd run in place for two or three hours. And I would do this all day long every day because I had to get tired enough to fall asleep. Otherwise you don't sleep. Food was no problem. They always fed us, even when it was only bread and cheese, the people were always fed. Hygiene was a problem in the sense that, well, we had the embassy bathrooms to use. They were kept clean because we cleaned them. I would volunteer for bathroom-cleaning duty just to get myself out of my room. I never saw anybody else all that time. Occasionally we'd hear a voice, and that would be that. Other than that, I could, much of the time, probably three-quarters of the time that I was there, have books. And that was fine. I would read, exercise, read for an hour, stand up, run in place for an hour, or some sort of exercise.

Q: What sort of books did you get?

METRINKO: Well, we had a small embassy library. They distributed that. Then they had seized the old American High School, and they brought the contents of the library down and dumped it, and they would give us books to read from that. In fact, I still have two of those books.

Q: Did you have any feeling that this organization that was going on was either changing in its composition or they were getting bored with the whole thing?

METRINKO: They were changing their composition because people would disappear from the guard group. I know from the history that I read later, that they purged members of the takeover group, that the Mujaheddin, for example, that were involved in it, were rapidly thrown out of it or rapidly dropped out of it. I don't think it was ever a Mujaheddin plot to take the embassy. There were a couple of people who were in the Mujaheddin who were involved with it or took part in it as activists, but I don't think it was a Mujaheddin plot to do this at all. We know the leaders of this takeover group, and none of them have Mujaheddin connections.

Q: Who were they?

METRINKO: Well, they're in power right now. Khatami, the great liberal hope of the United States, has them all as his trusted advisers, which is something the State Department refuses to think about, that his first vice-president was the spokeswoman for the group - Mary Ebtekar - who likes not to think about it or talk about it much today, but there was this great touting by

human rights groups and women's groups that said, "Oh, he's appointed a woman as his vice-president." Yes, she is. She was also one of the ringleaders of this group.

Other people closely tied to Khatami - in fact, the ringleaders of the student group are all closely tied to Khatami today, which has always led me to question what *he* was doing back then, and that's something that people simply refuse to think about.

Q: Well, of course, there's always the thing that, you know, when you get right down to it, religion is religion, but politics is politics.

METRINKO: And you hope that this is -

Q: Yes, and where you stand is where you sit, and where you sit changes from time to time. All you have to do is look at our political leaders.

METRINKO: Yes, some of them are scumbags that make the Iranians look absolutely pristine.

Q: Well, when they got you, did you have to fight bitterness? I mean, how the hell did the US Government get me into this?

METRINKO: No, I never blamed the US Government. You can't blame the US Government.

Q: Oh, sure you can.

METRINKO: I wouldn't. The US Government was us. I was the US Government. I could blame myself for lack of prescience. I could look back and say, Gee, if I'd only stayed in Germany longer on my vacation, I wouldn't be here. Gee, if I had only gone off to such-and-such a place, I wouldn't be here. But you know, a revolution is an act of nature. In fact, it would be the "perfect storm." You can't fight nature. A revolution is natural; it occurs in politics - not all the time, but as a cataclysmic event which, when you're involved in it, you cannot reflect. It was there. It's happening. You can lay back and enjoy it; you can go with it, hope to survive it, but you can't stop it, and you can't sit back and say, "Gee, if only I had done this," or "Why doesn't my government do that?" I knew my government. And I also knew all the various conflicting trends of thought about how to deal with the revolution that we were going through in Washington. I also had and continue to have very little faith in my government, in the sense of protecting me. So I had no expectations that it would. I remembered very, very clearly from junior officer training, we had been told that if we were taken hostage, the government would not deal with the hostage takers. It would do what it could, but basically we were going to be on our own. And there would be no attempt to buy us out or to deal with hostage-takers, no bargaining with them. Therefore, I was in that situation. I did not expect the government to do anything.

Q: In a way, it was probably a relief in that it allowed you to -

METRINKO: That I didn't have to sit around and keep hoping. In fact, I kind of expected - I mean I really did - that some day some American consul would walk in and say he was the

consular officer from the American embassy and was paying a consular visit. I had that little faith.

Q: Well, what happened in May, when they let you out - I mean, not let you out, but they moved you around?

METRINKO: What happened in May? May was when the incident in Tabas occurred, when Americans were killed trying to rescue us in one of the most stupidly planned, botched up military-political escapades of the season - unworkable, unwinnable, and if they had succeeded, we would have been dead. So I'm really glad that it ended in Tabas. It could not have gotten us out. But having said that... What happened is that they came into my cell one day and said, pack your things, you're being moved. Eventually I packed my things, and that consisted of putting things into a little, tiny bag. I think I had an extra shirt, an extra pair of underpants. I put them into a bag, and they came back to my room a while later, blindfolded me, put sort of these heavy plastic restraints on my hands, led me out, and put me in the back of a van, lying on the floor of the van. And there were other people lying there next to me. We were not allowed to talk. And we started to move. I was on the floor of the van, bouncing around for a couple of hours. We got to a different place, and they led me out, blindfolded again, from the van, took me into a building. Various doors slammed and shut and opened and closed. You'd hear voices. And eventually, they sat me down, took off my blindfold, took off my restraints, I looked around, and I was with two other people in the room, neither of whom I recognized. We were, as it turned out, in a former SAVAK prison in the city of Qom, and we had no idea who they were at first, and it was the first time that I had talked to an American since November. So it took a while to start speaking English again, which I hadn't spoken since November, either. But when I found out who they were, fine. In fact, I had met one of them a couple of times. The other one I had met, I think, just when he was introduced at a country team meeting and never seen again. But we lived together for the next month or two. I'm not sure how long I stayed in Qom. I knew it was Qom. They didn't want to tell us where we were, but I figured it out because I could hear a train in the distance the first evening, and I knew that Qom was on a railroad track, and when I tasted the water I knew that we weren't in Tehran any more. Water in Iran has very distinct tastes depending on the city you're in. The water of Qom is infamous because it tastes like salt water. It's very brackish. Tea and coffee made in Qom are almost undrinkable because the water is so salty. When I had some water I knew immediately that we had to be in Qom or somewhere near there.

Q: So what did you all do?

METRINKO: Talked. I hadn't spoken English in so long I could hardly get the words out.

Q: What were their experiences?

METRINKO: They had been in group rooms. They had each had a couple of roommates. The told me about what had happened to various people they knew, various incidents that had occurred, things like that, how various people were doing that they knew of or had seen as roommates were changed, as cellmates were changed. There were some people with whom we had no contact at all, nobody knew. For example, at that point we did not know that Bruce

Laingen and the others were being held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Nor did we at that point yet know that... I'm trying to think when I actually found out that people at the embassy had escaped. I'm not sure how I found that out. I know how I found it out; I never knew who they were. I found it out when I was reading the sports page once, and they had given me the sporting news because it had nothing at all to do with politics (and at that point I would read anything), and in one of the articles it just mentioned, sort of way down in the middle of a thousand words of text that guests of honor at the stadium in New York had been the Canadian ambassador and the six or seven Americans he had helped escape from the embassy in Tehran. And the crowd had cheered them etc. That was how I found out. I always assumed, up until the very end when we got out of prison, that that had been Bruce Laingen and Vic Tomseth, Mike Howland, and some of the others. I had no idea who it was. I just assumed that they had gotten out of the Foreign Ministry somehow.

Q: Well, then, what happened beyond this? Were the interrogations pretty well over by this?

METRINKO: The interrogations were over, yes, except for one that I had later. When was it? I guess I had one last interrogation a couple of months after the others when they had gone through one of my reports and I had reported on a conversation with someone who was a pilot for revolutionary officials, and they had arrested him. They brought him in, and they had us in for a joint interrogation in front of the hostage-takers' mullah, Khoeiniha. Khoeiniha was the spiritual leader of the student group, and he was also a little bit crazy then. He has become sort of a spiritual mentor for Khatami now. Now, of course, he's a laid-back liberal. At the time, he was more obviously a total bastard. Today it's no longer politic to be one.

Q: Now how did that go?

METRINKO: Well... I tried insulting him, which I guess worked, and they eventually led me away. He was a little bit crazy. He sat there the whole time digging a fork into the palm of his hand. He had a sharp fork, and he was just digging his hand down on the fork. This was bizarre.

Q: Well, then, sort of what was the endgame of this whole thing?

METRINKO: The endgame was lots of sitting around. And my roommates got changed once in Qom, so I got to talk to somebody else. I heard about other people, fine. We were then taken away from Qom - this was the time people were spread out all across the country - brought back to Tehran, and originally to what was called the Ghasr Prison or also was known by the name of the Komiteh Prison, although it had nothing to do with the *komitehs* that were formed after the Revolution. The Komiteh Prison was the name given to it a long time before. It was a prison that had been built by Germans in the reign of Shah Reza. It was a rather unpleasant prison, built as a real prison, the first time I was in a real, real prison with prison cells and little apertures and no windows, just apertures for air, which were always open. And you could hear screaming and things like that at night where people were being tortured, because there were lots of Iranians in prison with us at the same time. I met the former commander of the prison, actually, whose son-in-law owns a grocery store here. I met him a couple of years ago. He was visiting his son-in-law. Lots of Iranians come to the United States.

Q: *Well, then, how did it work out?*

METRINKO: I was there, had a cellmate there. I was taken away from there up to Evin Prison, went back into solitary. That was in Evin. I have no idea today how many weeks or months I spent in each place. I once calculated that out of the entire time I was, 14 months, I spent approximately 10 months in solitary. But I went from there to Evin, got thrown out of Evin once and sent back to solitary to a punishment cell there.

Q: *Why?*

METRINKO: It was wintertime in Evin. Evin is in the northern part of the city of Tehran. It's very cold. My cell was excruciatingly cold. If you were just sitting or standing, you can't warm up. I could sit there with a blanket around me, but it was cold. It was below freezing, especially at night. We had no heat. This was already after the Iraq War had started. But one day I was really, really cold. I had been told that the guards also had no heat, that they didn't have any way to stay warm either and there was nothing that anybody could do about this. Conditions were harsh all over the country. Fine, I could accept that, except one day when I was going out to the bathroom, they were leading me out blindfolded, I brushed up against a stove that was on, a heater. And I immediately knew it was a heater, and I just started to go on and on about Islam and the bastards they were - they knew nothing about religion, and they were liars, and what they could do with their imam, and everything else. They threw me back in my cell, and a little while later a couple of the leaders of the group came in - they were called in from the outside - and they said the guards were refusing to deal with me any more because of my attitude, and they took me back down to Komiteh Prison, at night in a car, blindfolded, and put me in a cell, just on a concrete floor with nothing else for about two weeks. And I was on bread and water for about two weeks. It was quite interesting. Then they brought me back later to Evin.

Q: *How did it end?*

METRINKO: How did it end? It ended when the United States, I guess, finally got its act together. We had an election in the United States, which allowed the Iranians an out. Do I believe that the release of us was delayed on purpose so that the election would take place? Yes, I do. I also believe that some Americans conspired in this. Yes, I do. I heard about it fairly early on, back in '81, shortly after I got out.

Q: *Oh, yes. Well, now, let's talk about the last days, or -*

METRINKO: The last days? Let's see, it must have been... when was that... I'm trying to think now. Where was I by Christmas? I guess in December... Yes, it would have been December. I was still in solitary up in Evin. I was taken from Evin to a building which... Oh, I might say, in Evin for the first time I got see other prisoners. I was allowed to talk occasionally to Colonel Holland, Lee Holland, who was in a cell next to mine. The would take me in there to sit with him for a while. He had a slightly larger cell than I did. And that was fine. We could sit and chat. And also they would take us out for exercise in the yard, and we could see each other. They would let

us walk in a circle in the yard just to get fresh air, and I could see several of the people who were in the same prison block that I was in. And it's funny, a friend - I think it was Anne Swift, who was up in that prison block, too, as one of the two women left - her reaction was exactly the same as mine. She was really, really glad to be able to get the exercise finally, until she realized the group she was in with - and I looked around and had the same reaction - I looked out and saw, hmm, the military attaché, hmm, the head of Station - oops.

Q: So they had pegged you as being -

METRINKO: Why aren't I with the lower-ranking ones somewhere? I'd rather not be in this select crowd. But yes...

Q: Did any of these groups that kept going over to Tehran, various clergymen and the liberal do-gooders and all this? Did they -

METRINKO: The only one that I was allowed to see was Archbishop Capucci, the Greek Catholic archbishop who had been the archbishop in Jerusalem for the Greek Catholic Church, the Melkite Church, and had been put in prison by the Israelis for gun smuggling and then been released to Vatican custody and was running around dealing with a lot of revolutionary groups in the Middle East. I met him. It was the second time I met with him because I had once stayed with him for a full week when I was visiting Jerusalem back in the year 1970. I recognized him, and he recognized me. He and I used to have dinner together every night for a week in Jerusalem. When I was there as a tourist, I stayed in his small monastery there. But he came. Other than that I wasn't really allowed to see most of them. I was taken in for, I guess, the second Christmas, not with the others. I was taken in privately, and I insulted the two clergymen who were there, so they took me out again. I was being filmed, so I immediately started with how could they deal with animals like this, and why were they pretending to be Christians and the clergy, etc., when they obviously had nothing to with Christianity. They got offended. I did my best to offend them. I was offensive on purpose. And they took me away.

Q: These were clergymen from where?

METRINKO: You know, I'm not sure where they were from. The Baltimore Roman Catholic priest who came I never saw. He was met with universally bad vibes like everybody who was there. And the only fitting reference I heard for him was scatological, so not worth repeating. But other than that, the do-gooders - no, I didn't see them.

Q: Well, then, how did the release come about?

METRINKO: Well, we were removed, I was removed from Evin, taken to a building which, as I found out later, was the former guest house of the prime minister. They had put bars and sort of iron grates, not planks, large pieces of flat iron or steel, over the windows, but the furnishings were all the original rococo sort of "Louis-the-Bastard"-type French stuff that had been there while the prime minister's guests were using it. It had an absolutely beautiful bathroom - I'll never forget it - lined floor to ceiling with dark red marble. It was like bathing in Caligula's

tomb. But I was there with Dave Roeder, the Air Force attaché, who had been my cellmate off and on. Dave's a good guy. And then we started getting visits - Algerian diplomats, for example, and others. If I remember correctly, the Swiss also came in. I could be wrong about that.

Q: *They were the protecting power.*

METRINKO: You know, not saying very much, and they weren't supposed to talk to us very much, other than to inquire about our health. And then we were all led, one by one, over for a final televised interview with Mary Ebtekar, who is now a vice-president of Iran. We didn't get along either. They never showed me on TV because whenever a TV camera got trained on me during one of these meetings, I would say things to make it impossible to show me. And she wanted me to say that I'd been treated very well, we'd had a good time there, etc., etc. I told her in un-nice terms to "buzz off." But other than that, more and more visits. And the guards were becoming "friendlier," as in, "Gee, hasn't this been swell," and "Aren't you glad you're going home?" and "You'll be going home very shortly" - that type of thing. I will say that one of the guards even gave me a copy of *Time Magazine* or parts of *Time Magazine*, and that's when I discovered that Ronald Reagan was now the President of the United States. He had been elected President. And I immediately assumed it was Soviet disinformation. I did not believe it. It just has to be disinformation - sort of a *Mad Magazine* version of *Time*. And then, well, it was almost over. I had trouble over actually leaving the guest house. And so I missed the ride out to the airplane. When we were being put on the bus, I was led back to my seat, and I was trying very hard to be correct because it was an important time. I knew I was in a bus because I could tell I was walking down a bus aisle - you know, the sides of the chairs. And I was put in a seat in the bus, and I could sense the bus was filling up. I could hear them coming, bodies moving around. Two of the Americans behind me started to whisper to each other. One of them said, "Where do you think they're taking us? Are we really going?" Something like that. And the other one started to reply, and one of the guards yelled out, "American, shut up!" And then he said, in Persian, an insulting reference to Americans. And so in Persian, I simply replied in a loud voice, "Shut up yourself, you son of a Persian prostitute!" And they pulled me off the bus, and the bus left. And they beat me up a little bit, and that was fine, except then they realized that they had me, and I realized the bus had gone, too. It had been very stupid of me. I had just been pushed. I reacted. And eventually they sent me out to the airport in a Mercedes-Benz, which is actually the only way to leave Iran.

Q: *Oh, absolutely. Well, look, I thought we might stop at this point because the next time we'll pick up, you've gotten to the plane to take off to go back, and we'll pick it up then - January 20th, was it?*

METRINKO: I don't know.

Q: *I can't remember. 1981.*

Today is the 19th of September, 2000. Mike, all of a sudden you were seeing all of your colleagues, weren't you?

METRINKO: I was indeed.

Q: How did this go?

METRINKO: It was fine, except I didn't know about half of them on the plane. I had no idea who they were because I had never seen most of them, or never seen a number of them. I was very surprised when I learned that Bruce Laingen was on the plane. I thought he had been one of the several who had gotten freed by the Canadians. I never knew that he was there, or the people with him. Other than that it went fine. We went through Algiers back to Wiesbaden.

Q: In talking was there a sense of exaltation, or was there a mood of bitterness - our government put us in this and they should have gotten us out earlier? How would you characterize it?

METRINKO: I can't characterize the mood of other people. I have no idea what they were really feeling. I felt no bitterness at all. I'd never felt my government would do anything. I had no expectations of it.

Q: Was there also the feeling that if they tried to do something it wouldn't work, that it could get very dangerous?

METRINKO: I really don't know what other people were feeling. We didn't talk about it. Everybody was caught up with saying hello, looking at each other, sort of getting pummeled by the press, by the flashbulbs going off, the camera lights, and then once we got to Wiesbaden getting in touch with family and friends.

Q: As far as you were concerned, did the Algerians play any particular role, or was that at a higher level?

METRINKO: We saw the Algerians a couple of times. Algerian doctors came in and gave us medical examinations. That's when I first really started to believe there was a possibility of getting out of there, because the Algerians explained who they were and why they were there. Other than that, to the best of my knowledge, they played a crucial role. We could not talk to the Iranians directly; we needed the Algerians, and the Algerians played a good role. They had the credentials, and they had the trust of both sides.

Q: How did they treat you when you got to Wiesbaden?

METRINKO: Wiesbaden was sort of interesting. They were trying to keep us under wraps. The State Department was very good. They had a lot of security. They really did not want us to do anything except to go through a battery of psychological tests, because I guess there was a lot of fear that we were all bonkers. And they wanted us to take tests, which, of course, I naturally refused to do.

Q: I would have thought you would play it the other way.

METRINKO: I looked and I walked out. We don't have to do this. But other than that, they treated us quite well. They herded us around. They took us here, took us there, took us to the commissary for new clothes, got us our medical tests, our dental tests. And I took off for about a day. I left Wiesbaden and went off touring with friends. The State Department didn't want me to.

Q: *What was the reason?*

METRINKO: Why did I go off?

Q: *No, what was the reason the State Department wanted to keep you?*

METRINKO: A bit of background. When I got to Wiesbaden, I had messages from a couple of hundred people - telegrams, phone messages, everything else - piled up under my name, and there were some rather strange messages there. But one message was from two American friends who were working in Germany. In fact, in October of '79, I had spent a week with them on a vacation, and they just said they were still in Germany, welcome home - all of this - and could I give them a call. So I called them up to say hello, and they asked me if I'd like to go out for dinner and do some touring. And I thought this was a great idea because otherwise I was going to have to sit in the hospital for a couple of days, and I didn't want to do that. So I went and told the head of security there, whom I knew, the American from the State Department, that I wanted to leave the hospital and I'd be gone for a day or so. And he said, "You can't do it. It's not allowed." "What do you mean, it's not allowed?" He said, "You can't do it. You can't leave the hospital." So I just looked at him and said, "I am leaving the hospital. You can help me or you can try to stop me, but if you try to stop me, I'm going outside and telling the press that you're keeping me in prison." And he decided he would help me. And so my friends came and picked me up in the basement, and we went off and I had a great time for a day. It was wonderful.

Q: *How was your reception when you came back to Washington?*

METRINKO: Do you mean the official reception by the Department of State, or do you mean people of the United States?

Q: *I mean both.*

METRINKO: People in the State Department were very, very careful of us. They didn't quite know how to handle us. They wanted to make sure that nobody did anything or said anything strange or that would reflect badly on the State Department - which was fine, it's the standard old, you know... They had done their best in a miserable situation for which they were not really prepared, and they had really done a lot of work. And a lot of people had put their hearts and souls into this. In fact, they had done too much of that. Too many people had become emotionally involved, and perhaps the most difficult part of all this was dealing with other people's emotion.

Q: *I suppose on your part there was a certain amount of, well, let's get on with it.*

METRINKO: Exactly. I mean, I was, Okay, I'm back now. You didn't pay me for weekends. You didn't pay me for overtime. I'm back. But the State Department was very antsy. I was asked once more if I would do the psychiatric exams, and I refused. I saw no reason to do this. That was fine. I took some time off. In fact, I took quite a bit of time off.

Oh, debriefings. I found this fascinating. The State Department never really gave a damn about debriefing us. They never did. They simply did not care. I don't know if it was that they didn't care or that they didn't have the intellectual interest or they had already gone forward in policy matters and they decided they did not want to know. I think it was that.

Q: Well, I don't know. I talked to people who have been in difficult times - not, obviously, what happened to you, but other times - you know, people in embassies under fire or very difficult times or just very "interesting" times, and I have a sort of standard question. Where were you debriefed? And the answer I get this sort of incredulous, What, are you kidding? It's almost as though, okay, let's move on. This is what I'm doing. This is what I've dedicated the rest of my life for is essentially to debrief people and to find out what they did and to make a record of it so it will be useful for historians and for interest - but also for training and all that - because the State Department... I don't know what the problem is. I know I was consul general in a place, and I met my successor, and we talked for about five minutes, and it's almost, well, I don't want to know too much about it because it might contaminate me when I go on to do something. It's funny, so I wouldn't say this is atypical. I mean, I think this is very typical.

METRINKO: I found it strange. The CIA asked me to come down to Washington. I was back home. I was still on leave. I had been back for about two or three weeks, and the CIA got in touch with me, and they asked me if I'd be willing to come and talk to them, spend a day with them, and just to answer questions and to talk about what happened - people, events, things that had happened in the embassy. And I thought this was fine. And they paid my way to Washington. They gave me per diem for a day, and I sat and they spent the whole day taping me. I thought that was fine, but State never bothered.

Now, the State Department did do one thing which, in a way, was... maybe it was the State Department approach to a debriefing. They called several of us together, the old Political Section - myself, John Limbert, Vic Tomseth - and they had a couple of other people there from State. John Limbert is probably the best of the Persian speakers in the State Department. In fact, his wife [Parvaneh] is here at FSI, or she has been for a long time.

Q: What's he doing now?

METRINKO: He has been named but not approved yet to go off as ambassador to Sudan. I don't think he's gotten congressional approval. But anyway, they called us in and sat us down in a nice room with a couple of people from the Middle East bureau, NEA, and then they proceeded to try and explain how what had happened had not been conscious government policy on the part of Iran, that this had all been sort of a wildcat move by students who were not in any way associated with the government. It's as though they wanted us to adopt that line. I broke up the meeting, I'm afraid, by reminding them that we had been in government prisons, in government facilities,

surrounded by government guards, etc. etc., etc., and I thought that they were just being stupid if they thought that there was not government involvement. And the meeting just simply broke up. They couldn't continue. (End of tape)

That's understandable. Later it became understandable to me. At the beginning I was a bit annoyed by it because I felt that my own life had been taken over by other people, and I found that, in theory, I had a "spokesperson" waiting for me in Pennsylvania. He lasted about one day, when I told him I could speak for myself, thank you very much, and went on like that. There were several of us who got to West Point and did not want to take part in the "Hollywood Squares"-type interviews that were being given on TV. They had all sorts of people being interviewed. When I say "Hollywood Squares," they had some sort of deal with the networks where -

Q: You might explain what "Hollywood Squares" is.

METRINKO: Yes, okay.

Q: It's a quiz show with celebrities. It's more for entertainment than for information.

METRINKO: And on the screen of the television - I'd forgotten how old that quiz show was - you had a grid of people, usually three, three, and three, so that they were like a tic-tac-toe grid. And they had hostages arranged like that, too, with the cameras picking them up and transposing the figures so that there were, I think, nine or 12 on the screen at the same time. I did not want to do this because I had just no desire to be interviewed, especially with everyone else, and I refused - a number of us refused - and on TV they said that "several of the former hostages have refused to take part in any interviews. This appears to be the same as the number of people who we believe have had serious psychological problems."

Q: That was very nice.

METRINKO: Yes, that was very nice. Reporters are bastards. They always have been. Reporters and prostitutes vie for the oldest profession. But then I had to give an interview, and I did. I gave an in-depth interview to a reporter who wrote a note to me in Persian. I figured, if the reporter can write a note in Persian, he was damn well worthy of getting an interview. He'd been a Peace Corps volunteer in Iran and remembered enough Persian. He was also from my home town newspaper, which made it perfect. So I gave him an exclusive.

Q: What about the official reception in Washington?

METRINKO: What about the official reception in Washington? I'm trying to remember the official reception in Washington. The day that we arrived in Washington from West Point, we were taken to the White House in Metro buses and paraded past the State Department. We got to meet President Reagan, and we all had our handshake and a photograph with him. It was a very nice ceremony at the White House. The State Department was kind of excluded. It wasn't a State Department ceremony at all; it was very much a "White House has brought you this victory"

ceremony - which is fine, it was politics. The State Department ceremony came much, much later, and it was as tacky as you can possibly imagine the State Department can be, which is pretty tacky. The State Department ceremony was about a month and a half later, and it consisted of Alexander Haig... Well, I got a call from the liaison officer who had been handling it, saying that the State Department was going to hold a ceremony, and we were going to be presented with medals, the medals were gold, and we would have to be there to receive the medal. Fine. I agreed to come down to this ceremony with my parents, and the ceremony consisted of a big presentation in one of those meeting rooms on the main floor of State. Alexander Haig did not bother to read out our names or anything else, just gave a small speech about service, God, honor - well, I guess not God, but honor, country and the whole bit. And on our behalf, I think, Bruce Laingen accepted a plaque or accepted a piece of paper from Alexander Haig, and then we were told individually to proceed to a particular room of the State Department, where we would be presented with the actual medal. I went to the room, and it turned out to be a cubbyhole in Personnel, and when I walked in, there was a GS-8 or someone sitting there, and I kind of looked around because I really had expected maybe, you know, a cup of coffee or something like that. And I told her that I had been told to come there to pick up a medal. And she said, what ceremony was it? What's the award for? And I told her, and without batting an eye she went to a stack of medals on a shelf, and there were lots of stacks of medals on the shelf. She asked me my name, pulled out a box, had me sign a receipt, and that was that.

Q: One other thing I just happened to remember. As I recall, Jimmy Carter flew out to Wiesbaden. Was he there when you arrived?

METRINKO: Yes, sure.

Q: And how did that work, because there would be... things were sort of ambivalent, I would imagine?

METRINKO: Jimmy Carter came to Wiesbaden. I talked to my parents. I called my parents as soon as I got there, of course. And my mother said, "President Carter is going to come to see you all in Germany. Please be nice to him." And I couldn't imagine why she would even say that. I couldn't imagine *not* being respectful to the President. It still hadn't sunk in that Reagan was President, of course. But why wouldn't I be? And I had no idea why people would be angry. None of this was Carter's fault. He was the President, but what happened was not his fault. He did his best to get us out of there alive, and I think he did, all in all, given the circumstances, a pretty good job of it. There were some people there, I gather, who were angry or who walked out. They're just - what can I say? - sort of idiots. There was no reason to do that. And one respects the office of the President always.

Q: That's the way Carter probably lost the presidency because of this.

METRINKO: Yes, that's fine, too.

Q: Things happen.

METRINKO: The Presidency is as much luck as it is merit.

Q: *Well, then, how about whither Mike Metrinko? You had a job to do and -*

METRINKO: Well, what I did was do a little bit of traveling.

HANS BINNENDIJK
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC (1977-1985)

Born in the Netherlands following World War II, Hans Binnendijk grew up just outside of Philadelphia. He attended the University of Pennsylvania and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in history. In 1972 he earned his Ph.D. from the Fletcher School in the field of international affairs. In 1985, he was appointed Director for the Center of Studies in Foreign Affairs. Six years later he became director of the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy at Georgetown University. Mr. Binnendijk was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1996.

BINNENDIJK: I had some ambivalence about our Iran policy while the Shah was in power. On the one hand, he was seen as a strong ally--a strategic counterweight to some parts of the Arab world which were flirting with the Soviet Union. On the other hand, I always had an adverse reaction to the Shah's authoritative regime which included major violations of human rights by a repressive secret police. So I was uncomfortable with our relations with Iran. In retrospect, I think I was probably both adequately analytical about Iran's role before the Shah's fall. That is, I probably did not worry sufficiently about "Iran after the Shah." In general, I don't think the US government paid enough attention about the outcome of a Shah overthrow; had it, we might have been to prevent or at least ameliorate the drastic effects of the transition that took place. The SFRC was very interested in Iran; even in 1977, when the AWACs arms sale proposal was being reviewed by the Committee and the Senate, there was considerable unease about the Shah and our relationships with Iran. Those concerns were expressed most vigorously by Senator Culver, but others made their ambivalence known during the hearings on the arms sale. But, as I said, we did not worry enough about "what after the Shah?" I was caught by surprise by the Shah's downfall; I had not expected such a vehement religious movement to emerge in opposition.

The Shah's fall left one major legacy; the Committee and other senators became very sensitive to situations like Iran because everyone was anxious to avoid another foreign policy disaster. The Shah's fall was followed by the hostage taking, which was a very dramatic even in our history. David Newsom, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, appeared often before the Committee briefing it on the status of the hostages and our efforts to get them back. After the hostage crisis, I think Iran pretty much disappeared from our horizon; I think it was essentially written off, but as I said, we focused on averting similar disasters in places like Morocco and Egypt or somewhere else.

JOHN R. COUNTRYMAN
Deputy/Acting Director, ARP
Washington, DC (1978-1979)

Ambassador Countryman was born in New York and raised in New York and California. He was educated at Fordham University, Miami University and the Frei University of Berlin. After service in the US Navy he joined the Foreign Service in 1962. An Arab language speaker and Middle East specialist, Ambassador Countryman served abroad in Istanbul, Beirut, Dhahran, Tripoli, Libreville and Oman, where he was US Ambassador from 1981 to 1985. In his service in the State Department in Washington, he dealt primarily with Arab Peninsular affairs. Ambassador Countryman was interviewed by David Reuther in 2001.

Q: So you were getting instructions from Washington; you were getting feedback from the embassy in London and you are talking...

COUNTRYMAN: Well, it was a three card arrangement. The embassy in London would report and say spoke to X today who feels it would be very helpful if our next trip down to Doha, an American representative could play this line with the Qataris over the dispute over Bubiyan Island. This was another one of these. There was a dispute over an island that was off the coast of Qatar that both Qatar and Bahrain claimed. It was eventually solved. You know it would be helpful if you could say blah-blah and we would, nine times out of ten we would just pick up the British line and support them. It looked like we were playing the same approach. The other player in the area who of course was important, the other two players were Saudi Arabia because these were people that they sort of always looked down their nose on as being sort of not big political players in the area, and the British. The Saudis were used to dealing with the British. So now all these little places were going to be independent. So the Saudis had to get, it was important for these people to make sure that their house was in order for the Saudis. The other big player was the Shah in Iran. The Shah of course was...

Q: That why its called the Persian Gulf...

COUNTRYMAN: That's right. There was one particularly nettlesome aspect that again we watched, but supported, while the Brits and the UN took the lead on this. There was way back an Iranian claim to Bahrain that was part of the province of Farse. There was an Iranian speaking minority. There were Iranians in Bahrain who were merchants, a quite wealthy group. The Shah, we suspected correctly, as did the Brits, just to assert himself in the Gulf asserted that right. So when the British leave, of course Bahrain is going to revert to Iran, which would have been disastrous, because of all kinds of Arab nationalist sentiment. Of course the rest of the Arab world was looking at this, and the Brits were conscious of that as well, that these places would become independent so somehow the idea that Bahrain would be turned over to Iran was unacceptable. So Ambassador MacArthur who at that time was our ambassador in Tehran got

into the loop, anything that had to do with Bahrain. There were also a couple of islands off the coast of the UAE that were right in the middle of the gulf that there was a claim on. They were not so important as an entity except that in the center of the Gulf there was the possibility of oil. So if you are talking about who gets the oil, that becomes rather important. So to get off of this, what the British did was work with the UN as they approached giving independence to Bahrain. There was a UN special representative named, whose name was Mr. Winspeare Guicciardi who was the son of an old Italian diplomat and a mother who had been part of the British gentry. Winspeare Guicciardi came up with a brilliant idea, and that is the way we will get around this is that in Bahrain we will have an ascertainment. There happens to be a word in Arabic, I have forgotten now, that translates very well into ascertainment, about the will of the Bahraini people. Of course you didn't have a democracy. There were no parliaments. It was the Brits and the sheik. You couldn't have an election because even if it went in the favor of the royal family in Bahrain, you couldn't put them in a position that they were elected. They had a right to be there. Obviously the election probably would go against the Shah, but you couldn't do it by fiat. You had to have some kind of way to show that Bahrain should remain under the royal family and essentially Arab rather than the province of Farse. So the ascertainment was they found a list of all of the possible groupings in Bahrain.

Q: Ethnic groupings?

COUNTRYMAN: They got the chamber of commerce. There was not a union, but there was a workers league for BAPCO, the Bahrain Petroleum company. They spoke with them. They spoke to leading bankers. There were a lot of the mosques had what they call muhattams which were sport clubs and Islamic charities. They spoke to them. They spoke to, they had a list of social, business and civil society groups, and they spoke to leaders of some of the ethnic groups and they came up with this ascertainment that indicated should be independent, and the Shah backed off of it. But there was quite a bit of backing and filling as the process was unfolding.

Q: Given the paper that you wrote in the War College and your duties in ARP, what were the view and the priorities given to Iran and its activities in the Gulf?

COUNTRYMAN: Well, the Iranians were in general quite thoroughly...fairly circumspect under the Shah in what they did in the Gulf. They tried to be good neighbors. They did help the Omanis a little bit and actually supplied very quietly and discreetly some Iranian troops to help the Omanis put down the communist revolt in Dhofar. But that was done very quietly even though that was a little bit, you know Iranian troops on the Arab side of the peninsula. The Saudis weren't too happy about that, but the Saudis didn't particularly like the Omanis to begin with. They kept quiet about it. But the Iranians were pretty good about not attempting to use their military power on the Arabian side of the peninsula.

Q: So the Iran that you are looking at and you are factoring in to your policy suggestions is the Shah's Iran. It is a less overt actor in the Gulf at this time.

COUNTRYMAN: And someone who, we always wanted there to be a Tehran-Jeddah, Tehran-Riyadh axis of these being the two most powerful countries in the region to sort of keep things

quiet and do the right thing. You know money in the case of the Saudis and oil. There were money and oil in Tehran but also a larger population and a larger military force. That never quite worked out because of mutual suspicion between the Shah and the house of Saud never were very close to each other.

Q: What would be some of the factors keeping them apart?

COUNTRYMAN: Well, the Shah was, of course, Shia. The Iranians rather than Arabs, the Wahabi fundamentalism versus a rather tolerant view of Islam and a progressive secular state that the Shah was advocating, and just basic geopolitical and geostrategic divergence. Who was going to be the primary power in the Gulf?

Q: What was the Saudi view of Iraq at that time? We are talking late '70s.

COUNTRYMAN: Well, suspicious and not good relations but not quite so...I don't think they felt the way we feel with the analysis that Iraq presented that much of an immediate threat, that whoever was in power in Iraq was going to step over the border. There had always been this question of Kuwait, but that had been met by the British with a show of force. That was something that had never been settled. The Iraqis had never stepped back from their claim that this was their territory and they had been forcibly separated. It was not an active problem.

Q: Again as you are coming to '78, you have been on the desk a couple of years, how would you describe now your policy priorities and whether they shifted from when you first came on board?

COUNTRYMAN: Well, there was still the question of appropriate arms sales to Saudi Arabia because this was something that Prince Sultan who was the Minister of Defense, this was a thing that every body was concerned that the Saudis are very much concerned about. I think it was for a number of reasons. They literally wanted to keep their military happy, and that it was a way of convincing themselves that the United States was a good ally, that we would supply them with this equipment. I think that from a geostrategic standpoint, we wanted to sell it to them because it would mean if you were going to sell them the F-15, well then you had to have hardstands for repair of the F15 which meant that although you could never have an airbase in Saudi Arabia, if the Saudis and U.S. had common equipment and you had tooled the Saudis up to handle American equipment, and you were rather lavish in the way you constructed the base, in effect, you had base facilities that you could use.

This was still, of course, a time when we were concerned about a Soviet thrust into the Gulf to seize the oil. And there was some concern that perhaps Iraq could be a threat to Saudi Arabia. There was always a concern about holding the Saudi's hands, I guess is the best way to put it, over the Arab-Israeli problem, that it was always a discomfiture between us and the Saudis because while the Saudis, like so many of their Arab brethren, didn't like the Palestinians, they felt obliged to make the Palestinian cause a bedrock of their foreign policy and to complain about mistreatment of fellow Arabs and injustice to the Palestinians and the necessity for a Palestinian state. That was always a problem; we were always concerned that we were writing instructions and I worked very closely with the Israeli desk and the front office to make sure that if the

slightest thing happened in the Levant or whatever it was that happened between Israel and its closer Arab neighbors, that we read the Saudis in. It was a particular sensitivity to the kind of questions that the Saudis would raise. The talking points could not be the same ones we gave to our ambassador in Amman or Cairo. They would have to be a little bit tailor made to the Saudis. The same idea but we would phrase it in a little different way.

Q: In addition to working with Treasury Department do any other agencies particularly come to mind? Wasn't the Army Corps of Engineers deeply involved in a lot of construction in Saudi Arabia?

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, they were there. They were there through the whole period. They were more or less folded into our military missions.

Q: Let's see now, you are Deputy Director ARP to the summer of '78. As you said this is your first time back in Washington for some time. Were you able to do things like serve on a promotion panel or...

COUNTRYMAN: No I didn't. I served on a promotion panel some years later, something I always wanted to do. Those two years I was really busy. It was a very busy time, and Joe Twinam, I think, felt very strongly that to do his job properly, he had a very full plate, he had a clear idea what he wanted off his plate that he wanted me to take care of. So he delegated a good bit of work to me and worked me hard. This is what I need to do, and this is what you need to do. So I worked long hours; I was working very hard for those two years. There was a lot going on, and there was a lot that he looked to me to take care of.

Q: Why don't we move to the summer of '78, summer transfer season. You become the acting director of NEA's Office of Regional Affairs.

COUNTRYMAN: Well actually I was Deputy Director and then acting Director. What happened was Henry Precht had been deputy director of regional affairs, and he was moved to be country director for Iranian affairs. I was put into Henry Precht's position as deputy director of regional affairs. The director was a fellow by the name of William Dozier, Bill Dozier, who had been economic counselor in Tel Aviv, and was a very, very top notch economic officer. The theory was that Bill Dozier would be very strong in the economic side and I would have the political and pol-mil side, we would be a good team and take care of all these little performers we had in regional affairs that we would farm out and use for regional purposes for NEA.

Bill arrived on the scene at about three months afterwards. He was near retirement and was quite senior. His rank was the old FSO-1. He received a job offer from, and I have forgotten the exact name of it, but it is like American Textile Association, someplace in the Carolinas that wanted an economist. He came from someplace down there. He had some family connections. They wanted a Washington lobbyist. They wanted someone who knew Washington, knew the State Department, could understand textile legislation, and would go to the Hill and protect them from the depredations of foreign imports and so on. So I knew something was going on. Bill early on in the process told me what was going on and swore me to secrecy and that he was seriously

considering this. They wanted him right away because there was a new round of textile negotiations coming up and they wanted to get him on board and crank it up and so forth. To make a long story short he retired from the Foreign Service. So they had nobody for that slot, and by this time it was into the fall, and assignments had been made. So the people sort of pulled things together and they said, "Would you take it as an interim assignment until we decide what we are going to do. You may be the acting director for a year or so. It was supposed to be a two year assignment. I will try to get you a very strong sort of number two, whether we call him a deputy or not, a sort of regional political officer to help you with things because there are a lot of things we are going to want you to do to spread your talents." So I said, "Of course." So I was actually the deputy director for about two or three months until Bill Dozier left and then I was acting director for the next year.

Q: You're in regional affairs and not the Iran desk, of course, but how did the November 1979 seizure of our Embassy in Tehran play out for you with this regional portfolio?

COUNTRYMAN: Well, first of all, I remember very distinctly Charlie Naas who was the predecessor to Henry Precht as the desk officer - Henry was the desk officer when the hostage situation arose - talking about the problems that the Shah was experiencing with this mullah by the name of Khomeini, and gave a briefing at the NEA staff meeting on the threats the Shah's regime is receiving from the right. I remember very vividly the reaction of almost everybody in the room, no one who was supposedly the expert on Iran that Charlie Naas was, but everybody was NEA, and we lived and breathed Iran... I had more expertise because I had written my paper on it. But the reaction of everybody, myself included I am sorry to admit, maybe not as much as other people and maybe with some nuance. Everyone's reaction was Gee poor old Charlie, he has kind of gone around the bend. A threat from the right? Everybody knows what the threat to the Shah is. It is from the left and the Tudeh Party, the communists. Just total dismissal of this.

His briefing was a very sophisticated briefing, a good one. He indicated areas where the Shah was vulnerable, where there had been misrule, and where SAVAK, which was their internal and external security service, had been heavy handed, and an incident where some dissident doctor had been evidently been mistreated. He had apparently been blinded in prison. Just a lot of anecdotal sort of stuff. And some indication of how there had been very little trickle down effect. Just a whole series of danger signs that one who was looking to the stability of the regime would have questioned the long term stability of the Shah. So when the hostage crisis came up, it was the big thing in NEA. It dominated everybody's activities. Henry Precht as country director and dealing with the hostage families I recall was a big burden, handled by Sheldon Krys who was in charge of NEA/EX, the Executive Director. Of course, there was the point where some of the hostages were released. I think some of the black officers and some of the women were released. There were people who had taken refuge in the Canadian embassy. They snuck out. It was a thing that dominated the NEA staff meeting. It was huge.

Q: Let me go back to Charlie Naas. Is he coming to these conclusions just Cassandra like or is the embassy reporting things that he has put together in a special way?

COUNTRYMAN: I don't recall taking the time to go and looking...you know when you are a

country director, you get a tremendous amount of stuff from INR. Of course, there is always a lot of CIA stuff, too. I have forgotten exactly the degree to which he was drawing on other agencies or INR. I have the sense that this was more or less on his own, and that this he was not quoting to us from an INR brief. That it was embassy reporting, and it was out there perhaps in classified form. It was available to the intelligence community, and to anyone who would look who had a high enough security clearance, but no one had put it together or attached the importance to it. I don't think anyone disagreed with any of his facts. I think it is the old question of well your facts don't fit into my pigeonhole so they are not particularly useful for me. It is that famous passage in E.H. Carr's What is History, and he described a whole series of documentation that talked about terrible violence in the Victorian period. You know riots at fairs, this sort of thing, people being beaten in the streets. These are not historical facts we recall, because we accept as truth the narrative that the Victorian period was calm and everything was under control. So the fact that these riots took place, they don't become historical facts because they don't fit into your pigeonholes because you have already determined that the Victorian period in England was a time of calm and sedate rule by Victoria. So the fact that in Newgate there was a terrible riot that took 55 lives doesn't become history because people rioting doesn't get recorded.

Q: It appears then that the Embassy was picking up bits and pieces. There were indicators out there which, when Charlie put them together, brought him to conclude...

COUNTRYMAN: And if you recall, Khomeini was in exile in Paris of all places, and he was making statements from Paris, and his little clique was issuing not so much fatwas, Islamic decrees, I guess they did issue some Islamic decrees condemning the Shah, but I think he drew on that also. Again attaching some importance to it. Whereas I think the people who heard the briefing sort of dismissed as some nut in a turban off in the left bank in Paris talking to the wind.

I don't know whether you recall, but before that we had the incident in the Mecca mosque where some Saudi dissidents, it was almost a Jonestown kind of thing [Editor's Note: "Jonestown" is a reference to the November 1978 mass suicide of more than 900 people in Guyana who belonged to a religious cult], where these people came in there with their families, with weapons underneath their cloaks, shot people, and took over the mosque. The Saudis finally contracted with a French hit squad, and these people finally came in and killed these people and cleaned them out. I think there is this idea that yes there is this nut fringe out there, and no one ever thought this was a threat to the Saudi regime particularly. It was an embarrassment that one of their holiest places had been taken over, but it was only that. It was not a threat to the stability of the county.

I think that it was a question also of the kind of people you have in the Foreign Service, who whatever their own strong, but personal, religious beliefs might be, tended to be a kind of secularist individual and not understand the tremendous motivating factor that religion can be for certain people, or just dismiss it as being a fringe phenomena, and not being able to accept it as something that for good or ill a large number of people could subscribe to. Evidently it is very clear that the message that Khomeini had brought to Iran received very strong backing. Women being in purdah and the turn to the right was broadly accepted in Iran. There is some indication now that people are getting tired of this, and that maybe some more democratic impulses are

crowding out those more traditional Islamic values. But that is another question. But at the time that this happened, I think that the kind of person you had who was a Middle Eastern hand tended to discount the pulling power of Islam and Islamic fundamentalists.

Q: When the Tehran hostage crisis starts, how did the bureau administratively responding? Was a crisis center set up. How was it staffed? Were people sucked out of your office?

COUNTRYMAN: We had a crisis management team on the 7th floor set up in an office up there. This was staffed 24 hours a day, and people from all of NEA served on it. It was heavily staffed by people from NEA/EX, from the S/S, but as I recall it was like a duty roster thing. My desk officers...as a country director I never served up there, but my desk officers,, like all NEA desk officers, took turns up there, because it was manned 24 hours a day. I thought that, some of the country directors fought it, you know, I still have all of my responsibilities and can't we get this manpower from outside? I thought it was a good idea for my people to get the experience up there. I would ask them what was going on when they came back. It was a way of briefing me.

Q: Despite the demands of the Tehran crisis, what other priorities does your office have? The human rights report has become an important priority with the establishment of the Human Rights Bureau. Does that report fall to the desks or to your region affairs office?

COUNTRYMAN: It fell to the desks. As I recall, that was one of the responsibilities that I had in regional affairs is to be the person that worked with...I don't think we had a human rights bureau at the time, we had like a coordinator up on the 7th. floor. But it was my responsibility to work with the NEA front office to establish the timelines and the guidelines and to present the package that came out of NEA for the human rights report for all the various countries, and to go to country directors and push them to get the thing done and make sure that the format was correct. I had a certain amount of staff responsibility to read them and make sure that they were responsive to guidelines. So that was a fairly large responsibility that I had. I can remember literally going myself or sending somebody to the place on the 7th. floor with human rights reports from NEA.

Q: At the time of the Tehran crisis, who is in the chain of command? Is Roy still the...

COUNTRYMAN: No, it was Hal Saunders, who had been in INR. He wasn't a Foreign Service officer. When the Shah was overthrown, and the hostage crisis began, I guess it was just about coincident with the hostage crisis or just thereafter. I have forgotten the timing. But Hal Saunders was a very thoughtful guy. He literally shut the bureau down about a day and got in absolute top flight people from around the country, academics, maybe a couple of people from the CIA, but basically top flight academics to have a seminar on Islamic fundamentalism and what was going on. What the motivation was with these people and how broad it could be. I remember it was a very good session. A lot of these people that lectured to us were somewhat critical of our head in the sand inability to see what was going on in the region, and pointed people at academic literature that if not predicted politically the Shah's downfall, at least by its sheer bulk and direction would have said you have got a real problem there. So that was a volte-face and the system the ability to say "Gee now we have been wrong. We were blindsided."

Q: Is there much impact on your priorities or your assignments, or are some things suddenly not having the priority they had before?

COUNTRYMAN: No, I guess this is true of any bureau, but NEA tends to be, I think, more than other places crisis oriented. I mean it is always some kind of a crisis. The Indians and Pakistanis are at each other's throats. There would be an Arab-Israeli war. We had an oil embargo. The Iraqis and Iranians would be going to war against each other. The fall of the Shah. Sadat being assassinated. I mean it just seems that there was always some kind of a crisis that was facing NEA. This was the one that dominated the period when I was in regional affairs.

Q: With two deputies the office is bigger than it was just a year before. You are coming still as the Tehran hostage crisis continues to drag on or unfold however you want to describe it. As the hostage crisis proceeds in time, does the desk have a different type of responsibility in terms of holding hands with the Saudis or the Gulfies. I suppose I am saying are people getting more nervous?

COUNTRYMAN: Well there came a point where we tried the rescue operation.

Q: Desert One.

COUNTRYMAN: Yes, and that of course was a little bit later, but as it started out, from the standpoint of the peninsula there was little we could do. I mean we would keep the Gulfies and the Saudis briefed you know, on our continued concern. There were a number of initiatives that I have now forgotten through others, you know the Swiss or the UN or third party the British or the French. Other little...and we were trying also to put some pressure on through the Saudis or through Islam through various avenues to resolve the hostage crisis. But none of those of course, came to any fruition.

Q: Allowing the Shah into the United States in the first place was the trigger for hostage crisis. My understanding was prior to these events the Embassy cabled and said if you let the Shah into the United States, we are toast. Do you have any sense why somebody decided at a higher level that the embassy's recommendation wouldn't be the operating recommendation?

COUNTRYMAN: I don't know that a cable in that form existed. I can see why it would be quite reasonable, but I never saw any traffic on that. I don't know that is the case, but it seems logical.

Q: It would be something to put in a freedom of information case at some point. So I mean your later conversation with Brzezinski didn't cover an earlier period as to whether he had encouraged letting the Shah in?

COUNTRYMAN: This was years later when we were both together at the Center for Strategic International Studies at Georgetown University. He and I didn't become close friends, but we were there at the same time and we talked. He was Polish and my wife was too and he was very interested in meeting my wife, so he invited us over one time. We had a drink with a few other

people. At that time he, not in an unpleasant sort of way but wanted, and he knew who I was, that I was ambassador to Oman, and had been the one to go out and negotiate this. But he wanted to make it very clear that it was his whole strategy, his conceptualization of foreign policy problems that led to this what we both agreed was a very wise move at least in relation to Oman. He was very happy that not only I had helped to negotiate the treaty, but had also been there to also administer it so that in effect it protected his legacy. See, that was a good idea, see how it worked out. He felt warmly toward me, in a sort of a pat on the back of the head kind of way, "Glad you followed up on the brilliant idea I had."

Q: In the midst of the hostage crisis and Desert One, what are the atmospherics for relations with the Saudis and the Gulf States now? Were those who saw us as a protector concerned?

COUNTRYMAN: There was some apprehension, because Iran appeared to prove we will let a traditional regime be replaced. So there was a good deal of handholding here. And some public statements I think that were well positioned, coming out of the White House and Hal Saunders contributed to this and the Secretary, how the Peninsula was different. The Saudi royal family were respected, numerous, powerful, tough. There really is a contrast between Saudi Arabia and Tehran and the imams of smaller gulf emirates. They are so small and the royal families are in close personal touch with everybody, not to worry about this. It is a legacy of the British being there and there is good feeling. So there was a lot of diplomatic PR that was going on for the world to make the world feel that this wasn't a domino theory at all. The traditional regimes who were our friends weren't going to fall tomorrow nor are we simply going to do things that would permit traditional regimes to fall.

CECIL S. RICHARDSON
Chief Consular Officer
Tehran (1978-1979)

Cecil Richardson was born in New York in 1926, and graduated from Queen's College. He served in the US Army from 1944 to 1947, and overseas from 1951 to 1952. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he was stationed in Dakar, Saigon, Lagos, Niamey, Paris, Accra, Brussels, Quito, Tehran, Lima, St. Paolo and Bahamas. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 5, 2003.

Q: In '77 where did you go?

RICHARDSON: I went in for a year of language training in Farsi, preparing for an assignment in Iran.

Q: How did you find Farsi?

RICHARDSON: Difficult, difficult. And I never really accomplished very much with it because, by the time I got there, there wasn't much opportunity for the kind of casual interaction with the

local populace by which you build up a language capability. People were as likely to spit on me as to converse casually or to correct my Farsi.

Q: Well, you were out there in what '78, '79?

RICHARDSON: Right.

Q: Well, what, when you arrived in Tehran, what was it like?

RICHARDSON: Well, it really heated up a few months later with riots. Martial law was declared and then it got tight. There was a curfew and you had to be off the street by 8:00. If you wanted to get together with somebody for one reason or another, you had to schedule it for like 5 to get home by 7 or 8. I can remember racing through the streets to get home in time.

Q: You were doing consular work then ...

RICHARDSON: I was head of the NIV section.

Q: That must have been, you know, Iranians have stood for years have been a pain in the neck for counselor officers. I found that up in Yugoslavia and in Athens and other places ...

RICHARDSON: The consular section was a stand alone facility, but the demand was so great that, that was yet another stand alone facility. It was in one corner of the chancery compound wall. In the main consular section we had IVs, NIVs, Welfare and Protection and Citizenship services.

Q: Who was in charge of the consular section?

RICHARDSON: Lou Goelz.

Q: Great.

RICHARDSON: You know Lou.

Q: I know Lou.

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes he was in charge of it when I worked there.

Q: Well, how did you find, what were the demands on you because Iran was going through a revolution. There were a hell of a lot of people who were trying to get out.

RICHARDSON: Yes, there was heavy volume, but of course there had been frequent travel to the U.S., so most of them had visas. The middle class all had their visas already. The heaviest of anything was in students and people who wanted to get out. Our volume at the heaviest approached 100,000, which is not heavy.

Q: Well, how did you find, how were you looking at, not looking at the visas, a person asking to go to the United States in the middle of a revolution from a very ...

RICHARDSON: There was civil disturbance, but the revolution didn't take place until the Shah left and Khomeini came back then you start talking about the revolution, that's when the government changed.

Q: So after, when you first arrived ...

RICHARDSON: It was pretty non-violent.

Q: Yes, so there wasn't an extraordinary demand then for ...

RICHARDSON: Oh, there was ... and we were busy, it wasn't all that big of a staff and as I said the volume as I remember was approaching 100,000, maybe 10,000 a month at our busiest and that was when the staff was really reduced. So we were busy. Yes, we were under the gun, but it was a very exciting time to be there because nowhere else in the world, as I wrote to Judy Heimann, do we have priests with guns getting their hands in the levers of power and political authority. That was exciting. When the families were given voluntary departure in December 1978, I lost my most valuable colleague, a PIT American Foreign Service spouse.

Q: Well, was there much discussion within the embassy and all about what was happening?

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. There were daily staff meetings, who did what to whom, the political section and the agency were busy with these things all the time, but the Shah was still there.

Q: Were you all feeling ...

RICHARDSON: But there was the unrest and there was marshal law, but what you had was great numbers of people enriched during the economic boom following the quadrupling of the oil price some years before. You had tremendous projects of construction going on in the city. The national bird was the Crane and to supply the labor, a lot of the people, country people came into town and they brought with them their values and their children who were influenced by the big city and going to the university and probably giving lip to their parents and breaking with the old, proper way of doing things. There was this social turbulence going on and hostility to the Westernization that was going on of which the Shah was a leading proponent.

Q: Well, then you were saying, you felt uncomfortable getting out in public places as an American, I mean you know, identify yourself as an American.

RICHARDSON: Well, not until after Khomeini came back.

Q: Well, when the Shah left, was that, did that sort of pull the plug. I mean were people trying to get out at that point?

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes, as I said many already had visas. Well, I followed the philosophy of NIV issuance if they had financial interests in the country, land owners, factory owners, people of substance, for whom there wasn't any question; that is, when things improved, they would return. They didn't want to leave and abandon their goods. Well, I think we had the same philosophy in Beirut, some years before. If they had a reason to come back we would give them a visa. If they don't have a reason to come back, they don't qualify.

Q: Well, were you, was the volume of applications picking up?

RICHARDSON: Yes. Yes and our staff was reduced. We had voluntary departure of dependents on December 8th of '78, I guess. Okay. The embassy was attacked on February, early February ...

Q: I think February 14th ...

RICHARDSON: Oh, was it 14th. My wife left on the 4th of February when she and the ambassador's wife and the last of the wives left. That would have been February 4th. 10 days later there was the attack and after and there were several hours of captivity. Soon after that incident the word came down that anybody who wanted to leave could do so. Great numbers of the American staff left, many going to join their families who were already evacuated and so then we struggled along. I became Chief of the whole Consular Section. I still had my local staff, Chief of the Consular Section, except I was the only American officer there for several weeks and then one fellow came back from leave and there were two of us. He was very good because this was the time when young men formed armed groups and the streets were under the control of young men with guns. NIV visa operations stopped except for medical emergencies. You couldn't imagine how many of these, what do you call these, quadruple by-pass surgeries became necessary. What was the name of the doctor in Texas?

Q: _____

RICHARDSON: It must have made his fortune.

Q: Well, this was a man in _____ Houston.

RICHARDSON: Yes. And he was. He had to have been a very busy surgeon because suddenly, almost anybody with a good deal of money who didn't already have a visa was applying for a visa on medical emergency because he needed quadruple bypass surgery. But, he had the money to pay for it. Okay, so those guys, they went. For what they were worth, they were confirming medical certs and appointments in Texas.

Q: So then were you there, what happened to you when they took over initially on February 14th?

RICHARDSON: I didn't go to work that day. We hadn't been to work, for 2-3 days before the attack. The Iranian soldiers that were guarding the embassy compound were suddenly withdrawn,

so the word went out, don't go to the embassy. Well, two days went by and there were no incidents so a bunch of us got together in one of the officer's houses in the neighborhood and we had a drink to celebrate the fact that we had gotten through 2 days with no difficulty. There hadn't been any soldiers guarding us, but there hadn't been an attack. The next day some people who just couldn't stay away from the office went in and got captured because that's when they came over the walls and took the embassy for those few hours. But, there was still a government that could stand up to the mob and had sufficient clout and prestige to be able to tell them, okay stop that, let these people go half a year later, why that wasn't possible. We had one person killed in that incident, one of the national employees, I think someone working in the cafeteria. And we had one marine shot. He gave up his gun as he was instructed to do and the ham-handed klutz who took it shot him with. But, it was an accident and not fatal. So then those of us who didn't go to work that day kept in touch by phone on what was going on. And then finally the captives were released and we went back to work. That was the same day our ambassador was killed in Kabul.

During that period, Khomeini came back, and I was still living in my apartment, several miles from the new consulate location in the Chancery. They later made me move to a building right across the street from the back Chancery entrance. Before then I came out of my house one morning got into my car which had a c.d. plate and just got down the street when a car stops me with 4 armed young men. And what do they want to know? They ask me in Farsi, where the American consul lives. [Laughter]. Who. In my Farsi, as I said, never became very good, but it was evidently good enough that I was able to tell them, "Gee, I don't know." Happily we're not dealing with the swiftest guys on the block. They don't even look at the plates. I was driving an American car, which was not that unusual but I had c.d. plates and didn't have a mustache. And I'm sure my accent, my Farsi accent wasn't all that good, but they accepted it, and I drove off. That was as close as I came to being captured.

Q: Well, then, of course the big takeover was when? In November or something ...

RICHARDSON: Yes.

Q: But you were out of there by then?

RICHARDSON: No. I was still assigned; I just went out for a couple of weeks leave to visit my wife.

Q: Uh, huh.

RICHARDSON: So we were in the cafeteria of the embassy in Amman, having lunch when someone came in and said there was something going on in Tehran, I think you better go upstairs and check it out and that's when I found out that they had come over the walls again, only this time to stay.

Q: Had there been any, in the time between the February thing and the time you went on home leave, I mean on short leave to Amman to see your wife, was there any, I mean were things

getting worse and worse?

RICHARDSON: Oh, yes. Oh, sure. But, even before my wife left, I remember coming home one night when the office was already dark and realized that my wife, in our kitchen, which faced the street, was silhouetted against, the light. So I, next day, I got heavy drapes in so that wouldn't happen because I was afraid somebody might fire a shot at her. They did at our naval attaché, the navy captain and he came very, very close. He was answering the telephone and whatever the conversation was he wanted to make a note of something the person was telling him, but he dropped the pen and as he bent down to pick up the pen the shot hit the wall where he had been. Well, that was the end of his regular tour. We had been in Farsi language training together. But, that's so this was in my mind when I saw my wife's outline in the window. I told you we had a local shot and killed, marine shot, and 2 years before a local consular employee going to the embassy to collect mail was shot and killed. An officer usually made this daily trip. During the last days, we had someone down in the oil field servicing agency in the south killed then we had another American killed, but we didn't know what he was doing, he was kind of mysterious. He was a civilian living off somewhere. The consul in Isfahan was stabbed. But, those were the only physical things, but the fear was always there. In Beirut you had a lot of kidnappings and that was my personal concern.

Q: Was there an idea before you went on the short leave to Amman, were you still talking about hanging in there ...

RICHARDSON: Oh, we were not only hanging in there, we were building up our staff. We were going to show Khomeini that we could get along. We had turned down staff so low that that I had only one vice consul. An FSO who had retired returned to the foreign service and they said oh you want to come back to the foreign service, we've got a great assignment for you and he came to me. [Laughter]. So that gave me 2 officers, that's all. But then we got a whole bunch of them fresh from Farsi training. All of those people who were aided, and evacuated by the Canadians, except for the Agricultural attaché, all worked for me. We also got a new Consul General, Morefield. He became a hostage.

Q: It wasn't Kennedy was it, Kennedy Morefield, wait a minute no.

RICHARDSON: No.

Q: Anyway Morefield.

RICHARDSON: It was Morefield. And so this was what was going on. We were on our way back up ...

Q: Were any of you questioning this ...

RICHARDSON: About leaving or not?

Q: Yes.

RICHARDSON: No, no. The policy was we would show them, we would demonstrate that we can get along. The only way we can do that is to resume normal operations, so I don't know, I don't remember in staff meetings, anyone questioning the wisdom of it.

Q: Did ...

RICHARDSON: And also, we were always, frankly we were enjoying ourselves. It was the most exciting assignment in the Foreign Service at that time.

Q: Oh, sure, yes. I mean of course the Foreign Service sort of blossoms under pressure. What about, were you getting any taste of confrontations or something with the religious types at that point or was it ...

RICHARDSON: We, well see the religious didn't bother us, it was their anti-Western orientation. The religion didn't matter. Where the religion was showing up was active persecution of the Bahai.

Q: Of Bahai?

RICHARDSON: And there was not anti-Semitic activity to my knowledge. There were some accounts to be settled and one member of the family of a Jewish merchant I knew was killed. And many Jews, and Bahai and Christians lost their property. But no active persecution of any one on religious grounds except Bahai.

Q: Were you seeing any, how about students, I mean you weren't dealing with students, but was there, were they trying to get to Holdernaut or?

RICHARDSON: Well, they may have been, but we were closed to them. When we reopened in October, then of course they turned up again. And, until we shut down in February the Mullahs who had been hostile to the U.S., and anti-Western, had no aversion to trying to get somebody in the embassy to get a visa for their nephew, not their niece, but their nephew. [Laughter].

Q: Well, what happened to you then, I mean all of the sudden you're, when you're first, when you're dealing with, when you're in Amman, what do they do, I mean were they saying, was there an initial thing saying well this will be over soon and we'll get back together again?

RICHARDSON: No, no. There were only separate sitreps. No one offered an opinion or any predictions. My own personal thing is how do we judge the present in terms of the past and so I thought that I'll hang around here for a few days and then go back to Tehran. So my wife and I stayed in Damascus, which was our base. Then finally, I sent cable to the Department, which they didn't answer, saying that I'm here if you need a consular officer somewhere in the area, I'm available. Well, they never answered any of these cables [Laughter] because they had more important things on their minds.

Q: Well, what happened to you then?

RICHARDSON: Ah, well I hung around there waiting for things to develop and then spent a lot of time preparing an inventory on the stuff I left back in my apartment. My wife who was living in Rome had visited me in July on her way back from a trip to Hong-Kong, on her way back from Hong-Kong, she stopped off and spent 2 weeks with me during which time she bought 12 rugs. All of which I lost. And that's an unlucky number because I had 1 rug of my own to make 13.

Q: Well, you were saying, you were spending your time inventorying, in Amman.

RICHARDSON: And also visiting the countryside. This was the time when the area was supposed to be ablaze with anti-American feelings. My wife and I rode public busses around Syria and Jordan and encountered courtesy and consideration.

Well, as I was saying, this is the time when there was supposed to be a blaze of anti-American, anti-Western sentiment and my wife and I rode public buses around Jordan and Syria with no discomfort whatsoever. It produced some amusing things. One time when we were in this very holy city in Syria, we were going to see a famous old giant waterwheel, and we entered a tunnel and my wife who was ahead of us, I was walking with our driver and we saw a Muslim woman go up and tug at her sleeve. What's going on, we picked up our pace, but by the time we got there the nice woman had left and my wife was laughing because the woman had asked her in broken English if she was an American and Pearl said yes and the woman said well, maybe you know my brother in Kansas City. [Laughter] And that is the God's honest truth. [Laughter].

Q: Well, what was sort of the feeling when you were sitting there at that time that this Iran thing, Tehran thing would be settled by, you know in a little while.

RICHARDSON: Based on our experience in February, I did not believe that it was going to go on as long as it did; we would return and get on with business. The Department following events in Pakistan ordered all dependents out of the Middle East. You could see that they were taking a very serious view of it so I sent my wife back to Paris where she had moved from Rome. Then I caught an evacuation plane with dependents from the Gulf and went to Rome. There I caught another evacuation flight to Washington. It was about 3-4 weeks after the takeover that I left Damascus. I got back to Washington the 19th of December so it was that long that I hung around Damascus and Rome trying to get an assignment.

Q: When you get everybody out of the country or draw down, sometimes there is a superfluity of people back in Washington, what to do with them.

RICHARDSON: Yes, well what did I do? I got a good assignment in Lima. There were also other possibilities.

Q: Oh, ah Medellin?

RICHARDSON: I chose Lima. After the capture of the Embassy in February '79 we did not have

regular army protection. We had some informal kind of militia that was supposed to be protecting us but they weren't really, they were occupying and controlling access to the compound. I had to fight my way into the compound one day because our captors decided we shouldn't work that day. One day I had a couple of visitors from Rasht on the Caspian Sea. These are people who had come to me on their own, they didn't need visas because they both had visas, there wasn't anything I could do for them. They and their families had visas before I ever met them. They came to me and said, "If you ever need to get out of here, if you're in danger, let us know, we will hide you." Unsolicited, that was on their own. One of my people came in and told me that the leader of the militia had collected a lot of our documents and is carrying them off ... passports and things like that so I charge down the stairs and I catch him and I get a hold of one end of the box he has and he's got a pistol on his hip and his brother is there cradling an Uzi. Well he and I are going back and forth. I'm very angry. Going back and forth tugging on this box and the brother is like [Laughter] sitting at the center line at the net of a tennis match, he seeing us going back and forth [Laughter] and he's still cradling this Uzi and the young man who had come up to tell me about this was translating what I was saying to this man except he was putting it in very polite language. I was calling this guy every foul thing I could think of because I was out of my mind with anger and my clerk was saying, "Mr. Richardson said that you shouldn't do that and those documents belong to the embassy." And this kid is being very polite and then finally the thug that I'm contending with hears something he can repeat. He doesn't know what it means and asks what means, "Son of a beach!" [Laughter]. At which point, I dissolve in laughter and he was so stunned with my change of mood that he lets go of his side of the box and I won.

Q: Oh, God ...

RICHARDSON: And, well later on that young man made his way to the States and there was a hearing, there was to be a hearing at an immigration court on whether he would be permitted to stay or be deported. Where the hell they were going to deport him to? His lawyer got in touch with me and I was very happy to write up the incident and send it off. Well, the INS accepted my recommendation and his son has just graduated summa cum laude from John's Hopkins University.

Q: How wonderful.

RICHARDSON: Yes. I hadn't I hired him. Personnel sent him to me. And I couldn't figure out why, with the embassy under the gun like it was, any ambitious young Iranian would come to work for us. So I thought he was a spy. I distrusted the young man and he turned out to be my interpreter for the son of a bitch [Laughter]. So that's one of my favorite stories from that period. But also these people, the dentist and the doctor from Rasht, who offered to hide me if need be. Okay, they offered me this choice of posts and I chose Peru and was very glad I did.

Q: You were in Peru what from ... '80 or?

RICHARDSON: That would have been '80.

Q: And so you probably left in '79, you left Tehran in '79. The takeover was in '79.

RICHARDSON: Then it was '80, I was already in Peru in '80.

Q: Okay, so probably ...

RICHARDSON: Because when the hostages were released, my wife went back to Washington to greet them. She had worked with the Department's family liaison group.

KENTON W. KEITH
Special Assistant to Deputy Director, USIA
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

Ambassador Kenton Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: This was the beginning of when all hell broke loose there. Was there a problem while you were still dealing with that?

KEITH: This was one of the clearest failures of American policy during my career. It is sometimes alleged that no one at Embassy Tehran had an inkling of what was going on at the universities and in the bazaars. Nonsense. We had people there who could see what was going on. I was working in NEA at the time and attended the weekly State Department policy meetings. There was no secret that the country was in turmoil. USIS people were sensitive to the currents that were running through Iranian society, but it was very difficult for our people in Tehran to engage with the people who were making changes because – and this is one of those moments to which you just alluded – the ambassador didn't want them to.

Q: There were very clear instructions to play it just one way in Iran, which is essentially the Shah's way. This had been going on for some years.

KEITH: There was a perception that if you engaged with the Shah's enemies, you were giving them aid and comfort and you were giving them credibility. There was a sense that we needed to be putting all of our effort into preserving the Shah's regime. He was a good friend of the U.S.

Q: At the Agency, were there attempts to reach out beyond and to try to change it?

KEITH: Oh, sure, there were. I could give you names of people who knew what was going on

and who were involved with Iranians. By the way, it wasn't just people who were loyal to the Shah who were coming to the Iran-America Society who were involving themselves in our programs. There would be plenty of times when there would be people who would be in American libraries during the day and demonstrating against us at night.

Q: How was it to work in the front office of USIA for a career State Department officer?

KEITH: Charlie Bray certainly brought with him the perspectives of a career diplomat. But he had an unusually strong disregard for doing things the way they had always been done. He had a very thoughtful and rigorously probing mind. He was constantly trying to get to the crux of the matter. In fact, if I was of any value to him, it was probably interpreting him to a lot of people in USIA who did not understand what he was getting at, and their attitudes to him.

Q: I just finished interviewing Ted Curran, who was very unhappy with the Bray-Reinhardt combination. Was this an individual or was there a problem within USIA?

KEITH: I'm not sure what Ted's particular problems were, but having been closer to them than he was, I must say that I didn't share his unhappiness. One reason some senior officers were unhappy with John Reinhardt had to do with personnel assignment policy. They introduced certain kinds of personnel policies with regard to senior officers that had not been strictly applied, to wit: either go back overseas after your Washington assignment or retire. That was an abrupt break with past practice and seemed to be applied without compromise. Understandably, this policy created some hardship – or at least some real inconvenience. We lost some of the best we had in their generation, such as Dave Nalle, they couldn't accommodate to the new policy. On the other hand, the departure of these officers opened up promotion possibilities for others. And Reinhardt was somewhat unapproachable, even for his long-time colleagues. He was no longer an old boy, but director of the Agency, and he acted that way.

There were a lot of expressions of concern with the reorganization of the Agency. I'd like to hear Ted's specific criticisms because, as much as I admire Ted as a colleague and mentor in my early career, I was never as unhappy with them as he seems to have been.

Q: You were there at the end of the Carter administration. It got particularly hit - and there was almost a paralysis – by the double hit of our hostages taken in Iran and also the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Carter had come into office with the idea that, yes, you can do business with the Soviets and all of a sudden, he found he couldn't. Did this strike you? Were you watching an agency wrestle with a problem at its level?

KEITH: The Agency, of course, had the same kind of challenges as the rest of the administration. There was a loss of U.S. prestige and that certainly had an impact on the way people responded to our foreign policy goals and objectives. The period from 1980 to 1983, the transitional period from Carter to Reagan, I was in Brazil and the colonels were still in power. People in Brazil who didn't want Figueiredo and the military regime were taking some heart from Jimmy Carter and his insistence on the importance of human rights. In fact I think Carter's resume of that period would be, on balance, pretty positive come out throughout Latin America. Similarly, in the

Middle East Carter was seen as a fair-minded American president. He is still regarded as something of an honored figure in Egypt.

But Afghanistan showed the weakness of the Carter presidency, and the response to the invasion – boycotting the Moscow Olympics – was seen by many, particularly in the Islamic world, as something of a joke.

HAROLD H. SAUNDERS
Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1978-1981)

Harold H. Saunders was born and educated in Philadelphia and received his undergraduate degree in American Civilization from Princeton. In 1956, he earned his Ph.D. in American studies from Yale. After a stint with the Air Force, Harold Saunders began his government career with Central Intelligence Agency. He then moved to the National Security Council and then to the State Department. While at State, he became intimately involved in some major foreign policy events as such as the Middle East peace process and the Iran hostage crisis, about which he wrote extensively. He was interviewed in 1993 and 1994 by Thomas Stern.

SAUNDERS: I mentioned that I had other problems on my hands while the peace treaty drafting and negotiations were going on. For example, while at Camp David, one of the significant events leading up to the fall of the Shah of Iran took place. That was the riot in Tehran. Carter actually called the Shah from Camp David to encourage him and give him support. So during the fall of 1978 I was busy with events in Tehran. By the end of that year, the Shah was ready to leave Iran and we were evacuating some 40,000 Americans who were living in Iran. In February 1979, Khomeini returned to his home land. The American Embassy was occupied for the first time. Spike Dubbs was assassinated.

The first thing that happened when I became Assistant Secretary was a change of governments in Afghanistan. That was followed by a period of turmoil in that country that culminated into the Soviet invasion of December 1979. There had been reports on Soviet build up on the border, so that the invasion did not come as a surprise. We did not of course know for certain if and when the invasion would take place, but there had been warnings. I believe that if you would ask Cy Vance, he would tell you that he is very unhappy with himself for not having been more vigorous with Gromyko in early December over the invasion potential, as indicated by the troop movements and the build up. Soviet generals had visited the front since the summer. Vance had asked Marshal Shulman to tell Dobrynin that any Soviet movement into Afghanistan would be taken very seriously by Washington. But in retrospect, I think Vance now thinks that he should have personally called Dobrynin to warn him that the arms control treaty negotiations would have to be abandoned if an invasion were to take place.

So we had problems in Afghanistan and Iran plus the normal issues that arise in a region as large

as NEA. Pakistan and India were relatively quiet during the 1978-79 period. I was very fortunate to have good deputies who were assigned parts of the total labor. These officers were competent enough that Secretary Vance, Deputy Secretary Christopher and Undersecretary for Political Affairs Dave Newsom became sufficiently comfortable that they would deal directly with the deputies on specific issues. It would have been an impossible situation otherwise; I was concentrating on Camp David at the beginning of my tour as Assistant Secretary and on the Iran hostage crisis at the end. Without that close-knit team, NEA problems would have become a nightmare. I knew the way the deputies thought; they knew each other well. I was never uncomfortable in turning certain problems over to one or the other. I accepted this accumulation of problems as a matter of course. That is the way NEA has always been and probably will always be.

If more time had been available, I certainly would have liked to devote it to Iran. I don't believe that the US government handled that sequence of events starting in 1978 very well. In fact, there was probably a decade of shortcomings. I don't believe that while I was the Assistant Secretary, we were adequate in our response and analysis of the evolving situation in Iran. By the time we came to agree on some actions that we might have taken, it was too late for them to be effective. For example, we should have encouraged the Shah to broaden his base of political support long before we did. We should have encouraged him to deal with his opposition much before we did so that he could have managed it before it really coalesced into an implacable opposition. I believe that if we had sat down early enough and given Iran the attention that it needed that we might have had different results. If we, the US government, had given even a third of the attention or even a fourth of what we were giving to the Arab-Israeli conflict we might not have changed the course of events, but I think we could have been more satisfied than we were that we had given Iran our best efforts. But if we had given as much attention to Iran in 1978 as we did when the hostages were taken, the US government might have done something quite different. It was the difference of 1:100 in terms of time devoted. I should hasten to add that no one that I know of foresaw in 1978 that nine months later, the Shah would have left Iran. I could be wrong, but while I was still Director of INR--until April 1978--I remember one of my INR colleagues bringing to the Department approximately six American scholars and experts on Iran. We spent some time talking to them about the situation in Iran. I don't believe that any one at that meeting even came close to predicting what actually happened later that year and in 1979. Certainly no one expected events to move as rapidly as they did nor the eventual outcome. But I do believe that if we had given more time to analyzing trends and events in Iran, the US government might not have been as divided on what to do about the Shah and Iran as we were. Brzezinski had his own channel to the Iranian government and was sending one set of signals in October-November 1978. Bill Sullivan, our Ambassador in Tehran, was getting different instructions. So the US government was not presenting a united front in Iran. Gary Sick documents that period well.

Maybe if I had spent more time thinking about Iran, if I had perhaps talked to more people about the situation there, if I had given it the attention I gave other issues, perhaps I could have detected the underlying currents and warned my colleagues that the political stability was very fragile and was not of the same nature of previous unrest that the Shah managed to calm. There were some unknowns. For example, we did not know that the Shah had cancer. There was a lot of critical information that was not available to us. I feel worse about our policy development process as it

concerned Iran than any mistakes we may have made in the Middle East peace process. We all missed the boat in Iran--bureaucrats, scholars, experts. If we had taken a calendar of 1978 and wrote on it the dates when different people came to the conclusion that the Shah's reign was coming to an end, perhaps Henry Precht, the Iran office director, and Peter Constable might show up as early as July. Our people in the consulates in Iran might be shown much earlier than that. They could not understand why we didn't see the handwriting on the wall. The main reason was that their reports were not being forwarded by the Embassy in Tehran to Washington. So it took too long for those signals to reach us in the bureau. Precht did talk to the consulate people by phone; he was spending a lot of time on analyzing the currents in Iran. It wasn't until November that Ambassador Sullivan sent in his cable "Thinking the Unthinkable". In a slight exaggeration, I am not sure that Brzezinski would have been put on that calendar until the day that the Shah actually left Iran. I don't think he wanted to believe that that could be an outcome; he felt that there could be a military solution, in which we could assist even in the days just before the Shah's departure. Of course, by that time, the Shah's cancer had spread and his living days were numbered.

By the end of 1979, the hostage crisis was at a peak and it became my overwhelming pre-occupation. On the Middle East, in April or May, 1979--a month or two after the peace treaty was signed--we immediately went to the next stage of the peace process which was the beginning of the negotiations on Palestinian autonomy on the West Bank and Gaza. There was a meeting in the Negev, attended by Vance, Bob Strauss--who was then the Middle East negotiator--the Israelis and the Egyptians. The subject was autonomy. I traveled to the Middle East with Bob Strauss whenever he went to the region. Around the time that Strauss was succeeded by Sol Linowitz, the hostage crisis began. I never returned to the Middle East after that to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace process. Linowitz was supported by a strong team of professionals, but whenever Middle East issues arose, I would become involved, but there were limits to my involvement because of the events in Iran.

So I was involved in all the issues arising in my area of jurisdiction. As I said, I probably did not spend enough time on Iran before the Shah's downfall. When the hostage crisis arose, I spent enough time on that problem, given the fact that here was a substantial and well-staffed task force in the Operations Center. Linowitz was well staffed. One of my contributions was to see that all these apparently disparate efforts were taken within a total regional point of view. Since the major issues--Iran and Afghanistan--were well supervised and staffed in 1979, I felt that both were being attended to it adequately. If there was any neglect, it was in 1978 and before when the whole US government did not pay enough attention to Iran.

Let me just say a few words about the conduct of the hostage crisis. If I were to be proud of our government's handling of a particular situation, I would obviously be very positive about the Arab-Israeli peace process, not just because of what was achieved, but also because the way we managed it. We had terrific team-work; we had a sound analytical basis for our policies; the professionals involved were very competent; and we had as much political support for making progress as we wanted and needed. Strangely enough, I would give the hostage crisis the same high marks. First of all, we must recognize that when the hostages were taken we faced a terrible mess. We may, as I suggested earlier, have made mistakes in the pre-1979 period that led to the

hostage crisis. In any case, once the hostages were seized, despite several strategic decisions that might be argued, I think the government performed quite exemplary. One of the those strategic decisions that might be questioned would be the judgement that the US government kept the crisis in the White House. President Carter's "Rose Garden strategy"--that is his refusal to leave the White House to campaign until the hostages were returned--put him at the center of the crisis. I think everybody--Christopher, Powell, Jordan, et al--would now agree, as we did after we left office in post-mortem analyses, that the President at an early point should have articulated our policy and then delegated the day-to-day negotiations and tactics to the Deputy Secretary of State. He, of course, should have added that he expected to be fully informed and involved if needed, but a President had to run a country and could not spend full time on the hostage issue. Psychologically, that would have removed Carter from the direct line of fire; the Iranians would have been more frustrated because as long as Carter was as deeply involved as he was, he was in fact also an Iranian hostage.

But in terms of the management of a crisis, I think the hostage was one that was meticulously implemented. It was a very, very complicated problem with many facets. That ranged from the resentments of the Iranian students in American academia to the protection of their rights and visas; the question of impounding arms shipments for which the Iranians had already paid; trade embargoes, freezing assets, etc. There were many issues that cut across the responsibilities of various Cabinet departments and agencies. You might criticize the time of Cabinet officers who had to become involved in the crisis--they met six days each week in the Situation Room at the height of the crisis. There was an inordinate amount of time spent on this issue; it was similar to the aftermath of the 1967 war when an oil embargo was imposed. But the US government actions, once the hostages were taken, were well directed and coordinated, despite the fact that many people had to be involved. We might have been somewhat more effective if the day-to-day issues had been handled below the Presidential level certainly and perhaps even below the Cabinet level.

I believe that, in any policy development and implementation process, the political leadership should become involved only when required, not continually. Obviously, the top of a government will be involved in major issues even if it isn't present at frequent conferences and meetings. The professional subordinates will have either direct instructions on which policies or tactics to support or will have, in most instances, have had sufficient knowledge of their Cabinet boss' views to be able to take a position on individual issues or recommendations. I don't think it is necessary for Presidents and Cabinet officers to devote so much attention and time as they devoted to the Iranian hostage episode. Of course, the Cabinet officers were involved because President Carter was personally so deeply involved.

Cy Vance resigned in April 1980 and was succeeded by Ed Muskie. When in August-September 1979 it became clear that we might begin negotiations about the release of the hostages, Carter asked Christopher to collect a team to develop the US positions. That was done. That team, that working group, managed that rather complicated agreement. It consisted of Bob Coswell, the Deputy Secretary of the Treasury--because of US claim on Iran's and the frozen assets--, an Assistant Attorney General from the Justice Department, the Legal Advisor from the Department of State, Lloyd Cutler--the Counsel to the President--, Gary Sick from the NSC, Arnie

Raphel--Vance's and Muskie's executive assistant--, an Assistant Secretary from Defense and myself. That was an effective group that coordinated the activities of all the departments well. We could have had a group like that at the beginning of the crisis instead of only at the end. Of course, there would have been moments when the President would have wished to assure himself about certain actions and policy directions; he could have called an NSC meeting for those purposes. He could have done on a weekly basis. That would have been entirely different than having Cabinet officers sitting around a table in the Situation Room, chaired by Brzezinski, for an hour and a half every morning for six days every week for some period of time. The whole question of the appropriate level of management of crisis needs further examination.

The creativity of the Department's task force was interesting. We produced a lot of the memoranda that were reviewed by the higher level groups. We collaborated with people in other departments. One of the interesting things that happened was that we had lost almost all intelligence and information collection capacity when the Embassy was over-run. But Henry Precht knew that he could dial Tehran directly. He began to call as many Iranians as he could. He would call people in the business community or the medical community or who ever he could. This went on throughout the crisis. We also soon became aware of how many relatives of senior Iranian officials had married Americans and had American relatives in the US. We asked them to call their friends and relatives in Iran; we talked to them and through them to senior officials in Iran. That led to some very interesting connections. Our capacity to have a dialogue with important Iranians and to collect information was considerably enhanced by this very imaginative telephone network that Precht developed. This was just another example that the crisis that was reasonably well managed by the US, in intra-governmental terms, and that the US government used some imaginative ways to deal with it. There were a lot of unorthodox channels used, which required the adaptation of some creative methods. Most of this is documented in a book that we put together under Christopher's direction, after we all had left government.

Q: One final question, if I may. We have not discussed Islamic fundamentalism. Can you describe the evolution of this phenomenon, starting with your NSC tour?

SAUNDERS: It achieved prominence with Khomeini and the events that led to the overthrow of the Shah. It was in 1979 that this movement began to raise serious policy concerns in Washington. Before that, we were well aware of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, but even in 1979, when we began to look at a broader trend, we reaffirmed the conclusion that we had reached several years earlier, namely that you couldn't really develop a policy towards Islamic fundamentalism as an international phenomenon. It had to be faced country by country. There was no question that there cross-border linkages which were accentuated by Khomeini. There was a wind blowing through the area that obviously infused and encouraged local Islamic movements. The Iranians reached out over their borders as they are doing today in Lebanon and perhaps other places. But it was not possible to devise a policy towards a blowing wind; the policy had to be country specific. We spent a lot of time in 1978 and 1979 listening to scholars on this subject. We must have held three or four meetings in the Department. As I mentioned earlier, I was still the Director of INR when we started this series of meetings with scholars. The first one, I think, took place after the second set of demonstrations in Tehran. We invited about 6 experts on Iran. That established a pattern which we continued after the hostages were taken,

even though by that time I had become the Assistant Secretary for NEA.

I remember spending a long day in the Roosevelt Room in the White House. The scholars were there at the request of President Carter. He wanted to hear views on this subject. It was discussed as a generic issue, but operationally, the discussion was focussed on the hostages in Iran. Therefore, the specific question was what there was in the Islamic mind and calendar--festivals, religious days--which might bring amnesty. Also, Carter was interested in what might be on Khomeini's mind that made him behave as he did and how might he be approached. Those were the operational questions that drove the discussion on Islam.

My personal view on Islamic fundamentalism is best characterized by an exchange I had with my warm and close personal friend, Gary Sick. After both of us left government, we participated in a panel discussing events that took place in the late 1970s. As far as I am concerned, Gary is the last word on this matter. In any case, on this panel, I said that the Iranian revolution was not essentially an Islamic revolution. I thought that there had been a convergence of deep rooted dissatisfactions ranging from poor economic performance and low wages to Khomeini's pain stemming from the death of his son which he attributed to the Shah's secret police. It was a strange set of bed-fellows that made the Iranian revolution: the business community, the lower levels of the military, the religious faction, etc. I thought that people should have noticed that phenomenon as much as Islamic fundamentalism, which obviously was a part of the revolution, but only one part. Indeed an Islamic republic did emerge. Gary took issue with me and I accept his response. But I wanted to make the point that the Iranian revolution might not have occurred or succeeded if it had been entirely dependent on Islamic forces. It was the flag around which a strange mixture of the dissatisfied rallied. When Khomeini returned to Iran, many of the people who had supported the revolution were marginalized. The revolutionary regime was gradually "purified"; the so-called "Westerners" were dismissed, as was the case of the Foreign Minister who was replaced in the same month that the hostages were taken. A senior Islamic statesman called Vance in January, 1980 to tell him that the hostages would not be returned until Khomeini had put in place every element of the Islamic revolution. As shown in the book *American Hostages in Iran* (Council for Foreign Relations), when the last pieces of that revolution were in place--the naming of a new Foreign Minister and the convening of the new Assembly--then the US got its first feelers from Iran about the release of the hostages. Khomeini's thrust was arguably to create an Islamic republic, but the fall of the previous regime was caused by a large number of factions.

As I said, in the fall 1979, we were genuinely concerned by Islamic fundamentalism throughout the area. There were numerous threats against American diplomatic establishments in the name of Islam. The real trigger was the burning of the Chancery in Islamabad. Ostensibly that action took place because a number of extremists had occupied Mecca and the French had gone in to move them out. The radio reports in Islamabad said that it had been the Americans who had gone into Mecca; it was obviously misinformation. In any case, the radio reports triggered a mob which attacked the Chancery. Soon thereafter, I got a call from Vance asking me to come to his house. He wanted to discuss whether Americans should be evacuated from the Middle East. He agonized over it and the next morning we issued instructions to evacuate the Persian Gulf states--not Saudi Arabia--and Pakistan. For weeks and months thereafter, I was berated by a

number of Foreign Service wives, who blasted me for that decision. They insisted that nothing would happen in the Gulf States; in retrospect, they were right. But we had hostages in Iran and our Chancery in Islamabad had been burned down with some Pakistani employees killed. It was not the time to gamble; a major catastrophe could have occurred in any of the countries. I went to Dulles airport to meet the families of our people in Pakistan; that was not a pleasant experience. I fully understood why the Secretary had taken the decision that he had and fully supported him. At the same time, I was sympathetic to the evacuated families whose lives were obviously disrupted.

I think the movement has deepened since the late 1970s. Now we have the important and powerful Hamas trying to interfere with the peace process so that the two issues--fundamentalism and peace--are merging. Fortunately, in the 1970s and 1980s, the fundamentalist did not turn the Arab-Israeli into a Muslim-Jewish religious confrontation in any significant way. But Hamas brings us to the heart of the peace process. I still believe that each Islamic fundamentalist movement is an entity unto itself. I still believe, as I suggested earlier, that in most cases, persons with a political or social agenda or grievance or power seekers used Islam as a rallying cry. That is not to say that there aren't Islamic fundamentalists, but they are not the sole cause of unrest in the area or a specific country. Hamas has its own extremist purposes, but it rallies around the Islamic flag, but I don't think you can rationalize their actions in Islamic terms exclusively. I believe that you have to look at the manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism in each national or political setting if you wish to address seriously the threat that specific groups pose for your policy.

HENRY PRECHT
Iran Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1978-1981)

Henry Precht was born in Georgia in 1932. After receiving his AA from Armstrong College in 1951 and his bachelor's degree from Emory University in 1953, he served in the US Navy from 1953-1957. His career has included positions in Rome, Alexandria, Port Louis, Tehran, and Cairo. Mr. Precht was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 2000.

Q: Yes. So you came to the desk?

PRECHT: June of 1978.

Q: Okay. Next time we will pick it up at that time.

PRECHT: All right.

Q: Today is March 24, 2000. Henry, you took over the Iran desk in June, 1978. Will you explain what the "desk" was in terms of that time?

PRECHT: The Iran desk dealt only with Iran and consisted of a country director, his deputy and an economic officer. Occasionally there was an intern. There were also two secretaries.

Even though I was a strong candidate for the Iran desk, I had two choices. One was to be country director of Iran; the other was to move from deputy director to director of regional affairs. Iran was certainly going to be complicated in my view and for that reason I took it.

The troubles had started in Iran, basically in January, when the Shah's people and newspapers insulted Khomeini and religious students had demonstrated in Qum at the seminary. A number were shot, touching off a series of mourning demonstrations. That is, celebrations to mark the death of individuals after three days, after 40 days, etc. That began in January and every time there would be one of these mourning demonstrations, sometimes in Tehran, sometimes in Tabriz, or other cities. Each time the troops would crack down again. So, there would have to be more celebrations commemorating those who were killed. Things were getting out of hand and the Shah was getting a little nervous. He began promising things like a more liberalized regime, etc. Unfortunately, people weren't buying that. I had been concerned about what was happening in Iran. The embassy indicated some worry but the press, which was not represented by American reporters, downplayed the incidents. All the papers had stringers who we always thought had dual employment, the other employer being SAVAK, the secret police. So, the level of concern was muted at best. In June when I came on board things had, in fact, quieted down. The mourning ceremonies had come to an end. There was tension but not recurring violence.

Q: At that time was it the perception that you were getting from other people and your own analysts that the problem was that the Shah has got to liberalize the SAVAK, or in a way become more conservative and religious?

PRECHT: Basically people didn't believe that the Shah, who had been through a lot of trouble from his reign since 1941, was in any real danger. Some people thought liberalization was the answer. That is, to lighten up. No one suggested that he join the church or start contributing to the building fund, because religious people weren't so prominent in American thinking at that stage.

Q: Was it also because we couldn't talk to mullahs and also Americans particularly in those days didn't think in terms of Islam or church in any place. We are secular people and have secular solutions.

PRECHT: Don't forget we are looking at this in retrospect. There had never been an Islamic revolution before. There had been political demonstrations led by clerics, the last one being 25 years earlier led by Khomeini at which time he was jailed and sent off in exile ending up in Iraq. The religious aspect wasn't the main focus at that time, in the spring of 1978, it was a popular uprising. It wasn't even viewed as being a long-term thing. After all, the Shah had a pretty tough secret police apparatus and an army deemed to be loyal. The presumption was that it might be messy and might take a little while but they could do the job. I recall a cable coming in from the embassy in May, 1978 which identified Khomeini, who was figuring in the troubles but wasn't

revered yet as leader of the stature that he later acquired. The Embassy had to identify him to the Washington audience in that cable, which tells you something about how much we knew about Iranian internal politics and Khomeini's role in it.

I came to the desk and one of my first visitors was the Israeli embassy officer who handled the Middle East, David Tourgamen. He had been born in Iran. When he came in to see me he said, "We are already in the post-Shah era." I had not heard that before. He felt the Shah was in deep trouble. He was basing that, I guess, on what he knew of Iran and was getting from the unofficial Israeli embassy in Tehran. Another incidence occurred just shortly after I came on board. I was told that Henry Kissinger had just returned from Iran and gotten in touch with the State Department to report on his conversation with the Shah. The Shah told him that he didn't see how it was possible for a bunch of ignorant mullahs to lead demonstrations so precisely organized and so effective. There must be some other force behind them. He concluded that the CIA must be behind them. He asked why would the CIA do this to him. Why would they turn on him? He came up with two answers which he gave to Kissinger. One was that the Americans felt that, with his dealings with the Soviets for gas for military and non-lethal equipment trucks and maybe a few other items, he was too cozy with the Soviet Union. If Americans thought he was soft, maybe the religious people would be more staunchly anti-communist and stronger in their containment policy. His other theory was that the Americans and the Russians, as the British and the Russians in olden days in the beginning of the century, had decided to divide Iran into spheres of influence. We would take the south which had most of the oil and the Soviets could have the north, as they had in the past and was of interest to them, the area around the Caspian Sea.

Q: Basically the pre-World War I division.

PRECHT: These were his two theories as to why the CIA should be stirring up trouble against him. I thought this is the man on whom we are relying to save our terribly important interests in Iran. He is a nut. This is the kind of person I am going to have to deal with. The job was going to be a lot more complicated than I thought. Then Bill Sullivan, who had been named ambassador when Carter came into office, came back for home leave. I think I mentioned earlier the Shah had been terribly concerned about Carter's ascension to the presidency even before he was nominated, fearing he would be another Kennedy who would force him down liberal paths that he didn't want to go down. When Carter was elected, I guess, the Shah's anxiety was mounting. But, although President Carter had had planks about human rights and unregulated arms sales in his campaign, while he was in office he didn't really want to implement those planks in the same fashion that he had announced them. In fact, he didn't want any trouble in Iran. He didn't want Iran as an issue. The Arab-Israel question was looming large on the American agenda as was the Soviet Union and China. Iran in turmoil was an unnecessary addition to our agenda. Carter had chosen Bill Sullivan, a tough minded highly competent professional diplomat, to reassure the Shah of our continuing support.

We heard from Sullivan after his meeting with Carter, but before he went to Iran, that he didn't want any pressure applied to the Shah on human rights. Carter wanted to continue the relationship that the United States had always had with the Shah. We would sell him whatever

arms we could, maybe being a little more cautious, but wouldn't press him on human rights. Essentially it was to be business as usual. That was my understanding of what Sullivan told us. Now Sullivan in June 1978 had been in Iran for, I suppose, a year or so, came back to go on home leave in Mexico. He came through the Department to consult and obviously the months of disturbances were on everybody's mind. I went to all of his meetings in the Department. Sullivan's line then was that it's all been taken care of. The Shah's people have found the right address with the mullahs and, providing them with money, satisfied their earthly needs. They would go back to their mosques and remain quiet. Essentially they had been bought off. It was a very optimistic report. And, nothing of concern was happening in Iran at the moment. He went off to Mexico for two months. Then the Shah disappeared from the media. I think Lady Bird Johnson went over there and Charlie Naas took her to see the Shah on the Caspian. He was a little bit subdued. He was not in the papers or on television. We didn't know what was wrong with him. There was concern that maybe he had been shot by one of his bodyguards. Charlie and I weren't terribly concerned so we didn't raise a ruckus. But, we were aware of his disappearance. In retrospect, I think he may have been having some physical examinations and learned the bad news about his health. That is pure speculation on my part. We had never been told anything about the Shah's health.

Q: Had you ever gotten an equivalent of a psychological profile from the CIA?

PRECHT: That came later during the revolution. It was so bland that it was worthless.

Q: Okay.

PRECHT: He reappeared around the first of August and was back on the job. Around mid-August there was some kind of problem. I think a mullah of some prominence was hit and killed in a highway accident. The immediate supposition was that this was the work of SAVAK and there were big demonstrations and riots in Isfahan causing it to be placed under marshal law. August coincided with the month of Ramadan in the Muslim calendar. Subsequently, towards the end of August, perhaps the 25th, there was a fire in a theater in Bandra Abbas and I think 700 people were killed because the doors were locked. It was a terrible disaster. The Shah's people blamed the mullahs. During the previous month of demonstrations, movie theaters had frequently been targeted by the clerics because they showed those sinful western movies. So, SAVAK let it be known that this was another act of the mullahs. Nobody in Iran believed that. They all believed that the regime had done it and blamed the mullahs. That showed you the level of mistrust of the regime. No one would take its word on anything. We received at that time a very short - couple of sentences - CIA report which said that SAVAK had been responsible according to one of the Agency's SAVAK contacts. Whether it was true or not, who knows? About that time Sullivan returned from his home leave to find that Iran had not cured itself with bribes and weariness of demonstrations, but remained considerably agitated. Things were looking bleak again. He made another round of people in the Department still showing optimism that the Shah would be able to take care of things. After a meeting with [National Security Advisor] Brzezinski, Brzezinski said that the Shah was our man and we have to stand behind him at whatever cost. There would be no compromise and we would do whatever was necessary to support him. Brzezinski's position was much tougher than Sullivan's. Then Sullivan went off to

Iran and when he got there, around the end of Ramadan, one of the first things he did was go to see the Shah whom he found terribly depressed. He couldn't understand how his people had turned against him. He had done so much for them and they were so ungrateful and disloyal. He was really down, Sullivan said in his reporting cable. He thought we had to do something to buck him up. So, he drafted a message from the president to the Shah bucking him up. I looked at it and took out a couple of sentences praising the monarchy, which I thought were not appropriate for a democratic country to say, and got it cleared around the government.

At this time there were huge demonstrations all over Iran. Millions of people were out in the streets non-violently protesting. I should note that during this period, the month of August when things were heating up, Hal Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State, was totally preoccupied with preparing for the Camp David conference. He was drafting papers for this conference. Bill Crawford was Deputy Assistant Secretary with jurisdiction over me and Iran. An Arabist, he knew little or nothing about Iran and left me to do most of the business on Iran. I got Sullivan's draft letter cleared and sent it to the White House. There it was put in a suitcase for people going to Camp David and who were then sealed off from the outside world. So, there went Sullivan's effort, to spend a week or two in a suitcase.

The demonstrations continued. The day before September 7, I believe it was, the Shah imposed martial law in Tehran. Nobody was allowed on the street. The head of the army was named martial law commander. It was imposed on a Thursday, I think, and on the Friday (later known as Black Friday), the Muslim's Sabbath, people hadn't gotten the word and came out to demonstrate. In Jalali Square in south Tehran, the troops shot down these martial law violators. How many people were killed? If you ask the opposition, it was well over a thousand and if you asked the Shah's people it was well under a hundred. The embassy finally came up with something like 125 which they got from their official sources. No one really knew. The perception, however, was that a heck of a lot of people had been killed and that the structure of the regime had been severely shaken. The day after the massacre, I was taking my morning shower and the thought came to me that the Shah was indeed finished. This was a war between him and his people and he could not prevail in such a war. When he went and how he went I didn't know. Whether he would be able to make some compromise that would diminish his powers, I didn't know. But, it was clear to me that the Iran of the future was not going to be the Iran of the past. The opposition elements would play a much larger role and the Shah a much smaller role and we needed to adjust to that. That was a view directly contrary to American policy. It was not a view, to my knowledge, that was shared by anybody else in the American government, certainly not Dr. Brzezinski, and to my knowledge nobody above or below me. So, I reckoned that if I announced my conclusions in the Monday morning staff meeting I might well find myself at FSI studying a language that wouldn't be Persian. So, I thought I would just have to play this slowly and at the margins. I would have to try to modify policy so that it begins to conform to what my conception of the reality was not to confront it head on and end up bringing myself down while not changing the policy. But back to Friday: At the end of the day there was a big meeting on the 7th floor chaired by Dave Newsom, who I think was the ranking official in town, on what are we to do in reaction to the massacre. Well, it was clear that the letter, Sullivan's draft, was overtaken by this event. We decided it would be best to use the telephone. So, the following morning Hal Saunders called me at home from Camp David. He said that Sadat had telephoned the Shah and so had

Begin and the president was going to. What should he say? I had just come out of the shower. I said, "It seems to me that we have to support him. We can't turn our back on him. But, we have to say something that indicates we understand the situation in Iran. And the message should be very brief." I can't remember whether I dictated it over the phone or how that worked out, but in one paragraph we restated our firm support of the Shah, with in a second stated our belief in the liberalization measures that would bring a better future for Iran. That was the message that Carter delivered to the Shah. I guess we heard from Sullivan that the King was pleased - so much so that he published the text of the message the next day. Well, I guess we should have anticipated that. It didn't work out the way we had hoped. What it said to the people in the streets was that the Americans were standing behind the Shah, supporting his shooting of the people in Jalali square. So, it really worked very much against us. The lid stayed on, but things began to get progressively worse. There hadn't been real labor unions in Iran before this - only so-called labor leaders appointed by the regime. Now real labor groups began to develop with their own programs supportive of revolutionary objectives. They were still not calling it a revolution. Progressively you had oil workers going on strike, then government people, central bank staff, etc. You had these industrial actions that shut down the country. And, there were demonstrations, but martial law was still in effect. The Shah began to move towards a bifurcated policy. On the one hand, they had shot down a lot of people. On the other hand, he tried to appeal to the population by appointing a new prime minister having jailed his former prime minister. He also jailed other people who were deemed to be corrupt. He let some people out of jail. It was a confusing time if you were not an Iranian. Is he soft or is he hard? In fact, he was both, groping for some solution. During this period, September/October, there seemed to be any number of occasions that needed to be celebrated by Washington. That is, the president needed to send a public message congratulating the Shah on his birthday, the crown prince's birthday, etc. It was part of the traditional flattery that showed what great friends the two regimes were.

Q: But, it was particularly pronounced in this case wasn't it? It sounds like compared to other leaders we were spending an awful lot of time flattering the Shah.

PRECHT: That's right. He had an ego that had to be frequently anointed. With my new, private perspective on the Shah's future, I tried to tone down the flattery. The Shah continued to broadcast each of our greetings. I felt it was not a very smart thing for us to do. I also thought that we ought to begin to know the opposition. Neither the Department nor the Embassy had ever had any contact with it. Richard Cottam, the political scientist who was persona non grata at the State Department contacted Gary Sick, who was the national security staff handling Iran, suggesting that he meet with Ibrahim Yazdi, who was an Iranian doctor in Texas on his way to Paris to work for Khomeini. Yazdi would be passing through Washington. I thought that was a good idea, but Gary thought that perhaps his level was too high for this encounter. Maybe I should be the one to meet with Yazdi. I readily agreed and an appointment was made. Then Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary, got wind of it and instructed me not to meet with Yazdi. There shouldn't be any conversation with an American official. I was disappointed but thought we ought to find some way to contact these people. The embassy at that time had no contact with the opposition. Along about mid-September, early October, the press still wasn't paying attention to what was going on in Iran in a fashion that was showing adequate knowledge of the situation. However, the Washington Post one morning carried a headline saying "Iran suspends (or cancels) big nuclear

power contract." This was big money, but due to labor unrest the Iranians had been unable to carry out those contracts. We had known about it for it had been reported by the embassy days before. Nevertheless, I got a call from the 7th floor asking what was going on and what should they do? My theory at the time was that there is a period when a crisis is developing in which the desk officer is in complete charge because no one above him knows anything about it or takes any interest in it. Then there is this golden moment when the seniors take an interest and they ask the desk officer's opinion. From then on the crisis proceeds, but people on the 7th floor are in charge and the desk officer is diminished. This was my chance to brief people, for from then on the 7th floor was seized of the Iran problem. Around the same time I was at a party for George Sherman, the NEA press officer, and Marvin Kalb was there. George introduced me to Marvin Kalb, a network anchorman. I said to him, "Man, you are missing a big story. The Iranian story is not figuring on your program or any of the nightly news, but you can be sure it is going to be much bigger and you better get on it now or you will lose it." I wanted people to pay attention to what was going on in Iran and I couldn't get them to do it. Press attention was the only way that the 7th floor would wake up to a problem. Everyone was focused on the Arab-Israel question. Iran wasn't getting any sustained attention. This began to change as things in Iran got worse and worse. At one point in October, the U.S. Navy wanted to sell the Shah some more F-14s and Mr. Duncan, number two in DOD, was going to make a trip to Iran to talk to the Shah about a buy. I said that they were crazy. The F-14 was one of our most valuable military resources and Iran was now an unstable country and it was absurd to sell them any more. Well, they went off to Isfahan where the planes were based and they were pinned down in their hotel unable to leave because of the fighting outside in the streets. It was little incidents like this that began to convince Washington that they had a serious problem in Iran.

Q: We talked before about controlled reporting in Iran because we didn't want to upset the Shah, how did you feel you were supported by the reporting on events and developments in Iran?

PRECHT: Reporting from the embassy was generally terrible and I told John Stempel, the domestic reporting officer, in August that they really needed to get geared up and give much better coverage to what was going on in Iran. Sullivan had begun to push the embassy into reporting like a normal embassy and talking to some opposition leaders. I think it was in November when they finally decided to do that. I continued to think they were not doing a good job. It is very hard for a desk officer to help his colleagues in the field, however. I felt practically almost everything from them was frightfully unhelpful. There was a seven and a half hour difference between Washington and Tehran. When I arrived at work at 8:00 in the morning they would be home or going home and Charlie Naas or Sullivan and I would review what had happened during the day. As the crisis developed tensions within the American government began to build. We had the liberals in the human rights bureau. We had the conservatives in the White House, if you want to call them that. Back in August, CIA had prepared a national intelligence estimate mentioning there was trouble but nothing serious in Iran. The Shah has it under control. There was one notable sentence saying Iran is not even in a "pre-revolution situation." Well, I wouldn't sign off on it. In a footnote I said that I didn't agree with these findings and the State Department would not be a participant in the report. I don't know if it was ever published. Particularly over these messages of congratulations, I began to feel tension building up between me and Gary Sick. I had known Gary from days when I was at Alexandria

and he was an assistant naval attaché at Cairo. When I was moving into the Iran desk, he had my wife and me to dinner with Jessica Matthews and several other people from the NSC staff, introducing me as the guy who really understood Iran. Later on though, when things became increasingly tense during the fall of 1978, we parted ways. If you read his book, *All Fall Down*, he puts it in rather melodramatic terms that we had been close friends, but I use to laugh at him and lecture him and shout at him in such a way that he just stopped communicating with me. I suppose I did rant and rave at him because I was so deeply frustrated that he was supporting the Brzezinski line and wouldn't listen to any other argument. I didn't think he had particular knowledge of Iran and he wasn't listening to anybody else.

But, in the State Department, people at my level began to group around me so we had a kind of working level cabal. I began to describe rather graphically at staff meetings the problems that the Shah was facing. There was always a good audience for that. Gradually I was building up some support for the position that I had. Later in fall the MacNeil-Lehrer show, the PBS [Public Broadcasting System] evening news, wanted to do a segment on Iran and contacted the State Department for someone who could talk on Iran. Nobody wanted to talk, so the request found its way down to me and I said fine. Well, I wasn't going to sit there and condemn American policy in front of a national audience. Joseph Kraft was on the show and he was expressing deep concern about the Shah. I was trying to make people feel better. They asked me at one point, "Do you think the Shah might leave Iran?" I said without a moment of hesitation that there was no chance at all of that happening - while not believing that myself. In fact, I lied. That was what we needed to do because we had a dilemma. We couldn't pull the rug from under the Shah because there was no structure to replace him. I didn't want to panic him and have him do anything drastic. What I wanted was some kind of gradual response that would phase into a new situation peacefully and with the preservation of America's position there. From that meeting I got to know the producer for Middle East news on the show. Journalists by that time were coming around frequently. There were also frequently high level meetings in the White House and in the State Department. So, the government was now galvanized. I used to attend meetings in the White House situation room, generally with Hal Saunders. Sometimes the meeting would be chaired by Brzezinski and occasionally by [Vice President] Mondale. I recall sitting in one of those meetings and looking around the room at the others present, all far senior to me, and thinking that there was nobody in the room who knew anything about Iran except me and I knew how inadequate my knowledge was. So we were really in the soup during this crisis.

Q: As I have done these oral histories and from my own experience, it seems that the greater the crisis the more the action oriented people are apt to grab the reins and deliberate and the more they squeeze out those who have been on the ground and could tell you there is no road between a and b if you are going to send in tanks.

PRECHT: That is the point I was making earlier. There is a moment when the desk officer is listened to and then after that he is pushed into the background.

At the end of October, the Shah's son had a birthday. This young man was 18 years old. At the Shah's wish he had been assigned to flight training in Lubeck, Texas, and had been equipped out there with a nice villa, an elaborate stereo system, a Swedish girlfriend - all things an aspiring

fighter pilot and prince should have. The Iranian ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi, was going to have a party for him in the thick of these troubles. I had gotten to know the ambassador when I took over the desk and went to call on him at his grand embassy. Well, he invited Marian and me to come to this birthday party. Brzezinski was there. Carl Rowen was there. It wasn't the creme de la creme of Washington society but not bad. I was quite impressed by the young prince. He seemed well-informed and quite mature for an 18-year-old. But, there was no indication from him or anyone at that gathering that Iran was in serious trouble. The demonstrations and strikes continued. Perhaps as a safety valve, the Shah had allowed the press to publish rather freely. November 4, however, was the anniversary of student killings in the university and the Shah had to impose martial law again because there were riots all over the city. Some people said the Shah, himself, had instigated them. At that time another prime minister was appointed, this time the head of the military, General Ashari, a mild mannered loyal gentleman. A few days beforehand we had word that something like this was going to happen - that a military regime was going to be imposed. Sullivan by that time, often in the company of the British ambassador, Tony Parsons, was seeing the Shah quite frequently and the Shah was always depressed. Sullivan's idea still was to buck him up. There was a debate in Washington as to how to advise the Shah to deal with his problems. There were essentially two lines of thought. One was a kind of weak kneed: to continue liberalization or accelerate it. The other was the iron fist. That is, to send troops out and shoot down as many people as necessary and bring an end to the rebellion once and for all. Dr. Brzezinski was the advocate of the iron fist, but President Carter was not buying that kind of policy. He would not sign off on that kind of measure. So, what you had was Brzezinski in touch with Zahedi sending messages to the Shah of his own design and we in the State Department, good and proper bureaucrats, clearing our instructions all over the government and sending out to Sullivan in regular channels, suggesting he encourage the Shah towards moderation. The Shah, poor fellow, was confused by the conflicting advise. He was getting one line from Brzezinski and another from Sullivan and was desperate to know what to do. In retrospect, we know now that he knew he was a sick man and what he wanted more than anything was to pass on to his son a viable monarchy. He wanted his son to inherit the throne. He was afraid if he slaughtered people in the streets and turned over to a teenager a situation that he could not handle, the dynasty would be swept aside. He was trying desperately to find the most stable way of constructing a succession. Along about end of October or early November, Sullivan sent in a message captioned "thinking the unthinkable." You had to read it very closely, but the inference was that maybe something was happening to the Shah. He didn't say clearly that the previously presumed 100 percent support for the Shah was weakening. It was an effort, I guess, to get the Washington community to think more broadly and creatively. Well, it went up stairs and didn't prompt anything. Nobody reacted. And Sullivan didn't follow up. I, at the same time, was terribly concerned that we were going to apply the iron fist. So, I devised a message saying that the military would be unable to end the popular revolt. The military leadership was not capable of running the country. The Shah was going to weaken the regime rather than strengthen it, if he depended on a military that was very much untested in this kind of business, untrained and of questionable loyalty in the end. Soldiers would be firing their rifles at their brothers across the barricade. How long would they continue to shoot them down? I don't remember if the telegram was actually released or not. Unofficially, I sent it to the post and, I think, they began to think in terms of a non-military solution.

Q: Were you getting any questioning reports on the Iran military from our military attachés who had a very close relationship with the Iranian military?

PRECHT: My thoughts were based on my experiences in dealing with the Iranian military, largely with the senior generals. The position you have just described is what most people, including many Iranians, believed. They felt our military was in bed with the Iranian military and knew everything about them. Bear in mind that our military advisers, first and only, deemed themselves as non-political; forbidden to be interested in loyalty or political questions of that kind. They were interested in whether the Iranians could crank up an F-4 and fly it. They didn't have any language ability, didn't socialize with the military except in a very structured environment. Of course, we had the attachés whose job it was to understand the Iranian forces, but they were fenced off both by the Iranians and the American advisors. So, our military was useless. CIA had no lines into the military that were useful. Finally, the embassy, as I mentioned, began to contact opposition people. One of their first forays occurred when Steve Cohen, who was one of our Human Rights Bureau people and anti-Shah, visited and insisted that the embassy take him to see opposition people. Along about November I was asked again to be on the MacNeil-Lehrer show. I was also getting the sense that I was getting too much visibility from the media. Perhaps I had better pull in some. So, I declined the offer but told the producer he should invite Ibrahim Yazdi to be on the show. After the show, he should invite him to dinner and I would come along. We went to dinner at a Washington restaurant with some of the participants on the show and Yazdi and I had a chance to talk to him. I wrote a memorandum of my conversation with him outlining his position. He was the most senior person in the opposition we had met at that time. So, what you had was a period of increasingly difficult times. Carl Rowan filmed an interview with the Shah in Tehran and gave a private showing to the staff of the Iranian Embassy and me. When the Shah appeared, pale, obviously depressed and hesitant, the audience of loyalists gasped in shock. Towards the end of November Mike Blumenthal, Treasury Secretary, went to Iran. Senator Byrd, who has an Iranian son-in-law also went over at the same time. Both went to see the Shah. They found him at lunch, propped up, popping pills and virtually comatose. His wife did all the talking. When they came back they were in a state of shock. Ham Jordan had said to the press that the Shah is our man and he is the only person we support in Iran. I think it was Blumenthal who said that if we don't have anybody else we better find someone quick because this guy doesn't have the stuff. Nevertheless, Gary Sick prepared a memo prescribing a more active leadership role for the Shah. In effect, the king should mount a white horse and show himself to his people as often as possible in person and on television. He should act out a stern father figure role. I thought Gary was wacky. The Shah was hated by his people and the sight of him would enrage them. Moreover, he was in no mental condition to inspire anyone. Like so much that was written or said during that period, no one grasped Gary's ideas. No one had any good ideas and no one had confidence or knowledge enough to accept or reject the proposals of others. The government was largely passive.

Along about early December, Brzezinski asked me to come to his office. Already it was clear that there was tension between me and the White House and Hal Saunders said he would also come to back me up. Brzezinski said that he wanted to see me alone. I went over and we had a businesslike meeting. He began to ask me questions about the future of Iran because he had clearly been told by the Iranian ambassador that a Khomeini victory would lead Iran to fragment -

the Kurds would go one way and Baluchi another way. I disagreed. Then at the end he said to me, "All right, if I point a pistol at your head and say to you, 'You have to tell me what you honestly think is going to happen in Iran or I will shoot you,' what would you say?" I said, "I would tell you that we have three months at the most for the Shah. If we don't work out some kind of deal between him and the opposition between now and then, he will be gone in three months." It turned out I had two weeks to spare - it ended in mid-February. But I never said anything about that meeting afterwards. I came back and never quoted or referred to my conversation with Dr. Brzezinski, which I thought would embarrass for him.

Q: Did you feel that Dr. Brzezinski was having second thoughts?

PRECHT: I didn't think he was having second thoughts, I thought he was trying to be a professorial type with me to smoke out what I really thought. Essentially he was a cold warrior. He was a Pole with terrible feelings about the Soviet Union and he didn't want to see that part of our containment barrier weakened. That is, the Shah was our barrier to keep the Soviets from moving towards the Gulf and we needed to support the Shah because of our Soviet policy.

Q: Were the Soviet Union or the Tudeh party factors as this waging on or not?

PRECHT: I think there may have been a few elderly Tudeh gentlemen who the Shah let out of jail or let return from East Germany, but they didn't figure in the equation. The Russians seemed as baffled as we were about what to do. We had very little contact with them about Iran. Still, I think they may have been a little ahead of us. Most foreign governments, I think, were ahead of us. The French, I think, were probably as far ahead in their thinking as anyone but they never shared information. Only occasionally would you get word of what French perceptions were. The British were quite good in sharing Ambassador Parson's reporting and I thought he was excellent. He was cautious but quite insightful and he was bringing to the attention of London the terrible situation he saw. I tried to bring his reports to the attention of the 7th floor because we weren't getting the same message out of the embassy in Tehran. The Israeli government along about this time began to change its tune having woken up to the dire future the Shah and they faced in Iran. It was clear to me that the Israeli government had become alarmed at the situation and instructed its man in Washington to urge Americans to urge the Shah to crack down. Clearly they were afraid of what was going to happen.

It was a week or so before the 10th of December and we were now in the Iranian month of Moharam. The Shiite calendar has a series of mourning days in which their early leaders who were martyred are mourned and in some communities the scene of their martyrdom is reenacted. The radio will play nothing but mournful prayers and such. People go around lashing themselves with chains, etc. We began to feel quite nervous how this was going to be treated and how it would affect the safety of our people in Iran. At one meeting in the White House in December someone brought up a letter in the Washington Post from the wife of a sergeant who said, "Here we are in this country where shots are being fired at crowds on the street and American lives are in danger." (Actually, I think, maybe one American at that point had been killed and virtually no hostility towards Americans had been shown.) She continued that "we have had no information from our embassy, we are exposed out here and all of us are at risk." Help, in other words.

Someone read that letter and said if American casualties occur as this mourning period reaches its peak, we will be held responsible. Maybe we should start to evacuate people from Tehran, dependents and non-essential personnel. I said, "If you do that, the Shah will get the message that you have lost faith in him and maybe he will pack up and go to Nice. You have to take the risk and protect your position there." I was told to go back to my office and prepare a message of evacuation. "Handle it as skillfully as you can, but get this letter writing lady out of there." So, I went back and called Sullivan who agreed with me. He said, "Don't send me any instructions to evacuate. The effect will be disastrous for our position." So, I called Ben Reed's office in the Administrative Bureau of the State Department, and told him the White House wanted to evacuate people from Tehran. How can we get them out without calling it an evacuation? Can we give them all a holiday and airline tickets and let them go? Nope, U.S. government regulations say that the only way you can provide people with airline tickets is with evacuation orders. I said, "Can't we just call it advanced R&R or whatever?" Nope, it has to be an evacuation. So, I drafted the cable, got it approved and placed it in my in-box over night and went home. Subsequently I thought, if Americans had been killed because I was trying to protect some foreign monarch's skin, I would have no excuse whatsoever. It was wrong of me to do that. The next morning I said to Sullivan that perhaps that perhaps he should alert the Shah in advance. He went to the Shah and told him that we were going to evacuate non-essential employees and those dependents who wanted to go. It was going to be strictly voluntary and low key. The Shah said, "I understand." He never mentioned the subject again. Not too many people left but a fair number did. We had a very large embassy there. It was the slow start of a movement that became a flood of people leaving.

Q: It was just the embassy but this would also send word to the Bell Helicopter and everyone else, too.

PRECHT: That's right, but they had contractual obligations to stay on the job. All the civilian and military people attached to the mission were covered by this. Thus, at first not too many left, but progressively more and more people left as the embassy encouraged them to do so.

Also around this time, Carter asked George Ball to come to Washington and undertake a study. The President saw the State Department and Brzezinski at loggerheads, things drifting steadily downhill and nobody with any bright ideas. He wanted a wise man to reassess the Iran situation and suggest solutions. So, George Ball, distinguished former deputy secretary, came down. In his book he said he went to see Dr. Brzezinski who said that he wanted Ball to talk to everyone, except the Iran desk officer at the State Department who was hopelessly biased against the Shah, and come up with an independent judgment on the Iran situation. Ball says in his book, naturally the Iran desk officer at State was the first person he called on. He had Hal Saunders and me at dinner in his suite at the Madison hotel. I talked quite freely about Iran, not pulling any punches. Gary Sick, Brzezinski's man, was there taking notes. Then Ball went off to talk to Iranian Americans and a variety of people in New York. He came back after a week or two and made his report while things had continued to go downhill. The report called for the convening of a council of elders, wise Iranians from a variety of sectors, who would consult and decide how the Shah and his regime should adjust to the opposition they were facing. On the list were people from the opposition, supporters of the Shah, a bag of people many of whom would never have

entered the same room with the others. But, it was months too late. New Year's was now approaching and by that time there was really no initiative from the United States that could take hold.

Q: Were we making any attempt through our embassy in Paris to make contact with the opposition which was Khomeini in Paris?

PRECHT: Thank you for reminding me of that. After Yazdi and I had dinner that night in Washington he went to Paris and I had his telephone number. So, we had a channel of communication. I would call him and he would call me. But, we also had the embassy as an intermediary. Warren Zimmerman was political counselor there. A superb officer. We would send Warren a cable requesting him to go see Yazdi and tell him such-and-such and see what he says. So we had two means of communication, either formally through Warren, who did a splendid job, or informally from my house via telephone to Yazdi.

Q: These calls from your house were...?

PRECHT: Open line.

Q: So there was no more "don't have contact"?

PRECHT: No, by that time things had eroded quite a bit. There had been a few Iranians other than Yazdi who would come around and the embassy was beginning to have contacts. Professor Cottam visited Tehran over Christmas and introduced the Embassy to Ayatollah Beheshti, the most senior cleric we knew. During this period also, the press was after us with a vengeance. Not so much over what was going on in Iran, but on the internal conflict that was dividing us on in Washington. Any message that we got from Tehran describing how bad things were would likely appear in the Washington Post the next day. The rule became write your messages for publication because they were constantly leaking. I devised one approach which was to send an unclassified message, an administrative message, and add on several paragraphs about some sensitive, but not super sensitive, matter, because no one would read those. Finally we got a system setup in the operation center which was online. We would type out a message which would immediately play on the screen in Tehran and then they would type out a reply that would come back to us. Then we would make two copies, one for the White House and one for David Newsom. I usually sat in on these sessions.

Q: Who was leaking, do you know?

PRECHT: White House people suspected me but I can assure historians who listen to this tape that I did not leak. Other suspects were in the human rights bureau who desperately wanted our policy towards Iran changed, but they denied the leaks. Who knows? When you have messages in the State Department there are so many copies it is almost impossible to track them down. But it was disastrous and I firmly agreed with those people who thought you couldn't conduct policy that way.

To leap ahead, after the Shah had left and Bakhtiar was prime minister, Marvin Kalb did an evening news segment on the situation in Iran in which he said "the official U.S. policy is to support the Bakhtiar government. But, if you ask State Department officers, they say he has no chance whatsoever. So this policy is really quite hollow and doesn't have the support of people who know the country." The next day Hal Saunders said to me, "You have to come with me to the White House."

So, I went to the White House with Hal and we entered a room with a huge round table. Seated around that table was everyone above me up to Vance: all the assistant secretaries, under secretaries, deputy under secretaries. Then Brzezinski, Ham Jordan, Jody Powell and Carter came in. Carter was in a rage. He said, "Somebody is talking to Marvin Kalb and that broadcast last night was disastrous for our policy. Someone is feeding him information and it is quite impossible for us to conduct policy. I am telling you that if this happens again, the person who is guilty is going to be fired and not only is he going to be fired but his superior is going to be fired. We are going to put a stop to this. I can't tolerate this kind of disloyalty." He and all the White House people then filed out of the room. Mr. Vance, a paternal figure, said, "We have a serious problem in our relationship with the White House. We can't function in this way. We have to be able to stop this problem." I looked around and everyone was looking at me, people like Les Gelb and Tony Lake, and said, "I think the president is quite unfair. He doesn't know who did this leaking and to threaten us this way is unfair."

I agreed with the president. I thought it was impossible to conduct a policy with such leaking of information. I acknowledge that some people may have told Marvin Kalb of my views. I had spoken to him myself but never told him anything sensitive. However other people may have said that the Iran desk doesn't support Iran policy. That is quite possible. But, it wasn't me. Two or three weeks later there was a short article in the Atlantic Monthly or Harper's which described our White House meeting quite accurately.

Q: Normally in those cases it is pretty much the White House operators who are more politically attuned and playing by a different set of rules. I am not absolving the Department of State, but these are people with a short term agenda.

PRECHT: Sure, there are people who leak to advance their political objectives, but these were leaks against policy and were quite destructive. Okay, now let's get back to the end of December. Things are getting worse daily. Sullivan, I believe it was Sullivan, came up with the idea that in addition to the exchange of indirect messages with Yazdi, it would be important for some American official to meet with Khomeini. Washington agreed. We appointed Ted Eliot, a retired Foreign Service officer who had been country director for Iran in the late '60s and ambassador to Afghanistan, and became Dean of the Fletcher School [of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University upon retirement]. An excellent choice. He knew the country well. He came down to Washington. I devised talking points for him. Sullivan went to see the Shah telling him that we were going to do this. The Shah said that it was quite understandable that we would want to protect our own interests in this crisis and you might talk some sense into this crazy man. Everything was all set to go. Then there was an Economic Summit meeting on Martinique. Carter and Brzezinski attended. My understanding was that Brzezinski felt the Ted Eliot trip was a bad

idea. When Carter came back he vetoed the plan. There would be no trip for Ted Eliot. So, we sent a message to Sullivan. Sullivan went into a rage. He said, "What numbskull made this decision? This was probably one of the most important gestures that we could make in this crisis and now it has been ruined" I had to get on the phone to Sullivan, on the classified line, and say, "Listen, it was the president." He almost lost his job then. But it would have seemed unseemly to have pulled out the American ambassador at that time. Anyway, he went back to the Shah and told him the trip was off. Meanwhile, Brzezinski was still insisting on the idea of an iron fist and a crackdown, but he couldn't persuade Carter to go along. As a compromise - and this is how policy is made - Carter said, "Look, we will send an American military official to get in touch with the Iranian military leadership to see how well prepared they are to handle the situation if it should collapse. General Huyser, who was the deputy CINCEUR in Europe [Deputy Commander in Chief - Europe] and who had been to Iran several times, was named to go to Tehran. He didn't have any particular knowledge of Iran or the senior generals concerned. Sullivan wasn't too keen on the idea but then Sullivan didn't want a rival in the embassy. After Huyser arrived, he and Sullivan worked out a relationship that was pretty productive. Huyser talked to the generals and Sullivan stayed in control of the entire show. None of us knew exactly what Huyser was doing, however. The idea was that if Brzezinski's plan was being followed he was telling the generals they ought to get ready to pull a coup when necessary. Huyser stayed until his life was threatened and it was pretty clear that the game was about over. Another DOD official went to Iran. Eric von Marbod, whom I mentioned earlier as the senior defense representative in Tehran. During the time I was there he was in charge of the generals and all American military programs. He had been active in Vietnam and was now back in Washington as the chief military sales guy. The Iranians payment system had collapsed, owing to the strikes at the Central Bank and ministry of finance. They were not able to pay bills owed and did not want to take delivery of some items. So, von Marbod was sent out there to regularize things. He drew up a long memorandum of understanding between the Iranians and ourselves canceling a variety of sales, putting off others, diverting funds from one operation to another. He did it all by himself with no input from anybody else. It was a way of resolving this particular crisis. What he accomplished remains the big issue on the claims agenda at The Hague now: How these unresolved sales are to be settled and will Iran get money back from them. In early January 1979, I don't know whether Sullivan suggested that the Shah leave the country or it was the Shah's idea or somebody else suggested it to the Shah. But, the Shah said that he was going to leave. I was asked if that would be a good idea. I said that I think the Iranian population would be delighted. So, we found a place for him to go to, the Walter Annenberg estate in California. Annenberg said we could have it for a month but then there was going to be a wedding there and he needed it back. Well, that was fine. We told the Shah we had this place for him and he packed his bags and around the 15th of January flew out to Egypt. As he left someone advised him not to leave the Middle East. Whether it was Zahedi or Brzezinski, he was told to stay in the area because the Americans once were able to save his skin when he left in 1953 and went to Rome. They could do it again. I think he believed we might just have a plan to save his throne. So, it was better that he be nearby so that he could fly back in triumphant after the Americans pulled something out of the hat. He stayed in Egypt for a few days, Sadat being one of his great buddies. But, as Sadat was having some trouble with Islamic folk himself, the Shah took off and went to Morocco, where he was when the revolution crashed through on February 11. In the meantime, Bakhtiar had replaced the military prime minister. Bakhtiar was one of the old national front stalwarts, a real opportunist, I had always

thought. He became prime minister and immediately began to throw his weight around as if the Shah no longer counted for anything. However, no one really paid serious attention to him. Bakhtiar allowed Khomeini to return on February 1. When he came down in an Air France plane full of journalists and his entourage, there was a tremendous reception by the Tehran populace. It even surpassed the festivities when the Shah left. So, that was February 1 and Khomeini quickly established himself in Tehran. His people soon began to move in while Bakhtiar was still hanging on. There were almost two governments at one point. Then there was some kind of ruckus at Doshentapi airbase in southern Tehran. A group of technicians there, people who were recruited and specially trained, brighter than your normal troops, were demonstrating their loyalty to Khomeini on the 9th or 10th of February. There was a conflict between them and the powers that be on the base. These men underscored an analysis that I had always maintained. The Shah had recruited his military on the principle of loyalty and approved every promotion over major, colonel, or whatever. But when he began to buy all that sophisticated American equipment, he had to breach that principle and go to people who had technical skills. People who have technical skills think for themselves and that is what these Air Force technicians were doing. There was a clash on the base and the military collapsed. They opened up all their arsenals and in a matter of days or hours it was all over. Bakhtiar fled the country and Khomeini's group was in complete charge. The military group went into hiding, fled the country or were arrested and held in jail. The revolution had succeeded by February 11. In Washington, as this was going on, I spoke to Sullivan on the phone and he said he had just come off the phone (there was still fighting between military units at the Air Force base) with Brzezinski. Brzezinski had told him to tell General Gast, who was our MAAG chief and senior military officer (General Huyser having pulled out) to tell the Iranian leadership now is the time for a coup. They must overthrow Bakhtiar and take control of the country and do whatever is necessary to restore order. And Sullivan said, "I can't understand you. You must be speaking Polish. General Gast is in the basement of the Supreme Commander's headquarters pinned down by gunfire and he can't save himself, much less this country." That was the last gasp and the Iranian regime collapsed at that point.

Q: This would be a good time to break. Would you like to note where we should pick up at our next meeting?

PRECHT: This is February 11, the end of the revolution, and the beginning of another set of problems with Iran.

Q: Today is March 29, 2000. Henry, we were at February 11, 1979.

PRECHT: Before we get back into the chronology, let me offer a couple of observations on the revolution that may not have gotten into my narration. First of all, on the one hand in Dr. Brzezinski's book, one footnote describes me as being very anti-Shah. That is inaccurate. On the other hand, my son, who was a senior in high school at the time, was very much motivated by liberal ideology, human rights, etc. and he wanted me very much to be the way Brzezinski described me. He was disappointed. I was not anti-Shah, although I can't say I admired the Shah's lack of adherence to democratic principles and human rights. My real preoccupation was in protecting American interests with Iran during this period. I wish I could have satisfied my son

by being a human rights activist, but that wasn't to be. I was somewhere in between my son and Dr. Brzezinski.

Q: I want to catch the perception while we are at it. During this period did you have the feeling that you were seen by the whole NSC as being anti-Shah and was this a problem?

PRECHT: Oh, definitely. That was the second observation I wanted to make. I and Gary Sick had been friends and we fell out. Accordingly to his book, my ranting at him and preaching to him led him simply to stop talking to me. I thought he was a non-thinking slave of Dr. Brzezinski and should know better and should listen to my argument. At any rate, that failure of the two responsible people at the working level to work together was disastrous for American policy. I didn't realize it at the time that there was great friction between Vance and Brzezinski as well. Brzezinski throughout the revolution was communicating with Zahedi or the Shah himself, to give his own personal opinions of how Iran should conduct itself in the revolution without coordinating with Vance. Apparently he promised Vance at one point in the fall of 1978 that he wouldn't do that anymore. I didn't know that. Once I mentioned to Hal Saunders that I had heard from Sullivan, who had heard from the Shah, that he had been on the telephone with Brzezinski. Hal said, "Come with me." We immediately went up to Vance's office where he was having an early morning staff meeting and Hal said, "Now, tell the secretary what you just told me." And I repeated it. None of the gentlemen in the room would look at me. They looked down at the floor. They were disturbed but didn't want to show their concern to an outsider. So, there was that tension. Then there were the divisions within the Department of State. There were the human rights folks pulling in one direction, there were other people pulling in another direction and the Defense Department pulling in their direction, as was the CIA. Everyone was pursuing his own ends, leaking to the press to obtain those ends. It was a textbook case of how not to conduct diplomacy in the modern era. People fighting each other and pursuing their own ends and disregarding the president's policy. Years later, when Mr. Marcos fell in the Philippines [February 1986], I asked one of the people who had been managing the Philippine crisis at the White House at the time how they had managed to accomplish that transition in American policy from Marcos to his successor. He said, "Henry, we went to school on you. We learned our lesson from all the mistakes made with Iran. We didn't fight. We resolved our differences and the government stayed together. And the transition was successfully handled." I think the Philippine crisis was also assisted by the fact that America knew that Mr. Marcos had a fatal illness and wasn't going to be around a great deal longer. We didn't know that about the Shah. People who believed that he was our necessary instrument didn't see any end to his employment in our service.

Q: We see this all the time. People nail their colors to the flag staff of one particular leader of a foreign country and all of a sudden they don't know how to back away from it and take a more nuanced posture. Particularly those who are not dealing with it directly but have their own ideology. Do you think this was coming in?

PRECHT: I think that is part of it. There is always this concern in foreign relations of after a particular leader what? After Nasser what? After Nehru what? There is bound to be a period of instability and things we have gotten used to will no longer be exactly as they were. With the

prospective fall of the Shah, though, there was no successor we could imagine. There was the Khomeini group coming in and clearly our understanding of what they would bring to Iran was flawed. Late in the revolution Judy Miller published in the Washington Post an article of excerpts from Khomeini's book "Islamic Government," something he is said to have written in the early '70s, which pretty much prefigured his attitudes toward women, Jews, etc. I wondered whether this was the Khomeini we have been hearing such progressive things from while he was in Paris? I asked one of our contacts of the opposition, Shariah Rouhani, who was Yazdi's son-in-law. He said, "Oh, no, no. That is not the ayatollah speaking there. Somebody has fabricated those points. He hasn't published any such book. Those are notes someone has distorted." So, I didn't rely very heavily on that perspective. Of course, he was misleading me. We were all misled by Khomeini in Paris. When he returned to Tehran where he had not lived for almost 45 years, he came under the influence of the conservative clergy that he had not experienced in Paris where he had westernized people buffering him from the press, etc.

Q: One more question as to how you fit in. Could you talk a little bit up to this point about the role of Hal Saunders and did you feel anyone was trying to yank you out of there and if so, who was protecting you.

PRECHT: I was protected by Hall Saunders to be sure. I hadn't known Hal very well before coming to the Iran desk. Since I came to the Iran desk in the summer of 1978 and virtually through the revolution, he was absorbed with the Arab-Israel situation, being one of the principal drafting negotiators before and after Camp David. It was a full time job. My immediate boss was Bill Crawford, the principal deputy assistant secretary. He had virtually no knowledge of Iran so he didn't offer me any particular guidance. Jack Miklos, who had been both country director and DCM in Iran was a deputy assistant secretary but he was in charge of South Asia. Once I went with Jack in September 1978, I think it was, to testify informally before the senate foreign relations committee. Jack offered just a basket of reassurances that everything was going to be all right and rely on the Shah, etc. I certainly didn't share his perspective but I couldn't contradict him in front of the senators. However, Jack really didn't have a role in Iranian affairs. His area was South Asia. Thus, there was nobody in NEA telling me what I ought to do. The person I had more contact with above me was David Newsom, the under secretary. He became in effect the real desk officer for Iran when the crisis got heated up and I worked very closely with him. As I mentioned earlier, I attended meetings in the White House, etc. But, there weren't a lot of people in the Department at the time who knew anything about Iran. They just weren't available. The few officers who knew something about Iran were in other places or elsewhere in the Department where they didn't have a day-to-day line input. They would occasionally drop by my office and share their views with me, but they didn't sign off on memoranda or that sort of thing. There was this terrible tension between the State Department and the White House. I heard later on, from a White House source, that Dr. Brzezinski saw an intercept. There was an Iranian young man, an intellectual, who was connected to the elite, who came to the Department and told me that he was investigating Washington's perceptions of Iran for his relatives in one of the Tehran banks. He convinced me that he was legit and I was frank with him that I saw things pretty bleakly. It turned out later on, his name was Shariah Ahi, I recall, that he was really working for the Shah gathering intelligence and reporting back. His reports were picked up by NSA [National Security Agency]. A message that Brzezinski read suggested that I was fighting US policy. I guess I was indiscreet

speaking to this Iranian so frankly. I frankly don't recall what I said to him but it was something that Brzezinski held against me and according to my source in the White House, he was convinced, therefore I was not reliable. I, of course, knew nothing about it and considered myself innocent - just doing what the State Department always told us to do to, that is, dissent from policy in a constructive manner. Anyway, February 11. Shortly after, the next day or so, there was a meeting to which I was not invited but Hal Saunders went. When he came back he said to me that the decision had been made to try to reconstruct a normal relationship with Iran. The country was too important for us to ignore. We have to rebuild some kind of a connection. He said, "You will be pleased by that." Well, I was pleased, it was a challenge, but it seemed to me a rather unrealistic proposition frankly. We had been perceived by the opposition, the Khomeini forces, as being on the side of the Shah and against them.

Q: Well, we were, weren't we?

PRECHT: Yes, we were, although the Shah thought we were undercutting him in the clumsy, conflicted way we were trying to support him. Rebuilding from ground zero was going to be extremely difficult, but that was the order. The first event after that, I think, was Valentine's Day and I was asleep at home. It was about 5:00 am. At that time, the Department had an operations center in which teams of officers would be on duty around the clock. The Ops Center was constantly getting calls from around the country, as well as international. The fellow on duty, who was not one of the swiftest guys, called and said, "Henry, there is a problem in Tehran." I said, "What is the problem?" He said, "They are shooting at the embassy." I said, "They have been shooting at the embassy for weeks. It is 5 am, what can I do about it?" He said, "Let me connect you with George Lambrakis on the telephone." George was the political counselor. I was connected with him and he said, "I am lying on the floor in the ambassador's office, shots are coming in the window and we are under heavy siege." You could hear shots over the phone. Then the op center fellow came back on the phone and said, "Don't you think you should come in?" I said, "What can I do if I am in there? I will be in in a few hours. I have to catch some sleep sometime." "Secretary Vance is on his way in." "I'll be in in half an hour," I replied. That was also the night Spike Dubs, ambassador to Afghanistan, was shot [and killed during a hostage crisis in Kabul]. So there was one room in the op center where the Afghan task force with Jane Coon in charge worked and another room where I and the Iran group worked.

The embassy in Iran was seized and we lost all communications with them but managed to establish communications with an assistant naval attaché who happened to be outside the building and who got himself to a place where he could look down on the compound. It was only later that we learned that the staff were all taken by this mob and then freed by Yazdi, soon to be foreign minister and Ayatollah Beheshti, one of the senior clerics. The people who had seized the embassy were convinced that we were hiding people from the Shah's regime in the basement or somewhere and they wanted to take them out. They were afraid we were going to use these people in a counter coup. But, before we knew that the embassy was freed, Secretary Vance was suppose to take off at 8 or 9 o'clock to go to Mexico. He didn't want to leave because he didn't think that would be responsible to go off to Mexico to whatever meeting he had. So, through this naval attaché we devised an answer that everything was all right. I wasn't at all certain that it was all right, but it seemed to be headed that way. So, the Secretary took off. It wasn't until some time

later that the final marine guard, who had been wounded and taken to a hospital, was returned to the embassy and things got back to "normal."

Bill Sullivan, the ambassador, and Charlie Naas decided to reduce the staff to zero practically. I think they went down to six or seven people, and immediately began evacuating people on a large scale including private Americans as well. This had been going on for a while but it was now stepped up. One of the things that occupied us heavily the last weeks of the revolution was arranging for TWA [Trans-World Airlines] charters. I have left out one key episode that I ought to step back and fill in.

Q: Go ahead.

PRECHT: The Ross Perot story. Ross Perot through his corporation EDS (Electronic Data Systems) had a contract with Iranian social security administration to computerize their operations. This involved big dollars. In December, I believe it was, a judge, one of the Shah's appointees, arrested the two top officials of the Tehran office of EDS and held them under something like \$36 million bail. He said their investigations had proved was the amount of money EDS had paid in order to get the contract - in other words, a bribe. This judge, who wasn't a revolutionary but was an Iranian nationalist of some integrity, would not listen to any plea we made at whatever level. He was adamant. EDS pays up or they don't get their guys out of jail. Well, I don't know if you ever experienced Ross Perot in action, but he felt personally responsible for these guys in a way he must have felt about the POWs [prisoners of war] in North Vietnam. He mobilized everyone he could to bring pressure on us to get these guys out of there. I and Dave Newsom were the focus of this pressure. Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts called me up. Why? Because one of these guys was from Massachusetts. Admiral Moorer, former chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, called me asking for an appointment to come and see me. I had to shift him off to the third guy on the desk because I was called to a meeting up on the 7th floor.

Every day I would call Charlie Naas or Ambassador Sullivan and would open with "What have you done for Ross Perot today?" They would say, "Forget about Ross Perot, we are trying to organize the evacuation of Americans or protect F-14s, etc. Nothing can be done for Ross Perot." I would say, "Listen Charlie, we are going to start getting calls in half an hour or so. Tell me something that I can tell these people." He said, "Well, our consular officer went to visit these guys in jail and found out that they were being well treated." That kind of thing. Two or three times a day I would be on the phone with Ross Perot from December, I think, and into January and February. His people would be coming to see us, writing letters, telephoning. Once we had a big meeting in Dave Newsom's office with all of Ross Perot's lawyers. I said, "Why, do you suppose they suddenly went after EDS of all the American companies operating in Iran? Who was your agent?" Abdol-Fath Mahvi was the answer, a man who had been excluded from defense business by the Shah because he was so notorious as a 5 per center involving military contracts. He was not allowed to participate in any military deal because he had such a terrible reputation for raking off money. The lawyers said that he was absolutely innocent, "simply the man who guided us through Iran." I said "no one would believe that. Everyone would believe that he was your bag man distributing money for you around the country. You should have checked on his reputation. That was obviously the root of the problem." Well, they wouldn't believe me. They

wanted us to bring their men home. So, I said, "We can go to the Shah, and being the supreme autocrat of the country, he can order the judge to release them. He could send the troops in and put them on the plane. However, he is already in a very weak position and if we order him to do that it will be devastating politically. He would be seen as our puppet, doing our bidding for an American company that is perceived to be corrupt. We can't do that. Short of that there is no way to get these guys out of there." After his prolonged and unsuccessful haranguing of us, Perot went to Tehran to harangue the ambassador and Charlie Naas. Finally, he decided to pay up. They were going to put their money up and had to do it in a complicated way. This \$36 million had to be transferred to Iran through banks in Oman, etc. It was a very complex procedure. In the midst of that process came February 11 when the revolution succeeded and the walls came tumbling down. All the jail doors opened and people walked out. Many of them, as did the Perot pair, got on donkeys or taxis and went to the Turkish border and walked across making their way back to the United States. The Iranians, though, when they saw what had happened -- that not only had political prisoners walked out, but the Perot pair as well -- were furious. We had evacuation flights leaving twice a day and they would hold up the flights to inspect them to see if the Perot pair were on one board. In effect freedom for the Perot pair put the safety of other Americans in jeopardy. Later on, when I was in Cairo, Ken Follett the author, telephoned me and said he was writing an account which he wanted to be as factual as possible about the Perot episode. I said, "Fine." "I would like to send you the chapters for your review and I will take your views heavily into account." Well, I did that, this was 1985 I think. Lou Goetz, who was our consular officer at the time and the man who was the connection with the Perot and the responsible officer, refused to have anything to do with this author. So, he got damned in the book. I was furious because Lou wouldn't talk to him for his own personal reasons.

Q: He had had so much of Perot that he couldn't stand it.

PRECHT: Yes, that is right. Anyway, he became the villain. I also was a villain. At one point somebody in the book referred to me by a foul word. When I came back to Washington in 1985, I found out that this author's agent was an old Navy friend of mine. I called him up and said, "Listen, I am going to sue you all if you publish this thing. I'm serious. I don't want to be maligned in your book." So, they took it out. I found out from Charlie Naas that the author had also contacted him. He had better terms with Follett than I did. Charlie said that the author told him that Perot had guaranteed him a certain income, that is, he should write the book the way he wanted to but if it didn't sell Perot would make sure that he didn't suffer financially. I don't think that is generally known and, of course, was not ethical even in that kind of trade.

Q: The book was On Wings of Eagle.

PRECHT: Back to the time after the seizure of the embassy on Valentine's Day. We were still having lots of meetings in Dave Newsom's office. The Shah by this time had left Iran for Egypt and then Morocco. His fellow monarch Hassan in Morocco began to feel a little uncomfortable with this long staying guest. He also had an Islamic component in his society that was quite disturbed by the Shah's presence. So, Hassan wanted him to move on. The Shah thought he would take up our invitation of January to go to the United States. So, after one of these meetings in Newsom's office, he asked me to stay behind. Then he said, "It appears that the Shah is coming

to the United States, a decision is about to be made." I said, "You cannot do that. This is not January. Iranians will not be happy to see him come. You will not be able to reconstruct a relationship with Iran if that happens." He kind of blanched. Then I went down to my office and telephoned Sullivan telling him that they were about to admit the Shah to the United States. Sullivan said "if they let him in they will bring us out in boxes." He conveyed the same message to either Newsom or Vance and it reached Carter some how. Carter declined to admit the Shah which meant that he first had to go to the Bahamas and then on to Mexico. He mobilized his supporters in this country who were quite influential: David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger, Brzezinski inside the White House, etc. There was intense pressure that we admit the Shah. I argued against it. Carter wasn't buying it. He said, "What will you do when they take our embassy." So, he was firm on that point. That was one of our problems but we had any number of problems in dealing with a new revolutionary regime. The situation in Washington, however, from my standpoint improved enormously. I no longer felt the tension with the White House. They weren't playing a role, as far as I could tell, in what was going on in Iran, leaving it to the State Department. No voice from Brzezinski or Gary Sick came down. I pretty much had my own way, although it wasn't an easy way because the Iranians were terribly suspicious of us. The American press became a problem. During the final months of the revolution the media had been anti-Shah and supportive of Khomeini and the revolution. When the revolution succeeded, they immediately became anti-Khomeini. There were reasons for their shift, of course. The Iranians began executing people with abandon. Any Iranian senior military officer or other official was likely to come before the Islamic courts accused of being corrupt and then executed. In March, I got word that former Prime Minister Hoveyda was going to be executed. He had been jailed by the Shah as a gesture towards the opposition who thought him corrupt and a Bahai (deemed to be apostates by the clerics.) Hoveyda didn't leave when the jails were opened up on February 11. Perhaps he thought he should stay on until he was officially cleared. It was a Saturday, I believe. I called Charlie Naas and said, "Listen, do something about Hoveyda. Save him." I sent him a little message with those instructions. He went to see Yazdi, the foreign minister who said, "We understand." Charlie said, "You shoot Hoveyda and it will not be understood in the United States where he is popular." "We will do our best," he replied. The next thing we knew the news came out that he had been executed hours before Charlie's conversation with Yazdi. This illustrated how chaotic the situation was. Then some of the more progressive revolutionary clerics were shot down in the streets by unknown parties. The revolution began to turn on itself. Khomeini imposed sanctions against women who marched in the streets against the veil. The left wing marched against religious people. It became quite difficult.

All this time the embassy was trying to put together a normal relationship. It had to clean up the old relationship which meant all the cars and household effects left behind had to be shipped out of the country. But then we had this huge tangle of civilian and military contracts. The Iranians had ceased paying so a lot of people had pulled their employees out and conflicting claims had to be resolved. There was constant turmoil and suspicion and tension between us and the new regime. The Iranians would shoot some Kurds and when the US press attacked them, they thought we were guiding the press. It was the same way the Shah thought. When he got negative publicity in the United States, he would send word to Jerusalem to control the American press which he deemed to be controlled by Jewish or Israeli interests. The revolutionaries felt the same way and they also blame -- Jewish interests in New York as controlling the press.

Q: Speaking of Jewish interests, a little later in the game I became involved in determining whether Iranians were refugees or not. One of the cases put was that any Jew was considered a valid refugee because Khomeini was anti-Jewish and had shot at least one or two prominent Jewish leaders.

PRECHT: Yes, I am familiar with that position and generally agreed with it. In May, and I will come back to this later, they did shoot a very wealthy Jewish businessman, Elghananean, I think his name was. In general, Khomeini tried to prevent lawlessness or street justice (although religious courts often weren't much better). His attitude towards Jews, Christians and Zoroastrian, the three primary minority religions of Iran was protective. Under the new constitution they were given their own representation in parliament. I think the concern they felt was basically about the unstable conditions for everyone in Iran at the time. Jews, because of hostility towards Israel which was manifest, felt it most strongly and many of them wanted to leave the country. We felt this was legitimate and it would be risky and unwise to oppose their desire to do so. Christians also left but there was not the same kind of compulsion - similarly the Zoroastrians. Anyone who was middle class - and most of the minorities were - wanted to get out or get their children out. The current Iranian scene was not conducive to a normal life. On the subject of Israel, the Israeli embassy, or non-embassy, was maintained there until the end. But, when the revolution succeeded what was going to happen to these staff members? Well, Charlie Naas got word from the Israeli embassy that they needed help. I heard the same thing and asked Charlie to help them leave. He got them out with the connivance of the foreign ministry. The new regime didn't want any additional trouble with Jews - which would mean trouble with the US and Europe. There were all sorts of little things like that that had to be cleared up. There were the CIA listening posts that we had in Iran and had been seized. The Iranians allowed us to close them down quietly and move those people out. They didn't make a big stink about it. Essentially, the new Iranian government came in under Bazargan and his secular colleagues. They wanted at least a decent relationship with the United States. They wanted to reestablish it on a basis in which they could express their independence. They wanted all past business between us reviewed. They weren't going to buy a lot of arms from us or spend a lot of money on projects, but they didn't want to fight with us because they knew they had a big enough agenda on the home front.

Anyway, visas, not only for Jews, but for lots of Iranians who wanted to get out of the country, were a big problem. Lines around the embassy, which were long before the revolution, became much, much longer after the revolution.

Q: Did we change our visa policy?

PRECHT: I think we became very liberal with minorities and others who might suffer unduly in the post-revolution chaos. We had a problem with Iranians who were in the States claiming asylum. My position was "Let's file it." Some of them may have deserved asylum and some of them didn't, but to make that choice seemed to me to invite a problem with Iran. I recommended that we defer decisions until things settled down. Then we could address the situation. So, we just let any Iranian who reached our shores remain here without any problem at all. We had

problems with American companies who didn't know whether to venture back or not. The situation within the American government was a lot smoother than it had been. But there were those occasional instances when people who were unreconciled to the Shah's defeat would leak something that was unhelpful to us. And, the press was always difficult. Well, in May, Charlie Naas thought it would be a good idea if he could make an official call on Khomeini and get that unfinished business out of the way of a new ambassador. Every other diplomat in the city seemed already to have called on Khomeini. We hadn't done it as we had been prohibited from doing so by Carter/Brzezinski. Charlie arranged through Yazdi to see Khomeini before we appointed a new ambassador.

Q: Sullivan had returned?

PRECHT: Sullivan had returned to the US in March and retired without a great deal of ceremony. He was not very well liked with the Carter administration at that time. The embassy was down to minimal staffing. Our consulates were closed. Charlie stayed on but was suffering from the strain. The administration selected Walt Cutler, who was then the ambassador in the Congo and who had served in Tabriz as vice consul in years before, to be the new ambassador. I thought he was the perfect selection. He picked a lot of staff who were going to go with him. Then the Iranians executed this wealthy Jewish businessman with close ties with the Shah and the senate, led by Senator Javits, passed a resolution condemning Iran for its brutal policies, etc. Bingo. The Iranians went up in smoke. I learned subsequently from Yazdi that they had to show the Americans "they can't treat us this way." Khomeini instructed him, "we don't want to break relations with them but go right up to the point of doing so. Make them know that they can't insult us this way." So, they rejected Walt Cutler. They said that he served in the Congo where he was bossing Mobutu around and they didn't want that kind of guy here. But, that was only an excuse. Well, Cutler was out of the picture although some of his selected staff continued on to Tehran. We had to find somebody to replace Charlie. I believe I suggested Bruce Laingen, who I knew had once served in Iran. I didn't know him personally but I called him in Minnesota where he was on vacation and asked him if he would like to go out for a few months until we got things in better shape. He was somewhat reluctant at first, but he went.

So, during the summer the embassy began to grow a little bit. At one point I got word that they needed desperately another officer to help resolve commercial claims and we sent them one. Then there was a request for visa officers. We gradually built up the embassy and had more Farsi speaking officers than the post ever had had. Almost everyone who was there wanted to be there. While some were running away from their wives, or went because it was good money, the greatest number wanted to be there because it was a challenge and they really thought they could make a contribution. I thought we had a superb embassy. Back to the question of the Shah. In July 1979, the question of the Shah remained an active one and we were constantly getting letters from congressmen and there were editorials and that sort of thing. The Shah by this time, I think, had reached Mexico. Congressman Steve Solarz invited my wife and me to dinner and to go to Wolf Trap one evening to talk about Iran. I described everything that we were doing. At the end of the evening I said, "I have told you what is going on. What are we doing wrong? What would you suggest we do differently?" He said, "It seems to me you are pretty much on the right track, but one thing I think you are failing in. You have to handle the question of the Shah in a better

way. People simply do not understand how you could turn your back on someone who has been such a valuable friend of the United States. You have to find a more creative way of dealing with that problem." I thought if a liberal congressman has that point of view, we are alone in the United States in opposing the Shah's entry. We have to do something. I drafted a memorandum for Newsom in which I said that we had to address this problem in some fashion. The best way to do so was to declare that it was not whether the Shah would come to the United States but when. The when would be dependent on when the American embassy in Tehran had adequate security. We would plan (my suggestion) on admitting the Shah when the provisional government of Dr. Bazargan had changed by elections under their new constitution into the definitive government. Khomeini had started such the process for a new government in about six months. When that happened, presumably around January/February 1980, we would see if the security was adequate. If it was, we would tell the Iranians that they now had their government, no longer a provisional arrangement - they were big boys - and both of us need to settle down and make some definite arrangements for the future. We would tell them we are going to admit the Shah and we expect our embassy to be protected. Embassy security was the key to making the decision on the Shah. I sent that memorandum to David Newsom. I also sent a copy to Bruce Laingen, marking it, "burn this as soon as you read it." Bruce, I think, was a short time later asked what he thought and he had a similar view that we should not admit the Shah now. So, that question went into abeyance.

Along comes September. Yazdi came to New York to attend the General Assembly. Vance was up there. We had a big meeting in New York to discuss Iran's military claims, bringing up officials from the Department of Defense and the PM bureau to try to explain to him our military programs and what we could and could not do for Iran. The Iranians wanted spare parts for their equipment. We weren't selling them much. They wanted ammunition and we didn't sell them very much at all. So, we made some compromises and began to work towards a modus vivendi on arms sales. We still had a small training mission in Tehran. We thought it important to have some connections with the Iranian military, decimated as it was by the revolution. We wanted to try to rebuild the connection with them - but nothing resembling what we had in the past, to be sure. At any rate, the meeting with Yazdi went pretty well. He seemed to understand what we were explaining. At the end of it he was on his way out and I asked if he could step aside and I spoke to him. I said, "I just want to tell you personally how difficult I find the distrust between us and how sorry I am that we were unable to send a new ambassador and get things going." I made some personal appeal in that unofficial way. He said, "We need a new ambassador. We want you to send an ambassador. I have a suggestion. Send Richard Cottam, the American professor, as ambassador." I said, "I can't tell you who will be the new ambassador but I think we will be doing that soon." In October, my daughter was on her junior year in London so I decided, as State Department officers sometimes creatively do, to visit her on my way from an official visit to Tehran. All the people who had worked for me on the desk had been out on several months' duty in Iran to help the embassy out. I would go out and see how Iran looked after the two years that I had been absent. And, I would stop in London on the way back to see Katherine.

I can't remember precisely, but the day was Friday I think October 18, that I was to leave and go to Iran for ten days. That morning Peter Constable who had replaced Bill Crawford... Let me interject that after the revolution, there was kind of a purge of NEA. Warren Christopher got rid of Crawford and Jack Miklos replacing them with Peter Constable and Jane Coon. Peter, who

had mostly south Asian experience, was a very good person for me to work with on Iran. He had excellent judgment and although he didn't know Iran he had a good sense of what was possible in Washington.

Anyway, I went to Peter's office to check out with him; Rocky Suddarth who was principal aid to Newsom was there. Rocky said, "You ought to know that we are about to admit the Shah to the United States. A decision is about to be made in the White House." Peter said, "You had better stay here and cancel your trip." I said, "What shall I do, send a message to Tehran saying 'Shah is coming here -- too dangerous for me to come out there. Good luck'." I couldn't do that. I protested vigorously. My standard argument was that if you admit the Shah you do the right thing in human terms, but you have to abandon any hope of reconstructing a political relationship with Iran. It was clear that Carter was trying to meet the obligation to the man and also reconstruct a relationship. There was no mention of closing or reducing the embassy staffing.

The Shah was sick it was said and he needed treatment in the United States. Carter was in an impossible situation. So, after my customary big mouth objections, they said I should write a memorandum. I went down to my office and got out a long piece of yellow paper and wrote, "If the Shah is admitted to the United States you can anticipate one of the following." Then I listed all the horrible things I could think of headed by "embassy personnel taken hostage." I put that in the out-box and went home and packed my bag. I didn't say anything to my wife but when I got on the plane I thought maybe I should write a letter to her as a sort of farewell. I decided not to because I couldn't think of the right words. I got to Tehran where I was staying with Bruce Laingen at the ambassador's residence. He was out at a party so I went to bed. The next morning after I met him for breakfast I said, "Bruce, I have some tough news for you." He said, "I have it in a telegram." He had scheduled the first meeting with Yazdi, the foreign minister, and we went to see him and told him the Shah was sick and needed medical treatment and we were going to bring him to the United States. Yazdi said, "Come with me." We left his office and went to the office of Dr. Bazargan, the prime minister. After repeating the story to him, Bruce said, "Mr. Prime Minister can you guarantee protection for the embassy?" Yazdi replied something to the effect that we were building a fire but they would do their best. It wasn't exactly an iron-clad assurance. Bruce sent in a cable saying that the Iranian say they will do their best to protect us. To me it looked like more of a positive response than the Iranians gave us. I didn't object to the language, however. I think the decision had already been made in Washington to admit the Shah. That day when we told senior embassy staff in a staff meeting they were quite concerned. They were all convinced they were in danger. But, the Iranian press played it low key. You know, on page two or three. Khomeini said that the Shah was going to the United States, "maybe we can now sue him. The Americans tell us we might get back the money he has stolen." During my visit, I made as many calls as I could cram in. I had told Yazdi during our meeting that we would try to conduct ourselves like we would in a normal country. That is, "We want to have contact with your opposition, with everybody in your country who is significant as we never did under the Shah. We want to act like an embassy should act." He said, "Fine. Are you going to see the religious leaders?" I said, "They won't talk to us because they have put the embassy on some kind of blacklist and wouldn't have any communication with Bruce Laingen or his people." He said, "I will fix it up," and he did. I had a very rich series of appointments. I went to see the leadership of the Jewish community. I went to see all the opposition leaders. I went to see the Bahai community. I went with John Limbert, a linguist, to the Friday prayers as Yazdi suggested I do.

He sent a foreign ministry car with an officer inherited from the old regime who clearly was unhappy at losing his day off. We went to the university some blocks away and the streets were packed with people laying down their prayer mats to pray. Our escort said, "Oh, we can't get through, sorry, we have to go home." I said, "No, we will walk in." So, we walked through the crowd up to the gates of the university and our guide, this elegantly dressed officer, said to the guard at the gate, "Two distinguished visitors from Senegal." We were admitted and stood in the crowd when these mullahs waving AK-47s shouted, "Death to Americans." No one took any note of us. I went to see Ayatollah Montazeri, Khomeini's deputy, with John. He said how wonderfully pleased he had been when he learned in the Shah's prison that Carter had been elected because Carter supported human rights and he thought American policy would change. The only thing he deplored was the influence of the Jews in American that made our policy towards Israel so bad in the Muslim world. Anyway, he was quite friendly besides that remark. With Bruce I visited Ayatollah Beheshti, one of the real powers in the new establishment. He was also cordial. We talked about Iranian exiles coming back. They would be admitted back if they accepted the revolution, he said. There was no mention of the Shah in any of these religious gatherings. No mention at all. So, we relaxed, I guess, in this kind of era of good feeling. But something began to change in the atmosphere. I was there a week or so and then at the start of the second week two things happened. One, a group of students seized the Hilton Hotel or the Intercontinental and were going to make it into a hostel for the poor. The striking thing was the government did nothing to get them out. These students were able to have their way until finally somebody talked them out of it and after two or three days they left. But it showed you how weak this provisional government was. It couldn't control the Komités, these little groups that established themselves in neighborhoods to control the population. They simply didn't have the backing of Khomeini to do the kind of thing the government ought to do. The second thing that happened was something had gotten under Khomeini's skin and he made a speech in which he said that everything bad that happens in this country is the fault of the Americans. It was that kind of tone which began to creep into the press that made me uneasy. Over the weekend some of the junior officers said they had never been to the bazaar so I blithely said, "Let's go down to the bazaar." It probably was not a smart thing to do. The mood of the bazaaries was not what it had been. There was a kind of resentment that you could sense. When you joked with the people in the shops they didn't joke back. There was a kind of ill feeling towards us - obvious Americans that we were. Secondly I had a meeting with all the junior officers who were doing visa work and they all said, with one exception, that we are crazy to be here. "This is a wild place. These people don't know where they are going. There is no control. This is a dangerous place and we ought to get out and close down the embassy." Only Joe Stafford, who is still in the Foreign Service, kept mum, good soldier that he was, but the others were completely frank with me. I didn't hear this from the more senior officers at the embassy, but these junior officers who had day-to-day experience with Iranians had quite a different attitude from official American policy.

At any rate when I left on a Wednesday for London, I was quite uneasy the way things looked in the embassy. That Friday there was going to be a demonstration in Tehran. But, I continued on my way and had a day in London and arrived back in Washington on Friday. I called the desk and my deputy said that nothing happened. There had been a demonstration, but it was kept away from the embassy. The embassy had reduced staff, the people went out of town and all seemed okay. I was told that I didn't need to come in. Saturday was parents' weekend at Colgate where

my son was a freshman so my wife and I drove up and spent the day. On Sunday driving back I tried to think creatively about improving our relations with Iran and getting things onto a decent track after the Shah's admission to the States. I turned on the radio and heard the noon news broadcast that the embassy had been seized. I was somewhere in Pennsylvania at the time. I thought, "we are really in the soup now." I got back to Washington and went in to the Department. It was plain that things were bad and that the embassy was in for a long siege. That became quite clear when, possibly the next day, Khomeini issued a statement supportive of the students who had seized the embassy. I know from Iranians who were in his entourage at the time that he had initially objected to the takeover: "What do these people think they are doing? They can't make this kind of decision affecting the entire nation. Get them out of there." But, then, hard line clergy got to him and got the mob to stand outside his house saying "we must support the students." He was persuaded that as it was a question of the Shah and the US on one side and Iran and the clergy on the other, he had to stand with the latter. It was true of Khomeini that whenever there was a decision that might lead to a weakening of the clergy, he would always protect them. Preserving the Islamic Republic under religious rule was his number one priority. When he supported the students I knew we were going to have great difficulties. But, we couldn't admit that to ourselves. Throughout the hostage crisis we had to believe that we were going to end it soon. The long haul was simply unthinkable. We were then thrust into the despair of trying some more desperate means. That immediately came up. Are we going to threaten to strike with force if they don't give up in 24 hours? Well, if they didn't yield in 24 hours, what would we do? Our bluff would be called and we would have to let them have it and the hostages would likely be killed. We had just been through the experience of the post-revolutionary period where the Iranians had freely executed their enemies. Who knew if they would execute the Americans. I knew most of the staff who were there. I had selected them to work in Tehran. I had encouraged some of them to go out there. I couldn't put their lives in danger. That, I admit, was putting the personal before the national interest, but that was how I felt. Again, I think it was Brzezinski who wanted to play rough and threaten and, if necessary, use force. Carter wouldn't go along but did allow planning for force to begin. We in State, being opposed to the idea, were not included in the super secret work. The great dilemma was that the administration had to be seen doing something. There was a loud outcry in the country. The administration couldn't just sit back and say, "We hope something positive will happen." They had to be active. So, I was asked to draft a letter from the president to Khomeini. The rule we followed in those days was that anything you drafted as a secret communication you had to phrase it in a way that was acceptable to be seen on the front page of the New York Times. I thought, however, that it was a mistake to try to push Khomeini. We had never met the man or had any exchange with him at all. The letter was to be delivered by Ramsey Clark accompanied by Bill Miller. Ramsey Clark was a former attorney general who had befriended many of the Iranian oppositionists when they were in this country. Bill Miller had served in Iran and I think resigned in protest over our close relationship with the Shah. They were going to carry the letter. Stan Escudero, a Farsi speaking officer, was going to go with them along with a security officer. I was also to go, but because of lingering attitudes in the White House, I was told that I would fly over and brief Ramsey Clark on the situation in Iran but would get off at the last stop before Tehran. I would not enter Iran. Dr. Brzezinski didn't trust me to do the right thing.

Anyway, I wrote a letter which was I guess too much of a valentine, too sweetly persuasive,

neither tough nor threatening. It was redrafted in the White House in a tougher tone - suitable for American public consumption. Equipped with that letter we went to the airport, boarded Air Force One and took off about 5:30 in the afternoon. I was told that we had not received permission to come from the Iranians. We got out over the Atlantic and heard that our mission was on the evening news, as usual. When we got to Spain to refuel, the Iranians said that we could come but not in a big American plane. Our supposition was that they didn't want a battalion of troops to jump out of the plane and take over the country. We went to Athens to pick up a small plane. When we got to Athens the word came that we could not come in a U.S. military plane. We could only come on a commercial airliner. So, then we flew to Istanbul and when we got there Bob Houghton, our consul general, said, "The Iranians say you can't come at all." Khomeini had said that no Iranians could have any meetings with Americans. So, we moved in with Bob Houghton. The next day, the Bazargan government resigned and a new government was appointed with Bani Sadr as the prime minister and Ghotbzadeh as foreign minister, neither of whom we had ever spoken to. We had no one to talk to. So Ramsey Clark went to work on the Turkish telephone system taking hours to get a connection to Tehran or Beirut. One of his first calls was to Yasser Arafat in Beirut. Clark was part of the radical network and he was going to get the PLO to help us out. Anyway we settled down while waiting for the telephone connections to be established for Ramsey Clark. The second day, Rocky Suddarth told me over the phone from Washington that I was on the front page of the Washington Post: "Your memorandum to Newsom saying that the Shah should be admitted to the United States in January or February has been found by the students and published. They call it proof that Americans had always been planning to let the Shah in and this was just part of their treachery." I thought if this memorandum - "burn after reading" - had been discovered in Bruce's files, everything that we had in the embassy was likely to be discovered. And so it was. That gave the whole hostage crisis a new dimension, an unfavorable dimension. To backtrack a bit, when I had visited Iran in October I had been sitting in the political section one afternoon when one of the officers was going through files and he said, "Look, there is a picture of somebody in 1936." I wondered what are they doing with these files in the embassy, because back in January or February the political counselor, George Lambrakis, had told me because of the dangerous situation here they were shipping all their files back to Kansas. Fine, I thought. But somebody had returned the documents to Iran. So all these historic files -- the works -- were back in Tehran. I didn't say anything to the embassy. A desk officer doesn't like to go out and tell people on the scene what they should do. I didn't say anything, but I didn't think it was a very good idea to have all that paper there. It now became clear when the embassy was seized there hadn't been time to burn these files. That meant that the Iranians could say, as they did, that this was, in fact, not an embassy but a nest of spies. These diplomats were plotting against the revolution and conducting espionage. Not only were there State Department documents, but also CIA documents. The discovery of the files was a terrible blow to our efforts to free the hostages. After a day or so, Peter Constable telephone me and asked, "What are you doing out there?" I said that I was sitting around with Ramsey Clark waiting for something to happen and nothing is happening. He said, "You had better come back here. We need you here." So, I left Clark, returned to Washington, and they followed in four or five days. You can't imagine the hectic nature of that situation. The first thing I would do every morning was to call the embassy. We had established with AT&T that no one could call the embassy from the United States. We didn't want crackpots, journalists, and other people calling the embassy, so that line was blocked. Only we in the State Department could use the line. I

would call and some English speaking person would answer saying, "nest of spies." Every day I would try to cajole him or whoever answered the phone, or threaten them or reason with them. Sometimes when hostage families would be there I would put them on the phone. Wives would break down crying requesting that messages get through to their husbands. None of that had any effect at all. None of those messages got through at all. It was like talking to a stone wall. That was the ritual. I would do that every day until finally someone in the White House or wherever woke up to the fact that I was making the calls. Thinking that I was not equipped to do this sort of thing, they brought in a CIA psychiatrist and a professional hostage negotiator who got on the phone in my place. They got no further than I did with those guys in Tehran. The other daily call I would make was to Bruce Laingen who was held in the foreign ministry. He was there with Victor Tomseth, the political counselor, and Mike Howland the security officer. They had been on a call to the foreign ministry when the embassy was seized. They would tell me what was being shown on Iranian television and I would tell them things in guarded terms. When I wanted the Iranians to know something I would talk in unguarded terms. We assumed we were monitored. But, every day I was able to do that and thanks to this telephone system that the Shah had bought from AT&T we had a very good connection.

In the early days, Victor Tomseth, who had served in Thailand, had a Thai cook who was outside in Victor's apartment. Victor was able to call this fellow and speak Thai. I don't think there was an Iranian in Tehran who could understand Thai. So, it was effectively an encrypted message and he would send this Thai around on errands to do this or that. At that time we had no idea who was in the embassy, who was captured. The Iranian captors would not divulge names or numbers. We soon found out, though, first from the British that six Americans were on the loose. Two consular officers and their wives who had also been working in the consular section plus two other officers had been outside the embassy when it was seized. They had all gone to the British embassy. The British, afraid that they might become involved in this crisis, sent them to the Canadian embassy where they were taken in. So we knew these six people were being kept by the Canadians. Otherwise we didn't know who was inside the embassy at all. We had no way of communicating to Tehran since Khomeini's ban on talking to Americans prevented them from talking to us. During the first few days I made a call to Ayatollah Beheshti and had spoken to him and he said, "I'm off to a meeting I hope we get this resolved," and hung up and nothing happened. Then we had a period when no foreign country would or could communicate on our behalf. We simply had no communication. We would read what they put in the press and they would read what we put in the press. It was a horribly frustrating situation.

Q: What about measures we were taking such as freezing funds?

PRECHT: Well, in about the second week in November Bani-Sadr, the new prime minister who was an economist of sorts, made some remarks about Iranian assets in the United States. Maybe they ought to take possession of them. The Shah had a lot of money in American banks, hundreds of millions of dollars, and when the revolutionaries took over either, because they had other things on their minds, or they were inexperienced or had no better place to put the money, they left it there. So, this money was on deposit here. The fear was that this new regime was going to pull it out. One evening there was a big meeting on the 7th floor and I was invited to attend with Vance and Secretary of Treasury Miller to discuss how to handle the Iranian assets. The question

was whether we would freeze their funds. Miller asked, "Will it help us get the hostages free? Does anyone know what the effect on the hostages will be?" Then everyone looked at me sitting down at the far end of the table. It was another of these high level meetings where nobody had any real expertise. I said, "If we don't freeze those assets the Iranians will withdraw the money and all the claims we have against them will never have a chance to be resolved. On the other hand it will create an issue between us and them that will complicate freeing the hostages. But, I think we should freeze the assets." So, we did. And, that became a major issue in the end. It was seen by the Iranians as another act of hostility against them and was the impediment to hostage release in the final act. It was that kind of situation. Whatever we did, they objected. Then there was talk as they began to release more and more documents that they were going to put the Americans on trial for espionage. Can you imagine what a difficult situation that would have been if there had been a trial with death sentence threatened? Every morning Americans would wake up to see if the death threat had been implemented. It would be impossible for the administration. So, we sent a message to Tehran via the Swiss embassy which was the protecting power for us, telling them that if they put the Americans on trial we would "interrupt their commerce." Now what did that mean? I don't think anyone in Washington had any idea how they would do that, nor did the Iranians, but that effectively ended the discussion about putting the Americans on trial.

Sometime in the second half of November, Yasser Arafat went out to Tehran and was able to persuade Khomeini to release the black women hostages. I think there were 13. But, two women, Ann Swift and Kate Koob (USIS), refused to leave, saying they were officers and were going to stay there until all officers were released. The other women left. Some time thereafter the relationship between the PLO and Iran fell apart so that option was no longer available to us. There was effectively no way of reaching Iran. Throughout the crisis we had to rely on intermediaries to do our bidding for us. We had a phone bank staffed by 10 or 12 junior officers and volunteers, including my wife. Penny Laingen and other wives manned another office up in the op center which maintained contact with the dependents of the hostages.

Q: You were talking about the banks of people who were answering telephones.

PRECHT: We got all sorts of calls. Suggestions were offered. For example, we got a call from someone telling us that she was the white Russian girl friend of Ghotbzadeh when he was in college and maybe she could contact him. We got a call from the estranged wife of the deputy head of the central bank. We pursued each of these calls in an attempt to find some way of getting our employees out.

Q: By the way, early on the Iranians in the United States did not endear themselves because Iranian students were demonstrating when our embassy was taken over in support of the students.

PRECHT: Well, I think Iranians in the United States had been demonstrating against the Shah for years and that certainly intensified during the revolution. I don't know how many demonstrated in support of the captors but a lot of Iranians became distinctly unpopular. My Iranian friends had a very miserable time during that period being castigated by Americans who probably couldn't tell

Iran from Iraq.

Q: I know I was consul general in Naples at the time and I got a call from my friend who was deputy in the visa office who said, "We would like to designate Naples as a place where Iranians can apply for visas." I said, "Not in Naples you won't. We are trying to keep them out." There was concern about Iranian threats against other posts.

PRECHT: Because we couldn't reach the Iranian authorities (if you could say anyone - except for Khomeini - was in authority) we would send out messages to everybody we could think of who might have some influence. We sent messages to every diplomatic post to contact religious leaders in their capital and ask them to get in touch with Iranian religious leaders. Contact student leaders in your capital and ask them to get in touch with the students in the embassy. Each message was complete with suggested talking points as to what they should say. Contact labor people. The works. We constantly sent these messages out to posts requesting help in doing whatever they could in an attempt to make contact with Iranian authorities. Nothing worked. American religious leaders went over at Christmas time and they got nowhere. Then the UN got into it. We had earlier gone to the World Court, to the Security Council and all were futile because the Iranians didn't pay any attention.

Finally, after Kurt Waldheim, secretary general of the UN, had been out to Tehran and been abused by the Iranians, Hal Saunders and I were summoned to the White House to meet two men who thought they might be helpful to us. The Shah, by this time, in December, I think, had made his small contribution to the effort by leaving the United States, I think at Carter's suggestion, and moving to Panama. Panama, you may remember, had benefited from Carter's very risky political decision to negotiate the canal treaty so Torrijos was going to repay the favor and agreed to take the Shah. They gave him a small island where he could set up household. Two men came from Panama to Washington to offer their services. One was Hector Villalon, an Argentinian adventurer with a little Latin mustache who had been a friend of Torrijos, and the other was Christian Bourget who was a radical French lawyer with long hair and had known Iranian revolutionaries in Paris with Khomeini and earlier. They might be able to get in touch with Ghotbzadeh, the foreign minister and see if they could use their influence. Well, what a pair. Were we reduced to this? One guy looked like he was a sharkster and the other one looked like he was a complete flake. But, we had nobody else. At the meeting in the White House we sat down with them and they said they would call Ghotbzadeh and see if he would be willing to be contacted by them. He agreed. We know they talked to Ghotbzadeh because we listened to the telephone call. So, okay, we have a channel now, what are we going to do with it? Hal Saunders, a master negotiator, fresh from Camp David Arab-Israel meetings, devised the idea that we would work out a scenario of events. The U.S. and Iran would take reciprocal steps ultimately leading to the release of the captives after we had acknowledged past sins against Iranians e.g. during the Mossadegh period. We went off to Geneva. Ham Jordan, Carter's principal aide, was involved. I can remember when I first met him he said, "You are the guy Brzezinski used to talk about in the staff meetings as being the one who is trying to defeat American policy in Iran. I am delighted to meet you." I don't think he was very keen on Brzezinski. We all took assumed names and persuaded the Swiss to give us space in Bern. We left the States secretly and were taken to a wonderful hotel in Bern while we talked with Bourget and Villalon and drafted a scenario which

was conveyed to Ghotbzadeh. During February we got a detailed scenario worked out. Our two contacts were living in Paris so I was there as liaison with them and Hal Saunders and Ham Jordan returned to Washington. I remained there for several weeks. Then it fell apart. We did our first reciprocal step, they didn't do theirs. We did our second and they didn't do theirs. The whole thing collapsed. In retrospect, it seemed we were asking too much of inexperienced Iranians. Our scenario was simply too complex for them. There was another explanation, perhaps the true one. Khomeini wasn't buying it. "We are not negotiating with the Americans. Nobody in the American government today is going to decide on releasing the hostages. This is a question that is going to be addressed by the Iranian parliament, they will make the decision." Well, the Iranian parliament didn't exist. They hadn't been elected. The earliest that might occur would be in September and we were now in March. We were faced with months of waiting for the Iranian political process to unfold. But, we didn't give up. We continued to seek ways around Khomeini. At one point Villalon concocted a false message that he said came from Washington and was published in the Iran press showing how conciliatory we had been and we were. We were obliged to deny the message. We were dealing with a bunch of amateurs and getting no where.

In early April, I guess it was, I went with Ham Jordan on Air Force One to Paris. Ghotbzadeh was there and Ham said we were going to make one last attempt. We went to Villalon's apartment. Ghotbzadeh came in. He had met previously with Ham once or twice. He would meet with Ham because he wasn't a Foreign Service officer, he wasn't an official of the government. He was deemed to be private and political therefore both on a higher level and more independent than we who were deemed to be slaves to American politics. Ham opened the door and said, "Henry, come in. Sadek, I want you to meet Henry Precht from the State Department." Ghotbzadeh thought he had been bitten by a viper because Khomeini had prohibited any contact with Americans officials and here was one ushered into his presence. We got over that pretty quickly. But, nothing happened at that meeting. Ghotbzadeh gave no assurances. So, very glumly we flew back on Air Force One with nothing new. It was, I learned later, a last chance for a peaceful solution. Then, we decided to go around the capitals and see what else we could do. Hal Saunders and I went to Rome and talked to a Palestinian priest, Bishop Cappuci, I think his name was, who had contacts with the Iranians and tried to persuade him to exercise his influence. Nothing doing there. We went to Geneva because a Red Cross representative had just been in Tehran and had visited the hostages. I went to see this representative and he told me that he had seen all the hostages and they were all well and were all in the embassy. The Red Cross doesn't make public these kinds of contacts. I filed a report back to Washington. In Washington, I stayed with our UN ambassador. The next thing that happened was Warren Christopher called me up and asked, "Did the Red Cross man say the hostages were all in the embassy?" "Yes," I said. "When did he see them?" "Just the other day." That was all that he wanted to know. I wondered why he was calling me to ask those questions? Something must be in the works - a rescue mission?

I guess it was another week or so when Hal Saunders called me about 5 in the morning and said, "You know that thing we have been worrying was going to happen? Well, it happened and it didn't work. Can you come down to the Department, we have some telephone calls to make." So, I went down to the Department and the rescue mission had failed. We had to call the dependents and tell them. Carter was going to make a speech taking responsibility for it, but we had to call

the dependents first to let them know what had gone wrong and what little we knew. It was a grim period because we knew that this was going to mean a further setback, as if we needed one, in our efforts to free these people.

Q: Were the Soviets playing any role in this?

PRECHT: No one asked the Soviets to do anything. Nobody thought about asking them. What we decided after our abortive diplomatic venture through intermediaries and our abortive rescue mission, was that we would go back to traditional diplomacy. We had put in place sanctions and broken relations with Iran. I will come back to that later. Hal Saunders and I made a tour of European capitals during which we tried as desperately as we could to enlist the support of foreign ministries in France, England and Germany. In Austria we went to see Bruno Kreisky. We started to get more formal again. It didn't produce any better results but at least it gave us the feeling that we were doing something.

As part of Carter's decision to get tough in April just before the rescue mission, we broke relations with Iran. Since the revolution succeeded, Iran had maintained an embassy here. During the last days of the Shah's regime, the embassy split apart. There were some on the staff who were revolutionaries. After Zahedi, the ambassador, left, the number two man, Homayoun, was trying to maintain a traditional embassy as he had been trained to do. But threatened by revolutionaries on the one hand and loyalists on the other, he had to struggle just to survive. He was threatened and felt his life was in danger. I intervened to help him. Once the revolution succeeded, he was thrown out by the new regime. People who had represented Khomeini in this country or were deemed acceptable to him, were moved in. Ali Agha, who had been living in America and was a very religious person with no diplomatic experience, became the chargé. He was advised by Mansour Farhang, a secular professor/journalist. When our embassy was seized, we continued to maintain contact with them and we hoped that they were sending positive messages back to Tehran. So, we kept them in business.

Q: In normal diplomatic practice these things were tic for tac. Was there any consideration of taking them hostage at the time?

PRECHT: We didn't in part because we were maintaining a fiction that our embassy in Tehran had been seized by students not by the Iranian government. Of course the "unofficial," but actual Iranian, government of Khomeini had endorsed the seizure by doing nothing to prevent it. But, we didn't take the logical diplomatic step of breaking relations because Iran still in those days was an important country and we knew if we broke relations, stitching them back together again might take forever. So far, we have been proved right. In fact, Ali Agha, the chargé of the embassy was relatively sympathetic to our position, although he annoyed us by defending Iran's perspective on the hostages on US television and in the press. But, we let him sit. Finally, Carter had had enough of all this and we broke relations. In doing this there is an amusing little story I will tell you. The plan was that we would summon Ali Agha to the Department and Warren Christopher would give him a note saying he had a specified number of hours for his staff to depart the country. This was the proper diplomatic procedure. I invited Ali in and he came with a sidekick, Lavisani, a snake-like creature whom I really despised. We sat in my office while the

note was being typed in Peter Constable's office. There was some error in the note and it had to be retyped. I was sitting there making idle conversation with Ali while he was waiting to go see Warren Christopher. Down the street comes a band of Iranians chanting anti-American slogans. I said, "Why don't these people go back to Iran if they don't like us?" Ali said, "You don't understand our Islamic doctrine that you have the technical knowledge here and you should share it with us. We are here as human beings to partake in what you have to offer which belongs to all mankind. That is the Moslem belief." I said, "You mean like Iranian oil, we can go over and share it with you?" The conversation took on a sour note. Finally, I said, "You know, Ali, life would be so much more pleasant for everyone if you would simply let the hostages go. If you could prevail on your government simply to give these people their freedom so that they can get back on track again with their normal lives. These are innocent people being badly treated in an un-Islamic manner." Finally, the snake says, "They are being well treated. We are taking excellent care of them." I said, "Bullshit," whereupon Ali Agha said, "I have waited here for too long and you have insulted my country, I am leaving." He rose and strode out with me following behind them because I knew this note had to be delivered or otherwise a great diplomatic fault would be committed. We got to the elevator bank and they entered one. I stood in the door and said, "Ali, come back. It will only take a few more minutes and we will go see Mr. Christopher." "No." So, I picked up the phone in the elevator and called Peter Constable's office and said, "Is it ready yet?" He said, "No, we are still typing it." Ali said, "You are keeping us hostage here. Let us go free." Well, I couldn't resist that kind of appeal, so I stepped out of the door of the elevator and let him go down. Ali went to the diplomatic exit. I went to tell Peter that there wasn't going to be any delivery of the note. On his way out of the building, Ali ran into Marvin Kalb who asked him what was wrong. He said, "My country has been insulted by Henry Precht." I returned to the op center. We finally got the note typed and I got a junior officer to take it over to the Iranian chargé at their embassy. He left. The next thing I know I got a call from Vance asking "What did you do with that note? Did you deliver it?" I said, "No. I sent it with a young officer to the Iranian embassy." He shouted, "What? He will be taken hostage, get him back here." By that time it was too late. Then I got a call from Marvin Kalb saying, "What did you say to Ali Agha? He was black with rage." I told him the story and he went on the air with it. It was published in the press everywhere. My daughter, who was in Rome at the time, thought I was going to lose my job because I had committed a diplomatic error. She went weeping to the American embassy. The DCM telephoned me and I calmed her down. He then explained to her that I was a national hero, as indeed I became. I got a commendation from Carter, tons of mail, proposals of marriage, an award from the American Legion and the American Police Association. I have never had such fame in my life. It was truly my 15 minutes of fame. The next day Ali Agha and his staff were bundled up and sent out on a plane. I felt sorry for him. I didn't try to offend him; my reaction was just automatic. The episode was one of the few moments of comic relief in the long hostage ordeal. Then summer we got word that one of the hostages was sick. Richard Queen, a junior officer, developed multiple sclerosis, was released and sent home. I immediately got on the telephone to anyone I could reach in Iran and said, "Look, see what is happening to this guy. If you have someone who dies over there you are going to get another show of American force." Again, zero, nothing happened. We proceeded into another long period of inactivity.

NICHOLAS A. VELIOTES
Ambassador
Jordan (1978-1981)

Ambassador Nicholas A. Veliotes was born in California in 1928. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California in 1952 and a master's degree in 1954. He joined the State Department in 1955. Ambassador Veliotes' career included positions in Italy, India, Laos, Israel, Washington, DC, and ambassadorships to Jordan, and Egypt. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990. Service in 1955 and has served in Naples, Rome, New Delhi, Vientiane, and Tel Aviv. He was Ambassador to Jordan between 1978 and 1981 and Ambassador to Egypt between 1983 and 1986. This interview was conducted in 1990.

Q: Well, then, turning to the Iran-Iraq situation. You were in Near Eastern Affairs at the time of the Khomeini takeover in Iran?

VELIOTES: I was Ambassador to Jordan at that time. It happened about the same time as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: The takeover of the Embassy [in Tehran] was in November, 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan occurred around Christmas, 1979.

VELIOTES: I remember that I was seeing the King of Jordan quite often, though our governments were estranged over the Camp David Agreement. He would not join it. We wanted him to associate himself with the Camp David Agreement. And that led to a lot of things, including the King's trying to isolate Egypt in the Arab world, which they did and which we didn't like. But we still had a lot of contact with Jordan. I was up seeing him one day when I told him that I understood that the Shah [of Iran] did not publicly take the salute on Armed Forces Day. King Hussein was stunned. He made a phone call. He came back and said, "You're right. I'm leaving for Tehran in an hour." He came back the next day and, with tears in his eyes, described what he had found there--a virtually paralyzed Shah, who was finished. King Hussein was very close to the Shah in many respects. Frankly, I think that the role of the Shah was a major, negative factor in our attempts to get the Arabs--particularly the Jordanians--to support the Camp David Agreement and to protect [President Anwar] Sadat [of Egypt] in that context. The Shah meant many things to the Jordanians, with respect to oil and ultimate security against the "bad guys"--the Syrians and the Iraqis, plus an ultimate form of financial reassurance should the Saudis seek to cut them [the Jordanians] off.

When the Iran-Iraq War started, the Jordanians and the Iraqis had natural reasons for a rapprochement. This was 1980. For 22 years the Government of Jordan and the Government of Iraq were at a very high level of antagonism, stemming from the 1958 Revolution, when the revolutionaries in Baghdad killed most of the king's family [King Faisal of Iraq, overthrown and killed in that revolution]. So it was quite an emotional thing when the Iraqis and the Jordanians reconciled. They both needed each other. These were the heady days of the Iraqis charging into

Iran with no opposition.

Our basic goal, during the Iran-Iraq War, was to hope that it wouldn't spread. Our second aim was to hope that we could find a way to stop it. We had no interest in any Iraqi effort to dismember Iran. We feared that a Soviet invasion of the northern part of Iran would be a self-fulfilling prophecy. So one of my first jobs...

Q: *When you were back in NEA?*

VELIOTES: No, when I was still in Jordan, through 1980. I was the major channel overseas to the Government of Iraq. We had an "Interests Section" [in Baghdad] which had no access to anyone. Once the Palace was reconciled to Saddam Hussein...

Q: *You mean the Jordanian Royal Palace.*

VELIOTES: Yes. I became a major communications link between the United States Government and the head of Iraq, through King Hussein. I remember that our first effort was to tell Saddam Hussein that we would not support, under any circumstances, his annexation of the oil-producing parts of Iran. As you recall, he [Saddam Hussein] had changed the name of this area to "Arabistan," at that point. We had been given some fanciful reasons why we in the West should be keeping this oil out of Soviet hands, and all that stuff. We said, "No way. We stand for the territorial integrity of Iran and Iraq." We were able to hold that position consistently. We let everyone know what our position was.

Secondly, we were adamantly opposed to any attempt by Saddam Hussein to widen the war to include the other Arabs. And we made clear that they understood that we had caught them, down in the Gulf, trying to intimidate the Gulf sheikhdoms into allowing his [Saddam Hussein's] air force to use their beautiful airfields for attacks across into southern Iran. We turned that off.

At about that time the Saudi mosque incident took place.

Q: *This was the takeover of the mosque by Iranians.*

VELIOTES: It was in 1979 or 1980. There was utter panic in Saudi Arabia. It happened during an Arab League meeting. The King and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia were there. They asked the Jordanians for help. And everything that you heard was that the Saudis were utterly disorganized, both in Tunis, where the Arab League was meeting, and in Saudi Arabia itself. And ultimately, as you know, the French helped the Saudis retake that mosque. King Hussein and I talked about this. There was the Iran-Iraq War, insecurity in the Gulf, and the significance of how shaky the Saudis were. They had no confidence in themselves. We had that crazy Yemeni incident when the Saudis panicked Brzezinski into getting President Carter to waive the terms of the Arms Export Control Act. We earmarked \$500 million worth of arms to go to Yemen for a war that never took place.

The upshot was that the King and I worked together and finally got [then Secretary of State]

Cyrus Vance on board. We created a confidential American-Jordanian military relationship which included training and everything. It was basically the first division of the Rapid Deployment Force. In those days we had created something called the Rapid Deployment Force, which essentially consisted of Gen P. X. Kelly, later commandant of the Marine Corps--a wonderful, strapping guy--and a Xerox machine. Our Defense Department was delighted to have the opportunity to exercise with the Jordanians. This, of course, gave us an opportunity, a way of retaining our relationship with the Jordanians, as we sought to find ways to heal the wounds of the political antagonisms, which stretched right up to the White House. President Jimmy Carter canceled the visit of King Hussein to the White House. He did it in a very crude way, including leading him [King Hussein] to believe that if he visited the U. N., he would be invited to the White House. Then he disinvented him.

Q: Was this Brzezinski's...

VELIOTES: Yes. No one in the Carter White House wanted to understand that King Hussein was not a free agent because about 70% of his people were Palestinians. Secondly, he depended so heavily on Saudi money. He simply was not a free agent. [Egyptian President] Sadat promised too much at Camp David, and rather than getting mad at Sadat, the White House got mad at Hussein.

Q: Well, isn't this an example of the tendency to pick on the little guy? I've seen this in other interviews and other circumstances. Particularly among policy makers, it's nice to be "macho" and pick on somebody you know cannot hit back.

VELIOTES: This was rather stupid. Any chance we had of inducing the King to take some risks could only come as a result of his feeling he had the confidence of the American President. Bob Strauss as a Middle East negotiator! He never took it seriously, and no one took him seriously. He was replaced by Ambassador Sol Linowitz, who was a much more statesmanlike and credible negotiator, but, I think, so committed to it that he missed the forest for the trees. I say that with all affection and respect for Sol Linowitz. So that was what we were doing in Jordan as of the time when I was called back in 1981 to be Assistant Secretary [for Near Eastern Affairs]. On the one hand, [Jordan and the U. S.] were estranged politically because of Jordan's failure to support the Camp David Accord. On the other hand the American and the Jordanian military had been working together to give us some kind of deployment option, should we have to go into the Gulf for whatever reason with some Arab partner at that time.

Q: This was when you were back in NEA? The Iran-Iraq War dragged on and on, and it was a bloody war, the whole time. But did our attitude change toward that war while you were in NEA? Did our view change as to who was winning, who was losing, or where we wanted things to come out?

VELIOTES: Sure. Until about the middle of 1981 it was the Iraqis who were winning and who were threatening to destabilize or dismember Iran. Then the situation changed. It was the Iranians who were winning and threatening to destabilize and dismember Iraq. There was panic in the Gulf over this prospect. I visited there in early 1982. This was after the Battle of Khorramshahr,

when the Iranians captured several hundred thousand Iraqi reservists--militia types. Then [the Iranians] moved on Basra, which was the key to the Shi'a South [of Iraq]. If they [the Iranians] had won that battle, it's very possible that Iraq would have been destabilized and dismembered. In any event the southern part of Iraq would have been occupied by the Iranians, which would have faced us with the unpalatable prospect of dealing with the Iranians in Kuwait. We were totally unprepared for anything like that. We had just created the Rapid Deployment Force--it had become CENTCOM [Central Command]. But CENTCOM was at an air base in Florida [Macdill Field in Tampa], because the Arabs wouldn't let us come in [establish a base in the Gulf area]. We had started the process in 1977 and then later in 1981, through the sale of F-15 aircraft, and then later on AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System] aircraft to the Saudis, which we would need in the Gulf, should we ever have to go there. The Saudis, in the context of both of these and other sales, agreed to "over stock" with American equipment and armament. We had hundreds of American technicians, in and out of uniform, on the ground, starting to make it possible for us to have a forward deployment area, should we need one. We needed time. Anyway, if we didn't have to fight there, we would prefer not to. This led to our arranging for an intelligence exchange with the Iraqis, to give them military intelligence--at least to let them know what their own vulnerabilities were--for the coming Iranian attack on Basra. This was done at my initiative. In this way the Iraqis filled the gaps in their lines. They [the Iraqis] won a very bloody victory that blunted the Iranian offensive.

Q: You say "intelligence." What did this include--basically giving them satellite pictures?

VELIOTES: Sure.

Q: Did this also include giving them intelligence analyses?

VELIOTES: I don't know just what it included. I know that it included satellite pictures. I suppose that there was some analysis delivered orally that went into that.

And at the same time the Egyptians were starting to cuddle up to Iraq. The Iraqis didn't even know how to use artillery. They were using armor piercing rounds against massed infantry. A pretty shocking display of ineptitude. I'm not sure what intelligence we gave them, but we gave them enough to protect themselves. Quite frankly, neither we nor the Gulf states wanted either of them to emerge as great victors, because we figured that whoever emerged as an overwhelming victor would pose a threat to the rest of the Gulf.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Cultural Affairs Officer
Tel Aviv (1978-1982)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural

and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: John Glenn's visit, and also how the arrival of Ronald Reagan on the scene hit within Israel, when he took office in 1980.

COWAL: Right, and, of course, the other thing that was an important part of all of that was the hostages in Iran, which weren't so far away from us, and the fall of the shah and the militarization of Iran, of course, also led to a huge influx of refugees and Jewish immigrants from Iran to Israel. So those are all interesting and important things.

Q: Well, first place, before we go to Iran, in Lebanon, were the hostages there – this is the time of the Lebanese civil war, or when Americans were being taken hostage. Did that have any reflections on life in your business?

COWAL: I left right before Sabra and Shatila happened. I left in June, and that was in September of 1982. I think the reflection was that between the huge hostage taking in Iran, when the Iranians took over the American embassy, and the fact that journalists and others were getting kidnapped on a more individual basis in Lebanon, made the whole world seem less secure to us.

Q: What was the Israeli reaction to the events in Iran?

COWAL: Well, first of all, the events in Iran generated a new influx of Jewish refugees, many of whom settled permanently in Israel. It was a time when I can remember the luxury hotels in Israel looking like refugee camps, because the Iranian Jews who had stayed until 1979 I think were basically fairly well off. I think the very poor Jews had left in 1948 and so on, but the people who had stayed were those who were bankers and lawyers and people who were well off.

Q: And the shah had solid relations with Israel.

COWAL: The shah had solid relations with Israel, as being the two non-Arab countries in the Middle East, and they had very close relationships, military, economic. So, as I said, those Jews who were living in Iran were in pretty good shape, economically. Then the shah fell and the revolution came and they had to get out very quickly, and, of course, one of the things that Israel offers is it's the home for any Jew who wants to make it his home. So there's no question there of whether there would be – as there would be in the United States about whether you would be accepted as a refugee and so on. You are accepted, if you can prove your mother is a Jew. It's all about your mother, you know. If your mother is a Jew, you're a Jew.

So you would go along the beachfront in Tel Aviv from the Sheraton Hotel to the Dan Hotel to the Hilton to the other fancy hotels, and in every lobby – I can remember this going on for

months – it would look like a refugee camp, because people were renting these very expensive hotel rooms, but the place where they had – and this was winter time. You do get a winter in Israel. The Mediterranean whips up and the rain comes. And so the playground for the children and so on was the lobby of the Hilton Hotel, so you would come in and you would realize there was a vast array of people who were essentially camped out there. They were camped out in \$100 a day hotel rooms, but their play space was the downstairs lobby in the Hilton Hotel.

That was a dynamic that was going on, and then I suppose the loss of the relationship of the state to state or government to government made the world even less secure for Israelis and caused their paranoia to go up even higher, I suppose.

Q: Well, did you find that the cultural program, the stuff that you were doing, changed, or were you sort of preaching to the choir as far as our concerns about our hostages and all?

COWAL: Well, I think we were preaching to the choir, basically, the same way I suspect if we're talking about our concerns of terrorism post 9/11. It must be a very different lecture in Israel than it is in Saudi Arabia.

MORRIS DRAPER
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1978-1983)

Morris Draper was born in California on February 18, 1928. He obtained a B.A. from the University of Southern California. He served in the U.S. Army and also served in the Executive Secretariat. During his career he served in Singapore, Baghdad, Jeddah, Amman, and Jerusalem. In Washington, DC, he served in Personnel and the Turkish desk. He was special assistant to Kissinger, Country Director and Deputy Assistant to NEA. He also worked with the Board of Examiners. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: What were the Department's views about Iran at this time?

DRAPER: Our Iranian policy was based on our perception that Iran was basically an important country. It was a neighbor of the Soviet Union and we did not want Iran either invaded or dominated by the USSR. We always had to see Iran as a major player in the area. What we said that and what we are saying today is that we recognize that we are not going to overthrow the revolution. It has occurred. But we would like to have some kind of relationship which will permit a dialogue between us about our common problems. It doesn't have to go beyond that. We were prepared to wait it out. I think some of the old Iranian hands were astonished at the viciousness of the Iranians--the hatred of some Iranian groups toward the US. The latter included some that we had trained in the United States as warrant officers and enlisted men. Dave Newsom, then Under Secretary for Political Affairs, a watcher of Iran for a long time, was certainly astonished. There were many people that were surprised. We were worried throughout

the last stages of the Shah's regime whether we were getting the facts. We issued a call for Iranian/ Farsi speakers to volunteer for some special assignments in Iran--to pay visits to the country. I talked to one person, whom I had found and asked whether he would be willing to go if we could get him released from his present assignment for three months. He didn't want to go; he was afraid that the attitude of the top echelon of the Embassy in Tehran would damage his reputation. It was only after we provided all kinds of assurances that he agreed to go. He spent three months in Iran, traveling about, seeing his old friends. He was a middle grade officer. After his return, we got more penetrating insights on the situation in Iran than we had ever seen. We were really behind the curve there. That was quite clear. The officer who went came back reported that the *bazaaris* had completely turned against the Shah. Washington was assuming that these people and the military would stick with the Shah to the bitter end. By the time we got this report, the Shah's fall was imminent and the new intelligence we had obtained was almost too late.

The Iranian events influenced our Iraq policy. I was with Secretary Muskie in the last days of the Carter administration--1980--when for the first time an Iraqi Foreign Minister--Saddam Hammadi--met with a Secretary of State in New York at the UN I'll never forget that meeting. Hammadi was elated because the war against Iran had just started and he was belittling the Iranians. He was predicting victory in a very short period of time. He saw Iraq doing a favor to the civilized world and the US in particular. He was so ebullient and almost arrogant. He was so sure that it would be a "walk-over". Even then, we knew how bad the Iranians could be, but we were certain it would not be a "walk-over". We thought that the war would last at least a year. It was another example of badly the Iraqis can miscalculate. Hammadi could not have spoken to an American Secretary of State unless he was echoing the views of Saddam Hussein.

Up to 1978, Hussein had shared power with one of his distant cousins--General Bakkar. By 1980, he was in full control. During those days, we kept thinking of balance-of-power politics. We viewed Iraq as a bulwark against revolutionary Iran. We knew that Saddam Hussein was blood-thirsty man who would put down any pro-Iranian fever or insurrection with great force. Once the Iran-Iraq war started, the situation changed a little bit. Nevertheless, it was the general feeling among those of us who had had experience in the area that Iraq was basically not a country. The Sunni Muslim minority --35 percent of the population--was running this country with Shiite majority and Kurdish elements essentially left out of the power structure. The Sunnis were very harsh on others. The Baath Party was not that admirable. Iraq maybe the most blessed country in the Middle East. It has water, fertile land. It was once the granary of Rome and of the Assyrian Empire. It has enormous oil reserves. It was conducting an economic development program which was quite admirable. Much of its revenues went to its military, but there was still considerable amounts left for other activities. We felt that ultimately Iraq could become a good training partner, as it had been at one point. But we couldn't in the late '70s and early '80s, brake down the residue of suspicion that had developed. Interestingly, Iraq had taken a position on the Israel issue that was intriguing, to say the least. The Iraqi felt that they would have no problem existing in the same area with Israel if the Palestinian could agree to a settlement of some kind and be satisfied. That has changed since that time, but in the early '80s, although we didn't consider the Iraq position as a major breakthrough, we found it an interesting variation. Iraq did not seem to insist on driving Israel into the sea. All it wanted was that the Palestinians be

satisfied. That formulation gave Iraq considerable "wiggle" room, but it suggested that it was not as preoccupied as other countries with Israel's existence.

The Syrian-Iraqi rivalry was very intense which created a lot of problems. So our attitude toward Iraq was essentially to keep knocking on its door--not begging--but making it clear that we were prepared to talk at senior levels and thought that it was stupid not to do so. At the time, we were working through liaison people. We had a small mission in Baghdad and Iraq had a small mission in Washington. Our people were highly restricted; they could only see certain people. Travel was restricted, but these limitations were gradually easing. But we just didn't have any dialogue at senior levels. The Iraqis had rejected all overtures, although we had sent a special doctor to examine Saddam Hussein, when he asked for help. There were a few other things that were happening. We had decided that we would take advantage of any opportunity that might arise; we showed an interest in Iraq in various ways. We kept in touch with various Iraqis all over the world. The largest group of Arabs in the United States originated in Iraq--many Christian Arabs, living especially in the Detroit area and in Chicago to some degree.

During my stint as Deputy Assistant Secretary, we had major problems with Libya. They were a threat in the world. We had a certain amount of interest in destabilizing Libya even then.

We had sort of a stupid policy toward Morocco, dictated in part by members of Congress who were suspicious of Moroccan policies. Yet Morocco had been a very good friend of the United States for many years. Moroccan kings going back to Hassan V had been very protective of the Jewish community. They has shown certain balance. There we were holding back, under tremendous Congressional pressure, on arms sales. Whenever we had to ask Morocco for cooperation--for example, when we asked Morocco to send troops to maintain order in the Belgian Congo--, they responded positively. But when the time came for us to help them, we couldn't do anything. It was a very bad situation; we couldn't get even get C-130 transport planes to evacuate Moroccan troops who had gone somewhere at our request or suggestion. We were frozen by all the restrictions levied on us by well-meaning Congressional members. We were for example restricted in taking action in Angola by human rights enthusiasts.

Q: It has been said that much of Congress' attitude toward Morocco was instigated by Congressional staffers who were true believers in the Polisario movement and therefore had their own agenda. Did you see the problem in that light?

DRAPER: Yes. There was one staffer particularly who was really infamous. He was a real booster of the Polisarios. There were leaks, but he wasn't the worst staffer from that point of view. The avid supporters of Israel were much more blatant than he was. But this staffer was a true believer; he felt that Morocco had a repressive regime--which it did. He was a formidable critic and he influenced many, many Members of Congress. There was an attitude that was spawned in the 1970s which was directed against Kissinger and US intervention in particular. So we had to deal with the African lobby and the Black Caucus. It was similar to the Israeli lobby and its friends. That lobby put strings on us. We had to be very careful about our contact with the Polisarios.

One of the first things that the Reagan administration did was to change our Moroccan policy over-night. It instituted a much more flexible policy. There were a lot of people sympathetic to Morocco who were fed up with its ambivalence on negotiations with the Polisarios and not being willing to carry through on understandings reached. There are people who to this day believe in democracy and are suspicious of monarchies--that view was quite understandable, but tied our hands considerably and caused us problems. We could have used Morocco as a staging base. We could have used it as a partner in our coalition against Iraq. We needed a country like that. Furthermore, King Hassan, despite all of his problems, is a formidable politician who was an adviser to the Shah long before his fall. He suggested actions and policies that were intended to keep the Shah on his throne, but the King was ignored.

We never established a good working relationship with Algeria until the end of the Carter administration when we enlisted Algerian intermediation with Iran. The Algerians were very good at that. We could not have freed our hostages or made the necessary financial arrangements without Algerian mediation. So in the last year of the Carter regime, we began to get some insights into what the Algerians were doing. We had a much more open relationship with them which opened new opportunities. The progress was slowed by Algerian disappointment over our inability to change our oil policies. They were trying to improve arrangements for the shipment of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) into the US. Algerians are not a communicative people in general; they are rather dour.

As for Libya, a lot of us didn't think that Qadhafi was a serious threat. His power was exaggerated, but we explored what might be done to make his policies more difficult for him. We tried to protect Egypt and the Sudan; it was outrageous what he was doing. The Libyans are some of the most passive people in the world; it surprised me that they put up with Qadhafi's nonsense, including the so called "Green Revolution". The Libyan emigres are a poor sort; they sat in villas in the Arab world, unable to organize any kind of counter-revolution. We never knew quite how to handle the Libyan problem. There was one area which I found very disappointing. It had always been our policy to promote freedom of the seas. So twice a year we send a destroyer or two into the Black Sea. Traditionally we sail through that part of the Mediterranean that Qadhafi claims for his own--including the Gulf of Sidra, which has some oil fields in it. In the last year of the Carter administration, I attended a at the White House sub-NSC meeting which was devoted to the question of moving vessels in that area and what we would do if we were challenged by the Libyans. The Department was eager to have such a challenge and wanted the US government to be prepared, including shooting some Libyan planes down if necessary or to take whatever action was required to uphold the freedom of navigation. However, the NSC representative vetoed the idea for inane reasons. That view changed when the Reagan administration took over; although we didn't mount any overt challenge immediately, it was clear that the administration's attitude was different. The issue was not only the freedom of the seas; it was in fact the need of maintaining and carrying out a consistent policy; when something is not done which had been done for years, it is interpreted as a sign of weaknesses and a lack of determination. Certainly the Carter administration had every reason to fear the perception of weakness of American power in the world at that time, which was not very useful.

Q: Why was the State Department's position over-ruled?

DRAPER: It was based on the facts that elections were coming soon and by concerns that the operation might have been perceived in a negative light. It was close in time to the failure to rescue the Iranian hostages. Oddly enough, we received a lot of cooperation from such countries as Egypt. That fact is barely known. In retrospect, it is easy to criticize that effort, but it was a "penny-wise, pound-foolish" operation based on terrible intelligence. People were not even checking the weather with the earnestness that it deserved. I have visited Iran many times and I can tell you that one of the things that is least fun is flying even at moderate altitudes over areas from the Gulf to Tehran. It is very turbulent. Yet in reading the accounts of the operation, it is clear that the helicopter crews were not even prepared for such weather conditions at that time of year. In general, it was another "Bay of Pigs": poorly prepared exercises that we sometime undertake, compounded by rivalries within the Armed Forces and lacking adequate resources. In the initial days after the seizure of the hostages, we had scores of private Americans getting in touch with us, offering their services and expertise--people who had worked on Iran's telephone system, power grids, etc. Had we used them, we could have brought Iran to a halt at least temporarily.

That Iranian situation has always been difficult to judge. It would have been hard to bring enough military power to bear, although that was very tempting. There was a well-grounded feeling that we could have bombed the hell out of the Abadan refineries and other installations, but the Iranians would probably not have been influenced greatly; they liked being martyrs. There was a feeling that the Iranians would have put up with almost anything and that we didn't have the power to force them to do anything against their will. We certainly had a lot of resources and assets in Iran. It was very ambitious to believe that we could have extricated the Americans even with a few losses, but even if we had, the Iranians just would have seized others or would have killed some people in Lebanon or taken some other actions. The situation might just have gotten completely out of hand. In 1982, when the Israelis invaded Lebanon and fought the Syrians, the Iranians sent to Syria a few plane loads of Revolutionary Guards. Initially, the Syrians didn't know what to do with them; so they put them into a training area a few miles north of Damascus. Sooner rather than later, the Syrians began to feel uncomfortable with all these crazy Iranians around and therefore let them cross the border into Lebanon. There they seized a part of the Baalbek Valley and established their own Iranian colony. If the Syrians had sent them back to Tehran the day they arrived, a lot of problems would have been avoided. These things can be seen in retrospect.

Q: On a new subject. What were your impressions of the change over in administration in 1981 when you were Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA?

DRAPER: I was virtually at my level who was carried over from the Carter administration to the Reagan one in any of the geographic bureaus, I think, and certainly in NEA. We had prepared, as usual during transitions, papers describing the problems and opportunities that the new administration faced. We sent these papers to the transition team which was located on the ground floor of the Department. The transition team people who were assigned to look at the Near East and South Asia were well known to us. One man, Carleton Coons, had worked for me until the election. We did not make a lot of recommendations in those papers unlike those we had

prepared for previous transitions. It didn't make a lot of difference because the team met with Secretary-designate Haig in either late December or early January and gave him the papers. He said: "Thank you very much" and filed them away. He didn't pay them the slightest bit of attention. The transition team, staffed primarily by strong conservatives and Republicans, who had been generally critical of many aspects of the Carter administration's foreign policy, were genuinely non-plussed by Haig's attitude, although many were subsequently given high level appointments both in Washington and overseas.

Many of us had known Haig from his previous service in the White House. Hal Saunders, who was the out-going Assistant Secretary, had worked very closely with Haig for many years; therefore we had some knowledge of his personality. Generally, the professional Foreign Service officers were pleased by Haig's appointment. He knew a considerable amount about national security; he was a likeable person; he had been successful in his military, business and White House careers; he had been a hero behind the scenes during the final days of President Nixon. On the whole, the career officers were pleased. We knew something about his manic personality but that didn't seem to be a major factor. When he first took office, he indicated very strongly that the traditional friends of the United States were going to be given greater leeway, greater attention and more assistance than had been the case. They would not be criticized as they had been for such matters as human rights abuses. Morocco was the outstanding example. Within 24 hours of his assuming office, Haig gave us the signal on that relationship. Within days, he had assured a despatch of naval vessels to Morocco for port visits. Morocco was going through a bit of a hard time at that moment. Haig made it very clear that our attitudes toward that country had changed. We welcomed that policy change. Morocco was a particularly ornery case because of the opposition that had developed against it particularly on the Hill. There were legislative restrictions that had been mandated in the Angola and Kissinger days which limited the kind of assistance we could provide; they all affected our relationships with Morocco. It was not just the Moroccan policy that was changed. Either Haig or some of his new associates gave indications that other changes would be made as well.

The real preoccupation in the early days of the Haig regime concerned whether the new team would approve the deals made with the Iranians in Algeria to obtain the release of our hostages. Warren Christopher, the outgoing Deputy Secretary, had made the basic financial and other arrangements--with the help of the Algerians--which brought about the release of the hostages on Inauguration Day--January 20. The financial document was very complicated; it dealt with the transfer back to Iran of some of the funds that we were holding and with the litigation and mediation that would take place under various auspices to settle the outstanding claims of American companies and institutions against Iranians--claims which are still being adjudicated today in 1991. It was a complicated document. There were some people in the new Reagan administration who believed that a deal had been made which was injurious to American interests. They suspected that Carter had gone all out to do anything for the Iranians so that the hostages would be released before the election. Many of the new Reagan appointees were extremely suspicious of the Carter hold-overs like myself as well as of the agreements made during the end of the Carter administration which had not yet been inspected. Among others, Paul Wolfowitz, who was the new Director of the Policy Planning Staff, was asked to review the Us-Iran agreement. We sort of held our breath for two or three weeks, but finally Paul said that it

was a fair deal which should be honored. Until then, we were wondering whether the Reagan administration would back out of the deal which would have had major implications...

Q: Let me ask you about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Was it a problem in the early 1980s?

DRAPER: It was not a monumental concern at the time. It was a matter of limited concern and interest for all of us, but we had been seeing its growth for years, going back fifteen or twenty years. TIME and NEWSWEEK did cover stories suggesting that fundamentalism sprung up with the Iranian revolution. In fact, there had been a steady growth of it for several years in all Islamic countries ranging from Turkey to the Philippines. It was a phenomenon of concern because it did not parallel American interests, but it was not a dominating element in the early years of the Reagan administration, in part because Haig was fascinated by a book that Claire Sterling wrote about terrorism. The book was deeply flawed, but Haig was greatly impressed by it. The substance of Sterling's arguments permeated a lot of Haig's views. This factor helps explain Haig's quick leap to support the "Yellow Rain" theory in Southeast Asia.

Q: That was the theory that the Vietnamese were using poison chemicals, which later turned out to be b-palm and other natural extractions.

DRAPER: Right. But Haig leapt far too quickly on the theory and really believed it.

Q: We have built military bases in Saudi Arabia and Oman and other places. Did this happen while you were in NEA and were they built to strengthen the anti-Soviet coalition or for other reasons?

DRAPER: This infrastructure construction started under the Carter administration, but you could probably go back as far as the Ford administration and find concepts being developed. It was harder to do so in the Ford administration because of the 1973 war and the consequent oil crisis. But Kissinger was certainly considering this policy. It got a major boost in the Carter administration in part because of Harold Brown, the then Secretary of Defense, who was far sighted person--basically a scientist, a very bright man. He and some of his associates started some strategic thinking which led to weapons such as the Patriot Missile system, which were used in the recent conflict with Iraq. We did work with the Saudis in particular and the Gulf States to build up their own facilities when we couldn't get all the things we wanted from the Egyptians until after the signing of the Israel peace treaty in 1979. When that was signed, we started exploratory discussions with the Egyptians; Sadat was very positive including giving us permission to navigate nuclear-powered vessels through the Suez. But he couldn't overcome the resistance from his associates and advisers. The whole process of developing a military infrastructure in the Middle East accelerated in the Reagan administration, but it was already well underway. It was basically stimulated by a host of elements including the potential for Russian involvement in the area.

This initiative may sound a little strange now in 1991, but the Carter administration was shocked out of its earlier posture by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. That was actually a shock to all

Russian watchers. It was the first time since World War II that the USSR had moved into something other than a satellite state. When it happened, not were people shocked by the Russian action, but began to question of what they would do next--Pakistan, Iran, Turkey? The Russians were in the Afghanistan case not trying to protect a communist regime or a satrap; it was an odd action. Since the early years of Russian military exercises, they had been impressive. Then there were concerns about militant Iran and about weak and underpopulated Saudi and Gulf States who were looking for help from us, the British and to some degree even the French. Our logistic military planners were considering pre-positioned supplies in vast depots, vast underground protected hangers and large docking port facilities--all much larger than anything that we would want to use or need for civilian use. All these plans took a decade or more to implement, but they paid off during our mobilization just prior to the recent conflict with Iraq. Basically, the Saudis over-built. This was a matter of concerns to the Israelis and others; we built in safe guards, limiting what Saudis could do in the facilities. For example, the airfields closest to Israel were restricted from deployment of F-15s. It was a very difficult time because we barely won our battles with Congress and the Israeli lobby to permit the strengthening of Saudi Arabia that was necessary. This happened early in the Reagan administration. The first large arms package for Saudi Arabia was a real struggle; we won it in the Senate by two votes. The Israeli position really harmed Begin in the eyes of the White House. Reagan felt that Begin had broken promises in mounting a campaign against the deployment of AWACs and F-15s. We survived, but paid a heavy price particularly in domestic terms. Most of the administration was in no mood to enter the Congressional fray very often; it was big, big struggle and occupied months and months of 24 hour-day, just lobbying on the Hill.

WALTER L. CUTLER
Ambassador Designate
(1979)

Ambassador Walter L. Cutler was born in Boston in 1931. He attended Wesleyan University and graduated in 1953 with a bachelor's degree He later attended the Fletcher School. He served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956 and then joined the Foreign Service. Mr. Cutler served in the Cameroon, Algeria, Korea, Vietnam, Zaire, Iran, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Your reassignment came in 1979. Could you talk a bit about a rather interesting story about what your next assignment was to be and how this played out?

CUTLER: Yes, I had been in Zaire since December of 1975. And so when December of 1978 came along, I was back in Washington on consultations. The normal three years were up, and I was told, "Well, there'll be something else, but there's not much on the horizon. If you're happy in Kinshasa, fine, why don't you stay on for awhile."

And that was fine with me. I, frankly, believe that three years is the bare minimum that any

Ambassador should be at a post, and that moving our Ambassadors every three years is not good policy. I think that they should be there longer. So I went back to my post, thinking I'd be there at least for another year.

But, meanwhile, during the end of '78 and early '79, I, like everybody else, was watching what was going on in Tehran. You remember, 150-200,000 people in the streets. And it was evident that the Shah's days were numbered. Khomeini came back, and there was this revolution in Iran.

I remember consulting with and consoling my Iranian colleague in Kinshasa. He was typical of many Iranian Ambassadors who had been appointed by the Shah. All of a sudden, things changed totally back home, and he had no idea what was going to happen to him. He was fearful of being recalled; he didn't know whether he was going to go back and be executed or what. And so during those initial months of 1979, because I had served in Iran in the mid-60s, he came particularly to me, and also because we seemed to have the latest news more quickly than anybody else in town.

So my only thought about Iran was that, obviously, momentous change was taking place, that it was a dangerous time. And I was concerned about the fate of my Iranian friend there in Kinshasa. In fact, he was recalled, and he didn't know what to do. He had no family or assets anywhere other than in Iran, and he went back. And to this day I've wondered whatever happened to him.

But, anyway, I received a phone call one day, I guess it was April of '79, from the then-Director General, Harry Barnes. I remember it very distinctly. It was on a Saturday afternoon and I was at the residence. He asked if I had any reactions to going to Iran as the new Ambassador. This took me totally by surprise, as you can imagine. I said I obviously would want to consult my family and I'd call him back.

But as we went on through the conversation, it became evident that the decision had already been pretty well made right through the White House.

I told him that there was no reason that I could see why I shouldn't be sent to Iran, that I was willing to accept the hardships involved, including not being able to take my family (I had done this once before when I had gone to Saigon), and that the only thing that I could see as a possible inhibition was the fact that I had served in Iran under the Shah some years before in the mid-60s, and that this might cause the Iranian government, the new, revolutionary government, some problems.

And Harry said they had already looked at that and thought about it and didn't think it would be a problem. And, in fact, as time went on, it wasn't a problem. It was never raised by the revolutionary government as a reason for my not going there.

So I had very little time to pack my bag and leave. My appointment was announced about a couple of weeks later. And then two weeks after that, I left Zaire. Went back to Washington (here, I'm not sure of the dates, but I would say in mid- to late-May). And I was to spend no more than, let's say, three weeks getting confirmed by the Senate, sworn in, briefed, and off.

Bill Sullivan, our previous Ambassador, had come back. Charlie Naas was out in Tehran serving as Chargé. He had been through all the wars and was exhausted. And that was the same with other members of the country team in Tehran.

There was a feeling that we ought to really put in a new team. So, Cy Vance, the Secretary of State, sent word to me that: Look, we obviously can't assign people to a hardship post like this, where they can't take their families, unless they really want to go. If you line up a new team, we will do whatever is necessary to change assignments, etc. to facilitate this.

So, in fact, I spent the better part of a week on the phone trying to put together a team of the best and the brightest that I could find from around the world.

I had full support of the Department in doing this. It was a high priority. We were very concerned at the time about the future of Iran, our relationship with this new government. We knew it was tough. We were hoping in some way to find a way of communicating, starting a dialogue, with Khomeini, and perhaps salvaging as much as we could.

Q: Of course, in the thinking there was no idea that we wouldn't continue to have a mission there and all, at that time.

CUTLER: No. As a matter of fact, in retrospect, I think the thinking was probably unduly hopeful, positive.

So I made my preparations to go. I hand-picked a number of people to go with me. For example, my Administrative Counselor from Kinshasa said he would go, and he started packing his bags. My secretary said she would go. And there were others from the Political-Economic side. I picked a DCM from Washington, who was particularly strong on the economic side, because I knew that a lot of our problems were going to be financial and economic.

There was a morass of questions to be sorted out. Our whole military assistance program was very complicated and large. And we had all the question of assets that were here, we had destroyers that were half-built but not delivered. The questions on the economic and security side were unending.

So I tried to be sure that really competent people were ready. And I think it's a credit to the Service that I really didn't have any trouble finding people who were willing to go off into that kind of a dicey situation without their families. Because it was a real challenge, an exciting challenge, not just a dangerous one.

Well, anyway, I was making good progress, and I was being briefed by experts on Iran. I had a two-day briefing at the State Department. I shipped my stuff, my household and personal effects, to Tehran. Then I went before the Senate for confirmation, and I don't recall any particular problems there.

However... And this goes back, Stu, to what we were talking about, precisely. I have to be very candid on this point, with respect to Congressional responsibilities (or irresponsibility) relating to our foreign policy.

During these days, the new Khomeini regime was arresting people and, in many cases, executing them. There was a big clean-up going on.

Just before I was ready to go, after my hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the head of the Jewish community in Tehran was executed. There was a fairly substantial Jewish community there, maybe 100,000 people, and this caused great consternation here in the United States.

Q: If I recall, he was executed more on economic grounds.

CUTLER: He was executed, apparently not because he was Jewish-- that was never mentioned--no, it was corruption, alleged corruption.

Q: He was very close to the Pahlavi regime.

CUTLER: Yes. And this caused a great deal of concern here, particularly with respect to the fate of the Jewish community out there. Was this or was this not the start of an extensive persecution of Jews in Iran--a very legitimate question. As I recall, I was asked about this in my hearing, about minority groups (the Bahais were others out there), and human rights. The hearing went all right.

But then this individual was executed, and Senator Javits became quite concerned and exercised about this. He was obviously under considerable pressure from his constituency to speak out about this.

We conferred with the Senator (I say we, I and others at the State Department) about what should be done, if anything. We encouraged him not to speak out, at least at that point, because we were not at all convinced that this was the beginning of a pogrom or a persecution, and that Congressional action might exacerbate rather than help a situation which was delicate at best. And we were hoping, with a new Ambassador and a new team out there, to establish a dialogue with Khomeini and to point him in some directions which would be in US interests.

Senator Javits seemed to understand this. And it was, therefore, with tremendous surprise when the State Department learned that he had introduced and passed on the floor of the Senate a fairly strongly worded resolution condemning Khomeini's executions, the one in particular, and generally critical of Khomeini.

I would have to check my dates, but I think that that was perhaps done on a Thursday evening, when there were very few people on the floor of the Senate.

I don't recall that anybody in the State Department even knew about this all day Friday, the next

day. I certainly didn't know about it, and I was there having consultations.

On the weekend, I think it was either on Saturday or Sunday, all of a sudden the news came on television that Khomeini had asked that the new American Ambassador be held up.

I think it was made quite clear that this was in reaction to the Senate resolution condemning Khomeini's actions in Tehran. In other words, the Javits resolution had triggered a reprisal. And the reprisal was to put a stop, to put a hold, on the reception of a new American Ambassador.

Now let me just remind you that my agrément had been granted by the Iranian government fairly quickly. Actually, I was surprised that it didn't take much longer. I think, in a matter of just three or four days, the agrément was sent back. Although there was some question, later on, as to whether this agrément had gone all the way up to the top for full consideration and approval. I'm not sure we'll ever know.

But this was the first inkling that we had, and it came on television, it came in a news dispatch. I think that Henry Precht, who was in charge of Iranian Affairs, had got word of it about the same time, and he was trying to reach me. But, anyway, all of a sudden I was put on hold.

And then, in fairly rapid succession, one thing led to another. First, I was put on hold, and then the Iranians decided that they would just reject my coming out altogether.

To justify this about-face, this rather extraordinary action, they trumped up all kinds of things about me, which they proceeded to broadcast and to put into their newspapers and so on, that "Cutler was not the right person to understand the People's Revolution, because he had served with highly centralized governments, such as South Korea, South Vietnam, Zaire..." None of the allegations made much sense, but they tried their best to justify their action.

Interestingly, they *never* said that one of the problems with me was that I had served under the Shah in Iran for two years. Of course, I was up in Tabriz, so I had nothing to do with the central government. But I thought that would be the most likely argument to be used against me; it never was.

Anyway, there I was. The President and Secretary of State put their heads together and decided that they were not going to simply withdraw me and put up another candidate. The position that our government took was: Look, this is a qualified Ambassador. You have already agreed to his coming. You take Cutler or nobody.

So I was the Ambassador-designate for most of the summer of 1979. I knew, and I think everybody else knew, there was no way that I was going to go out there after this public vilification.

Q: That is a fait accompli, completely

CUTLER: Yes, sure, but this was a posture which we adopted. And that's when Bruce Laingen

was selected to go out as Chargé, to hold the fort and to see how things went. And I think you know the rest of the story. I stayed back here doing pick-up jobs, still as the Ambassador-designate, through the summer and into the fall. And then the hostages were taken on the 4th of November. At about that time there was no way we were even going to have an Ambassador-designate. So I went and took a job as the Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations.

And that was the end of the Iranian episode in my life, except for a couple of minor personal things. One was that I had felt a very personal responsibility about some of those hostages, because I was the one who had asked them to go with me.

Now when I was rejected, if you will, by the Iranian government, I got back on the phone to those people who I had asked to go with me and said, "You should know that I'm not going to go. It's up to you whether you want to go or not." And I think it's to their credit that they all decided that they would go ahead. But they were all taken hostage, and I, obviously, felt a certain personal responsibility for their having had that fate. My DCM, of course, never went, the one I had selected.

The only other thing was that I had shipped all my clothes. They were sitting there in Mahabad Airport, and every time the embassy sent somebody out to get them back, to ship them back to me, they were told: "Well, we can't do that, because our regulations specify that the personal effects of arriving foreign diplomats must be held here in bond until the diplomat himself arrives."

The embassy would say to the customs people, "Well, look, your government's not allowing this diplomat to come." And they would say, "Well, we can't help that, those are the rules we have."

And so it took months and months to get my clothes back. They finally arrived and all in good shape.

Q: Was there any talk, as this thing developed, of a tit-for-tat thing, to say: All right, you're doing this to our embassy, we'll do this to your embassy or your mission? Or was it felt there's no point in pouring more gasoline on the fire?

CUTLER: Well, the tit-for-tat came later on, of course, after the hostages were taken. And sometime after that, we closed down their embassy, etc.

What they had here in Washington was a sort of Junior Chargé. They had a skeleton staff over at their embassy here. And I remember this, because I went over to call on my then-counterpart. I can't remember his name, but the Chargé had been a middle-level or even low-level functionary with the World Bank, I think. All of a sudden, he was placed in charge of their embassy here.

I remember that very well, going in and calling on him in what used to be Ambassador Zahedi's office, this great big office. Of course, the huge portrait of the Shah that used to hang above the desk had been removed. And this rather small, bearded fellow was sitting there, quite young,

looking a little bit lost, quite frankly, in this huge office. I had a very formal and, I would say, rather tense meeting with him, because I think he was feeling uncomfortable. It was the first time he had ever done something like this. And I certainly found the surroundings rather strange. The whole atmosphere there was rather, shall we say, unwelcoming. I remember he gave me a little book of Khomeini's writings.

I also remember (this was just before the whole problem in the Senate and so forth) his asking me where I'd served before and so on, almost as if he had some idea that maybe they were wondering whether I was going to be sympathetic to their revolution. I think there was a great deal of paranoia at that time and feeling of insecurity. This was the new government, and we hadn't yet been labeled "The Great Satan" (well, maybe we had, as a matter of fact), but, anyway, we were known to be the primary supporters of the Shah and, therefore, we were close to being enemies.

JOSEPH P. O'NEILL
Temporary Duty
Tehran (1979)

Joseph P. O'Neill was born in New York in 1935. From 1953-1956 he served in the US Army. After joining the Foreign service in 1961 he served positions in Laos, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, India, Portugal, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Eritrea. Mr. O'Neill was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan in May 1998.

Q: Those were the bad days in Tehran.

O'NEILL: Yes. I went out in January of '79. The Shah was still in power. In February, the Shah left and Khomeini arrived. February 14, the mobs took over the embassy for the first time. That was interesting; Ambassador Sullivan was out there. Sullivan knew me because he had come in and replaced Byroade in the Philippines. He was very kind when I was out there. He said, "You know, after you left, the political reporting from that area just deteriorated." I was so pleased that he noticed my reporting. So, I was out there. What was interesting was the interplay between the embassy, Brzezinski, and Carter just before the takeover, during the takeover, and after the takeover. The absolute stupidity, ignorance of the senior American military officer.

Q: You mentioned the embassy, Brzezinski, and Carter. Where was the State Department in all of this?

O'NEILL: I consider Sullivan the State Department. Sullivan did all his work with Brzezinski. He did not go back through whoever was head of NEA. The first day when I got there, and I regret to say this, there were political officers of the junior and middle grades who were on the phone back to Washington undercutting Ambassador Sullivan, saying that "We shouldn't be here, we should all be evacuated, we should all be sent home, not just the wives and the children. We

all should get out of here. Stop issuing visas, the whole thing." A number of things happened here. One, we had probably the most incompetent consul general in the world, Lou Goelz, as the consul general in Tehran. He was issuing visas as fast as we could stamp visas without regard to who we were letting in. We were bringing in Pan Am planes to take out Americans and we found out that everybody on the Pan Am plane were Iranians. They weren't Americans. We were bringing in extra planes to take out third country nationals and Americans and found out the Iranians were leaving. We had a rough time taking out the Israeli embassy. Brzezinski personally called Sullivan to make sure that the Israeli embassy was taken out, on a priority basis, regardless.

First of all, let's talk about the military.

Q: Yes, and what were you doing?

O'NEILL: My job was to help get the Americans out of the area and to help adjudicate some of the visas that were being processed there. First thing, the senior American military officer, three stars, was from Germany. Sullivan asked each officer "Will the Iranian troops stand with the Shah? Can we count on them?" The American officer said, "Absolutely, sure, they will stand." Sullivan asked, "How do we know this?" "Because the officers had given their word as gentlemen." We're talking about Iranians. We're not talking about British officers. They just flopped. The other thing was that Brzezinski and Sullivan were talking to each other but were not listening to each other. Brzezinski could not, and neither could Carter (I think it's impossible for people to understand) understand that this thing was falling apart. This was the Shah. This was a man who had been courted by every President since President Truman. This is a man we put on the throne.

Q: He was thrown out once before.

O'NEILL: Right, and we had brought him back. Kermit Roosevelt, who was a CIA guy, brought him back. So, here we have all these things. Then we have another problem: there was low morale in the embassy. There was low morale in the Consular Section, which was the biggest consular section we had in the world. There was low morale there because Goelz would not stand up and [refuse to] issue visas. He had some very incompetent consular officers there, just awful. One who later goes at another post, doesn't follow up on an American who dies under mysterious circumstances. Really bad. It was Goelz himself. He just lets them go through. Somebody refused a student visa goes over and gets a tourist visa. Just nothing. Just awful. That was the problem.

Then you had the problem of whether the President, Mr. Carter, will be tough. In other words, will he say the necessary things. We had no relations with Khomeini. Nobody knew him. Sullivan now knows shortly after Khomeini arrived that things had gone bad and wants people out. The Agency does not want to go out. Many of the officers don't want to go out. Their families are there. They're making 25%. You've got "listeners" who don't want to go out. Sullivan can't get a hold on it because to get this thing done, he has to get permission from Washington to send them home. He can't get it done. He just can't get it done.

Q: Washington would not give that permission?

O'NEILL: Washington would not give that permission. Then comes February 14th. Mobs start to come across the wall. The Marines are armed and ready to fight. Everybody is battened down. Sullivan is trying to get some word out of Washington, but can't. He has two choices: a) he can fight and hope that everybody will not be killed; or b) he can give up. So, he decides to give up and he moves everybody, myself included, into the vault. By this time, smart guy that Sullivan is, there is hardly any secret papers around. There is just hardly any. He's only got one last channel, one crypto channel left. Then he hollers in to Eugene O'Neill, not me, the CIA communicator, and he says, "Is it destroyed?" O'Neill throws it in the barrel and says, "It's destroyed now" and then we surrender. Then they march us all out: Marines, secretaries, a couple of correspondents, into a courtyard. He has Skip Boyce, who is Sullivan's interpreter, who is now, I think, DCM in Bangkok. So, we're all marched out there and we're all lined up against the wall. We all know what the hell is going to happen. We're going to get shot. So, the Marines and the others start to put the women to the back. We say, "When they shoot, you fall under the bodies." Then Sullivan, God bless his heart, starts to move off to the side, with Boyce, his interpreter, hoping that if there is going to be shooting, they will shoot him and not us. So, he and Boyce keep talking. As this happens, another faction starts to come into the courtyard.

Q: These were all civilians, not uniformed people, on the Iranian side?

O'NEILL: All civilians. Every single one were civilians. All of them. They come in and then there is a big argument. Then the radicals start to move out. I would suggest that five minutes, give or take, we were all dead.

Q: Very close shave.

O'NEILL: Very close shave, closer than anything I had experienced in Vietnam. Really close. The thing that got me after this as we all sort of sat around in the American community who were there on February 14th, every one of us knew that if we had been killed, we would not have been avenged. Ronald Reagan... We just would not. So, February 14th until I left sometime in March, we never had complete control of that embassy. Their people were in the embassy.

Q: Oh, they were still there.

O'NEILL: Still there. We moved in and moved out. One of them forced me to give a visa under threat of a gun. I gave the visa and then I wrote under the page FORINSEED. When he got to New York, the immigration people picked him up, beat the living hell out of him, threw him on a plane, and sent him back. Barbara Watson, who was at that time assistant secretary for Consular Affairs, was asked by INS, "O'Neill is one of your officers?" Then they asked about the visa. "Yes, that's exactly what he would have done." When he came back, he had the "gall" to come to the embassy and complain to the Iranian guards, who then beat the living shit out of him also!

Q: A pretty brave act.

O'NEILL: Well, I knew the guy wasn't going to figure out if I put "INS" in among all these letters. It didn't make any sense to him. But when the INS people saw it, it kind of stuck out at them. We had no control. The bad thing about that whole thing was, one, lack of communication between the White House and Sullivan; two, the undercutting of the ambassador by members of his own staff.

Q: You couldn't have left Tehran with a very optimistic attitude as to the future.

O'NEILL: No. Khomeini lived in the 11th or 12th century, not unlike a lot of people that we'll talk about in the future in Khartoum. They're happy back there intellectually. This was a time of power for Islam; it's clean, it's clear, everybody knows what is right and wrong, not much different than fundamentalists.

Q: Two years in Lisbon and then you went back to Thailand.

ROBERT S. DILLON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Ankara, Turkey (1979-1980)

Ambassador Robert S. Dillon was born in Chicago, Illinois in 1929. He received a bachelor's degree from Duke University in 1951 and joined the State Department in 1956. In addition to serving as ambassador to Lebanon, his career included positions in Venezuela, Turkey, Malaysia, and Egypt. Ambassador Dillon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: There were two outside events that occurred while you were in Turkey. One was the convulsion in Iran (the take over of our Embassy in Tehran) and the invasion of Afghanistan. How were these viewed by our Embassy in Ankara?

DILLON: The Iran situation was viewed with mounting horror, to say the least. The Turks were greatly concerned. There is a sense that Iran is an awfully long way away from Turkey, even though the two countries have a contiguous border. But the heart of Turkey, which is Western Turkey, where most of the population dwells, is separated from Iran by eastern Turkey, which was largely Kurdish and then across the border, in Iran, is the province of Azerbaijan which is populated by people of Turkish descent and more Kurds. The heartland of Turkey and the heartland of Iran are a long way apart. These two countries never really felt like neighbors.

The Turks of course had modernized much more quickly than the Iranians. They were concerned by a reactionary movement which was religiously driven and led by the Ayatollah Khomeini. That was horrifying to them. The Turkish press and popular opinion in general was very anti-Khomeini. Undoubtedly, there were individuals who supported the revolution, but on the

whole the prospect was not pleasing to the Turks. There was no great upsurge of religious fervor. There had been for sometime a lot of pandering in the political parties to Islam. Pandering to Islam by secular politicians is a hell of a lot different than having religious leaders who emerge as political leaders. In Turkey, there was a party called the Salvation Party, headed by Erbakan, which was outrageous in its pandering to Islam. They ended up at one point with 12% or 13% of the vote, but this was nothing like Iran. Erbakan and his deputy, Korkut Ozal, who was a brother of Turgut Ozal, who later became Prime Minister, were essentially secular leaders. But Erbakan is still in political life in Turkey today. He is an absolute fraud. If he were in the United States, he would be a TV evangelist with a scandal surrounding him, but with a pocket full of money. Many Turks were worried not only because of the nature of Iran's revolution, but wondered whether the Soviets would take advantage of it or what other events might be triggered by Khomeini's assumption of power. There was a good deal of sympathy among the Turks for the refugees from Iran. It is worth recording that they were well treated. The official Turkish position was to close the border to people without entry permits; on the other hand, if one managed to cross the border, the refugees were taken care of. The Turks were very helpful to fleeing Americans. There were a number of cases of Americans who got close to the border and made a run for it and as soon as they had reached Turkish territory, they were protected and assisted. I should mention that we monitored communication channels. One of those was the Iranian Embassy in Ankara. After the revolution, the Iranian Ambassador fled. The Embassy was taken over by what was called the "students committee", although the diplomatic staff remained in place. Reading the Iranian communications was appalling because they were so clearly pandering to the religious nuts back in Tehran. If Tehran formed its world views based on the information from its Embassies, it was totally misled because the reports from Ankara, for example, suggested that Turkey was on the edge of a major religious upheaval. It simply wasn't true. There were all sorts of misleading reports from the Iranian Embassy in Ankara. I found it difficult to believe that the reporting officers believed the misinformation they were filing; on the other hand, people often find what they are looking for and they may have found some evidence to support their arguments. The Iranians were not very sophisticated about their communications, so that we routinely read probably everything they sent home that was allegedly political reporting and commentary. On one level it was funny; on another it was frightening. I sat there thinking that if these messages reflected their views of Turkey, how misled were the Iranians about other countries?

I left in August, 1980. At that time, the Turks were still trying to digest what was happening in Tehran. Our people had not been released from their "quarters" in Tehran. The Turks were very helpful to us since they had still a functioning Embassy in Tehran. Also, particularly through Azerbaijanis, the Turks had pretty good reporting. They were very sensitive that the Iranians not see them as reporting to the Americans; on the other hand, they would brief us very carefully and seriously on what they were being told. They would report to us information about the hostages. At one time, there were some hopes that the Turks might be helpful in resolving the hostage crisis. Publicly, the Turks said very little about Iran. They were smart enough not to get caught up in a public debate. I remember meeting with the Turkish Ambassador to Iran when he returned from Tehran. He didn't want to make a big thing about meeting with me; in fact, I think I had to go to Istanbul to see him. We spent some hours together talking about the Tehran scene and his views. The Turkish Foreign Ministry is quite good. This Ambassador was very good in his analysis. His views were well documented and balanced. He had obviously kept up his contacts

and was quite familiar with what was going on. I took notes and wrote up a lengthy report.

The Turks would also on occasion share with me information they received from their border post at Maku. That covered events in such places as Tabriz. There was nothing secret about it, but it was good reporting. It became clear to me in the course of these debriefings that the Turks had a pretty good network of informants among ethnic groups in Iran. I don't know how things developed in the '80s. I assume that the Turks continued their attempts to maintain decent relations with Iran; that would be absolutely characteristic of the way they would operate. What they thought privately was irrelevant; they would make an effort to maintain good and normal relationships. The Turks are *status quo* minded; they don't want any questions about borders; they want good relations with their neighbors. They don't want to feel threatened.

As far as Afghanistan was concerned, the Turks always had a thing about that country. After Ataturk became President, one of the few places outside of Turkey that he became involved in was Afghanistan. Until the late '60s, there were Turkish military instructors in Kabul. I remember meeting the Afghan Ambassador who had defected to Turkey in the '70s. He had been a former Afghan military officer who had gone to Yildiz, the large Turkish military staff college in Istanbul. So the relationship between the Turks and the Afghan had been close for many years. The Turks became a little sentimental about the Afghans perhaps because they were so far away that they didn't create any threat whatsoever. The Turks had attachments to strange little places. Albania was another one partly for historical and cultural reasons. They had a similar attachment to the Afghans. They viewed these little countries as friendly and as culturally related. So the Turks reacted very negatively to the communist revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Even among the intellectuals, Russian communism was *passee* and the events in Kabul did not find much appeal in Turkey.

At the popular level, the fear of the Russians still existed. The Afghan events reinforced the views of those who believed that the Soviet Union offered a threat. The Soviet invasion may have discredited the left to a small extent. It strengthened the right, particularly a man like Turkish, who was viewed as the chief secular rightist as opposed to the religious rightists. He could cite Afghanistan as evidence that he had been right all along. Incidentally, Turkish now cites the emergence of the Turkish republics in Central Asia as proof that his earlier views were right. There is a lot of racism involved in the views of these rightists. They are a minority. I doubt whether they make up more than five percent of the political active Turks. They are a strange little minority with strange racist views, even though the Turks, of all people, are immensely mixed. Racism doesn't make sense in any context, but it certainly makes even less sense in a country as mixed as Turkey.

JOHN M. EVANS
Staff Aide to Secretary of State
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

Ambassador Evans was born and raised in Virginia and educated at Yale

University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1971 and became a specialist in Soviet and Eastern European Affairs. His foreign posts were Teheran, Prague, Moscow, Brussels, St. Petersburg, Chesenan (Moldova) and Yerevan, Armenia, where he served as Ambassador from 2004 to 2006. In his assignments at the State Department in Washington, the Ambassador dealt primarily with Russian and former Soviet states' affairs. Ambassador Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2009.

Q: Did you ever run across Mike Metrinko?

EVANS: Yes, and I want to tell you a story.

Q: I've had some fascinating interviews with Mike and I was wondering-

EVANS: Well, I want to tell you a story about that. If we can jump ahead a little bit to the eve of the Iranian revolution. As Mike probably told you in his interview, he was the consul in Tabriz during the beginning of the revolution and I was at that time working in Secretary Vance's office. The first thing that really got our attention is when on Valentine's Day, February 14, must have been 1979, there was a convulsion that gripped the whole Middle East. I don't remember what set it off but our embassies were attacked in Pakistan and I think in North Africa and a group of Iranian radical anti-shah forces made its way into the consulate in Tabriz and took Metrinko hostage or prisoner and as I remember from the time they were on the verge of running him up the flagpole and hanging him. But he had done good consular work and knew the police and the Tabriz police arrived on the scene and took him under arrest and so he was taken to the prison in Tabriz and then shipped to Tehran so at least he was out of harm's way temporarily.

Well, I had been working on the Iran Working Group, I had been detailed because of my former service there; we were at that time located in the operations center and we had to keep a phone line open 24 hours a day to the embassy, and the only way to do that was to chatter, talk about whatever came into your head to keep the line open; otherwise some operator would figure it was a dead line and you'd lose it. So I remember doing that and by this time it seems to me that things had eased up a bit; I was supposed to go to replace Mike after this incident that had occurred with him but somehow things had eased up a bit and he had a collection of samovars and carpets in Tehran and he decided he would take his chances and go back and try to claim his property and would not leave the embassy staff. By this time I already had in hand a plane ticket and I was all ready to depart for Tehran but I was talking every day to Ambassador Sullivan and one Saturday morning, this must have been in 1979. It was March by this time; Mike decided to stay so I did not go on that Saturday and on the Monday I stayed home to do my taxes, as I remember, and that was the day that I got a call from the operations center saying "President Carter is going to the Middle East and we want you to advance that trip for Secretary Vance." I was on Vance's staff and so I went out there and it became the trip that produced the Camp David accord. So I did not become a hostage in Iran. But Mike Metrinko did.

Later in the year, of course...

Q: There was a takeover in February that only lasted a day or two.

EVANS: That's right, that's right.

Q: Things sort of swelled up and then it went away and it was in, I believe November of '79-

EVANS: When the embassy was taken over.

Q: -when the embassy was completely taken over.

EVANS: That's exactly what it was. And so I did not become a hostage but I did get to go out to Jerusalem and advance that spot for Secretary Vance.

Q: In the first place, going to the Staff Secretariat means that usually, you know, you're, you might say one of the chosen at that point, I mean, given that the secretariat is considered a road up.

EVANS: Well, I hoped that's what the calculation was. I was put in charge of the European section of the Staff Secretariat where we dealt with European and political-military issues so I sat in on the staff meetings of those bureaus and tried to anticipate the paper. We were in charge of what we called the "slow paper," the memos for decision and information that were coming up as opposed to the "fast paper," which was the telegraphic traffic, and part of my responsibility was to stay in close touch with a certain number of bureaus and the most important of those were the European Bureau and particularly the Political-Military bureau which was then run by Les Gelb. I think George Vest must have been the assistant secretary of EUR. And I did have good contacts with Frank Wisner, who was at that time the deputy executive secretary; Peter Tarnoff was the executive secretary. And his two deputies divided the world between them.

Q: Yes, I'm, right now I'm, just last Friday I'm interviewing Marisa Leno.

EVANS: Yes.

Q: She was a very junior officer in that organization, I think about that time.

EVANS: That's probably right.

Q: One of the things about working in the secretariat, you understand who does what to whom in the system, which I don't think most Foreign Service officers get a good feel for.

EVANS: Well, they get a feel for it when they feel the lash, because one of the other purposes of the secretariat was to make sure that memos arrived on time, cleared as they ought to be, so the decisions were not unduly postponed or delayed, and I remember one of the things we did was to task the memos, to try to describe what was desired by the seventh floor and then to track its progress and then make sure that it showed up on the principal's desk when it was promised, and sometimes this meant the late afternoon saw a lot of calls to staff assistants and sometimes office

directors, dunning them for these memos.

Q: Of course there's a lot of footwork in this, wasn't there? I mean for getting- not necessarily for you but somebody had to really hand carry these things around.

EVANS: Well, to a certain extent that's right. There was a network of staff assistants who all knew each other and it was important to stay in touch with those people, and I also attended daily staff meetings. I remember very clearly, particularly political-military affairs where Les Gelb was charge and I had a good feel for what the bureau was producing and also tried to convey to them what was needed. I also sat in, oh, that was a later time when I sat in on the Secretary's staff meetings. But we got a briefing after the Secretary's staff meeting from either Tarnoff or Wisner so that we had some sense of what the principals were working on and could convey that to people who needed to know.

Q: Well I mean, did you get into things such as- political-military, sometimes there's, you know, do we sell boots to Argentina when they're being nasty to their people or something like that, military boots or that sort of thing?

EVANS: Certainly the political-military office was dealing with a very wide range of issues all around the world and many of them had to do with licensing, with training and all the programs that the U.S. Military, the defense establishment, runs. But one of the other big issues at that time was the SALT treaty...

Q: Strategic-

EVANS: Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty. That was an issue that was very high on the Administration's list and Les Gelb was deeply involved in that as were others and there were special negotiators and so on. I think the best treatment I've read is probably Cyrus Vance's own book, "Hard Choices," in which he details what he and Gromyko were doing in addition to what was happening at the negotiating table.

Q: Did you find yourself getting betwixt and between bureaus or, you know, getting sort of enmeshed in a bureaucratic struggle or anything like that at all?

EVANS: There were some cases of that sort but I must say that the greater pressure was that we felt between the seventh floor and the rest of the building; we were sort of the crunch point between them. The principals, and particularly Peter Tarnoff, were whipping us to whip others to get the papers...

Q: So you did work for Vance for how long?

EVANS: It would have been for slightly over a year because Vance resigned in April of 1980 after the abortive attempt to rescue the hostages in Iran.

Q: So this is 1979 to '80.

EVANS: Seventy-nine to April '80.

Q: Okay. Well let's, first place, could you talk a bit about your impression of Cyrus Vance as a person and how he operated?

EVANS: Yes, indeed. I went into that office with great high hopes. I had great respect for Vance, for his intellect, for his previous accomplishments. He had gone to Yale, which gave me a sense of confidence, since I had gone to Yale myself.

EVANS: These things sometimes matter and I had every good feeling about going to work for Cyrus Vance and for Arnie Raphel whom I had known in Iran. He had been in and out of Iran. And I thought it was a good operation, generally, but unfortunately over those years two things dragged Vance down. One was the worsening climate with the Soviet Union culminating in the invasion of Afghanistan.

Q: This is December-

EVANS: Of '79.

Q: -of '79.

EVANS: And that really brought to an end the détente process. The arms control treaty had by that time been signed but President Carter pulled it back from ratification. And Vance had worked very hard with Dobrynin and Gromyko to try to improve relations with the Soviet Union. This was a great blow to him.

The other thing, of course, was the Iranian revolution and the taking of hostages which we talked a little bit about last time and that became the really awful reality of the late Carter years and I think contributed a great deal to the defeat of President Carter in the 1980 election.

Q: Well how was Vance to work for?

EVANS: Cyrus Vance was used to working in Wall Street firms -- I'm trying to remember the name of the firm he worked for -- but he was not comfortable as a public person. He didn't like going up to the Hill and testifying, he didn't like appearing on television talk shows and making big speeches. He was more used to law offices, that kind of atmosphere, not necessarily backroom, but private dealings. He was a quintessential Wall Street lawyer. He was a fine man, he was a decent man, he was a fair man. I came to regret that he had no sense of humor, at least in my sense; it may have been so wry that I missed it.

One of the things I did for him was to draft a great deal of correspondence and short statements and what I found was that even when I introduced just a tiny bit of humor or levity it would always come back scratched out. That was not the case with Edmund Muskie, who took over from Cyrus Vance. He had a great sense of humor. So he (Vance) was a little bit dry.

Q: Plus he also figured- I mean, plus he was a political figure.

EVANS: Yes.

Q: Yes. Well one can see these- Well, I mean, on this, what sort of, what issues were you, did you find, what were you doing?

EVANS: Well, I of course was a lowly staff aide; actually, it wasn't so lowly because I had a nice office right outside the Secretary's own office and at that time I sat in on his staff meetings so that I could keep abreast of what was going on. But I dealt with any issue I was asked to and was not considered a substantive expert. It's true that during the Iranian revolution, I think I may have mentioned, I was put on the Iran Working Group during hours when I could be spared and spent a lot of time in the operations center on the telephone with our embassy in Tehran, keeping tabs on events as they were reported. But Iran was the only issue on which I was really selected for my knowledge of a subject. I carried out for some months a correspondence with Mrs. Vance's cousin, William Sloane Coffin, who was a well known...

Q: Yale-

EVANS: ... chaplain I had known slightly at Yale. He had written to Vance repeatedly about some of his human rights concerns and I would draft letters for Vance to sign going back to Sloane Coffin, basically saying that "we welcome your views but you're wrong."

Q: When did you arrive in that office?

EVANS: I would have to check this.

Q: Well it was before or after the takeover in Tehran.

EVANS: It was before the takeover of the embassy. It was between that event in February-

Q: That was February 14.

EVANS: February 14.

Q: Seventy-nine.

EVANS: Right, of '79, and the November takeover in the embassy so it was probably June when a lot of people move.

Q: how would you put the atmosphere, from your perspective, because you'd been there, you know, I mean, this was on your turf. We all feel rather possessive of places we've been. How did you feel about this and what was sort of the developing reaction that you were getting from your colleagues and from seeing the secretary of state, the whole government operation?

EVANS: First of all, there was growing alarm as developments occurred. There was great alarm in February with the first outbreak of this violence, then it seemed to calm down but each development just seemed worse and worse and worse. If I remember correctly, we heard about the Tehran Embassy takeover as we were flying back from Park Chung Hee's funeral. We were somewhere between Alaska and the mainland, and Vance did ask me a couple of times what I thought of various things and I answered as best I could. We had reinforced the embassy with some experts like Stan Escudero but then when the takeover happened this was a disaster of the greatest magnitude and it meant constant crisis. We had a crisis group -- the Iran hostage task force, I think it was called -- and that went on for, I think, the whole time.

Q: Four hundred and forty-four days.

EVANS: 444 days. And of course Vance was very upset about that and worried about the hostages. But he wanted to do things as much as possible in a considered legal way.

Now, I should mention that in this period there was a growing rift between Cyrus Vance and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was the national security advisor. Despite the fact that every Thursday there were three-way lunches of Vance, Brzezinski and Brown, Harold Brown, the defense secretary, which were meant to be coordinating sessions, but as things moved on we discovered that Brzezinski was very much using his proximity to the President to elbow Vance aside and it came to a terrible crisis in April of 1980 when Vance was out of town, as I remember, I think he was on a speaking trip to Florida, and a decision was made about the attempt to rescue the hostages using helicopters in the Iranian desert. Vance was opposed to this and when he came back and discovered what had happened -- of course the operation went terribly wrong, with deaths and two helicopters, two of them, crashing into each other -- Vance then went into a terrible, terrible slump. He was troubled by gout and at that time walking with a cane and I remember distinctly that he requested a meeting with the President and the President kept him waiting for a week.

Q: Good God, the secretary of state.

EVANS: That's right.

Q: Did the president know what this was-?

EVANS: I'm sure the President had every idea what this was about but it was a signal to Vance that if he couldn't get a meeting immediately with the President his days as Secretary of State or his authority as Secretary of State was compromised and he had to leave.

Q: Fifty-two. I mean, you know, this is- these were a pretty potent group that was-

EVANS: Well they were part of our family and I mean, we knew so many of them. I knew a number of the people who were being held hostage and there were terrible imaginings about what they might go through. There was fear that they might be executed.

Q: Yes.

EVANS: And indeed there was an organization formed by the families of the hostages and they regularly came in to the State Department to be briefed on developments and what our approach was. Warren Christopher was leading the attempt to negotiate their release and I think, if I'm not mistaken, he was using the Algerians as a...

Q: I mean, the Algerians turned out to be sort of the key group.

EVANS: The mediators in that.

There was also another event that I should mention from that time which was the fact that some of the hostages, unbeknownst to the Iranians, had gone to the house of Canadian Ambassador Taylor and were being hidden by Taylor in his residence. There were fewer than ten, I believe. The fear was if they were discovered not only would they be in jeopardy but the Canadian ambassador might be in for some trouble.

Now, this story at some point in 1980 was discovered by a little newspaper in Quebec but the "New York Times," ever vigilant, had picked up the story and was about to run it and the State Department learned of this. Probably "The Times" had called to ask about it, and I remember that Vance called Sulzberger at "The Times" and prevailed upon him not to run the story and then Ambassador Taylor contrived to get the Americans out. He somehow got them out of Iran.

Q: He gave them actually French diplomatic passports.

EVANS: French or Canadian?

Q: I mean Canadian diplomatic passports.

EVANS: Yes. And they somehow got out.

Q: It was kept quiet until after everything was-

EVANS: And when they had reached safety, I remember there was a huge outpouring of sympathy or thanks, gratitude, to the Canadians. Opposite the Canadian Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue a big banner appeared saying "Thank you, Canada!" But I happen to know from my wife, who was in the Canadian Foreign Service, that Ambassador Taylor was not universally applauded in Canada and the Canadian Foreign Service for this; they felt that he had unwisely endangered Canadian interests on behalf of the Americans.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the hostage thing sort of tied everything up? I mean, was this, you know, were we so involved in this one horrible incident but at the same time, you know, we had other- we're a mighty power and we had other things to do?

EVANS: Yes, you're absolutely right. This issue moved front and center, not only for the State Department but for the entire foreign policy apparatus and it was front and center in the news, the television news in particular, and there were added insults that kept coming. And I seem to remember that about that time also the Russians had used quick and deadly force in Lebanon to prevent some of their people from being taken hostage and that was seen as an unfortunate commentary on our apparent weakness in the face of this affront.

Q: Yes, it-

EVANS: And it was an election year.

G. EUGENE MARTIN
Staff Secretariat, East Asia-Iran Hostage Crisis
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

A Specialist in Chinese Affairs and a speaker of Chinese, Mr. Martin spent the major part of his career dealing with matters relating to China, both in Washington and abroad. His overseas assignments included Hong Kong, Taipei, Huangzhou (formerly Canton), Beijing, Manila and Rangoon. His Washington assignments also concerned China and the Far East. Mr. Martin was born in Indiana of Missionary parents and was raised in the US. and India. He is a graduate of Kalamazoo College and Syracuse University. Mr. Martin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Yes. Well now, what was Warren Christopher like to work for?

MARTIN: Privately, he was a wonderful person. He's a really very warm, engaging, humorous person. Publicly, however, he had a totally different image. He was a lawyer's lawyer. He kept everything extremely close to his chest. While he treated his staff well and was personable, he did not share a great deal of the information. He tended to keep his own counsel. Often we would have to ask him about an issue. If you asked, he would then tell you what he was thinking, all that was going on; but he did not volunteer it. But we had a good group of people working in that office, and it was very enjoyable.

Q: What was your role in that particular staff?

MARTIN: My role was to make sure he was aware of what was going on in the building; that he was fully briefed; that when he was having meetings or when he was asked to have meetings, he had all the information he needed to make the decision; and that he had the necessary papers to be able to conduct a meeting. I was also responsible for making sure the bureau for which I was responsible knew what his thinking was, and also to try to be able to run interference when necessary to get things done.

Q: Did you find at his level that the hostage situation in our embassy in Tehran pretty well tied everything up, or was it business as usual?

MARTIN: For the first few months it was more business as usual; but as the hostage situation dragged on, he became increasingly wrapped up in it. By the end of my tour there, he was spending almost all of his time on the hostage negotiations because he was the designated negotiator and had the responsibility for the talks. But before his almost total focus on the hostages, he was engaged in pretty much a full range of the Department's activities. Desert One, the hostage rescue attempt that failed so dramatically and tragically in Iran, made him the key person in the crisis.

During the first few months of the hostage negotiation, there was a great deal of pressure for the U.S. to try to do something, to try to rescue the hostages. There were diverse ideas and suggestions floating around. Ross Perot and EDS (Electronic Data Systems) was quite successful in getting some of his employees out of Tehran. There was a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing as to whether it was possible, whether we could do it. The military was anxious to do it, to prove it could be done. So the mission group was cobbled together, a joint command as all the services wanted to participate. There's been a lot written about this, so I don't need to go into a lot of detail. From my perspective, it was an effort to make sure that we notified allies, that we were able to keep everybody aware of what's going on without letting anybody know what we were going to do, which is sometimes difficult.

What happened, as everybody knows, was that we went in one night for the rescue attempt, and something went badly wrong, and one of the helicopters collided with the fuel carrying C-130 causing a big explosion which killed a lot of people and prevented others from getting out on the other aircraft.

Christopher had been involved in a long series of White House meetings at the National Security Council for several weeks. We were aware, I won't say totally, but in general terms, as to what was being planned, but we did not have all the details, which were closely held. The night of the event, we spent the whole night in the office at least until about four in the morning, waiting to hear whether the rescue was successful. When the tragedy occurred, we were there trying to pick up the pieces. It was a long night but a dramatic, memorable time.

Q: I've talked to some of the hostages and to a person, they thanked God it didn't come off, because they said, "I don't think I'd be here yet."

MARTIN: A lot of the people that I've talked to subsequently felt that way too. There was a possibility! You sometimes have to take these chances. But I think that Vance felt strongly that this was not going to succeed, and unfortunately, it did not. So, in the end, the administration turned to negotiations; and Christopher spent the next seven or eight months, negotiating with the Iranians in various places. Some sessions were lengthy; some were quick trips out and back.

Q: Did you get involved in that?

MARTIN: I did not because another of his special assistants handled the Mid East. They went with him for the negotiation sessions. The legal advisor's office was represented, as well as the NSC and a number of other offices.

Q: What impression of President Carter and his handling of foreign affairs that you were picking up in the higher reaches of the Department?

MARTIN: I think the sense was that the hostage crisis was something that nobody would have been able to handle better, that it was a difficult situation. I was not an expert on Iran by any means, nor am I now, and I don't think I could have second-guessed Iranian policy. I recall was a lot of criticism of him, which partly was the reason for trying the rescue attempt. In the end, it just came down to hammering out a negotiated settlement.

Frankly, I think Reagan's stance, when he was elected, that, "I want those people freed, or there will be repercussions" helped move the negotiations to conclusion. The Iranians, of course, waited until the very last minute to release them, just as the inauguration was going on; but I think Reagan's taking office at that point was what really put the final chapter on it.

Christopher had reached the agreement prior to that during several trips to Algeria. I remember one time he expected to be gone for two days, then stayed two weeks. He told us he had only taken a couple changes of clothes, expecting to only be there a couple of days, and the two days dragged on and on and on. He ended up spending a lot of time washing out his clothes in the sink at the hotel, and extra items. But the president in Algeria took good care of the delegations as they were talking. When Christopher came back from one of these long sessions in Algiers, he brought back a couple of cases of wine that the president had given him; a case from the "La Réserve du Président." He opened it in the office with the staff. It was probably the worst wine I've ever had! It was just awful! I think we could taste the sand of the desert in it still. I can guess why it was the president's reserve -- he reserved it to give to other people and kept the best to drink himself!

HARVEY F. NELSON, JR.
Diplomat in Residence
Arizona State University (1979-1980)

Ambassador Nelson was born and raised in California. He was educated at Occidental College, The University of Stockholm, Sweden and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. After serving in the US Navy and teaching at Bowdoin College, Ambassador Nelson joined the Foreign Service and served in Washington and abroad, primarily as a political officer dealing in Scandinavian and African affairs. In 1985 he was appointed Ambassador to Swaziland. Ambassador Nelson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

Q: Was there a black student movement at Arizona State when you were there and was that

involved in the South Africa issue?

NELSON: There were a couple of black students in my class. They were very level-headed, very interested, intellectuals and not emotional. I also had an American Indian in our seminar, a Hispanic, a couple of Anglos and a few who took the course just because they had to fulfill some academic requirements. But we did not have a black student movement.

The major issue which took center stage while I was at Arizona State was the occupation of our embassy in Tehran. We had a lot of Iranian students on campus. That issue attracted attention, but again only by a minority.

Q: Did you find yourself explaining the rights of diplomats and diplomatic property and things like that?

NELSON: Not a lot. On occasion, I was asked about those matters, but it was not a hot subject by any means. I did spend some time talking to students who were interested in the Foreign Service. I suggested to them what they might want to study if they wanted to take the exams.

When the Iranian problem arose, there were a lot of questions. I was asked what the likely scenario might be and how it might be resolved; no one knew the answer, but there was considerable speculation. There were some who were interested in the origins of our difficulties. The media was generally the main source of information for the campus community. I should note that the majority of the student body probably did not know that I existed. As I said there were 50,000 students; and one got lost in the campus in a hurry. So there was only a small group who knew of my presence. But it was a great year for us. My wife and I enjoyed it tremendously; she got a job as a secretary to the head of the biology department. So she was on campus every day. We became acquainted with a number of the faculty members and a handful of students. And then, as I said, I developed contacts all over the state through the community colleges. Some of these institutions were so new that they were still operating out of trailers; they had no buildings finished yet. There was real energy in these community colleges; they were bound and determined to make their mark in the academic community. The faculty was mainly young and it had that pioneering spirit one often sees in new endeavors. It was just neat!

ROBERT S. STEVEN
Senior Watch Officer, Operations Center
Washington, DC (1979-1980)

Mr. Steven was born in Massachusetts and raised there and in Rhode Island. He graduated from Brown University and served in the US Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. Mr. Steven became a specialist Latin America, where he served in Mexico, Chile and Argentina. He also served in Burma, Vietnam and Japan and had several senior assignments at the State Department in Washington. Mr. Steven was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: Well then, in '79 you left the desk.

STEVEN: In '79 I left the desk. As we all know in the Foreign Service, you start looking for jobs and what do you want to do. The picture was clear to me that the usual course of action was not open, that as a desk officer - and I thought for a desk officer who had done a job that was at least good enough to get a Superior Honor Award handed to him, there ought to be something useful out there, political counselor or even a DCM in a small place, you know, a step. And it was very clear there was nothing there. Nobody ever said, "No, I don't want you." It was just that every job that I was interested in was already spoken for. "You've done a wonderful job, Bob. We wish you luck in your future." It didn't take a great deal of intelligence to see that at that time at least in the Bureau it was understood that I was *persona non grata*. So I looked around, and the only interesting thing I could find at the moment, that looked interesting to me, was in the watch office as a watch officer. So I went from the Bureau to Senior Watch Officer in the Operations Center, which was fun and different and a break away from what I'd been doing.

Q: You did that from when to when?

STEVEN: Well, I left in the summer of '79. I guess in the fall of '79 I went to the Operations Center. Again, it's on that paper, if we can find it.

Q: I have it somewhere.

STEVEN: I went up as a senior watch officer, and that was an 18-month tour.

Q: What sort of things did you find you handled?

STEVEN: A little of everything. You run a watch, which is roughly five people. You have an assistant watch officer; you have an editor who reads the telegrams and does the morning brief; you have an Intelligence representative there from INR; and there's a military representative. The Pentagon staffs the place; it used to in my day. There was always a military officer in their little area. A side note, a sad one: At that time - and it may still be; I don't know - we had a desk over at the National Military Command Center to exchange. I've seen the desk at the National Military Command Center. There's a sign on it: Department of State. It was empty; we didn't staff it. The military offered it, they had the desk there, they wanted it to be filled, and we just couldn't find enough manpower to put somebody at the National Military Command Center to represent the State Department. To me this always symbolized the narrow view of things that we have. Of course, we have problems filling personnel, but can you think of anything more important than to have somebody from the State Department in the Command Center when these things happen? Oh well, if something happens, we'll send somebody over. Ridiculous. He wouldn't know who he was talking to, he wouldn't know the procedure, nothing. Anyway, the job at the watch office is a good one. It certainly exposes you to everything. The senior watch officer sees and reads any significant traffic coming in, all of the limited-distribution things, the NODIS and so on, and NODIS Cherokee. NODIS Cherokee was a more restricted system within no-distribution, then Cherokee because Secretary Dean Rusk came apparently from Cherokee,

North Carolina or South Carolina, wherever Cherokee is down there.

Q: In Georgia.

STEVEN: And during his period, they introduced even more restricted channels and called it Cherokee, so it was NODIS Cherokee. A NODIS Cherokee message came in once a month: "This is virtually a war." They came off the wires and were immediately sealed and sent to the senior watch officer, day or night. The senior watch officer read them and made the determination who to call, what to do with it, so on and so on. There were some, NODIS's and others and restricted messages, which obviously should not have been. Half of them were overclassified, and you marked who should get them and send them on. Initially they weren't shown to any people on the watch. I learned to read very, very quickly, and after just a few lines you'd see what it was, and I'd hand it to my associate watch officer and he'd take care of it, and I'd read on. Well, in a few cases things were sensitive enough so that you read this and you said, "Wow!" Seal them up in the envelope and hand carry it yourself down to the executive secretary in the front office. I didn't worry about distributing it. It was this type of judgment call. In the middle of the night if something happened, you'd say who to wake up, what to do with it. The one thing, and it might be of interest to any historians or researchers looking for things, would be the fact that I was the senior watch officer on the night shift when our embassy in Tehran was invaded. I made Time Magazine on that one. But I think the picture is worth the vignette for people thinking how does government work. It was three o'clock in the morning. The watch was dead. It was absolutely silent, nothing was happening, and I was sitting at a counter, a control board and everything up there, which is used 24 hours a day and it has the coffee and Coke and it's a mess. It's covered with stains and dust, you know, coffee stains. So I sat there and said, "Oh, my god, we've got to clean this up." So I looked at my associate watch officer and said, "Come on, let's clean up." So we picked everything up and got it off and went and got the spray and sprayed the desks and got paper towels and were wiping away, and right in the middle of this the phone rings. I think I picked the phone up. Yes, I picked up the phone up, not the associate, but I picked the phone up myself. "This is..." - the young woman who was the political officer in Tehran when this happened.

Q: I've interviewed her.

STEVEN: You know the one. Maybe we can put her name in. Elizabeth?

Q: Swift.

STEVEN: Swift. They called her Swifty; her friends called her Swifty. Elizabeth Swift was on the phone and said, "I'm back in the embassy in Tehran. We're being invaded by a mob." And I could hear the sounds in the background. I said, "You are?" She said, "Yes, we're in the refuge" - I forget the exact terminology. "We had pulled back into the inner area with the vault doors and shut things off, and they were trying to break in." So at the same time that I was listening to her talking about this, I'm frantically motioning to the associate watch officer to pick up number one, to get on with me, and then secondly to start pushing the necessary line buttons. I will always remember, and I hope it tracks with her memory, a short conversation. There were Marines there;

the Marine guards were there, and they had their weapons. I heard her yelling at the marines, "Put the guns down. Put them under the desk." They apparently were ready to go down and die shooting, but she had the good common sense, even in those circumstances, to recognize, number one, that was suicide and, number two, she said, "They don't seem to be hurting people." It wasn't one of those situations where they were breaking in and obviously killing people. They were taking hostages and prisoners, but it wasn't, if I can use the term, violent in that sense. They were just trying to get control. She was telling these Marines, "Put the weapons down. Put them away." And then I do remember something to the effect that "somebody's coming over here now" - they had broken in - "somebody's coming over here now." That was the end of the connection. She told me later that they ripped the phone out. So by that time I went over to the system which, for anybody who's ever worked in this, is called the NOISWAN, National Operational Intelligence Officers Warning And Working, a green telephone at that time. This may all be changed now; this was years ago. You punched this button, and it automatically connects you to all the other operational centers, CIA, National Military Command Center, the NSC, the White House Situation Room, the NSA, the whole works, automatically. You're all on. And they check in, and as soon as the last one checks in, you say, "This is State. Here's our problem." I remember saying something fairly idiotic in retrospect: "Gentlemen, we have a problem." I explained it to them, and then I think I had asked the associate watch officer to get the Assistant Secretary. At first, we called the Executive Director at the Bureau. I said, "Get the Executive Director," because I had seen him that day and knew he was in town at least, so he called him. And then the very next call he made was to Assistant Secretary Saunders.

Q: Hal Saunders.

STEVEN: Hal Saunders was, I think, the man at the time. And I woke him up. It's now three-30, four o'clock in the morning, and I woke him and told him what was happening. He said he was coming right in and asked me to wake up his country director and some other people. But while that was being done by the staff, I was getting other people notified and doing my own chain of command, as they would want to come in, supervisors. But then I thought it was about time. They've replaced all these consoles. At that time there was a red button you pushed, and it rang the classified scramble phone beside the Secretary's bed. This sort of sleepy voice said, "Yes?" I explained the situation to him. He was very calm and he said, "All right. I'm coming in." It went on from there. People began to arrive one after another. Everybody starting coming in, and pretty soon the place was overflowing and we then pushed them off into an operational room.

Q: Ann Swift, by the way, Elizabeth Ann Swift, known as Ann Swift.

STEVEN: I'll always remember somebody called in once. A couple of her colleagues who knew her well called her Swift. But we got the task force behind me and we started over in another room. And, again, I'm trying to think of things that might be of more historical interest. We didn't really know what was happening out there. The embassy was no longer talking to us, and CNN wasn't as ubiquitous as it is today, and we were sort of wondering what was going on. One of the people who had already gotten in there, I think the desk officer or somebody, had just served in Tehran, and he said, "You know, there are a couple of the other embassies nearby. Maybe they'd be willing to tell us what's happening. The Swedish embassy was overlooking

ours. I pictured it always on some sort of a ridge line, but the term he used, "It overlooks ours," so whatever that was. I don't know Tehran. So I called the AT&T long lines office in New York City, which was an emergency center they had. We had a direct line to them, essentially a way for us to override any other traffic, if necessary, for State emergencies, US government emergencies. I called them and said, "This is State Operations Center. We have an overriding emergency. I need to talk to the Swedish embassy in Tehran, and, bless their hearts, they didn't say, "Huh?" They said, "Okay" and hung up. Within about 60 second there was a voice on the other end, and I said, "Is this the Swedish embassy in Tehran?" "Yes, it is. Who is this?" I explained, and they got their ambassador on the phone, so I explained to their ambassador, "Mr. Ambassador, we understand that our embassy is being overrun by a mob." He said, "Yes, I am standing here looking at it." His English was excellent, of course, with accent. He said, "I am standing here looking at it." I said, "Mr. Ambassador, can you tell us what's going on?" So he was describing what he could see, about having gotten in and so on. He said, "I see people being brought out." He said, "I don't think they are hurting anybody." He didn't see blood or things like that. So our source of information for quite a while was the Swedish ambassador to Tehran looking over our shoulders for us. By then it was getting to six or seven in the morning and things were really hot. My poor editor on the watch, who was supposed to be compiling the morning report. I just made a snap decision and I said, "Forget the summary this morning. We'll be doing a special summary on this situation obviously, unless there's a world war somewhere else in the world. Forget it. I'll be responsible for it." I kept waiting for somebody to come down and say, "Wait a minute. Where's the morning summary?" This fellow was more usefully involved doing something else. It turned out, just as an after note, that the Department's leadership was very, very good. I don't think they ever noticed, frankly, that the summary hadn't been done. The one or two comments I did get was, "Obviously you did the right thing." That made me happy.

The other point of interest, and for future reference for many people, because of the number of hostages in the embassy, the wives back here, they had been in a tense situation and many wives were here, families were here, and the officers were in Tehran without their families. So they were not only at home in the States, but some of them had already come into the Department. Someone, not me certainly, a senior watch officer, but somebody above, brought them into the operations area, two or three of these wives to represent the group, and they were installed in the task force area right next to the people who were trying to carry on classified conversations and make decisions about the life and safety of their husbands out in the embassy. I saw this and I immediately took it up with the director of the Operations Center, who by that time was in, and said, "We've got to get them out of there. For whatever reason, you can't have these uncleared family members sitting there inhibiting the talk and the decision making going on." And the reaction was, "Well, we couldn't do that, because that would look bad. It would be bad press relations if we chased the family representatives out of the operations area when we are going this. It wouldn't be good." So they then moved over and took a conference room which was right next to them. It was a classified conference room we could have used for conferences on this. We turned that over to the operations group. It had a door, a single door, leading then into the operations area. But it still was no good, because the door was never closed. They wandered in and out, and they set up this 24-hour arrangement, which was very beautifully run by these wives, but there would be three or four at least in there every time, and other family members just came

in, listening to everything going on. Two or three times I and other members, the senior watch officers, raised this and said, "We can't function this way," and were told, "No, no, no, it's politically impossible to run them out now. Therefore, we just have to live with it." Quite quickly, within a very few days, the desk officers, the people in the Bureau, had decided that they couldn't work this way and they were going to move the key elements out of the Operations Center. So they did. The political officers in effect were back and working in their own bureau, and they set up their own mini-task force there, leaving in the official task force area all of its resources and communications and so on, leaving there only the consulate element and other sort of noncontroversial things. A lot of the consular element, of course, and all that and citizens having trouble, they were all there, but the key decision-making not being done where it was supposed to be done. It was being done in a makeshift way down below because of this decision to put the wives in there. It was the sort of thing that, of course, we wrote up. We, the senior watch officers, wrote a joint memo to our director saying this should never be allowed to happen again, that an arrangement should be made for an alternative area for these people away from the classified area. For the entire months that that thing went on, the whole operation was badly handicapped by the fact that you had non-operational people there. Not only that, even if you trusted them, they were people who were emotionally involved. No officer wanted to say, "Look, we may have to take a chance if they're going to kill these people. We're going to do this." You can't do that sitting there in front of their wives. It was a bad decision made at the time.

STEPHEN BOSWORTH
Ambassador
Tunisia (1979-1981)

Ambassador Bosworth was born and raised in Michigan and educated at Dartmouth College and George Washington University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1961 he served abroad in Panama, Madrid and Paris before becoming Ambassador to Tunisia, where he served from 1979 to 1981, to the Philippines (1984-1987) and to the Republic of Korea (1997-2000). The Ambassador also was a member of the Department's Policy Planning Staff, and he played a major role in the US-Japan Foundation and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization. In 2009 Ambassador Bosworth was named the President's Special Representative for North Korean Policy. He was interviewed by Michael Mahoney in 2003.

BOSWORTH: The other big thing that happened when I was there and this was very interesting to me, that was the time when the Iranian hostages were taken in our embassy. The president was Bourguiba who by this time was in his '80s and was failing. He would have good days and bad days, good hours and bad hours, but he was a determined friend of the United States. He gave us credit for basically having kept the French from arresting him during World War II and giving him the opportunity to become the George Washington of Tunisia. This is a man with a very expanded vision of himself in a historical role, but his historical role was indeed quite important. He had one story about this experience of how the American Consul in Tunis during the war

smuggled him out of Tunis before the French could get him. He told that over and over and over to American visitors. When the Iranian hostages were taken there was of course that vote in the UN Security Council in which we needed a majority to condemn Iran for having seized our diplomats. Tunisia happened to be on the security council and of course as an Islamic country, an Arab country, this was a very tough issue for them and had Bourguiba taken a straw vote within his cabinet it would have been unanimous against joining the U.S. in this. Yet he himself made the determination, I had gone to see him, made a strong demarche on instruction from Washington and he made the decision himself to support the U.S. and cast the Tunisian vote in favor of the U.S. position on the resolution. It was something that earned great appreciation in Washington. This was a time when we were very tough force. So, about a week later the sixth fleet came through and the commander of the fleet, a vice admiral, when the sixth fleet came in the commander would always come and call on the president. I accompanied him to this meeting with the president as I accompanied all and I'll never forget this. He thanked him for the support on the hostage issue and presented Bourguiba with his midshipman's sword, which of course naval officers only have one of and he gave it to Bourguiba. Bourguiba who at that point was as I say he had good days and bad days, he was rather frail and rather uncertain. He took the sword out of its scabbard and started waving it around. The palace chief of protocol was a young Foreign Service guy and myself were trying to back up and stay out of the reach of this saber he waved around. Finally the protocol guy took it away from him and in effect went up and took his wrist, so it all worked out fine. But Bourguiba, it was quite an experience dealing with this guy. He had this great affection for the United States, a great sense of appreciation and would do almost anything that we wanted.

HARMON E. KIRBY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Khartoum, Sudan (1979-1981)

Ambassador Harmon E. Kirby was born in Ohio on January 27, 1934. He received a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in international relations and served in the U.S. Army overseas for two years. His Foreign Service career included positions in Geneva, Madras, New Delhi, Brussels, Khartoum, Rabat, Lome, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Kirby retired on September 29, 1995. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 31, 1995.

Q: You were there during the whole period of our difficulty with Iran, when they seized the Embassy. Here you had a government that when the PLO had taken over and killed our Ambassador and DCM Cleo Noel and Curt Moore, had been not a very helpful entity. I mean the Sudanese eventually got the killers out (of the country) and hadn't done really very much to help. And yet here is this Islamic fundamentalist takeover, albeit Shiite, of our embassy in Tehran and yet they seemed to have taken a course somewhat different than most of the other Arab countries.

KIRBY: That was a very bad autumn all together--the autumn of 1979. You've mentioned the takeover of our facilities and our people in Iran. One Sunday up in Libya that fall they tried to

burn our Embassy down, and over in Pakistan they did burn the Embassy and a couple of people got killed. It was a tough time all through the area. The Fundamentalists were underground in the Sudan and a somewhat inchoate group at that time. Nimeiri believed that his and the Sudan's security interests rested in having a good, responsible, constructive relationship with Egypt. So that's why against all the sentiment of the Arab world, he was prepared to back Sadat in his opening toward Israel and peace with Israel. The history of Sudanese domestic politics suggests that there has always been a party that allegedly got part of its political, spiritual and cultural guidance from Egypt, with another group getting its inspiration from other sources, including the Koran directly at times. But Nimeiri, at least during that period--later he was to change--in effect threw in his lot with Egypt. Having brokered the Middle East Peace Process and the Camp David Accord, the U.S. was certainly at pains to nudge him forward to stick with Sadat. Sudan is surrounded by a lot of unlovely neighbors. Unlovely, not as people or in terrain, but in many of their actions, maybe unlovely in their leadership, at least at that time. I think the Sudan is touched by at least eight different countries. As neighbors, Nimeiri had Qadhafi, he had Chad--things going badly in Chad--Idi Amin, with things doing badly in Uganda, and Mengistu in Ethiopia. Also, problem-ridden Zaire touches the Sudan. So, in Nimeiri's place, one looks for zones and measures of stability and I think that's what he did. Anyway, he decided that what he thought the Mullahs stood for in Iran, and what Qadhafi seemed to stand for in another vein, was not what the Sudan needed. We were at pains to encourage that sentiment, as was Sadat in Egypt. This is why Nimeiri was the only one of the Arab leaders to support us on the Camp David Accords and was virtually ostracized at Arab League gatherings for some time after that.

Q: Did you find yourself having to say or make the point that we should really do a certain amount of "fine tuning" about this or otherwise we might end up with a strong Fundamentalist group which we were already having terrible problems with in Iran, we might sort of "out of the frying pan and into the fire" type of thing. Was this a concern, an analysis of where are we going?

KIRBY: It was of concern, and we did address it. It was a theme that figured in our policy analyses and meetings but it was not a first priority issue, not the biggest item on the agenda. At a time of crisis, you have to set your priorities and get first things first...the top priority was to get rid of the Soviets. We chaffed and worried about the issue, but it became more prominent at some stage down the line later in the middle 1980's, after I left the Country Directorate, when you began to see light at the end of the tunnel in terms of likely Soviet withdrawal. At that time I think concern about the Fundamentalists became a more prominent theme. There seemed to be a tendency on the part of some Pakistani officers in liaison with the Mujahideen to funnel equipment especially to the more radical and more Fundamentalist Afghan elements. This is something that, I'm told, figured in discussions between our people and the Pakistanis at various times along the way. My sense of it is, that this became a more prominent issue after we made the decision to supply Stingers, i.e., after my time at the Country Directorate. It then became a rather prominent issue for us to discuss with the Pakistanis "sotto voce". By definition, the Pakistanis were on the ground and in a way they held the "whip hand", it was thus hard for even our liaison people to control the flow of weapons entirely. But I think this is something that our people were concerned about but didn't quite know how to handle, although I wasn't privy to the discussions that might have occurred on this...say from the spring of 1984 on....

Q: Were we using Pakistan as a thermometer to find out what was happening in Iran at the time? Because we hadn't had relations since the take-over of our embassy in 1979?

KIRBY: A very good question. I don't know about using them as a thermometer but certainly we were always attentive and interested in what Pakistan had to say about Iran. The Pakistanis, for their own reasons, were trying to improve their own relations with Iran. Part of that had to do with the struggle in Afghanistan because the Iranians were a factor in that struggle. I remember that Yahya Khan, the Pakistani Foreign Minister, made a visit or two to Tehran. Later I sat in on meetings where Secretary Shultz held discussions with Yahya across a broad range of issues, including Iran. My memory of it is that Yahya--I don't know whether he shared everything--talked to us about his impressions of what was going on in Iran. As I recall our saying (in effect) to the Pakistanis, "We Americans have on-going problems with Iran. Keep your eyes open and keep your powder dry, but we understand and have no objection to your maintaining your relations with Iran, and we hope that if you have insights that will generally be useful, you will share them with us." That was the tenor of discussions on it...

Q: What were you getting as the attitude toward the United Nations, the U.S. role? I mean this is the end of the Reagan Administration.

KIRBY: I was there at the end of the Reagan Administration and at the beginning of the Bush Administration. I think that in the period that I experienced the Reagan and Bush Administrations were ambivalent at best toward the UN, although President Bush and his team were probably slightly more positive than the Reaganites. I can't compare it with the Administration's approach to the UN and UN affairs when the Reagan Administration first entered office because I was doing other things at that time and not involved. But, I would say that at the end of the Reagan Administration, our government was ambivalent at best. Probably the Administration thought the UN had some good ideas and some bad ideas. One of the sound instincts which the Administration held toward the UN system is still with us today and has, I think, a certain amount of bipartisan support. And that is that the UN really needs to get its administrative and budgetary house in order, that it has been living a little "too fat" and perhaps too inefficiently over time. This theme of the need for reform has been a constant in our policy toward the UN for at least 15 years. That sentiment was certainly prominent at the end of the Reagan Administration. I thought then, and now, that it was desirable to keep the pressure on the UN to reform, although the U.S. could perhaps manage the campaign for reform more adroitly than it has sometimes done. All the to-ing and fro-ing, and the unwillingness to pay our assessments, which I consider regrettable, all of which are still with us today, began during the 1980's. Of course, some of the pressure came from Capitol Hill rather than from the Administration. I'm not sure the Administration moved as adroitly as it should have on the assessment/arrears question. There was a fair amount of true believing anti-UN sentiment in some quarters in the IO Bureau. I didn't have a feeling, though, that the Secretary of State, George Shultz, and his senior associates at the Under Secretary level were strongly opposed philosophically to the UN in any way, although some of them may have had doubts about its overall efficacy. There were several arenas, and we'll probably talk about some of them, where the senior people in the Department considered it useful to engage the UN, believing that it was in the U.S. interest to do so.

However, the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, at that time Mike Armacost, were sometimes skeptical and had to be persuaded, but were nonetheless attentive in various crises along the way, when the IO Bureau or other parts of the building would suggest a UN role, e.g., the Afghan War end-game and for a Persian Gulf monitoring mechanism following the Iran-Iraq War. I would say they were quite attentive to serious suggestions about UN undertakings and, at times, brought on fairly readily.

Q: What were the main issues? Can you take them one by one during the 1987-1989 period that you found yourself most involved with?

KIRBY: Right. All times in UN affairs are fascinating. It was an especially fascinating time. Day in and day out, the bread and butter the things you could count on to occupy a fair amount of your time were Southern Africa issues; Middle East issues, disarmament and other matters where we and the Soviets had, historically, competing interests; the end-game in Afghanistan; and the Iran-Iraq War...

I wanted to say a general word about UN peacekeeping and then just tick off some of the individual operations. There has been, of course, a real explosion of UN peacekeeping operations in this decade, in the first half of the 1990's. I don't know what the latest count is...17 or 18 current such UN operations. The first major explosion or proliferation of peacekeeping operations, however, was during the late 1980's, while I was in IO. Just to list them: as part of the "end-game" in Afghanistan, we worked up and installed a UN monitoring group in Afghanistan. I should note that the "end-game" in Afghanistan--getting the Soviets out and trying to bring peace--was a major preoccupation at the State Department in the late 1980's. There was a sizeable UN component to that negotiating effort, and our office was very much engaged in that. The UN played a very substantial role in that. Another major regional crisis which had implications and potential for becoming a world issue, which took a fair amount of time and attention of the international community at that time was the Iran-Iraq War and, particularly, the Persian Gulf dimension of that. The concern from the U.S. side was that somehow we were getting involved in it...that our interests were threatened. I remember that we re-flagged the Kuwait oil ships and provided naval escorts, that there was great to-ing and fro-ing in the Gulf area with exchanges of fire, and that our escort efforts were being threatened with attack by Iranian gunboats; we then went in and undertook some punitive action. All of this had a very strong UN element. Then, to re-use that "end-game" phrase, the United States, among others, was working on trying to bring peace to Iran-Iraq, trying to wind that crisis down by working with the Security Council to devise a peace formula. The Security Council became actively engaged in the search for peace and the Secretary General became engaged in the search for peace between Iran and Iraq. UN-sponsored negotiations finally entered in train, and part of the end-game was a UN Security Council decision to install a peacekeeping/monitoring force in the Persian Gulf. We were again actively engaged in helping put that force together and getting it installed. Still on the peacekeeping front, while the whole thing didn't come to fruition during the time that I was in IO/UNP, we had a lot of UN activity in the UN, as well as in our regional diplomacy here in this hemisphere, on Central America during that time--the Nicaragua-El Salvador problems. That had a strong UN strand to it. And we began to put together what a UN peacekeeping monitoring group would look like in that part of the world. Later such a force was installed. Cambodia had

considerable salience for us at that time, especially in the UN system, although some U.S. bilateral and regional diplomacy was devoted to Cambodia, too. The effort was to find a way to bring about Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, to reconcile Cambodia's political factions, and to hold free elections in that country.

MARIE THERESE HUHTALA
Line Officer; Staff Secretariat
Washington, DC (1979-1981)

Ambassador Huhtala was born and raised in California and graduated from Santa Clara University. Joining the Foreign Service in 1972, she studied Thai and Chinese languages and became a specialist in East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Her overseas postings include Paris, Quebec, Hong Kong and Chiang Mai (Thailand). In Washington she dealt primarily with East Asia and Pacific Affairs. From 2001 to 2004 she served as US Ambassador to Malaysia and, from 2004 to 2005, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Ambassador Huhtala is a graduate of the National War College and the State Department's Senior Seminar. Ambassador Huhtala was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Who was the Secretary of State?

HUHTALA: Cyrus Vance at the beginning of the year there. If you recall it was in November of 1979 was when the U.S. Embassy was taken over by militants in Tehran. As that crisis dragged on, President Carter pursued what was called a Rose Garden strategy in his campaign for re-election. He stayed in Washington, did very little foreign travel, and Secretary Vance didn't travel much either. I remember I went up to New York in September 1979 to help cover the Secretary's meetings at the United Nations General Assembly, but that of course was not a foreign trip. I also went with the Secretary's party to La Paz, Bolivia, I think it was in October, for an OAS summit. That was interesting, my first big trip, what I thought would be the first of many.

Then in early November the hostages were taken and I didn't get another trip overseas until the following spring. Cy Vance had resigned by then, in protest over the abortive military raid to rescue the hostages in Iran. Edmund Muskie was the new Secretary of State and he went to Europe for the annual NATO (North American Treaty Organization) meetings; I helped staff his trip to Brussels and Vienna. At the very end of my year in the Secretariat, in probably June, I went to Malaysia to advance the Secretary's attendance at the annual ASEAN Summit, and that was the end of my year. So I spent most of that year sitting in a windowless cubicle going through hundreds of cables every day and inspecting lots of documents that were on their way up to the Secretary of State making sure they had the right clearances, that kind of thing. It was very tedious work. It was not what I had been expecting.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Washington establishment, who did what to whom and?

HUHTALA: Well, I was beginning to. Naturally it was my first exposure to all of that. The way they had it organized back then was that there were eight line officers and each one had a portfolio of Bureaus that they were following and they were responsible for the documents and the clearances coming up from those Bureaus; usually we each covered one geographical and some functional bureaus. I was given the Latin American Bureau; it was called ARA at the time. We were also partnered with another line officer and we backstopped each other. The one I was partnered with had the Africa Bureau (AF), so I was kind of watching events in those two continents. I remember some of the toughest cases we had were papers coming out of ARA that had to get a clearance from the brand new Bureau of Human Rights, headed by Assistant Secretary Patricia Darien. Many memos and policy recommendations were coming up to the Secretariat without the proper clearances, so I had to “bounce” them and work with the different Bureaus to get compromise language. I was really getting my first taste of Washington bureaucratic politics.

Q: Patt Darien really exerted her powers through the clearance procedure?

HUHTALA: Absolutely. She was no slouch at manipulating that process. This was of course in the years leading up to the “contra” problems in Latin America so there were things going on in Central and South America that were pretty much at variance with the wishes of Ms. Darien and the Human Rights Bureau. There was kind of a struggle going on there.

Q: Did you find yourself getting between bureaus, between say the ARA bureau and Human Rights?

HUHTALA: By the nature of the job you had to do that. It was an interesting experience for me to get involved at that level. At the end of the year (for it was only a 12-month assignment), when it came time for my evaluation, the director of the Line said to me, “You know, Marie, when you started I wasn’t sure you were going to be very successful here because you don’t have a very confrontational style. I thought you were going to be too understated to make things work. But actually, you did very well. You brokered a lot of compromises and things worked pretty well.” So I guess I demonstrated that there is more than one way to skin a cat.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the embassy takeover in Tehran, also the burning of our embassy in Tehran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan? That was a big, it was November, December of ‘79.

HUHTALA: It all happened that year. When the embassy was taken over, like many people in our services, I knew somebody personally who was in there, Victor Thompson, the political counselor who was also a Thai hand. I had gotten to know him when I was studying Thai before I went out to Thailand. So we were all quite worried about Vic. If you recall he and the Charge, Bruce Laingen, had been at the foreign ministry delivering a demarche at the moment when the embassy was taken. They were held at the ministry for a few months, where they were able to keep a phone line open to the Ops Center and relay messages back to Washington. I remember

Vic relayed some of the information in Thai to circumvent Iranian eavesdroppers. When the hostages were finally released our Thai instructor had a big party for Vic and we all turned out to welcome him home. Then there was the invasion of Afghanistan. I remember that the U.S. organized a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics in response; it was coordinated out of the Operations Center and I helped out a little bit on that effort as well. Then of course I remember how shocked we all were when the aborted rescue attempt took place in spring of 1980 and Cyrus Vance, for whom I had the utmost respect, resigned in protest. It's pretty rare in our government when you have a senior official resigning in protest. I can't think of another example offhand. So that impressed me very deeply.

Q: Did you develop any personal feelings towards Carter and his foreign policy?

HUHTALA: I got to meet him once in the context of a big White House meeting. I thought that the injection of human rights into the substance of foreign policy-making was new and perhaps ill-advised. I could see where he was coming from but I could also see how that was upsetting a lot of apple carts. Of course it has proved to be an enduring element of our foreign policy ever since but at times it has been allowed to take priority over other national interests.

Q: I was in Korea at the time. Of course Korea had a different situation. We couldn't help but feel we had a very nasty bunch of people 30-40 miles away from us over the 38th parallel and we felt this was upsetting things.

HUHTALA: I would say that President Carter was fairly naïve about that too because you can't just call on people to be good. At the same time I think it is very important for our country to be in the lead among nations in promoting human rights. As long as we don't do it in hypocritical ways -- and we often have slid into hypocrisy when we do it. I'm thinking of our annual human rights reports which are often a real exercise in preaching hypocrisy and rub every country the wrong way, even allies like Canada and Britain. They get upset with our report, perhaps because we don't turn that search light on practices in our own country. Other organizations do that but we don't. I think there are right ways and wrong ways to make human rights an important element of your diplomacy; in any event, the effort to do so was probably the major contribution of the Carter administration.

DONALD F. MCHENRY
Ambassador to the United Nations
New York, New York (1979-1981)

Ambassador Donald F. McHenry was born in St. Louis in 1936. He grew up in East St. Louis and attended Illinois State University. He received his Master's degree from Southern Illinois University in 1959. In 1963, he entered the foreign service. He was assigned to United Nations Political Affairs. In 1979 he was appointed by President Carter, United States Ambassador to the United Nations. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: Well, turning to the Iranian revolution and the taking of our embassy. The whole thing, again, while you were in command at the U.N. How did this play out?

MCHENRY: Well, this was something that consumed our time, frankly. It took the last full year of the administration. I don't know where I was when the embassy was taken over. For some reason, I think I was in Geneva, doing some negotiations on Namibia. I think I had just arrived. I am sure I hadn't been there 24 hours, when the secretary asked that I come back to New York. I did and found this very difficult question.

Frankly, when it occurred, I didn't expect that it was going to be something that would last.

Q: Because there had been a seizure that spring that only lasted a few days.

MCHENRY: And taking over an embassy and holding diplomatic personnel was something that was unheard of, even in the Second World War. Diplomats were shipped home when the war broke out, or if they were in any way interned, you knew they were perfectly safe. Here was a situation where the embassy was taken over and that wasn't the case. Well, frankly, even here, in our initial dealings with the then-government of Iran, there were all kinds of indications that this thing was going to be worked out.

Well, we discovered, of course, that the then-government didn't have control of the hostages and that its influence was very limited. That early discovery was something that plagued the negotiations on the hostages throughout the time that they were there. The point is that, in all of the negotiations, for most of that year that they were held, we found ourselves negotiating with groups that did not have the power they pretended to have and/or were vying for power with other factions.

It was only after the power relations within Iran were themselves settled, in terms of who was in control of things, that we started making progress with regard to the negotiations on the hostages. And that was months after they were taken into custody by the Iranians.

Well, at the U.N., we started out on what one would expect. First, the reasonably pointed, but, in retrospect, mild, resolution calling for the observance of diplomatic immunity and no taking of hostages and respect for diplomatic establishments and that kind of thing. We then moved towards denunciation of these actions; then calling on the secretary-general to go over there and have some talks with them; calling on the president of the Assembly to use his good offices to do various things. Now we were getting to coercive measures: the use of sanctions.

Each one of these steps was looked upon at the time as a pretty harsh measure. They weren't, but nevertheless, we were escalating the pressure, at least the international pressure.

I think we felt that what we were doing was using a combination of things. We were trying to, in the International Court, make it clear that the Iranians were legally unjustified. We were trying to make it clear, in various places like the EEC and other organizations, that they were in violation

of legal and political norms. We were doing that in the Security Council and in the General Assembly. And then we were also starting to put pressure on Iran economically and diplomatically.

We had numerous Security Council meetings on this question--some formal meetings, that is, public meetings, and numerous informal meetings, consultations-in-a-back-room kind of thing.

At the same time, there were discussions going on in every channel that anybody could imagine, whether it was through people who had known Khomeini in Paris, or people who had known him someplace else, or any kind of avenue that could be used. And you tended to take a hard look at every avenue, no matter how far-fetched it was. You couldn't afford to ignore it, because it just might be the key to unlocking the door.

We finally, in the Security Council, came to the question of sanctions on Iran. A lot of people had argued for a long time that the U.N. was somehow anti-American, the non-aligned were anti-American, which I didn't find to be true. And a number of newspaper writers noted that we were able to work with the non-aligned in a way in which the United States had not been able to work for a number years. But the question arose: Are we going to get the votes in the Security Council on Iran?

We worked very hard to get the votes, with the president also being very much involved in making a phone call here and there.

We ended up getting the votes that we needed, though the Soviets abstained.

JOHN E. GRAVES
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Tehran (1979-1981)

John E Graves was born in 1927 in Michigan. He received his Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Michigan, and served in the US Navy overseas from 1945 to 1946. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1962, he was assigned to Leopoldville, Bukavu, Antananarivo, Rach Gia, Lomé, Yaoundé, Tehran, Montevideo, Sidi Bou Said, and Rabat. Mr. Graves was interviewed by Richard Jackson on January 12, 1999.

Q: After those seven years in Washington, you got a major assignment as public affairs officer to the embassy in Tehran. That was a new area for you. How did that come about?

GRAVES: I was assigned to Kinshasa. John Reinhart, who was head of the Agency at that time, was rather annoyed when I told him that I didn't think I would be welcome since I had known Mobutu a long time ago and we hadn't gotten on at all well. Truth to tell, I didn't want to go back to Kinshasa.

Q: Reinhart was himself an Africanist who had been ambassador to Nigeria.

GRAVES: Right. He had also been head of the Africa office in USIS and the African Bureau at State. He probably knew I had got on well with Tshombe but not Mobutu. So I was assigned to Tehran, a very major post. But I didn't go off to Iran with the notion that the Agency was doing me a big favor. Khomeini and the revolutionaries didn't look kindly on America and Americans. The country was in the throes of radical change and internal strife. No dependents were allowed to accompany officers assigned to Iran.

Q: Iran was, of course, going through a wrenching transition of its own, how long were you there as public affairs officer before you were taken hostage?

GRAVES: Four or five months. I arrived in Iran shortly after the Shah left and Khomeini returned triumphantly. Ironic. I had been assigned there in part because many of the top people in government were French-speaking, including of course the Shah.

Q: You mentioned you had had no previous connection with Iran. Through your francophone background, had you had any connections or ties with Khomeini in the Paris years?

GRAVES: No, none at all. I didn't know anything about Iran. I went through the normal briefings, so I can't say that it was like Vietnam, where it was a direct transfer with no preparation. I had proper briefing preparation, but no language training.

Q: What did the briefings prepare you for and what did you find when you got there?

GRAVES: Essentially, the briefings tried to emphasize the idea that it was in our interests to get on with Khomeini and his regime, even though the revolutionaries were hostile and prickly. This was primarily for business reasons, arms training and building contracts.

Q: Basically, the transition had occurred. All of the debates about Iran's stability were behind you. The mission when you arrived was in the process of picking up the pieces.

GRAVES: The transition was far from over. But the consensus was that Khomeini and the fundamentalists would be in power for quite some time. Therefore, we should be practical and pragmatic and learn to live with them.

Q: At the time of the hostage crisis, we had a chargé. When you arrived, was there an ambassador?

GRAVES: No, he had left.

Q: Who had that been?

GRAVES: William Sullivan, whom I met in the Philippines during our inspection.

Q: And the charge was already Bruce Laingen?

GRAVES: Yes, Bruce Laingen was already in charge when I arrived.

Q: There was clearly a kind of foreboding, an anti-Americanism.

GRAVES: I wouldn't say there was a strong anti-American current among even the higher placed people in the government. You have to recall that some of them even had American passports. They had lived in the United States a long time. In fact most Iranians were cautiously friendly. Everyday there were long lines of people in front of our consular windows trying to get visas to enter the U.S.

Q: Were those educated elite Iranians friendly to the United States or were they already themselves becoming targets of animosity or not yet?

GRAVES: Yes. After being there awhile, I picked up some Farsi words like “tagoutis,” which means “tainted.” They were already *tagoutis*. They stayed in Iran because, if they left, all their property would be confiscated. But they sent their families out of the country. There were lots of Iranians opposed to the revolutionaries. They were especially outraged by the aggressions of young revolution guards who stopped their cars and questioned them. There was much conflict and confusion. The economy was paralyzed. The city was a forest of abandoned cranes. All building projects had stopped. Industrial operations lacked parts and technicians.

Q: An obvious new religiosity.

GRAVES: Yes, very much so. You could hear the calls to prayer and there were many street demonstrations.

Q: Peaceful ones?

GRAVES: Peaceful in the sense that no one was any longer being killed. Six months earlier, there had been a great many deaths in the streets. But Khomeini had won out. Still, I had the feeling that the street demonstrations were not spontaneous. They were organized by the mullahs (Iranian clergy). Sunnite Muslims object to the idea that there is any clergy in the Muslim tradition, but Iran is Shiite and its mullahs have frequently intervened not only in politics but in nearly every aspect of people's lives.

Q: The mission as you found it must have been hunkered down and paring down from its former large presence. What did it seem like?

GRAVES: Exactly right. The American presence in Iran was horrendous, especially military-related business. What with Khomeini and the uncertainties, the mission was of course busy trying to reduce it or at least make it less evident. Except for India, which I surveyed when I was an inspector, Iran was the largest USIS operation in the world. In Tehran USIS even had a huge

printing plant and a building that was some eight stories high just for the teaching of English. Everyone wanted to learn English. USIS also had an elaborate cultural center, with a huge theater. You could have a football match on the stage, which could be rotated so you could change scenery and decor on the back half while the show continued on the half visible to the audience. There was also an impressive library. In addition, USIS had branch posts in the provinces and sundry English-teaching operations. I had a huge operation to cope with.

Q: But with such a large bureaucracy and all its components (the military, the military advisors, the CIA), many of them with strong vested interests in what had been there before, it must have been a wrenching, cumbersome process to see them groping with this new reality. What were the country team meetings like?

GRAVES: The military were the most perplexed because they were essentially in the business of selling arms and training to the Iranians, which leads me to a major point: The United States bought a great deal of oil from Iran and felt the need to somehow recoup. Therefore, we sold Iran arms. The Shah was foolish to buy all those arms, which even with the expensive training programs were never of any real use. Megalomania! A misuse of billions which the revolution harped on. Perhaps more important and less known in the United States, we also worked hard at selling Iran agricultural products, which distorted their domestic markets. For example, an Iranian farmer can't produce poultry at the price that we produce rubber chickens in our factories. So Iranian resentment was strong and could be used readily to whip up crowds against the United States. I didn't have much sympathy for the Shah's repressive regime but he had a point when he claimed he would rule like a Swedish monarch if Iranians acted like Swedes. I've already mentioned that, in my opinion, the US didn't have to support unsavory regimes and dictatorships; we could do business with them without giving the impression that they had been installed by us and were supported by the United States. Iran is a flagrant case. Early on the Shah was deposed, and then brought back by the CIA. Mossedegh wanted to nationalize the oil industry and throw out the "rascals" as he called them. There was a book published by one of the CIA operators of the period, Kermit Roosevelt bragging about how Mossedegh had been countered. I find it interesting that this book completely disappeared shortly after publication. You not only couldn't buy it anywhere, you couldn't find it in any library, which shows the size of the CIA operation which made Kermit Roosevelt's book disappear. In the book, he tells how the CIA reinstalled the Shah. Consider all the arms and the waste of money, the damage to their agriculture and their cultural sensitivities, and finally the fact that we put the Shah back on his peacock throne. There is little doubt that the Iranians had some very serious grievances, which went unreported in our media during the hostage crisis. But some of my colleagues were aware of the grievances. Several spoke Farsi so well they could disappear in a crowd. We had good contacts and officers who knew the country well, so we were not without means to understand the Iranians.

Q: I understand you to be saying that you feel that the billions of dollars in arms sales in the Nixon-Kissinger period to Iran was essentially destabilizing and were not in Iranian or U.S. interests.

GRAVES: Certainly not in our long-term interests nor Iran's. I'm not sure all that money could have been used in a better way. Much experience in Africa taught me that it is not easy to help or

be useful. Even for an enlightened ruler it's not easy to promote development. I am not convinced that all that oil money could have been effectively used to improve the life, health and economy of Iran if it hadn't been wasted on arms.

Q: Coming back to the dialogue around the country team table, I would assume with your background and being the USIA representative with a mandate for outreach and getting the opinion of all sectors, you would have found yourself in conflict with other agencies locked into particular elites and perhaps with a vested interest. Or was that at that stage all behind?

GRAVES: I think it was pretty well behind. I didn't have bad feelings about any of my country-team colleagues. At country team meeting I didn't hear hard-line jingo views. Even the general responsible for our military programs seemed to understand the situation and recognize that what we had done in the past wasn't always in the interests of the Iranians and they had some legitimate grievances. His chief concern was to keep a low profile and reduce in an orderly fashion his training and equipment replacement programs. He seemed genuinely concerned to avoid ruffling revolution feathers or compromise his contacts. I would say that he was good at it.

Q: There you were, as it developed, just a few months before you were taken hostage. How did you without a background and without the language go about putting the pieces together? How did you as the public affairs officer go about the job of outreach and U.S. image in this very sensitive situation?

GRAVES: One of the decisions I made right away was to assume that the Iranians still wanted to learn English. So we continued to have hundreds of students in class every day. We also continued our theater and arts programs in our beautiful cultural center, and Iranians in large numbers continued to work in our art classes, visit our exhibits and use our library. Not just in Tehran, but in all the other cities where we had USIS programs. In addition, because part of my job was to gather information, to know what people were saying and thinking, what worried them, I worked at acquiring contacts. I also had good sources in that I had officers who spoke Farsi well and knew the country. I was personally in contact with top officials because they were French-speaking. I visited them in their offices and attended dinners and receptions. I found the Iranians essentially *sympa* [French: nice] and interesting. They love flowers and the arts. I learned one thing from an elaborate reception which I have never forgotten. There was this sumptuous table. The Prime Minister caught me admiring it and remarked, "One eats with his eyes as well as with his mouth and stomach." I've never forgotten that.

Q: As somebody not knowing Iran, I'm a little surprised that just months before the hostage crisis, there were still crowds wanting to learn English, who didn't perceive that as perhaps something dangerous for them. So, it was then somewhat of an open environment. Were you able to travel to the branch posts around the country?

GRAVES: Yes. I traveled freely, no problem at all. The branch posts were running reasonably well. In some cases, they were what we call bi-national centers, which means that they had an Iranian-American board (essentially Iranian). People really wanted to learn English. In the provinces, we didn't have great cultural programs because it was hard to transport big groups and

their paraphernalia. We were also a bit leery of what could happen if we advertised and put on a big show. Khomeini was all powerful, but the crowds that later would be chanting "Death to America and Americans" were not hostile.

Q: As you met with the senior officials, many of them French-speaking, did one have a feeling that they had power and authority or was there really a separate mullah government behind the scenes and this was by then a front?

GRAVES: Everything was in transition, but it was already clear that nobody dared do anything that was really opposed by Khomeini. But officials didn't seem to be frightened straw men. They often convoked us and treated us to emotional lectures on our sins and the merits of the revolution. Others, in private, expressed misgivings about the excesses of self-appointed revolutionary guards.

Q: I assume nobody saw or knew Khomeini, but did the embassy have other channels into the mullahs?

GRAVES: There were several who were more open. One of the most open was Ayatollah Montazeri. But I never saw any report that reflected much direct contact with Khomeini, the mullahs, or militant students.

Q: The students who would turn up at your English language centers were relatively apolitical and didn't reflect this radical strain?

GRAVES: I don't think most of them were even at university. They had other occupations and concerns, many had jobs. They simply felt that English was a very useful tool that they wanted to acquire. Also, you have to remember that the embassy compound was besieged by literally thousands of Iranians who wanted to get visas to go to the United States. Our consular operation was the biggest I have ever seen and I inspected a lot of countries. It was just incredible the number of Iranians who wanted to go to the United States.

Q: Washington in these months must have been extremely focused on getting regular assessments and making sense of where Iran was going. Were you aware of tremendous interest? Was that reflected in visits and demands on you?

GRAVES: Yes. But we didn't have the kind of problem that became so burdensome in Vietnam of all kinds of unlikely visitors, such as politicians, press, and religious groups. The visitors were mostly our own officers.

Q: The very public missions like that of General Heismann, who for example, had been before?

GRAVES: He was there at one point, but low profile. I would say that perhaps we had more military visitors than State Department or CIA. It wasn't a circus like Vietnam.

Q: As you came close to the takeover of the embassy, there had be some earlier warnings or

attempts. Was that in these months?

GRAVES: By late August/September there were big demonstrations. At first, we were very concerned. But we got used to them. For reasons unknown to us, the demonstrations would peter out or go elsewhere. Crowds chanted slogans and sprayed paint but they didn't climb over the embassy compound wall.

Q: So, these were mass regime-sponsored...

GRAVES: They were certainly orchestrated by the mullahs. I didn't know what had been going on until I was a hostage and had occasion to talk with the students who had taken over the embassy. Many of the student leaders, especially the medical students, had spent years in the United States. They knew America and the Americans and spoke English very well.

Q: These were students who you met for the first time as a hostage?

GRAVES: Right. As they explained, they felt the great revolution, which they favored, was simply petering out. What to do? They cited the program Mao had invented, the Cultural Revolution to re-animate, galvanize, and put back on track the revolution. They had already tried various ploys. During the summer, they had gone out to the villages and worked with the villagers, who were happy to have help, but didn't care much about revolution or change. Next they had tried organizing squatter movements to bring the poor out of south Tehran and install them in the northern suburbs where the rich had lived and where many houses had been abandoned after their owners had fled the country. This didn't work out very well because the poor felt isolated and uncomfortable in their new digs and gradually wandered back down to south Tehran's lively slums. Finally the students latched onto the idea of taking over the American embassy, but their intention was to sit in for only a day or two. Whip up nationwide enthusiasm for the revolution by demanding that the U.S. return the shah to Iran for trial. But they didn't have prior permission, authorization, or the blessings of Khomeini and the mullahs. They were afraid Khomeini would say no and they were also afraid that one of the growing demonstrations would get out of hand and spoil their slowly developing plans. So they were busy leading these demonstrations off to other squares and letting them peter out. We couldn't understand why the demonstrators would get all worked up and then march off.

The student leaders I got to know after they finally took over the embassy were an able and sophisticated lot. They were pleased indeed when, the first night, they received the blessings of Khomeini and a visit from his son, but they had no plans to stay on beyond a couple of days. Unfortunately, the Iranian public and many of the less sophisticated students took the slogan for the return of the shah as a serious demand, which played into the hands of the mullahs who needed a rallying cry to shore up their shaky revolution. The occupation dragged on. By the third week, many of the most sophisticated leaders returned to their work in the hospitals and we were left in the hands of students who had no experience abroad and didn't understand much about the world. It was a very different group from the leaders who planned the takeover. Owing to obsessive anti-Communism, American media and public opinion never accepted the fact that we were taken hostage by genuine students. They weren't Communists and the takeover wasn't a

Russian plot. On the contrary, the students were anti-Communist and opposed to Russia.

Q: Go back a little to the actual takeover: where you were, how the realization came to you, what really was happening.

GRAVES: Another demonstration, yawn. But around noon, we were startled to see demonstrators come through the open compound gate. At first, mostly young women in chadors. Our so-called guards had obviously been subverted by the students. They didn't have to break in. We were herded into our library to hear a lecture on the misdeeds of America. I thought the whole drill was a farce. I didn't take it seriously. I assumed I would be home to have a proper dinner that night. However, I began to worry when through the library windows, I saw colleagues being led out of the chancery (I was in another building) blindfolded and with their hands bound. I realized that the chancery was also in the hands of the students. I later learned from one of the sophisticated student leaders that they knew our preoccupation with fires obliged us to always have an access free, which they spotted during the weeks they tramped around the compound as legitimate visitors, grad students from American universities. So they slipped into the chancery without violent confrontation with our Marine guards who, in any case, had orders not to fire on the intruders.

Months later, I was to hear from a fellow hostage, a communicator, the story of his capture. He was ordered to climb to the roof through a trap door in the ceiling and hide all the arms that were in our safes. While he was up there, the last bastion fell, the strong or code room below. When he clamored back down from the roof, he found himself among Iranian students who paid no attention to him because he was part American Indian and therefore easily mistaken for an Iranian. He mingled with the students milling around in the code room, but finally decided he'd better identify himself since he didn't speak a word of Farsi and didn't know a thing about the country. Too dangerous to go out onto the streets. Better to be with the Americans.

Q: Did you as your building was being taken over (I understand it was on the compound but separate) have a chance to caucus with your staff and make a plan?

GRAVES: We were all put together in the library, Americans with our Iranian employees, FSNs. Most of the Iranian employees were not Muslims. They tended to be Armenian Christians and they were frightened, maybe more frightened than we Americans were.

Q: Were there any Bahais?

GRAVES: Not to my knowledge. But persecution of the Bahais was a concern of the embassy.

Q: How were those Christian Iranian FSNs then handled?

GRAVES: It was hard to know for sure what really happened to them, but I think all of them were eventually released and none was seriously harmed.

Q: Without the many months of detention?

GRAVES: I think they were all sent home the same day. It was very hard to piece this out. We didn't have a chance to check on it afterwards.

Q: I'm getting the picture of this happening quickly, you and your staff in a separate building in the library, the chancery being taken, little chance for concerting. I know the chargé was out at the Ministry. There was no central direction going on. There wasn't time.

GRAVES: No opportunity for concerting. We hostages weren't allowed to talk to each other. There had been a big demonstration the day before and the chargé was very annoyed by all the slogans sprayed on the compound wall at the place in front of our consular operation. "Yankee go home!" So, before going off to the Ministry to protest, the chargé decided to close down the consular operation in protest against the desecration. Shades were pulled over the consular windows. One of the Marines who was a good cartoonist drew a shade with a sign, "Yankee went home."

Q: In saying that initially you didn't take it seriously, I guess you're also saying that there was a calmness among your initial captors and nobody felt that the place was going to be burnt down with you in it or that it had the possibilities of terrible violence. These people knew what they were doing.

GRAVES: They were reasonably well organized for the short term. Sometimes it seemed like bad theater. They would make great threats. But most of the Americans didn't take the threats seriously. There was also a certain amount of outrage among us over being subjected to all the nonsense.

Q: In the months leading up to it that you were in Iran, I assume there were no families?

GRAVES: In general, no, but my wife had just completed consular training and was about to enplane for Tehran. Several days after the embassy had been taken over and we were all hostages she got a phone call from the Travel Section of the Department saying that she had to come down and pick up her tickets immediately. They weren't going to stay open just for her. The employees were so little aware of what was going on in the world that they didn't know that Tehran was no longer a place approved by the Department.

Q: How did things seem to proceed from there? I know there have been many full hostage accounts. You yourself may have written somewhat on it. Starting from that point, how did the 14 months develop? There were some groups who initially got out, perhaps with the help of other embassies.

GRAVES: During the actual takeover, some American officers were working outside the compound, including my people at the Cultural Center. They were eventually gathered up and became part of the hostage group in the compound. But another group managed to make its way to the Canadian chancery and was finally spirited out of Iran by the Canadians. That was certainly a very courageous and complicated operation to pull off. It was not easy to hide that

many people and finally pass them off as Canadians at the airport. Hats off to the Canadians! As you know, we have arrangements with the British and with the Canadians to come to each other's aid in times of crisis. But the British turned away the stranded group which the Canadians eventually took in.

Q: You were initially in the library. You mentioned others being led out of the chancery. Was your group then moved and subsequently separated?

GRAVES: We were separated into small groups. Most of the time we were blindfolded and our hands were bound. What I can say is limited because all I know was what I could hear. But I knew the compound well and therefore knew where I was being led. I ended up in one of the small bungalows that housed TDY and arriving officers before they got their official housing. The students didn't yet know who was what. I was with several Marines, a Japanese businessman and another man who supposedly had been simply visiting the embassy to get American textbooks to teach English. Once we were inside, they took off our blindfolds but our hands were still bound. Our student captors didn't seem at all threatening. Most of them were women. My main worry at this point was the chanting crowd outside the compound, which sounded threatening. "Death to America and Americans!" I wasn't afraid of the students, but I was afraid the chanting masses would break in and tear us limb from limb. Their roar shook the walls all night.

Q: Did you feel they tended to know what USIA was and perhaps concentrate more on people that were in the chancery? Did your ending up with these visitors to the embassy reflect that or not?

GRAVES: Exactly the opposite. The Iranians obviously tried to figure out who did what and who was who. They got hold of the protocol list. I was number two on that list and the top man was at the Ministry. As the highest ranking officer in their hands, I was isolated and lost track of time. I was questioned and threatened and then questioned again and again, not allowed to sleep, forced to always remain standing. They seemed to know that CIA types could be tucked away in almost any office and especially wanted to identify deep-cover people by latching onto their handlers.

Q: This separation occurred after a matter of weeks?

GRAVES: The third week. It took them a while to sort us out. At first they asked each of us what we did. I said I taught English. In the middle of the night, they shook me up. Men with machine guns and masks. "You no teacher. You big boss!" I was trucked out of the embassy compound and moved some 30 times during the year, always at night. The students obviously had enemies. At one point I was held in a desert village hundreds of miles from Tehran and the building came under attack. Bullets flying all around me. I didn't know if I should be rooting for the students or the attackers who might well be much worse.

Q: Before we come to that, how was it to see the experience initially through the bewildered eyes of these random visitors to the embassy?

GRAVES: They were very different. The huge man who was supposedly in the business of teaching English but was probably connected with the CIA was demanding and outraged. The Japanese was very polite. There weren't enough mattresses but he didn't have any problem sleeping on the floor, whereas the rest of us did. I smoke a pipe sometimes. He had some tobacco which he shared with me. I finally demurred, saying, "At this rate you'll soon run out of tobacco." He answered, "We smoke together and we stop smoking together." He was a good companion. After the second week, he disappeared. The huge man was not treated well. I think they figured he wasn't what he claimed he was. The Japanese apparently really was a businessman and was released as far as I know.

Q: You were moved 30 times. As the second ranking on the protocol list, you were questioned intensively by different types of Iranians trying to pry out all kinds of information.

GRAVES: They had a PLO manual on how to take hostages and how to deal with them. They were reading it and trying to do what it said. But their knowledge of Arabic was not great. The whole process is supposed to keep the prisoner under such pressure that he finally loses track of everything and doesn't know what he's saying. But the students didn't understand the importance of unremitting pressure. There was a little man (We called him "the Dwarf" later on.) who was sympathetic. He kept saying, "You be alright," which helped me tremendously. I had experience with interrogations in Vietnam. I had visited the tiger cages and talked with interrogators. I was aware that the students didn't know how to interrogate, and also knew that the best way to baffle interrogations is to agree to anything and everything, which means that eventually they can't figure out what is really true. So I systematically agreed to everything and added to their worst accusations. I kept piling it on, didn't deny a thing. I had learned in Vietnam that the really hard nuts to crack were the people who had been trained to agree to anything and everything. Name names? So I named names, but concocted a huge list which didn't give them any useful info. There were too many names, too many fictitious names and every time I had to repeat, the list changed because I of course could not begin to remember what I had said previously.

Q: Did that get you into any later conflict with hostages who had taken a name and serial number only approach?

GRAVES: No, because when I found myself in a luxurious room with them at the end of our sojourn, I was gaunt, taciturn and hard. Used to sleeping on cold floors and going barefoot. While several in the room had spent the whole 14 months in the relative luxury of the embassy compound. They were demanding and outraged by our student guards. Their bravado seemed soft and silly. Only a very few hostages had been severely interrogated and done hard time in solitary confinement in cold prison cells. It was obvious that we had come through something our more fortunate colleagues didn't want to hear about. A colonel and I soon discovered we had at one point occupied adjacent cells. We were grateful for the respite but did not expect it to last for long. Neither the colonel nor I expected to survive Iran. We went to sleep each night expecting the hard-handed crew would come for us as they had so often in the past. But we were glad to be together, to talk with someone who knew what prison cells and solitary confinement were like.

Q: Were you mistreated?

GRAVES: I had some bad moments. The worst occurred when I was handcuffed to a seat in a van which plunged into a ravine and flipped over nose to tail several times. The driver was probably killed. I was knocked unconscious by the second flip. When the students from another car finally pulled me out it was almost dawn. I was covered with bruises and paralyzed by a back injury which still bothers me today.

I was surprised to learn after release that the media had been reporting that we were tortured. Our student captors were young and incompetent, but they worried about our well-being since Khomeini had specifically charged them with responsibility for our health. In my view, my interrogation did not include torture. I of course had bad moments and took refuge in fantasy. But I don't recall any case where I was willfully mistreated by the students. They sometimes talked about the bad guys among us being put on trial. I remember feeling terribly threatened when I was moved in with one of the communicators who was suspected of being CIA, and with a political officer who spoke excellent Farsi. He had lived for years in Iran before joining the Foreign Service and was married to an Iranian. We weren't allowed to talk to each other but when we heard the crowds going by, I watched his face thinking, "He can understand what they're saying and if he's worried, I'm worried." He didn't seem to be worried, so that helped.

Q: You were unable to speak.

GRAVES: We were not allowed to speak.

Q: People were monitoring that.

GRAVES: A guard was always with us. It wasn't yet necessary for me to learn to sleep on a really hard, marble floor. At this point, we were in a tagouti house and I had a bed. In fact we had to stay always on our beds since there was no space to do otherwise. But my bed broke down. The guard assumed I had done something to get the slat that fell out to use as a club. He was all excited about that club. He knew nothing about Western beds and couldn't imagine what that club was doing there. Of course, they didn't do anything about repairing the bed so the rest of the time I was there, I lived on an inclined plane.

Later, I was moved out into the desert. We were moved frequently, probably because the students feared an attack. In any case there were armed groups opposed to them and we did come under fire. I can remember lying on the floor while bullets pierced the wall over my head.

Q: Other groups of Iranians were shooting where you had been moved?

GRAVES: Right. The students came under armed attack.

Q: By whom?

GRAVES: No way to know. But it seems clear the mullahs were a long time consolidating their revolution and we hostages were useful in whipping up public support for them. As far as I know

this struggle was never reported in the media, which insisted we were being held to force the US to return the shah to Iran for trial.

As I mentioned earlier, while being moved blindfolded and handcuffed to a van seat in the middle of the night, the driver must have fallen asleep and plunged us into a ravine. My back was so badly injured that I couldn't move. The students had a terrible time getting me out. I didn't think I would survive the move. Miracle! I had no medical care but gradually recovered nonetheless.

Q: For the duration, you must have been in considerable pain.

GRAVES: I learned not to make moves that hurt.

Q: No medication or care at all.

GRAVES: No. But it wasn't because the students didn't care. They just didn't have means at that point to get me to a doctor. Just as when we were hungry and thirsty. I had the impression they were sharing what they had, not 100%, but they were hungry and thirsty, too. The moves in the middle of the night were sometimes long, as much as 12 hours on the road. One of the things we all feared was the pain of not being able to urinate. There is a point where that's all you think about. You worry about your bladder and nothing else.

Q: You were totally cut off from outside news, knowledge of the failed rescue attempt, reaction of the U.S. government?

GRAVES: Nothing at the time. Much later, we were told about the great victory of the Iranians. I think we were back in the chancery again when the rescue attempt took place, but we had no sure way of keeping track of time and dates so I can't be sure. In any case, it was spring and there were signs that we might soon be released. The students even had themselves photographed with us. They were making a big effort to feed us well and even take us over to the showers. We had gone, especially those of us who had been in the desert, weeks without washing, without shoes, sleeping on the floor. Here we had mattresses and showers. The students had been helping themselves to the embassy commissary's stores, including food to feed the Americans who wouldn't eat Iranian food. One Marine almost died out in the desert because he absolutely wouldn't eat anything but junk food from the commissary. I kept trying to get him to eat the Iranian yogurt. But he wouldn't touch it because it was live yogurt, which was exactly what he needed for his intestinal problem. But getting back to the shower room and a good laugh, we found that one of the commissary products the students had been using was rug shampoo. Imagine what it must have done to their heads! They could read "shampoo," but they didn't know about rugs.

Q: After months of being moved around and interrogation, there came a point when it sounds as if they virtually gave up on you and you were in a holding pattern pending release or something else.

GRAVES: Not exactly. The attitude of the students had changed. They were downright friendly and full of good cheer. Relaxed. We could even hear them playing soccer outside our chancery window. Then, suddenly, they were furious. Most of us were moved out of the chancery, out of Tehran. My guess is that the rescue attempt scared and infuriated them. They thought they had a deal cooking with Carter, that they had won and their onerous chores were coming to an end. Now they understood Carter's talk was just a smoke screen to lull them into reducing security measures. Instead of a deal, he sent them commandos. But for the sand storm and the rescuers incompetence there could have been a shoot-out. My guess is that most of us would have been killed.

Q: This occurred maybe 2/3's through the period that you were hostage?

GRAVES: It was in the spring.

Q: Without outside news, what were your feelings about Washington or the U.S. government? Did you say to yourself that they were doing everything possible or did you feel abandoned?

GRAVES: Both. One hostage even tried to commit suicide. There is no simple answer to that question. At times there was great impatience because we had little idea of what was going on. There were visits, but our visitors were carefully selected by the students and had to agree to restrictions on what they said. At Christmas, for example, there was a Protestant pastor. Many of the hostages were delighted to participate in a religious service. My main interest was a big table piled high with goodies. I hadn't seen fresh fruit in months. What I was really interested in was how much I could stuff into my pocket. When my pockets couldn't hold any more fruit I fitted in some nuts. Stupid, since I didn't have any way to crack them.

Q: Was there a feeling that the event was being used by the Iranians?

GRAVES: Yes. The students set up television cameras. No doubt the media showed the world how well we were being looked after. I had learned early on from the medical students that Khomeini said, "Yes" to their operation, but stipulated they had to protect our health. This greatly handicapped the students because to maintain authority over people who are losing hope is not easy and they did not have the option of using much force.

Q: But were not some threatened and mistreated?

GRAVES: We were of course frequently threatened with minor privations, but I don't know personally of any really serious mistreatment. The top military officers, the CIA station chief and others who were identified as CIA, and I were threatened with trial and death penalties, but the other hostages mostly brought privations on themselves, no doubt because they had a psychological need to be defiant.

Q: Admiral Stockton and others have written and talked about the mental games in Vietnam that longer held hostages played to keep their minds alive.

GRAVES: I suppose each one had his own way of coping. I did a lot of fantasizing, day dreaming. Then there was the Stockholm syndrome, prisoners who identified with their captors. I have no quarrel with the way my colleagues coped, except perhaps for the defiant ones who occasionally brought privation down on a whole group.

Q: Had you reading materials to occupy yourselves?

GRAVES: Yes. One of the things the students realized early on was that to avoid confrontations they had to keep us occupied. So they made a great effort to give us books from the embassy compound library. They ran a big book-lending operation until they discovered some hostages were slipping messages into their books. I never figured out why a hostage would go to great trouble to put messages in books, or why this worried our student guards. Perhaps the messages were just another act of defiance. As for the students, they had an exaggerated notion of our capabilities. For example, they confiscated our watches so we couldn't communicate with the outside à la Dick Tracy.

Q: The very books you had selected in your Washington job.

GRAVES: Yes, some of them were books from USIS. Others were donations to the library. Over the years people finished a book and dumped it in the library's box. An eclectic collection of paperbacks. I read a lot of books. At one point, they even hauled in for me the whole Great Books Shelf. I'm one of the few people in the world who has really read all of Freud. I came to see him as a complete fraud, but that's another story.

Q: But not the ability some of the Vietnam hostages may have had to discuss among themselves?

GRAVES: No, we couldn't talk to each other.

Q: As this terrible experience is coming to an end, are there any other things?

GRAVES: At the end, we were pretty hopeless because we were finally crammed into one of the shah's worst prisons. That was their solution after moving us around and finding that it was too dangerous. They brought us into Tehran and put us in this notorious prison, which they claimed wasn't a prison anymore because it had been decommissioned.

Q: Then there came a day when it seemed that you were moving towards release? You were getting better food, better treatment?

GRAVES: In that prison, as in earlier places, one of our great problems in the winter was the terrible cold. No way to warm up. In the toilet room, for example, the water ran all over the place and was frozen solid in the morning. We spent our time wheezing and coughing.

Q: A large number of you were by then assembled there?

GRAVES: I couldn't tell, but I had the impression that many were there. Then suddenly, we were

being moved to what appeared to be a sort of hotel in the north of Tehran, a relatively pleasant place. The food was much better and we were allowed to talk to each other. It looked as if something was happening. I was in a room with a top military officer. We compared notes. Our itineraries hadn't been all that different, although I had never seen him during our 14 month sojourn. Near the end, when they began to move people out, they left the colonel and me behind. We assumed we were going to be shot.

Much earlier, when we were in the chancery, we had been put against a corridor wall, blindfolded and handcuffed. They pumped shells into their chambers and let us agonize awhile before leading us back to our room which was in shambles. No doubt they were trying to scare us and thus maintain order.

Q: What made them think you were getting out of order?

GRAVES: I don't know. I was particularly shaken because I was asleep. Suddenly rough-handed masked men dragged me into the corridor. The two people who were in the same room with me were awake and saw that it only was bad theater.

One of the hard things for me were the handcuffs. Early on the students found some handcuffs in a safe. They put them on a few of us. So I learned to do everything two-handed. Whenever the handcuffs were removed, I had to laugh at myself. I still moved my hands in unison. The first night I was handcuffed I had a terrible fright because they can lock down if a button is pressed while there is pressure on the manacle. While I was asleep, I must have put pressure on the button and the manacle. I waked with one hand numb. I yelled at the student guard but he didn't pay much attention. When he finally understood the problem, he had to go in search of the student who had the key. Sleeping with handcuffs is difficult. But you get used to going without shoes. The pads on the bottom of your feet become leather and the blood circulation adapts to exposure, similar to your hands. After a couple of months, being barefooted didn't bother me. What bothered after release was wearing shoes. Too hot and confining, like wearing gloves indoors.

Q: We left you with the senior military advisor in the hotel.

GRAVES: Happily our turn to join the party came at last. We were examined by a group of Algerian doctors because the Iranians didn't want to have former hostages making false claims. But it hadn't occurred to the Iranians that I could chat in plain French with Algerians who, for the Iranian Moslems, were admirable Arab revolutionaries. The doctors confirmed we would soon be released and flown to Algeria. My talking with the doctors upset the Iranians who kept saying in their broken English, "You no speak." They didn't want me to tell my fellow hostages what I might learn from the doctors because they feared some hostages would become unruly. (On the plane to Algeria I became friendly with one of the doctors and kept in touch with him for years.)

Q: So, then you were suddenly in a convoy headed for the airport?

GRAVES: First, they had to get shoes on us. They led us into a room where there was a huge pile

of shoes. I had trouble finding anything that was bearable on my feet. Next, they confiscated our precious belongings --anything useful we had managed to stash in pillow cases. They promised that all our personal effects would be sent to us, including our watches, but nothing was ever returned. Fortunately, I had already removed the notes I made whenever I had pencil and paper. These I slipped into my under shorts with my other private parts, knowing the students were too chaste to search there. I still have those notes which helped me when I set to writing.

We were transported to the airport in a packed bus which stopped whenever some hostages became too unruly. The need to be defiant. The students were equally unable to act in their own interests. They formed a narrow gauntlet and jeered while we shuffled into the aircraft. I saw people I hadn't seen for 14 months, including our women officers. A joyous reunion.

Q: Of course, Bruce Laingen and the group in the Foreign Ministry.

GRAVES: Right. I saw them for the first time when I got aboard the plane.

Q: So, there was a feeling of euphoria when you lifted off.

GRAVES: Very much so. Bruce, however, didn't know quite what he should say to his people. He realized that, since he hadn't gone through the experience, he wasn't one of us. He sat down with me to discuss what he could say and what he had best not say. To his credit, he was sensitive enough to suspect that some of the ex-hostages might feel the U.S. government and the chargé were partly responsible for their misery. He was of course right. They were delighted to be released, but not happy with what had occurred and not happy with the powers that be. In Germany, when Carter came to visit us, there was great concern that he might receive a very bad reception indeed. As it turned out, he didn't because he didn't try to say anything except that how glad he was we were out. Had he said more, many of the hostages would have chewed him out.

Q: What could you advise Bruce to say and not say?

GRAVES: What I said was simply that he should express how glad he was to see us and not give any advice or instructions. Even more important, he should not presume to speak for the group or even use the term "we." He was grateful and handled himself well. He had a winning manner. He didn't antagonize anybody.

When we had a press conference, he didn't presume to speak for the group. He also asked me for advice in dealing with the press since I had worked as a journalist and served as a press attaché. I told him what I had always told ambassadors when they asked about dealing with the press. If it's good news, you should participate; if it's bad news, let the press attaché do his job. Also, if you don't like a question, rephrase it and then answer the question as you rephrased it. Do the same with follow-up question. Never answer a question you don't like. The professional journalist soon realizes you're too experienced to be easily trapped into saying what you don't want to say. He may complain that you're not answering his questions, but at least you won't have to try to repair unfortunate quotes in the press.

Q: Were you or he called on to pass on advice on the plane to the President on how he should approach this?

GRAVES: No. But when we arrived in Germany, we were swamped with bureaucrats, doctors, and psychiatrists. They all assumed we were fragile and needed counseling. A pain. On the other hand, I was invited to ex-Secretary Vance's room where I spent several hours talking with him. He asked good questions. What I told him may have been passed on to the Department and to Reagan, even though Vance by this time was no longer an official. In any case, I assume he passed what I had to report on to ex-President Carter.

Q: He had resigned after the hostage raid?

GRAVES: Right. So he wasn't seen as one of the bad guys. Personally, I liked him. I liked his humor and his way of asking questions. A relief after having to cope with all the self-styled prisoner experts and do-gooders.

Q: This was before the ceremonies, the debriefings, even the reunion with families.

GRAVES: Oh, yes. This was in Germany at the military hospital.

Q: I should have asked before whether as a hostage you received any mail, any communication.

GRAVES: A little, but much less than most of the other hostages.

Q: That is to say, actual mail to you, John Graves, from the family, or just parts of the mass mailings from Americans?

GRAVES: Mass mailings from well-meaning groups who wanted to keep our morale up. This kind of mail from adults was far less helpful than the mail from children who often seemed to know just what to write. In any event, the students kept shoveling impersonal mail to us. Their way of proving they were delivering the mail. All mail, both incoming and outgoing, was opened and scrutinized.

Q: It gave you a sense though how the issue was preoccupying the country?

GRAVES: Gradually, near the end, they even gave us some scissored news magazines. So we learned a lot at the very end, but not earlier. There were always hostages that had news because they got a lot of mail. Their news got passed around surreptitiously even though we were not allowed to talk to each other. So we did have some news, but much of it was distorted or inaccurate.

Q: Before we leave this chapter, do you want to say anything about the reintegration and depressurization from this experience?

GRAVES: Yes. Insofar as I could observe, most of the so-called "professional help" was of little

use to us. Some of the ex-hostages may have benefited from talking about themselves. Others seem to have gained peace of mind from religious activities. But a few never seemed to recover, never seemed able to accept that hostage glory dims and you become like everybody else. Some of the ex-hostages went through a lot of turmoil, but I doubt that the hostage experience scrambled them. However, the experience of being the center of attention after their release may have contributed to their undoing. Most of the people who survived well probably didn't have many serious personal problems to start with, and most of the ones that had great difficulty readjusting to wife, family, dog, shoes and sex probably had severe problems prior to being held hostage. I don't have the impression that the hostage experience in itself was the cause of all of the ensuing maladjustment. Vietnam was far more traumatic. Youngsters of 18 confronted with death and mayhem. Killing and seeing their buddies maimed and killed. Far more traumatic than anything that happened to the hostages.

Q: I have a sense over the last hour that you're at ease with the experience, without rancor vis à vis your captors, at least the students, that you've made your peace with it as a kind of a historical inevitability.

GRAVES: Inevitability? Be that as it may, I never had great rancor or ill feelings toward our captors. Many of the students were by nature gentle, but religion and revolution demanded that they impose on us. At best, they found it hard to understand some of our concerns. At times they were downright shocked by our ways. For example, when they discovered we urinated standing up and exposed rather than crouched down. I sometimes became exasperated by what seemed to me to be unnecessarily rigid restraints and stupid errors like dumping stale bread in the toilets or plugging American equipment into 220 volt outlets, thereby blocking the plumbing or destroying our electric heaters. Then I would ruefully remind myself that we would probably be faring worse if we were prisoners of American college kids who had to feed and care for us.

Sometimes they asked me to help them with their homework in English or invited me to play chess with them. The "Dwarf" often brought us extra clothing he had somehow got hold of. During Ramadan, when I was in solitary confinement in a dreary prison cell, I was always hungry by late afternoon. One of the students guards was a plump fellow who obviously liked to eat. I tempted him into sin with, "There must be some dates in the kitchen." I could see his mind working. If he brought me dates, a few might fall into his mouth on the way to my cell.

But I had ill feelings about American policy in Iran, which I think, over the years, was not in the interest of the United States. I had more ill feeling concerning the bankers who probably set back our release by months with their demands for guarantees that their investments be protected. Iranian funds abroad were frozen. So there was a great deal of controversy about how all that money would get divvied up.

Q: The bankers or transition of administration from Carter to Reagan?

GRAVES: I think the Iranians' hatred of Carter, who talked agreement while organizing an armed rescue attempt, prolonged our captivity also. They didn't want to release us while Carter was still president. After our release I was sorry to see that the Congressional promises of

investigations were shelved. It seemed to me that America should have had opportunity to air U.S. policy and interventions in Iran over the years. As a professional writer, I set to work to promote such an airing. I had a good contract with "Penthouse" magazine, but I was refused authorization to publish. I tried participating in American talk shows. Frustration. Only human interest stuff. No substance allowed. I didn't even manage to effectively make the point that our captors really were students. For America and Americans they just had to be dirty Communists working for the Russians.

Q: As an outsider, one has the impression that the hostage experience was a bonding one among hostages for some, that they have kept in touch closely over the years, and for others a divisive one among hostages. How do you view that?

GRAVES: It was said over and over again with reason that there were 52 people, very different people, and that generalizations would be misleading. I, for example, had little interest in joining the group Bruce Laingen organized in Washington. But I enjoyed seeing some of them and maintained close relations with one former hostage who came with his family to visit us in Rabat. The hostage experience was never my whole life. It isn't important in my life now. When I discovered I couldn't get a debate started regarding U.S. policy in Iran because I couldn't publish, I gradually stopped following closely events in Iran. I was never an Iranian specialist.

Q: A lot of hostages did publish. One thinks of Morehead Kennedy's book, "Ayatollah in the Cathedral" and there have been a number of others. Those were accounts when they retired. What do you think of those accounts such as you've read?

GRAVES: I read them all and found parts of them interesting but on balance disappointing because none took issue with American policy in Iran. The central business of career diplomats, American Foreign Service people, is American policy and actions abroad. The books focused on personal experiences. One book told of a hostage's friendship with a young Iranian. Others evoked the saving grace of religious faith. Happily, none dished out distilled hatred. You mentioned Morehead Kennedy who retired early from the Foreign Service and took a job with a religious organization, which turned out rather badly. He was confronted with dangerous intolerance and dogma.

Q: John, you're out of Iran. You're going through a transition. You're back in Washington. It is 1981. You went then from 1982-1986 as the public affairs officer in Montevideo, Uruguay. How did your transition from hostage lead into that assignment?

GRAVES: I had accrued a lot of home leave. For once, I was able to take it all, which is rare in the case of senior officers. I thoroughly enjoyed it and did a lot of writing and public speaking. I also served in BEX and learned about examinations and recruitment. But I'm a field hand. I wanted to go back overseas. As a former hostage I pretty well could have had any assignment I wanted. All those years in French-speaking countries, I kept thinking I would like to try something else, but my French always persuaded Personnel that I could best serve where my French would be useful. Besides, I have little language-learning ability. (My aptitude test scores showed that it would be foolish to assign me to FSI to learn a foreign language.) I knew the test

was right. No ear and no memory. I had learned something of Uruguay from my experience in Santa Isabel where the UN people I got to know best were from Uruguay. It sounded like a fascinating country, an incredible social experiment So I requested assignment to Uruguay. I spent something like nine months in Spanish-language training but never got to the required 3 level, even though proper students arrive there after four months of training. Nonetheless the folks at FSI were very kind to me. A big pow-wow in the director's office where I was frank to admit that my teachers were excellent and the fault was all mine. They kept asking me what they could do to help. In desperation, I finally suggested that part of what they were teaching didn't have much relevance to my case. For example, the course spent time trying to make English speakers understand the idea of grammatical gender, which I was born to. I finally suggested a transition course, similar to those which converted Spanish speakers to Portuguese or vice-versa. So I was given individual day-long lessons with teachers who knew some French. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience at FSI and my teachers, who came from various Latin American countries and Spain. But I made very slow progress and the powers that be finally gave me a waiver to go to Uruguay without adequate language skills.

Q: Do you think the mental strain of being 14 months a hostage and living with maybe not making it out and then you go cold turkey into nine months of intensive language training. That's pretty tough.

GRAVES: No, I don't think so. I just didn't have any aptitude for foreign-language learning, which is the case for most adults. All children have a marvelous, built in ability to learn natural languages, but they lose most of this program by puberty. According to recent research, childhood-acquired languages are lodged in a different sector of the brain than languages acquired as an adult. For an adult, there are languages that are closer or further removed from the so-called native language. Thus Chinese is a very hard language for English speakers whereas Spanish is relatively easy.

Q: What I'm asking is whether having just been a hostage impeded in any way your ability to concentrate over long periods of time.

GRAVES: No doubt my ability to concentrate wasn't as good as when I was twenty, but I doubt that this had much to do with the hostage experience. Be that as it may, I found grappling with Spanish instructive. During my years in French-speaking countries, I observed that many of my colleagues had problems working in French and avoided it when possible. Some even went downhill, gradually losing what French they had learned in FSI. They had hang-ups I could observe but couldn't fully understand. When I arrived in Uruguay, I couldn't communicate. My first experience of being cut off. I labored in an embassy language class every morning. I listened and watched television every evening. At the end of two years, I was at the 3/3 level and could more or less carry on business in Spanish. At the end of my third year I was tested at the 4 level, fluent in Spanish and at ease with Uruguayans. But I have never forgotten what it was like to pick up a telephone knowing I was in for an ordeal. I finally came to understand my colleagues' problems in French-speaking countries. I remember a political officer in Rabat complaining that he had been doing fine talking with a Moroccan at a reception until I came along and joined in. My native fluency caused the Moroccan to switch to normal colloquial French, which was nearly

incomprehensible to my colleague.

ELIZABETH ANN SWIFT
Political Officer
Tehran (1979-1981)

Elizabeth Ann Swift was born in Washington, DC in 1940. She received a bachelor's degree from Radcliffe College. Ms. Swift entered the State Department in 1962 and the Foreign Service in 1963. Her career included positions in the Philippines, Indonesia, Iran, Greece, and Jamaica. Ms. Swift was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: In 1979 you got a real plum assignment. Would you describe how this came about?

SWIFT: By mistake basically. I was up on the Hill and I needed an assignment. This time I really did need an assignment abroad. I had been three tours back in the States, and one up on the Hill. I'd been '71 to '79 and I really wanted out. Also my entire career had been in East Asia, except for that one period on the Benelux desk. So I really wanted a job outside of the East Asian Bureau, which was a mistake because I could have gotten pretty good jobs in East Asia. But trying to go to another bureau was real difficult. I mean difficult for two reasons: one, because I was an unknown quantity for them; and two, I was a woman. So this was the period in my life where I really hit up against being a woman. Being a junior officer woman is no big problem, but as you come up through the ranks and get to the point that you are now qualified for higher ranking jobs, then it got tricky. I was working in the mainline bureaus, rather than AF. AF was just a wonderful place for women because they took women and did all sorts of wonderful things with them. But the EUR bureau, and the NEA bureau were not as good. My own bureau, EA, would have been quite easy to deal with. Trying to get out and go someplace else was real hard, and I wanted to go as Consul General to Palermo. I thought that would be good fun, just because it happened to be coming up and it was ready to go. And I was told in no uncertain terms that no-way were they going to put a woman down there. Now, I did not realize that a woman had been down there about ten years before. But naturally when a woman gets out of the job, then of course a woman can't do it anymore because you're dealing with all these terrible male-chauvinist Sicilians and they won't have anything to do with a woman. It was nonsensical.

What would have been a much better argument was that the job was one grade above my present grade, and I spoke no Italian.

Q: Also because the Italian hands tend to be Italian. They've been back again and again.

SWIFT: Oh, yes. But my competition wasn't coming from anybody who was an Italian hand actually. It was coming from all sorts of other people. There would have been a perfectly good reason. There were all sorts of reasons for me not to get that job. I saw them perfectly well. But one of the main reasons given me was that I was a woman, and they didn't want no woman down

there. And I also looked at a Pol/Mil job in Korea. Phil Habib roared with laughter. He said, "Ann, you're just not going to be allowed in any of those ginseng parties."

Q: You didn't miss a thing.

SWIFT: I could have gone to Korea. I would have pushed, and they would have given in. But I really was trying to get out of East Asia. So the jobs that I was being offered were just not really wonderful. And along came one of my good friends in Personnel, and said, "Oh, how would you like to go as Deputy in the Political Section in Tehran?" And at the point, at the point they came along I was getting a little desperate. One of the problems was it was off cycle. It was January and they hadn't assigned me up until the end of January.

Q: Normally the summer period is the assignment cycle.

SWIFT: So I was off cycle anyway, so it was a little bit difficult. Fascell was glad to have me up there as long as I wanted to be up on the Hill. I really did not want to use Fascell...I mean, obviously I had a great deal of potential influence that I could have used to get an assignment, but I didn't want to use it--which is just my stupid pride. So I had not been telling Fascell and his guys how much trouble I was having. It was a certain amount of loyalty to the Department. So when this thing with Tehran came up I thought it was kind of fun. The Shah had been kicked out, the place was in chaos, but it looked like it was going in an interesting and reasonable direction.

Q: There's nothing a Foreign Service officer likes better than chaos.

SWIFT: Well, that's true, and it was a good job in a big world area. And I thought it would be a real winner. So I said, "Sure, I'll do it." This is Personnel coming to me, and saying, "Would you like to go?" At which point, I said "Sure, okay, I'll do it." At which point the entire system, the old boy network, leaped on me and said, "No way. Put a woman in the number two slot in the Political Section in Iran at such a time? Nonsense. It will not happen." So I said, "Now wait a minute guys. You came to me wanting me to go to Iran. This is not some place that it's real easy to get people to go to. You all came to me. Now, if you want to say to me that a woman cannot do the job because you've got a whole bunch of Muslim fanatics that I won't be able to communicate with, fine. The fanatics were not that fanatical at that moment. If you think that there's a good concrete reason that a woman can't do the job, tell me. I am no radical and I'll let this go." Well, no, they didn't want to do that, and Vic Tomseth who was there as Political Counselor, looked at it very seriously, and called me and said, "No, Ann, I don't think it's a problem. I think you can do it." Bill Sullivan, who was still out there at the time, I ran into in the corridor and he just laughed at me. He said, "Ann, it's not that you can't do the job, it's why would you ever want to come?" So I was getting different readings.

The DAS for the area was a woman, and she took up my cause and pushed it through the NEA bureau.

Q: With friends like that...

SWIFT: Yes. So I got assigned. I started off into language training and right about that time the Political Counselor position in Kuala Lumpur came open, and Bob Fritz was looking for somebody to go. It was just the right rank, right everything. And Bob said, "Why don't you go?" Well, I was too proud. I should have backed out of Iranian language training at that point and stop causing the system such trouble, and gone to KL, but I didn't. It was one of the stupidest decisions I ever made.

The next thing that happened was that the system got this wonderful idea, Henry Precht got this wonderful idea, and they found another officer. They were trying to build up the section and they found another officer, but he was one grade above me. And they were going to put him in the Political Section. You know, if they're going to put him in the Political Section...he was also a grade above the Political Counselor. He was going to have to swallow his pride, and work under the Political Counselor, Vic Tomseth, but it was going to be too much for him to swallow his pride and work under me too. And therefore, rather than me being deputy in the Political Section, I was going to be like number three, but it was a wonderful job anyway. And that was when I lost my temper, and said...this was Henry called me in and tried to talk...

Q: Henry Precht was the desk officer.

SWIFT: Was the country director, and Henry tried to talk me into it, and I just got madder and madder. He was telling me what a wonderful job, and wonderful opportunity it was, and I got madder and madder. He called me at night, and by the next morning I was so angry you just would not believe it. At that point, I called Ben Read who was the head of management, whom I knew, and I had not talked to before. And I said, "Ben, I'm really sorry to bother you, this is absurd, but...and I put the whole thing in front of him. And I said, "Look, this is Tehran. I am not nuts, there's no particular reason for me to go to Tehran. I'm happy to back out of it, but I will not go as number three in the Political Section. I will not have this done to me. So all I'm asking you, is that either send me to the job to which I was assigned, or pull me out---but protect me." You know how the system is, you pull out of the job...if I would have pulled out they would have just creamed me. And Ben called me back later that day or the next day, and said, "Oh don't worry about it, Ann. It's all fixed." And off I went as number two.

Q: As number two.

SWIFT: ...as number two. So I got out there and I was only there two months before the embassy got taken.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived?

SWIFT: Reasonably chaotic. The embassy was quite small. It had been overrun on the 14th of February in '79. I got there in August. On the way to Tehran I went to London and stayed over with friends, and went out to the plane Monday morning. I boarded the plane which was going through Frankfurt, and was sitting beside a lady who turned out to be Iranian, who said, "What do you mean you're going to the embassy? The embassy has just been taken again." And I opened up the paper and there was the story that the embassy indeed had been taken again on the 15th of

August.

What actually had happened was that the embassy had called a different set of Islamic revolutionaries in. The embassy had an out of control group that was providing security, and they had asked the government to come get this out of control group out. But at any rate I could have gotten off at Frankfurt...but no, I went on in. I mean it was crazy. We arrived at night, Vic Tomseth picked me up, drove me back in, ignoring all lights, nobody paid any attention to traffic lights. It wasn't totally lawless, but it was close to. Not lawless the way Somalia was, but it was pretty crazy. And I was there two months and just getting established. It was fun. It was turning out that Vic was right. There were certain things I couldn't do, but there were four of us in the political section.

Q: I realize we're talking about a rather short run time there. You arrived in August, but how would one go about in a situation like that? Were there people who wanted to talk and get out?

SWIFT: No, you were free to travel almost anywhere in the country. People went out every weekend to various parts of the country. John Lindburg and Mike Metrinko, who at that point were fairly young officers, both spoke fluent Farsi, and both were developing very good contacts with the Muslim leadership. In terms of my contact, I was handling the Foreign Ministry which was easy because they were all very westernized, and I was starting to get out more and more into the community. This was before the days you had to wear scarfs.

Q: How were you observing events? I mean, what precipitated the takeover? From your point of view, how did you observe the events that led over to the takeover?

SWIFT: Basically you had all these factions going back and forth. It's almost impossible, and I still don't think that we understand how Iran works. Iran does not work like a western country. Even in East Asian countries you can make sense out of their politics. You have to change your head when you look at Iran. There are lots of political parties and factions, they mean absolutely nothing. It's the inner workings of shifting groups of alliances back and forth. It's all very informal. And at the time we were there there was this shadowy revolutionary council which later became a real thing. I remember having a terrible fight with Henry Precht who said the revolutionary council didn't exist. But the revolutionary council, which was basically Khomeini's way of controlling the country, was made up of some military leaders, a lot of the Ayatollahs, and some of the leadership of the government, but depending on who he trusted from moment to moment, he would move them out and it shifted.

I think that the revolutionary council was extremely nervous that the United States government was going to try to come back in, and put its own people in power. I think they were absolutely right that was exactly what we were trying to do. There were supposed to be elections, and there were elections I think finally in December, or something like that. And Khomeini's people were just bound and determined that the moderates would not get back in. The whole issue of having the Shah in the United States was an extremely emotional one for the Iranians. I don't think I really realized at the time exactly how emotional it was, but what it basically meant...they looked upon it as just one more sign that the United States government was really fully intent on

restoring the Shah, or at least restoring a right wing government to Iran. They were not about to believe that we were going to let the Shah in just for medical treatment. They saw much deeper...

Q: The issue was that the Shah...where was he? In Egypt at the time, or Morocco?

SWIFT: No, I think by that time he had gone to Panama, or he was in Latin America, and he turned out to have cancer and he needed an operation which obviously could have been done in many places. But Henry Kissinger got to Carter, and to a certain extent I had to agree with Kissinger. Kissinger's argument was that this guy was one of our major friends who had worked very, very closely with us for a thousand years, and the United States could not slap him in the face this way. That here he was very, very sick, he needed medical assistance, we had it, and on humanitarian grounds the only thing to do was let him in. Kissinger was a funny one to be talking about humanitarian grounds. And Kissinger, of course, was very tied in to the upper levels of the State Department, and the White House, and to Brzezinski. I think Brzezinski felt very much like Kissinger did. And Bruce, and various other people at the embassy, warned...Bruce Laingen who was the charge, warned the Department in no uncertain terms that they could set off real problems by letting the Shah in. And they knew.

Q: You were in the Political Section. How were you reading this?

SWIFT: There would be trouble, there was no question. But nobody quite thought there would be that much trouble. We had no conception of what Brzezinski was doing. I don't think anybody still does. But Brzezinski met with Prime Minister Bazargan and Foreign Minister Yazdi in Algeria. And I think even more than letting the Shah in...the Shah was symbolic of what the Khomeini people thought was going on. The meeting between Brzezinski and Yazdi, and Bazargan, really made the Iranians think that the United States Government was coming back, and was going to work with these moderates to overthrow the Islamic revolution. Which indeed is what we apparently were trying to do. Quite clearly the whole intent of U.S. policy at that point, which was not being run from the embassy but from the White House, was to block the Islamic leadership from control of the country. That was the idea. The problem is that it seems perfectly normal nowadays to say that we were opposing Khomeini because we now know the excesses that government went to. However, in 1979, the legitimate revolutionary government was the Islamic government, and what we were trying to do was move it more to the moderate side. And what we did, we ticked off Khomeini and the more radical Islamics. And I think the meeting in Algeria did it, even more than letting in the Shah. The Iranians used the Shah to whip up things. Letting the Shah in meant to them that we were moving towards support of the Shah, which we may have been.

Coming from a human rights background, I did not like the Shah. But I did feel the United States had supported him for ever and ever, and that we shouldn't run scared.

Q: I was in Naples at the time, and as it led up to it I didn't see what else we could do.

SWIFT: It was very simple what we could have done. It was very, very simple but we were unwilling to do it, which was what I think really set them off. We could have said to the Shah,

"Okay, look, we're perfectly willing to let you in here for medical assistance. However, understand that there are certain conditions and you will have to abide by them. No political actions in the States. You will have to renounce any intentions you have of ever returning to Iran. If you want to come in as a private citizen, and not the Shah of Iran, welcome, but you have to make it absolutely clear that you're giving up your pretensions to interfere in Iranian affairs." He never would have done it and he never would have come in. I think that it would have been possible to take that stand. We recognized the revolution, we recognized the new regime, why not say to the Shah, "If you want to come and use our facilities, welcome, but you've got to stop being political."

Q: In talking to Bruce Laingen in a series of interviews which are continuing now, and he was saying that really things were looking up.

SWIFT: Oh, hell. This is where I go bonkers.

Q: Well, he says he was wrong.

SWIFT: Yes, and I was sitting down there saying they're not looking up. You're looking at the person who was fighting with Bruce, and with the Economic Counselor. The Econ Counselor was saying things are better, we can bring American business back in, things are getting better, things are wonderful. Isn't it dandy. I was watching increasing attacks on...and you didn't know where they were coming from, you didn't have a clue where they were coming from...but increasing numbers of attacks on power stations in Tehran, more and more unrest among the Arab community down in the south. Things were just wildly unstable. I had no feel for where they were coming from. All I knew was the Bazargan government, which was the one we were supporting and trying to build, was not very powerful. These were the indications we were getting at the time we got taken, and this was the big fight I had with Henry Precht. I said to Henry, "Look, Bazargan and Yazdi are not the people that run this government. Don't look to them as the people who run the government. There is this thing called the Revolutionary Council, and the Revolutionary Council runs the government. Yazdi and Bazargan are part of this shadowy Revolutionary Council, and that is where the power is. It comes out of Khomeini; it is not Bazargan and Yazdi. If you think that Yazdi and Bazargan are the real forces of power in this government, you're wrong." And I was told I was stupid, I knew nothing of what I was talking about, I knew nothing about Iran, I had had no experience in Iran, and shut up small child, and forget it. I still get angry. This was two weeks before we got taken. Henry came out through on a trip. I was not speaking to him when he left. Quite literally I walked out of his office.

Q: Here is a problem of the new boy or the new girl on the block coming in often with a different point of view which can be more objective.

SWIFT: The people who had been stationed at the embassy through the earlier period thought things were getting better. To somebody like me coming out in August, this was the craziest, most lawless, situation I'd ever been in. There were mounting demonstrations against the embassy. I mean, you had demonstrations all the time, huge demonstrations. This place was crazy, and extremely, extremely dangerous. And for the older officers to try to minimize what

was going on was insane, and that's what they were doing. And they were doing it on orders from Washington.

Q: *Was it orders from Washington, or...*

SWIFT: It was on orders from Washington.

Q: *...sometimes you try to put the best face on things, and all things will work out if we just...*

SWIFT: You know how it works. It's not really on orders from Washington. It was just that Washington, Brzezinski, and the State Department all wanted things to get better with Iran. So did Bruce. And therefore anybody who thought that things weren't getting better, was an alarmist and crazy. I'm always an alarmist and crazy, so there you go. I did not expect what happened to happen, but I just knew that we were in a terribly dangerous situation. I did expect what happened to happen a couple of days beforehand, because I was told it was going to. It was a whole mindset of "we've got to make relations better with this government, therefore it will be better. And if we can keep saying that's its better, and if we can keep saying that things are calming down..."

There are two things driving this. One was that the White House was desperate to start up economic relations with the country again, and to work back into those damn sites up there on the border.

Q: *The listening sites, electronic monitoring.*

SWIFT: And secondly, the upper leadership of the embassy, and everybody in the embassy who was married wanted their wives back in. There were no families there, and you couldn't get the wives back in unless you could say that things were safe. And they were desperately trying to get the wives back in. I mean, this was running policy. It's just nutty. Can you imagine what would have happened if we'd had the wives in at the time that the embassy went down?

After the Shah got let in, it became quite clear that bad things were going to happen. And my friends at the Foreign Ministry told me that something awful was going to happen to the embassy. I took off that weekend thinking the embassy was going to be taken over that weekend. And what's always astounded me, was that it was absolutely clear to all of us that there was no way...and it was clear to me, that there was no way Bazargan and Yazdi could guarantee the safety of the embassy. No way. The only person who could guarantee the safety was Khomeini, and to a lesser extent Rafsanjani.

Q: *Here you were Deputy Chief of the Political Section...*

SWIFT: ...actually on and off again, acting.

Q: *How about dealing with Khomeini and reporting on...*

SWIFT: One of our big problems was that Khomeini, and the whole bunch of Ayatollahs, were anti-American. There were some that were easier to deal with and we were talking to the easier ones. Bruce was dealing with Yazdi. My officers in the Political Section were dealing closely with Beheshti and his people and some of the other ones. So we had our antenna into these places, but Iran is a place of massive plots, and you could never tell from moment to moment who was plotting what where.

At any rate, it was sort of clear in those last few days that something terrible was going to happen. However, remember that all of us were of a mindset. Certainly I was at that point, that if the embassy was taken, and we were basically defenseless...these mobs would come by and any time they wanted to get us they could. But it had been taken once before, and we'd been released. And that was what we assumed was going to happen. At least that is what I assumed was going to happen. It would be one of these relatively dangerous takeovers, but then the embassy would be turned back. I mean, who had ever held an embassy hostage before? Never.

Q: The world wouldn't stand for it.

SWIFT: No, that they might take the embassy, and then we'd all get evicted, or something like that. That was the kind of assumption that I think most of us were working under. Certainly I was.

Q: Would you like to describe what happened?

SWIFT: No.

Q: Okay.

SWIFT: No, because it is all over the place and in eight billion books and I see no point in...

Q: Okay. Were you getting any information while you were being held...this is what? 444 days. Any intimation towards the end that something would come out. How did you feel about getting out? Did you feel completely...

SWIFT: Oh, I didn't think we were going to get out. I couldn't believe in the beginning that they didn't...the fact that the U.S. government didn't break relations with the Iranian government within the first couple of days of us being held, is just mind boggling to me still. I assumed that some sort of Cambodian type rescue like the Mayaguez would be run rather quickly, and was nothing but astounded that it wasn't run. Assumed we'd all be killed if they ran it but assumed that the government would have to. And assumed that our lives were really hanging in the balance every day.

Q: Were you getting any intimation towards the end...we're talking about after Reagan was elected President in November of 1980, that you might get released?

SWIFT: There were all these rumors of release, and not release that kept occurring. There was a

period before the rescue attempt that they'd nearly worked out an agreement, and then the thing fell through. So we would hear these things about we might get released, and we might not. And along about November or so, or October there was one spate that it sounded like they might start releasing us again, and then that fell through. And then as we worked down toward the elections...I can remember one of the guys coming in...we didn't have a clue what was going on. One of the guys came in and said, "Do you know who's running in the elections?" And I think at that point we didn't know it was Reagan. He said Reagan was going to win, and we just roared with laughter. The last we'd heard Carter was in fine shape, and there was no way Ronald Reagan could win.

Q: Ronald Reagan was considered sort of a joke.

SWIFT: I can't remember when it was, but in one of these discussions one of these Iranian guys came in and said, "You all better hope you get out before Ronald Reagan comes in because he will take military measures, and all of us will die." And I think that was quite possible too. They just figured that when Reagan came in that they believed his rhetoric, that indeed he would take action. So, I have never been one for this great theory of Casey going off and cutting deals. I assume that Casey was talking to the Iranians but...

Q: Just to put in context in the last political campaign there was the idea that somehow the Reagan people said, "keep the hostages in place," which was terribly damaging to Carter, and probably was the main reason he lost, although there were other reasons, and then, "We can cut a deal, or something like that after I'm elected."

SWIFT: I've never believed that that was true, never. I have always thought it was perfectly creditable to think that Casey and some of the Republicans had contacts with the Iranians, especially when it looked like Reagan was going to win, that they would be talking to the Iranians and saying various things to them like, "If you don't let these people go, you're going to be in big bad shape." Because you know the Iranians timed our release to the precise moment that Reagan made his acceptance speech--which I thought was amazing.

Q: When you came out of there...a couple of questions: one, how did you feel? I mean you'd had plenty of time to brood about the State Department. What did you feel about the State Department, the Foreign Service?

SWIFT: I'd worked in East Asia, I'd been through the pull out of Saigon. I was on the task force for Mayaguez.

Q: Mayaguez being a ship that was taken over by a Cambodians and we attacked at a great loss of life on our side.

SWIFT: The loss of life was when a helicopter went down in Thailand and part of the rescue mission collapsed. I had assumed all the way along that everybody back in the States was desperate and worried about us. I never felt abandoned. There was no way the State Department was going to abandon us. I had too many friends, and I've never quite understood how people

could feel that they were abandoned. There was no question in my mind that the President had the right to make a decision that might cost me my life. That the President might take a decision to try to rescue us that might well get us killed. Or that he might take some sort of decision that would get the Iranians so mad that they would execute us, or something like that. But it never occurred to me that people weren't very worried about us. When I signed up for the Foreign Service, I signed up for whatever happened. I cannot say that I was particularly delighted with the thought that I might get shot or killed, and if you'd asked me did I want them to come to our rescue physically, I would have told you no, because I thought a good many of us would get killed. But I would never have said it's not the right of the President of the United States to make that decision. And I know he would make it realizing that indeed he might get a lot of us killed, but that is one of those awful decisions you have to make as a President. A lot of my colleagues didn't feel that way.

Q: How about when you came back? When you got back to Washington how was it?

SWIFT: It was crazy. The psychiatrists that met us in Wiesbaden...you know, all of us had varying degrees of guilt, and upset about various things. I mean, heck, I sort of felt that I lost the embassy. Bruce feels that he lost the embassy. Everybody feels they lost the embassy. And from the time that we got taken we had absolutely no ability to control our destinies. None. There was a tale around that I had refused to go out with the women because I didn't want to abandon the rest of the people at the embassy. Well, nonsense. Nobody ever asked me. I had absolutely zip control over anything that I did. So I certainly didn't feel myself a hero in any way, shape or form, just the opposite. And to come back to this outpouring of joy, and triumph, where we had been sort of glorified, was real hard to deal with. And what the psychiatrists in Wiesbaden told us is just don't go out there and try to tell everybody how you're no hero, they're not going to believe you, they're not going to deal with it. Just leave it be. It was an interesting experience because you learn to know how movie stars must feel, and a lot of very public people. There was one person out there that was me, and there was another person that was this hostage, and the two of them had very little to do with one another, and I just let it be.

Q: When you came back obviously you'd been through this and the Department I assume was trying to, "what do you want?"

SWIFT: Yes, they were wonderful.

Q: For one thing the State Department had learned, there was a time early on where if you were a hostage...I mean these are single hostages, nobody mentioned it, but they were treated like pariahs, nobody wanted to get close to them, or something like that. We've gone through a lot of soul searching on this whole hostage thing.

SWIFT: I give Sheldon Krys the most incredible high marks. Sheldon at that point was the head of NEA/EX. He was the executive director for the NEA Bureau. He pulled the damnest stunts for us. I mean, he was wonderful. When we came back in, USIA told its people...Kate was furious because Kate wanted to go abroad, Kate Koob, who was with me, and was told none of the USIS people will be assigned abroad. "You're back here for a year and we're going to watch you, to see

that you're not crazy." They didn't say it in those terms, but they said nobody is going out. For the State Department they had obviously, and as I say, I put a lot of this to Sheldon because I think a lot of it was his planning, although everybody was involved. I don't think there was anybody in the State Department that wasn't just turning themselves inside out for us. I can remember Harry Barnes, who was Director General, came out on that trip to Wiesbaden and he had a list all made up of these worldwide choice assignments for all of us. Where did we want to go? What did we think would be fun? Anyplace that we wanted to go that was open, was ours. Generally speaking, at grade, or a little bit higher. I mean, really plum jobs. I was offered something in New Zealand, something in Jakarta, I was offered all of these wonderful, wonderful jobs. I was in no shape, mentally, or anything, to go off abroad again. I simply told them, "Look, you put me in that same situation again, I'm going to tell the Marines to fire. You do not want me any place in an embassy where I might be faced with a mob again, because my reactions are going to be extremely irrational. I tell you right now."

So when Harvard offered me the opportunity to come up there for a year, I leaped at it, and the Department worked it out, and it was wonderful.

Q: What were you doing at Harvard?

SWIFT: I was at the Center for International Affairs as one of their fellows for the year.

Q: What were you working on?

SWIFT: Whatever struck my fancy. I had thought about going to the Kennedy School, and then picked the International Center because it just seemed a more free-flowing program, and a little bit more fun. I was trying to get into management, and learn a lot about management techniques, computer stuff, and then a lot of international relations. I did a paper on the role of the U.S. ambassador. It was fun. It was just a nice, nice year, it was very interesting.

Q: Were you getting any reflections on how the academic world viewed our Iranian policy?

SWIFT: I tried to stay as far away from Iranian policy as far as I could. I had had it. I really didn't want to have anything to do with Iran. I really still to this day like Iranians. Iranians are fun people, they're very bright, they're just a little crazy, but very, very bright. You cannot meet an Iranian and not be involved in politics immediately. Their psyche is tied to the various permeations of Iranian politics. They are all on one side or another, and they're all scheming. They're all deeply involved and fascinated by their country, and by how their country is governed. You can't go to a party with Iranians but that you're immediately sucked into various things Iranian. Everybody that I would have dealt with after I got back would have assumed back here that I would be pro-Shah, which I absolutely wasn't, or pro-Bazargan, which I wasn't, nor Yazdi, because I thought they were a bunch of idiots. And very, very anti-Islamic revolution, which I also wasn't. I just thought, stay away away from it.

Q: Then you came back from there, and its really a drastic change of course. You still had a certain amount of the aura of having come out, and you were recovering from this thing. So how

come you ended up taking the direction you did?

SWIFT: I'd always liked consular. This is why as a senior officer I'm now absolutely determined that somehow you need to give all incoming junior officers a taste of consular, and if we can go back to the system where we gave them a taste of the other cones as well, it would be a really good idea. I like consular. I hated my last consular boss in Manila, and it caused real problems. But my feeling always was that while I wanted to be a political officer, I would be quite happy doing consular work because I liked it. So consular was always my second choice. I just decided that I'd had enough of this banging my head against the policy bricks. I was very discouraged. I'd gone through all of this business with human rights which I really believed in.

Q: You had arms sales to the Philippines.

SWIFT: Oh, arms sales to the Philippines, the Vietnam war, you name it, we'd had it. I had gone through this business of being really a committed human rights person, and had watched Carter come in saying that he was going to be all for human rights, and watched him back way off. And because when I'm committed, I'm real committed, and I can't help it. I just thought, for your own sanity it would be better to take yourself out of political stuff, especially under Ronald Reagan.

Q: Oh, yes. I forgot about Ron.

SWIFT: Yes. Remember Ronald Reagan that I came back to? I left with a fairly liberal Democratic government, and I come back with Ronald Reagan. I mean, it was just absolutely unbelievable. So I think that no matter who had been there, because I really thought that Carter had...Carter certainly with Iran had betrayed everything he ever said about human rights. But interestingly enough, I pushed Bruce into a thing with human rights that really backlashed on the embassy badly because I made Bruce go do a demarche.

RICHARD H. MOREFIELD
Consul General
Tehran (1979-1981)

Richard H. Morefield was born and raised in California. He attended the University of San Francisco and graduated in 1951. He attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he received his masters degree in 1956. He served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. Mr. Morefield entered the foreign service in 1956. His postings included Norway, Colombia, Uruguay, Iran, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by William Morgan in 1990.

MOREFIELD: As a result of my going to Bogotá, and doing a good job, I think, in motivating and going through a very difficult transition period, I got a call from Barbara Watson; would I consider going to Iran?

Q: *Which we take as a compliment, and perhaps, other things, too, in retrospect.* [Laughter]

MOREFIELD: It is very hard to resist when a very strong-willed assistant secretary wants to twist your arm.

Q: *Right, and does it well.*

MOREFIELD: Yes.

Q: *"My dear."* [Laughter]

MOREFIELD: One of the things you could say in response, "Well, why me?" The U.S. Government and the State Department, at times, may be dumb. But it's not stupid. And when it was clear that the revolution had succeeded, and there was a need to come to some kind of accommodation with the new revolutionary government, it was also clear that the corps of people who had been Farsi trained, who had been identified with the Shah's regime, just couldn't exist with the new government.

The people that we kept there were young officers that had been in some of the consulates, who had contact with the general population, rather than with the palace procedures.

Q: *Had others been in the mill, if you will--in the pipeline?*

MOREFIELD: One of the problems is that it takes 44 weeks to get through Farsi. While the Department had been making a strong effort in order to get new officers to Iran, they didn't have to run the consular section.

In one of the early meetings with the revolutionary government, they told us that there were going to be a number of criteria on which our relations with them were going to be judged. One was military spare parts. And, surprisingly, the second one was student visas.

Q: *Oh, yes. I say "oh, yes," Dick, because I remind you that before you got there, by about two or three years, I inspected that distinguished post. And I must say, I got some insights into what they were interested in and visas was out there, number one.*

MOREFIELD: I think it's insightful as to why. In Iran they had the French baccalaureate system, in which they would graduate about 135,000 high school students a year. And, of which, they could train farther, in country no more than about 35,000.

Q: *Because the universities there were so few.*

MOREFIELD: So they did have a problem. They had the 100,000 people who had passed the exam, plus all those who had not passed the exam, but who still wanted some kind of additional training.

Q: *Plus a society that was saying, "This is the role of the future. This is the way we're going to be a great Iran."*

MOREFIELD: Yes. So there was a great demand to have students going overseas. And this, also, placed a dilemma on the students. [Brief interruption]

This, I think, has implications as to the dilemmas that some of the students had after the revolution.

Q: *Frustration?*

MOREFIELD: One of the problems was that, with the possible exception of doctors, an Iranian student could do better going back to Iran after he had had his degree, than he could by staying in the U.S. The Shah was very good at co-opting people. In effect, bringing them into the system. And this was part of the frustration for those students who did go back.

Q: *I think we'd better get you placed historically, Dick. When did you actually arrive there and what was it, in terms of?*

MOREFIELD: I arrived at the end of July in '79.

Q: *And when was the occupation of the embassy?*

MOREFIELD: November 4th of '79, also.

Q: *So you were there--*

MOREFIELD: Just a few months.

Q: *Just a few months, as consul general?*

MOREFIELD: As consul general. There was great pressure on many of these students, who were abroad, who had to drop out. Many of the students in the United States, who were adamant opponents, were those who had failed their academic training in the U.S. and, basically, couldn't go back to Iran. They had lost face, if you will.

It also presented a dilemma once the revolution came for the students. Did they stay abroad in schooling, to learn the skills and training that the new revolution needed, and give up the opportunity to affect the social changes in Iran; or did they go back in an attempt to participate in the rapid social changes, but give up the opportunity to learn the skills that that revolution needed?

And that was a dilemma. And my own personal opinion was, I could not fault an Iranian student for choosing either one of those two things.

Q: Of course, also, they didn't have the clairvoyance of knowing what was going to really happen.

MOREFIELD: What I could not stand was the ones who decided they were going to pull a copout. Because, very frankly, if they weren't willing to go back and fight for what they wanted for a new Iran, they weren't particularly good Iranians, and they certainly weren't going to be good Americans.

Q: In that short period, that you were in charge, how were you able to manage this situation; literally physically, the arrangement of the embassy and staff?

MOREFIELD: Well, one of the things that had happened was, as part of the February, Valentine's Day takeover--

Q: The preliminary takeover.

MOREFIELD: Yes, the preliminary takeover. We had withdrawn from the consulate, which was off the compound.

Q: Way off the compound, in bad physical shape.

MOREFIELD: There was a decision to renovate what had been the embassy cafeteria into a new consular division. Incidentally, that was an indication of how the Department can move when there is a need to.

Q: Only when they get occupied, maybe, in the literal and figurative sense. [Laughter]

MOREFIELD: The building was designed, renovated, and brought to completion. And we opened for business on my 50th birthday, September 9th.

Q: So you arrived before it was fully opened?

MOREFIELD: For the first couple of months, I was acting as the equivalent of an assistant GSO, to help make sure that the work went on as quickly as possible.

In that interim period, upon the insistence of the foreign ministry, we accepted 50 student-visa applications a day, that were sent over as referrals from the foreign ministry.

Q: In addition to all the students that were at the front door?

MOREFIELD: We weren't taking anybody at the front door.

Q: Oh, you weren't taking anybody at the front door?

MOREFIELD: So when we opened, I said, "We will take everybody first come, first serve, at the

front door. And we will abolish this referral system."

Q: *So it was really a control system, I presume, by the foreign ministry?*

MOREFIELD: Of course. What happened was, the students blockaded the entrance and said, "If we don't get special preference, we will make it impossible for anybody to come in."

Q: *Are we talking of hundreds and hundreds of--*

MOREFIELD: The first day we opened, there were 10,000 of them.

Q: *Oh, my God!*

MOREFIELD: We refused to set up an administrative waiting list and I told the police, "It is your job to control the mob. I will take them first come, first serve."

Q: *And did they get in line?*

MOREFIELD: They organized themselves in groups of 50, with a leader. They gave the lists of each group to the police. It was also very interesting that, nevertheless, the same people would come back day after day. They were able with *Backsheesh* to get into the front of the line again. And because of pressure from the foreign ministry we continued the 50-a-day referrals.

Q: *In addition to those that came in through the front door?*

MOREFIELD: In addition to those at the front door.

Q: *So those were, kind of, extra screened with influence, shall we say? [Laughter]*

MOREFIELD: Yes.

Q: *The minister's son.*

MOREFIELD: That kind of thing. Then we also had another way of special access. It was clear that there was no way in which we were going to be able to see everybody every day. So at 4:00 we would take those people who had an emergency. We said "emergency" is a life threatening illness or a real personal or business emergency. And we made a decision, on the spot. We had, two windows that we kept open until the whole line went through.

By talking to the man, who was ten years older than I was at that time, and the young lady, we reached an agreement. And the man, went off to his ship again. It was clear, by the time I went to Bogotá, by the time I went to Tehran--

Q: *Twenty years later.*

MOREFIELD: --twenty years later--that the American-citizen services was the reflection of the consumerism society in the United States. And we were the reflection of the new theme providing a wider range of services to Americans overseas.

Q: Let's take that one step further, geographically, to Tehran and albeit those few months, tell us what kind of American service problems you had there.

MOREFIELD: One of the problems that I had in Tehran is a reflection of the extent of the change of providing American services. We have an obligation to provide services to American citizens, even when we may not have a right to under international law. I think that's most clearly seen in the case of dual nationals.

By the time I got there, most of the American citizens--who were there working with the military or with a oil company or with Bell Helicopter--had all left.

Q: Because of the situation?

MOREFIELD: Because of the situation.

Q: Were they expelled or was it just--

MOREFIELD: Well, they were gone.

Q: They were gone.

MOREFIELD: But there were a number of American women there, who were married to Iranians, and I tried to meet some of them when I got there.

Q: Dual Americans or native-born?

MOREFIELD: Under Iranian law, when they became married to an Iranian citizen they had to enter Iran on an Iranian passport. And the Iranian Government would not allow us to claim them as American citizens. Very clearly, we were going to document them as U.S. citizens when we could. We were going to document their children, if their children had a claim to American citizenship. But that is an indication of the kind of things where you really, often, can't go in and pound the table. I'm talking about relationships. Let me give you another example, again from Bogotá. We had a case where there was a bombing, concurrent bombing, of the Marine house--I mean security guard house--and the supreme court. And the bombing was done by a brother and sister.

The woman was a tri-national. She had Colombian, Argentine, and a claim to U.S. citizenship. Now, under a general rule, you can't offer protection to a dual national when he's living in his own country. There was also another problem. Under Colombian law you become an adult when you're 16. This girl was 17.

It was important that I could go to the military authorities and say, "Look, I understand the position of the Colombian Government. But this is one case in which you need to be aware of our concerns, especially since she is a minor under U.S. law."

Because of a previously established good relationship the military commander said, "Oh, I understand what you want. Here is a copy of the medical examination that we gave her within two hours of the time she was picked up. You will be allowed to see her." And so forth. When it was all over, he said, "I don't understand why you are interested in protecting this young lady, who has tried to bomb part of the embassy."

I said, "General, you don't understand. It is my obligation to make sure that her rights are respected. Very frankly, when you're finished with her, since she has violated U.S. law, we very well may want her, as well."

Q: Dick, how did you feel, at the time, in that situation, in which you were, sort of, by definition, torn in the two directions? Protect the person? At the same time, get the person arrested?

MOREFIELD: It is even more clearly defined when you are involved in a case of drugs. I would tell my junior officers, "When the prisoner starts to tell you things, you have an obligation to tell him, 'Look, I don't want to know that. It is not going to make a difference in how I am going to react to you. And, very frankly, it is not to your advantage to make voluntary confessions to me as to guilt or innocence.'"

Q: If you received such a "confession," did you then feel compelled to turn it over immediately to DEA agents, for example, as many a prisoner accuses us of?

MOREFIELD: No. In fact, we were very careful to separate out what could be given to the DEA and what could not be given.

Q: Who made that decision? You alone?

MOREFIELD: No. There was good guidance from the Department. It was clear that this was a concern, that if it wasn't handled properly, was going to poison the well in our relations with Congress. It was going to poison our relations with the DEA.

Very frankly, having been in Guadalajara, where my main purpose for being there was to provide the atmosphere for the DEA's doing its thing there, I am convinced that it's important that you have a relationship with them, an honest relationship. And it is possible.

Q: And, at the same time, protect the American individual arrested.

MOREFIELD: Exactly.

Q: Sounds like a schizophrenic situation.

MOREFIELD: Well, but we're all schizophrenic. [Laughter]

Q: *We're commissioned to be, by the Jesuits.*

MOREFIELD: Yes. And I think that kind of judgment call . . .

Q: *It's judgmental, isn't it?*

MOREFIELD: And it is a maturity. Because you have to look at what was our purpose in looking after, say, a young drug trafficker--

Q: *Prisoner.*

MOREFIELD: Prisoner.

Q: *Right, prisoner. Two-hundred-and-something years of protecting the American citizen abroad.*

MOREFIELD: I think it came down to this: is that, sooner or later, that citizen was going to go back to the United States, where he was going to be incorporated back into our society. And society had a vested interest in that person coming back in the best possible physical and emotional state, so that his transition back into society would be possible.

Q: *And DEA agents, with whom you worked, in Guadalajara especially, had no problems understanding that?*

MOREFIELD: Some of them did. After all their job was to catch them and put them away. I had no problem with that because we had different functions. Even if I did have a problem, it was clear that the law said we were to protect their interests.

Q: *And you feel that the guidance from Washington on this was good? Up front, or did it come way after the fact?*

MOREFIELD: Well, it's one of those things in which--like Alice and the Red Queen--you had to run very fast just to keep up. The situation was changing so quickly that, in many cases, it was only when there was a horrible example somewhere that all of a sudden we would pull our act together. But we were running very fast.

Q: *Because this turned out to be, x-number of years after you were there, a tremendous tragedy, namely, the execution by certain people, some of whom just had a doctor arrested in the United States, or dragged to the United States from Mexico. How many years after that was Kiki -- what was his last name again?*

MOREFIELD: Kiki Camarena was there when I was there.

Q: He was there when you were there? Tell us what you can, or want, about that.

MOREFIELD: My wife has said, and I think I agree with her, that probably my being there was a culmination of my career, otherwise. Because of my own son's murder and because of my incarceration in Iran, I was in a position to provide the kind of emotional support, not only to the family and to the other colleagues, but to the rest of the consulate...

I don't have any recollection of any American prisoners by the time I was there. I didn't see the inside of an Iranian prison until-- [Laughter]

Q: Until you were made one. [Laughter] So the protection of Americans, in those few months before the captivity, were pretty-much dual nationals or citizenship?

MOREFIELD: Well, dual nationals, taking care of the property of people who had left things there. I had one case, where an American was concerned about getting his illegitimate son out.

Q: I guess what was behind my question was, not only the obvious protection of Americans, but given what happened in November, weren't there things like that beginning to happen, in the sense of Americans mistreated, maltreated?

MOREFIELD: No, because there weren't that many of them. This was strange.

Q: But fortunate.

MOREFIELD: But fortunate.

Q: So most of the Americans had, for obvious reasons, got out of the country? Certainly, those that would have, before, been your business customers. Well then, a certain day all those delightful visa applicants turned into bad guys? Or how did that happen? Do you want to tell us about the day in November?

MOREFIELD: There is an interesting point. One of the things I notice in your agenda that you're talking about in your study is the coordination or the integration of the consular section into the country team. Looking back, the fact that we did not spot that something was about to occur, just from the sheer number and the sheer panic of people fighting to get visas--

Q: Should have been an indication of what was--

MOREFIELD: Should have been an indication.

Q: Especially since you had a rehearsal on Valentine's.

MOREFIELD: Yes. What had happened was, on the first of November there had been a disturbance and there had been some spray painting on the walls. And when we got through that, we thought we were, sort of, over the hump, if you will.

Q: *Was this something new, something isolated?*

MOREFIELD: It was, I think, the anniversary of one of the previous serious riots and consequent deaths. The Iranians had the custom of commemorating such anniversaries. We should have been, I think, more aware that there were--

Q: *"We" being the total mission?*

MOREFIELD: "We" being the total mission.

Q: *Do you want to talk about that relationship?*

MOREFIELD: Well, we were trying very, very hard to find a way in which we could establish the kind of normal ties with the revolution.

Q: *"We" being the whole mission objective? Let's get on with the new government.*

MOREFIELD: The whole mission, yes. For example, any time there was a mullah that needed a visa to go get medical treatment, we would try and get him to be seen by a political officer--we were working very, very hard at that. But it's hard to tango when the other person wants to go sit out on the balcony, if you will. And it was a difficult time.

Q: *In communications, government to government, as well as people to people?*

MOREFIELD: Yes. To give you an example: later on, one of the guards was livid when he was describing the meeting with Brzezinski and the Iranian Foreign Minister in Algeria. I said, "But wait a minute. We have relations with the Soviet Union even when we didn't have diplomatic relations with the Red Chinese, we at least talked to them in Paris, and so forth."

And he came back very quickly. "No. There is no reason for any American to talk to any Iranian official, except to subvert the revolution. There is no reason for any Iranian official to talk to any American official, except to betray the revolution." When you have that kind of attitude it is very, very difficult.

Q: *Conspiratorial, ideological?*

MOREFIELD: Yes.

Q: *And you take that as the example of widespread--*

MOREFIELD: Of why it was so difficult to try and talk to them. And yet, I would say many of our people who were there could have intellectual sympathy, at least, with the revolution. The example I've used is that this, to my knowledge, was the first social revolution, certainly in modern times, that did not have to compromise, almost immediately, for lack of money.

There were a great number of social problems in Iran that were well known: the need to revitalize agriculture; the need to get away from this tremendous metropolis of Tehran that was, sopping up resource in the country; to do reforestation; to revitalize the irrigation system. All of these things were clearly in the Islamic tradition.

Q: *Shiite fundamentalist tradition?*

MOREFIELD: Yes. And were issues that could have been addressed.

Q: *Weren't addressed?*

MOREFIELD: The great tragedy was they were not addressed because of the desire to go back to, basically, a sixth-century Persian agricultural village.

Clearly, I'm not a specialist in Iran. But I think the downfall of the Shah came when he tried to achieve a modern Iran: "Modern" meaning that there would be the attributes of a modern government--social security, education, welfare--which up to then were all functions centered around the mosque; Iran, in that it was more than just the Persian Shiites. There was more to Iran than the Shiite Muslims. There was more to Iran than just the Persians. There was even a small Jewish community that went back there to the Babylonian captivity.

When I went to see the Armenian archbishop, he told me the revolutionary government was closing down his schools, was making it impossible for him to teach the children their language and their culture. And I saw this as a great tragedy. The equivalent of what we did to the blacks in the United States as slaves. They were not allowed to participate in the culture of the country. Yet, they were denied the opportunity to have their own. That was a dilemma that I saw in the Iranian revolution.

Q: *With only a few months to make such observations, you, I suppose, relied an awful lot on the more-expert colleagues in the embassy, and your own local employees--your Foreign-Service-national employees.*

The Iranian government took...I can't remember whether it took, or was going to take...a 92-year-old former general, who was in a wheelchair, up to the top of one of these buildings and executed him. It was just scandalously awful. This was just as we were trying to work our way back in to dealing directly with Khomeini. Bruce was trying to get an appointment with Khomeini, and I said, "This is appalling, we cannot stand by and let this go unnoticed." And I made Bruce go off and make a protest, and it drove the country bonkers. I've never really felt guilty about that, but I do realize that it was a stupid move.

At any rate, after Iran I thought seriously about getting out of the Foreign Service, but again, with the new Foreign Service system I figured I had six years to go before I got kicked out. I figured there was no way of making it into the senior Foreign Service, I will let them kick me out, and I'll be gone, wonderful. I was thinking of getting out and doing a total career change. And also you

come back out of an experience like that really wanting to make a difference with people. The whole political nonsense of trying to shape foreign policy...I really think that there is a foreign policy that the U.S. government follows...its gotten better in the last years, but its not one that I was really joyous with. We go a very center line policy. It doesn't matter whether you've got a liberal president in, or a conservative one, we come right down that center line, and I'm not a center line person.

L. BRUCE LAINGEN
Chargé d'affaires
Tehran (1979-1980)

Best known as the highest-ranking officer during the Iranian hostage crisis (1979-1981), L. Bruce Laingen was born in 1922 in rural Minnesota. He served in the U.S. Navy during the World War II. During his career in the Foreign Service he had assignments in Hamburg, Tehran, and Karachi. He also had a stint as the Pakistan-Afghanistan country director at the State Department in the early 70's. He was interviewed on several occasions by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992 and 1993.

Q: *You left there when?*

LAINGEN: I left there on the very day that the British ceremonies took place in Malta marking the final end of British military presence. Then I was assigned back in Washington, as is so often the case with Foreign Service officers who aren't available or useful in any other context, to the Inspection Corps. I began work with the Inspection Corps as head of a delegation going to Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay. I spent a month or so in preparation for that and was about to leave for those three countries to inspect those embassies when I took leave in Minnesota in early June, 1979.

While I was there I had a telephone call from the Director General of the Foreign Service telling me that the Secretary wanted me to go instead to Tehran to serve as Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy for a period of four to six weeks while the Department and the White House made a determination as to what kind of diplomatic presence we were going to have in Iran in the aftermath of the revolution that had taken place in February and in the aftermath of the departure of Ambassador Sullivan in March and the fact that the Chargé d'Affaires who had remained in place, Charlie Naas, needed to be relieved as well.

I don't recall if I said immediately on the telephone, "Yes, of course I will go," or whether I said, "I will call you back." I hope with respect to my wife I said at least, "Let me call you back." My memory doesn't serve me very well on that respect.

My memory does recall, as I may have mentioned earlier on, a conversation of almost 26 years earlier when I had been on that same farm, on leave between assignments having completed an

assignment on Hamburg and about to go to Kobe, Japan as a vice consul, all my effects having been shipped to Kobe. I got a similar telephone call that time from a personnel officer in the Department of State saying, "You are not going to Kobe; you are going to Tehran" because the Embassy in the aftermath of the Mossadegh overthrow in the summer of that year was building up staff and needed officers who might be available. I was single at the time and thus presumably available. So my assignment was broken to Kobe and despatched to Tehran. So in that sense history was repeating itself for me when I got this call in 1979.

Q: How did you feel about this?

LAINGEN: Coming back from Malta and picking up the Inspection assignment, I recall having...it was a time when having served there earlier, as an old Iranian hand, I and many others were watching what was happening in Iran in the aftermath of the revolution. I can remember talking with Henry Precht, who was then the Country Director for Iran, about what was happening and he, I thought facetiously, saying, "Wouldn't you like to go to Tehran?" And I pooh- poohed that and said that I had been away from there too long and was not the one to go. But when I got that call in Minnesota on the farm telling me that the Secretary of State wanted me to go to Tehran, as a loyal Foreign Service officer my first instinct was to say, "Yes, of course I will go."

I can also recall feeling excitement. That was where the action was. I am not sure I said that I would call back or immediately said, "Yes." That is important because my wife at the time had reservations. She said, "All right if you want to go, go." But she was strong in her reservations, and I can recall that she told me that that was not the place to go, that we shouldn't be there at all. What we should do, in her view, was to put a fence around the country and let them sort themselves out rather than take any risks with the place. But she was the loyal spouse, in the days when spouses had less to say, and she said, "Go ahead and go, if you want to go." So I went.

I want to interrupt to relate an incident with regard to EUR yesterday. I had called the Portuguese Desk in the Department to ask whether they would send through the pouch to Lisbon a copy of a book I have done on my Iranian experiences for the Swiss Ambassador in Portugal, who happens to be the same ambassador who served as the Ambassador from Switzerland in Tehran at the time I was there and who was massively helpful to me in my Embassy then. The Portugal Desk Officer in the Department of State currently has a slight accent, and is clearly from the subcontinent. When he told me his name I knew he was from the subcontinent because it was Ahmed. He is Pakistani born, lived there until his teens and now is a naturalized American citizen who is the Desk Officer for Portugal, of all places. I told him I assumed he must be the first Pakistani-American to be a member of the career Foreign Service of the United States. And he says that he thinks he is. He volunteered to me that it was a fascinating, dramatic example of the way anything can happen in the United States of America.

Q: Today is November 25, 1992. In our last interview you explained how you got your assignment to go to Iran and how overjoyed your wife was with this assignment. What was the situation as it was explained to you in Washington and when you went out, and what were you supposed to do about it?

LAINGEN: The revolution had occurred in February 1979. Ambassador Sullivan was presiding in the Embassy. The Embassy, as you know, had been overrun in the midst of the revolution. In the zeal and passion and excitement of the revolution the revolutionary types descended on the Embassy and occupied it for six hours, but it was restored to Ambassador Sullivan's control by leaders then coming into power but not yet in office, including the future Foreign Minister Yazdi. Thereafter the Embassy had revolutionary guards whom we referred to gently as thugs, on the compound. A squad of them, indeed at the beginning three squads of them from three separate revolutionary groups, were placed in the Embassy for our "protection." Ambassador Sullivan remained on the job for a time, until March.

Here in Washington those responsible for Iranian affairs, from the Desk on up to the President began their considerations of what to do next. Do we try to reestablish a relationship with the regime or do we get out and decide that it is hopeless? A policy review, and I wasn't involved at that point as I was still in Malta, began in early March, 1979. That review concluded that our interests in the country, and particularly the region, were still big enough for us to require an effort to rebuild a relationship, to try to salvage a relationship with this new crowd coming in. The old crowd by that time having been out or on their way out either in prison or exile.

That review of policy continued on through that year until the Embassy was seized a second time. But those early reviews concluded that an effort should be made to try to rebuild a relationship. One of the side affects of that was that Ambassador Sullivan had to leave; he was too much identified with the old regime. That left the place in charge of the DCM at the time, Charlie Naas, who became Chargé d'Affaires when Sullivan left. Charlie remained on the job until I arrived in June, a decision having been made by that time that Charlie had to leave as well. He had weathered a rather difficult time, obviously, and it was time for him to leave as well.

I was asked to go, instructed to go and man it for four to six weeks until we sorted things out and decided what we would do.

I don't recall, Stu, whether we talked about Walter Cutler or not last time.

Q: No, I don't think we did.

LAINGEN: As part of the review of policy and the conclusion that we still should continue to make an effort to establish some kind of relationship, however limited, with the new regime, Walter Cutler was identified and designated as the Ambassador. Agrément was sought from the government in Tehran, the provisional government of the revolution. Agrément was received from them. Then in late May, 1979, in the aftermath of rather considerable pressures against the Jewish community in Tehran...Iranian Jews in the city at that time were still rather active and reasonably large community were being so harassed that Senator Javits from New York moved a resolution in the United States Senate which was very critical of the regime in Tehran for its policies towards minorities and particularly the Jewish minority in Tehran. That got the radicals behind the scene in Tehran, but including elements of the provisional government, agitated and there began a series of large demonstrations against the Embassy.

The Chancery was not overrun at that time in late May, but it was attacked. The flag was torn down, graffiti all over the place. And, more significantly, the Agrément for Walter Cutler was withdrawn.

The authorities here in Washington said that they couldn't do that and we got into a confrontation...our government and the government in Tehran. That continued for several weeks and finally the decision was made to send me out as a temporary Chargé with the rank of Ambassador...we wanted to get that message across to them that I was still a senior type, sent out there to resume the discussions with the authorities.

As far as my own instructions were concerned, in addition to being told that my assignment was temporary, I was to do what I could do in the first place to enhance the security arrangements in the compound at the Embassy. Do what could be done to get those revolutionary guards, by that time reduced to one squad of about 30, removed from the compound. They by that time were an awful red flag for our proud Marines who didn't think much of the idea at all, having others on the compound, particularly revolutionaries, sharing the responsibility of protecting their compound. The first item on my list of instructions was to do what I could even in that short time to see if we could accomplish their removal.

The second instruction was to do what I could to enhance the morale of the Embassy community, largely then confined in their social and official activities to the compound itself. A third responsibility was to again look to how the consular function of the Embassy could be rehabilitated. A fourth was to continue to work as Charlie Naas had done to put some order into sorting out our military supply relationships with this new regime.

I guess it was largely that list of instructions, as well, of course, to communicate as Charlie had already been doing on behalf of Washington, that we fully accepted the change in Tehran, that we had no intention to work with the Shah to restore him to the throne, that we were well aware that circumstances had changed totally in Tehran and that we accepted it. Those were my instructions.

Q: What was your impression of how the people you talked to in the State Department or the White House felt about the situation in Tehran?

LAINGEN: There was divided opinion as there had been throughout the time that future relations were being discussed in the aftermath of the revolution in February. But always those who felt that the risk was worth taking prevailed. I think they were a rather substantial majority. That was my opinion of people here. We couldn't just walk out. We still had a great deal of things to sort out on the ground in Tehran, not least the military supply relationship, and it was best that we make that effort.

Q: When you talk about the military supply relationship, what were the issues?

LAINGEN: There was something like 12 billion dollars in incomplete orders placed by the Shah, where the equipment had not been delivered. There was also a substantial amount of spare parts

for an existing US supplied military inventory. We had had, for that matter, before the revolution, during the Shah's period, a very large military supply relationship, cash payment, involving on the ground in Tehran hundreds of military personnel handling this complex supply relationship. Most of those had left in the aftermath of the revolution, couldn't stay on. All of those orders and all of that relationship was lying there untended and we needed to get at it. I still had the head of the Military Assistance Group, MAAG. He had weathered the first assault on the Embassy in February and stayed on. It was Maj. Gen. Philip Gast, United States Air Force. He was doing his best with a small remaining staff, but some kind of impetus had to be put behind that to get it moving a little faster.

Q: Here was a revolutionary country which at the time we felt with the Soviet Union so close as rather problematical and here you are talking about billions of supplies which were obviously of great value. It was a way of siphoning off Iran's oil wealth and going to the defense industry. At the same time there must have been a concern about the kind of outfit we were strengthening? What were we trying to do?

LAINGEN: Your question made reference to the Soviet Union. We were still talking then about the depths of the Cold War when the Soviet Union...

Q: Oh, yes. In fact it was at the very depths of the Cold War...well it hadn't quite reached the Afghan stage which came at the same time.

LAINGEN: In any event, the Soviet "threat" loomed rather large in the minds of everyone. Of course, in the final analysis that threat and oil interests in the Persian Gulf were the considerations that kept us concluding that to try to have a relationship even with this questionable regime was worth the effort. That we had to be there.

Vast numbers of US military suppliers, business, commercial, defense industries, were involved in all of this--that was another major consideration, of course, that went into the decision after February to make an effort.

You refer to whether I had any consultations with the White House. I did not. I did not see Jimmy Carter. I should have, I think, particularly in light of what happened. Although when I went out there it was only a four to six week assignment. Under such an assignment one wouldn't expect to see the President.

I don't think I even saw Secretary Vance before I left. I saw him in September when I came back on consultations. But before I went out it was temporary enough in the assignment to make it seem necessary only to talk with the people at the Assistant Secretary level.

Q: Did you talk to anybody at the Iranian Embassy?

LAINGEN: No. I did not.

Q: How did you get out there and what did you find?

LAINGEN: I arrived in Tehran June 16, 1979 and was met at the airport by Charlie Naas and a large entourage of security escorts. This was my first return in a substantive official capacity since I left there in an official capacity in 1955. I obviously returned to a very different Tehran, both in terms of the growth of that city, and in a revolutionary context a very different scene of revolutionaries everywhere, not least at the terminal building in Tehran. I will never forget the impression of traveling into the city from the airport that evening with Charlie Naas in an armored plated limousine with escort cars both fore and aft. Each of them were loaded with security types who had no hesitation when it was necessary to clear traffic to jump out of their cars and wave their pistols and Uzis...

Q: These were Iranians?

LAINGEN: Yes, they were Iranians. ...waving their guns and Uzis around to clear the way. It was a rather dramatic entry back into Tehran. And, of course, along the way at that time one could still see the visible impact of the revolution in terms of burned out buildings, particularly banks, theaters, and Western business establishments. By that time they hadn't changed the names of the streets, so you still had Eisenhower Blvd. and Queen Elizabeth Blvd. and a few names such as that. They were to change in a few weeks or months.

Q: I assume one of the first things you did was to sort of appraise yourself of the morale situation. How did you find the management, morale and effectiveness of the Embassy when you got there?

LAINGEN: The effect was evident as I drove into the compound that evening. To see the way in which it had become a kind of used car lot and yard sale lot because of the masses of supplies, not least wrought iron patio furniture which seemed to have been in abundance in our houses in Tehran and was now stacked on the Embassy compound here and there--all still a product of the time during the weeks preceding and after the revolution in February when the American community descended upon the compound for evacuation purposes accompanied by much of their own supplies and possessions. Most of their personal possessions had been shipped out, but a lot of their furniture was still there. The compound was a mess. It was 27 acres and you can put a lot of stuff in there, but it still looked crowded with cars and stacks of household equipment and supplies of one kind or another. It was a very disorderly looking place. Understandable because not much had been accomplished in cleaning this up, although there were additional personnel assigned to Tehran, particularly from military installations in Germany, to help--since many of the personnel whose cars and other property were still there on the compound were military personnel now transferred to commands in Germany.

I found the morale of the Embassy high...in a beleaguered mission is usually high because it is beleaguered. But this situation, nonetheless, was a little down because the outlook was still very uncertain. They were thrown in upon themselves. They couldn't get out very much at all around the country. They could travel to some extent within the city of Tehran. This is no criticism of Charlie Naas and his colleagues who had been through a very tough time and had done their damndest. In the light of that kind of experience that they had gone through, many of them still

there in June, I thought morale was remarkably high, given the circumstances.

My reception by the officials of the provisional government of the revolution headed by secular leaders of the revolution, particularly representing the National Front, was very good. They weren't jumping over themselves to embrace me or anything, but they were courteous, polite, on the whole very friendly. I never had any difficulty during the months that followed to gain access, to see members of the government, which I did acting under and speaking to the mandate that I have described of communicating to them a desire to continue to build a new relationship, to remind them that we had no policy objections to the fact of the revolution, to appeal to them in particular for cooperation to improving security affecting the personnel of the Embassy and the compound. That kind of welcome was evident on the Fourth of July, which was less than three weeks after I arrived on this temporary mission. We made a judgment that we would go ahead with an official ceremony celebrating the Fourth of July, which one would normally do in an embassy, of course, but this time it had to be carefully considered because we didn't know what kind of reaction we would get.

So we had a noon time reception at the Residence, inviting a fairly large number of officials of the Provisional Government, including some military representatives. We had a surprising large turn out, including the Foreign Minister, the Defense Minister, and I think a couple of other Ministers.

I will not forget it because I made an effort to get the Foreign Minister to join me in a toast at one high moment. He chose not to have it photographed or in any way thus signaling to the community outside the compound that relations were that warm. But at least he came and we had a good conversation. He declined any alcoholic beverages. The reception got some good publicity in the press.

It began, that event on July 4 the building of optimism among us that eventually became wishful thinking and eventually saw us make some judgments about our durability in Tehran that proved totally unfounded.

Q: As you looked at the situation then, you had the Provisional Government, and as I take it the Mullahs and the religious fundamentalists off to one side like a big cloud. What was the tie as you saw it?

LAINGEN: Well, there was the Provisional Government headed by Prime Minister Bazargan, a distinguished Persian, Iranian, private individual, a gentle personality, presiding over a very difficult situation. He was respected largely, however, because of his long years of opposition to the Shah, going back to the fifties. He was surrounded by other ministers, also secular, many of them from the same political movement, the National Front, from which Bazargan came. In other words, I had to deal with a sitting government with people occupying all the normal ministries that you have in a government with which most ambassadors at embassies have to deal. You can't ignore them totally and go behind the scenes and try to find somebody else to deal with.

Behind the scenes, however, we knew there were other elements of the revolution that had

brought it about, particularly the clerical elements from the Ayatollah Khomeini on down. Their power, their role, their activity was concentrated in a Revolutionary Council with which I never had direct contact, which was not a visible organization to the rest of us, any embassy, or for that matter the Iranians themselves. It was very much behind the scenes. It was another element of power which we all knew was there but with which we did not deal directly. I never did have that kind of contact with them that amounted to much except on some social occasions I would have contact with this or that cleric, this or that mullah. I called a couple of times on senior mullahs, including a man named Beheshti. He was a powerful influence whom we knew was active behind the scenes and who was a member of the Revolutionary Council. I had a warm reception from him, but a very tough conversation because he was very critical of previous US policy and he let me know that.

Q: What was the thrust of your response to this?

LAINGEN: The thrust of my response to that kind of an approach from a cleric was to reiterate, as I did many times in the months I was there before the Embassy was taken, that we did in fact accept the revolution in Tehran, that we had no intention of trying to turn it around, that we knew reality when we saw it. The Shah was not going to be a factor in our decisions on the future of Iran. I accompanied that with frequent reminders, speaking in many ways personally. I said, "Look, we are a country that also has some reason to respect a larger spiritual value. We are a religious nation of people as well and respect your belief that Islam should be a large consequence in your decisions." I made it very clear that I understood how they felt about a higher spiritual value. That didn't carry much water, I suspect, but I went on with that kind of thing.

As the summer went on, the six week assignment began to lengthen for a variety of reasons. One, I think was that Washington concluded that Laingen was doing reasonably well out there and that his presence was helpful. In any event Washington wasn't coming very fast to any conclusion as to the future of the place, particularly the naming of an ambassador, other than the possibility of naming me.

Morale did improve in the course of that summer. Security, generally in the country, seemed to be improving. The involvement of revolutionary committees and roadblocks seemed to be beginning to lessen. We were able to get out of the compound and travel about the city with a little more ease. Indeed, by August we were able to begin sending people out to former consulates in Shiraz and Tabriz where our consular facilities were closed but still manned by Iranian employees. Again, it was further deepening our wishful thinking, our preference to be optimists.

We were beginning to get cooperation as well in improving the security on the compound. I think it was in August that that effort reached the point where the security group on our compound headed by a particularly unattractive thug named Mashalla, was removed forcibly by other revolutionary elements. Early one Sunday morning I was startled, knowing that an effort of that kind was being planned--the Office of Protocol had kept me advised of that but not knowing precisely when it was going to happen--startled to find myself one Sunday morning as I got up in my swimming trunks and bathrobe and opened my door on the second floor of the Residence to

find confronting me, face to face, a couple of revolutionary guards with Uzis presumably ready to fire aimed at me, they not knowing who I was. They had gotten into the back of the Residence through kitchen windows looking for elements of that revolutionary squad that they were evicting. They were examining every nook and cranny of that compound to find them and flush them out. These two who confronted me ordered me to sit down, which I promptly did, and then went into my room and searched carefully, including all of my closets, finally concluding that I was legitimate in some fashion.

They accompanied me downstairs where I found the two Marines who normally at that time spent the night on watch in the Residence, they too having been surprised by these guards that had crept through windows in the kitchen area, very unhappy at the situation they had gotten themselves into. The group of us, four or five of these "friendly" revolutionary guards, myself and the two Marines spent a few worrisome minutes looking at each other in the entrance foyer of the Residence until we sorted it all out.

In the course of the morning the eviction of that other group was accomplished and these new revolutionary guards stayed on the compound for a few days, but within a short time the Marines were back in control of the compound and regular Iranian police became the guards outside the walls.

That was a very important development event because it did a great deal to restore morale on the compound for the Americans who lived and worked there. It was seen as very tangible evidence that the Provisional Government, at least, did want to continue to try to build a relationship with us and let us remain. As this process went on, and we were having some progress as well in discussion in sorting out the military supply relationship, Washington apparently concluded that it might be a good idea to keep me on not only longer as Chargé d'Affaires, which of course they did, but eventually to conclude that my being named as Ambassador to the new regime would be a positive development.

Late one afternoon in August I got a telephone call as I was playing tennis on the courts on the compound--which were always carefully guarded by both Marines and revolutionary guards during the time they were on the compound--I got a call from either David Newsom or Ben Read...

Q: Newsom was Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Eastern Affairs and Read was Under Secretary for Management.

LAINGEN: ...informing me that the White House wanted to put my name to the Senate that very day as Ambassador to Tehran and how did I feel about that. Obviously I was surprised and said, "I need a little time to reflect on that. I very much would want to talk with my family." It was of sufficient consequence to cause me to consult with what mattered to me most at that point, I guess, and that was how my family felt. I knew if I were named I would be there a much longer time and much of that time would still be a situation where we still had no families of any kind with us. All dependents had been sent home in the aftermath of the revolution in February, so there were no dependents of any kind in our community.

Washington was very understanding of that and after several other telephone conversations over the next few days it was concluded that I should come back to Washington on consultations in early September, which I did. In consultations at that time it was decided to leave the question of my being named as Ambassador in abeyance. There was again some question as to whether it was a good thing to do it. There was always some question apparently back here as to whether it was a good idea to elevate a Chargé--whether that was a sufficient signal to the new revolutionary regime that we had accepted the revolution. In any event, that issue of whether I should be elevated as Ambassador was never fully resolved.

Eventually, I got the impression that a decision in Washington had been made that it was not the best thing to do in terms of naming an ambassador and they began to consider others. Indeed, as I understand it, when Foreign Minister Yazdi came to New York in early October for meetings of the General Assembly and for a meeting in the course of the General Assembly with Secretary Vance, a decision had been reached to name a different person as ambassador. In fact, Secretary Vance had in his pocket, I understand, when he sat down with Yazdi, the name of that person. He was ready to ask Yazdi to ask his government for Agrément. That conversation went so badly however, that that request was never extended. It will always be an open question for me, and an uncertain answer, whether, if I had been named Ambassador and whether in so doing we had signaled that we had accepted the revolution to that degree, whether things might have been different in November.

Q: What went badly in the discussion between Yazdi and Vance?

LAINGEN: It was mainly the atmosphere. Yazdi was so aggressive, and this was the first high level conversation that had taken place between the new government in Tehran and Washington. All previous conversations had been at my level. There had been no substantive conversations at a high political level. The conversation was icy. Yazdi was full of a lot of propaganda about the revolution. The question of getting a hold of the military supply relationship bogged down in suspicion, which was wide in government circles in Tehran, and expressed particularly by Yazdi; that we really had no intention to do much to help them resolve this. They felt, throughout, that if we had really accepted the revolution and the new state of reality in Tehran, that we would have been much more aggressive in resolving that issue, that we would have been much more forthcoming in price considerations, contract resolutions, than we had signaled to them. So the conversation went badly and it was so reported to me in Tehran. It was a bit of a let down obviously. That was early October.

Q: When you were back in Washington I take it you still had this feeling of cautious optimism. Since you and your Embassy were reporting this, was this sort of the mood also on the Desk, the Bureau, etc.?

LAINGEN: Yes, it was. All of us were motivated by a mission. We thought that it was a mission achievable, that there were enough signals, there was a sufficiently good atmosphere for us to continue to work to try to find a basis for a relationship with this new crowd. Most diplomats, I think, tend to be optimists. Most of us are sort of convinced after long years of service that

problems can be resolved, and, of course we want to resolve problems, that is our job. That is the way we approached this thing in Tehran, I think, all of us. We were all optimists. Yes, we were all cautious optimists. I don't think we were naive, although given what eventually happened I am sure we can be accused of having been naive and unrealistic in our optimism at the time.

Q: Well, there are always events that overtake whatever...

LAINGEN: Well, there was one very large event that overtook us on this one. But enough had happened in terms of our relationship with the provisional regime...when I say "us" I mean both Washington and us in the field...to believe that there was an upward trend and that we should work to try to nourish it, to keep it going. I came back on consultation with that kind of spirit. I found the same spirit in Washington. They obviously wanted to hear from me directly. I recall making a commitment to myself to try to nourish that optimism, try to contribute to it, believing Washington wasn't yet sufficiently accepting the view that I had communicated that there was an upward trend--including in our discussions about resolving some of the thousands of commercial problems that were lying around needing resolution. We had a number of visits from American business representatives. We had encouraged them to come to check it out on the ground, but not to stay. The only way we told them that they could hope to begin to resolve some of their problems was to come out and take a look.

I said that we were beginning to have some very serious discussions about the military supply relationship. We were approaching a point where an Iranian mission of military officers would actually come to the United States and go out to Omaha and sit down and look at the vast amount of paper and records that had accumulated affecting that supply relationship.

I remember having a breakfast session, in Washington during consultations, with American media representatives and talking to them about this situation. The general impression that I communicated and left and believed in was that there was a favorable enough trend in Tehran for us to continue the effort. Granted that we had not yet seen the Ayatollah and that we were not in direct contact with the Revolutionary Council, but we and indeed virtually every other embassy in Tehran to which we talked were convinced that things were looking up.

I went back to Tehran in mid-September and I remember the first day I got back because a leading element in the Revolutionary Council, an Ayatollah named Taleghani, had had a heart attack and died. He was widely considered by most observers, including us, as a rational, moderate voice in the Revolutionary Council. There was a great deal of regret among us that he had suddenly disappeared from the scene. The day I got back there was a very large memorial service on the grounds of the university in Tehran where the diplomatic corps was invited. We all attended and mingled with vast crowds of clerical and secular Iranians accompanied, however, by substantial security because it still was not advisable to be involved in large public gatherings at that time. But his voice disappeared from the scene and that was, looking back on it, a particular loss in terms of the moderation we thought was building, even in the Revolutionary Council.

Q: What were you getting from the other embassies there?

LAINGEN: Their attitude was essentially the same as ours, that things were improving. They were watching us, of course, very carefully, because we were an important barometer of what might be happening and what might happen in the future. And we were watching them. They saw the beginning of that seemingly improving trend when they watched the Foreign Minister and me mixing very informally together, especially at that July Fourth reception. I reported to them or talked to them about the way in which the ministers of the government had received me and talked with me and seemed to welcome me and what I said to them. I think most of them were essentially as optimistic as we were.

Looking back on it, the one ambassador who was more cautious than others and in light of what happened, perhaps the best informed, was the Ambassador of Turkey. The Turkish Ambassador consistently warned me and others in conversations that we were a long way from Nirvana; things could turn badly. He was proven right.

Q: Did you have any meetings with the Soviet Ambassador? What was our feeling towards the Soviet "threat" at that time?

LAINGEN: The Soviet "threat" was there and we recognized it. We didn't expect the Soviets to intrude, invade, they obviously needed to be cautious and careful themselves in how they dealt with this new regime because there was no love lost for communism as an ideology on the part of a regime that was so dominated and motivated by an ideology like Islam. They, and particularly elements of the Communist Party, then underground, remained carefully discreet.

I had a few conversations with the Soviet Ambassador. I think I had one official call on him in the official calls I made as a new fellow on the block when I arrived in June. I saw him at diplomatic receptions. There was no warmth in the relationship. I didn't gain anything from him. I think we regarded each other very warily.

Q: What about the arms sales business? When one looks at this the complication of a modern military system is such that it's a mixed blessing when somebody gets involved with the United States or any major power, because you need a lot of people from the supplying country to take care of things. How did we deal with this and how did the Iranian military look upon this when we withdrew all our technicians and all that?

LAINGEN: The military aspect of our official relationship with the Shah was obviously very, very large. It was immense.

Q: Many people, I must say even from the side, I thought, "My God, what are we doing here?" This didn't seem like a good idea.

LAINGEN: It is easy to say that today, maybe you said that at the time.

Q: I am not talking about any deep thought, just from the side. There was criticism.

LAINGEN: The military issue was immense. All of us, I think, had reason to be wondering about

it and possibly puzzled by it, even possibly apprehensive about where it was taking us. Some, with a lot more prescience than most of us at the time, had serious reservations. It required a very large, visible, physical American presence that was part of the something like 60,000 Americans who lived in Tehran in the heyday of the Shah with all of our trappings and cultural accoutrements and things that we carry with us as baggage.

The clerics and others leading the revolution were able to cite that as evidence of the Shah's, as the Ayatollah put it, "West Toxification." The Shah's regime was that closely linked with the West and evidence of it was this vast military involvement and all of the American culture that came with it. It obviously loomed very large as a factor in the revolution itself.

Sorting all this out after the revolution became very, very complex. They couldn't stay, that large community of military advisors and business representatives who were involved in these contracts. They left massively in the aftermath of the revolution. What they had supplied was there on the ground in warehouses. But vast amounts of it were also in warehouses in the United States where some of it presumably remains to this day, unsorted out.

Both sides recognized that resolving this problem was the biggest single issue in a future relationship. We had very good conversations, however, to try to lay the ground for the process of resolving it. General Gast had very good access to the military leaders who took over after the revolution. They had a practical problem, obviously, with the military inventory, however critical they may have been themselves of the United States to gain at least some kind of support in the maintenance of that inventory, so our working relations were reasonably good. We didn't get access, as we should have gotten early on if things had been ideal, to the former headquarters of the military supply offices, the vast compound in the northern part of the city of Tehran, until very late in my tenure.

Indeed, it was the week before the Embassy was overrun in November, that we finally, with the cooperation of the Provisional Government and the revolutionary comité that controlled that compound after it had been overrun in February, gained physical access to it. Indeed, the fact that we had gotten that access the week before we were overrun, was probably the single most important piece of evidence that we were looking for that the provisional regime really wanted to work with us to rebuild a relationship. If they were prepared to let us into that place again, and gain access to our records to begin the process of cleaning up the files and records, with the cooperation of the revolutionary guards on the spot, that seemed to us as real support for our conclusion that things were going better.

Indeed, on my desk the day we were overrun was an eleven page unclassified cable ready for me to sign, which I didn't get signed before the roof fell in, reporting to Washington about all of this--telling them what we had accomplished in that visit, describing the cooperation of the revolutionary guards and the military figures involved. Somewhere that piece of paper still exists, but it never got to Washington.

Q: As we were working on this military relationship was it the feeling in talking with General Gast, that essentially in order to make all this equipment and stuff that was coming you really

had to have these Americans there or a substantial American presence to make the system work?

LAINGEN: No, we weren't advocating anything like that. We kept saying that we had no intentions of reestablishing a vast military presence. We knew that was behind us, but we knew that we had to have some kind of very close contact to just get to the bottom of this, to sort the contracts out. We weren't intending to come back with any kind of military training mission. That was not our intention. And they certainly did not press for it. General Gast in the months of that summer and fall had a staff of at most 15. They were working it down to the point that when the Embassy was taken it was something like 10 or 8.

The morning the Embassy was overrun, I was in the Foreign Ministry with my deputy, and with the security officer in the background, to have a conversation long planned with Iranian professionals about the diplomatic immunity status that would affect the future Military Liaison Office in my Embassy, involving at most 6 or 8 people. We had a good cooperative conversation which didn't resolve it totally. But the irony of the whole thing is that as we sat there talking about the future military diplomatic immunity status of this reduced Military Supply Office within a smaller embassy, across town one of the most egregious violations of diplomatic immunity was taking place involving the entire Embassy.

Q: Before we get to that one other question about our operations. As an old consular officer, what were we doing consularwise during your stay there?

LAINGEN: One further point on that military supply relationship; as I said, General Gast had good conversations. He and I together had a couple of very consequential meetings in the Foreign Ministry with Foreign Minister Yazdi and the Chief of Staff of the Army, talking specifically about details of the problem including this mission that I referred to where Iranians would actually go to the United States in an cooperative effort to work out the details of these contracts. Meanwhile, we were also coming near to conclusion about a limited resupply of military spare parts, particularly badly needed spare parts for the Iranian air force. There was a lot going on in the military supply field, very much needed if we were ever to get to the bottom of that.

This contributed to that atmosphere about confidence on how things were moving, because the military supply relationship, I can not emphasize too much, was such a big factor, particularly in restoring a sense of confidence on the part of the Iranians that we really meant what we said in affirming that we wanted to be cooperative in rebuilding the relationship. They refused to accept that. There was always this depth of suspicion that we really didn't mean it.

Q: How about that in the United States? Here is a revolutionary government. Weren't there people in Washington in positions of authority who were saying, "Let's drag our feet, we don't want to arm these guys because we don't know what they are going to do."?

LAINGEN: Yes, I am sure there were. Their voices, however, were not very strong. The voices mainly focused on getting out of a bad situation as cleanly and effectively and expeditiously as we could. The bulk of our military supply had been provided. It was on the ground. It was not something we could pull back. We are talking about how to resolve the existing contract

situation, the bulk we knew would never result in mass amounts of stuff going to Tehran, other than spare parts, stuff on order. We weren't thinking then about thousands of tanks, or new aircraft, or anything. We just wanted to find ways to end the previous relationship, clean it up as quickly and effectively as possible to the benefit of, not least, literally hundreds if not thousands of American suppliers whose money was involved.

Q: What about the Iraq factor at that time? Iraq was certainly not our friend at the time. It was considered to have a strong relationship with the Soviets. Was this also a factor? At best Iraq and Iran are never going to be friends and even though we have a regime that we have trouble with, it still acts as a counter to Iraq. Was that a factor?

LAINGEN: Yes, it was. Islamic fundamentalism as a threat, as you said, was not then seen as pervasive throughout the region. We didn't really come to that conclusion until after the Embassy was overrun and Khomeini signaled in that way his total opposition to any kind of American presence in the region. So we didn't see it. Frankly, I don't think we talked much about Islamic "fundamentalism." That didn't figure very largely. It was rebuilding a relationship with a different regime in Tehran. Yes, it was motivated by Islam and its strengths, but it was not a threat in that sense.

This brings me to the Iraqi situation. Iran was still seen as a place that mattered to us and that we needed in that part of the world. I was not engaged directly in our relations with Iraq at that time, except that there was and is and forever will be, a sticky relationship between Persians and Arabs, symbolized particularly in the relationship of Persian Iran with Arab Iraq. There is a lot of friction. We didn't look very favorably at Iraq in those days either. We went to the degree of actually sitting down with elements of the Provisional regime in Tehran and talking about how we saw the Iraqi "threat" to Iran. We were prepared to cooperate with them in providing them our judgment, to some degree our military intelligence estimates of Iraqi intentions and movement vis-a-vis Iran at that time. And some very, very sensitive classified conversations occurred at the level of the Prime Minister, where I talked to him and talked about how we saw Iraq as a force in the Middle East and particularly as we judged the provisional regime's concern that Iraq had malice a forethought vis-a-vis Iran.

Those conversations that we had were a deliberate effort, instrument, mechanism in our policy towards Iran in those days to try to rebuild a relationship. We went to the degree of actually sitting down with them and giving them highly classified intelligence on Iraq.

Q: What was the reaction on their part?

LAINGEN: The reaction on the part of the Prime Minister and other Ministers of the government, was very favorable. It was as important a signal as I was able to make that summer that we really meant business about rebuilding a relationship. The military supply was another one, but that was so difficult, so amorphous, and so laden with suspicion on the part of the Iranians that I can't say that I could identify it precisely as accomplishing much. But the way in which we met with the top officials of that provisional government to communicate highly classified information about Iraq was very effective, I thought at the time and I think it was with

those elements, a signal that we meant business.

I can't say how the Revolutionary Council felt about it because I wasn't dealing with it. I didn't have that contact. The specifics and details of those conversations that I had with the Prime Minister on this subject are presumably still highly classified.

Q: Sounds typical when you think that these things are known really to the other side, but people who are left out of this is the American public in a way.

LAINGEN: I will always remember one particular incident in the course of one of those briefings where my delegation was accompanied by technological equipment to project on the screen some of our intelligence. It included a simple projector that throws images onto a screen or wall. We carried that from my limousine into the Prime Minister's office. I sat down and began the briefings and the damn thing wouldn't work. Actually the Iranians had to go and find one of their own and bring it into the room. So much for American technology!

You raised the consular connection. That, of course, was an element in my mandate, my instructions, to signal our interest in resuming a normal relationship, because one of the instructions was to continue the efforts that Charlie Naas had begun guardedly early on to resume a visa issuing function, passport service, etc. The consular facilities of the mission had been overrun...they were in a separate building across the street from the Embassy compound ...during the revolution and badly damaged. We didn't reoccupy the building. So to resume a consular function, we had to find space within the compound, which we did in former apartment facilities at the rear of the compound. They were already in place in a kind of jerry-built arrangement when I got there in June. They remained there in a limited capacity of actual visa issuance until we were able to complete construction of a new visa issuing facility in a different building on the compound with all the trappings of bullet proof glass windows and that sort of thing for visa officers to sit behind and interview their candidates.

Meanwhile, of course, throughout the summer after I got there, the passion for visas on the part of Iranians was intense. It never died. It grew during the summer. I rarely had a conversation, even with Ministers, including a couple of times with the Prime Minister, when I didn't get what I called a visa push, asking me to do something to expedite the issuance of a visa for this or that person. We were doing it, of course, for people who desperately had to go, but it was still limited because we didn't have the facilities, the number of people to do that. When we finally reached the point of completing the construction of the new consular facility, we needed added personnel; we got a half dozen young Foreign Service officers, including a husband and wife team in two instances to man the facility...

Q: These were recruited from Washington?

LAINGEN: Yes, from Washington. They came there for about six weeks to two months at most. We opened the new consular facility, I think, three weeks before the Embassy was overrun. We opened and were a sellout for thousands of people on the streets surrounding the Embassy, anxious to get visas to go to the United States, or get at their previous applications which were in

massive files from the time before the Embassy was overrun in February.

Q: Iranian students were always the fly in the consular ointment throughout the world. I remember in Yugoslavia I had problems with Iranian students. What was the thrust of the visas?

LAINGEN: They were almost all visitor visas. And a lot of them students, of course. I think it is fair to say that at one point Iranian students in the United States were the largest single foreign group. So there were students, parents of students already in the United States who wanted to visit them, people who simply wanted to get out. After the revolution had occurred and it was a very uncertain future for vast numbers of Iranians as to what their lives were likely to be and they wanted to get visitor visas to go to the United States--obviously to stay. That was their intention, really. That is the problem that confronts all visa issuing officers. How does a visa issuing officer make that judgment about the real intentions of someone at his window? I have always said no one has more power over people than a junior officer who is a visa issuing officer. He has to make that judgment. He doesn't run to the Ambassador to ask his opinion. He has to make that judgment in light of his own interpretation of laws and regulations and to the intentions of that guy evident only on his face. It is a very responsible job and very difficult job.

I remind new officers in the Foreign Service, who might be a little unhappy about their first assignment to a consular post, that they will never have anything more useful in terms of strengthening their capacity as a diplomat because a diplomat has to know how to deal with people, fundamentally, and you really learn it on the visa issuing line.

When this new facility opened it was considered, at the time, the ultimate in visa facilities where protection was essential as well. We had thousands of applicants. We had so many that we had to appeal to the police for special security. We had to close the facility down on occasion because the numbers were so considerable on the streets. We also had Iranians who wanted to make money on the process, of course; bribery on the side to get a place in line, plus all the business interests on the street set up with quick, fast food facilities outside our doors, etc. It was an absolutely remarkable scene over several weeks, and also exciting in a way. It said something to us about the readiness of the regime there to allow it to happen--another a signal of sorts that they were prepared to have a relationship with us. It certainly said a lot, of course, about how many Iranians judged their future. This wasn't a particularly safe place for them to stay, Iran. They wanted to get out. That went on until the weekend before the Embassy was overrun.

That facility got, I suppose because it was new, as much graffiti on its wall as any during the demonstration that took place outside the Embassy walls three days before the Embassy was overrun. There was so much physical abuse of these facilities that I said, the first working day, indeed the day the Embassy was overrun, "We are going to close this place if that is the way they are going to treat us. We will close it until we get it cleaned up." That wasn't of much consequence because it got closed rather easily for other reasons!

Q: Setting this up to the elements that led to the takeover, what was your impression in October or so, of the relationship between the Provisional Government and the Revolutionary Council?

LAINGEN: That was always guarded. It was evident in the way in which the Prime Minister, Mr. Bazargan, often on television, spoke to his countrymen, pleading with them for cooperation, telling them what was going on. He was often on television in that fashion. He would also be seen and heard on television describing his frustration. He was quite open about his frustration in getting his orders and decrees implemented and carried out, and about how other elements in the revolution were frustrating it. He was often critical of the Revolutionary Comités functioning in various sectors of society outside of the normal government, on roadblocks on the streets, etc. It was pathetic to watch him on occasion to see how difficult it was for him to carry out his purposes--how frustrated he was in terms of accomplishing what he wanted to do. At times he was almost directly critical of the Ayatollah himself, on television.

Obviously, looking back on it, I should have read more into that than I did. I should have concluded more than we did that real power was not with him. That real power was, indeed, with revolutionary elements behind the scenes from comités on up. By comités I mean these committees, some of them ad hoc, and some of them reasonably permanent, that functioned all over the place as a kind of dual government, or separate government facility, with which Iranians had to deal--often with the baksheesh and bribery that is endemic in Iranian society.

Q: Were these comités really taking orders from the top or were they sort of operating on their own?

LAINGEN: Many of them were operating on their own. We could never be sure where the lines of communications were. All of them asserted, and they made it clear in any direct contact with them that I, or any Iranian had, that they had the blessing of the Ayatollah. It was easy to say that and they probably knew they did have that blessing in a larger sense. In any event, the relationship between a provisional government and something else in any revolutionary scene is always, obviously, uncertain. And it certainly was in this case because presiding over all of this was the Ayatollah Khomeini. He didn't sit in on meetings of the Revolutionary Council on a regular weekly basis; he was up there in majesty on high. These other elements were down below, all claiming they had special contacts with the Ayatollah. Indeed, that revolutionary thug who headed the revolutionary guards on our compound claimed he too had a personal, special relationship with the Ayatollah. Everybody did. That made life difficult for anyone presiding over the provisional government. It certainly did for all the rest of us trying to divine where all of this was going to go.

Q: Did you have in your political section an Ayatollah watcher who was sitting there trying to figure out what was coming out of this? Did we have any way of getting any feel? The Ayatollah was making speeches wasn't he?

LAINGEN: We didn't have any particular man as an Ayatollah watcher, but we had a reasonably good political section. Three of the political officers were former Peace Corps volunteers in Iran and had thus some considerable capacity to communicate and understand. Their Farsi was good. A couple of them had fluent Farsi. These people had a lot of contact with clerics outside the provisional government at lower levels--families of clerics and some of the leading clerical figures like Taleghani who died suddenly in September, and was at the head of a very large

family in Tehran. One of my officers, Mike Metrisko, in the political section, had some very considerable contact with the Taleghani family. So we had contacts with the lower level clerics. I would see them socially once in a while too; e.g. the meeting that we had with Beheshti.

But all that said, of course we didn't have enough contact with them, almost none when you consider what was going to happen. We should have had more. We should have seen the Ayatollah. The US government never did have direct contact with Ayatollah Khomeini, even in Paris. We stepped back from it when we came close to doing it there. When I got there it was not something that was considered wise or, for that matter, immediately essential to do. We obviously had to deal first, and build a relationship, with the provisional government to the extent that we could.

When I came back from consultations in September, I had instructions to work to find the best possible time to request an audience with the Ayatollah. We never got to that point. But I was functioning under that instruction when I got back and conceivably, with a little more time, I could have had it. In retrospect, I am convinced that even having done that, possibly even if I had seen him as the accredited Ambassador, it wouldn't have made a hell of a bit of difference. The Ayatollah Khomeini was so rigidly opposed to any kind of presence of the United States, of "West toxification" as to make it impossible for us ever to have had a relationship with him.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point.

Q: Today is February 17, 1993. Bruce, the last thing we said on this was that we reached the point that the revolution had happened, things were in chaos, but there was some optimism that maybe might turn around. But then the problem of what to do with the deposed Shah came up. Could you explain what the problem was and how it was seen from your advantage point?

LAINGEN: This was after the revolution had occurred, that's correct? The revolution occurred in February, almost precisely 14 years ago today. I had arrived in Tehran in June of that year, three or four months after the revolution.

The Shah had moved from Tehran in January, fleeing with the Empress and a small entourage and had stopped in various places...Cairo, Morocco...and by June when I came there, he was in Mexico. It was an issue lying there on the table, if you will, in the background for some, what to do about the Shah--the person, the leader, the head of state, for whom the United States obviously had some responsibility, given the previous relationship we had with him. It posed for President Carter a special obligation in the sense that he had reached out to him in such an open, sympathetic way, as the crisis developed in Iran, particularly at the time of the visit of President Carter and Mrs. Carter to Tehran on New Year's Eve in 1977. I was Chargé of the Embassy in Tehran beginning June, 1979. I was asked on several occasions, both on the record and by people who came to Tehran, for my views about what we do about the Shah, where he should live and should he be allowed entry into the United States?

On both occasions, on the two instances when I was asked formally by cable from Washington for my views, I responded that I felt, myself, that we had an obligation to admit the Shah into the

United States, but that the timing was very significant. On both occasions, and these were sometime in late July and again in late September, I responded that his admission was inappropriate until and unless we had demonstrated our acceptance of the change in Tehran, our acceptance of the Islamic revolution, by naming an Ambassador, formally, to succeed Sullivan who had left in March, and to succeed the aborted nomination of Walter Cutler in May, and until we had seen in Tehran the completion in large part of the process of putting in place the institutions of government under the new regime. That involved in particular the election of a new majlis, a referendum on the constitution and a number of other symbolic, but very important, steps that would see the revolution put in place its own institutions of government. Those two cables in which I reported those views were obviously received in Washington and considered, but as I think we have talked about before, a recommendation from an embassy in the field, from a Chargé in the field, from an ambassador in the field, to Washington is only one of a large inflow of views affecting policy in Washington.

Q: You said that you felt the timing was wrong until these things happened. How did you reach this conclusion? I am just trying to get a little of not only the thought process but also maybe how the Embassy worked.

LAINGEN: I reached that conclusion based on my own view and, indeed, my own participation in the events of 1953 at the time of the overthrow of Mossadegh and the flight of the Shah to Italy at that time and the actions on the part of the United States to assist elements within Iran to sustain the overthrow of Mossadegh and to permit the Shah to return to the throne from Italy in a CIA-supported effort at that time.

In 1979 at the time of the revolution and during the revolution, one of the major concerns of the revolutionaries, both nationalists and the more radical Islamic elements, was that the United States would again work behind the scenes to facilitate a return of the Shah to his throne, even after he had fled this time in the midst of that revolution. They were very apprehensive about that. There was a constant concern on the part of the revolutionaries...a greater concern in the minds of some than in others, but it was always there.

It was apparent to me that that concern was very strong and how we handled the Shah, what we did with him, the degree we seemed to be supportive of him in his ambitions, could be very decisive for our position in Tehran.

Well before I had come to Tehran in June of that year, the Embassy had sought in every way possible to say and to demonstrate to the new regime that we, despite our sense of obligation, moral, not least, to the Shah, we had no intention to facilitate his return to Iran. It was very hard to convince them of that. It was impossible to convince them of that so long as the Shah was out there moving about.

So it was for that very basic reason that I felt that anything that we did to reach out, to embrace the Shah, even in humanitarian terms, could have very considerable consequences and we needed to handle it very carefully.

Q: Would you mention what the humanitarian side might be?

LAINGEN: Well, the Shah was sick. We didn't know how sick. He wasn't well. It was apparent, I think, to my predecessors, Charlie Naas and Bill Sullivan, that the Shah was not the person that Americans had known in years before. His character seemed much stronger and his capacity for decisions was more apparent than it was in the critical months leading up to the revolution. There was also a humanitarian sense because the Shah had been our ally, our friend, had been a close friend, had been supportive of much of US policy throughout the region and in areas well beyond the Middle East. That was a sense of political obligation, but there was also that humanitarian sense of the guy being a good friend. Here he was bounced from his throne and trying to find a place to live, to put down his feet and his family. There was a very considerable sense of obligation, I think, humanitarian, political and moral, on the part of a good many Americans, well beyond government. I say well beyond government, because some of those were very influential in the decisions that were eventually taken.

Q: How did it play out?

LAINGEN: I came to Tehran in June, convinced, myself, that the revolution was there to stay. Indeed, I thought the revolution had a great deal of promise because of the way it seemed to be a genuinely populous revolution, widely supported by the people of Iran, and more importantly, by much of the establishment and the intelligentsia of the country.

So I thought the revolution was there to stay. I tried in every way to convey that impression, myself. That was among my instructions when I went to Tehran in June, to convey to the Iranians in every way I could that whatever action we took in respect to the Shah, we accepted the political change in Tehran. We were prepared to live with the Islamic revolution. Nonetheless, we felt a sense of obligation to the Shah and I said they should look at how we handled him in light of what I had tried to convey, that the United States accepted the change in Tehran and had no intentions to disestablish it.

It was very difficult to convey that. I was not asked repeatedly in every meeting I had what we were going to do about the Shah, but I sensed it was there all the time. On several occasions, when I was instructed to convey to the Foreign Office that how we handled members of his family, I said that should not be misinterpreted. Before we took the decision to admit the Shah in October, 1979, we had already admitted several of his children to attend school in the United States. Again on those occasions I was instructed, in the face of some concern expressed to me by Iranian officials, that that should be looked at in the context of our humanitarian concern for his family.

Of course, all of that culminated in the decision taken in October to admit him. I thought that was very much the wrong time to admit him because of the very sensitive political processes that were underway in Tehran.

Q: What were these processes?

LAINGEN: Particularly the referendum on the new constitution. It was expected to occur in early December, 1979, with elections to follow that.

Do you want me to go into the actual admission of the Shah?

Q: *Yes.*

LAINGEN: I also engaged, of course, in a good deal of exchange by correspondence, that is classified letters, and also by several cable exchanges with the Desk, that is Henry Precht and his colleagues, on how we should deal with the Shah and when we should deal with him and what it might mean. I had no doubt that the Desk and most policy implementers in Washington, both in the National Security Council and in the State Department, were supportive of my views that it was too early to admit the Shah--that we should not do it at that time.

I think I may have mentioned before that particularly in the second of the two sensitive cables that I sent back to Washington in response to their highly classified cables, I warned that if we were to admit him before these other steps were taken...the completion of elections, etc., and before we named an ambassador...there was a risk of another assault on the Embassy like that of February, 1979 when the Embassy was occupied and held for several hours. I did not have the prescience to predict that we would be seized and held for 444 days and used in the way we were, but we at least had alerted Washington to the risk of another assault on the Embassy.

It was on October 23, 1979 that at breakfast in the Residence I got a call from the Marine guard in the Embassy telling me that there was a NIACT message that I had to see urgently. I asked him to bring it over to the Residence on the compound. So a Marine brought it over to me. That was a message informing me that the Shah was about to be admitted to the United States for medical treatment and that I should inform the government at the highest level that we were taking this step for humanitarian reasons. It spelled out in some detail where he was going to go, what our understanding was of his medical condition, that this in no way should be seen as an attempt by the United States to undermine the position of the provisional government of the revolution, with which I was dealing.

It came as a bit of a shock to all of us in the Embassy and, of course, triggered immediately steps that we were prepared to take to strengthen our security, and these were taken. My first responsibility beyond that was to get to the highest level of government and that was the sitting Prime Minister at that time, Mr. Bazargan. As I recall, Henry Precht was in the city on a visit. We got, within a couple of hours, an appointment with the Prime Minister, Mr. Bazargan, who received us in his office along with the Foreign Minister, Mr. Yazdi, and a number of other officials including, I think, the Acting Defense Minister.

I communicated this information pursuant to those instructions with particular emphasis on our feeling that we had a responsibility in humanitarian terms to provide this kind of medical treatment to the Shah and that the Empress would be accompanying him. I did not receive in the instructions at that time how long we expected him to be there and I simply did not discuss with them or communicate to the Prime Minister any views as to how long this might entail.

Q: Did you have any information from the Department about the nature of the disease, which was cancer?

LAINGEN: I am not sure how much anybody knew about the details of his illness at that time. One of the problems in dealing with the Shah well before the revolution was that we didn't have an awareness that he had, indeed, a rather serious illness. Certain French doctors with whom he had dealings were aware of it, but we were not. This always surprised me and I don't know the real answer to that. I don't recall precisely, I think I simply informed them that the condition was such as to require immediate entry and that we would be communicating to the government as soon as we had the details of the medical problem and the treatment that he was being given.

The Prime Minister, and even more the Foreign Minister, expressed their concern. The Foreign Minister reminded me several times during that conversation that this was a very serious step that could have some very difficult consequences and that he had warned me against this kind of thing. He, in particular, pressed for participation in the medical diagnosis by Iranian designated doctors--that they be permitted to send a doctor to the United States to participate. I couldn't give them assurance of that, although I communicated that to Washington. In response to that all the Department was prepared to do was to assure Yazdi and his government that we would inform them of the diagnosis by medical doctors in the United States.

I was instructed as well to get--and obviously requested--assurances from the Prime Minister that the Embassy would be provided adequate security in the event that there would be demonstrations on the streets stimulated by this decision on our part. After some considerable discussion of that, the Prime Minister said some rather fateful words that didn't seem as fateful at the time, that they would do their best to provide security. He didn't say, "We guarantee you that your Embassy will be secure." He said simply, "We will do our best." And, I think, he meant that. I have no doubt that Bazargan meant what he said, that he wanted to do what he could to assure that the Embassy was secure. But, of course, time would demonstrate that it was not secure and that he was not able to do his best.

It was a difficult conversation in the Prime Minister's office. But it was civil. I always had that kind of exchange with Bazargan because he was and is a very dignified gentleman of old Persian traditions. That is the way he conducted his business. Some of his colleagues were less so. Mr. Yazdi was a little more blunt and direct.

We left that conversation that morning and went back to the Embassy and immediately called what approximated a country team meeting where I communicated to the rest of the Embassy, the decision of Washington and the actions I had taken to emphasizing as much as I could that we had a difficult situation and that in all we did we should carry on in a fashion that would help demonstrate that we did not regard this as that consequential a step. I said business would proceed, that our relations would continue and that Washington would inform us of further details as soon as they had them.

There are some, apparently, who understood that I was instructed to simply ask the opinion of the

provisional government, to seek their permission, for the admission of the Shah. But that was not the case; the instructions made it clear to me that the decision had already been taken, and I want that to be clear on the record. What I was asked to do, instructed to do, was to simply inform them that the Shah was being admitted for medical treatment--not that I was to approach the government and seek their permission. There was no question of our changing our minds. It was clear that Washington had made up its mind and that the Shah would be admitted.

Under normal circumstances, I suppose, in the context of a relationship in a country that had gone through a revolution, the fact that we had admitted for medical treatment the previous ruler, would not and should not be necessarily of that great consequence if we had tried to demonstrate at the same time that we accepted the change in that country. But the concern about the Shah, the suspicion born of that period in 1953 when we had collaborated to return the Shah to the throne, was so strong, particularly among the nationalist elements of the revolution and also the clerical ones to some degree, that that decision with respect to the Shah proved to be very consequential and was consequential as we had earlier warned Washington it would be.

Q: Was the Iranian view of this among the Nationalists elements...

LAINGEN: I say nationalist elements in particular because it was the nationalist elements, Bazargan, himself, who were holdovers from the 1953 period.

Q: Did you have the feeling that this was going to be used as a cause to further something internal, or was this something that was so enormous that it was handing a tool to the extreme elements?

LAINGEN: I suppose it was both. As time would demonstrate, it was a tool, a peg on which the more extreme elements could act. I think the nationalist, secular elements of the revolution, Bazargan, wanted to handle this in a way that would preclude its becoming a focus for the more radical elements of the revolution, about which Bazargan and Yazdi were themselves concerned. They were in effect competition, a threat to them as well. That is why they sought things like permission from us that an Iranian doctor could participate in this. They saw this as something they could use with the public in a PR sense to hold down the efforts on the part of the more radical elements to fire up the masses on the streets, and the media as well, of course.

The immediate reaction in the streets, in the media, on the part of what we dealt with as government, was rather moderate, in a sense surprisingly moderate. Even the reaction from Khomeini, at the outset, was restrained, much less strident than I expected. He used, particularly the expression, "Let us all hope he dies." Almost a sense of confidence that the guy was dead anyway, politically, and that this was a way to see him die medically.

The reaction among my colleagues in the Embassy varied. Some were much more concerned than others, to the point that some today say, and I think they can say with accuracy, that they were much more prescient about the consequences than I was, for example. I thought we could manage it.

Q: I interviewed Ann Swift not too long ago and she seems to feel rather strongly about this, not just on that, but the whole situation was much more dangerous, although she was not an Iranian expert by any means.

LAINGEN: Yes, I as think I indicated before, many of us, and I think broadly defined the mission as a whole, were living on hope in some of the weeks and months leading up to that period. A sense of misplaced confidence, as things had been going rather well. The security situation broadly in the country as we saw it and as it affected us and particularly in the city of Tehran, was gradually improving. You could move around more freely. People even travelled outside of Tehran on certain occasions. Indeed, Ann Swift was outside the city the weekend before the Embassy was taken. We had gotten cooperation from the government in improving the security on the compound, getting rid of the resident revolutionaries there. We had opened a new consular facility and that had gone well. It certainly had gone well in terms of the number of Iranians who were seeking visas.

So there was a sense of confidence, as it turned out; it was misplaced confidence,, given the events that followed, that we could weather this. That confidence was strengthened by what I described as the first reaction on the part of the media and the Ayatollah, himself, relatively restrained.

Q: You mentioned the media. Did we have somebody from the USA that could get our story out to the media or not?

LAINGEN: Getting the story out to the media was not easy. It never had been during the months leading up to that. Our voice wasn't heard very much. It was too soft. It didn't convey much assurance. We had a USIS staff, at the end, of only four officers. Barry Rosen was our press officer. And, of course, we made a deliberate effort after the admission of the Shah to reiterate the message that we had delivered to government; i.e. that he was being admitted strictly for humanitarian purposes, that nothing should be read into it beyond that. That we continued to accept the revolution and were prepared to deal with it in Tehran.

That reaction didn't really change substantially in those two weeks that followed, until four or five days before the Embassy was overrun, when the Ayatollah began to speak out much more forcibly on the subject, and that stridency was then picked up by elements of the media. Nonetheless, even then, we were not a target of any large demonstrations. There were always people or groups walking by on their way to something else that would yell anti-American slogans when they passed by the compound destined for a larger demonstration somewhere else.

Our big concern was a very large demonstration planned for support of the revolution on November 1, three days before the Embassy was overrun. That demonstration was originally scheduled to take place around the walls of the Embassy and in the immediate environs of where we were. At the last minute, indeed the night before on October 31, the word was sent around that the Ayatollah had directed that the revolutionary demonstration take place in another area further from the Embassy. The next morning, the bulk of the demonstrators did go to that other destination, but somewhere between one and two thousand demonstrators nonetheless came to

the Embassy compound that morning and spent the day marching back and forth around the walls. We anticipated some of that, to the point where we had added security and the Marines were on sort of battle formation that morning.

I recall, myself, going out to the gates of the Embassy to look around that morning and at one point having the chief of police come rushing up in his jeep to take a look at the situation and assure me through the gates that things were under control, that I need not be concerned about any particular danger. They were noisy during the day. A lot of graffiti was put on the walls, on the outside. There were some tense moments late in the day when some of the more determined demonstrations were determined to keep it up and put some banners on the outside of our main gates denouncing us and putting up pictures of the Ayatollah. It caused us a rather difficult stretch late that evening requiring our security officers, particularly Alan Golacinski, to spend some very tense moments out there. We were finally able to resolve it.

Q: What type of thing are you talking about?

LAINGEN: More than I knew at the time. We were demanding that the posters be taken down, that the Ayatollah's picture be taken off the gates, and that sort of thing. At one point, apparently one of the security officers or one of the Marines may have ripped one of the posters down from the inside and taken it. That caused some of the demonstrators to demand that it be returned undamaged. Eventually we did turn it back, but not before there had been a good deal of very close physical exchanges between those on the outside and those on the inside of the gate. This was on the night of November 1, culminating a rather difficult day, during which we had advised the bulk of the Americans who lived on the compound and those who lived in apartment houses immediately to the back of the compound behind the rear gates to spend the day up in the British compound in the hills of Tehran. And they did, so we were a skeleton presence that day, except for the beefed up Marine Security Guard patrol on actual duty. But we weathered the day and the next day was, as I recall, a relatively quiet day in the city.

We had services in an Anglican church hall. I attended those periodically. I went that morning with my security guards. The streets were relatively quiet, but evidence of the demonstrations the day before were clearly to be seen, with the vast amount of graffiti that was on the walls of the compound, particularly on the new consular facility in the rear of the compound. We made a decision that morning that when the Embassy was to be reopened on the 4th, we would keep the consular facility closed while we got the graffiti removed from that particular spot. Frankly, it was a gesture almost of defiance. We weren't going to let that stop our operations totally, we were going to clean it up and get on with it.

The night before the Embassy was taken over was the third of November. Periodically I would have welcoming parties for new arrivals and we had scheduled one that evening in the Residence where we also showed films in the large salon for the American community. At the last minute, I was unable to host that affair because I got word from the Foreign Office that there was a command performance for the entire diplomatic corps to go to the Foreign Ministry club compound where a new documentary film on the revolution was going to be shown. So I asked my secretary, Liz Fontaigne, to substitute for me as hostess, at least until I came back from that

command performance.

I went to that command performance and saw the film, which was an interesting documentary on the revolution, not least because some important footage of the film was filmed immediately outside the Embassy compound back in February showing tanks on the streets and the Embassy under a state of siege at that time as well. It was rather ironic that the night before the Embassy was to be overrun the second time I was at that command performance watching a film showing how we were affected by the revolution eight months before.

Q: Was the documentary in tone anti-American?

LAINGEN: It wasn't blatantly, but anti-American sentiment was in it, it couldn't help but be.

The next morning was our first day back at work after the events of these preceding days, the first day that the Embassy was open again. Again, the way in which we had weathered this very large demonstration on the first, three days earlier, was very much on our minds, in our senses. Here was evidence, in the way we had weathered it, that the regime meant what it said about being prepared to do its best to protect the Embassy. Contributing, if you will, to a further sense of confidence and wishful thinking that morning. In the country team meeting that we held that morning, I don't recall specifically, but I assume that Barry Rosen and others reported on what was in the media and what had been said in terms of the Shah. At this point I don't recall the details of that. We talked about our schedules for that day. What we intended to do. I recall particularly that we made a decision that morning to keep the flag flying around the clock and leave it on the flag pole, carefully secured and with the pole greased, as they had done before on occasions, to insure that if there was any attempt to come over the walls in any demonstration it would be difficult to get that flag down.

I recall that we agreed to keep the Marines on a state of alert, but that business would go on as usual in the Embassy. I would keep a long scheduled appointment that morning at the Foreign Ministry at 10:30, or whatever, I have forgotten precisely, to carry on discussions I was having with the Foreign Ministry about arranging for the future diplomatic immunity status of my reduced military liaison office...reduced and changed. The Office was previously a military assistance advisory group, a MAAG. We ended that because we weren't providing military assistance beyond what we had provided before, but we needed a military liaison office to maintain liaison with the Iranian military on their existing American supplied military inventory and on future military cash purchases. And working on the difficult problem which we have discussed before, I think, of what we were going to do with uncompleted orders, equipment for which the Iranians had paid but had not yet been delivered.

That military liaison office was to be a new office, a newly named office, and new, not least, in the way it was to be infinitely smaller than our previous military presence in Iran which had been numbers in scores and hundreds at one point. We were going to have a continuing office of about 8 individuals. That was what I had been communicating to the Iranians, but I wanted assurance from them that they would have full diplomatic immunity as other members of the Embassy staff did. It was difficult for them to accept that, and we were working on the details of that and trying

to work it out. That was the reason I called at the Foreign Ministry that morning.

I went there with one of my security officers, Mike Howland, leaving the other security officer on duty in the Embassy--Alan Golacinski. The two of them had radio contact on walkie talkies. Communication back and forth between Howland and the Embassy and between the Foreign Ministry parking lot and the Embassy.

I was scheduled also to be accompanied by the senior political officer in the political section, who was Ann Swift. A more senior officer, the head of the section, was Victor Tomseth, but he was also designated as acting DCM. Ann Swift was to accompany me. As it turned out she had been out of the city or at a distant place in the suburbs, and I don't recall exactly where, and wasn't able to get back to the Embassy in time to join us, although we saw her come walking into the compound as our limousine drove off. So it was I, Victor Tomseth and Mike Howland in our group that morning that went to the Foreign Ministry.

We passed on the streets several groups of demonstrators, all of which--as we understood before and was apparent to us--were heading for the university compound where there were to be large demonstrations commemorating an assault on the University by the Shah's regime at an earlier time. We did not sense that they were heading towards our compound and so proceeded as planned to the Foreign Ministry.

We had a good conversation over traditional cups of tea with Iranian professional diplomats, none of whom that morning raised the issue of the Shah. Our conversation was entirely limited to the question of diplomatic immunity for the military liaison office. At the end we departed without resolving the issues, but we had not expected to. It was a reasonably productive conversation. We went down to the parking lot in the Foreign Ministry compound and there we found Mike Howland in active conversation with his counterpart in the Embassy. Mike informed me that a dustup was taking place over at the compound--that there were demonstrators trying to come through the gates.

We got in the limousine and started off, followed by another Iranian security laden car and got only a block or two when we heard the situation was getting worse at the compound and given advise by Alan Golacinski that it would be best if we not try to come there, and we agreed that we would return to the Foreign Ministry to seek what was then needed, help from the provisional government.

We turned around and got back to the Foreign Ministry and raced up the stairs...I say raced because I recall running up those stairs, the sense of urgency was that great by that time...to see the Acting Foreign Minister because the Foreign Minister, Mr. Yazdi, had not yet returned that morning from Algiers where he had been with the Prime Minister as part of the Iranian delegation to celebrations attending the 15th or 20th anniversary of the Algerian revolution.

We talked about that before, I think, because Brzezinski was heading the American delegation and it was during these ceremonies in Algiers on November 1 that Brzezinski and Bazargan had had a conversation, the highest level conversation that had taken place yet at that time between a

leader of the revolution and an American policy maker.

So we saw Mr. Kharrazi, the Acting Foreign Minister, who incidentally today is the sitting Iranian Permrep in New York at the UN. We pleaded with him, demanded of him, that he take steps immediately and provide assistance. He clearly wanted to do that, to protect the compound. He was pretty ill-informed as to what was going on. He knew less than we did at that point when we began the conversation. There ensued a number of conversations by telephone between him and elements of the government. I was getting on the telephone as well, accompanied now, however, by Mike Howland and his radio connection. So we had a continuing report of what was going on in the compound to the extent that our beleaguered colleagues over there could report on it, could see it all. All of them at that time were holed up in the Chancery itself.

An hour or so went by, I think, before Yazdi, the Foreign Minister, turned up. He had come directly from the airport to the Foreign Ministry and the conversations then continued in his office. Meanwhile the Chief of Protocol, who was clearly a friend and had done his best to facilitate improved security at the compound over the preceding months and had been a very good interlocutor, moved about wringing his hands, as concerned as we were. His secretary and other secretaries were milling about. Everybody was in a state of uncertainty, to some extent bewilderment, as to just what was happening because it wasn't visual to us. It was all by telephone and radio.

Eventually, Vic Tomseth and I ended up in the Foreign Minister's office where I repeated my demands for some action to be taken to protect the Embassy and to evict those who by now were coming over the walls in large numbers. I, having by that time established a telephone connection with Washington, with the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, was sitting for much of the remainder of the day at the side of the Foreign Minister's desk, determined not to give up that telephone connection.

It went on that way for several hours. He trying to carry on to some degree normal business, while I was in conversation with a number of people in Washington from David Newsom on down.

Q: He was Under Secretary for Political Affairs at that time.

LAINGEN: Yes.

It became painfully clear in the course of the day that things weren't happening the way we had hoped they would happen. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Yazdi, was the man who had been the person, as the revolution had occurred in February when the Embassy was overrun then, who had acted physically on the spot to restore the Embassy to our control then. Now he was the Foreign Minister who should have been able to act to repeat what he had done then. And I think he meant to do it, wanted to do it, actually tried to do it in the course of that day. But it became increasingly apparent as we sat there that he was no longer the locus of the kind of power that he had had then.

Meanwhile, of course, the Embassy had been overrun. In conversation with the Embassy, both with Ann Swift and Alan Golacinski by telephone and by radio, because we also had a telephone connection with them in addition to the telephone connection with Washington, I had given what instructions and what orders I could from that vantage point. Unfortunately, it evolved into a rather mixed up command and control situation. I was in the Foreign Ministry, available only by telephone and to some extent by radio. The acting DCM was with me, there was no chief, if you will, apparent in the Embassy. The chain of command involved the next senior political officer, who was Ann Swift, the incoming head of the military liaison office, Col. Scott, USA, and the senior defense attaché, Col. Shaefer, USAF. So I was in conversation with several of them at several points that day over those hours, and I confess the locus of authority there was never clear to me. A key issue as things developed was destruction of documents and equipment. I think we may have talked about this before. We had earlier been under instructions to reduce our classified material. We had supposedly responded to that instruction. I say supposedly because it is clear in retrospect that not enough destruction had taken place, not enough return of documents had taken place to Washington. Indeed, there is some evidence that some documents had been returned from some offices in Washington to the Embassy in Tehran. We clearly had much more classified paper than we should have had and I knew we had. We also had generally inadequate destruction equipment, older varieties. Not enough of the total mashing version, or whatever the terms are. More often it was stripping equipment.

We also that morning began the destruction too late. It did not seem, in the conversations that I was having that it was that threatening. The first impression that all of us got, both on the compound and certainly with us in the Foreign Ministry, was a kind of repeat of the February intrusion and that the intention of the students coming into the Embassy was this time to again hold it for a while as a kind of demonstration of their contempt for the United States, and more importantly their concern about the direction in which the Provisional Government had been taking the revolution and their hope that they could destabilize the Provisional Government under Bazargan.

This was in any event their real intent. Their real intent was not to get the Shah back, despite the slogans that were so useful to them in that sense to get passions in the streets aroused. Their intent was to use that device to destabilize and undermine the provisional government of the revolution and to facilitate a greater role for the more radical elements.

At any rate it did not seem that the situation was all that bad at the outset. In retrospect we should have begun destruction earlier. I, obviously as chief of mission, had that responsibility and today bear that responsibility for the way in which not enough of our classified documentation was destroyed. We had too much, we started too late and we had equipment that was not the best.

Q: Had anyone ever talked to you about what we had and weather we could do it or not?

LAINGEN: We had had some simulated exercises of that kind. But again, not as much as we should have. It was clear that there is a classic lesson from the overrunning of the Embassy in Tehran and that is that we have to think lean as diplomatic missions. The less paper we have the better.

Q: This was the lesson, I think had been learned for a little while after the overrun of our Embassy in Taiwan done by a mob.

LAINGEN: Human beings are pack rats. They like to pack their paper and things around them. Diplomats are not better than anyone else, I suppose, although they should be. We were able, if my understanding is correct, to destroy all the useable equipment in the operation center. That destruction was complete. They couldn't use what we had. It couldn't be taken apart and found within it computerized boards with sensitive material. But a lot of paper did not get destroyed, including some very sensitive documents in the hands of the station chief.

Of course, a lot of the paper that did not seem to have that urgency of destruction, including unclassified biographical material, would also in time prove to be a very damaging element of the situation because lots of that stuff has Central Intelligence Agency logo stamped on it even if it is unclassified. That was enough to fire the fury of the more radical elements of the revolution, even though it was material of an unclassified, descriptive nature. That was sufficient to cause a great deal of pain and hurt to a lot of Iranians.

And that is the real pain that I have felt since. Not that our security was threatened, our strategic interests, or political interests in Iran and the region. They were not seriously effected by what was leaked. It was clear at any event at that point that our relationship with the Iranians was not going to be reestablished very soon. But the human hurt for a lot of people in Iran because of the way we were not able to destroy incriminating documentation, that is the legacy that hurts me very much today.

As we have all learned since, if you are going to be overrun by a revolutionary group at an Embassy, make sure you are overrun by groups a little less passionate in their zeal and determination than those in Tehran, because their passion, their determination, their zeal as revolutionaries was apparent in many ways in the months that followed, and not least in the way they laboriously over hours and hours, days and days, and still today probably, pieced back together a lot of the damaging paper, strip by strip.

Q: These papers were cut in very thin strips, the idea being it is easier to burn.

LAINGEN: On the other hand, most of us would assume that even if we were unable to destroy it further, no one would ever piece that together. But they did. Today, I don't know what the count is, more than 50 sets of such documentation is available in books that are on sale in book stores in Tehran.

It was a bad day in many ways, but there were many lessons learned from that day and what occurred before and since. But one certainly was that cliché, "Think lean as an Embassy, as a mission." In a computer age one would assume that one could. On the other hand, I think all of us today concede that computers and xeroxes make it possible to have even more paper.

Q: And also memories are around that people are not even aware of.

LAINGEN: That is correct.

Q: Bruce, while we are on the subject, what was your attitude and how does one use Marines? You have this trained military force, yet it is sort of a fact that if you shoot on a mob, it is pretty much the end of everything. So what good is it to have Marines? How did you feel about that at the time?

LAINGEN: Well, I am a strong admirer of the Marine Corps. I have always referred to Marine Security Guards as partners in diplomacy and am delighted to have them there. I still think it has been a good program, not least for the way in which the Marines, themselves, have a unique career choice that they can pick and enjoy. They look damn good. They are a sharp, neat image of America. For people in many countries it is the first image they get of America as they walk into an Embassy compound; there are the Marines. You can argue that any way you want, but I think from the whole it is a plus. But, Marine Security Detachments are not there in Embassy compounds to fight Custer's Last Stand operations. That is not their purpose. It can't be their purpose. They are there to buy time and, of course, in the process of buying time to protect. In the course of normal life in an embassy and a diplomatic mission, they are there to enhance and strengthen the security that attaches to our offices, to documents, etc. They are the watchdogs that guard the embassy and they play that useful role well.

All of that was evident to us in Tehran. The first assault on the Embassy in February, in the middle of the revolution, had been a very dangerous state of affairs where the Marines at that point were stationed in several places on the far perimeters of the compound, in effect defending a 27 acre compound with a Marine Security Detachment at that time, I suppose, of 15 or 20. I wasn't there so I can't say precisely how many were there, but it never got over that number that I know of and wasn't over that number when we got overrun in November. At that time I think we had 16, several of whom were out of the country on leave.

But in February the Marines had engaged in some rather difficult one-on-one situations. The standing instructions for Marine Security Guards in all embassies is that they do not fire on their own initiative unless or until they are in danger of immediate bodily risk themselves; otherwise they fire only on instructions of the senior officer present, who normally would be the ambassador or chargé. That was the situation in Tehran and that was the situation in February when the Embassy was first overrun, but because some of the Marines were at distant points around the compound, that need to make a decision on their own fell on them. Some of them had to face some very difficult situations.

There is today, still some uncertainty as to the number of Iranians that were killed in that incident that day, but one or two we know were killed. At least one, I believe, as a consequence of Marine firing. One Marine was held by those revolutionaries in February and taken off somewhere for a time. His escapades have been written up publicly. I wasn't there, but it was a very dicey situation for about 24 hours before we got him back.

All of that is background for the situation which I faced when I came up against that problem on

November 4, 1979. At no time did I order the Marines to fire. At no time did they fire. I did instruct them to use tear gas as needed, fairly early on, although I think we probably should have used it even earlier. But we didn't use it when the actual intrusion into the compound began. At that time their battle stations were all within the Chancery, itself. One problem, by the way, that morning was that some of the Marines were in the Marine House immediately behind the Embassy compound, across the street from the outer walls. They had to get back into the compound when the alarm bells began to ring. One or two of them were captured in the Marine House, itself, complicating the situation when the decision was made as to whether we should surrender. We did eventually use tear gas...again I am speaking from my vantage point in the Foreign Ministry on the other side of town. I wasn't there so the specifics of how things went from minute to minute, from hour to hour, have to be provided by someone else. But my understanding is, based on telephone and radio conversations, that one or two of the Marines actually did not make it back into the Chancery and into that kind of protection.

In any event, the Chancery was eventually surrounded by hundreds of these demonstrators, armed with a variety of things...some with banners, some with protest slogans, some with actual guns, some with equipment to pry open a rear window of the basement slightly below ground floor of the Chancery. That is where they forced entry into the building and as they came in were deterred to some degree by tear gas, but not sufficient to stop them. The Marines retreated back up to the first floor and eventually up to the second floor behind the steel door there.

As time went on the question developed as to what we should do, having been forced into that kind of fortress on the second floor of the Chancery. Eventually at one point, Alan Golacinski, went out into the compound, down the stairs, to attempt to negotiate with those who were leading the demonstrations. He was captured and held himself. I was informed of that. I don't recall that I was aware of another thing that developed at that time, although I am aware of it now directly from John Limbert, one of the political officers in the Embassy, the most fluent Farsi speaker we had and who at one point made the decision to open that second floor door. To what degree the decision to do so was coordinated among those of my staff in charge or who had taken charge in the hallway, is not entirely clear to me. In any event, he went out as well, and was captured. I was informed at one point that smoke was coming through under the second floor door suggesting that they were trying to burn the place down even though it was a metal door.

That and other reports from the Embassy indicated that there was no possible way to defend the Chancery, that we had made sufficient progress in destroying what I understood to be the bulk of the classified gear, and I ordered them to surrender when they thought they had no alternative to doing so. And they eventually did. The rest of the story is better told by those who were there on the second floor.

The demonstrators then stormed through the open door, bound all the staff loosely, hands in particular, and blindfolded them, forcing them to sit down on the floor. At the outset the classified code room was held a little bit longer, but eventually that too was surrendered, when they had completed the destruction of the equipment there. After I had given the order to surrender and the second floor was occupied, obviously my contact ended. Radio and telephone links were cut off.

The three of us, Victor Tomseth, Mike Howland and I were left to ourselves and the horrible sense that something, not totally unexpected, but serious event had transpired. I say not totally unexpected because we still had the feeling that this was probably going to be something like what happened in February.

Q: This is the way things are done. We have had problems before and they all worked out within a day or two.

LAINGEN: Well, they did then, but they didn't this time.

I continued into the evening, until late that evening, approaching midnight eventually, sitting at the desk of the Foreign Minister, still in telephone conversation with Washington--he in telephone conversation with a number of people around the city. He at one point said to me, as he told me that he had to go off to a cabinet meeting, "What are you going to do?" I said to him, "You tell me what I am going to do, because you have the responsibility to provide me security and my colleagues' security. I can't go out on the streets. I am not going to go back to the compound now and be taken."

There was some discussion earlier on whether it would be a good idea for me to try to return. That idea was rejected rather quickly because of the way things were developing. It was better that I and my two colleagues stay where we were to see if we couldn't work things out from the government end.

I told him that it was his responsibility to tell me what I should do. I said that I could not go out and try to make some other embassy in town responsible for me and my colleagues. And there was some risk of my being picked up in any event.

So he said, "Well, look, you better stay here. We will work this out by morning." He took me down personally to one of the diplomatic reception rooms, I and my two colleagues at that point having not eaten anything to speak of during the day, except for tea and some cookies and some Algerian dates that Yazdi had brought back as a gift from the Independence Day celebrations there. He arranged for us to get something to eat from the kitchen of the Foreign Ministry. This was roughly just before midnight--he going off to a cabinet meeting.

So we made ourselves as comfortable as we could in this rather splendid room, full of pseudo-French furniture. We took turns trying to sleep during the night on those uncomfortable sofas. It was a very painful time. And yet, a time when we were still determined to convince ourselves that we would work this out. We really believed it--or told ourselves we believed it.

Q: And, of course, this was what all common sense and experience had taught one, that these things didn't keep going.

LAINGEN: The next morning came around. We had been on the phone all night with Washington. We were on the phone also with elements of the Foreign Ministry that were friendly

with us. We had telephone contacts occasionally with Kate Koob, who along with Bill Royer, were still two not taken hostages. They were running the American Cultural Center in another part of town and were not to be taken hostages until later, the second day. We had visits from the Chief of Protocol; friendly kitchen force people; we were on phones to other ambassadors in the city, all of which was being facilitated by the Foreign Minister's office. The Foreign Minister, himself, came down to see us once on the second day. We talked to the Deputy Foreign Minister once or twice.

As all of this was happening, Washington, with whom we were in contact, were constantly asking us for our opinion of how things stood and our own judgment of the scene and giving us their own judgment of the scene from back there. President Carter eventually weighed into action, himself, in deciding to send several messages to Khomeini. He decided to send Ramsey Clark, the former Attorney General, and William Miller, a retired Foreign Service officer who had served in Iran earlier and who had a lot of contacts, particularly with the nationalist secular elements of the revolutionary leadership. The idea was to send them to Tehran for conversations directly with the Ayatollah to work the thing out.

Then we got involved as a kind of sitting foreign Embassy within the Foreign Ministry in trying to work out the landing rights for the aircraft to come in. We were facilitated in this fashion by the Foreign Ministry to continue to operate "normally" as Chargé with my deputy and security officer. Incidentally we also had in the same room with us the driver of my car, an Armenian-Iranian employee of the Embassy who had been driving for American Ambassadors in Tehran for years and years. He was held hostage, too, if you will, for the first week or so, when he eventually was allowed to slip out of the Foreign Ministry.

The Clark-Miller mission, of course, never arrived, despite full cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, carefully laid out landing arrangements, etc., because eventually the Ayatollah said no. And if the Ayatollah said no to something, that was the end of it. He was determined not to have any conversation with the Carter regime. So the Clark-Miller mission got as far as Ankara or Istanbul. They waited there for as long as a week, I believe...someone like Bill Miller should be interviewed to get his view. He is here in the city. He is President of an American/Russian group focusing on that relationship (later named as ambassador to Ukraine).

So that was the Clark-Miller mission to which the three of us in the Ministry had a great deal of hope. Here was an opportunity at the highest level to get through to this regime, led by two people who the Iranian revolutionaries regarded, we assumed, and I think rightly so, as friends of the revolution. Ramsey Clark was a clear friend. He had been to Tehran in mid-summer of that year, shortly after I arrived in Tehran, on a visit. He was known as a friend of the revolution. He was a friend of many elements in it, particularly the secular side. And Bill Miller was as well. So we attached a lot of hope and confidence in that effort. That hope was dashed, of course, with the denial of their entry by the Ayatollah.

Meanwhile, the three of us in the Foreign Ministry maintained contact around the clock with Washington for two or three days. Eventually that ended, although for some time thereafter we had daily contact, and for several months thereafter until February, we had use of the telex

facilities of the Foreign Ministry to communicate with Washington. This was done obviously in carefully guarded correspondence which wasn't very sensitive, because it was sent by means of Iranian facilities. But it gave us a way of talking to Washington. It gave the three of us a sense of participation. It was great for our morale. We could answer questions and get it on the record with the cooperation of the Foreign Ministry about our judgment of the mood in Tehran, the scene in Tehran.

Q: Obviously you were isolated. Where were you, in one room?

LAINGEN: At the outset we were a kind of Embassy in exile, in isolation in the Foreign Ministry in the diplomatic reception room.

Q: Were you able to talk to people coming in or out to find out what was happening?

LAINGEN: We were able to get information of a relatively limited nature. We couldn't go out into the streets and get a Gallup poll of the mood on the street. But we could watch from the windows at what the sentiment was like out there. The Chief of Protocol came to see us, almost daily at the outset. I had long conversations with him, which on his part were obviously guarded. He was clearly sympathetic. He was old school Persian--a typical Chief of Protocol who wanted to cooperate in every way in a protocol sense, and I have no doubt he, being a professional diplomat himself, was deeply troubled by what had happened. But what he had to say had to be carefully guarded. But we could read through lines in conversations with him.

We talked to the kitchen force, who also were friendly. Shortly after we were taken, Army guards began to appear who would remain our guards throughout the process until we were taken off to prison, late in the affair. We could converse with them.

But, most importantly, we had visits from foreign ambassadors once in a while. A few were allowed in to see us. The British came in to see us once or twice. We could talk on the phone with them the first few days. The Canadian Ambassador got in to see us. The German, the Turkish.

And we had access to radio and to Iranian TV. Victor Tomseth speaks fluent enough Persian so that he could watch television and inform me. I didn't know Persian that well.

From all of those hearing points we could say something to Washington as to what the situation was like; what we judged the mood to be; ideas that we might have for media coverage, public relations handling. We couldn't get into sensitive material except to the point we could communicate sensitive views and suggestions to these visiting ambassadors who would then leave and themselves report back to Washington.

A lot of that went on and it developed over the months into a rather sustained channel, although not always regular. The Swiss Ambassador came in to see us periodically and, when we broke relations with Iran in April of that year, his embassy became our protecting power in Tehran. He got in to see us sometimes weekly, not always that often, but reasonably often so that we could

send messages through him that we wrote out ourselves, and passed to him reasonably surreptitiously, although we were not watched that closely when we were talking to him. We would pass him a piece of paper and he would put it on his wires. So there is a file of classified cables from Laingen in the archives of the Department. Scores of them and some quite sensitive. Some, I would like to believe, reasonably helpful to Washington as that crisis wore on over the next 444 days.

Q: Did the action on the part of the United States to freeze assets have any effect?

LAINGEN: I regarded Carter's action in freezing those assets as the smartest things he ever did in this crisis.

Q: I do too.

LAINGEN: As it turned out, it became a powerful tool in our hands, as freezing of assets can be in certain situations.

Q: Particularly the way the Iranian situation is set up.

LAINGEN: That is right, when they are as large as that. We saw it as the right thing to do. I don't recall sensing at that time that it was going to be as consequential as it was. In terms of PR, yes it was also a useful thing that made it clear to the Iranians that Jimmy Carter could be tough, at least in that area, and that was something that I thought was a good thing to do. I am often asked whether I disagree with policies that Jimmy Carter followed in the hostage situation in Tehran and my stock answer, usually over simplified admittedly, is that I don't think he had many other options than those he chose, including the seizing of the assets, which any President would have done.

He, however, put reliance not on the use of force, but on a sustained process of applying pressure through diplomacy, eventually through economic sanctions, through diplomatic isolation, and using and probing for channels of communications in every way he conceivably could. He did, in fact, warn, in classified communications with Tehran, and we became aware of that, that if the hostages were put on trial then no holds were barred. That he was prepared to use force if necessary...if any kind of physical action was taken against us.

Q: That was a constant threat was it?

LAINGEN: It was implied, and also expressed on several occasions in a classified, secret sense. It wasn't blatantly touted from Washington every morning. One can make a good case today that had Jimmy Carter resorted to actual force from day one, regarded what had happened in Tehran as an act of war, as Ronald Reagan described it, the situation might have developed differently. Probably would have developed differently, if he had used force. I did not, sitting there, think the use of force was a good idea. I got swept up, if you will, in the sense that we can work this out over time through negotiations and discussions and diplomacy and pressure...diplomatic and economic pressure. I really believed that that was the preferred course of action. In part because I

thought the use of force, the threat, say, we are going to bomb Kharg island everyday if you don't release the hostages immediately, was a slippery slope that would have been very difficult to handle because I thought the passion in Tehran at the time was such that they would respond with force equally against the hostages. If you do that we will kill three hostages tomorrow. We will put them on trial and condemn them as spies next week. Maybe those threats would have been proven false, I don't know. We can't replay it. At the time I believed that the passion was such that Khomeini's vindictiveness, determination and rigidity was such as to make it impossible to see him back down.

Q: One looks at events later in those places...Iran-Iraq war, etc....and the resilience of fanaticism. It doesn't respond well to threats to the economy, etc.

LAINGEN: That's right. That is the second consideration on the part of the revolutionaries. Their goals and their zeal come first. One can interpret what I said as sort of a soft reaction that you would expect from somebody fearful of his own life or fearful of the life of my staff. Yeah, I was fearful for the lives of my staff. I wanted to see them get out of that situation alive. I believed that over time we could get out of that situation alive, in good part because I had known Iranians from a previous time and had a perspective of how Iranians behave and was convinced that they didn't intend at any point to kill us deliberately. I think I can say with integrity, with honesty, that I believed that was right, not because I wanted to get out of there alive, but because it was right for our long term interests in that region.

Q: I felt this outrage and let's do something at the time. But in the long run you all got out and we didn't end up killing a lot of people which we would have done with this force, and it is very problematic that a revolutionary regime would respond to what essentially would be a very limited type of thing that we could do. We could blow up a lot of things, but that is about it.

LAINGEN: That's right. I came out of this affair and have had that belief strengthened by the way in which I have watched our government deal with terrorism since. Military force in dealing with terrorists is a very difficult option that doesn't usually work. Ronald Reagan, on the arrival of the hostages on the south lawn on the day of our return to freedom, warned that there would be swift retribution if something like this were to happen again...presumably anywhere. Despite that, Ronald Reagan, when he was confronted with the first such crisis in his Presidency, the TWA hijacking in Beirut, didn't use force. A number of Americans were held hostages for a time. He ended up "negotiating" or at least trying to work it out without the application of force.

The only two times that force has really been effective in dealing with terrorism in my view is the bombing of Tripoli by Reagan...and you can argue how effective that was...it seemed to have some effect on Qadhafi. The other singularly successful one, where everything was in place and worked right, was the Achille Lauro cruise ship incident, where we were able to use force to pick up the terrorists involved.

But normally things aren't neatly in place, things don't work right, and there is inevitably all manner of risks, and God knows we certainly came to appreciate that in a subsequent hostage crisis that went on for years and that was Beirut. We never ever felt we could wade into Beirut

with military force and get at those bastards. I use that word advisedly. They were assuredly bastards and needed to be clobbered. But we couldn't find a way to do it. We couldn't be assured of where they were and, of course, we could not be assured at all about what would happen to the hostages if we tried it.

Q: What were you getting from the people you talked to in Washington...I suppose it was the Desk and David Newsom and others? Was it sort of "Keep you chin up, we are doing everything we can?"

LAINGEN: Oh, yes. They did everything they could from Washington for all of us. They kept assuring the three of us they were doing everything they could. As I suggested we were kept informed, reasonably, obviously not totally. We didn't know everything. We knew a lot about what Washington was trying to do. We knew about the efforts through the UN with the Secretary General to get a UN panel of inquiry in there. That was front page news here and a front page element of American policy for the months of late December and January and into February. We knew enough about that to be concerned about it.

The three of us were deeply concerned that we seemed to be prepared to make some kind of deal with the Iranian regime in terms of that panel of inquiry and in the process extend a kind of "apology" to the Iranians. We thought this would be counterproductive to our interests in the long run and we thought it would subvert the commitment the three of us and our colleagues over in the compound had made to the very principle of diplomatic immunity. To depart from that in any way we thought would be wrong. We believed that to the point of being prepared, I think I can say again with conviction, for some risk. We thought it better to take some risk than concede that point to the Iranians. We were very nervous about that UN business.

Eventually it was undermined anyway because of the Ayatollah's determination not to make a deal at that point. His refusal to make any concession at that time frustrated that process and it died. Indeed we sensed that it was dying as the panel of inquiry was airborne from New York. While that flight was underway, we knew sitting there in Tehran from newscasts in Tehran that the Ayatollah had said that the issue would be resolved by the majlis, which wasn't even elected at that point. The election was several months away. As it turned out, the decision on the issue was six or seven months away. We knew from our perspective in Tehran how much of what the Ayatollah said was in concrete from the moment he said it. We were convinced, having heard that, that this panel of inquiry process was fruitless from day one. And we were proven right.

I should add that as all of this was going on there were changes in the role of the Foreign Minister. Mr. Yazdi, of course, lost office as did Prime Minister Bazargan when his provisional government resigned within 36 hours after the seizure of the Embassy, and that saw accomplish one of the central purposes on the part of the more radical elements of the revolutionary regime. That was to oust that government that appeared to them to be prepared to let the revolution drift back into a relationship with the United States. They wanted to stop that. They were able to stop that with the seizure of the Embassy. So Yazdi and Bazargan and their government fell within 36 hours, and power then centered in the Revolutionary Council that had been functioning before but from behind the scenes. Now power was centered in that Revolutionary Council and, of

course, centered ultimately in the hands of the Ayatollah.

The incoming Foreign Minister was Bani Sadr, who had been known to us as a kind of intellectual in the revolution during the months preceding the seizure of the Embassy, but whom we had never regarded as a heavyweight in any sense. The only contact we had had with him was a call that I asked the Economic Counselor to make on him back in September, I think it was, 1979. He came back from that conversation with a report, given added credence to me ever since, that he was a fuzzy headed intellectual, a revolutionary type who didn't really know how to handle power. And his role as Foreign Minister and eventually as President of the Islamic Republic, demonstrated that to me in spades.

He became Foreign Minister immediately after the departure of Yazdi. At one point he was about to go off on a mission to the UN in late November and early December of that year. That was frustrated as well by the Ayatollah.

Bani Sadr was then removed from office and Mr. Ghotbzadeh took his place in early December. One of his first public statements was to the effect that Laingen and the other two hostages in the Foreign Ministry were free to leave. That got on the wires very quickly, particularly back in Washington. Within hours we were given instructions that got to us through some source to be indeed ready to leave. Ghotbzadeh, however, had made it clear that we were free only to leave the Ministry. He could not guarantee our security after we left the building. So his assurance of our being free to leave proved hollow from the beginning.

There is a myth around that I refused to leave at that point because I didn't want to leave before my staff in the Embassy were permitted to leave. That is myth. That is not fact. I didn't leave because I couldn't be assured that I would be free to leave. If I had been free to leave in the total sense, to leave the country, I guess I would have left, particularly since Washington expected me to leave. I can assure you that I would not have been happy to leave because I thought still at that point, and this is only a month after we had been taken hostage, that we could work it out and I didn't want to leave my colleagues in the lurch.

In any event, I didn't leave. I could not leave. Meanwhile the students, over in the compound, on occasion would clamor periodically with the Ayatollah and with others for our heads. They wanted the "super Satans" as we were called, the three of us. That happened three, four, five times in the course of the next several months. Sometimes the demand got louder than other times. At one point early on, the first few days of the seizure, they were reported at the doors of the Foreign Ministry, physically ready to take us. In each case, when the decision was eventually his, the Ayatollah decided not to let them get at us. Just why, I will never know. I guess I have to conclude that it was one gesture symbolic to some degree, however slight, of their respect for diplomatic status and immunity and something they could point to for world public opinion as demonstrating their "respect" for diplomatic immunity.

Q: Did you have any contact with Ghotbzadeh at all?

LAINGEN: I had contact with Ghotbzadeh twice. Once was when he summoned me to his office

in February in the height of the process involving the UN panel of inquiry and the expectation then that part of that process would see the hostages in the compound turned over physically to the control of the government, not the students. The idea was that they would be moved physically from the compound to the Foreign Ministry and into the same diplomatic reception rooms where we were. There were three very large rooms there. They were to be moved there and held in one room. Indeed, they moved 50 cots in there and 50 small steel wall cabinets for hostages to keep their clothes.

He called me to his office, on the same floor where I was held, to tell us this and to ask for my cooperation in insuring that there would be no attempt to escape from there at that point. The theory was that eventually the government would have enough control that they would be able to release the hostages themselves. It didn't happen.

Then I saw him one other time when he came down into that room and talked to us seeking cooperation from Victor Tomseth in some kind of testimony for a trial that they were envisaging of a counterrevolutionary that they had captured. I had strong distaste for Ghotbzadeh at the beginning because of the way in which he maligned the United States' image and purposes in Iran when he was head of what was called the "Voice and Vision of Iran." That was the propaganda office. He had that office during the months when I was Chargé in a free Embassy. He had not been very helpful. So I didn't like the guy.

I didn't like him at the outset for the role he played as Foreign Minister, but I sensed as time went on over those months, that he came to the conclusion, himself, fairly early, that this hostage business was counterproductive to the revolution and that it needed to be ended. I think he genuinely wanted to end it and was prepared to make some concessions to do that. And he stuck his neck out to do that. He showed some guts. I regret the fact that eventually he was executed. I thought he was one of those Iranians in the revolutionary arena that could, over time, have put a more rational and more moderate direction to that revolution. But he took too many risks with the more radical elements to the point where he eventually was accused, rightly or wrongly, who can say, of conspiring to kill the Ayatollah himself. So were the charges.

The Ayatollah eventually allowed him to be executed even though Ghotbzadeh supposedly had one of the closest relationships of anyone in the revolutionary regime with the Ayatollah.

Q: I take it that the Ayatollah was looming over everything all the time.

LAINGEN: Of course, it was the Ayatollah's revolution. It was his revolution to lose. We had no doubt of that. During the time the provisional government was functioning and we were dealing with it, we knew. And Bazargan, the Provisional Prime Minister knew better than anyone else that the decision making power was not his on fundamental issues, but was the Ayatollah's. He used the expression in a celebrated public interview once that he was like a knife without a blade. He didn't have real power.

The Ayatollah was a looming presence. We watched him a lot on television, particularly when we were hostages. We could watch television, usually, in the guards' room next to our room. The

army guards would allow us to do that. Endless, almost daily, lectures, homilies, sermons, preachments by the Ayatollah to the faithful. We got sick and tired of it, but I can assure you we never lost our "respect" for his capacity to control that place by the power of his words, the power of his ideas, his physical presence and his pivotal role, of course, of bringing on the revolution.

The 44 days became 444 days. I think my comments earlier suggest that I and my two colleagues, and I suspect most of my staff over in the compound, believed that it would work out. That this would be another one of these things that we had gone through in February. Maybe in a day or two we could work this thing out. When 14 of our colleagues were released...the blacks and women, except for two women and one black...that was further indication to us that maybe the pressure of international opinion was beginning to work and the Ayatollah would bring this thing to a head and conclude it. In other words, we lived on hope, grasping at straws and signals. As it turned out we gave much too much credence to every one of them.

In a situation like that you live on hope. That is as much as you've got. So you tell yourself, "Hey, by Thanksgiving, they will let us go." "Christmas? They wouldn't hold 53 Americans hostages through Christmas and thus demonstrate to world opinion how heartless a regime this is." Well, Thanksgiving and Christmas came, New Year's came, St. Patrick's came, birthdays came. Second Thanksgiving, second Christmas even. We lived on hope and I am sure my colleagues in far worse straits than I was over in that compound lived on that same kind of hope.

Q: Were you aware of the Americans who were with the Canadians?

LAINGEN: We were very aware of those six Americans who were around town and hadn't been caught because we were in telephone conversation with them. We got into contact with them. We were able to find them with help particularly from Kate Koob and Bill Royer who weren't taken hostage for the first 24 hours. Victor Tomseth was the one who handled that most. He was on the telephone with the six several times, giving them advice to where they should go as they moved around town from one spot to another, including a time in Tomseth's own apartment where his Thai cook still lived and for a time became quite celebrated for harboring those six. After being in the British compound for a while, they got in touch with the Canadians. The first conversation was with the Canadian Minister, the number two, Mr. Sheardon, who said in those celebrated words, "My God, where have you been? Why didn't you call us before?" I get emotional on the subject because of what the Canadians did. For the next three months, roughly, those six lived in the homes of those two Canadians...the Minister and the Ambassador. Except for one, the Agricultural Attaché, who spent several weeks in the Swedish Embassy in hiding.

Yes, we were aware of them. Indeed, we told the Desk Officer of the Foreign Ministry who handled American affairs on the second day that those six were still around and we needed the Ministry's help in getting them out of the country. They responded by saying, "Look, we have enough trouble with you all, coping with the ones we've got. Let's worry about these six later." They never divulged the fact that they were there. They knew it, but kept it secret and I give them credit for that.

The Canadian Ambassador got in to see us and eventually he told us that they were with him. It was he who told us that. They weren't in telephone contact with us then. Over those three months, the Canadian Ambassador got in several times. He kept us informed to a degree about what was being done to get them out. We would pace up and down the central floor of that diplomatic reception room, he and I, making sure we were out of earshot of anybody while he briefed me about what they were doing in terms of fraudulent passports, etc.

Suddenly, one day we learned that not only had the six left, but the Canadian Ambassador, himself, had left and closed his Embassy and taken his entire staff with him. That was a very good day because it gave us such enormous satisfaction that here at least was one success. We had fooled them. We had played a marvelous game with them and gotten them out. And, of course, it was a success back here, the way in which the image of Canada became for a time so splendid among the American public.

The next morning, I learned about this later, a member of the American press corps in Tehran, who hadn't been kicked out yet, went to the gates of the Embassy and told the student who was on guard on the other side of the gate what had happened; i.e. that six Americans had been spirited out of the country with the help of the Canadian Embassy. And he responded, according to this story, "But that is illegal." We thought that was one of the funniest expressions we had heard the whole time. That he could say that standing there, having stolen an entire embassy.

Q: Today is May 27, 1993 and this is a continuing interview with Bruce Laingen. Bruce, talk quickly, a bit, about your perception of what happened in Washington. To me it is a little bit late in wondering how things played out, but I would have thought that at a certain point we would have interned the Iranian diplomats at the Greenbriar or whatever one does as we did with the Germans and Italians and Japanese and an exchange would be made. You can say they are hostages. But that is exactly the case when you have an exchange. Did you have any feeling then or afterwards about how we dealt with the Iranian diplomats.

LAINGEN: I don't know if that concept of an exchange was ever discussed, or even considered. It often would boggle our mind thinking about it, that the three of us were sitting in the Ministry and our Iranian counterparts in Washington were allowed to function freely until early April, 1980. The fact that the Embassy in Washington was allowed to remain open was a product, of course, of Carter policy, broadly defined. That is, to keep every option open, to keep probing, to leave every avenue possible available so that if some contacts that hadn't been considered, could be, and I guess Carter just felt that the Iranian Embassy in Washington was a possible liaison to something with somebody.

It bothered me and I can assure you it bothered our families, not least my wife. I may have mentioned earlier that there developed a tradition of prayer vigils across the street from that embassy, begun by members of my parish in Washington, All Saints Church. These people eventually recruited a fairly large number of regulars who always appeared on Sunday night for a prayer vigil and sing along across the street from that embassy. The "Battle Hymn of the Republic" became the theme song of that group and was sung every Sunday night. Hopefully, my wife would say, within the hearing of those who occupied that chancery.

On at least one occasion they knocked on its door, went in and presented a petition. But the fact of that Embassy remaining open while we were kept hostage was troublesome. It was a curious aspect of that whole affair.

Q: What were other developments? You had heard that the Canadians had gotten six American out.

LAINGEN: From the time of the visit of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Waldheim, in January, until the break of relations finally on April 6, 1980, was a time of rather high maneuver and activity on the part of the Carter administration using the United Nations. Using that avenue as a possible means of developing contacts and encouraging some degree of response from the regime in Tehran.

The Secretary General's visit to Tehran was a bit of a disaster because he got not only inhibited, but I think frightened physically, by the way in which carefully constructed demonstrations were mounted against him in his sight and in his presence, hostile to the United Nations and to him personally.

But his visit and his departure in January did not end the effort through the United Nations because then there began a long process that extended a couple of months to try to develop some kind of a panel of inquiry under the Secretary General's auspices. In its final evolution it was to be a panel that would come to Tehran...and a panel eventually did...and listen to the grievances of the Iranians, hear what the USG had to say and, ideally, would also sit down and hear from the hostages themselves about how they felt about the situation.

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...the three of us sitting in a corner....it was destined to failure from the beginning, because Ayatollah Khomeini announced actually on the day that the panel was en route to Tehran, that the hostage issue would be resolved by the majlis, the parliament. But we sensed, our knowing Khomeini's policies and attitudes as we did, and he having said that the issue would be decided by the majlis, that the panel of inquiry was destined to be a failure, as it was, even though they got there. Even though Ghotbzadeh, the Foreign Minister, representing the somewhat pragmatic side of the situation in Tehran in those months, was able to work out an arrangement that he thought he had in the bag.

It would have seen the panel come, hear all of this, then depart with among other things what would be construed as a kind of American apology. Meanwhile the hostages held in the Embassy compound would be moved physically to the Foreign Ministry and put under the custody of the government rather than the students. The government would then be in a position to work out a release schedule appropriate to a saving of face. As I said earlier, the Foreign Minister asked my cooperation in assuring that the hostages, when removed to the Foreign Ministry, would be kept in order, would not escape. We were so delighted to know of that kind of development that we assured him, of course, that we had no such intention of plotting an escape. Cots were moved

into the large room adjacent to the one we were in. Steel lockers were brought in for 50 hostages. Those cots and lockers were never occupied because the process failed. The panel of inquiry eventually departed in frustration.

Q: Did anyone talk to you from the panel?

LAINGEN: No, they never got in to see us, even though that was the plan. We did see the Secretary General of the United Nations back in January and some of his colleagues who came in with him.

The collapse of that United Nations effort essentially ended the diplomatic phase that Carter had pursued so actively in the first six months roughly. There were continuing efforts through the French and Argentine lawyer types and others who would pop up occasionally. And there was an exchange of letters that became very celebrated involving one to Khomeini from Carter. It's authenticity was never fully determined, at least not by us, but eventually Jimmy Carter in Washington realized that the diplomatic process had been played out, and on April 6 he broke relations, and the Chargé in Washington and his remaining staff, which was very small at that time, were ordered to leave within 72 hours.

That order of departure involved, as presumably history will record elsewhere, the celebrated comments by Henry Precht, then the Country Director for Iran, who was the officer asked to bring the Chargé, Mr. Ali Agah, to the Department to receive his departure notice. Henry Precht received him at the entrance to the State Department, took the elevator and in the process of moving from the lobby to the sixth floor where he was to get his departure notice, Henry and the Chargé got into a conversation in which Agah alleged, as his government had repeatedly alleged in Tehran, that the hostages were being treated in a humanitarian fashion.

Henry Precht at that point was so frustrated that he expressed his celebrated response, "That's bull shit." That made Agah so angry that he refused to go on further into the office and went back to his Embassy. Eventually the departure notice had to be taken to his Embassy and he left as ordered.

In any event, that was the end of that process. The next big event was the failed rescue mission at the end of April, April 25 by our counting, April 26 back here. That day--for all the hostages, I think, surely it was for me--remains of the most poignant memories of that entire crisis. Not so much that the rescue mission failed, but that eight men died in its failure.

The three of us in the Foreign Ministry knew nothing about the planning. We all assumed that planning of that kind was going on back in Washington and had been going on since day one of the hostage crisis. We had been encouraged, admonished, by Mike Howland, the security officer, to always have at our cot sides in that room where we were held, a few essentials in a small plastic bag so that if a rescue mission were to take place, and the rescuers should suddenly bolt into our room, we would have that ready to go with us.

We learned of the rescue mission almost immediately because at that point we had access to a

short wave radio. So we knew about it, I think, before the guards who were watching us in the room adjacent to us were aware of it. It was a very dark day, one that grew worse as we learned from a later broadcast that eight men had died.

The result in Tehran, among other things, was that all of the hostages to my knowledge in the compound, all 50 of them, were moved physically. Some simply around the city, some in the compound, but most of them to other cities in the country. Moved blindfolded, bound in the back of vans at great risk, with injuries to some of them because of a traffic accident.

The whole process was designed to insure that Washington would never try another rescue mission because of the difficulty of trying to find all of the hostages in that many places around the country.

They remained scattered around the country for much of the remaining time, although all of them were back in Tehran by, I would say, November of that year. We expected to be moved as well, the three of us in the Foreign Ministry. But while security was greatly tightened in the room in which we were held, and some of our "perks" were taken away, otherwise we were not affected.

I have the highest respect for those who went on that rescue mission. For that matter, I have an enormous respect for those who planned it, however much today with benefit of hindsight it is obvious that there were many mistakes in the process of that planning. And, of course, I have undying regard and respect for the eight men, and in particular, for their families, who died in that process. We have tried to express that on the anniversary, April 26, here in Washington, when there is annually a ceremony at Arlington Cemetery at the monument for all of them--and a grave site for three of them--to remember what they had sacrificed. The ceremony is put on by an organization called, "No Greater Love," which is a private non-profit group here in Washington that has been active since the Vietnam War in reaching out to families and children of people held in such circumstances.

After the failure of the rescue mission in late April, the whole process, as far as we were concerned, and I think as far as Washington was concerned, went into pretty much a stalemate for the next five months, roughly, when it was clear that there was no further hope, or likely progress, in the diplomatic process of probing for openings that the Carter administration had been following up to that time.

It was essentially a time of watching the new majlis in Tehran come into being so that they could be responsive to the Ayatollah's directive that the hostage issue would be resolved by that body. All of that we took with a grain of salt. We knew full well that the majlis would not agree on anything that the Ayatollah, himself, didn't approve of, or for that matter, that the students, the terrorists, didn't approve of, their voice being that consequential in any action in respect to the hostages.

One celebrated event that took place that summer was when former Attorney General Ramsey Clark came to Tehran. He had been to Tehran once before, while I was still functioning as Chargé d'Affaires in the Chancery in the summer of 1979. At that time he had been very helpful

to us in coming there, talking to our Marines, in effect reaching out to them and strengthening their morale. He had been a Marine, I think, himself, or at least had some service. In other words, we had considerable respect for him.

He came this time in June, 1980 to participate as an American delegate to something called "The Crimes of America Conference," put on by the regime in Tehran, to publicize and to highlight what they alleged were the kinds of crimes and criminal offenses and political wrongs that governments in Washington had committed against Iran over many, many years. There were many delegations from many countries. All of them, of course, supportive of the Tehran regime. Ramsay Clark came there, as he insisted, to make the point that whatever grievances the Tehran regime might have against the United States, it was wrong to hold hostages, and to seek revenge, if you will, in that fashion. I respected him for that stated purpose. Nonetheless, it struck me as highly inappropriate for someone of that stature to come there to participate in that kind of a conference with that kind of theme...crimes against Iran by the United States. So my regard for Ramsey Clark dropped a bit after that affair.

It was a long hot summer for us sitting in the Ministry, and I am sure much worse for my colleagues over in the compound. It does get hot in Tehran in the summer. Nothing really of consequence happened until late September of that year when the Iran-Iraq war began with Iraq's obvious, clear cut act of aggression across Iranian borders, in the south, particularly around Khorramshahr. Clearly an act of aggression, however much the two sides, including Iran, had been engaged for over a month or more before that in a lot of border skirmishing, reflecting the problems between the two countries at that time. But this was a massive offensive across borders designed by Saddam Hussein in Baghdad to take and hold areas of the south of Iran, oil producing areas, and, of course, in the process strengthen Baghdad's access to the Gulf, which in normal times is only a very narrow strip of land.

A larger purpose, as well, in launching that war in Saddam's mind, was to take advantage of what he sensed was Iran's discombobulation and isolation on the international scene as a consequence of the hostage crisis to try to topple the regime in Tehran, to undermine the Ayatollah, believing as well that he would have support from the Arab minority in the south of Iran.

That didn't work out, of course, and as we all know the result was an eight year war of enormous consequence and loss to both countries, neither of which to this day, 1993, has fully recovered. Indeed, there remain today tens of thousands, to my knowledge, of POWs held by both countries now for many years. And it still is in a state of cease fire. The war has not been resolved beyond a cease fire engineered by the United Nations in 1988.

The result of that aggression was not discombobulation of the Tehran regime, not to topple that regime, but in the immediate sense to strengthen that regime. It doesn't take much to get Iranians exercised about the wrongs of Arabs, particularly Iraqi Arabs, and this was a clear wrong as they saw it. As a consequence there was a great surge of nationalist furor in Tehran in particular.

The three of us in the Foreign Ministry became what we described as hostages having a window on a war, because from the third floor of the Ministry we could watch from our windows in the

early days in particular and more easily at night because there was a total blackout of the city, and we could open our windows and look out onto a city supposedly being bombed by the Iraqis. I say supposedly because much of the time the air raid sirens would go off and there was no threat of any kind. It was simply a reaction to the emotional state that saw Tehran at that time react to anything that looked suspicious.

At one point there was a celebrated affair where an Iranian jet fighter, an F-14, was trying to land at Tehran airport, and nervous anti-aircraft units on the ground began firing at this image. We heard on the radio how announcers kept appealing to the anti-aircraft batteries to stop firing as it was one of their own aircraft.

There wasn't much damage done to Tehran at that time; it was mostly psychological in terms of what the Iraqis were able to do in flying without much challenge over the city. At one point one afternoon the three of us were able to watch an Iraqi MIG-21 bomber, I think it was, fly virtually at eye level, or it looked eye level to us, at least, across the Ministry gardens and through the heart of the government district simply flaunting Iraq's power in that fashion with little return from anti-aircraft batteries. We used to joke among ourselves, that by the time the air raid sirens went off, we could be assured that the Iraqi bombers were well on their way back to Baghdad because of the slowness in getting Tehran's air defense system to respond.

The outbreak of that war worried us and I am sure it worried Washington. This was not only a worry because of the tragedy, the futility and dangers of that war in a larger sense, but also because of the way in which our immediate response and concern was that there would be a further and very considerable delay in getting at the hostage issue. That was indeed the immediate result; things were set aside for a time. The majlis at that time was finally beginning to get its act in order and actually beginning about early September to consider the hostage crisis and what to do about it.

We could sense and see from our windows the way in which a nationalist fervor among the Iranians was strengthening the regime to cope with this threat from Iraq. We could hear it as a matter of fact from lamp posts around the Foreign Ministry where loudspeakers blared out martial patriotic music. The music was often from John Philip Sousa; "The Stars and Stripes Forever", the "Washington Post March", and things like that. I learned later that similar music was played in Baghdad in the midst of that war. It is a very martial kind of music and obviously worldwide in its orientation.

By late September and early October, the Iranians were beginning to appreciate--not least because of the Iraqi aggression--that they needed to get on with this hostage situation and get it resolved. Iran was hurting by that time rather considerably from the economic sanctions, however incomplete they were. And hurting in the way the Iraqi aggression, clear as it was, produced almost no sympathetic response from the rest of the world in support of Tehran...realizing clearly more than they had realized before at any time in that crisis how isolated Iran was in international public opinion because of this crisis. And, of course, by this time, September, October, the Iranians had done with us. They had finished the use of us in the sense that a major purpose in the beginning in taking the hostages was not simply to undermine the provisional government of

the revolution, get rid of Bazargan, to get a more radical government in place, but also to get a majlis and a constitution in place, a referendum completed and all of the process of legitimatizing a more radical government by using the hostages as pawns in that political process to fire up the passion of the masses. By September, much of this had been accomplished. Virtually all of it had been accomplished. A majlis was in place, dominated by radical elements, dominated by clerics. They didn't need us anymore. It was possible to begin thinking, from their point of view, of ending the crisis, getting rid of the hostages. We were becoming a kind of burden.

I don't have the dates immediately in mind. I wasn't aware of its happening, of course, but one of the Deputy Prime Ministers of the regime, Mr. Tabatabai was sent to Bonn to convey to the Germans and through the Germans to us in Washington the conditions, the requirements that the Iranians were demanding that had to be accomplished to end the crisis. And that had been preceded by a celebrated speech by the Ayatollah in September in which he spelled out four specific conditions. The three of us in the Foreign Ministry hearing that speech and reading it didn't sense as we should have, I think, that these four conditions were as important as they were. To us in large part they sounded like more of the same. But there was enough difference in them, there were enough things left out of previous demands, to make Washington appreciate better than we did that these conditions were newly phrased and more negotiable. And the fact that Tabatabai went to Bonn to convey these conditions in that fashion was even more important. It was that trip by Tabatabai to Bonn with those conditions, obviously blessed by Khomeini, that set in motion the process that eventually saw the crisis end. That was in September-October. It didn't end until January 20. It took that long.

It also required at one point, rather early in this process. that the Iranians needed a different interlocutor, hence the Algerians. They concluded the Algerians would be a better vehicle at that time. The Algerians were highly regarded because they had accomplished a revolution and overcome their problems of colonial status with France. They were seen as a revolutionary regime.

So the Iranians turned to the Algerians, and as far as Washington was concerned Algeria met some essential requirements as well. It was non-aligned and we had reasonable relations with Algeria. Those began the process of getting agreement--the money hassle began--involving endless time, energy, thought and intelligence to determine how the issue of the frozen assets were to be dealt with. Eventually they were dealt with, in a remarkable process of diplomacy. There were many ups and downs. Some of them so far down that we worried and I know Washington worried, that the issue simply could not be resolved, because of its complexity and because of Iran's demands, before the end of the Carter administration. Of course it did go down to the wire to the last minute, almost to the last second, before it could be done.

It was done, thanks to a remarkable group of Americans. Thanks to the skill of the Algerians as well. We came to know, we, that is our government, how useful a non-aligned country could be for us at that time, particularly one with the professional diplomatic skill, highly French oriented, that the Algerians could bring to bear. The Algiers Accord--eventually worked out in the waning minutes of the Carter administration--saw us released. Part of that Accord is the Hague Tribunal today sitting 14 years later in the Hague still resolving economic, commercial, governmental

claims against Iran and Iran against us. The Accord and Tribunal have been a boon to lawyers and will be for years. But the Algiers Accord and particularly the Hague Tribunal represent in many ways a remarkable, as Christopher himself said, who was the prime player in that process, "a classic example of diplomacy." That is what it was, with a lot of skill and innovative approaches applied to a settlement affecting something like \$12 billion in frozen assets, which Mr. Carter had wisely, early on, frozen.

Q: Apparently that was quite a shock to the Iranians. It hadn't really occurred to them that someone might do that.

LAINGEN: Well, it was a shock in the sense that we acted early enough to prevent them from realizing it was a possibility.

The assets did not, of course, all go back to Tehran. Indeed, after American banks had been provided for in terms of interest claims they had in loans outstanding and given particularly the way a good bulk of it was reserved for an account in the Hague to make possible this process of resolving economic and commercial claims, only a small part of the assets actually went back to Tehran.

As I said before all hostages were back in Tehran by December and we were still sitting in the Ministry. All along the three of us had far more knowledge, of course, than the others did. Never total knowledge, never complete awareness of the facts, but very considerable. By late December all of us were pretty well informed including the 49 other hostages, Richard Queen having departed in mid-summer, were aware of what the Algerians were up to...that they were the interlocutors, that they were the middlemen. And at Christmas time in 1980, the Algerians in Tehran were able to come in and meet all of the hostages, to my knowledge, and tell them essentially where things stood. The three of us in the Foreign Ministry suddenly on December 23, were given notice that we were to be taken from the Foreign Ministry that night. The notice came to us around 7:00 that evening. We were told that we would be taken to join our colleagues. I think that was the intention that evening of those who eventually did take us. But that evening the process failed and we were not moved. I protested. I said, "Why are we being moved now?" I protested to the Chief of Protocol and tried to get word to the Swiss Ambassador, who had been our benefactor on so many occasions. I was unable to get through to him.

Approaching midnight that night on December 23, the room was entered by a large group of people, including clearly members of the student terrorist group over in the compound, but also members of the Foreign Ministry and a couple of representatives of the Prime Minister's Office. After a good deal of discussion took place, we demanded to know why we were being moved and demanded that we have access to the Swiss Ambassador, the three of us were taken down into the courtyard of the Foreign Ministry. There we were ordered to get into a van.

At that point, sensing that we were also to be blindfolded and bound, restrictions that we had been assured were not going to be imposed on us when we were talking up on the third floor, we got into a bit of a contest--triggered by Mike Howland having been pushed into the van and reacting by saying, "You can't push me" and fighting back giving a well placed kick at the

student terrorist who was trying to push him into the van.

That saw us almost at sword's point and eventually my two colleagues were ordered up into the room above and I as well, but I had lingered a while to protest and I was then ordered by gun point at my head to leave and tell my colleagues that if they tried anything like this again there would be real trouble.

That incident in the presence of members of the government, the Foreign Ministry staff and the Prime Minister's Office, obviously embarrassed everybody concerned, including the student terrorists who were frustrated in their efforts. We spent the rest of that night wondering what the hell was going to happen to us the next day or later that same night. Nothing did happen and we were able to spend Christmas in that room.

One of the Algerians came in to see us. The Papal Nuncio came in to see us. We had a ceremony. We had in effect a kind of party. We began to think that we were secure in the position we had before, but in fact we were eventually moved on January 3, I think it was, when a group of terrorist students returned and this time were clearly determined to get us. We were ordered into vans with the clear cooperation of the Foreign Ministry and taken that night not to join our colleagues but to solitary confinement in some prison somewhere in Tehran. This was contrary to the assurances given us again that we would in fact be taken to join our colleagues.

We were put into prison, I think, clearly as an act of retribution for the dustup we had gotten into during the first attempt to move us. So we spent the next several weeks in solitary confinement until a few nights before we were released on January 20. On the night of January 19 we were suddenly ordered to go to another room in the building where everybody else at that point was being held for physical examinations. It turned out that the doctors examining us were Algerians and it was pretty clear to us then that something conclusive was about to happen.

We had our physical examinations and that night we were also invited to make a statement on Iranian television. Some of us did, some of us did not. They were clearly hoping by the nature of their questions that we would say things that were useful to them to confirm their continuing allegations and insistence that we had been treated in a humanitarian fashion. None of us cooperated in that fashion to my knowledge. I did not. I don't think any of that was used very effectively on television.

The next day nothing happened until late in the afternoon. Then we were given copies of Tehran's English language newspaper, the Tehran Times, replete with headlines that the crisis was over, that an agreement had been worked out, and that the US had supposedly conceded on every condition posed by Iran--which of course we would later learn was far from the truth. About five in the afternoon we were told that we would be leaving for the airport in twenty minutes and that we could each take a small tote bag of whatever personal possessions we had. Those twenty minutes became several hours, but late in the evening we were ordered to put on blindfolds and led down into a cold courtyard where we could hear buses lined up and ready to go. On the way down the stairs we were told we could not, despite the earlier statement, carry our tote bags, but that they would be on the plane when we got there. I resisted, saying a promise was

a promise, and that I didn't think they would be true to their word. This went on for several minutes, with my guard finally saying as he pulled the bag away: "Don't you trust us?" To that I could only laugh.

On the buses we were ordered to sit without talking, keeping our blindfolds on. I followed orders, as did my colleagues. It was a very tense time, and I remembered what Mike Howland had often said, and that was that the trip to the airport, if and when it came, could well be the most dangerous time of all, since there could well be elements determined to frustrate any agreement.

At the airport, and by now it must have been close to midnight, we were pushed off the buses, the blindfolds ripped off, and forced to walk and run a gauntlet of shouting and pushing militants, determined to have their last word of abuse of the hostages. But there was the ramp, leading up to a plane, one of two Algerian aircraft, and there in that plane assembled 52 wildly happy Americans, embracing each other, moving up and down the aisle, talking, laughing, shouting, unable to sit more than a few moments, a scene almost incredible, except that it was real, very real.

As we entered the cabin, however, the first person to greet us was the Swiss Ambassador, Erik Lang, who with one of his staff was meticulously recording the name of each and every one of us as we appeared--the Swiss determined not to leave the plane until they were absolutely sure we were all accounted for. On board too was the Algerian Ambassador to Washington, the Governor of the Algerian Central Bank, and of course a full staff of air attendants and the pilots--all of whom equally excited and all determined to reach out to us in every way they conceivably could...It was bedlam and it was noisy and yet there was a perceptible uncertainty still in the air, the plane sitting there for some time before we were finally told, ordered might be a better word, since we were up and down all over the place, to sit and calm down so that the plane could be airborne.

Well, to describe it all would take a book, or perhaps a movie...there were uproarious cheers as we cleared the runway, more when champagne was broken out when we crossed the Turkish border, and then the beginning of a flight to freedom we can never forget...nor can we forget the constant hospitality of that Algerian aircraft's crew. What beautiful people they were.

Q: Well, let me just go back a bit. During all these negotiations going on, were you still in contact with Washington?

LAINGEN: Yes and no. As a general rule our ability to have some contact with Washington continued until late October, early November. The Swiss, after we broke relations, were able sometimes to get in to see us and bring us mail. We had far more mail than our colleagues did in the compound even though the Swiss delivered a lot of mail there but always without any assurance of its reaching the hostages. When the Swiss came in we were able to send Washington our thoughts on bits of paper that we handed over to the Swiss in a way that did not attract attention by the guards, although the guards didn't really watch us very closely. In fact most of the time they closed the door and left us in the room. So those messages eventually reached Washington. I don't remember how many we sent. There were probably dozens of them. They

were classified by the Swiss when they sent them over their channel and sent on from Bern to Washington.

We also had periodic telephone contact. All of that ended in late October, early November, when I got a telephone call. The telephone rang early one morning in the room. We couldn't call out, but telephone messages would come in once in a while. The telephone rang early that morning, and I answered it and it turned out to be a radio station in Seattle, Washington asking for an interview. I said that I was not in a position to give an interview. He tried again and called me back. This time the telephone operator in the Ministry said, "Are you finished?" I said, "Yes, I am finished." I was worried that anything I said could be misinterpreted and be harmful, especially for those on the compound. But when the phone rang a third time I decided I'd take the risk and say something about the sensitivity of the negotiations going on and the need for the American public to keep their cool. Those comments, brief though they were, were immediately picked up by the media all over the country and abroad, and of course the militants heard them too, and this time got the Ministry to cut the phones for good. I suspect the reason the call got through, and kept coming through that morning was that the telephone operator in the Ministry, having been told that an occasional call from Washington DC could be put through, heard the word "Washington" and concluded it was from Washington, DC.

Up to that point we periodically had calls allowed in to us from the Department. Their timing varied; sometimes denied us for several weeks; sometimes allowed weekly; sometimes for only a few minutes; sometimes for as long as a half hour; and sometimes we were "patched" to our wives. We were very fortunate that way. The conversations with Washington had to be guarded; we assumed the calls were being taped by the Iranians. But we found ways to get our views across, and we vented our frustrations, great for our morale.

Let me make some comments about those who guarded us in the Ministry. They were army men, not the student militants; the latter got their hands on us only for the last several weeks. Some of the soldiers were zealous revolutionary types, but most were pretty bored with the whole thing. Some were anxious to practice their English and talked at every opportunity they had. Some we liked very much. We were cared for in terms of food and toilet access by the regulars in the Ministry kitchen on that floor, and these were older Iranians, long on duty in the building, and most were fed up with the revolution. They became our friends, and I look back on some of them with real affection.

I remember too the other chiefs of mission in Tehran who got in to see us occasionally, especially the Papal Nuncio, the Vatican's ambassador in the city. He was allowed in to see us on both Christmases and on Easter. He was the embodiment of the best in Christian virtue and humility and comradeship and, not least, faith--faith in our future, faith in prayer and hope and optimism. He was magnificent. We felt his love and faith more than that from anyone else on the outside. I will always remember him with affection. Unfortunately he died after we came home and before any of us could convey to him personally how grateful we all were.

And of course there were my two cellmates--Victor Tomseth and Michael Howland. My respect for them is deep indeed. I could not have been kept in such close quarters with better

companions. Mike--always reminding me, and Vic, of the importance of keeping physically fit and always alert to any opportunity to escape, however hopeless it seemed. And Vic--who had been my deputy in the embassy and knew Iran better than any of us. Fortunately he knew Persian and listened to the TV in the guards' room adjacent to ours and kept Mike and me informed. Vic had a deep and sensitive understanding of the Iranian psyche which served us in very good stead.

I should note also the two women hostages, Ann Swift and Kate Koob, who clearly handled themselves with distinction and courage. Indeed all of my colleagues, in my view, endured that crisis with distinction and stood tall, with only one or two occasional exceptions. Nothing pained me more than to watch on TV on those occasions when the militants trotted out one or more hostages for some purpose. But only rarely did the hostages allow themselves to be used by the militants; indeed only one, Army Sergeant Joseph Subic, did anything of a serious nature that seemed to jeopardize his colleagues and our interests, and he will have to decide how he can live with the memory of that today.

And I must concede, living in better conditions in the Ministry than were my colleagues in the compound, that making judgments was not and is not easy about the conduct of my staff, under the pressures they faced...In a general sense they were a remarkable good and courageous group of human beings. Given the kind of treatment they suffered with, the way they survived and coped with that atmosphere, with the isolation, with the way they were bound and particularly at the beginning the way they were denied the right to talk to each other, didn't have enough food most of the time, their performance was remarkable. They fully deserved and earned the award for valor that each of them received. I think that spirit and high degree of performance and high professionalism was also evident in the way they have conducted themselves since their release. There has never been any divisiveness within this group of 53 Americans of different personalities. Among the 53, plus the six who escaped with the Canadians...there was no backbiting, no complaining, no second guessing made public. Some may have felt that way, but rarely if ever has that ever been expressed publicly in any divisive way.

One of the points I tried to convey to my colleagues on that Algerian aircraft as we flew from Tehran to Algiers that night and on to Weisbaden, was the considerable impression I had of how we were regarded in the States among the public as rather an impressive group of Americans who had conducted themselves pretty well under stress. I told my colleagues, using the loudspeaker system on that aircraft, what I knew about things that they couldn't possibly have known. I did what I could to remind them that, "Look, we've got to sustain our image when we get back. We've got a pretty good image at home. Everything we do, every step we take, everything we say is going to impact on that image." "Keep in mind," I said, "as you do your interviews, as you get home, as you get off this aircraft, keep that image in mind and remember that you are speaking for and reflecting the American Foreign Service, the American diplomatic service, the strength of Americans in stress, and do what you can to sustain that." And I think they have been remarkable in the way that they have done so.

Q: I think so too. One last question about sort of the end game when you were in the Foreign Ministry. Was there any following of the election between Carter and Reagan?

LAINGEN: ...of course all of this was being conducted or played out in the middle of a Presidential election campaign.

Q: And a very left/right campaign compared to some.

LAINGEN: That's right. It mattered to the 53 of us, all of us having our own political views. Eventually all of the 50 others knew something about what was going on in the outside world. It got better towards the end. The three of us in the Ministry knew a lot, and we followed the election reasonably closely. Indeed, we heard one of the debates. I think the general feeling among us was that it seemed unlikely that Reagan could win. This actor from California, granted he had been Governor of California for eight years, it still seemed somewhat unusual and unlikely to us sitting there that this person might conceivably become President of the United States. We were aware of some of the electoral campaign as it dealt with the hostage issue, but not all of it. We had the general impression that Reagan was talking tough on that issue as well as on a lot of other things.

I don't know how much I can say about how the Iranians felt at the time. They were contemptuous of Carter, had been from the beginning and I think for that reason, not least, hoped that he would lose to further discredit him and disgrace him...as evidence that God was on their side in this respect too. That God would see that Carter would lose. But generally speaking they were apprehensive about the possibility of Reagan being elected, and there is the whole issue of the October surprise.

Q: Could you explain what it was and....?

LAINGEN: Well, the term October surprise comes from the Republican concern during the election campaign that Carter might be successful enough in discussions then underway to enable the hostages to be released before the election in November and thus pull off an "October surprise", which could have greatly increased his chances of winning. I think most people felt that if the hostage crisis could be resolved before the election, Carter's chances of reelection would certainly be enhanced, if not confirmed. It was a very emotional issue.

Q: Each news account that the hostages had been in so many days was at the end of some of the major news broadcasts.

LAINGEN: Exactly. So the Republican concern was not surprising that an October surprise might be pulled off. That concern allegedly caused Mr. Casey...

Q: William Casey?

LAINGEN: That's right, and with others in the election campaign, to engage in discussions of some degree with Iranians--allegedly designed to frustrate an October surprise by getting the Iranians to agree not to release the hostages until after the elections in return for assurances from the incoming Republican administration of arms deliveries to restore some of the shortcomings in the Iranian military inventory. This was said to have proceeded to the point where Mr. Casey

and others had actually met with Iranians in various places, not least, of course, in Madrid, but also in London and Paris, to work this out.

Those who allege that there was a conspiracy in this fashion on the part of the Republicans feel that their concern is also justified by the way in which we were released within a half hour after the inauguration of Mr. Reagan and that there were, in fact, arms deliveries through Israel that began shortly after the beginning of the Republican administration.

Those allegations have been, as we now know, very considerably deflated by the reports of committees put in place by both Houses of Congress to look into these allegations. Both committees have reported that they have found no credible evidence to support those charges. However, it is obvious that the issue will never die, not least because Mr. Casey is not around and they could not conceivably be fully resolved unless Mr. Casey is resurrected from the dead. I am, myself, satisfied, particularly with the report of the two committees of Congress that delved into this in enormous detail. The reports are inches thick that came out of this process. For that matter, I was never prepared to believe that any such activity on the part of Mr. Casey took place, or at least not to believe such activity was carried to the point of an actual deal. The fact that Mr. Carter was working assiduously in October, up to the day before the election, to resolve the crisis, that is true. And that is not surprising and is fact. Of course he would want to do that. Of course he would want to do it for political reasons, but he had wanted to do it every day of his administration from November 4, 1979 on. He didn't want that crisis to continue a day longer than it did, as burdensome as it was for his administration in Washington.

I wasn't prepared to accept that this kind of activity took place, carried to that point, for a number of reasons. Not least, in my view, granted that old Casey probably did have contact of one kind or another with the Iranians, because it would have been so stupid, politically, to run the risk of such a deal, in leaky Washington in the middle of a Presidential campaign in October in Washington, becoming public. It would have destroyed the Republican chances in the campaign. I may be naive, but also refuse to believe that any American, in or out of office, would indulge in any kind of activity that would see American citizens, particularly American government officials, held prisoners so much as a day longer than necessary.

For that kind of position I was accused of being naive by the audience on a Phil Donahue Show in the height of public agitation over the October surprise business. But I continue to feel that way, not least because of the conclusions of the Congressional committees that there is no credible evidence to support the allegations.

The Iranians, as I said, had no regard for Mr. Carter, evident in one of their favorite expressions, particularly on the part of the students, that "Carter can do nothing", that God was on their side. Carter was maligned and disliked by the revolutionaries, particularly the more radical of them, for the way which they identified him with the Shah and the Empress personally, highlighted by the controversial visit of the Carters to celebrate New Year's Eve in 1977 with the Shah and the Empress in the palace in the north of Tehran, where he expressed that remarkable judgment that the Shah was beloved of his people and remarkable in his rule. They never forgot that and wished him ill at every opportunity. They did not like Reagan either They were apprehensive about him.

The fact that we were released a half hour into the administration of Ronald Reagan, I think reflects that apprehension. They didn't want to run the risk an hour longer than necessary of dealing with the Reagan administration, because if the issue had gone on into the Reagan administration, at best it could have meant that the crisis would have taken several more months to resolve, and at worst it could have seen the Reagan administration physically clobber them in some use of force.

Q: There was still a very difficult war and it wouldn't take much to tip things.

LAINGEN: Exactly. The war with Iraq was still going on. In any event, by that time the hostage settlement process had begun in September and October, with the Germans first and the Algerians later. It involved, particularly, the frozen assets, because that was an issue that had to be resolved. It had reached the point late that year where it was resolvable, was about to be concluded. They didn't want to jeopardize that by seeing it go on into the next administration. So they, I think, were quite prepared to sign quickly, at that point. To get it over with and get on with it.

Q: Speaking about getting on, when you got back to Washington, was the initial reception pretty difficult?

LAINGEN: I don't recall that there was anything difficult. Stu, I can only remember the joy of it, the relief of it, the incredible embrace of affection we had from every American. Of course from our colleagues in the Foreign Service and the military services and the government here in Washington, but the embrace was from everybody. That made the reentry very comfortable, very pleasant, very easy. We had not been trained as public figures on the public stage, having been in "isolation" for 444 days; it wasn't all that easy to suddenly take a position very much on a national stage. But I think all of my colleagues handled that challenge remarkably well. Some of my colleagues made a judgment, made a decision, as they were coming home, anticipating it in all those months of isolation, that when they came home to freedom they were going to disappear. They were going to get out of the public limelight as fast as they possibly could. Some succeeded in that respect. Some welcomed the publicity. Some took advantage of it to write books, give interviews, performing, I think, remarkably ably in every instance that I know of.

Personally, I didn't think I could have faded into the shadows, and I chose not to. In any event I thought somebody had to speak for this group and I anticipated that obligation well before the release. I knew I would have to do that. I turned over in my mind countless times in Tehran what kind of position I was going to take publicly when I got home. What was I going to say? What I would say in effect in defense of the bind we had gotten into. I was apprehensive a little bit about the possibility that we would be roundly criticized after the euphoria of our return had passed.

But as it turned out, that criticism was rarely expressed. Not that criticism wasn't warranted, but I think generally speaking there was a sentiment in Washington at that time, not least because there was a new administration, but generally because there was a feeling of let's get this damn thing behind us. Let's get it over with. We have all been burdened with an unfortunate affair. We have all been hostage long enough. Let's get it behind us and get on with things.

There wasn't much focus of what we might have learned from the crisis. There were a few Congressional hearings, nothing sustained. To some degree that is regrettable from our vantage point. We benefitted from it in the sense we weren't criticized and deeply questioned. I think our posture as hostages in most respects had been perfectly defensible and honorable. I think that feeling was also broadly felt by the public and to some degree by government as well. I think the general feeling was that both the public and the government wanted to get it behind us. The new administration apparently did not want to dwell on it.

Q: I am sure in the back of your mind you must have been thinking about the "who lost China?" thing that had come out..."who lost Iran?" This can't help but be in the back of the mind of everybody in the Foreign Service when they see a country where you serve and things change.

LAINGEN: Sure, it is there. Iran is there as an example. As I mentioned earlier we made a lot of mistakes, from the President on down to those of us in Tehran in what contributed to that crisis. I guess what I am saying generally to underpin all that is, I don't think we made any mistakes in terms of the way in which 53 human beings coped on the ground after it happened. And my colleagues performed honorably and nobly on their release. Sure there were plenty of things, with hindsight, that should have been done differently in the years leading up to the crisis. But you didn't hear much of that possible line...who lost Iran?

Q: It didn't become a political issue.

LAINGEN: It didn't become one like China. Partly, I think, simply because everyone had made mistakes and everyone wanted to get it behind us. More fundamentally, I think, certainly from my viewpoint, it wasn't our country to lose. The Shah lost Iran. His inner circle lost Iran. Yeah, there were things with hindsight that we should have done in terms of trying to council the Shah to have done this or that. But even that assumes we can tell any government or leader, particularly an autocratic leader of that kind, what to do and when and expect it to be followed.

Q: That didn't stop the China business. There, of course, it went Communist. Iran went radical Muslim, but at that time it didn't turn Communist.

LAINGEN: Happily that didn't enter the foray.

I think there are things that should have been examined more carefully and in more depth at the time; not least, for that matter...here were 53 guinea pigs...this was early on in hostage taking and terrorism...there should have been a more sustained psychological, medical, physical watch on us over the years, or at least a year or two. That wasn't done.

I go back to the point you were making, I think there is in the minds of certainly those of us in that generation of Foreign Service officers in service today a sort of button one could press that recalls the mistakes we make. That recalls in particular my favorite cliché from that period..."Always challenge conventional wisdom." We did not adequately challenge conventional wisdom in the decades leading up to the taking of the Embassy, certainly not in the decade of the

seventies when conventional wisdom proclaimed that while the Shah was despotic and autocratic he was nevertheless presiding over a remarkable revolution of his own.

We did get too comfortable with the Shah, but it didn't begin with Jimmy Carter. It began earlier than that, and we paid for it in time by inadequately challenging conventional wisdom; in an inadequate perception of an idea that was developing in that country that Iran was being taken in the wrong direction--a feeling that could be exploited and used politically by clever political leaders. The Ayatollah Khomeini proved to be a remarkably clever political leader, in addition to being the cleric that he was.

Then there are a number of smaller lessons related to that. How we, and at that time in particular, protect and defend against terrorists. What kind of defense to maintain. What kind of security to have. The use of Marines. The staffing of an embassy. We have talked about the kind of security that affects our paper holdings in an embassy, our capacity to destroy when the crunch comes.

I want to mention in particular and reemphasize, perhaps I may have mentioned it, that I think the Marine Security Guards in Tehran performed the way they are expected to perform. They were not there to fight Custer's last stand operations. That is not the purpose of the Marine Security Guards. They are there to buy time, to provide security within an embassy against isolated terrorist incidents perhaps, and to use fire power if necessary to protect life and limb. But not to mount a defense against a large mass of people. That only produces more problems.

We learned one major lesson in terms of all of this, and that is that however secure your embassies and homes may be against terrorist attack, against any kind of security intrusion, if you don't have assurance from the government to which you are accredited that they will come to your protection with force when the crunch comes, then all of that security is useless.

Q: One of the rationales behind this whole Oral History Program, at least on my part, is that unlike the American military we don't seem to examine when things go right or go wrong in a methodical way. We sort of move on to the next thing. It is like Vietnam. We don't look at it. I am hoping from these oral histories we will create something which eventually can be used by people to look at the practice of American diplomacy, good and bad, and maybe to pass on some very hard earned knowledge to the next generation. It is spotty. I think what we are doing has at least the germ of a program which might be used to learn lessons.

LAINGEN: You are absolutely right, particularly your analogy with the military. They are much better at that. I suppose you can say they are better equipped to do it. In any event, they do it after all engagements that I know of and they go at in great depth to find out what they can learn from the process. Not simply to identify what's right and what's wrong, but what they can learn from the process. We didn't really dig into the Iranian affair that way.

But we learned something in the context of that general cliché that I used about challenging conventional wisdom. I think that encompasses a great deal in terms of what we are there to do. That's what diplomats do. We are there to find out how people are thinking and why they are thinking that way and behaving that way. And if we get too comfortable in believing something

that sort of fits our purposes, well, we are in hellish trouble.

We learned a lot of small things along the way in the context in Tehran. Certainly dealing with terrorism. Certainly protecting an embassy. Certainly relying on assurances from governments. Certainly dealing with classified paper. Certainly the staffing of an embassy. But it is all in the context of that larger political issue and there we didn't look at it very deeply.

Q: When you came back after the initial wave of emotion ...and it was a worldwide wave of emotion too...was there a problem about hating Iranians or Iranian students among you and your colleagues? I would think there would be tremendous bitterness.

LAINGEN: No. I don't think any of my colleagues came back feeling bitter about Iranians as such. Some came back in the immediate return with feelings about mistakes on the part of our government. Some of those concerns were expressed to Jimmy Carter, when he met us in Weisbaden. Put rather bluntly to him by several of my colleagues, but also in a atmosphere of respect. We were talking to the man who was just hours earlier the President of the United States and still carried the mantle of the Presidency about him. But as far as Iranians were concerned, I don't think my colleagues felt that way. We had a lot of problems with individual Iranians, particularly those who held us. I know my colleagues over in the compound have some very strong views about a few of them. One of them, incidentally, today is the Iranian Ambassador in Sudan, a country where Iranian money and ideology, revolutionary and fundamentalist ideology is rampant and causing others, not least the Egyptians, some problems. The Iranian representative in Khartoum is a graduate of the Tehran school of terrorists. He went from there to become in the first instance Chargé in Lebanon and was very instrumental in the growing strength of the Islamic Jihad there in the eighties. Now he has been promoted to being ambassador to Khartoum. We are not very happy about that.

Personally I hope that our visa files are sufficiently accurate to preclude and prevent any of those who held us hostage ever to come to the United States as either residents or visitors. I will carry my distaste for them to that point. Beyond that, however, I have no brief to carry out against them. They have to live with what I regard as their mistake, a mistake that I think they will realize in the final analysis was of great cost to them and their country.

I am troubled by a concern that America's anger, the public's anger over what had been done in Tehran, would see Iranians in this country maligned in response. I worried at the time that Iranian students, who were here at that time in large number, would suffer. And some of them did, granted that some of them deserved some of this.

Q: Some of them were demonstrators.

LAINGEN: Some demonstrated and brought it on themselves. That didn't help their cause.

Today we are the second largest Persian speaking country in the world, given the number of Iranians who live here among us. Large numbers have come since the revolution. Some students who were here at the time stayed on, of course. Iranians in the United States still bear some

degree of stigma of distaste because of all that happened 14 years ago. That is unfortunate because they are living among us today. Most are highly decent people, able people. I don't think any of them have yet gotten to the point where they are represented in the Congress, but I suspect they will some day.

I do whatever I can to remind the public that it is not worthy of us, and I said that from the beginning, to take it out on the Iranians who live here. For that matter I look back on my first tour in Tehran in the fifties with some fond memories, and I hope someday to go back to Tehran, however difficult it still is. I could go today, I guess, but I don't know if I would get a visa. Others go, a few go, but not all that many.

In any event, the hostage crisis, if you will, is still with us, now 14 years after the taking of the Embassy. Still with us in the sense that we don't have now after all those years a relationship with Iran. In many ways that is unnatural. The place matters out there, because it is astride an area that is of great consequence to some important American interests. It matters, not least, because we have all those Iranians living among us. It is still with us in the sense that the hostage issue, that crisis, the Iranian regime's continued use of terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy, continued for years after we were released. And that burden is a very large one in terms of how our government today looks at Iran and, not least, how the American public looks at Iran.

It will be very difficult for Washington, even when the time comes to try to reestablish a relationship, to deal with this public distaste out there among the American public. It is a burden on the future and is going to require some very deft handling on the part of Washington to overcome. Both we and Iran, both governments today, will be bringing a lot of emotional, political baggage to the negotiating table when we sit down eventually and try to talk. I think this is overdue. We should be talking to put this business behind us.

Q: Where did you go when you came back?

LAINGEN: When I came back, all of us were given time off. None of us was pressed to get back to work tomorrow. Some of the signs that graced the highway as we drove into Washington reminded us of reality, including one special one... "the IRS welcomes you back." We were given a lot of freedom, time off, to get our act in order, to do our welcoming ceremonies in our home towns all over the country. They were incredible. This euphoria lasted quite a long time. It's still there in the sense that people either recognize you or you identify yourself and it seems to bring back in the minds of almost all Americans the whole damn business.

Q: It's an identifier. One says, "So-and-so was a hostage."

LAINGEN: Many Americans still remember where you were when our bunch came home. So it's still there. I guess I have sustained it myself in the sense that I have done an awful lot of public speaking since I came back. I have had incredible opportunities to speak to hundreds of audiences. A lot of young people audiences, which I enjoy very much, because I think I have something to say to them that might remind them of a few things. When I speak to young people about the problems in our country today, I remind them that when one looks at this country from

a distant vantage point we don't look so bad. We look very special from a hostage cell. And that is a message that I try to express, as well as the whole business of challenging conventional wisdom and dealing with change in the field of diplomacy and in the developing world.

RUSSELL SVEDA
Watch Officer, Operations Center
Washington, DC (1979-1981)

Mr. Sveda was born in New Jersey in 1945. After serving with the Peace Corps in Korea he joined the Foreign Service in 1975. His overseas posts with the State Department include Korea, where he served as Staff Aide to the Ambassador and in Moscow, as Science Officer. In Washington, Mr. Sveda was assigned as China Desk Officer and subsequently as Watch Officer in the Department's Operations Center. He also served as volunteer in the Sinai Field Mission. Mr. Sveda was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June, 2000.

Q: In 1979, were you a member of the Near East Bureau or were you just a loose body? Where did you go?

SVEDA: Well, I was now, thank goodness, a member of the Near East Bureau of the State Department. The Near East Bureau of the State Department, which is always dealing with crisis after crisis, is also the bureau that runs an organization called S/S and S/SO. S/S is the Secretary's staff. They do all the paper flow for the principal officers of the Department. S/SO is the Operations Center, the State Department's 24 hour watch on the world. So, I was able to get a Washington assignment, which is desirable after a big embassy, a small post, and then a Washington posting. That is the holy trinity in the State Department career. So, I got an assignment as a watch officer in the Operations Center. My job was to draft the Secretary's morning intelligence summary and other things. I was an editor and a watch officer, but primarily an editor.

Q: You did that from 1979 to when?

SVEDA: 1981. At that point, I was able to get an assignment to Russia (then the Soviet Union), the embassy in Moscow, as science officer. That would have included a year of language training.

Q: Let's go back to the 1979-1981 period. How did you find the Operations Center?

SVEDA: The very first night I was on duty was February 14, 1979. I remember this date because the New York Times had a headline about the Operations Center on the front page the next day. They referred to the St. Valentines Night massacre. The first night, my first night duty, was unquestionably the most hectic night that I've ever experienced. I should explain something about the way the schedules were structured. As a watch officer, I was on a rotating shift,

meaning that I would show up at 7:00 am for two days. I would work from 7:00 am until 4:00 pm, at which time I would leave. Then I would have two days from 3:00 pm until midnight. Then I would have two days 11:00 pm until 7:00 am. So, there was always this overlap. Then I would collapse for the rest of that day and I had two days off and began the schedule again. So, my first midnight shift was the night that I was going to be writing the President's morning intelligence summary for the first time. A few days earlier, I began my shift with the day shift and with trembling hands opened up the morning intelligence summary, something that I thought contained all the secrets of the universe and which I'd be writing in a couple of days. I also with trembling hands got to see the CIA's product, which was called the National Intelligence Daily (or at least it was then). I opened it and I just couldn't believe I was actually looking at these things, that this was what President Jimmy Carter himself was seeing. I don't think I read anything with comprehension because I was just so amazed at what I was actually supposedly seeing. In a few days, I was writing it. The first night, I was looking through the cable traffic to see what I could put before the President. It was 11:00 pm. I served with a senior watch officer, another junior watch officer like myself, and a couple of office assistants. It was around 11:00 pm and the major focus for the other people was what would be on TV that night because nothing was going on. I was fumbling through the cable traffic looking for items that I might put before the Secretary of State, Vance, and President Carter.

Around 11:30, all hell broke loose. We had our embassy in Teheran seized by militants, the first time. They only kept it for a day or so and then they let it go and then later on in November of '79, they seized the embassy a second time and that time for about 400 days. Our embassy in Chad was caught in crossfire between government troops and rebel troops. Most sadly, our ambassador, Spike Dubs, in Afghanistan was seized by rebels or militants and held in a hotel room as a hostage. From that moment on (they all happened at about the same time, I guess because of the difference in time and they were mostly in the Middle Eastern time zone), literally all hell broke loose. Of course, the Operations Center would need to get the desk officers and in this case the assistant secretaries to be present immediately and would have to brief the President and the Vice President. As it turns out, Jimmy Carter was extremely conscientious and was about to depart for a trip to Mexico the next day. He really wanted to know whether he should take the trip to Mexico or perhaps postpone it. Secretary Vance announced to us that he was coming and he would just spend the time with us. Of course, as soon as we got the word to the assistant secretaries and the deputy assistant secretaries that the Secretary himself was going to be with us in the Ops Center that evening, we had big problems of crowd control. They all wanted to be in there at that particular moment. Secretary Vance spent most of his time that day negotiating with the Soviets, who were in control of Afghanistan, and trying to get them not to attack the rebels and shoot the rebels dead and incidentally, our ambassador, Spike Dubs. This went on for about 5 or 6 hours. At one point, President Carter, a very conscientious person, calls. It was about 3:00 am. The head of the desk, a guy named Bill Rowe, gets the call. Very crisp former naval officer to former naval officer, he said, "Yes, Mr. President. No, Mr. President. Secretary Vance is right now on the line to Kabul. I will see if I can patch you in. I'm going to go to the other room (where he was on the line)." The Secretary was there with any number of assistant secretaries and deputy assistant secretaries trying to negotiate this through. So, Bill Rowe hands the phone to one of the office assistants and says, "This is the President on the line. I'm going to go to the other room. I want you to listen and when I connect, we'll connect." "About an hour or two later, Bill

Rowe comes through, has a cup of coffee. He is talking to the OA and says, “Well, what did you say to the President?” “Nothing.” Of course, he wouldn’t initiate a conversation with the President. “Well, what did the President say to you?” “Nothing.” “What? It took him eight or 10 minutes to put this call through. You just were silent on the line with the President of the United States?” “I put him on hold.” “At which point Bill Rowe practically fainted dead away, seeing his Foreign Service career absolutely going down in flames. He actually did have a very good career after that. I think he was ambassador to Turkey at some point. But it was a fun place to work because all things were happening all the time.

One thing that happened shortly after the big Iran hostage crisis began, I was the editor and an agency of the U.S. government which is across the river from us - the CIA - the people who were our Intelligence and Research people came to me and said that the CIA absolutely had to get an item in to the President in the morning intelligence summary. This was about three or four days after the Iran hostage crisis had begun, the big one. Basically, it was an intelligence report, an intercepted communication of a Latin American embassy of a very large country in Latin America that doesn’t speak Spanish reporting on what the American reaction to the hostage crisis was. I looked at this and I said, “Why are we getting this to the President?” “Well, this is really good stuff. We got this from an intercepted communication.” I said, “Well, excuse me, but you could walk out on the street at random, speak to four Americans at random, and get firsthand report on what Americans think about the Iran hostage crisis. What do we care what this embassy says?” “Well, this is really good material. It’s really hot stuff.” I was able to block it for two days and then my successor, I told her in the next shift, “Block this stupid item. She was able to do it, but she forgot to tell the person who followed on the next shift and it got in.

Q: I think this points up a real problem, a bigger one. That is, intelligence caught by clandestine methods - intercepts or paying an agent or something - seem to have a value greater than just normal intelligence. If you pay so much or you have such and such a method of getting something, it’s worth more than just plain information.

SVEDA: Yes. I mentioned earlier that when I first touched the NID [“National Intelligence Daily”], my hands were trembling. Later on, I was able to go to Langley and I met the 20-30 editors who wrote this product. The one question that the Foreign Service officers who worked in the Ops Center with me always had in the back of our minds is, when we leave all of this sexy classified material, supposedly the word from Mount Sinai, how are we going to find a substitute for it in our daily reading? What are good and open sources? As Foreign Service officers, we believed, and I still believe, that open source material by and large can substitute for classified materials. There will always be state to state communications like the president to the president, which will be unique and of great value. But by and large, I think that if you read the Economist magazine, you get as good as can be gotten from open sources. The Wall Street Journal’s daily summary, the little items that they have, is a very good summary. The New York Times does a very good job. But then you get to the level of the “Periscope” that’s done by U.S. News and World Report. That was the level of the NID. The flavor of reading the NID was so sanitized that it had no flavor at all. These were like chicken McNuggets versus free range chicken, which is what the State Department serves up, so to speak. This was the difference in flavor between what we produced as editors based on State Department cables and what the CIA produced.

The problem is, once I had a CIA cable about a French businessman in North Korea who had learned something very sizzling about the leader of North Korea or his son at the time, who is now the leader of North Korea. It's not important what the item was. I expressed mild surprise that a French businessman would be privy to such information. My CIA counterpart said, "Oh, well, it's not necessarily a Frenchman. It's not necessarily a businessman. We changed the identity to protect the source." I said, "Oh, well, in State Department cables, you don't do that. You'd put the name of the person and you'd say 'Protect' or you give a reason why you can't identify the source, but you don't play games like that. You leave it to the intelligent reader to figure out what is going on with the best information you can provide. You don't digest it. You don't predigest it. You don't pulp it and make it into a little chicken McNugget," which is what they do. That's my problem with their product. The Defense Department products are basically... I guess they read State Department cables, it seems, and rewrite them, I don't know, changing all the active constructions to passive constructions. They just read badly.

Q: With the hostage crisis, did that generate almost a separate office within Operations? That was 444 days.

SVEDA: The Operations Center has two or three office suites that are ready to be used as a full functioning office in five minutes. In other words, you have the business machines that you need, furniture, etc. At that particular moment, we already had a crisis going. We set up two crisis centers, one for Chad and one for Iran. But we used the Secretary's conference room (that's the only place we could) for the Secretary's phone calls to Kabul. This was an unfortunate precedent. When the Kabul business was over, the families of the hostages, the State Department Washington-based relatives of the people in Teheran, insisted on being kept apprised. A very bad decision was made to have the families basically set up shop in the Secretary's conference room for 444 days and nights. They were basically privy to almost everything that we did. It was government transparency run amuck.

One thing I should say about the hostage crisis is, looking back on it now, it was all done for the media. We had two reports, the best intelligence reports I have ever read, from another country, a small county in the Middle East which is about the size of New Jersey that I will not identify. This particular country had what I think were the greatest reports, probably from the same person. In one report, this person entered Teheran airport and left Teheran airport. Part a was arriving in Teheran and part b departing Teheran. This person had an absolute photographic and phonographic memory. It just seemed like a very bland report on everything you saw, everyone you talked to, all the officials you had to pass through, and what the security arrangements were in those airports. The second one simply walked around the embassy compound in Teheran at 8:00 am, 10:00 am, noon, two or three hour periods throughout the day for about three days. I don't know when this person slept. But he noticed something, that all the crowds were in the front of the embassy where the TV cameras were. Indeed, all the guards were at the front of the embassy where the TV cameras were. On the sides and back of the embassy compound, nobody. This is a very important report. It later probably served as the basis for the Iran hostage rescue mission, which I can discuss if you want. I only saw it from the worm's eye view in the Operations Center.

Q: Talk about that and how that played itself out at the Operations Center.

SVEDA: Secretary of State Vance was a workaholic. He worked round the clock, was a very conscientious man. He had a very good deputy secretary, Warren Christopher, who was later Secretary of State under Clinton. One day, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was national security advisor, came up and said, "Gee, Cy, you work real hard. Why don't you take a few days off? Not that much is happening right now and you have been really working yourself 24 hours a day. You really ought to go to your home in Middleburg and just take a few days off. Go Thursday, come back Sunday, the rest will be good." "You know, Zbig," he said, "Good idea." So, he goes off to Middleburg, Virginia. Warren Christopher, the deputy, is in charge. He comes back Sunday evening. Christopher and he had a telephone conversation. "What's happening? Anything I need to know about?" "Oh, not much. We had our National Security Council meeting on Friday and we gave final approval to the Iran hostage rescue mission." "The what?" "You don't know about that?" "No. What is that about?" Warren Christopher and Cy Vance realized that they had been snookered, that basically Brzezinski wanted to have Vance out of the room when they took final approval of this. Vance insisted on seeing the plans that evening. He had been deputy secretary of Defense. He did know defense matters. He looked at the plans and the next morning, he went to President Carter with a sealed envelope and he said, "Mr. President, this is the last straw. Zbigniew Brzezinski and others have been forever acting as though they're Secretary of State (Andy Young, for example, said something that he had not cleared with the Secretary of State when he was the UN ambassador at one point)-"

Q: It was dealing with the PLO [Palestinian Liberation Organization]. He had contact with them when he was told not to.

SVEDA: And Cy Vance threatened to resign over that unless he had full control over foreign policy. Then this thing happened with Zbigniew Brzezinski now planning this hostage rescue mission without telling Cyrus Vance at all about this and trying to get it approved when he was out of town. So, he said, "Mr. President, I've put up with this a lot, but this is my letter of resignation in this envelope. It takes effect seven days after the Iran hostage mission takes place. It is my letter of resignation whether or not this mission succeeds or fails. I've looked at the plans and it will fail." "Well, Cy," said the President, "I'm sorry that you feel that way, but" and he accepted the envelope. Then the Secretary of State resigned, only the second Secretary of State to resign in protest in the 20th century. The first one was William Jennings Bryan back at the time of World War I.

Q: Were you on the watch during the rescue attempt or the aftermath of it?

SVEDA: Oh, definitely during the aftermath. I was and I wasn't on at the time that it occurred because it was over a couple of days really. The one thing I remember very distinctly about that period also is how President Carter came to develop an animus against the Soviet Union. He said he learned more about the Soviet Union in the previous 48 hours of time when they invaded Afghanistan and other things than he had in all the previous years of his presidency. He fixed on this idea of an American boycott of the Moscow Olympics because that would hurt the Soviets at

the place that they were most vulnerable, their pride. Dr. Marshal Schulman, who was one of his advisors on Soviet policy, advised that course of action. He also went for a wheat embargo to the Soviet Union. We were sending vast quantities of wheat - 800 million tons or something like that - to the Soviet Union. The one thing that I do recall reading is something that I've thought about since, that Brezhnev had told some of his intimates that he intended to make Afghanistan the 16th republic of the Soviet Union. That had been something that was on the President's mind. I don't know if he noticed that particularly.

PETER D. CONSTABLE
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1979-1982)

Ambassador Peter D. Constable was born in New York State in 1932 and received his bachelor's degree from Hamilton College. He earned his graduate degree from the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in 1957. After joining the Foreign Service, he served in Vigo, Tegucigalpa, and Lahore. Ambassador Constable was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 17, 1990.

Q: Things moved with a terrible rush in that period, moving away from Israel's confrontation with the Arab States. All of a sudden we were looking at... And the other thing was Afghanistan and Iran, which was more in your bailiwick. How did we view them and respond to developments?

CONSTABLE: Of course the first part of the Iran tragedy had already taken place. By the time I got back to Washington, the Shah was out and the revolution had occurred. Washington was concerned with ways to try to put something back together again and see if there was any way that we could deal with this regime in Tehran.

You may recall, at that time, although Khomeini was obviously the supreme power, the civil government was still a secular one. Bazargan was the Prime Minister, and he had non-clerical people, by and large, staffing the government. So the judgment in Washington was that we should and could find, somehow, ways to deal with this secular government. The seizing of the hostages, I think, was very much a part of a power play within Iran.

Q: This was in November '79.

CONSTABLE: In early November of '79, with the more radical Islamic fundamentalist revolutionary elements seeking to enhance their power and, in effect, overthrow a secular government and constitute a religious, clerical revolutionary government. The hostage issue became an instrument for achieving that.

And, indeed, within days after the seizure of the embassy and the hostages, the Bazargan

government collapsed and was replaced, first, by Bani Sadr, who still was secular. But he was soon put on the rack, also, for his involvement in the hostage crisis, and within a few months he was out.

And then it was a purely religious, clerical government. Once the aims of that revolutionary group were achieved, then the hostages became superfluous to their purposes. And the kind of embarrassment that holding the hostages caused Iran, and the pressures of trade embargoes, and political and diplomatic isolation began to tell, to some extent, as well as the war with Iraq.

At that point, then, Iran looked for a way to get rid of them. But, until the hostages had served their purpose of accomplishing the revolutionary goals of the radical Islamic fundamentalists, we really had no chance to get them out.

Q: How did we see it as this hostage crisis developed? There had been other times when the Ambassador had been taken over in the embassy. Did this thing appear to be just one of those temporary blips?

CONSTABLE: In the very first few days, we hoped that that's what it would be. There had been an incident in February, on Valentine's Day, as you may recall, when the compound was overrun. The Ambassador was able to quickly get assistance from the government to turn this around, and the compound was very quickly returned to American control.

So, when this happened in November there was a hope. Bruce Laingen, the Chargé, was, at the time that the compound was taken over, at the foreign ministry making a representation on some other issue. He stayed in the foreign ministry throughout most of the hostage crisis.

But in those first two or three days, he hoped to be able to persuade the government to reverse itself or to disassociate itself from what had happened in the compound, and to use its authority to get the guys out who had taken the hostages.

Unfortunately, there was really quite a different stamp on the takeover this time. The objective of those who were engineering this, clearly, was to get rid of the Bazargan government that Laingen was trying to deal with, and ultimately replace it with a radical revolutionary government. So there was a different context in which the takeover occurred than had been the case earlier in February.

As you will also recall, ostensibly what triggered this was the Shah being admitted to the United States. The Shah had been in Morocco and Egypt, and then the US agreed to allow him to come to the United States for medical treatment. The Iranians were infuriated by that.

Q: Did the bureau have any input into this or was this done at a higher level?

CONSTABLE: It was done at a high level. We did have an input. We were asked for our views, and we gave them.

Q: *Which were?*

CONSTABLE: Which were that this would be a very dangerous move if we wished to maintain a presence in Iran. And I think the President knew that it was potentially a dangerous move.

Q: *Were you getting pretty good readings on what was happening, either from people who'd served there or from the CIA, so you understood some of the dynamics there and how this thing was pretty much under control as far as the old system? Looking back on it, how well do you think we were served by what we had developed there over the years?*

CONSTABLE: There was quite an array of opinion, even from people who knew Iran very well. I was not an Iranian expert, but it's very clear, in retrospect, we underestimated the depth and the fervor of the Islamic element and their ability to force the pace in Iran, and perhaps overestimated the ability of old-time, secular democrats who had suffered during the period of the Shah and obviously had not been allowed to participate in the political process. But they were people who were known to embassy officials over the years and respected. We perhaps attached more credibility to them than the facts warranted.

Q: *Well, this almost comes with the territory, doesn't it? Looking at it objectively, it's very difficult for an embassy to deal with quite radical groups that are anti-Western. You don't have Mullah friends, really, or Ayatollah friends.*

CONSTABLE: I think that's a very good point. It is hard to have those contacts. It is hard to get to know these people. It is hard, therefore, to make accurate assessments of what their political capabilities are and where they really stand, what they really want. I think that's a very valid point. You end up talking, in effect, to those who will talk to you.

Q: *Can you give a little idea what it was like? I was not in Washington at the time, but every day the news commentators would say the hostages have been in for umpty-ump days. This went on for 444 days. The wives, whose husbands were in there, were coming and being very...move ahead with the rescue mission anyway.*

Q: *Let me ask, was one option, right at the beginning (which looking back on it maybe we should have done), the tit for tat business? In other words, we had a mission, and you just take the Iranians and put them in the Greenbrier Hotel, or whatever one does (we've done this before), and say: Okay, now it's time, you've held our embassy, we'll hold your embassy. And this puts some pressure on the other side. Was that considered at the time?*

CONSTABLE: We thought about things like that. There were some legal difficulties, I think, with some of the things that you suggest, of holding hostages in the United States.

Q: *But there is... I mean, if we went through this during war... We did this.*

CONSTABLE: Some kind of internment. Yes, I think that could have been done. There was a very strong feeling, at the beginning, that there may not have been any authority in Tehran that

had real control of those who were holding the hostages, and that for us to take retaliatory steps could endanger the hostages. Now that may have been a misreading, a misassessment, but that's what people thought at the time. This kind of thing was certainly talked about.

We had an enormous problem of the 80,000 Iranian students in the United States, some of whom, as you may recall, at that time were running around organizing pro-Khomeini demonstrations in downtown Cleveland, and that kind of thing. People were outraged.

Q: I recall that there was an interesting side to this. I was in charge of our consulate general in Naples, and all throughout Europe there were Iranian students who were asking for visas. The State Department Visa Office, to get the pressure off, said, "Oh, give them non-immigrant visas." And we said, "Screw you. We won't." And we didn't. It was really a revolt of the consular officers. We said, "We will obey the law. We're not going to put any more of these students into the United States."

CONSTABLE: I remember that, indeed. These were some of the kinds of problems that we were coping with all the time. Dealing with the press, dealing with the Congress, dealing with these issues of Iranian students running around the United States and getting beaten up, actually, by quite understandably hostile Americans who did not like to see people carrying pro-Khomeini banners down the street while our hostages were held in Tehran.

But each one of these issues had to be looked at, from our point of view, in terms of what impact this was going to have on the hostages and on the hostage crisis itself. I suppose you could say that we tended to be perhaps overly careful, over cautious, in our determination to try to protect the safety of the hostages.

We were perhaps less severe with Iranian students here and the Iranian Embassy here. Eventually, but it took several months, we closed the embassy here. But for a long time we listened to and bought the argument that, absent anything that we could usefully do in Tehran, it was important to have some voice back to the Iranian government through their Iranian Embassy here in Washington.

I think, in retrospect, one can say that did us no good at all. It was not a useful voice. It wasn't even an honest voice in terms of honest reporting. They always put their own spin on things anyway.

But it was an extremely difficult time, partly because of the intense spotlight that was on this crisis, and the intense pressure on the Administration, at every step of the way, to do something. Within a few days after the hostages were seized, we did what probably turned out to be the most important and useful thing that we did though the whole thing, which was freezing Iranian assets here. Because that gave us something that they wanted back.

Q: That came as a surprise to the Iranians, didn't it?

CONSTABLE: I think so, yes. Apparently it did.

Q: Nobody, of course, was in charge, and they didn't see this as a whole.

CONSTABLE: There was reluctance here to do it, and for very good reasons. We have found very useful our ability to act as a repository for funds from around the world. And there were those who were very, very concerned that the Saudis, and other big money-earners who deposit a lot of money in the States, would be alarmed if we did this to Tehran, no matter what the provocation, that the US would no longer be seen as a necessarily totally safe repository for funds. So that was debated for a day or so. But the need was overwhelming to do it, to create some kind of a counterbalance to Iran holding the hostages.

As it turned out in the end, having seized the assets, getting rid of them was also very complicated, because there were all kinds of court cases that had been registered in the meantime of people who had claims against Iran. And all of that had to be taken care of in some way. It was extremely complex, but we were able to work through all of that at the end.

Within a month, we were trying to look for some kind of negotiating track that might be able to do something with the Iranians. We tried to work through the U.N. and Waldheim.

Waldheim was the Secretary-General of the U.N. He made a trip to Tehran in which he was embarrassed, humiliated, maltreated by howling mobs of Islamic fanatics. Whatever one may think of Waldheim, I must say he acted with some courage in that situation. It was not a situation I would want to have been put in.

But very little came of that, although that particular U.N. track became folded into a bilateral negotiating thing that we got involved in with Bani Sadr's government, which I think came close to success.

And I say that only in this sense, that Bani Sadr, who was the elected President of Iran at that time, and his Foreign Minister, Ghotbzadeh, wanted to get rid of the hostage problem. We're talking about January, February, and into early March of 1980. I think they wanted to do it, but in the end they were unable to swing Khomeini.

Khomeini seemed to give them his blessing. But then, at the critical moment, when it came to the actual moment to move the hostages out of the embassy compound and into a hospital, which was going to be an interim stage before their ultimate release, Khomeini did not support them.

And Bani Sadr was not very long after that out of office, as was Ghotbzadeh. And this was, again, a step in the deepening of the revolution by the radicals, the use of the hostages as the instrument for achieving that.

So that was a major negotiating effort that collapsed at the last moment, and had an impact in the election and primary process that was going on in the States at the time. On the diplomatic side, we were trying to crank up some sanctions through the Security Council. There was reluctance. Everybody always hates sanctions or hates to have to do them. We were banging our

European allies around the ears to get them to support sanctions. And in April, indeed, a limited program of sanctions was imposed.

But the other track that was going on at the same time was the planning for the rescue mission, which was then attempted in the middle of April. The failure of the rescue mission, tragic as it was, had one positive effect. It took some of the steam out of this tremendous political pressure to resolve the issue.

People saw the hostage crisis, after the failure of the rescue mission, as something that we were going to have to live with for awhile, that it was going to take time, and that the Administration had tried just about everything that seemed reasonable. So, in that sense, it gave us a kind of a respite.

By that time, the crisis had gone on for about five months, and we understood a good deal better than we had right at the beginning what the dynamic was in Iran.

Khomeini had laid out a process for writing a constitution, electing the new assembly, electing a council of ministers, and blah, blah, blah. There were a series of steps that were put in place, the institutional elements of the Islamic revolution. And it became apparent to us, in fact Iranians were saying this, that there could be no solution to the hostage crisis until these steps were complete.

Looking ahead in April, it seemed to us that not much would happen before summer or early fall. So we spent our time trying to broaden the sanctions, increase the pressures wherever we could find ways to do it, diplomatic pressures through friends, whoever would help us with this, increase the cost of holding the hostages in economic terms to the Iranians until they were through this process. And always letting them know, through the Swiss and through other means, that any time they were ready before that, obviously, we would be ready, too. But we understood it was going to be several more months.

Then, in September, when we thought it was the time that things should break, that was when the Iraqis invaded Iran. And, while ultimately that may have increased the pressures on the Iranians to settle, in the short term I think it delayed their consideration of the hostage issue.

Q: How did we feel about that? My initial reaction was, when the Iraqis invaded Iran, it couldn't happen to a nicer group of people.

CONSTABLE: Yes, that was everybody's emotional reaction.

Q: We didn't like either side, and if they did each other in, the world would be a better place.

CONSTABLE: Indeed. Those of us who were working on Iran and the hostage thing saw it initially in narrower terms, that it was deflecting Iran's attention from a solution. Just at the time when they should have been knuckling down to talking to us about getting the hostages out of there, they were distracted.

Q: An obvious question to ask was, was there any American involvement in encouraging the Iraqis to do something?

CONSTABLE: No, not at all. Not at all. No, not at all. No.

Now, ultimately, I think the war brought home to the Iranians how isolated they were, and that they needed both the money that we were holding in the United States, the frozen assets, and they needed better access to military equipment and spare parts.

They were having a lot of trouble, and we were putting as much pressure as we could on anybody who was a potential supplier to Iran. And they were feeling that pinch. So the war with Iraq did increase the pressure on them to solve it. But I think they were headed to solving it anyway. And in the short run it may have slowed them down coming to grips with the way to solve it.

Q: Moving from that, we can come back, how did we feel about developments in Afghanistan?

CONSTABLE: Within six to eight weeks, seven weeks, after the hostages were seized in Iran, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan to shore up what was a collapsing Communist regime in Kabul. This presented the Administration, of course, with another extremely serious issue. Could I talk a little bit about the lead-up to that?

Q: Please do.

CONSTABLE: I've always felt that this was an area in which we had a significant policy failure, that we did not find ways to convey to the Soviets what their intervention in Afghanistan would mean to US-Soviet relations, and what it would mean to the Soviet position worldwide, really.

Now, part of this, I think, was the context of the time. The Administration was, embattled is perhaps too strong a word, in the same kinds of things that I talked about earlier, problems in the Horn, problems with Cubans in Angola.

You may recall that, I think it was in September, perhaps as early as August of '79, there was a great rhubarb about an alleged discovery of a Soviet battalion in Cuba.

Q: Oh, yes.

CONSTABLE: Senator Frank Church, who was running for reelection in Idaho, which he subsequently lost, suddenly surfaced this illusory Soviet battalion in Cuba.

Q: I think it was a brigade.

CONSTABLE: A brigade, whatever. There were also problems with Sandinistas, and Soviet support for Sandinistas, or Cuban support for Sandinistas, in Nicaragua. So all of these things were on President Carter's plate at this time. They were impinging on the dialogue with the

Soviets.

Carter had concluded a disarmament agreement, a nuclear weapons control agreement, with the Soviets, which was supposed to go up to the Senate. There were those who said it was in trouble. It was called SALT II. There were those who felt there was opposition in the Congress to this agreement. Part of that opposition was stimulated and fed and confirmed by what were seen as Soviet incursions in Africa, in the Caribbean, in Central America. So these issues were burdening the dialogue with the Soviets.

My sense at the time was, although I was not directly involved in US-Soviet affairs, that the Soviets were behaving a little bit arrogantly and were not taking seriously American representations on these issues.

There was a disposition in the government in that summer of '79 and early fall, number one, not to believe that the Soviets would intervene in Afghanistan, and then, number two, because the dialogue was already so freighted with things that we were having trouble getting the Soviets' attention on, nobody wanted to raise Afghanistan with the Soviets.

It was very late in the game, probably late November, early December, before we started saying things to our allies and to the Soviets against a Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, trying to warn the Soviets off.

I don't think we had the kind of full and frank dialogue that we should have had. I don't think the Soviets ever understood, before they intervened, just what our reaction would be, and how Carter would be absolutely forced to take a number of very drastic steps against the Soviets.

Q: It wasn't your particular area, the Soviet Union, but was there a problem of whom to talk to? Brezhnev was getting pretty dotty, in a way...

CONSTABLE: It could be. It could be. It could be. I was really not privy to just exactly how we carried on the dialogue with the Soviets, but certainly you're right. It was a group in Moscow that perhaps did not have the kind of leadership that we could plug into easily. It may have been getting too diffuse.

Q: How did we react then?

CONSTABLE: When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, this was of course seen as a major challenge to the United States. We saw Pakistan as in quite an exposed and weak position. We were even more fearful that the Soviets could follow up an intervention in Afghanistan with some kind of an intervention in Iran.

WAYNE WHITE
Analyst, Bureau of Intelligence and Research

Washington, DC (1979-2004)

Mr. White was born and raised in Pennsylvania, and educated at Penn State, Abington. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973 he served in Nigeria and Haiti before being assigned to the Sinai Field Mission. He subsequently devoted his career in the State Department to Middle Eastern Affairs, serving in senior positions in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research dealing with Arab-Israel, North African and general Arab and Iranian Affairs. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well let's talk about the situation when you get there in '79. What was the, well I guess Iran. Was that part of your portfolio or not?

WHITE: Oh, this is interesting. A tradition of sorts, even though the Arab-Israeli SITREP was only four years old at that point, had already been established that whomever headed the Arab-Israeli SITREP team, had the Iraq portfolio to run as well with their little pinky because it was so insignificant. Now we all know Iraq is huge on the Middle East stage, by right of history and size alone. But during the 1970's, Iraq sort of built itself into an isolated, radical corner of the Middle East and was really not a major player in the mainstream of Arab-Israeli diplomacy, the Arab League, regional issues, etc. So, honestly, when I left government, because of the current Iraq crisis, there could be 2,000 items of one type or another to scan or read per day. By contrast, when I started covering Iraq back in 1979, I was lucky if there were 20 or 30 pieces a day on the country. How little official Washington knew was just over the horizon.

Q: What did you find yourself when you were doing this? Was your main job sort of editing stuff that was given to you? What were you working on?

WHITE: We would try to scan as much of the traffic from the entire Middle East from Morocco to Iran as possible. We would then pick out (often in consultation with the appropriate intelligence analyst), the short items to be written up, mostly by us, but sometimes by contributing analysts, often with sexy insights and angles. On the longer essays, after sorting through priorities, we would schedule them out as best we could, with the help of the Office Director, assigning them to various analysts. Some, however, were written hastily in response to a request from the seventh floor or our INR director. We sort of charted things out, met with the Office Director (George Harris, for virtually the entire orun of this product while I was on board) around mid-morning, saying here is what we intend to do: "We are going to run with the cover memo that we had scheduled two days ago. The person who is writing it is making good progress. Here are our picks for shorter items, in addition to some that are interesting, but didn't make the cut." Sometimes we were the ones writing the longer items. If, for example, it was on Iraq, I was the analyst and would be the drafter. There was a lot of independence. George would say: "Yes, that sounds good. Let's roll." Or "Maybe you ought to do this one short item too, and drop that one." Then we were off.

Q: Who was Mr. Middle East when you got there?

WHITE: As far as we were concerned, George Harris, our director.

Q: What was his background?

WHITE: George was a Turkish specialist by trade, but had a solid grasp of the region as a whole, especially, I would say, Iraq and Iran. He was CIA originally, going through the old DO boot camp back in the 1950's. He joined INR/NESA as Deputy Director back in the early 1970's, I believe, and had just succeeded Phil Griffin as Director in 1979, only a few months before I arrived. George didn't retire until the end of 1995. Now even though his background was Turkish and his whole office contained lots of Turkish memorabilia George was, again, a very keen Middle East specialist, having written, I believe, a piece at CIA around 1970 predicting the fall of the Shah. In fact, for about a decade, mostly in the 1980's, George would go on an annual briefing tour to the region during which he would brief Sadat (followed by Mubarak), the Turkish Foreign Minister, and once or twice Hussein of Jordan. The Egyptian and Turkish legs of the trip remained unchanged, but there were some other substitutions, based on requests. George was very highly thought of, although low-key in style. And, perhaps aside from Henry Myers who presided for many years over the production of INR's flagship Secretary's Morning Summary (SMS), George probably was the best editor I ever knew.

Q: How did you find the desks related to INR when you got there?

WHITE: Actually I thought it was a very good relationship overall. The desks weren't our problem. We had a product that had to be co-signed by the NEA Assistant Secretary or one of his deputies each evening (at least in the early days of the SITREP). That was where we ran into problems. A DAS could edit and play with the analytic cover memo which interfered with INR's independence, and that's primarily why INR and NEA would go their separate ways eventually. I ran the SITREP from late Sept. 1979 through late Sept. 1980 -- almost a year exactly, ending with the onset of the Iran-Iraq War. About a month or two after I left the team, NEA and INR parted ways, and it became a uniquely INR product.

I can jump ahead and tell you how hilarious some of our interaction with the country desks could be, just on an analyst to desk officer level. There was of something in the early 1980's that we still wrestle with today: which countries should be on the terrorist list? Well, we had become closer to Iraq, as with many countries, because of the Iran-Iraq War: a country practically everyone wanted to see hold its own, with so many other Arab states regarding it as the cork that could keep Khomeini's Iran in its bottle, but we hadn't establish full relations. We were coming out with the terrorist list a year or two prior to when Iraq would get off the list. The Iraq desk officer, wanting to improve relations, came over with something to clear with me saying that Iraq had no involvement in any terrorist acts for the previous year. So I said, "That's very interesting. The Arab Liberation Front (ALF), the Iraqi-backed faction in the PLO, (it was under the PLO umbrella, but was so heavily Iraqi -- vice pro-Iraqi Palestinian -- that out of its 2,000-odd members in, say, 1980, about 1,200 were believed to be seconded Iraqi military cadres), had launched a hang glider attack into northern Israel from southern Lebanon in the course of the year under consideration--an ALF man strapped with grenades, explosives, an AK, ammunition, and a map to the nearest kibbutz." The Israelis detected him at night from the buzz of the hang glider as

it passed over the border. They killed him about a mile away from where he landed and about two miles from the kibbutz. I said, "Isn't that a terrorist attack?" And the desk officer replied, "It didn't work." I said, "I thought intent had something to do with the terrorist list. Not working doesn't mean it wasn't a terrorist attack." So it could be quite interesting. There was sometimes a bit of tugging and pulling.

Let me take this one step further because you are onto something pretty interesting. Back in the mid 90's, probably when Toby Gati was INR Director, Assistant Secretary of State for INR, a consumer survey of sorts was sent around to the various policy sides of the State Department, the 6th floor functional and regional bureaus and to the 7th floor consumers. What were the results? As for 7th floor consumers, essentially: "We really like what you are doing. Keep it coming." Regarding the 6th floor regional and functional bureaus, who also feed the seventh floor with paper: "We very much like the coordinating function of INR, but we can do without the analysis." (There was an operational intelligence coordination office in INR). Why the difference? Because on some occasions, policy bureaus send up a memo saying this is something we think should be done. In parallel with that, up had gone an INR assessment saying, in effect, if such were to happen, it could be problematic. So we were complicating the policy process in some cases, and they didn't like that. So there is tension between the policy and intelligence sides of the Department which has ebbed and flowed depending on who was, let's say, on INR/NESA's front, the NEA Assistant Secretary, with some being more interested in intelligence or open-minded and others not so inclined.

Q: When did you move out of the basically editing side?

WHITE: The Iran-Iraq war broke out on 22 September of 1980. Relations between Iran and Iraq, that little thing I handled with my pinky, had been steadily worsening since April 1980. By the time full-scale war erupted, I was already handling it with one whole hand, and the amount of traffic had gone from 20-30 items a day to over 100. The Iran analyst and I worked out of the NESA section of the INR SCIF (Secure Compartmented Information Facility) upstairs, turning a portion of it into an Iran-Iraq War Room of sorts. I camped out up there for 3 years; my counterpart covering Iran, who already had an office downstairs (the SITREP team worked out of the more secure SCIF), -- and was far less involved in the military side of the war -- operated out of NESA's 4th floor suite.

Q: Well for the time you had it just as you say with your little pinky doing Iraq, what were we saying or thinking about the Bath regime and Saddam Hussein at that point?

WHITE: It was viewed at that time as a loathsome dictatorial, leftist regime, closer to the USSR, and still fighting a low level Kurdish insurgency, involved in terrorism, as well as assassinations of Ba'thist dissidents throughout Western Europe and the Middle East, a regime with very few ties to the U. S. That last fact puts the lie to silly conspiracy theories still circulating that we put Saddam up to attacking Iran. Meaningful contact with senior Iraqi officials was almost nonexistent, and to the extent they listened to any major power, it was the USSR. So if someone else put him up to it (which I doubt very greatly), ask Moscow. We had a low-profile Interests Section under the aegis of the Belgian embassy. The Iraqis were embroiled in their own internal

political struggles--and with revolutionary Iran. The year I joined the SITREP was the year Saddam Hussein shoved aside the army general who had fronted for the Ba'athist regime, using the pretext that the general was in ill-health (not true). He was moved aside as Saddam exploited a non-existent Syrian plot to eliminate potential rivals on the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, trotting out the entire council to witness personally the execution of the plotters, so that the blood would be on everyone's hands. It was very much along the lines of Stalin's artful, but utterly brutish, purges. So, I saw Iraq turn from an internally tormented radical state lunging out occasionally to wreak terror against its own dissidents abroad, generally not other people, supporting occasional pokes at the Israelis in south Lebanon through the ALF, and scrapping with the Iranians increasingly, into Persian Gulf regional power that would seize a piece of the world stage in a war that potentially threatened a substantial chunk of the world's oil supplies.

Q: When you start looking at Iraq, what did we feel about Soviet ties to Iraq?

WHITE: I worked hard on that issue because USSR-Iraqi ties were so close before and during the Iraq-Iran War. I prepared a number of INR assessments and one lengthy Intelligence Research Report (IRR). I believe the IRR already has been partially declassified, with my assistance. I had to look over various products of mine for declassification purposes all the way up to 1985 by the time I left. There was a huge Soviet presence in Iraq, another hindrance to our relations with them. There were virtually 3,000 Soviet advisors in the country, say, in 1980. But there was something very interesting about that. Although Saddam literally modeled himself virtually on Stalin, reading about both Stalin and Hitler, and behaving quite methodically in his repression, he was paranoid about the Soviet presence in Iraq. So, when the Soviets went into Afghanistan in 1980 to defend a frail new Communist regime, giving the Soviets the excuse to intervene there, he reacted quickly and violently against Iraqi communists, who had been affiliated with the government, along with a couple of other leftist parties, to make the regime look less monolithic. Very shortly after the invasion of Afghanistan, Saddam turned on and virtually exterminated the Communist Party of Iraq so it could never invite the Soviets into the country on its behalf. That began the gradual downturn in Iraqi-Soviet relations.

Q: Well then the Iran-Iraq war started. From the INR point of view, your point of view, how did we view this? What was happening?

WHITE: Well first of all, I will freely admit to being one of the few people in the intelligence community who didn't believe it was going to happen until it was almost upon us. I will explain. I thought that if Iraq went to war against Iran because of these rising tensions (in part, a rise in terrorism inside of Iraq by Iranian backed groups, such as an assassination attempt against Tariq Aziz and an attack on the funeral for students who were near Tariq Aziz). I thought the Iraqis would be very reluctant to go to war because the Iranians had an American trained air force which was quite intimidating, Iraq's majority Shia population was of untested reliability, Iran was three times the size of Iraq, and it had over double the population. I even used the analogy of the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, being drawn into a massive quagmire and getting in well over their heads. Finally, and our Iran analyst agreed, a conflict with Saddam would reinvigorate Khomeini's revolution at a time when it was flagging. But I finally realized Saddam was going to do this foolish thing about 36 hours before it happened, and went over to

the other side, writing a stark warning memorandum on a hot Sunday afternoon. Once the war started, everything I had noted as potential problems for Iraq in such a war locked in and started playing out, with only one exception: the vast majority of Iraq's Shia would fight -- perhaps not for Saddam -- but for their country and against Khomeini's vision.

Q: What was your opinion of why Saddam did this?

WHITE: He stumbled into it in a thuggish manner. People often mischaracterize this moment in time. So many books that have been written, with a lot of amateurs leaping onto the Iraq journalistic stage -- or many Iranians, who not only believe he planned the war as it unfolded, but that the U.S. egged Saddam on. Really good scholars and experienced former U.S. government officials who were there don't subscribe to this, but much of the literature out there on this period of time claims that Saddam went into Iran with certain clearly defined ambitions. This just isn't true. There was a simmering, steady rise in Iraqi-Iranian tension, with violence on both sides. Artillery barrages in early September 1980 were the culmination of a ladder of escalation. Finally, Saddam got sick of it, and being the thug he was, interpreting the situation from a thug's perspective, thought the Iranians needed a big punch in the chops. He even thought a good, strong blow along the border might humiliate and topple the Khomeini regime. But he wasn't thinking in terms of all-out war.

So he threw in a bunch of air strikes against Iranian airfields and cautiously moved some of his army divisions into Iran in three areas. But far from planning a war, he didn't even have his army deployed completely to the border. Much of the army was still in garrison, which supports an impulsive, rather than planned, act. Well, the Iranians decided to make this a war, and started bombing Iraqi economic targets, like petrochemical plants in the south. Then, using their far larger navy and access to the Persian Gulf, cut off his oil exports from the south (the majority of the flow). Saddam panicked. On day two of the war, he announced, in essence: "Fighting should not involve economic targets, and if Iran stop air attacks against such targets right now, we will not retaliate." He was really scared that he had stumbled into a major war. His offer regarding economic targets--a sign of weakness--only encouraged the Iranians to keep it up. Then he moved his entire army up to the border (as did the Iranians), hit back at economic targets, and an 8-year all-out war was started.

Q: Well how did we see the Iranians? Was this seen in a way as a good thing with the Khomeini regime and all? I mean there is nothing like a war to unite people and all.

WHITE: No, people were almost to a man or woman inside the Department were appalled by what was happening because there were so many potential consequences, such as the adverse impact on the availability and price of oil, and a belief that this would indeed strengthen the Khomeini's regime. You also have to remember that the hostage crisis was still ongoing, so people were still very upset over the potential impact on that situation. But, more than anything else, people were watching the oil. The production of the world's second largest oil producer, Iraq, had largely been eliminated by the Iranian blockade. The price of oil surged. There was also the first scare that the Iranians might try to close the Strait of Hormuz, something that I remained relatively unconcerned about because it would bring about international intervention against Iran

and cut off Iran's oil exports too. All these phantoms of economic doom, oil market catastrophe, and harm to our hostages were floating in front of people, so the outbreak of this war was viewed with great consternation. Again, this attitude should be noted when the ill-informed or agenda-oriented argue that Washington pushed Iraq into attacking Iran.

Q: At the beginning of this how did we have at your side a military analyst, in other words a military analyst who was looking at this and where it goes.

WHITE: Analytically, I was well-positioned for all this because I became the military analyst, for all intents and purposes. As a military buff, with hundreds of volumes on WWI and WWII under his belt and walked battlefields, I was in my element. Essentially, the Iran-Iraq War was as some have described it: World War One with tanks. Actually, there were tanks in World War One, but not like the ones fielded since the late 1930's. To understand this huge land conflict, one had to break out of the analytic mindset of too many military analysts, who focused far too much on modern weapons systems and far too little in reading a battle map as if one was observing many battles of the Second World War and even a few of the First World War. This problem among the Intelligence Community's regular military analysts diminished over time, partly because some of the missionary work on the part of the pre-Vietnam focused military buffs like me. Not to belabor the point, but when I went on the road repeatedly with CENTCOM's J-2 (a general) and one or two of their military analysts to brief senior Jordanian and Gulf Arab officials, I frequently had to refine the CENTCOM military briefings. A case in point is a MSNBC military analyst, retired Lt. Col. Rick Francona, who I coached as a young officer on one of those trips; he was a terrific guy with a keen analytic mind, and grasped the unique nature of the conflict very quickly.

It was fairly easy, given my background, the intelligence and reviewing the geographic alignment of the front line and the distribution and movement of forces for me to predict not only what the two sides were up to, but also to predict the outcome of many engagements. Essentially, the Iraqis went into Iran, gained pieces of some territory, not enough to make a difference (i.e. in weakening Iran strategically), and then just sat on their gains. They made virtually no attempt to better align their holdings. By not doing so, they left their forces in several dangerously exposed salients. Then the Iranians moved against them, learning as they went, in well-planned battles of encirclement. The Iraqi learning curve, in those first two years, was poor, so like a blundering, punch-drunk boxer getting beaten up by a far more agile opponent. They lost most of those gains and tens of thousands of prisoners to the Iranians during a series of well-planned Iranian counterattacks during 1981-1982.

Q: One I've heard said in INR you have got a war, a traditional war going on. If you are going to have good intelligence, it is fine to have somebody who knows the battlefields and all this, but at the same time I would think that INR would want to have somebody who understood logistics, order of battle. It seems, you are pointing to yourself but it seems if INR is going to do its job, it should have somebody who is a real military expert, because there are things about the capabilities of the Iraqi Mirages versus F-15's or whatever. Anyway you know what I am saying. Somebody who is a real military expert coming out of the Department of Defense. Did you have somebody?

WHITE: Good question. We actually had our own people, some very good, but occasionally we would get a DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency) analyst on loan. The reason why I became the military and political analyst for the war, going beyond what told you, is the fact that virtually every single Middle East military analyst had overly focused on one thing, the Arab-Israeli theater of war. They had much less experience relating to what was going on east of there. I had been covering Iraq, and I had been interested in military issues, had actually delved into a lot of military aspects of the Iraq portfolio, even with that little pinky I mentioned before (and a few other fingers as it got more serious), so that I was the expert on a unique battlefield to the east, hitherto largely unexplored territory for the vast majority of USG military experts. We had a succession of military analysts, a couple of whom felt uncomfortable because I was doing so much on the military side for INR, but none of them brought with them sufficient knowledge of the Iraqi (or Iranian) military. By the time we got into '82-'83-'84, I had been in Iraq, had considerable on the ground experience they didn't have at all. But, again, far too many essentially Levant-oriented Arab-Israeli military experts, which came as no surprise since that was so active up until then. One in particular sort of groused about my involvement, but that wasn't my problem. It was between George Harris (or the INR Director) and their bosses, and when it went up to the Front Office that one time -- first to INR Director Hugh Montgomery, as I recall -- it was basically: "Leave Wayne alone." And then there were others who didn't really want to do what I was doing: "I am the Arab-Israeli guy, so you take that Iraq stuff, Wayne," and if you recall during the early years of the Iran-Iraq War, we had pretty serious developments taking place on the Arab-Israeli front, especially in Lebanon. The military side of INR needed -- in a very small shop -- an analyst giving those developments his or her undivided attention. So we specialized.

Q: Well one of the things you would think, by the time this war was started, the Iranian army had been trained I would assume in American military techniques, where the Iraqi army had been trained in Soviet military techniques which I am told was generally dig in and wait for winter.

WHITE: Oh, yes, Soviet training was obvious, generally detrimental, and the Iraqis had no Zhukov. They were hellishly ponderous. We saw amazing things take place on the ground. I remember one engagement early in the war in southern Iran in which one Iranian self propelled artillery company held off an Iraqi armored division. The Iranians were on a slight rise, well dug in, and were pounding away at the Iraqis, and at the end of the engagement, fairly prolonged (the better part of a full day), the company finally withdrew. The company didn't appear to lose much of anything, while the Iraqis lost scores of armored vehicles. The Iraqis never thought of flanking the Iranians. They just stood in front of them and tried to slam away at them even though these guys were in good cover and could sweep the battlefield with fairly accurate fire. Going back to Sinai for something related, one Israeli liaison officer who served in the '73 war told me he was a forward artillery observer when the Iraqis showed up belatedly on the Golan front. He said it was stunning. He was on a ridge with two enlisted men manning a radio. They had been warned of the Iraqis approaching by their superiors, but he said it was night at the time, and they couldn't see anything, even using night scopes, through heavy dust, compounded by a fog as dawn broke. The sun suddenly cut through the fog at about 6:00 A.M., and below him in lines as if they were on a parade ground was an Iraqi armored brigade. Naturally, he started calling in artillery. Within two hours the Iraqis had lost a hundred vehicles.

And this is what I was observing in about the first 20 months of the war, ponderous, foolhardy and unimaginative tactics. The thing that stunned the Iraqis so badly when you talk about American training was the proficiency of the Iranian regulars with self propelled guns, tanks, etc., but even more startling, aircraft. F-14 Tomcats, F-4's, and F-5's. Two of the three superior to the Iraqis, training superior, and running rings around them. Now, admittedly the Iranians didn't have a lot to go around beyond, say, the first two years of war. A lot of aircraft were wearing out for lack of parts But there was a lot of pain involved when the Iraqis went up against a pretty decent third world air force -- something they were not in terms of proficiency and improvisation. Saddam had been so suspicious of internal dissent and opposition that he permitted none of his pilots to go to the Soviet Union to get the superior training offered there. The Soviets had to come to Iraq without everything they had at the Soviet Union's favorite training bases and train them there. So the Iraqis got a second-rate Soviet training. The same thing went for the tank crews. The final kicker was that for years Saddam, self-promoted to "Staff Field Marshall" and having had no military training whatsoever, interfered repeatedly -- and often damagingly -- in day to day Iraqi military operations.

Q: Well at a certain point this thing turned into just a plain slugging match where you had the Iranians sort of wasting their youth by these martyr brigades you know. All this coming in. It sounded like World War I on the Russian front where the Russians were attacking and picking up guns from the guys who had fallen because they were just charging up the hill. How did that happen?

WHITE: The great mistake the Iranians made in the war was similar to, fishing here for an historical analogy, to one assumption the Japanese made in the Pacific war. Confronted by increasingly superior U.S. air and naval capabilities, and with amphibious landing forces which outclassed them tremendously to the extent they could deploy (and receive from offshore) devastating firepower and powerful air support, believed that sheer fanaticism could compensate for such conventional imbalance. Khomeini and his clerical colleagues, and some of the revolutionaries around them (also, like Saddam, militarily inexperienced), counted on brute revolutionary willpower driven by religious zeal to even the odds. They neglected the basics -- acquisition of the vast quantities of the heavier tools of war -- believing that it wasn't that necessary to order a lot of tanks and artillery. The Iraqis were ordering like crazy from practically everyone. They were getting as much in the way of heavy weapons as possible. In fact, at times, they should have been focusing more on changing tactics than piling up more military hardware. The Iranians were doing just the opposite, under-ordering seriously, and it usually wasn't a problem related to money.

That said, I was part of something I guess we can get into here, "Operation Staunch," which was aimed at reducing still further the flow of arms and ammunition to Iran. So not only was Iran under-ordering, we were trying our best to block countries from selling to Iran--even basic artillery ammunition. I was very active in my many briefing trips at the highest levels -- and in highly-classified monthly updates that went to governments including Turkey, Egypt, and those previously mentioned -- in pressing this agenda. But we didn't feel any guilt about it because of the hostage crisis, the hostility and the terrorism against us (especially in Lebanon), the deep

seated fear of our Middle East allies, and Khomeini's twisted vision. Anyway the Iranians badly under ordered, regarded will power and Islamic fanaticism as factors that would offset serious disadvantages in materiel. And the longer the war went on, the Iraqis became more proficient and savvy in the use of their heap of equipment. They basically learned the World War I handbook, how to shred incoming infantry formations effectively with multiple lines of trenches into which one could fall back from one to another, all the while decimating Iranian assault forces. In many cases, with all this in place, they simply let the Iranians bash themselves to death against such improved defenses and kill zones.

Finally, at the end of the war in 1988, the Iraqis took the offensive, employing a World War I-style combination of massed artillery and poison gas. In addition, also from the First World War, they adopted what are called Hutier tactics (named after WWI German General Oskar von Hutier), in which one initially avoids attacking the strong points in the enemy line, instead using relatively small groups of elite storm troopers to bypass and strike deep, using these specially trained infantry units in haze of gas and artillery fire to isolate Iranian frontline units by tearing up communications, overrunning headquarters, etc. Most people think the German storm troopers as the Nazi brown shirts of the 1930's, but these street bullies, many of them World War I veterans, were named after the elite storm trooper battalions that began appearing in the Imperial German Army in 1917.

Q: In the first place were we looking at Iran, there was the military situation, but I suppose the thing that really concerned us was the internal dynamics within Iran during this time, because Iran had become the enemy and we were afraid of the spread of Khomeini's radical Islam and all of that. What were we seeing as this war developed inside of Iran?

WHITE: We saw an increase in the strength of the clerical regime as it fed off the war, especially in the early years. It quickly devastated its enemies in vicious purges of various leftist elements that helped Khomeini come to power. The main focus of U.S. attention with respect to Iran was, as with most of the rest of the international community, to make sure the Iraqis checkmated Iran on land. The other focus on our hostages in Lebanon (beyond January 1981) was one that would lead the Reagan Administration down the path into the Irangate minefield, basically giving them arms to fight their war against Iraq, but a pitiable little amount that I knew (once I found out about it after the fact) would mean very little in the overall military equation, in order to buy enough favor to release hostages. The Israelis in my consultations with them during the war period successfully used some money, under the table, in an effort to protect the large Jewish community in Iran. There is still a large Jewish community there. It bought such good will with the Iranians with respect to Iranian Jews that at one point late in the war, according to a conversation I had with the Israeli Defense Ministry's Uri Lubrani, the Israelis were asked to reduce levels of this aid by Jews in Iran because they thought they were being treated better than ordinary Iranians!

Q: Well were you aware of these things? I mean the Iran gate business and in a way the whole Israeli connection to Iran I imagine would be compartmented off from you.

WHITE: I became aware, after the fact, of what the Israelis were up to at one point very early in

the war merely because I accidentally saw, sometime later, a relevant file while looking for something else in another INR office. However, what I discovered was that the Israelis were, only very briefly, given a very iffy OK of sorts (I will explain "iffy" in a moment) to sell a small quantity of U.S. manufactured military items already in their possession to the Iranians. But that preliminary -- and very tentative -- U.S. response was very quickly reversed by, I believe, Al Haig. Regarding what had happened earlier, the Israelis essentially pestered us, and somebody gave them something like a "well we probably will let you do it" (i.e. not a real OK). Yet, the Israelis lunged forward with their scheme, with the U.S. changing its mind shortly thereafter -- and angrily -- because a full and formal authorization to go ahead had not actually been given in the first place.

The Irangate thing hurt me very personally. I was one of the main officials working on "Operations Staunch," and I cannot recall how many times I was asked by Arab foreign ministers, defense ministers, etc. to assure them that we were not giving anything to Iran. At the time (1983-1986), I was unaware of any such thing, and gave them assurances, in good faith, that we were not doing anything along those lines. The last major Iraq-related meeting I had abroad in the Arab world before changing portfolios to become Deputy Chief of NESAs Arab-Israeli Division in 1986, finally dropping the Iraq portfolio, was a meeting with King Hussein of Jordan, a wonderful man. The Jordanian Prime Minister also was there, as was the Crown Prince, Foreign Minister. One main point of the meeting was for me to persuade King Hussein to persuade Saddam Hussein to give us boxes of defused munitions that had been fired into Iraqi lines by the Iranians so that we could examine them and get a better fix on how to block munitions shipments to Iran.

We had had considerable success up to this point in "Operation Staunch" and very much wanted to sustain the momentum. It was, however, sad in a way (with respect to our reputation) because probably for every dollar's worth of stuff Ollie North sent the Iranians, I (and others) had stopped fifty or perhaps even 100 dollars worth from getting through. But that didn't mean much of anything after Irangate. It was all: "No, you were doing this behind our backs all the time -- lying to us." But anyway in that last meeting around November 1, 1986 that I had with King Hussein, I did persuade him to call Saddam, and Saddam agreed to the shipments of defused munitions. Within days of my return to the United States, Irangate blew wide open. I was devastated. More than that, I was the source of several angry messages from King Hussein to President Reagan saying, in effect: "Your envoy assured me that this wasn't going on. I believed all of that. And I tried to help, even calling Saddam." He certainly had, and was deeply embarrassed for evidently passing along our false assurances. It was really a shame on a personal level, too, because I had gotten the impression that we had really bonded, Hussein and I. I became, effectively, the scape goat in Jordan for the U.S. blunder. And those relatively small shipments that had been sent to the Iranians discredited so much work that, in the military balance, meant so much more. The U.S. never seems to exhaust ways in which to squander goodwill. I suppose, with respect to credibility lost in this affair, a line from, I believe, a routine done by comedian Steve Martin applies to U.S. actions: "How I turned a million dollars of real estate into \$25 in cash..."

Q: Well I think this is a good place to stop. We are talking about your time in the Iran-Iraq War, and outside of just a brief mention of Irangate and King Hussein and how you were discredited

there. I wonder if next time you would talk about the trips you made, and what you were gathering from your contacts, also information you were getting from our intelligence agencies, the CIA, NSA and all, and how good these were. I mean where they were going, and also during this Iran-Iraq business, did you see a greater and greater tilt for Iraq, and was this disquieting and were we taking a look at the long term consequences and all. And also about the Arab-Israeli invasion of Lebanon and all of that. There are a lot of things to do. If you want to in your mind arrange all of this, but that is where we will be going.

WHITE: Yes, I wanted to, this to relate to Iran at some point, even if backhandedly by reference to the terrorism it backed in Lebanon. While I was covering Iraq and Iran, I also was the backup analyst for Syria (yes, I know, INR is a REALLY small operation). In fact, during a wedding leave on the part of our Syrian Analyst the great Hama uprising occurred in Syria, and I had to step up to the plate on that front for a couple of weeks, so that shows how I had to commit to other things and work on other accounts, making everything that much more hectic. But covering Iran also drew one into matters involving Lebanon because of the presence of Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard presence in Lebanon (and Syria), related hostage taking in Lebanon, the bombing our embassy and 241 Marines -- all bearing Iranian fingerprints to one degree or another.

Q: I think we can continue on. What were we talking about. We were talking about Iran-Iraq war. You are following this. How did you find, I mean in the first place, how was the intelligence coming in, and what did you use?

WHITE: That's a fair question. The intelligence was actually, if I was to rate it against other targets, not going into any sensitive details that haven't made their way into what we call "the open source world," rather good. When we are talking about how the armies were aligned, the ebb and flow of events (and military intent on the part of both parties), especially, again, on the military side of the Iran-Iraq War equation, it was not all that difficult to get enough intelligence to do the job. When you have massive forces in the field, you can detect them and follow them.

Q: We had satellites.

WHITE: Yes we did. The thing that is always hard to get is information on issues of intent within the senior leadership of both warring parties. This has always been the case, in various matters I covered in INR, whether it was Iranian, Iraqi, Israeli, Libyan or Syrian: getting information on exactly what the leader and key members of his government will do is consistently the most difficult thing to break into. In fact, as an aside relating to my coverage of Syria in the Arab-Israeli Division, in, I believe, 1986 there were reports that something extraordinary was going to be done by Hafez al-Assad. I won't go into details. Anyway, CIA concluded that the information was bad, but the embassy corroborated it from another source, and something had to be sent up by way of a warning to Secretary Schultz pretty urgently. I assessed that, contrary to CIA's conclusion, that the information is absolutely correct. The problem was that what we got was only a brief slice of the story." Assad had a temper tantrum and in the midst of a temper tantrum ordered something or said he would do something that was entirely out of character and potentially very politically self destructive. Since it was just a brief temper tantrum it would

never happen. It never did. So even when you do get a glimpse inside the leadership loop, the results from that access can be highly misleading because it is fragmentary.

Q: During the war, how were you seeing getting information and all, what were the power centers in Iran. Who were calling the shots or testing each other?

WHITE: I will give you two anecdotes. Various subordinate power centers within the Iranian leadership didn't matter very much back in the 80's. There was one all-powerful center of the revolutionary government: Khomeini. He truly dominated the scene. If anyone did something that was at variance with what Khomeini wanted, they were smacked down. We found this out very early on in the hostage crisis when there were a lot of little feelers from Iran at lower levels that we were involved and which gave certain State Dept. officials unwarranted hope that the American hostages were going to be released much earlier. In the end, only the old man would make that calls.

Q: You are talking about the embassy hostages.

WHITE: Exactly. I am talking about the 1979-1981 affair that, because Khomeini personally wanted to humiliate Jimmy Carter, wasn't resolved in the hours after Ronald Reagan's inauguration on 20 January 1981. There were all these odd little things going on like the Iranian foreign minister meeting with our people in disguise in Europe. NEA and others were becoming very hopeful because of these meetings whereas INR, and I won't take credit for this, our Iran Analyst Steve Grumman in particular, maintained that such talks were probably of no value. Khomeini, in repeated statements, had indicated there was no give -- no give, unless we made a long line of concessions, including the release of Iranian property, all the things we had done to retaliate, apologies, etc. NEA Asst. Sec. Hal Saunders apparently became angry and actually called over my boss and our Iran analyst to give them a piece of his mind. Hal is a wonderful man, but he had been under terrible pressure, and probably just lost it that one time. "You keep saying everything we are doing is worthless. You have a negative attitude. This isn't helping anything," etc.

Well everything the USG was doing on that front soon fell apart. The Iranian foreign ministry channel collapsed, and Hal, being the honorable man he is, did something that is unusual in high levels of government; he called over my boss and Steve and apologized, saying, in effect: "I will be thankful in the future to listen to anything you have to say because clearly we were completely off base, you were right on target, and I apologize for what I said in that previous meeting."

Another example of Khomeini calling the shots came toward the middle of the war. Hashemi Rafsanjani, who would eventually become president of Iran, and then a defeated presidential candidate in the runoff with Ahmadinejad, made a statement that hinted of negotiating with Baghdad. The Iranians captured a significant piece of territory inside Iraq within the southern marshes in 1984 called the Majnoon Islands. These "islands" were artificial dry areas created in the marshes for oil exploration --the water had been pumped out of these areas that were below water level after they had been walled off by earthen berms in huge squares forming artificial islands of a sort to protect oil derricks. The Iranians moved in and seized the islands in a

lightning assault with speed boats. After their fall, Rafsanjani made a public statement that we all immediately recognized was very significant, saying these islands will be useful bargaining chips in future talks with the Iraqis. We knew Rafsanjani was a pragmatist, but we were amazed by the statement because Khomeini had said there weren't going to be any talks with the Iraqi government. One of his war aims was the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime. Within hours, Khomeini spoke out, utterly denouncing anyone who would even think of negotiating with the Iraqi regime. He just smacked Rafsanjani right down. Any variance from Khomeini's singular mind and stark goals was immediately beyond the pale and designated as such. Khomeini, of course, following terrible military reverses in 1988, would be forced to swallow the bitter poison of being compelled to negotiate with that same Iraqi regime, but not until perhaps another 200,000 troops were killed or wounded on both sides.

Q: Well were you seeing , I imagine here I mean obviously you have got a war going on the military side and the military intentions are so very important. How about on the defense side, defense intelligence did you see. How did they work. I mean were they seeing, because they had to understand where Khomeini was coming from because for all intents and purposes he was the supreme commander.

WHITE: Right. You mentioned earlier when I was talking about how easy in many ways it was for me to address the Iran-Iraq War analytically if one had studied WWI and WWII. You said something like, "Yes, but there are a lot of analysts who have to help you by dealing with weapons systems and things that maybe I was not up on." I dealt continually with DIA in particular, and they had almost an obsession with the relative quantities of military hardware on the two sides, which often drew them off beam during, say, the first 12-18 months of the conflict, as to its likely flow on the battlefield. We call that "bean counting." It doesn't take sufficient account of factors such as morale, battlefield tactics, and proficiency with those weapon systems. As late as a year into the war, they (and CIA) counted all the hardware on the two sides and concluded that Iraq was going to make additional conquests, which of course never happened in those early years of the war. Over time, amounts of materiel on the two sides did begin to count more heavily in the equation -- and very much in Iraq's favor. I could see this as Khomeini continued to bank too heavily on revolutionary fervor rather than ordering enough of the necessary military hardware to sustain a modern war effort, while the Iraqis were frantically ordering and ordering more and more heavy weaponry. The disparity between the two sides in major weapons systems got so out of whack that the Iraqis, learning some more advanced infantry tactics in particular that I mentioned, were finally able to really punish the Iranians on the battlefield and seize the initiative. But early on in the war DIA and CIA were predicting more victories for Iraq, well after the Iraqis had ground to a halt, pretty much because the Iraqis simply had more tanks, etc.

Q: Well were you seeing in the say of at least the majority of the major part of the war sort of a triumph of American training and tactics or not, or was it a more indigenous?

WHITE: It was a combination of both. The Iranians dominated the war on the ground for the first 18 months and for nearly seven years held the initiative, with the Iraqis effecting a stunning reverse only in the last year of the war. But Tehran had badly weakened its forces by not ordering

the necessary hardware, grinding down their military's valuable human resources, suffering immense numbers of casualties, with cadres replacing them who were less well trained and had possessed of less zeal. Initially, it was clear that American training had put the Iranians in an advantageous position in certain areas. In fact, initially, we even underestimated the effect of our training in that respect. This is because there is always that tendency to look down upon Third World militaries and say "Ah, they can't do it nearly as well as we can." That is probably true in many cases, but what they can do is quite sufficient in certain situations. This is the sort of the thing that happened in 1956 (much written about) in which Nasser seized the Suez Canal and once the crisis was over everyone said, "So what, he won't be able to run it anyway." The Egyptians ran it just fine.

Q: How about our military analysts? Were they kind of looking at American versus Soviet equipment and all? I mean was there a certain amount of ??? Particularly at the beginning of seeing American equipment being so much better than Soviet equipment or not?

WHITE: Oh sure there was a lot of that. In the Iran-Iraq case it diminished, however, because when you got to two, three, four years into the war, the Iranians could of course get only very limited parts for their American-made weapon systems. They couldn't even get parts for civilian airliners from us because they were cut off utterly, and deserved to be the way they were behaving. Iran's U.S.- related inventory just kept grinding down through attrition as they shifted into ordering from the Chinese and other overseas sellers, replacing American equipment with substandard "equivalents" of Eastern Bloc design. By the end of the conflict, probably well more than half of their American-origin equipment (tanks, heavy artillery, self propelled artillery, and aircraft) was gone, and, as I noted earlier, they fell far behind in replacing these relative to the Iraqis.

Q: What about the Stark incident? Can you describe what that was and how did we view that at the time?

WHITE: Well I don't think anyone viewed it as anything more than an accident.

Q: You might explain what it was.

WHITE: Sure. Because Iraqi oil had been cut off while Iran continued to export from her terminals out in the Persian Gulf, something the Iraqis thought of as quite unfair, the Iraqis opened what we called the "Tanker War." The main Iranian offshore terminal, unfortunately for Iran, was within only perhaps 80 miles or so of the Iraqi coast. So the Iraqis acquired Super Etendard aircraft from France, not the U.S., mind you -- yet another Western country trying to bolster the Iraqis against the Iranians. These aircraft launched Exocet sea-skimming anti-ship missiles. So starting with the Super Etendard and then later improving with a much more advanced French aircraft that delivered the same weapon, the Iraqis started going ship-hunting in the Gulf in 1984, hammering tankers that were on the way to Iran's Kharg Island facility, bombing the Kharg Island facility itself, and attacking other Iranian-bound merchant shipping via missiles or mine-laying. But people kept lifting oil there. Oil prices were high enough that despite the increased insurance rates, tankers kept loading at Kharg as long as Kharg's facilities

remained even partly operational. Some of these people were wildcat lifters and taking a lot of risk. Anyway, the Iraqis had a problem -- the Iranians had direct access to Gulf shipping lanes to which they were denied.

Now, let's go back to the Stark. There was a fear factor involved in firing the Exocet missile at a ship. In order to get a solid missile lock on the target, you released the missile about 30 miles away from the target using locking radar on the attacking aircraft itself. You had to wait, guiding the missile, as you remained in the area marking time (the military calls it loitering) until the sea skimming missile got within about five kilometers, which is darn close, to the intended maritime target. Then the missile's own short-range radar got a final lock and sent a signal back to the aircraft that no further assistance was required. What the Iraqi pilots were doing, with Iranian aircraft frequently scrambling against them, would be to leave the area before the aircraft had fully guided the missile to the point at which the missile itself locked onto the target. In this situation, the missile would go wandering around a portion of the Gulf looking for a target, which often wasn't the intended target.

So sometimes the missiles would do some pretty crazy things. For example, there is a lot of controversy surrounding the Iranian nuclear infrastructure right now and Iran's nuclear intentions. Well, Iran's first nuclear plant was practically right on the Gulf at Bushehr, not too far from Kharg Island. The Bushehr reactor had a high dome profile. The dome was being constructed before the machinery was being installed. One of the sea skimming missiles hit the nuclear reactor dome. Why? Missiles went for a high radar profile, which is why all the tankers were hit in the rear. A tanker is a long flat vessel with a big superstructure in the rear, so the sea skimmer would go toward the rear. It was mainly designed to destroy warships, because of their smoke stacks, bridge, radars, etc., created the highest profile in the center of the vessel. But the tanker was not an ideal target for this missile. It always hit the rear. With respect to the Stark, what happened was that one of these Iraqi aircraft went down into the Gulf tanker-hunting, released its sea skimmer at a tanker, and bugged-out before it got his final missile lock. The missile went wandering and found the U.S. destroyer Stark which was hit and very badly damaged. There were lots of casualties. But it was an example of Iraqi military sloppiness, not nefarious intent. I worried about the Stark and our other ships in the Gulf before this happened. I used to go and brief when I was doing briefings for the GCC our naval commander in the Gulf. It is now the fifth fleet. It had a different name in those days: COMIDEASTFOR.

Q: Well tell me about, we are talking about the whole Iran-Iraq war period right now. Tell me about how you were used both in Washington but also these briefings. What were you up to?

WHITE: The Gulf States felt very much threatened and wanted to know keep track of what was transpiring. They wanted to know what the danger was of an Iran breakthrough, an Iraqi defeat, etc. Those were their major concerns. But, of course, the Tanker War, arriving on their front doorstep, became another in 1984. So we would brief them on the overall war situation. They wanted me because they wanted to get a bead on the political situation, the economic situation, how was Iraq holding up under all this, the status of our efforts under "Operation Staunch" to reduce weapons, ammunition and spare parts shipments to Iran. There was clearly a fear that Iraq would buckle at some point and of Iranian retaliation against them for their support of Iraq.

Q: Well did you go out very often?

WHITE: It was a twice per year exercise which sometimes got bumped up to a three times per year exercise by something extraordinary, like the 1982 tiff I told you about involving flawed intelligence analysis, which got the Saudis, quite justifiably, upset and panicky. The briefing flow could be very unusual at times: when I was in Kuwait once, in 1985 I believe, the Kuwaiti defense minister found out in the course of chit-chat on the margins of our briefing that I had been asked by NEA to travel to Iraq and take soundings on the economic situation because Washington was a little bit uncertain about its implications for Iraq's staying power. He asked me to return to Washington via Kuwait and also brief him as well. Now, that was rather bizarre first for me. I had to go back to NEA and INR and say, "Am I allowed to take orders from a minister of a foreign government involving USG travel funds?" Jim Placke, who was a good friend of mine and the deputy assistant secretary in NEA who covered Gulf issues, and very well I might add, said: "Sure, why not. We can hardly refuse." NEA even decided to put up the money for the whole extra leg of the trip. So I went up on behalf of both NEA and Sheik Salem and conducted an economic survey of inflation, availability of goods, Iraq debt, and matters like that, which, quite frankly, took me a bit deeper into the world of economics than was usually the case, but the embassy helped a lot. Then I returned and dutifully reported back to Sheik Salem at his lavish beachfront residence. Actually because we had been quite frank with these governments, the instructions were exactly what I wanted to do: "Go ahead and give him the full scoop on the situation" (the bottom line of which was that Iraq was still in a fairly robust economic situation).

Q: We must have been looking at the role of Ayatollahs or the ayatollah in Iran as this war continued. I mean the flower of their youth was being thrown away on the battlefield and all that. Particularly I was thinking of cities with the university students and the upper classes and all. I mean the religious rulers must have been under a certain amount of strain or threat or something of losing the mandate of their people or something like that.

WHITE: It is actually amazing that we saw very little indication of that. The Iranian population supported the regime pretty much blindly in what was perceived as a defensive war and, to many when the revolution was much fresher, sort of a holy cause. At least that is the way it appeared to us. Perhaps most people--especially so-called opinion-makers--who would have thought more the way you and I might have in this situation had fled into exile after the fall of the Shah. Much of the western-educated elite was in exile. The average Iranian, as I said before, perceived this much as Russians perceived WWII--as the "Great Patriotic War," even though a grave mistake had been made by their leadership at a point in 1982 when Iran had expelled Iraq from most all of its territory, but chose not to end the war. Most every Iraqi foothold in Iran, which were at some point quite extensive, had been eliminated. The big question was: does Iran press on with the war to destroy Saddam's regime, or does Iran stand down and say enough, you know, because of the bloodshed? Khomeini made the decision that it was not enough, and wanted to destroy Saddam and his regime. It was the most spectacular strategic mistake he ever made. Yet, the population to the end of the war, in the main, supported him. He didn't seem to have any trouble recruiting people to go to the front and die for the cause, supposedly securing a ticket to paradise through martyrdom. The flow of recruits never stopped. What changed, though, was their quality, well-

trained regular army types were decimated, along with some erosion in fervor even among elite Revolutionary Guard units. Some of the quality we saw in early military units was diluted and diminished by massive losses.

Q: Let's talk about the end game. What were sort of the warning signs or something when you say, were we calling it and seeing Iraq gaining the upper hand? How did we see it and how did it play out?

WHITE: It came fairly quickly. In 1987 the Iranians launched a major offensive to try to take Basra for like the fifth time. The Iraqi response to that, for the first time, showed more tactical flexibility, and it was a large enough battle to showcase in a bigger way their proficiency with the armor and artillery that they had been accumulating and the bankruptcy of Iran's wasteful infantry assaults. The Iranians showed themselves as being somewhat worn down. The Iranians suffered perhaps their most lopsided offensive reverse. That got people's attention. But all in all, observers didn't see the Iraqis using tactics that were sufficiently clever or really moving decisively to the offensive in order to really change the character or course of the war. But then we did get some indications that the Iraqis had developed more advanced infantry tactics. There was a peninsula in southern Iraq, al-Faw, that had been taken in 1986 by the Iranians--something that really scared the Gulf Arabs because it was between Kuwait and Iraq. In a dramatic offensive in early 1988, employing WWI tactics of heaving in huge amounts of gas and heavy artillery immobilize command centers, key artillery positions, and then rushing forward with specialized storming battalions that were designed to penetrate deeply behind enemy lines, the Iraqis swept through, and retook the al-Faw in 24 hours. It was a stunning reverse for Tehran, and an example of what the Iraqis could do using more advanced tactics.

In fact, this style of warfare is quite brutal and costly. The Iraqis even used some of the same of tactics that were used commonly in late WWI with gas, in which you stacked behind your field guns gas shells on one side, high explosive on the other, and you fired them alternatively (i.e. mustard, high explosive, mustard, high explosive, etc.). Since mustard in particular, a very heavy gas, settled low and lingered in the trenches, the first thing many did when under mustard gas attack was to crawl outside the trenches to get away from the heavier concentrations of the gas, even though you had a mask on, because it could burn your skin. So if the enemy mixes high explosive in, the guys have to jump back in the trenches to escape the high explosive rounds. You get them caught betwixt and between. In addition the high explosive rounds, often because of concussion, would blow off masks and expose people to the gas that much more. The Iraqis learned these lethal but cunning tactics from 1917-1918 and applied them brilliantly (and ruthlessly) at al-Faw. After that it was all over. I remember being in the Hilton Hotel in Kuwait City during the massive exchanges of artillery fire prior to the Iraqi assault and feeling the glass of the sliding door trembling from the intense barrage (about 60 miles away across open water) just as Londoners would know when a major offensive took place in Flanders back in WWI by the rumble from across the channel. The Iraqis had finally found the key to victory, the will to take the offensive, and armed with a massive superiority in heavy weapons -- those kinds of assault tactics backed up by masses of armor and artillery began inflicting on Iran defeat after defeat after defeat.

Q: Was there any collusion or ties with Iran [and Syria] during the Iran-Iraq war?

WHITE: Absolutely. There was a deep hatred between the two regimes. Yes, all the way to the end of the war there was an air bridge between Damascus International Airport and Mehrabad Airport (outside Tehran) in Iran. High value military cargoes that couldn't wait for shipment, often from Europe or the Far East, would fly the hump, skirting Iraq and moving over Turkey into Iran. Many people tried to stop this from happening by getting the Turks to try to block the flights. The Turks didn't want to get involved, so they just let it continue. But, yes, Syria was an active supporter of Iran. The only other country in the Arab world with a similar orientation was Libya; Qadhafi supported Iran for various bizarre reasons, but not to the extent Syria did. In any case, it kept going on and on. The Iraqis only tried to interfere with that air bridge once. You would think, as an Iraqi, "Lets pick off one of these jumbo jets full of high tech parts for Iranians," and they did -- once. In 1982, the Iraqis lunged into that stream and pickled one plane. It is amazing how bad your luck can be at certain times.

Q: When you say pickled a plane what do you mean?

WHITE: Sent an air to air missile right up its tailpipe and blew it up. This is a military expression I picked up from those CENTCOM people I used to travel with so much. But of all the planes to nail going between Damascus and Tehran, they destroyed an executive jet, not a cargo plane, containing the Algerian foreign minister conducting shuttle diplomacy in an effort to produce truce in the Iran-Iraq War. Of all planes to hit, I mean it was probably a one in a thousand mistake. After that the Iraqis just forgot about doing anything about the Syrian-Iranian air bridge. And, yes, things like the air bridge just increased the bitterness between Assad and Saddam.

LOUISE TAYLOR
Afghan, Pakistan Desk Officer, USIA
Washington, DC (1980)

Ms. Taylor was born and raised in Illinois and educated at Wellesley College, George Washington University and Boston University. After joining the Foreign Service of USIA, Ms. Taylor served in Washington and abroad in the field of Cultural and Information. Her foreign posts include Moscow, Kabul, Tel Aviv and Rabat. She also served in Washington as USIA Desk Officer for Afghanistan/Pakistan and for South Asia and as Policy Officer for Eastern Europe and Newly Independent States. Ms. Taylor was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: You came back to Washington and took Dari. What is the difference between Dari and Farsi?

TAYLOR: Dari and Farsi are very close. They're virtually the same language. To my ear, there is a different inflection in the pronunciation of the vowels. Speaking from sort of a parochial standpoint, I think that Dari has a much more beautiful sound to it than Iranian Farsi, which has a

flatter sound. Just to boil the difference down to one vowel sound, the word for the pronoun “I” in Dari is “Ma.” In Farsi, it’s more of a “Mac” sound. But the languages are interchangeable. There is a difference of vocabulary words, but the languages are interchangeable. There is a difference of vocabulary words, but the peoples of both countries can understand each other. When I went to Iran after studying Dari for seven months, I had difficulty the first three or four days I was there. Had I stayed there, had I been assigned to Iran, I would have been able to make the adjustment quite easily. The script is the same. The word “Dari” comes from Darius, the great Persian king. Afghans will tell you that their language, Dari, was the language of the court of Darius, whereas “Those Iranians just speak this peasant-type Farsi.” By the way, FSI in Rosslyn at the time, our Dari teacher, who is still at FSI, Hafiz Latify, was probably the best teacher of any subject I have ever had anywhere. Other students of Hafiz’s will tell you the same thing. He is a natural teacher. There is just something unique about his approach. Dari is an easy language. It’s an Indo-European language. After just seven months or so, I got a 3/2+, which was a fairly high grade, but it was because Hafiz made it so easy for me. My reading ability never got much better than that, but my speaking ability in Afghanistan was quite developed after the end of the tour. I credit him for that.

Q: Before December '79, you've got events in '79 culminating in November of '79 in Iran. Was this something you were looking over your shoulder at or was this another country a long way away?

TAYLOR: Remember that the day that Spike was killed was the same day of the initial takeover of the embassy in Tehran, the one day takeover. Then they were released. It was rather quickly found that these two events were not connected. But we were aware all the time of what was going on in Iran and we thought about it. Yet once that initial takeover of the embassy in Iran ended, our focus turned back to ourselves. Little did we know what was going to happen to our colleagues in Iran at the time. The focus was really more on Afghanistan because of the Soviet angle there. That was the lens through which Afghanistan was seen. In the early fall of '79, there was another shoot 'em up in the OK Corral, as we call it, and Hafizullah Amin managed to gun down Taraki. So, they had their little shoot 'em up in Kabul in the palace. It was the PDPA, the same wing of the Communist Party. Hafizullah Amin and Taraki had come into power together in the Sauer Revolution of '78. But by September '79, they literally had a shoot 'em up. It was like a duel and Taraki lost. Amin emerged. That was September of '79, four months before the Soviets invaded, overthrew him, and installed Barak. In parenthesis, Hafizullah Amin was one of our classic failures as a Fulbright exchangee. He had gone to Columbia University and although we loved to tout our Fulbright program and I'm a cultural officer, he did not do very well there. He obviously had negative experiences and he came back with a fairly anti-American approach to life.

Back to September of '79, after Taraki was killed, Amin became increasingly ruthless, which brings us up to November of '79 and the takeover of the embassy in Tehran. You may also remember that almost the same day as the takeover of the embassy in Tehran number two was the attack on the embassy in Pakistan. Five or six people were killed and 80 were almost killed.

Q: To put it in the context of the times, there was the Iran thing and everybody was very goosy

about this. We were evacuating all over the place.

TAYLOR: That's right. We were evacuating all over yet we were keeping people in Kabul. I had sort of forgotten that angle.

Q: While you were in Afghanistan after this, was it apparent to those of you in the embassy of the enormity of what the Soviets had done as far as relations with the United States? Almost up to that point, Jimmy Carter was under the idea that we could do business with the Soviets if we're nice and all of a sudden there was this complete turnaround. Wheat embargo, don't go to the Olympics. It was very hardball. It wasn't so much concern about Afghanistan, but it was what the Soviets had done. Were you aware of how this was playing out in the States?

TAYLOR: I'm not sure. I don't think I was. Again, there was no Herald Tribune. There was no television. There was no English language radio. Most of what I got was from embassy reporting, what was coming in from Washington. During my tour in Moscow I felt that we needed to do everything possible to move closer to the Soviets and we needed to use détente as much as we could and get as much out of it for both sides as we could. I was so mad at them by the time the invasion happened that I became very anti-Soviet for a couple of years afterwards. I know certainly how I felt, but I don't think that I knew how it was playing out in the States. We were so preoccupied with the events of the moment. Things were happening every minute. People were disappearing. We had no idea whether there would be more violence. We lived from day to day to see what new issue would break out the next day. By the time I got back to the States – and my next assignment was in Washington... My father was ill. I came back. I took over the Afghan/Iran desk. After all that, that's what they gave me. Certainly by the time I got back here three months later, I was very aware that things had changed for a long time between us and the Soviets and all the good work I had done in Moscow was out the window and we'd have to start all over again. By the way, when the American hockey team beat the Russians that year, you could have blown the roof off our house. We were so happy. We had Afghans with us that night. We had a little dinner and watched it on television. Nobody thought that the Americans would win.

Q: You left there when?

TAYLOR: I left in late February of 1980. My father died in March.

Q: When you came back, you were assigned where?

TAYLOR: The Office of Near East and South Asian Affairs in USIA. I took over Marilyn McAfee's desk, which was all the basket cases of the world. I used to say that I had Afghanistan, where the Soviets had invaded, Iran with the hostages, Pakistan where they had just sacked our embassy, and the bright spot on my horizon every day was Bangladesh, the only place where we had a normal USIA program going.

Q: To get a feel for how Washington bureaucracy works, here you were, a relatively junior officer holding down a place under very difficult circumstances. Was there much interest in what

you had been doing? Did anybody say, "Well done?"

TAYLOR: Yes, there was a lot of interest. Probably my career got put on the fast track because of that. We were invited to speak at the War College. I was invited a number of times to attend the director's meetings – this was not the State Department, mind you; I was never invited by the State Department to do anything – but through other means we were invited to the War College. My own agency directors and deputies would feature me at various places where they would trot out reasons why we needed more resources. Then after spending six months, maybe a little bit less, as the desk officer for these basket case countries, I was recruited to replace Kenton Keith as the executive assistant to the deputy director of the Agency, who at the time was Charlie Bray. Charlie was then a State Department Foreign Service officer, the spokesman. He became Deputy Director of USIA when John Reinhardt was our Director. So, we had two career people running USIA at that time. Kenton was the executive assistant to Charlie. When Kenton left to go to another assignment, Charlie had seen me in these various fora speaking about what had happened in Afghanistan and how our resources were used and whether they were effective or not, so he asked me to become his executive assistant. To the extent that being in a place with the focus on it helps your career, there is no question but that it helped mine. People knew who I was. That means a lot.

Q: Going to the time you were the desk officer, here you are in Iran, where we had nothing going except... What were you doing about Iran?

TAYLOR: There was nothing from a programmatic point of view that we could do in Iran. But four of the hostages were from USIA. I spent a huge amount of time with those four hostages' families. I traveled to conferences on Iran and spoke about the public affairs perspective, meaning what we had been trying to do in Iran to present the United States perspectives to counter what the Iranians were saying about us at the time of the takeover. I did a lot more domestic work on Iran. There was no work to be done in Iran itself. I got to know a lot of people at the State Department working on Iran. I was part of the Iran Task Force.

Q: I've interviewed Sheldon Kryz.

TAYLOR: He was the executive director for NEA. He was involved in all of the things that I worked for. I was a worker bee. But just to staff a task force like that... There were 50 something hostages and each family had to have a point of contact. I just spent an enormous amount of time with our four families.

Q: How did you find the families reacting to the situation?

TAYLOR: They were all different even among four. There were two families that really were private in their grief, in their concern. They liked to talk to me. They called me a lot and they talked to my boss, but they never came to Washington. They never spoke to the press. But two of our other hostages, John Graves and Barry Rosen... John was our PAO in Tehran and Barry Rosen was the information officer. Their spouses, Bonnie Graves and Barbara Rosen, became quite famous and became the spokespersons for the hostage families. Barbara and Bonnie

traveled in France and appeared on French television and had a lot of things to say about the U.S. government that caused some heartache back here. These were the two USIA spouses who were out of line, it would seem. But they had a point of view. The U.S. government from their perspective was not doing everything it should to get these people back. So, when I said that I spent a lot of time on the hostage families, I didn't know you were going to ask me that kind of question, but one of the reasons that I spent a lot of time was because Bonnie and Barbara were extremely upset and were very active and were very articulate and were in Washington constantly.

Q: There is this obvious frustration, but did they have a point of view on what we should have done or was it just that we weren't doing whatever should have been done?

TAYLOR: I hate to speak for them now after so many years have intervened, but I think one of their points if you went back to their public statements, which they made all the time – they were always interviewed by Dan Rather and Tom Brokaw – they were on the major networks once a week – was that we weren't doing enough internationally, we weren't working with our allies closely enough, that we hadn't pursued every lead, that perhaps we ought to negotiate a little bit more in depth with the Iranians, find out a little bit more about what the Iranians wanted, and somehow find a way to know the students better. I don't mean to say that they were totally estranged from the State Department process. I remember being in plenty of meetings of the Task Force when Bonnie and Barbara were both present. But then afterwards they would come to USIA when we were still on Pennsylvania Avenue and really unload there and let us know that they were going to go out and speak publicly. I remember that their trip to France was quite notable. They met at the very highest levels of the French government and that was all on international television. It was election year in the United States. I had spent my whole career overseas. I had been 10 years overseas. I had never known these things could happen the way they did. So, I learned a lot about the way Washington really folds up its tent and everybody looks inward when something like this happens. Before talking any more about what Bonnie and Barbara were saying, I'd like to go back and look at what they did say, what their points were. I think part of it was that they felt, and this is an honest human reaction, that as time went on the Carter administration was tending to other business and the hostage thing became part of the woodwork, it became part of our everyday scenery, it was never going to change, and that we had somehow learned to live with this. I think that was basically what their message was.

ALFRED H. MOSES
Lawyer, Special Counsel to President Carter
Washington, DC (1980-1981)

Ambassador Moses was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. He received his education from Dartmouth College, Princeton University and the Georgetown University Law School. After service in the US Navy, Mr. Moses joined the Washington, D.C. Law firm Covington and Burling, where he dealt with matters concerning Middle East and Romanian Affairs. Prior to being named

Ambassador to Romania in 1994, Mr. Moses served as Special Counsel to President Carter. He subsequently became Special Presidential Envoy for the Cyprus Conflict. Ambassador Moses was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

MOSES: The Iranian Government was toying with Carter -- raising his hopes and then dashing them. He became, in effect, the real hostage. Indeed, I was with him at the White House the night before the Reagan inauguration. Carter, Warren Christopher, Deputy Secretary of State, and Lloyd Cutler, Counsel to the President, left the party around eight to work on the hostage crisis. The next day the hostages were released because they were no longer of use to the Iranians. They had already served Iran's purpose.

Q: Were you picking up any emanations that Casey or somebody was making deals with the Iranians?

MOSES: I don't think so. Anything is possible, but I had no knowledge of it. I did think that Carter had, inadvertently, made himself a hostage. I tried to tell him that by going for the bait (the Iranians' dangling the prospect of release of the hostages), he had put himself under arrest in the U.S. embassy. He did not understand the political damage to him. He didn't start to campaign until April. That was five months after the take-over of the American Embassy in Tehran. Instead of thumbing his nose at the Iranians, he appeared as a beggar or supplicant. He should have tightened the screws on the Iranians as he did on the Soviet Union when it invaded Afghanistan (for which he didn't get sufficient credit). He should have said to the Iranians, "Don't call until you release the hostages." The political impressions were that he was ineffective, weak, vacillating -- in a word, didn't know how to play it. Reagan was very good at "playing it" and deserves credit for bringing a sense of leadership to the country. In my view, on substance he was dreadful. On substance Carter was better. He did good things once he got to the White House, but he had no sales skills. It was all right when he was running for office, talking about reducing government, bringing people into the White House, a new message, a rejection of Watergate, the whole Nixon legacy, but once he got to Washington, his policies appeared thin and after two years or so, he ran out of juice.

Q: Well were you feeling any problem, because you were concerned with foreign affairs essentially, the Israeli side. Did you get any feeling about not just Carter, but sort of the Georgia mafia around Carter. Were they attuned to this or did you feel they were somewhat tone deaf?

MOSES: They were tone deaf. You had Jody Powell who was press secretary. Jody was good, a smart guy, probably the best of the group. You had Hamilton Jordan who I found to be arrogant, sometimes belligerent, and didn't really know much about building support for the Administration. The Carter team thought he was a political genius, because he had done a good concept paper that helped in the 1976 election. But once he came to Washington, he did not make the transition. He came as a rebel, thumbing his nose at Washington, looking sophomoric.

Q: This is a common trait that crops up again and again. You know, you kind of wish there was a primer of...

MOSES: There was also Jack Watkins, mediocre in talent and ability, but a decent guy. The best of the group from Georgia was Stu Eizenstat who ran domestic policy. Stu was extremely methodical and had a superb staff but sometimes went the wrong way on issues. He was opposed to using military force of any kind in Iran. He was afraid Carter would lose the liberal wing of the Democratic party and Teddy Kennedy would get the nomination. He didn't, in my view, understand that the American people wanted a leader as President. Stu was a superb processor and had a good head for issues. He understood and appreciated the importance of getting along with the Congress, something Carter never adequately faced up to. His congressional relations people were a weak link in the White House. The President and the Congress were at dagger points by the end of Carter's presidency. Carter thought that he could reach out directly to the American people, could go beyond the institutions of government, go beyond structures in the private sector as well, and appeal to the public on the basis of populism. Once he became president, that was no longer an effective way of communicating. There were a lot of Georgia boys in less important positions in the White House. They were generally hostile and not helpful on issues. They were loyal to Jimmy and he probably was loyal to them, but they didn't bring much. They had no world vision. They didn't know how to get things done. Carter's staff, on a one to ten, was somewhere around a three to a four in terms of effectiveness and ability. Except for Eizenstat and, later, Lloyd Cutler, the staff was not up to the job. But Lloyd had his own baggage. He thought he knew more than anybody else. He probably did, but he didn't work cooperatively. He got a lot of face time with the President. In actuality, the President resented Lloyd's pushing all the time, getting into areas that were beyond his competence and his job. He was a wonderful lawyer but made occasional mistakes. On the Billygate matter he had met with Billy. He responded to overtures from Carter to get the Billy issues resolved and didn't see the train wreck down the track. He was more a rain-maker, pontificator, smart but in the end did not serve the President particularly well. Also, the President had problems at State. Cy Vance and the President didn't see things the same. In the end Vance got chewed up by Brzezinski. At Defense he had Harold Brown and Bill Perry, both of whom were outstanding.

Q: Do you have a feeling that on the matters you were dealing with, that Brzezinski was not serving the President well or not? How did you feel about Brzezinski?

MOSES: Well, Zbig is a friend of mine. He and I became good friends after we left the White House. Zbig is one of a kind. I thought his policy positions were half baked, too quickly formulated. He is a terrific wordsmith. He can put words on paper faster than anyone I have ever known. In those days, the public perception of Brzezinski was almost totally negative. In the White House there were two factions: Zbig who was the hard-liner. Then you had Cy Vance who was more of an accommodationist, much more willing to search for areas of agreement than Zbig. You had David Aaron who had previously been on Mondale's staff in the Senate who was not a Zbig hawk. Unfortunately, Zbig got his picture taken pointing a rifle in the Khyber Pass at an imagined enemy (*i.e.*, Soviet troops). Played up in the press, this looked dreadful. When crises occurred, I don't think Zbig was the right go-to person. When the hostages were taken by the Iranian "students," Zbig jumped at Rosalynn Carter's idea to use Billy Carter as the go-between with the Libyans. The Sunday after the hostages were taken, Rosalynn was coming down the stairs from the private quarters in the White House, saw Zbig and suggested, "Maybe Billy's

Libyan friends can help.” Instead of saying, “Hey, that’s a great idea,” and then conveniently forgetting about it, Zbig immediately got hold of Billy. Zbig just responded to what the President wanted. This started the crazy notion of using Billy Carter as an intermediary with the Libyans that later boomeranged and came close to destroying the President.

DAVID M. EVANS
Director, Office of International Security Operations-Iran Hostage Crisis
Washington, DC (1980-1981)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Let’s concentrate on the Central Command, to begin with. When you took over in June 1980, what was the perceived threat?

EVANS: Well, the main threat was the Soviets. The Soviets could go down, swoop down, seeking the warm water and control of the Iranian and Gulf oil. The overarching threat was still seen as Soviet. The subsidiary the problems were Iran and Iraq. But fundamentalist Islam was not seen as the problem that it is now in the context with Iran. Although the Ayatollah had gone back, and had led the effort which resulted in the hostage taking, fundamentalist Islam was not perceived as the threat. It was Soviet and Soviet proxies that were driving this train and we were very concerned about it.

Q: As you were doing this, on the military side, were you getting input about Soviet capabilities? At the time, there were big maps, with red arrows going through Iraq, pointing toward Kuwait, and all. But when one thinks about it, that is a hell of a lot of territory to project an army through. What were you getting from our military side?

EVANS: Again, I don’t think there were any firm indications of actual massing of troops. There was a lot of so-called “trouble making” activity in these countries. But perhaps we were overreacting to the combination of the Afghanistan situation and the Iranian hostage taking. You have to remember that at that time, the United States Government was in an election year. Carter and the Administration were very weakened by the hostage taking, and Carter was virtually a hostage in the White House. The whole country was almost hostage. It was a major overriding factor. I think the reaction to the hostage taking, and the perception of this Soviet-inspired threat wasn’t just that the Soviets would move. It was overreaction and compensation. We kept very close track of Soviet naval movements

in the whole area, of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf, Soviet ship visits, and resupply efforts to their clients throughout the whole area, as well as efforts in the Horn of Africa to establish a presence. We watched for Mediterranean forces and Black Sea movements, the situation in Turkey. I do not remember seeing anywhere any indication that any Soviet divisions had moved to the Iranian border. I don't think that ever happened. What I am saying, is that a lot of this was our perception of what might happen. Since Afghanistan, we were not going to let that happen again.

Q: How did your office look in October 1980, at the start of the Iran/Iraq war? What was the initial reaction, and as it developed?

EVANS: Well, anything against Iran was looked at favorably. Right from the beginning, I think it is fair to say, we were pro-Iraqi, although not overtly so. Our goal was to try to see the Iraqis weaken the Iranians as much as possible. That was one goal, the other was to keep the area clear so that our shipping could continue unharmed and that it wouldn't spill over against our interests. On one hand, it was containment of the conflict, control and management, but we very much wanted to see the Iraqis weaken the Iranians although it obviously was in our interest to see both sides weakened. It is like seeing two basically hostile states, one much more hostile than the other, going at it. We were trying to make the area as safe as possible for our interests and to prevent the thing from spilling over and getting out of hand.

Q: So, you were doing this from June 1980, until when?

EVANS: Until about April 1981. It was a very concentrated period, just about a year.

Q: Absolutely. What was your impression of how the Saudis dealt with us during this time?

EVANS: I don't remember any direct involvement that we had with the Saudis except their general concern that they made it very clear, they didn't want any high-level bases. They were not going to be any part of this. Naturally, we canvassed the whole area. The only ones who said they would agree to negotiate bases were the three countries, Somalia, Kenya, Oman, and then, Diego Garcia. That was the crux of it there. Then, there was this Egyptian effort which came a cropper. The Saudis said, "Don't rely on us. We're out of it." So, the Saudis never came into it at all.

Q: How about Kuwait?

EVANS: Nor the Kuwaitis. Bahrain's feeling was that they were taking care of the Mid-East horse, and that was enough for them. They were close to the action anyway and didn't want any more American presence there. Here we were, in this, sort of conundrum: people were griping about the fact that we were trying to save these people from being overrun by the Soviets and/or the Iranians and they wouldn't let us even come in and help them, the ingrates that they are.

Q: A decade later, it was the same thing, until Iraq invaded Kuwait. Up to that point, we were being told to keep hands-off, very decidedly by both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, until all of a

sudden, their ox was gored. Turning to some of the other places, were there any particular problems, incidents, or situations that you had to deal with on our worldwide base agreements? Greece, was that a problem?

EVANS: Greece was not critical. Spain was a big problem because the Spanish had cold feet and were trying to, and did, of course, reduce their involvement. In fact, we had to move our bases to Italy. The Italians were our rock in the Mediterranean while the Spanish wanted to reduce and eliminate our presence. As you know, we had to move the Air Force base out of Tehran.

Q: We moved it to Sicily, didn't we?

EVANS: Aviano, I think, in Southern Italy.

Q: Sigonella, or something?

EVANS: Sigonella is in Sicily.

Q: Anyway, we moved into Southern Italy.

EVANS: Right. There were little problems. The Portuguese hung in there pretty firmly with us. We considered Portugal as our rock solid pillar in the Western Mediterranean, Italy our pillar in the Central Mediterranean. Unwritten, of course, was the role of Israel in the eastern part of the Mediterranean and of southern Turkey and then Greece. Greece was always a problem. You couldn't really rely on the Greeks that much because of the Greek/Turkish issue. There was nothing at that time involving Morocco, as I recall. The focus was so much on Southwest Asia, that I don't remember any other global negotiations except the renewal of something in the Pacific that I was hoping to get to go on, but did not, for one reason or the other. I was really tied down, working flat out on this combination of implementing the Southwest Asia strategy and then the Iraq/Iran war. We had a task force with the French, the British and the Americans in the Gulf on combined rules of engagement. That was all done out of my office with the Navy Captain running that operation. The Navy Commander was running the Southwest Asia part. We did an amazing amount of work with this small bunch of people. The Air Force Colonel was, I knew, sort of reporting to other people. That was understood, and I didn't worry about it. It turned out, that he was directly involved in the Iranian hostage situation. In fact, when the hostages came out, in January 1981, that was done through my office in the State Department. My office was the coordinating office for that. The Air Force Colonel was doing it but it was so secret that it was actually kept from me.

MICHAEL H. NEWLIN
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Organizations
Washington, DC (1980-1981)

Ambassador Newlin was born in North Carolina and was raised there and in the

Panama Canal Zone. After graduating from Harvard he joined the Foreign Service in 1952 and was posted to Frankfurt, Oslo, Paris, Kinshasa and Jerusalem, where served as Consul General. During his distinguished career, Ambassador Newlin served in several high level positions dealing with the United Nations and its agencies and NATO. He served as Ambassador to Algeria from 1981 to 1985 and as US representative to the United Nations Agencies in Vienna, 1988-1991. Ambassador Newlin was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: What about the problem with Iran? Did that arise while you were [serving your tour in IO]?

NEWLIN: Yes. We were deeply involved in monitoring the peace negotiations. And what was going on in Algiers. We helped coordinate what was going on at the UN with the agreements that Christopher and the Algerians reached with Khomeini.

Q: What were your principal concerns as Ambassador there?

NEWLIN: To improve the political and economic relationship. I lobbied hard for grain sales and investment and tried to help American businessmen. Of course, the protection of American citizens living there. Occasionally they would be arrested for things that they're not really responsible for. It culminated, just before we left, at the time of the high jacking of the TWA plane, that our contacts at the senior levels were very important. The Algerians, through their negotiations--we couldn't negotiate with the high jackers, but they could--they got the majority of the passengers released in Algiers before the plane departed for Beirut with the remaining hostages. They played a very helpful role there as they had in the Iranian hostage crisis. They also tried to be of help concerning our hostages in Beirut but that proved to be difficult since they were dealing with terrorist groups rather than a government as was the case in the Tehran hostages.

Q: Did you accompany President Benjedid on his official visit to the U.S.?

NEWLIN: Yes. From both sides, it was a successful visit. Benjedid and Reagan established a rapport which reinforced the good relations between Bush and Benjedid.

RALPH E. LINDSTROM
Director of Iranian Affairs, Near Eastern Affairs,
Washington, DC (1980-1983)

Ralph E. Lindstrom was born in Minnesota on April 10, 1925. He joined the Navy during World War II. He obtained a B.A. from Harvard University and entered the foreign service in 1952. He served in Kabul, Paris, Hong Kong, Oberammergau, Moscow, Nairobi, and Dhahran. He also served in the State Department in INR, the Economic Bureau, the ACDA, and with Iranian Affairs.

He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1994.

Q: You came back when in 1980?

LINDSTROM: Then I had agreed to take the Iranian job, and of course things just went from bad to worse as far as the hostages were concerned. So I finally came back, after consulting in the area. I did get a chance to visit Oman and the Emirates, and Kuwait, and Baghdad, and came back in June or July of 1980. Henry Precht was my predecessor, so I replaced him. But when I arrived there it was really the very lowest of the low points in the whole hostage crisis. We had just sent a letter signed by every congressman and senator to Rafsanjani, who was already rising in power. It was delivered to him by the Swiss ambassador who was acting on our behalf. He just gave a terrible anti-American diatribe. I remember hearing Muskie say...

Q: He was Secretary of State.

LINDSTROM: He said, "I can see the outline of a possible negotiation." And I said to myself, I didn't say this to anyone else, "These people are all batty if they think they can make anything out of Rafsanjani's anti-American diatribe." But in a sense Muskie's observation turned out to be true, because there were some points in there and we were able to get additional signals that indicated some willingness. But still the mind set at that time was that the _____ had no authority really to deal with the hostage crisis. It was just sort of hanging out there. I worked in the Operations Center for the rest of the hostage period and on for the first five or six months into the non-hostage period after their release. I had a very large staff of volunteers, people from all parts of the Department, to handle phone calls.

Q: Basically for most of the time you were there, at least the first part of the time you were there, it was just hostages. That was it, wasn't it?

LINDSTROM: I'd say that was the center of it.

Q: How about the freezing of Iranian funds?

LINDSTROM: This was all a part of it, of course, and all the measures that we took, and eventually the releasing of many Iranian funds as a part of the release process. But I would say going back to the summer when I first got there, the emphasis then was on maintaining contact. I mean, establishing some kind of meaningful contact with someone who you might call a decision maker inside of Iran. As I mentioned on Rafsanjani, he didn't seem to be asserting himself as a decision maker at all. We had various people to maintain telephone contact directly with Iran. Fortunately the telephones never went out during this period. I had developed a contact with one of the leading Shiites in the United States, in the Bay area. We used to meet from time to time, and I went out and saw him in San Francisco. I first met him here, he had studied in religious institutions, mainly in Iraq, where the best students were, many of the present leaders in Iran, and the post-revolutionary leaders. He could also get through on the telephone to some of them. Most of the people were pretty afraid to talk, but he occasionally would give us some little tidbits of what was going on. As Hal Saunders used to say, we just keep tapping on every door, every

window, in hopes of finding one that we eventually could open. So it was sort of a shotgun approach to the problem, which I think was probably a reasonable thing to do. We had contacts with some very disreputable people.

Q: Were we able to...because one looks forward a few more years to the Reagan administration to the time when you had what was known as the Iran-Contra affair where the National Security Council got involved with dealing with the so-called "Iranian moderates" and thinking that they were working a deal again about hostages but this time in Beirut. Were there attempts to get you into one of these deals with say disreputable people where caution would say, let's not do it? Were we desperate? Were there attempts to get you involved in things that probably would have been discreditable?

LINDSTROM: No. That certainly wasn't a part of the picture then. But we did deal with some people who had rather questionable backgrounds in an effort to get information. This, of course, was all cleared with everybody. One of my daily jobs from the time I first got here was to write a daily report on whatever information we'd gathered from our sort of informal channels of one kind or another. For example, I used to pick up from Henry Precht, the Frenchman in Paris, who had supposedly good ties in Iran. Again, leaving no stone unturned. We would report this to the Secretary of State, a daily report, and that same report went, without his name on it, to the President, Jimmy Carter. He became completely involved in getting the hostages out.

Q: How were your relations with the National Security Council?

LINDSTROM: I used to see Gary Sick, not a great deal. For example, they did keep the State Department from knowing, other than Warren Christopher, about the hostage rescue operation. Anyway, I did see a fair amount of Sick. This was more after the hostages were released. Anyway, going up to their release there was a lot of speculation about what held up their release to the last minute. I don't find there's ever been any really satisfactory explanation. Gary Sick wrote his book on so-called October Surprise, and I don't think this was something deliberate on the part of the Reagan administration...so everyone, and not just our agency, but in the whole government was working in one way or another. The Treasury Department was very deeply involved in all of this money business, constant meetings of committees to coordinate all of these things that were going on. Again, the feelings about whether we were going to get them out, we just simply didn't know, or if some of them were going to be killed. Rumors flew hot and fast. Let me say, I was in on the original involvement of the Algerians. This was, as I recall, it was on a Sunday--we worked 7 days a week--and I worked very closely with Hal Saunders, and we got a call that the Algerian ambassador wanted to come around to the State Department. He had something to say, and his only western language was French, so I was asked to interpret for Hal. At the same time up in the United Nations, a permanent Iranian had just come there. He was the Prime Minister. He had been up at the United Nations, and the wife of one of our hostages had met with him, and he seemed to be very sympathetic to her. This was the school teacher hostage, and she had an hour. I think it had some impact on him as a person. Then the Algerians also met with him. They came around to see Hal and me on a Sunday afternoon, and he was proposing that the Secretary of State might want to work jointly with the Foreign Minister of Algeria to facilitate the hostage release since it wasn't going anyplace very fast. The Swiss were doing an

excellent job of representing us, but there were limitations. They just simply didn't have the same credentials as the Algerians had at that time. So we talked to him at some length about how this might go. Hal made it clear from the beginning that it would be Mr. Christopher who would be the U.S. representative, because he had the experience. Muskie could always be brought in, but he was brand new and not familiar with this. So that's how this special Algerian relationship got started. I remember initially Christopher flew over to Algiers with a number of other people, and they really got this other channel going. It fits in with what I mentioned earlier about having multiple channels to solve this problem.

Q: What was your feeling about the final agreement that got the hostages back?

LINDSTROM: I think it was about as good as we could have got. There were a lot of things that we did not give the Iranians. Of course there are some people that say we shouldn't have given them anything. We should have gone in there militarily. But we got every last hostage out alive, which we weren't sure of at all. Some think, and sometimes I lean towards that point of view, that we could have gotten them out politically, if we had not gone this very detailed route. We could have gotten them out sooner. I don't really think that was the case. Once you started down that path there were all sorts of technocrats on the Iranian side, and the Central Bank, and all that sort of thing. It worked well, but it worked slowly because as you know the hostages didn't get out until even after the new President was in office. I can remember out to the hall going to the men's room in front of the Op Center, seeing some taking down the names of all the Assistant Secretaries from a board from the old administration, and still we didn't have any hostages out yet. It was rather exciting when finally they were allowed to take off. We were monitoring the flight of the two Algerian aircraft. The Iranians did give us a military escort. The Iran-Iraq war was on by that time, and they gave us an escort of three or four F-4s to go after the Iraqis, if they should come there. Then finally we got the word that they were over Turkish airspace. It was exciting, and then they refueled in Greece. Our ambassador there wanted to get on and greet everybody, but the Algerians wouldn't let him on. He was furious, I don't remember who it was. So finally they got all the way over to Algiers and made a safe landing. We had some threats that came in supposedly from Qadhafi, and that sort of thing. Nothing materialized, and the Algerians planes went on and landed there.

Incidentally, the Algerians did a tremendous job and never charged us a dime for any of that. They would never take anything whatsoever for the use of their planes, their people, and all that.

Q: The Reagan administration came in and what happened? The hostages arrived and Iranian affairs almost disappeared from the Department of State radar, or what happened?

LINDSTROM: No, not immediately. It was still a matter of continuing interest. In a sense, yes, but there were lingering problems. We were concerned with our property in Iran, for example, what was going to happen to that. And there were a couple of other people to still get out who were sort of private hostages, you might say, a woman. So it just sort of wound down more slowly. The Reagan administration gave a reception on the White House grounds for the returning hostages. They, as you know, spent some days getting back and were brought back via West Point. I remember one of the things is that the Reagan administration didn't seem to want to

give much credit at all to the Algerians who played such a key role, and that rather bothered me. But I continued to work with the Algerians. They were managing our Iranian interests and I was still in that job.

One of the exciting moments, of course, too, was when not only the Algerian planes exited into Turkish airspace, but we did get a phone call from the Swiss ambassador in Tehran saying that he had 52 hostage signatures. Up until then we didn't know how many we were going to get out. A lot of the delay was apparently caused by disagreement among the hostage holders. A couple of the hostages weren't brought to the airport until the last moment. So I don't think there was any October Surprise, any conscious conspiracy, or anything like that. It was just the customary Iranian disarray.

Q: During the Reagan administration was there any change, you might say, in attitude or anything else like that as far as you were concerned in Iranian affairs?

LINDSTROM: Oh, Yes. They wanted to go through the policy making process. We had the SIG-IG thing at that time analyzing Iran and what it meant for U.S. interests and all that sort of thing. That's where I first met Ollie North. He came to one of our SIGs but stayed more or less in the background whispering to his buddies from you know where. So, yes, there was considerable interest.

But going back to one point, when we were trying to figure out how to deal Khomeini. He had issued this rather mysterious proclamation. Most other things seemed to call for our recognizing that we had been at fault in this whole thing. We would consult with all sorts of experts on Iran to see how we could satisfy this feeling. We started doing a lot of things in retrospect we weren't terribly proud of. They're humiliating almost. But throughout this period, once these basic contacts were established with the Algerians and with the key players on the Iranian side, who had been authorized by Khomeini to negotiate, it really went on pretty well. But there were always these uncertainties as to whether they were really serious, whether we were really negotiating with the right people.

That's putting in a capsule an awful lot of happenings but then after that we moved back up to Iranian Affairs in the NEA Bureau. There were some odds and ends to tend to but mainly dealing with the Algerians over the things that the Iranians were doing in the Interest Section, and trying to keep them under control. The Algerians did a marvelous job as far as I was concerned under a very difficult position.

Q: They're very professional diplomats.

LINDSTROM: Oh, yes. These are the people who now are being attacked by the Islamic extremists inside their own country.

Q: You left that job, your last job was it?

LINDSTROM: Yes, my last job was not a terribly exciting job. I was in charge of economic

matters in INR. I'd say the hostage business was the last really interesting job that I had.

Q: Did you get any impression of how Alexander Haig as Secretary of State...did you get any feel for his operation from your perspective?

LINDSTROM: Well, I certainly was conscious, as was everybody who worked in the policy area in the Department at that time, of Haig's idiosyncrasies such as underlining key words in one-page memos, his military technique. That wasn't that important, but you were already being as brief as you can. I didn't have anything personally to do with him.

Q: While you were dealing with Iranian affairs, what about the multitude of Iranian students in the United States? Were they any factor at all?

LINDSTROM: No. They were, of course, an irritant to President Carter when they would come and demonstrate in front of the White House. He kept saying can't we do something about this. The President had to be informed that they were observing U.S. laws. To answer your question I don't think they had any important bearing on...

Q: Were we ever talking about checking visa status, and sending them home?

LINDSTROM: All of these options were considered. Of course, some of the Iranian students were perfectly reasonable people. Others from our point of view...so we didn't get into anything that was really punitive. I maintained quite a lot of contact with Iranians that I had met earlier in academics. It was rather a unique event in American history.

Q: It certainly was. Well, when you left the Iranian job, what was your feeling about whither American-Iranian relations. This is '83.

LINDSTROM: I would say the last time we looked at it from a policy point of view in a SIG context...

Q: SIG means?

LINDSTROM: Senior Inter-departmental Group. We thought at that time, and it turned out to be wildly optimistic, that within a few years the Iranians would find it in their interest to come back and reestablish a relationship with U.S., other western powers, etc. It just simply has not happened. We don't see much likelihood of it happening in the near future. We thought amongst other things there would be sort of an end to the educated Iranians all over the country and into western Europe, United States, etc. I thought maybe at one point they would start returning, but they were too afraid to return. They would send their wives back, because the revolutionaries wouldn't bother the wives. The wives could sort of secure the family property for a time. But that's not really transferred political power back into Iran, so it has turned out to be something more of the nature of the Russian revolution in looking back. So I don't think most of those people are ever going to go back. The center is still a very radical thing. Rafsanjani was called a moderate by North. Well, maybe he is a moderate, if he had his own way. He's never been

sufficiently in control of the operation to exhibit genuine moderate tendencies, and the radicals, our former hostage holders...we did put them on our look-out list, every last one of them. We managed to finally to identify all ten of them. But several of them became high ranking officials in the Foreign Ministry. We did deny them entry into the United States. We were afraid of having scuffles on the tarmac in New York. So, anyway, the regime goes on with the radical factions within the Foreign Ministry tending to control it. Those ties would keep them in Sudan, I think, and other admiring governments.

Q: You can always add anything you want, including the name of the congressman ...Steve Solarz is the Jewish congressman from New York whose name we couldn't remember. Thank you.

JOHN H. KELLY
Executive Secretariat
Washington, DC (1981-1982)

Ambassador John H. Kelly was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in 1939. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Emory University. He Kelly entered the Foreign Service in 1964. His career included positions in Adana, Ankara, Bangkok, and Songkhla. This interview was conducted by Thomas Stern on December 12, 1994.

KELLY: I should mention two other major events that took place while I was in the Executive Secretariat. One was the release of the hostages in Iran and the other was the attempted assassination of President Reagan. On the first issue, this had been a long running episode throughout 1980, that was a major concern for everybody in the administration and throughout the elections. There were daily briefing memoranda to the Secretary which were sent to the President. Much of the time of the Department's leadership was devoted to the issue of the American captives in Tehran -- the negotiations in Algeria, etc. We had in the Operations Center's Conference Room an around the clock the spouses, other relatives and friends of the hostages. They had been given free access to the Operations Center and essentially the whole Seventh Floor. Someone on that floor might be writing, or reading or telephoning in his or her office and all of a sudden find a relative standing at the door demanding to see all of the telegraphic traffic on a specific subject related to the hostage situation. This was a real anomaly and I am not sure that free access of non-employees to all corners of the Seventh Floor really contributed to the efficiency of our efforts to gain the hostages' freedom. My general view of the effort to gain release of the hostages was that a lot of people were fiddling with dead end alleys; i.e. a lot of people were involved in considerations that obviously were a waste of time. There were lots and lots of memoranda back and forth within the Department and from the Department and to the White House. Anyone who interfered with that traffic was subject to an assignment to Siberia -- even comments that such a piece of paper might not be relevant. We saw many memos that we thought really did not add to policy development or even the White House's knowledge, but we learned very early that anything that remotely touched on the hostages was to be given free and rapid ride to the addressee. Any perceived interference with this massive traffic was

deemed to be "heartless, without compassion and treasonous". Even though we dealt with a massive number of papers, I am not sure that we saw all of the traffic. Memoranda went here and yon in ever conceivable fashion; there was absolutely no discipline to the process nor any sense of proportion or rationality; S/S lost control over the process: one) because many relatives, for understandable reasons, would intervene in the process and be a completely free lance player. They would interject some of the wildest rumors and force people to pay attention to the wildest schemes. It seemed that every Iranian who would show up on the administration's door steps with a story would be given a hearing by high ranking members of the government. I think the whole process became chaotic and out of control, despite that some first-class people worked on the issue day and night. Secondly, the President's personal involvement did not help to discipline the process, not did the involvement of so many White House staffers and the Seventh Floor. Even Secretary Vance, who resigned in protest over the ill-fated effort to free the hostages by military means, came back to the State Department four or five days before Reagan's inauguration without publicity and slept on a cot in the Operations Center for three or four nights; he was trying to play a constructive part in the process and hoping that he might be able to help solve the problem. He finally did go on a plane on January 20th after the hostages were freed to meet them in Germany. But the whole Iranian hostage saga was very bizarre and sad; I had friends among the hostages; I played Santa Claus to the children of one of the hostages. So I had great sympathy for all the people who were trying to do their best, but I don't think that our efforts were at all well organized. I believe that in the final analysis, it was Reagan's election which actually gained the hostages' release. It was Khomeini's apprehension about the advent of a hard-line government that finally convinced the Iranians that holding the hostages was not worth running the risk of being bombed or whatever else the radicals in Iran thought that the new administration might do.

This Iranian hostage crisis was a real lesson for me which came in handy when later I became involved in the Lebanon hostage process, as was Jerry Bremer, who by then had become the Director of the Anti-Terrorist Office. We at least remembered what not to do.

EDWARD L. LEE II
Chief, Diplomatic Security Service-Iran Hostage Crisis
Washington, DC (1981-1982)

Mr. Lee was born and raised in Michigan, educated at Delta College and American University. After seven years service with the US Marine Corp, he joined the State Department as Agent in the Office of Security. Mr. Lee's entire career in the Foreign Service was devoted to Security matters in Washington and in diplomatic posts throughout the world. His postings as Regional Security Officer include Cyprus, South Korea, Thailand and Panama. Mr. Lee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Today is January 18, 2000. Before we get to Latin America, we want to go back to domestic things, '81-'82.

LEE: The Tehran hostages were released on January 20, 1981. I was still in Bangkok as RSO. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Security at that time, Carl Ackerman, had broken my assignment in Bangkok to bring me back to become Director of Training of the Office of Security of the predecessor organization of Diplomatic Security. The whole purpose of this was that the Tehran hostages were being released and that it was clear that the Department probably needed a new focus on security training from the standpoint of hostage crises and what have you. One has to look at the kind of training that diplomats and their families were getting before the hostage crisis and during it. I think the philosophy within the Department was that with the dramatic aspect of the release of the hostages, the Department needed to be looking at maybe a more cutting edge approach to what Foreign Service personnel were being told about how to not only protect themselves internationally but how to deal with things like mass hostage crises, which was somewhat new to the U.S. In February of 1981, I returned to Washington, took up offices over in Rosslyn, in suburban Northern Virginia, with the mandate of totally revamping the kind of security training the diplomats and their families were getting when they went abroad. It was sort of an interesting period of time because the media coverage surrounding the release of the hostages was very active and frenetic. There were lots of interviews and statements being made about new policies being made related to terrorism and the handling of hostages and what have you. Up until that time, the Department had a training program that was one day initially called "Coping with Violence Abroad." It was a very quick blurb of things that one needed to be thinking about in terms of crime and acts of terrorism, assassination. In Greece, we had had a number of officers in our embassy targeted by the November 17th group. There were other attempted assassinations involving U.S. officials abroad. We had a lot to think about. In addition to revamping the internal security, for example, because of the influx of RSOs and new Foreign Service security officers into the organization at that time, we were doing a lot of things at one time. We did, in concert with the Foreign Service Institute develop a program expanded from the Coping with Violence in a one day format to a two day format. Initially, the Training Division of the Office of Security handled the Coping with Violence Abroad course. As the months went on, there was a lot of discussion about putting that course under the control and operation of the Foreign Service Institute, which eventually happened. The reason we did that was that because of the expansion of the overseas security program, increasing RSOs and special agents within the Office of Security, we felt that doing everything was too much from a manpower standpoint. It probably would have been maybe late '81/early '82 that the Coping with Violence Abroad course was transferred from the Bureau of Administration, where the Office of Security was located, to the Foreign Service Institute, which at that time had offices in Rosslyn, Virginia, as well. It later relocated elsewhere in Arlington, Virginia, a few years later. I think shifting from internal security training to the Coping with Violence Abroad course, I think it's important that we remember that training diplomats and their families to operate internationally in an increasingly high risk environment often cases is difficult. You're dealing with the realities of things like denial. Quite often, a person goes to one posting where the threat is relatively low. They may be direct transferred to a much higher risk post. I guess the preparation that one gets before they leave has to be somewhat broad and diverse to cover varying levels of threat.

I think the aspect of training people in how to conduct themselves from a security standpoint is always fraught with difficulty because you don't want to alarm them; on the other hand, you want to give them the right information that will empower them to act correctly. Even in the early

'80s, the period that we're talking about, there was a reluctance to really call a spade a spade in that we weren't being as honest in some respects as we should. Quite often, those that were providing the training were viewed as being alarmist. Today, in the year 2000, we're much more direct. We generally are more open about exactly what people are going to be encountering abroad. It's a very difficult job to actually conduct this training and make it successful.

Q: The impetus for this new look at personal security training came from the hostage crisis in Iran. Did much come out of the debriefing of the hostages that gave new insight?

LEE: The debriefings that many of the hostages went through were very exhaustive. There were a number of federal agencies that talked to them. By and large, the experience that most of them had was very similar. There were in some cases some differences, but by and large, we learned that a hostage experience is life altering regardless of how harsh the treatment or how long the captivity. If we go forward from '81 when the hostages were released to contemporary times in the new millennium, we have seen increasingly more mass hostage operations being conducted by extremist groups. For example, the takeover of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima, Peru, just a few years ago. This was at a time when everyone thought the terrorist threat in Peru had diminished and had become dormant. There have been other examples. Aircraft hijackings, for example. Just a few weeks ago, Indian Airlines... There were Americans that were taken hostage during the hostage takeover of the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima. They were released early on. It did not become a real political issue from the standpoint of the United States. In Colombia most recently there have been a series of mass hostage takeovers of airlines. In one case, rebels of the National Liberation Army went into a catholic church and seized about 160 people. A number of them were Americans. The threat if we go back a 20 year period, it doesn't necessarily dramatically increase but we are continuing to see mass hostage takeovers of one sort or another. Again, going back to the Tehran experience, we did use those debriefings really to develop the kind of instruction and courses, lectures, that people should be getting. As we're talking, a lot of that training has been put into place. When I was director of training in the Office of Security, we had begun to put a lot of that into place. But the training is constantly changing depending upon the kind of threat and the regions in which these events take place. If we look primarily at what Foreign Service personnel experience when they live abroad, hostage taking and terrorism is really a very minute aspect of that. The reality of Foreign Service life is that there is always going to be the threat of crime, political unrest, demonstrations, natural disasters. In the last two years, from January of 2000, where we are now, we've seen some of the worst natural disasters in a 20-30 year period. The floods that Venezuela has just sustained will probably represent the most serious natural disaster in Latin America during the last 100 years. 50,000 people probably will have been lost when all the toll has been done. While in many cases, when a natural disaster does take place, the primary victims usually are nationals of the countries in which we are represented, but nevertheless our own people to face risk as well. We have had people killed in earthquakes, have had serious problems during national crises. Increasingly, if you look at Africa, Latin America, and Asia, we're continuing to see strikes, labor disputes, demonstrations, the world, in fact, is in flux and the threat does change daily and weekly and from time to time.

Getting back to the training that Foreign Service personnel receive, I've mentioned it before and

I'll mention it again because I think it's very important. Being able to develop a training program that is appropriate is one thing, but being able to really get people to focus on the subjects and really acknowledge the seriousness of it sometimes is more difficult.

Q: I think this is one of the problems of all of adult training. People have got other concerns. They're busy getting ready to go places. Adults don't take kindly to people lecturing to them. I find that I have gone through a series of training courses, not necessarily security ones, and you come out feeling good and great ideas and within three days, it's almost gone. That's a continuous problem they have here at the Foreign Service Institute. Most of it is to try to get out there and get people to participate and to try to make it stick.

LEE: That's an interesting point. I think we've talked about this briefly before. It would be appropriate to give the kind of security training that we're talking about – for example, as we're talking now, the Department gives a two day course entitled the Security Overseas Seminar to diplomatic staff and families and others that have not been through a similar course in the last five years – it might be appropriate to give them that security training maybe three months before they actually depart so that the information can get absorbed a bit and they're not literally giving it short shrift as they're trying to pack out and ship their car and take care of many other things. I think you're quite right. Imparting training to adults is difficult. On the one hand, you've got the training objectives. On the second, you want them to retain what you're trying to impart. But that will probably continue to be a difficult task. Are there any other questions relating to the training that our people get before they go over?

Q: Like most people of my generation, I have put my time in in the military. If captured, it was "name, rank, and serial number" and that was sort of it. As a matter of fact, I was dealing with security intelligence, which made it sort of iffy if you got caught; you didn't feel very comfortable. In the present climate, do you talk to people who might be taken captive about protecting intelligence or is it really how to survive the experience?

LEE: I think you're quite right. Initially, if we go back half a century, particularly from a military/strategic standpoint or a national security standpoint, primarily military personnel, but also civilians were educated and indoctrinated that you protect information at all cost. I think the hostage crisis in Tehran, other hostage experiences that we've had over the last 30-40 years, now have us to the point that particularly with the Cold War having dissipated, with there not necessarily being a massive military adversarial relationship with major powers, today it really is, if you're taken hostage for whatever reason, the important thing is to survive that experience. There is less emphasis on protecting information. If we begin to look at the role of the media vis a vis foreign policy and what our embassies do, it's very hard to keep a secret anymore. So, with the media playing such a carnivorous role in public affairs and government operations, there probably is less emphasis on the information as there was 20-30 years ago.

RICHARD M. FAIRBANKS, III
Special Negotiator for the Middle East

Washington, DC (1982-1983)

Ambassador Richard M. Fairbanks, III was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. He attended Yale on a Navy scholarship and graduated with a degree in history. After graduating, Ambassador Fairbanks served in the Navy for four years. In 1981, he was appointed by President Reagan as the Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. In 1982, he was appointed Special Negotiator for the Middle East. He was interviewed on April 19, 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You left Middle East matters at the end of 1983. Did you move immediately to Ambassador-at-Large dealing with the Pacific basin?

FAIRBANKS: On the Iran-Iraq side, we pursued "Operation Staunch"--which aimed at preventing arms shipments from the free world to Iran--because we decided that the danger in that war was that one side or the other might win it. The best that could be achieved from the American point of view was for the war to stop and for neither side to win. If Iran won, with its revolutionary regime and Khomeini's band of radical Muslims, it would be very dangerous for our interests in the Gulf. Similarly, Iraq, standing astride the region, would also be dangerous. Therefore we decided that ending the war in stasis was the best result. Iraq, we believed, could not militarily defeat Iran; it was a much smaller country, and basically, at that time, was fighting defensively. Iran was the threat because it sought to push its revolution in the Gulf. The Iraqis were looking for every way possible to sue for peace and the Iranians weren't. We thought we should wind the war down, and, since Iran had basically American weapons, we wanted to make sure that they weren't getting any spare parts and weren't getting any new high-tech weapons systems to replace the American arms. We, therefore, beefed-up "Operation Staunch" by launching diplomatic initiatives in all the countries that we were friendly with to encourage them not to deliver arms. We also talked to the Soviets to control the East block countries in order to cut their deliveries down.

Q: How responsive were the Soviets?

FAIRBANKS: Not very. Nominally they would be, but practically, no.

Q: Were you involved in the "Iran-Contra Affair"?

FAIRBANKS: No, I certainly wasn't.

RICHARD T. MCCORMACK
Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs
Washington, DC (1982-1985)

After attending Georgetown University, Mr. Richard T. McCormack assumed a

multitude of administrative roles for the Nixon Administration in addition to serving under Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania and Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Mr. McCormack's career also included positions as the US Ambassador to the Organization of American States as well as Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Ambassador McCormack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: We have touched on issues as they came up. Were there any particular issues during this 1982 to 1985 period that we haven't talked about that were major issues to deal with?

McCORMACK: Your day as Assistant Secretary for Economics was programmed every half hour from morning until night. You had to deal with airline negotiations. You had to deal with oil price issues. In fact oil price issues were something I did have to deal with that we haven't talked about here. You recall that when the Iranians had their revolution, the price of oil shot up and it helped cause a major global recession.

In the mid-1970s, we developed a strategy to encourage as much oil production worldwide, as we could. The World Bank subsidized exploration and drillings; we did all kinds of other things aimed at stimulating supply. When the Iranian revolution and other inflationary factors came together to force Volker to tighten monetary policy, it of course produced a deep recession. Over time, the combination of a huge new production base of non-OPEC oil, which we had encouraged, OPEC's own expanded production, and the contracted global economy generated a surplus of oil. The price of oil began to come down dramatically. There was an effort by oil producers to try to stabilize and strengthen the price.

The International Energy Agency was also a source of such ideas, proposing a consumer producer deal stabilizing oil prices at a certain negotiated level. I didn't support that. During our regular meeting with the Treasury Department, Sprinkel, Leland, Wallace, and myself agreed that the market should be allowed to work. We knew the huge global recession caused in part by high oil prices would be eased if oil prices were lowered. We actually sent an emissary to Prime Minister Thatcher, whose energy minister was strongly in favor of cooperating with OPEC's price fixers to try to get as much money as possible for North Sea oil. We persuaded Mrs. Thatcher that England's broader interests lie in restimulating the global economy. Therefore, she vetoed the recommendation of her energy minister and encouraged the price to go down. This, of course, caused a huge turmoil with oil producers all over the world including those in the United States. But remember: unemployment was terrible. We had a huge debt crisis in Latin America, partly caused by excessive recycling of petrodollars made expedient by the higher oil prices.

It was not a popular decision in the oil industry or even with my Foreign Service staff which was in favor of a consumer producer arrangement to stabilize oil prices. But we did not do that while I was in office, and prices went down. This allowed other parts of the global economy to grow. It served as a huge tax cut to generate purchasing power elsewhere in the economy. I felt that oil people had made a lot of money during the fat years and they could afford to take a hit for a while for the sake of the world economy. So that was one controversial issue.

JAMES A. PLACKE
Deputy Assistant Secretary, Near East Affairs
Washington, DC (1982-1985)

Mr. Placke was born and raised in Nebraska and educated at the University of Nebraska. He entered the Foreign Service in 1958. An Arabic Language Officer and Economic specialist, Mr. Placke was posted to Baghdad, Frankfurt, Kuwait, Tripoli, Ottawa and in Jeddah, where he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. At the State Department in Washington, Mr. Placke dealt primarily with Near East affairs. From 1982 to 1985 he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Near East. Mr. Placke was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2001.

Q: How did the events in Iran, the events of '79, the embassy, well, Iran had been going through a revolution, how did that reflect on what was happening?

PLACKE: Well, I knew actually the wife of one of the embassy officers who was taken hostage was, she was Iranian by birth and was living in Saudi Arabia and remained in Saudi Arabia.

John West who didn't come out of the Foreign Service tradition, but came out in the southern political tradition, he was the government of South Carolina. President Carter appointed him Ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was the first non-career ambassador to Saudi Arabia and of course the Foreign Service was miffed about this and knew that this wasn't going to work and how could any non-career person understand or even come close to understanding the complexities of Saudi Arabia. John had no problem with that at all. I've often accompanied him, I always accompanied him in fact, when he met with Prince Abdullah who in those days was number three and commander of the National Guard as he is still, now he's number two and is effectively running the country. [The] King is incapacitated.

We'd go around and see Abdullah and almost every time John West and [the Prince] would go through this routine. We'd walk in and the Prince would greet the Ambassador, very gracious and would sit down and he would say something like, "Your Excellency, always delighted to see you and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to exchange our views here today. You must appreciate, however, that I'm going to speak very directly because it's the only way I know how and essentially from a Bedouin tradition, we deal with people in a direct way." John would say, "Your highness I know exactly what you mean. I'm just a country lawyer." Then they both laughed. John figured out Saudi society sufficiently to be a very effective ambassador.

Q: Often, I think it was noted that ambassadors who are politicians often can do better than ambassadors who are business people. They're dealing with political figures. It may be a prince, but I mean it's politics, you know, even though there may not be a very solid tribal system in South Carolina.

PLACKE: Well, I think southern politics - about which I don't really have any real expertise, my

only serious exposure was with John - probably would fit into that mold a little more comfortably than northern American politics. John was in my observations did a very fine job as Ambassador.

Q: Well, back to the events in Iran, I mean here you had a very revolutionary fundamentalist Shia group in Islam, practically on the borders of Saudi Arabia.

PLACKE: Right across the Gulf.

Q: Right across the Gulf. This must have, particularly at that time, must have presented some real strains, didn't it?

PLACKE: Well, the real strains came later, but not much later. I recall meeting with a group of Iranian clerics within a week or two of arriving in Saudi Arabia actually in... I guess it was, I don't remember where, we must have been in Jeddah. They had come for [pilgrimage] - not the annual pilgrimage, it's a, it's the minor, so-called minor pilgrimage, which can be made by Muslim visiting Mecca and Medina at any time, the Hajj being a particular period that takes on additional significance. These were about four or five clerics and I didn't, and nobody in the U.S. government had a very clear notion as to where they fit in, but it was the first opportunity to talk to any kind of representation from this group after the embassy officers had been taken hostage. We had discussions, which I don't, thinking back on it I think they must have been; they were very, very weary and didn't know what this was all about. I frankly didn't know what it was really about either. My purpose under instructions from the Department as just to try to find out whatever might be useful in the way of political intelligence to find a handle to try to deal with the hostage situation. Needless to say we didn't find that handle on this occasion. I think only later began to appreciate that the whole hostage episode in Iran was a reflection of Iranian domestic politics more than anything else and that when it was no longer useful to Ayatollah Khomeini to hold these hostages and when that became a liability brought it to an end. It was turned on and off for their own purposes. Bad news for the hostages of course.

John Limbert was one of them and John had been a political officer in Saudi Arabia and his wife having been Iranian born, John spoke very good Farsi and Arabic and was asked after the Iranian revolution to go back to Tehran and take an assignment there in the political section which he did. He left Parveneh in Jeddah because I think that was before dependents could return and when the hostage incident occurred and this is an illustration of John West's approach to things opposed to perhaps the more traditional Foreign Service, there was no doubt in his mind what the right thing to do was and that was to provide housing on the embassy compound for Parveneh and [their] two children. Being DCM and being kind of a, the point of contact between Ambassador West and the State Department on all kinds of things and particularly administrative affairs, I knew that there was potential to get us all into difficulty if we didn't handle this right. So, my role was to try to figure out a way to do it and to explain to Foreign Service inspectors or anybody else. We worked it out. Parveneh then became an employee of the consular section and this was not a sham. She was there and did a genuine job and therefore, entitled to embassy housing in her own right, while her husband John was being held in Tehran. That was the situation that was maintained until the hostage episode came to an end.

Politically, tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran were there from the outset. The takeover of the Mecca Mosque, the Grand Mosque in Mecca occurred in September of 1979 a few months after I arrived there in September or October, it may have been October. [Editor's Note: The Grand Mosque Seizure on November 20, 1979, was an armed attack and takeover by Islamic fundamentalist dissidents of the Al-Masjid al Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the holiest place in Islam. The insurgents declared that the Mahdi, or redeemer of Islam, had arrived in the form of one of the insurgents' leaders and called on Muslims to obey him. The seizure shocked the Islamic world as hundreds of pilgrims present for the annual Hajj were taken hostage, and hundreds of militants, security forces and hostages caught in crossfire were killed in the ensuing battles for control of the site. The siege ended two weeks after the takeover began with militants cleared from the mosque.] That was followed by at the end of the year, December going over into January of the following year, by fairly serious riots among the Shia in Eastern Saudi Arabia. The belief of the Saudis and how much intelligence they really had on this I don't know, but within their own country they generally know what's going on and our beliefs were simply on a more analytical basis, was that this was probably Iranian inspired so that the antipathy between the two sides began to rise and hit the boiling point when there were large scale Iranian inspired riots at Hajj. That I think was in 1981 I believe and then there was a series of these incidents. The Iranians were attempting to use the premier religious event in the Muslim calendar for political purposes. They were staging, you know, pro-revolution, anti-U.S., anti-Israel, to some extent anti-Saudi Arabia demonstrations, getting people killed. Finally the third time that they staged one of these things a lot of people got killed, hundreds of pilgrims and dozens of Saudi national guards. That's when the relationship between the two really ruptured and was only put back together about, it was in the late, it was right at the end of the '90s, I think it came about probably 1997. Iran became the president or the chairman of the world Islamic council and in that role convened a traditional heads of state congress in Tehran and by this time Fahd of course had become king when the King died which was while I was still in Saudi Arabia in 1982 and by the late '90s was incapacitated to the point where he wasn't going as Saudi Arabia's representative to these things, so Crown Prince Abdullah went. Abdullah found someone in Mohammed Khatami who had been the popularly elected president only a short time earlier that he felt he could work with and even extended that later to the religious in de-facto secular leader of Iran and that's when the Saudi Arabian relationship turned around within a very short period of time. There had been a lot of tension between them and in-between we also had the Iran and Iraq War.

Q: When was the Iran and Iraq War? Was it on your watch?

PLACKE: It was during the time I was in Saudi Arabia, we had the takeover of the mosque in Mecca, the riots among the Shia in the eastern province which was the oil producing area, the seizure of the American Embassy and the hostage taking in Tehran. Then in September of 1980 the outbreak of the Iran and Iraq War and then [the] King died the month I was leaving Saudi Arabia, July of 1982.

Q: You know, these things were going on with Saudis' eastern neighbors, Iran and Iraq and all, was this something that we would consult them or were we sort of bystanders watching their relationships, what they were doing?

PLACKE: Well, when the Iran and Iraq War began because we did not have diplomatic relations with Iraq, but we had reinstated resident officers in Baghdad in the U.S. Interest Section which operated under the Swiss flag. But, of course with the situation in Tehran needless to say there wasn't anybody there and still isn't to this day. So, we had a poor relationship with Iraq and a really bad relationship with Iran. So, between, the choice between the two was not very dramatic as long as they were just fighting and hurting each other, we didn't see that our interests were being directly affected. The Iran and Iraq War when I was back at the Department as deputy assistant secretary was something worth coming back to, because it did have a number of long lasting consequences, but at that time, of course the Arab states on the Arab side of the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and all of the others lined up immediately behind Iraq and become Iraq's principal source of finance for the war and the Saudis actually built a separate port to bring in Iraqi arms shipments in the Red Sea and they were trekked across the kingdom. We saw all this going on and observed and reported on it, but it didn't, our perception at the time particularly involved American interests.

Q: Well, the problems of internal security, did we give advice or again were we observers to what happened? The Grand Mosque was taken over, the Shiite revolt, you know and the disturbances during the Hajj.

PLACKE: Indeed, we did. The takeover of the Grand Mosque, of course, would be the equivalent of St. Peters being taken over in Rome by some Catholic revolutionary group. It was a shocking event and the purpose was to dramatize the conservative view within Islam that this particular group was putting forward and one of the ironies in all of this was that the leader of the group that took over the mosque in Mecca was the son of one of the Muslim brothers that were killed in a confrontation with [the] King. These things have long antecedents and long memories. The, let's see where were we going on this?

Q: Well, I was just wondering, did we get involved in sort of security advice or help or anything?

PLACKE: Security advice: Yes. The myth about the takeover of the Grand Mosque is that the French came in and helped the Saudis retake it. This is not true and I finally found why it was so widely believed. Several years later, it came across my desk a copy of a report out of the military attaché's office in Paris reporting that this is what the French had told them and therefore this is what happened. It wasn't what happened at all. This is what is believed, but it simply is untrue. What actually happened is that there were non-Muslims within sight of Mecca, at that time, about the same as on any other day of the year, but the Agency did bring in some advisors, U.S. military, not CIA, but under CIA auspices that in my understanding - and I did not observe it directly - provided some fairly useful advice and perhaps some special weapons to Saudi National Guard in their retaking of the mosque.

Q: In '82 you left and came back to Washington, is that right?

PLACKE: Right. Came back to be Deputy Assistant Secretary in NEA. In those days there were four deputies and each of them got a war. My war was the Iran and Iraq War. Things had evolved since the war began in September of 1980 when I was in Saudi Arabia from where I had a view

from sort of nearby, but not any direct involvement. Now it became much more of a direct concern.

We had a briefing every morning by INR and the two INR briefers who brought me up to date on what had happened were there when I got to the office. The Agency, NSA, and others also paid the war a lot of attention... Then I kind of became the manager, was in fact the manager of the American policy dimension of that war. Well, one of the little sidelights is Larry Eagleburger who has been undersecretary for political affairs called Nick Veliotis who was the Assistant Secretary for Near East affairs at the time and Nick took me along to the meeting and a couple of other people and said, "Look, we've got to think of a way to manage this activity better. It's becoming a threat to our regional security interests", which it was. The policy on both sides was beginning to attack each other's oil shipments in the Gulf and it was becoming more and more of a headache. The Iraqis were using, Mirage F-1s and missiles. The Iranians didn't have anything comparable to that so they were tending to go at it with small gunboats and mines and that sort of thing, but it was becoming a real hazard. Shipping rates were going up because of much higher insurance rates and generally making everybody uncomfortable, not least of whom were the Saudis. So, Larry said, "Look, we've got to figure out a way to get a handle on it, at least the Iranian dimension of this. Isn't there something we can do to starve the Iranian military machine?" Out of that meeting was born the staunching operation, which became known in the press, in the U.S. press and I think I guess internationally as well, became known as Operation Staunch. It came from some press guidance I had written after the meeting talking about staunching the flow of arms into Iran, which then became the fairly significant U.S. policy initiative. We hammered on everybody. We hammered on the Europeans. We hammered on the Brazilians, anybody that was in the arms business with the Iranians. We sustained it; it was a very concentrated and sustained effort that ultimately had some effect.

Rafsanjani, during the time he was president after the war was over, on one occasion in a speech said that the main reason that they ultimately had to make a truce with Iraq and could not prevail in the war was because they couldn't get arms. The policy, which I would say Larry Eagleburger who is really the author, ultimately I think filled its purpose. Well, just carrying out that activity, took up a lot of our time. As always NEA was staffed with extremely good officers and had good support in trying to get that done. I had, I was out of that position by the time it happened, but a turning point really in our whole policy toward the Gulf came when Kuwaiti shipping particularly became a target of the Iranians and the Kuwaitis did what was called reflagging and that is registering their maritime particularly their oil carriers as U.S. flagged vessels and thereby eligible for U.S. naval protection. That was kind of the beginnings of the Fifth Fleet in the Gulf. My contribution in the same sense was to put forward the argument that it was pretty clear that Iran was a much greater threat to our interests than Iraq and that within limits we had a parallel set of interests, not identical by any means, but a parallel set of interests with Iraq in the region because they were the military barrier to expansion of Iranian revolutionary ideology and at that time. Ayatollah Khomeini was very much intent upon spreading by force if necessary the Iranian revolution as an Islamic revolution. The Iraqis being a secular society were opposed to it and also because it would cost them their country.

The Iraqis in the summer of 1983 sent a new head of their interests section to Washington

[Editor's Note: Reference is probably to Nizar Hamdoon, who replaced Zuhair al-Omar as head of the Iraqi Interest Section sometime in second half of 1983], with whom I got well acquainted. He came here with a knowledge of English, but not fluent, but within six months was going toe to toe with Ted Koppel on ABC News' Nightline to give you some idea of his dedication as well as his ability. I would say one of the best, if not the best diplomats that I've met in my entire career, very good. Well, to make what would be an indefinitely long story a little bit shorter, it became accepted in Washington that we had a degree of parallel interest with Iraq and we ought to try to escalate and normalize our relationship and that was something that the Iraqis were interested in. Saddam Hussein in those days was making some of the right noises. He gave a speech that was very prominent at the time about the Palestinian-Israeli confrontation and changed the Iraqi position, which had been absolute rigid rejection. They had been part of what was once called the Arab rejectionist camp which included Syria as well, changed it completely and said, whatever the Palestinians agree to, we will support. It's their issue, it's their interest, they are the ones who primarily have a stake and we will accept whatever they agree to. Well, that was a significant step in the right direction as far as the United States was concerned. It helped a lot. The other thing they did was get rid of Abu-Nidal who was the sort of number one terrorist at the time. They had given him refuge in Baghdad and after the process of normalization was complete and the announcement of full diplomatic relations was made, Secretary Schultz invited Tariq Aziz who was his Iraqi counterpart as foreign minister and also deputy prime minister to lunch at the Department and I was there and had the opportunity to ask [him] why they got rid of Abu-Nidal because that enabled us to take him off the terrorism list which they thought we couldn't have government relations if they were going to be on the terrorist list and they were right and we didn't have any disagreement with that, but doing it was another matter. Getting rid of Abu-Nidal was critical for that, so I asked [him] why they chose to do that expecting that he would say something about creating the right atmosphere between the two sides. His answer was very interesting. He said, "Because we realized that we couldn't completely control him and that he was doing things that weren't necessarily in our interest so we got rid of him."

Q: How did you go about staunching the flow of arms?

PLACKE: By publicizing what we knew about the activities of other governments who were supplying arms. Iran was pretty widely regarded at the time as an international bad man. Not only because of the hostage taking, which of course was a major threat to conventional diplomacy anywhere in the world, but the ideology that Ayatollah Khomeini was promoting and trying to export as an Islamic revolution. That was pretty disturbing to certainly the OECD group of countries and I think world widely. So, well other governments in some cases were interested in providing weapons that would be used in the Iran and Iraq War. They didn't publicize it. So, our principal weapon was simply publicity and we would make announcements and fairly regularly talk publicly about things that they wanted to maintain quietly in the background and Dick Fairbanks who has been Ambassador at Large under Secretary Schultz was assigned the task of providing us the diplomatic fire power to go in at senior levels in other government's foreign ministry, prime ministry occasionally, and have a heart to heart talk with them about how we saw our interests and how what they were doing was not consistent with those interests and let them draw their own conclusions as to what the consequences might be. We did a lot of that. On one

occasion the British DCM was called in to meet with Dick Fairbanks and the Iranians had bought under the Shah a large number of Centurion tanks from the UK which were one of the superior tanks of the day, and of course the Shah always bought the best, F-14s from us and Centurion tanks from Britain and so on. The issue was supplying tank engines as spare engines or replacement engines for the existing inventory of tanks that had been sold to the Iranians. We had this bizarre conversation where his brief was to persuade us that a Centurion tank engine had no lethal properties about it unless you happened to drop it on your foot. Apart from that it wasn't going to do anybody any harm. So, we pretended that we understood this and he pretended that you know, he had persuaded the American government that it was too dumb to recognize that a tank needed an engine in order to do anything, but the deal was, okay, we recognize that we can't prevent you from selling these engines. Their argument was this is a preexisting contract. We have an obligation to fulfill this contract and also their contractor happened to be important and going to make a lot of money out of it, but that would be the end. Once that contract was fulfilled they'd cut it off altogether, which they did. So, you know, we were doing those kinds of things with a lot of different countries.

We approached the Portuguese on a couple of occasions. The Portuguese were selling large caliber artillery to the Iranians and on Dick's maybe second trip to Lisbon - he would go over to Europe periodically, go around to all the capitals and give them our latest version of the story. In Lisbon, I think it was the second time around, they finally said, "Ambassador Fairbanks, we must be candid with you. We're going to continue to sell the Iranians artillery because it is very important to us commercially." At least it was candid.

Q: Did we in a way retaliate to a certain extent by making it, in other words?

PLACKE: We didn't threaten anybody with sanctions or anything.

Q: No, but I mean would we have somebody call in Seymour Hirsch of the New York Times or something like that?

PLACKE: We'd just do it in the regular Department briefing. I usually wrote the press guidance myself.

Q: You left that job when?

PLACKE: I left it in 1985. During this tour there were a lot of other interesting things that happened. The first Saudi astronaut was launched. The relationship with Saudi Arabia was always a subject of great interest and concern. Prince Bandar who is to this day the Saudi ambassador in Washington and has been the military attaché. I knew Bandar in Saudi Arabia when I was DCM and just keeping track of the Saudis, keeping track of the Iraqis, keeping track of the Iranians, that was pretty much of a full time job.

JOHN D. STEMPEL

**Director of Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1983-1985)**

Dr. John D. Stempel was born in Pennsylvania on July 26, 1938. He graduated from Princeton with a bachelor's degree in 1960. In 1965 he earned his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. Dr. Stempel served in the U.S. Navy from 1960 until 1962. He entered the Foreign Service in October of 1965. His postings included Guinea, Burundi, Ghana, Zambia, Iran, India, and Washington, DC. Dr. Stempel was interviewed in 1993 by Kristin Hamblin.

Q: After director of the Operations Center, you were director of the Office of Near East and South Asian Affairs on loan from the State Department to the Department of Defense.

STEMPEL: We had the Marine Barracks episode and the American involvement in Lebanon and almost all of my time that year was taken up with that. I came to see other problems, the Iran-Iraq war and other issues. And I think what they were looking for was a sort of hands on desk officer, and what I saw being needed was to push out and deal with some of the broader issues. After a year, kind of by mutual consent, I went back to the State Department, which was delighted to have me working as a special assistant to the Assistant Secretary for the Mideast and the Secretary on the Iran-Iraq war.

Q: What kind sort of policy did you have to formulate concerning that war?

STEMPEL: Well, we worked out sort of a National Security decision memorandum on Iran and how to handle Iran with respect to the war. I chaired an interdepartment committee, whose White House member, by the way, was Ollie North. My colleague, who I worked very closely with, was a deputy assistant secretary, Jim Placke. We essentially wanted to be in a position to move with respect to Iran if needed, to have a balanced end of the Iran-Iraq war. In other words, no victors, was the policy. And to make sure that our allies didn't support either side in terms of giving an advantage on the war. As part of that I took a two-week trip with Special Ambassador to the Middle East, Charles Fairbanks. He and I went to five European capitals and had a bad cop/nice cop act on beating up on people who helped the Iranians. The Spanish were repairing boats, the Italians were selling everything, the Brits were selling tanks to them, and the Swiss were even selling light private aircraft. However, our intelligence discovered one of their circulars that showed how they had hook-on points for all the weapons on these private aircraft. I was the bad cop that day and got to sit down and talk to the Swiss assistant secretary and say that this wasn't going to fly, it was going to cause problems. That is the kind of work I did.

Q: And, were you successful?

STEMPEL: Up to a point. You member, of course, we attacked Iran for taking hostages and stuff like this. Then I went off to Madras, as consul general in the summer of 1985, and, of course, it was that fall that Ollie North, out from under the kinds of restrictions that our interdepartmental committee had put on him, started going around. What had happened...you see I had been an Iranian specialist so I had some clout and was not willing to roll over for some guy who just said

he was speaking for the President. My boss had been a specialist on Saudi Arabia and again had full knowledge of the area. I don't know whether Ollie just decided to ignore the people who succeeded us, or whether he talked them into working for him, but in fact he began his rogue elephant program that surfaced a year later as the Iran-Contra mess. I remember getting a midnight cable from Assistant Secretary Murphy on that and sending back an answer trying to lay out what I knew about it, what was going on. You have a feeling of deja vu in the wrong way. That is one of the things we prepared to do, for example, was that if we wanted to help the Iranians how would we go about it. Well you are not supposed to do that. "Look," we said, "we know we are not supposed to do that but if we wanted to do it, how would we do it?" Some of that probably filtered into the kind of stuff that Ollie got playing around with. But nothing quite so blatant as weapons for the hostages.

KENTON W. KEITH
Deputy Director for Near East and South Asia, USIA
Washington, DC (1983-1985)

Ambassador Keith was born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri. After graduating from the University of Kansas he served with the US Navy before entering the Foreign Service in 1965. An Arabic speaking Officer, Ambassador Keith served as Public Affairs Officer and/ or Cultural Affairs in Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria, France and Brazil before his appointment as US Ambassador to Qatar. His Washington service included several tours in senior positions with USIA. Ambassador Keith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: Today is October 4, 1999. What happened in 1983?

KEITH: I left Brazil and went back to Washington as deputy director for Near East and South Asia. That was a tour that eventually lasted just two years – '83-'85, and then I went off to Paris. As deputy area director, I handled mostly the Arab world and North Africa, as my boss was a South Asianist and he basically handled the South Asian posts. We split duties but each of us focused on the area of his expertise.

Q: You didn't mention Israel. Was it part of the equation?

KEITH: Yes, the NEA area includes all of the Arab countries and Israel and all of the South Asian countries – Pakistan, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh...

Q: The head of USIA at this point was Charles Wick, a controversial figure. He could get funds which other directors probably couldn't. He had political clout. How did you find him and his impact on what you all were doing?

KEITH: I think you touched on the important things. He brought with him something that too

rarely have the directors of USIA had and that is political clout. Ed Murrow had it. Carl Rowan had it to a certain extent. We really didn't have anybody after that with that kind of political power or name recognition until Charles Wick came, bringing with him the personal relationship between the Wicks and the Reagans, That relationship certainly benefited USIA; there was a spike in the USIA budget at that time. He moved us into the television age. He was a man of great enthusiasm when he was with USIA. I thought his enthusiasm for his international television projects worked somewhat to the detriment of other areas of public diplomacy, but he definitely deserves credit for moving us into the television age.

Q: Did he have a point of view or was he reaching down as you were working on this very politically charged area of the world?

KEITH: I think he learned important lessons early in the game. He was not a policy man. He didn't have a deep of understanding of international affairs. In the earliest point in his Poland v. Poland fiasco, when he sought to influence affairs in Poland with a kind of political variety show, the Agency was in danger of becoming a laughing stock. At that time he was surrounded by political advisers who were committed to an ideological agenda that I'm not sure even he was comfortable with. I'm fairly certain he was uncomfortable with some of the politically-appointed ideologues who came into USIA under the sponsorship of right wing figures on the Hill. I think he felt they were a distraction to his main goal, which was modernizing the Agency's delivery system. Eventually he began to get rid of them. But he really didn't focus on those things until they became an embarrassment. Les Lenkowsky was the deputy director of USIA for much of the time that I was in Washington. He was and remains a person with a very conservative political agenda. He made no secret of that fact while he was there.

The enemies list. You've probably heard many of my colleagues talk about the enemies list. Lenkowsky publicly denied the existence of an enemies list, i.e. a list of Americans whose intellectual output or service in our overseas programs was prohibited because of their liberal credentials. When that became public there was outrage, and the Agency took some real blows. Lenkowsky, as you've probably heard, denied any knowledge of such a list and put the blame on "mindless gnomes in the bowels of the Agency" acting without direction. Agency employees were furious, and within a day or two people were sporting "Mindless Gnome" buttons.

In fact, Lenkowsky was one of many with neoconservative beliefs who came to prominence during the Reagan years, were less prominent under George H. W. Bush, were completely out of power under Clinton, and re-emerged with George W Bush. Under Reagan they brought with them a foreign policy agenda which was an aggressively American agenda with far less multi-nationalism than we had practiced since the end of WWII. The kind of cultural relativism or political relativism that marked a more liberal period in our history was gone. No remnants of that. There was a very strong feeling that our system - open markets, free markets, free enterprise, American democracy as a model – we should not be apologetic for these things and we should not be too eager to allow a relativist discussion. Other versions of popular governance or economic systems were irrelevant in their agenda. It was a tough period. Also, Lenkowsky and the people around him had a very enthusiastic pro-Israel agenda, to the extent that it sometimes became a problem for the Department of State, which also had quite a pro-Israeli agenda at that

time. But the nuances and the steps forward that you took at the appropriate moment, the effort to try to get the sides together to fulfill a longer range agenda which was held at the State Department was sometimes threatened by the more tactical activities at USIA. They might have taken the form of a VOA editorial that was ill-timed, that was particularly aggressive toward one or another Arab government or leader at a time when the U.S. was involved in delicate negotiations with the very same government. We were in a very confrontational stance.

But on balance the experience with Wick was probably good for USIA. He brought us kicking and screaming into the television era; he made us think about the use of new technologies; he didn't listen to people like me who talked about communication on a human level and face to face, etc. It wasn't that he didn't believe in those things necessarily. It was that the important thing to him at that moment was the use of the new technology and the establishment of USIA as a modern purveyor of information. He could be extremely persuasive. I observed him in action with ministers in Brazil and Jordan, and King Fahd in Saudi Arabia, and they took him quite seriously

Q: Did you find yourself acting as one of the gnomes in USIA?

KEITH: Vis-à-vis Lenkowsky I certainly considered myself one of the gnomes. In fact, I sported a gnome button, that I still possess, for some days after this comment was made in public. As deputy director of NEA, I was responsible for interacting with the Department and with the media on issues of public diplomacy and of public policy. So, when the part of USIA that was responsible for putting out material – brochures, pamphlets, and so on – wanted to do a piece on terrorism in the Middle East, it had to come through my office. I wasn't the final arbiter, of course. It would be an issue that would be discussed also with the appropriate State desk, but there was a political support structure for people who had a more aggressive propaganda agenda in those days – political support structure on the Hill and in academia and think tanks – whether it was the Heritage Foundation or other foundations who supported a more aggressive and more conservative agenda. So, those of us who were in the mode of the chess player moving pieces as it seemed to make the most sense at that moment, trying to get to a certain level of exchange and engagement between Arabs and Israelis, were in a way the opposition to that other way of thinking. I don't want to give you the idea that we had battles every day, but there was a sense that we, the gnomes, were standing in the way of effective policy action on these items.

JOHN WHITEHEAD
Deputy Secretary of State
Washington, DC (1985-1989)

John Whitehead was born in Evanston Illinois in 1922. At the age of one and a half his family moved to New Jersey. In 1943, he graduated from Haverford College with a degree in economics. He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943 until 1946. He earned his Master's degree from Harvard Business School in 1947. He worked for Goldman Sachs and retired in 1984 as a cochairman. In 1985, he was

appointed Deputy Secretary of State. This interview was conducted in January of 1998 by Richard Jackson.

Q: Excellent start. Well now in hindsight, the Irangate Affair looms over the period that you were in government with its progressive revelations, the McFarlane Mission, arms for hostages, the Bible, the cake, and then later the funding of the Contras, that seemed to threaten the authority of the Secretary, the Department, the President himself. You played a particularly strong role in that as the point man, defending Secretary Shultz before the House International Relations Committee, before Dante Fascell. That brought particular attention to your role at that time, if memory serves.

WHITEHEAD: Yes, that was an unforgettable experience. This was my first experience in testifying before Congress, which I did quite a lot as time went by, but this was my first experience. As I remember, it started with a morning meeting Shultz and Mike Armacost, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs who was the sort of third ranking officer in the State Department (we frequently met, just the three of us, to map out what each of us were going to do in a particular day and what the problems of the day might be, at least we had those meetings when Shultz was in Washington). We met that morning and Mike said, "Well the most important thing I have to do today is to -- George you're going to be away, you have to leave for South America at noon time -- I'm going to be testifying for you on the situation in Iran." This was before we had the phrase 'Iran Contra' on the situation in Iran. Mike then said, "I have some qualms about this, because as the press is playing this up, this is going to be a situation in which they point out possible differences between the White House and the State Department and what we in the State Department know and what we don't know about what the White House is doing." He said, "This seems to me to be more of a political thing, and I'm a Foreign Service Officer, I can talk about our policies with Iran, but I'm not terribly good talking about differences between the White House and the State Department and maybe this ought to be done by a political appointee." Suddenly the eyes of both men turned to me, and I could feel them boring into me and there was dead silence in the room and Shultz really did have to go to Latin America and Mike really did have a pretty good point. To make a long story short, the duty fell to me, the giver of this testimony.

Q: And that gave you about three hours to prepare.

WHITEHEAD: It gave me, I think a little less than three hours to prepare the testimony. While they had prepared the testimony for Armacost, which was about ten pages -- it took about 15 or 20 minutes to read -- and I read it through and it was pretty good and it talked about how we were searching for moderate leaders in Iran and trying to avoid having to deal with the extremist leaders but hoped that there might be some moderate leaders in Iran that we could find that would permit us to have some kind of a continuing dialogue with Iran on the many issues that existed between the two countries and between Iran, one of the most important countries in the region, and other states; so it was a tense time. I changed the testimony a little bit, added to it a little bit, tried to make it a little more persuasive, and at 2 o'clock I got to the committee hearing room and found myself confronted with what looked like a hundred television cameras and two hundred microphones and a full contingent of the press from all over the world. It was obvious

that I was going to be attacked by all hands at this hearing, mostly by the Democratic side because it was the Republican White House that was then sort of the target of the criticism. I was to be a witness that would give them the information they were looking for. Well I read my ten pages of speech, and then they began the question period and the question period lasted for more than two hours and lasted until something after 5 o'clock, so I was up there for three hours. My testimony did evidence differences between the knowledge that the White House had about what was happening in Iran and what we were doing and what the State Department knew. The questions in which you're under oath -- and of course I had to answer absolutely honestly -- brought out that, yes indeed, there were differences and the questioners tried to make the most of those differences and show that there was dissent and disagreement between the information and actions of the White House and the National Security Advisor, on the one hand, and the Secretary of State and the State Department, on the other hand. Pretty exhausted after the three hours of testimony, I went back to the State Department feeling fairly confident that I had done a pretty good job of defending the President, of pointing out the need to look for moderate leaders in countries like Iran, that some of the things they asked about including the cake and the candle and secret trips and so on, I simply had to deny that I had any knowledge of those; there wasn't more than once I denied it and I did have no knowledge. There was no further questioning, but I thought I had done a pretty good job.

But, there was one place in the testimony, thirty seconds out of three hours, in which the question was, "Do you think that, in any way, all these efforts with Iran have, in any way, moderated their conduct?" and whether they may now be a little less enthusiastic about the terrorist actions that they had been involved with. Well, that question had been asked of President Reagan the day before at a news briefing. He had said that, yes, he thought, from all that he knew, that there may have been some moderation in the conduct of Iran. Then I was asked the same question, "Do you have any information which would lead you to believe that there had been any moderation....?" And the information that I had was that there had been no change at all, that up 'till then our efforts had not had any positive effect. And I made the statement, "I hate to disagree with my President, but" and I went on to say, "my information is that there has been no change in their conduct." Well that little way of phrasing that question, of course, was what led the evening news on television that night and made screaming headlines in all the newspapers because it was the first disclosure. I can see over there on the windowsill some clippings from those morning newspapers that I had framed. And it was the first time that there had been an indication of disagreement and distress between the information that the White House had and which it had not given to the State Department. So that was my baptism by fire from the media and it was not a pleasant one.

Then there is a little aftermath to that. I was very distressed at the way the news was playing. It did not seem to me to be an appropriate determination, because I had tried very hard to have it more balanced than it came out. This was the only sentence, from all of my testimony, that was quoted in the newspapers, but it was quoted very vividly. So I wrote a note to the President, handwritten, saying I was sorry at the way it was played, that, if he would look at the whole testimony, I think he would feel that I had done as best I could to have a balanced point of view, but that I was sorry if it in any way embarrassed him. So nothing happened, and the next day came and went, and all my friends in Washington were calling me up and sympathizing with this,

and about 5 o'clock I got a call to come over to the White House to see the President. I said well, I've been in office five months now, it's been fun, and I'm probably on my way out. This was a real, momentary disaster, and I was prepared psychologically that this might be the very end. The President welcomed me into his office -- just the two of us were there -- he sat me down in the seat and he said, "I got your note, you did a terrific job, I'd been told by others what a fine job you did in your testimony. Now you understand what the media can do to you, they've done it to me, you're doing a great job, you already had some really successful things that you've done and I just want you to know I am fully supportive of you." I was much relieved and I smiled and I said, "Thank you very much." But then he said, "But then, John," he said, "you know," he said, "yesterday was a very tough day for me, I had to make two speeches and one was in Baltimore and the other was somewhere else, I had busy meetings all day, we had this issue here, this issue there, I got home last night at 7 o'clock, just in time to look at the evening news upstairs. I took off my jacket and put on my smoking jacket," and he said, "I took off my shoes and put on my slippers and I sat down before the television -- you know how it works with the television when you turn it on, the picture comes on while the sound comes before the picture, and you hear the sound before you see the picture," and I said "yes." He said, "the sound came on and somebody said 'I hate to disagree with my President, but,' and I said to myself, now who the hell could that be." And he said, "John your picture came up and I couldn't believe it, so that was my day, you had a tough day and I had a tough day." So, in a very sort of nice way, he told me that I had given him quite a problem and that it sort of distressed him. It was very, very sort of typical of him, he was very kind about it, but he got the message across that it wasn't my best day in his eyes. And I had added to his burdens of the day by what had happened. It was one of those little incidents that many of us had with the President, where his character traits came out.

RICHARD T. MCCORMACK
U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States
Washington, DC (1985-1989)

After attending Georgetown University, Mr. Richard T. McCormack assumed a multitude of administrative roles for the Nixon Administration in addition to serving under Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania and Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Mr. McCormack's career also included positions as the US Ambassador to the Organization of American States as well as Under Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. Ambassador McCormack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Well, as we began to build up the contras and sort of building up a backfire within Nicaragua, how was that playing within the OAS? What were you getting?

McCORMACK: Well bear in mind that the heavy lifting on that issue was done before I became OAS Ambassador. These were ongoing, up-and-running programs by the time I was there. There was a war going on. The question was, was it going to be successful or not? There were major propaganda operations underway. The OAS was one of the theaters for various propaganda

efforts that were being made to either support or condemn the war. But the real work on the Central American issues was being done by the CIA and NSC. The only time I got involved was when I thought the State Department was about to make a mistake. Then, I would write a memo and send it to the Secretary of State. There were a few times when I did that and in fact prevailed.

Q: What sorts of things were these?

McCORMACK: One of the more contentious solutions to the Nicaragua conflict had to do with commitments of United States and others under the Rio Pact. Bob Sayre and I saw a few people privately and killed efforts to undermine it. I was also an old friend of Bill Casey, the CIA Director. From time to time, when I wanted to know what was happening, I would go over by myself and see him alone. There was never anyone else present except him and me. If I had something that I felt that I wanted the President to take note of, Bill would do that at his regular morning briefings. I didn't do it very often, only if I felt that something really needed to be brought to the attention of the President for action. When all else failed, this channel never failed.

Q: Did Oliver North ever cross your track?

McCORMACK: Briefly, but only very distantly. I earlier mentioned Bromley Smith. Bromley was the longest serving employee of the National Security Council. He served as Executive Secretary for Johnson and Kennedy and Deputy Executive Secretary for Eisenhower and Truman. Later he was brought back and became sort of a permanent advisor at the National Security Council. One day I went over to see Bromley Smith during the Tower commission investigation, which was reviewing Iran Contra. Bromley looked strangely pale. I said, "What's wrong, Bromley?" He took the copy of the Tower Commission report, and he threw it across the desk. He said: "Have you seen this?" I said, "No." He said, "This is an advance copy of a report that is going to be issued tomorrow. These people have prostituted an institution to which I have given my entire life." He was referring to the Iran-Contra people he thought had abused the National Security Council process. "Now this Commission has compromised the whole concept of executive privilege, which I successfully defended for 40 years. "I am resigning today." He went home and died three days later. Mac Bundy and I were pallbearers at his funeral at the National Cathedral. Bromley had undergone a medical examination one week before this event, and he had been given a clean bill of health.

Q: What were they trying to do?

McCORMACK: Basically they broached the principal of executive privilege. That was the smaller issue. The main issue was his complete disgust at how people had misused the National Security Council structures. It literally killed him. Anyway he was a great and wonderful patriot. Subsequently, a magnificent tribute appeared in The Washington Post by Joe Layton. The headline read: "Bromley Smith, Confidant of Presidents." I did not have anything to do with any of these Iran Contra events. Later when Bush Sr. became President, I was helped to rise higher in the system.

DAVID M. EVANS
Office of Counter-Terrorism
Washington, DC (1986-1987)

Mr. Evans was born and raised in Philadelphia, PA and was educated at Harvard University and the University of Belgrade Law School. After service in the US Army, he joined the Foreign Service in 1963. As an Economic Specialist, Mr. Evans served in Warsaw, Belgrade, Moscow and London. In addition to his economic assignments, he served in senior level positions dealing with International Security and Counter-Terrorism. He also served as Political Advisor to the Commander-in Chief, US Naval Forces in Europe. Mr. Evans was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: In 1986, you left POLAD. Where did you go?

EVANS: I came back to Washington. As you can imagine, after coming off of an assignment like that, it was a let-down. I hung around for a while. Then, I was assigned in the fall to the Counter-Terrorism Office, which was headed by Jerry Bremer at the time. CT, I think it was called.

Q: You did that from 1986 until?

EVANS: So, that was the fall of 1986. There I had sort of an epiphany. This must have been in November, no October. I was delegated to be the office's point man to go out and talk to the French and read the riot act to them about their bad behavior in treating with terrorists. I was given all sorts of briefing materials and told to take a very hard position with the people that I was to interface with. I think two days before I was due to leave on my trip, there was a great flurry of excitement. People said, "Come, look at the TV." There was, Bud McFarlane, as I recall, in Iran with his hand in the cookie jar.

Q: We are talking about the Iran-Contra Affair.

EVANS: That was the first breaking news that we had, that in fact, we were negotiating with Iran. Well, the hypocrisy of the whole thing was so obvious. I remember going back to my office and reading these briefing points that I was meant to make to the French about never dealing with the terrorists, and never trading with Iran. The French had been negotiating with Iran about something or another. So, I told Jerry that I couldn't stay in the office. It was the closest I came to quitting. I wasn't going to quit the Foreign Service, because I had too many bills to pay. I said that I couldn't work in CT. There were some exciting times though. I was there when we were tracking the Hezbollah hostage, Father Lawrence Jenco. I was in the Operations Center that night that Oliver North was out there in a plane. I didn't even know who Oliver North was. Of course, we learned. It was exciting. It was another activity. But, as I say, I just couldn't take the hypocrisy of it. I remember Jerry Bremer, whom I respected, and as you know, went on to work with, and who may still be with Kissinger & Associates. He said, "Well, what is it that you want? Do you want a larger office? Do you want a different title?" I said, "No, I just want to get out of

here. I can't take this hypocrisy." I then had, as inevitably with one's career, a series of short-term assignments, as I recall, in spring or summer of 1987. I was doing promotion panels.

ALFRED JOSEPH WHITE
Iran-Contra Task Force
Washington, DC (1987)

Alfred Joseph White was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 16, 1929. He attended Syracuse and Georgetown Universities and served in the US Army before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. His career has included positions in countries including Germany, Sudan, Italy, Austria, Turkey, and Venezuela. He was interviewed by John J. Harter on September 17, 1997.

Q: So it was presumed that you were going to Latin America. You've never been there before.

WHITE: It was not clear at first that I was going there. There were several possibilities, one of which was Seoul, South Korea. The Economic Counselor job was opening in Seoul, and I was interested in that. Several jobs like that came open in Latin America. What I would have preferred to do was to go back to Europe. However, for some reason, things just didn't work out in Europe, even though I had the obvious background for such an assignment. So for a time I worked on the Iran-Contra Task Force in the Operations Center in the State Department. I really wasn't doing anything more than monitoring TV hearings going on in Congress.

Q: Tell us a little about that.

WHITE: My role was minor. I was simply in the Operations Center to monitor the TV hearings and write up a synopsis of these hearings in the Operations Center on the Seventh Floor of the State Department. Well, you know that that period was very dramatic, and a lot of attention was being given to those hearings. For some reason the powers that be in the Department thought that we should monitor the hearings.

Q: Well, I think that somebody should have been doing that. In my view that was a lot more important than a lot of people realized. Speaking of a lack of foreign policy and lack of control over the policy process, this was, perhaps, the most dramatic example of all of how people way out in "left field" operated. Like CIA, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North...

WHITE: Washington is never happier than when there is a big, juicy scandal. The media loves it.

Q: This whole episode made a mockery of what the State Department and the Foreign Service are all about. This was really the "Cold War" going crazy.

WHITE: In that particular period of time the situation in Central America was THE news, of course. Everybody was talking about it, and the hearings in Congress were quite spectacular.

Secretary of State Shultz testified, among many other people. Anyway I spent perhaps several weeks summarizing the TV hearings. Then I went into Spanish language training.

Q: From that experience did you get any special insights into the situation? Obviously, I have my own prejudices about it, but did you have some unique sense of it that was not part of the public record?

WHITE: No, because what I was doing was simply watching the public hearings.

Q: And you were writing reports about them?

WHITE: Just synopses of the hearings.

Q: Where did these synopses go?

WHITE: I suppose that they were turned over to ARA [Bureau of Inter-American Affairs].

Q: The press, of course, was preparing exhaustive reports on the hearings. What could you write that the press didn't write about?

WHITE: All I was doing was summarizing the hearings, which apparently was of some use to some people in the Department of State. Obviously, these hearings were a rather spectacular and bizarre process. I don't know any more about that than what's in the public domain. I had no inner access to any aspect of it. This was something that people on the Seventh Floor wanted to have done, and they were looking for people to do it. I was between assignments, so that's what happened, as those things do.

JOHN H. KELLY
Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs
Washington, DC (1989-1991)

John H. Kelly was born in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin in 1939. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Emory University. Mr. Kelly entered the Foreign Service in 1964. His career included positions in Adana, Ankara, Bangkok, and Songkhla. This interview was conducted by Thomas Stern on December 12, 1994.

KELLY: Also the Iranians may have decided that the hostages were becoming a liability for them. I should mention in that connection that during the 1989-91 period we had an extensive indirect dialogue with Iran through the Swiss, because we had no diplomatic relations with that country. During the Gulf crisis, we may have had as many as three exchanges per week with Iran. For example, we gave the Iranian warning about our military involvement in Saudi Arabia. We tell them in advance of our military deployments; we were obviously trying to assure that our

actions would not be misinterpreted in Tehran and read as hostile to Iran. We did have occasional inadvertent overflights, as might be expected with the thousands and thousands of sorties that we flew both from land and sea bases. We forewarned the Iranians that that might happen and assured them that no action against them was contemplated; our sole target in the area was Iraq. The last thing we needed was a military confrontation with Iran. Occasionally, American citizens who were held hostage in Kuwait and Iraq escaped into Iran; when we detected such moves, we would forewarn the Iranians and seek their help, which they extended in all situations. So we had a quasi-working cooperation with Iran on a very minimal level during the Gulf crisis. This did not change our fundamental view that Iran was a rogue state intent on fostering terrorism. We knew that they were still actively sponsoring terrorists against American targets; we had absolutely no doubt about the Iranian activities. These activities, sometimes carried out through Lebanon, occupied some of my attention. The Iranians had just decided that the US was the "Great Satan" in the world and were preoccupied with that concept. When we held the Madrid Peace Conference in October, 1991, the Iranian Islamic hierarchy issued a *fatwa* condemning to death every delegate to that conference, including Gorbachev, Bush, Baker, Shamir and all the other delegation leaders. The Iranian Muslim leadership had a grandiose view of the world and their role in it; unfortunately, they were deadly serious about their mission. In fact, that *fatwa* has not been lifted and all the delegates to Madrid are still potential victims of some demented extremist who might take these religious injunctions as his entrance into blessed eternity. Iran still operates on 13th Century European model of international behavior. I firmly believe that Iran has both a skewed view of the world and has domestic political pressures that lead to extremism. As I suggested, Iran reminds me very much of the kings and lords of the Middle Ages who decided that they were instructed by God to go to the Middle East to kill as many "infidels"--Muslims-- as they could. There are a lot of Iranians who think that their God wants as many Americans killed as possible. In addition, I don't believe that the Iranian political leadership has any understanding of the West. In the 1989-91, we had direct dealings with Iran at the World Court in The Hague. There was then and still is a US-Iran tribunal which meets to decide on the disposition of Iranian assets frozen by the West after the Shah's overthrow as well as some Western claims for assets in Iran. Some of the Iranian positions in that tribunal come out of "left field"; they bear no relationship to reality, as we know it, despite the fact that many of the attorneys representing Iran were educated in the West. Living and studying in the West has had no effect on these people's views of the world; they may have experienced that society, but certainly do not understand it. We saw the same syndrome appeared when Tariq Aziz justified Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by using as an analogy the Japanese rationale for their attack on Pearl Harbor. The Iranians don't see why we resent so much their *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie; they consider that a perfectly appropriate response to a literary work. It shows a complete lack of understanding of our views of the world and our psychology. I believe that the Iranian government and the Iranian religious establishment are very much as they portray themselves; Iran has not be "kidnapped" by a small bunch of religious revolutionaries. The majority of Iranians support this fervor; they just suffer from a major misperception of reality, as seen by most of the rest of the world. Therefore, I do not believe that there is a major battle in Tehran between the extremists and the so-called "moderate faction". This is a fiction that has been around for years. I do not see the see-saw political battle in Tehran between these two factions nor do I believe that President Hashemi Rafsanjani is a "moderate" who is buffeted by one side or the other. Rafsanjani is not a moderate by any standard. He countenances assassinations in the

name of religion; he is personally convinced that his religion requires him and all other "good" Muslims to take all measures against "infidels"; that is God's will!

Our main objective in the 1989-91 period was to isolate Iran. I discussed this goal with our European allies as well as the Russians. I didn't get much sympathy; the Europeans all admitted that Iran was not behaving as a civilized country should, but it was just going through a bad period during which its leadership was crazy. They thought that most Iranians were civilized and that eventually, the "crazies" would leave the scene. They also thought that if would only treat Iran better, it would respond in kind. Of course, all European countries and the Russians had large commercial interests in Iran. In their view, it was we, the US, who had a skewed view of the world. It was a perfect illustration of the old maxim that "what you see depends on where you sit." The Europeans would admit in private that the Iranians were not behaving as a civilized country should. In Paris, there had been assassination of some Iranian opposition members and the Iranian diplomats had been involved in questionable practices, such as importing the guns used in these killings. The French officials would shrug their shoulders and tell me that that was the world--unfortunate situation, but beyond the control of anybody except the Iranians themselves. Then gratuitously they would point out that it was still we whose nationals were being held hostage in Lebanon. They didn't have any hostages because they would deal with the kidnapers; the US would not. It was the typical *realpolitik* one gets so often from the French. The Germans would tell us that we did not understand the Iranians and the British took the line I mentioned before--treat them better and they will improve their behavior. So we did talk to the Europeans about what might bring Iran back into the family of nations. I should note that George Bush, in his Inaugural address, said to the whole world that there were no reasons that we had to have adversarial relations with Iran; in fact, the US was prepared to open a dialogue with Iran if it wanted it improve relations. In other words, we were ready to sit down with the Iranians and discuss our differences at any time they chose. During my entire tour as Assistant Secretary, I received regular messages from Tehran which invited me or an American emissary to meet with their delegation anywhere in Europe, but that the meeting must be secret. Our standard reply was that we were prepared to meet, but that it would have to a meeting that we could publicly announce. The Iranians could never allow that degree of openness. I think they insisted on secrecy so that they could disavow whatever might have taken place or whatever might have been said. In my view this nervousness was due to Iranian domestic and international politics; if a government takes the public position that the US is evil incarnate, then it would be hard to justify meeting with it.

I do believe that the Iranians want to be a major player in the Muslim world--which they are not presently--but to become one means a radical departure from their present positions. I met regularly with the President of the Islamic Conference--who, at the time, happen to be a Nigerian. That Conference meets regularly, although it is largely ignored by the Western press. We tried to follow what transpired at the Conference because it took positions on many issues of interest to us. Iran was trying to influence the Conference; it spent money trying to influence other Muslim countries; it would and still does buy the air tickets and other support for delegates not only to the Conference, but to other meetings including the UN. The Iranians opened embassies in many former parts of the Soviet Union as they became independent; in fact, they mounted assistance programs for the countries in central Asia, most of which were predominantly Islamic. So the

Iranians are very active in trying to play a major role in the Islamic world.

G. JONATHAN GREENWALD
Office of the Special Representative for Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1991-1993)

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Mr. Greenwald earned degrees for Princeton University and Harvard Law School. His first government assignment was General Counsel in the Department of the Air Force. He later transferred to the Department of State, where he served as legal advisor as well as Political Officer, both in Washington and in various assignments abroad. His foreign posts include Germany (East and West Berlin), Yugoslavia, Hungary and Belgium. He also had assignments concerning anti-terrorism. Mr. Greenwald was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in 1998.

Q: Is there anything else that you want to cover on the period in Washington, or should we go on to your next assignment?

GREENWALD: There is in the press these days a fair amount of talk about the Swiss channel for dealing with Iran. In fact, Switzerland is the representative of U.S. interests in Tehran. We used that channel to communicate on hostage matters from 1991 to 1993 quite extensively. There was the question after all of the U.S. hostages were released as to what now, what did this mean. One of the major blockages toward any kind of normalization of U.S.-Iranian relations was the hostage problem. We had said that many, many times, and we had said that the release of hostages would be regarded obviously very favorably. So there was at least the possibility that some of the kinds of things which now seem to be happening in U.S.-Iranian relations might happen in 1992 or early 1993 when the hostages were freed. One of the questions for us in the Counterterrorism Office was what should our position be. Should we take an extremely hard line? Should we say, well, there are all sorts of indications that Iran still uses methods of terrorism in dealing with its own dissidents, its own Iranian political opponents abroad, it still has ties to the Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and so forth, and should we say that until all of those elements of Iranian involvement with terrorism are removed, the position within the bureaucratic spectrum of the Counterterrorism Office is do nothing, make no movements toward Iran, accept no gestures from Iran until you have it all? My own argument, which I think frankly would have been accepted as the Counterterrorism Office's argument if it ever reached that point, was that we should be more innovative in approaching Iran and say this was a major step forward, let's engage them on this subject and try to do with them what we were trying to do with Syria. I was disappointed and a little bit surprised -- I suppose I shouldn't have been in retrospect -- how little interest there was at that time in the State Department frankly in doing anything in Iran, and in particular in the Near Eastern and South Asian Bureau. I suppose I shouldn't have been, because just as the ethos in the European Bureau with regard to Berlin issues was built over the years with the relationship to West Berlin and going back to the Berlin air lift and all of those heroic times, so there was a lack of interest in exploring what might be non-stereotypical in East Berlin. I think

the ethos that I encountered in the Near East/South Asian Bureau with regard to Iran was still formed completely by that awful searing experience of the hostage taking plus the political realism of having seen what happened in those tragic comic escapades of cakes being taken to Tehran and the Iran Contra scandal in the middle '80s. So there was a feeling that this wasn't a government that had much to recommend it and that there was an enormous possibility of being burned if one took any initiatives. For that combination of reasons, nobody really wanted to try to do anything new or different.

Q: I suppose there were two other related factors to what you've just said, Jon, one that the new Secretary of State in 1993, Warren Christopher, had had a very personal involvement with the embassy takeover and, of course, the release of the hostages just as he was leaving office in 1981. But the other factor was there had really been not much change in Iran yet or at least it wasn't apparent to people other than maybe facilitating and helping release of the Beirut hostages and a lot of other things pretty much stayed the same. Then with the election Khatami as president, things did begin to change.

GREENWALD: Yes, well, certainly the Khatami election is a larger sign of something new and different than anything that was around in 1992-1993. There was at that time the belief that Rafsanjani was different from what had been before him, certainly not as much as Khatami seems to be, but he was different from the first generation.

Q: Jon, I think you were just finishing talking about the role of Secretary Christopher vis-à-vis Iran when he came to office in early '93.

GREENWALD: Yes, I think your point about Secretary Christopher's strong personal feelings that were very much influenced by his dealings with the efforts to resolve the hostage crisis at the end of the Carter Administration is real and true. This immobility, this reluctance to move goes back into the latter stage of the Bush Administration and the stewardship also of Secretary Baker. I think there was a feeling that there wasn't any political benefit but there was enormous political risk in trying to do something in what was already an election year period, which wasn't unlike the reaction that I had seen from him in the early stages of revolution in the GDR. Just as things were becoming most interesting right after the first demonstrations had broken out in the streets of East Berlin, there was a delegation from the Policy Planning Bureau under Francis Fukuyama, the end-of-history man, the highest ranking delegation that basically we had ever sent to the GDR. Certainly at that point in time it was a significant delegation. He very much wanted to talk to the political leadership, at least the second rank of political leadership, because he was working within the Policy Planning Bureau on developing policy alternatives to what was obviously a more flexible, fast-moving situation. Instructions came on the morning that we were take him over to East Berlin directly from the Secretary. We were not to talk to anybody in East Berlin, because there had been riots and police action a few nights before, and I think his concern was it would politically look bad to talk to the government at the same time as there was some police action against dissidents. My argument would have been this was precisely the time one needed to talk to them to find out what was going to happen and deliver messages and take the pulse of the situation. The nervousness about some type of politically embarrassing incident happening was predominant, and I may do him wrong in feeling that that was a driving concern

with regard to Iran at a time which was much closer to an election. At the same time I should also say I have great admiration for the way he conducted the Two-Plus-Four talks and everything around German unification. He was very perceptive and frankly had a far better feel for the flow of history than those of us in East Berlin, than I did, so I don't want to make this appear as an attack upon him, but I do think that particular cautiousness was not just one of Warren Christopher's personal reaction. It was one that really went more widely throughout U.S. political circles. There was much to be risked in dealing with Iran and not much to be gained; therefore, let's just stay away from it. Maybe an early opportunity was lost in 1992-93.

Q: But certainly nobody was really pushing us in the direction of looking for opportunities, no other country, or the Iranian-American community was probably not doing that.

GREENWALD: No, I'm sure there wasn't countervailing domestic pressure to go ahead and do things, and we didn't have the kinds of sharp disagreements about policy toward Iran that we've had over the last year, which have been at least one of the factors influencing our willingness to explore new possibilities, the desire to avoid having differences over the approach to Iran erode the fundamental U.S.-Western European relationship.

DAVID E. REUTHER
Iran-Iraq Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1992-1993)

David E. Reuther was born in Washington in 1942. He received a BA from Occidental College in 1965 and entered the Foreign Service in 1970. His assignments abroad include Udorn, Bangkok, Songkhla, Taipei, Beijing, Khartoum, and Kuwait. Mr. Reuther was interviewed by Raymond C. Ewing in 1996.

Q: David the other day we took your career up until approximately 1979. I would like to go back and ask you a couple of questions that occurred to me later about your time as desk officer for Iraq from 1976-78, in the light of subsequent and very interesting events. You left in 1978 from that job, did you see anything on the horizon relating to the war between Iraq and Iran? Was that something that you and others were beginning to think about?

REUTHER: Around 1979 I can't really recall anything that would have suggested a future Iran-Iraq war. I have subsequently concluded that Saddam simply seized the opportunity that opened when Iran made itself reprehensible to the rest of the international community. Iran's seizure of the American embassy left it quite isolated, not only diplomatically, but also militarily. Tehran antagonized the very country upon which its primarily American-equipped military was dependent. For Saddam then, Iran looked like easy pickings. But that was in the future. At the time I was dealing with Iraq, both Baghdad and Tehran used different Kurdish factions to harass each other. But, then that had been going on for a years and in fact during the 1976-78 period there was a lull in this activity.

As to U.S. policy, the Carter Administration came to office in the middle of my tour. Its basic thrust was that the United States should have diplomatic relations with anybody, regardless of whether we approved of them. This policy stressed that opening communications was key to reducing tension. Because, Iraq was the last of the Middle East countries that had broken off relations as a result of the 1972 war, the Administration sought to move Baghdad to a more formal relationship as the first step to nullifying its opposition to a Middle East peace. I think that is where our efforts were directed at that time, to look for opportunities to establish some sort of dialogue with them, or at least undercut Iraqi policy by creating the image that progress was being made. As I mentioned, for Baghdad, a truncated relationship with the U.S. was a pillar of its foreign policy. Iraq's position was that it was the last true Arab state, the only protector of the Palestinians, that the Syrians had sold out and established relations with the Americans. So, part of Baghdad's policy was no official relationship with us; that is why our willingness to establish a dialogue was a direct, albeit subtle, challenge to Iraq's policy.

Q: How long did you stay in Khartoum before you were transferred?

REUTHER: I believe I returned to Khartoum in April and by mid-May received my next assignment. After almost ten years, I returned to Washington. Building on my previous exposure to Iraq affairs I was offered the Deputy Office Director position in the Office of Iran and Iraq Affairs. In preparation for that assignment I was sent to Kuwait to help reestablish the embassy's Political Section. The war rather inconveniently ended before the State Department's summer transfer cycle, so the Department was assigning temporary duty personnel as an interim measure.

Q: What did you come home to?

REUTHER: As I mentioned earlier, I had experience with Iraq and we all realized that post-Gulf War policy toward Iraq would remain a major and delicate policy area. Ambassador David Mack was the Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near East Affairs and knew my work. He recruited me as deputy to Ron Neumann on the Iraq/Iran Desk. So, I returned to Washington as Ambassador Neumann's deputy. His focus was mainly Iranian issues and I covered Iraq and managed the office. It was indeed a substantive assignment at a propitious time.

When I took this position, I was aware of the considerable debate in this country as the public and the Congress struggled for understanding. As often happens, much of this is Monday morning quarterbacking. Some American commentators argued that U.S. policy contributed to Saddam's misreading of the situation in August 1990. One of the best academic pieces on the issue of 'could Saddam have been dissuaded' is by Janice Gross Stein, 'Deterrence and Compellence in the Gulf, 1990-91: A Failed or Impossible Task?' *International Security*, Vol. 17, Nbr. 2 (Fall 1992). Professor Stein's conclusion is that because Baghdad discounted American and European opposition, it probably could not have been deterred from the invasion. I believe that Saddam's calculation was impeccable. He was deeply in debt due to the recently concluded Iran-Iraq war, although his Arab neighbors contributed considerable funds Iraq's drubbing of the Persians. Rich Kuwait was there, viewed condescendingly by most of its poorer neighbors and Iraq owed major money to Kuwait. Extinguishing Kuwait eliminated a major debt and provided

substantial future revenue. Who would oppose Baghdad? Not the Iranians; they too are exhausted from eight years of war. The Syrians are Iraq's traditional political foes, but they are not big enough to take on the largest army in the Middle East and perhaps the fourth largest in the world. As to the Europeans, the French won't object. Baghdad owes Paris so much money that it wouldn't jeopardize its creditor. The debt situation is similar with the Germans and other Europeans. And even if they object, what does that mean? Certainly nothing militarily significant. Saddam might have considered that the Americans would object. There will be a lot of American hand wringing and UN resolutions, but because nobody else will go along with the Americans, they will be isolated in their objection. Even if the Americans try to do something militarily, if you look at what they just did in Panama, they made a total mess out of it as the world press had told everybody. So, thinks Saddam, if the Americans weren't militarily effective next door in Panama, how are they going to effectively move 10,000 miles into the Middle East? And, anyway, where are the Americans going to plant themselves? Washington can't make common cause with Tehran. Saudi Arabia is the protector of the holy Islamic places and the idea that armed infidels would be allowed into Saudi Arabia was beyond anybody's comprehension. Saddam's calculations were impeccable to a point. And that point was the moment he invaded Kuwait. His action changed the calculus. The Kuwaitis actually put up a stiff resistance in the first few hours and shot down a command helicopter. From the helicopter they retrieved papers that suggested Saudi Arabia was in jeopardy. The Kuwaiti success and the enormous vulnerability of Saudi Arabia to further Iraqi moves made the Saudis more afraid of Saddam than they were of armed infidels.

Q: Back to your Washington assignment. Of course there were a couple of other issues that presumably were being dealt with at that time by Saddam but also of interest to us, the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Shiite in the south. Were those of interest to you?

Faced with what Saddam was doing to the Iraqi people, we spent considerable time developing the international community's response. For example, a rebellion continued in the swamps on the Iran and Iraq border. Intelligence told of a heavy Iraqi hand throughout the Shiite south. Taking a cue from the north we worked closely with coalition members and instituted the southern no-fly zone. This program denied Baghdad air cover for its troops and meant we would fly very low level reconnaissance. The southern no fly zone was also a response to Baghdad's increasingly obvious unwillingness to recognize Kuwait's independence and demarcate the border. In fact, Iraq began to move military equipment toward the Kuwait border. Needless to say, the Kuwaitis felt very intimidated. Our counter to Iraq's military moves and the southern no-fly zone and the emplacement of a move-it-or-lose-it policy. This was one small illustration of what happened on my watch and that of my successors. Saddam would challenge the coalition looking for some hole we would not plug, stretching the patience of the coalition, and looking for the point where the coalition would crack.

PARKER W. BORG
Office of Counterterrorism
Washington, DC (1994-1996)

Ambassador Borg was born and raised in Minnesota. He was educated at Dartmouth College and Cornell University. In 1965, after a tour with the Peace Corps in the Philippines, he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During his career, he served in Vietnam and Zaire, and in the State Department in senior positions concerning Vietnam, West Africa and Counterterrorism. He served as US Ambassador to Mali from 1981 to 1984 and to Iceland from 1993 to 1996. Ambassador Borg was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

Q: Were you getting any signs of what became the Iran Contra affairs, in other words, our going around and talking about deals with the Iranians, or anything like that?

BORG: This emerged in November of 1985. I think we can pick that up later because, as I said a little bit ago, this would be a continuing issue. We're talking about early 1985 at this point. I'd like to go back to this, but maybe we can talk about the military and how they were organized, and the FBI and how some of these things evolved. Rather than discussing each one of the incidents and how we dealt with it, there were a number of generalized problems. One of the first that we discovered was that the new Bureau of Diplomatic Security was sending in its own messages through the DS channel and these would not be available for anybody back in the Department, and likewise the embassies were sending things in through their channels that would not be shared with DS if they were ex-dis or whatever it might be. We decided that we really needed to get our own act together within the State Department and also hopefully bring the CIA and the military attachés into a common reporting system. We had a meeting with all of the different parties in which we agreed to establish something called the 'terrep', which was a terrorist report. We worked out what the distribution on these messages would be, how they would be shared, how many copies there would be that were distributed, and so forth. So there were 'terreps' and 'terrep exclusives' that the CIA was to provide contributions to, the DS people were to contribute to, and the embassy people would contribute to overseas, with the objective that the information that was being collected about terrorist suspects and terrorist activities would be disseminated to all the people that needed to know back in Washington and not just to the specific channel that had organized the report in the beginning. I'm not sure how those fare at present, but at that time and for the next decade they were very effective.

Q: Did you feel that the military in the JSOC group, had they in a way learned their lesson from the botched attempt to rescue our hostages in Iran? It was apparent at the time that it could have been done better, much better.

BORG: I don't know, because I never asked anybody this question and I had the sense that personnel turned over in a manner that in three or four years the collective memory of what might have happened and gone wrong in the past was no longer there and that we were dealing with the players who were there at the time. They came to recognize that they needed to work together rather than to work separately.

BORG: The Iran-Iraq war began in maybe '87 or '88.

Q: It was a long war, about seven years, I thought.

BORG: I'll have to check this out. But Iran was interested in American equipment, spare parts for the planes that they had, and if we could provide these things, then perhaps they'd be helpful in getting the Hezbollah to release the hostages, and he thought they'd be willing to pay for this as well. What he didn't tell me was what he was going to do with the money that they were paying. He explained this story of how they were going to provide the Iranians with some of the military equipment that they needed. I went back and, after briefing Bob about this, I went and talked with the people in the Executive Secretariat, Ken Quinn specifically, and told him, "Here's what the National Security Council is doing right now on Iran." I told Ollie also that I really didn't think this was the best way to go about this because there was a ban on selling weapons to Iran and that we would get in trouble. Ollie made one of his statements - he made this statement more than once - "You know, at some point everybody will turn against me, but I know I'm doing what's right, so I've got to keep pursuing this. This is the right cause." I said, "I think you're going to have problems with this one." Anyway, I explained to Ken Quinn what had happened, Ken Quinn explained it to somebody, maybe the Secretary directly, and there was a meeting of the National Security Council in December in which the issue of arms to Iran came up, and there was a confrontation between Shultz and Weinberger with Shultz arguing very strongly that we should not be doing this. Again, I provided sort of the specifics about how much, what the quantity was, and it wasn't just a few submachine guns; it was a lot of stuff that they were talking about sending over.

Q: TON missiles and...

BORG: Yes, all that sort of stuff. So Shultz argued against it. Oliver called me after the meeting and said, "Well, I want to assure you that this is not going ahead. The National Security Council decided that they're not going to provide arms to the Iranians, and we're not going to be doing this." So we then thought, well, we've prevailed. Little did we realize at the time - this didn't come out for another year or so - that they cut Shultz out of the subsequent meetings, and they went right ahead with their plans for arms for Iran with Weinberger. Shultz was not involved in the subsequent meetings. This came out in the Iran Contra discussions subsequently. Again, we knew what Ollie was doing in providing arms to Iran, but we didn't know the other side of it. We knew that he also had the account for dealing with the Contras, but we didn't know that he was using the money that he got from the Iranians to fund the Contras, so when all of the scandal broke about Oliver North, all of us in the State Department were essentially protected because Ollie hadn't shared the interconnection between his two accounts with any of us. The people in ARA - who was running it at the time? He's back again, Eliot Abrams - probably knew what he was doing with the Contras, but he didn't know where the money was coming from. I guess I can fill in details of things I might have forgotten when I get the written transcript.

ANTHONY C. ZINNI
Commander-in-Chief, CENTCOM
(1997-2000)

General Zinni was born and raised in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Villanova College he joined the Marines, which became his lifelong career. His distinguish career took him to Vietnam, Okinawa, Philippines and Germany, where he served in senior level positions. Attaining the rank of General, Zinni served as Commander-in-Chief of CENTCOM, where he was deeply involved in worldwide missions including Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan. General Zinni was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: How did the operation, Provide Comfort, evolve and what were you doing? Before I get to that, when you're talking about a second front, what were we talking about at that point?

ZINNI: Obviously, there was a limit to the ability for example, for airstrikes and everything else into Iraq from the south. This would expose all of Iraq to attacks, would give us easier access into what was called the H areas in western Iraq where the scuds were launched. So, you know, this did not get a safe haven, you know, for Saddam anywhere in the country. I'm convinced that that is one of the things that caused him to send airplanes to Iran, because he couldn't move them back up into the North and keep them out of range or anything. So it had advantages in terms of exposing all of Iraq. You gained another ally in Turkey and a commitment into it and obviously because we did it with British and French and all, you brought NATO involvement, not under a NATO flag but you brought European involvement in from another area and a major NATO nation like Turkey providing the base support. So there were a lot of advantages to it in the long run.

Q: Did the Iranian Kurds play any role in this at the time? Were they a problem?

ZINNI: The Kurds in Iraq fled mostly into Turkey and also a large number of them fled east into Iran and initially, the discussion was how do we work with the Iranian side? The Iranians were very resistant on any outside involvement or support, humanitarian or otherwise with the Kurds that had fled across their border. When the Italians first came in and were considering joining our coalition, they actually went out to see if they could maybe participate with the Iranians in this relief effort because there was a big need out there and the Iranians rejected them a little too hard and they rejected the United Nations involvement. So we basically were confined to working with the 500,000 Kurds that had fled up into Turkey and were still stuck in the mountains of northern Iraq. The Iranians did not want any outside assistance and said they would care and take care of the refugees that had fled across their borders so that was completely separated.

Q: Were there while you were there sort of movements around?

ZINNI: No movements out of Iran that I was aware of or anything like that. The only thing out of Turkey were the activities of the PKK. The larger Kurdish community outside the PKK weren't making any noises. Barzani and Talabani were trying to show cooperation with the Turks

because obviously they didn't want to, you know, we needed them, the Turks, for this thing to work.

Q: You left there in 1995 and then what?

ZINNI: Yes. And of course we had a commitment in Korea, and a commitment in CENTCOM for Iraq and Iran, so my time was spent staying boned up on those war plans, going through those sorts of things.

I was nominated to be the deputy commander in chief of CENTCOM, the number two at CENTCOM. So in 1996 I went to CENTCOM and spent a year as the deputy and then I was nominated to be the commander and became the commander in 1997 until 2000.

End of Reader