

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

KENNETH SMITH

*Interviewed by: David Reuther
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is the 7th of December, 2020. This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History Program interview with Ken Smith. This interview is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm David Reuther.

Ken, welcome aboard.

SMITH: Thank you, I'm glad to be here.

Q: It is a significant day; it's December 7th, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor. You are one of the few people I've interviewed who was born before Pearl Harbor. Let's start there. Give me some background; where were you born, what were your folks' occupations, where were they from.

SMITH: I was born on the 16th of December, 1932 -- so I'll be eighty-eight next week -- in Plymouth, Devonshire, South West England; where the pilgrim fathers came from; so I

missed the boat that time! At the time, my father -- Frank -- was in the Royal Navy, home-ported nearby at Devonport. I don't remember ever being in Plymouth. Mostly what I remember was from 1937 on; after my mom – Dorothy -- moved to Kent, South East England. I've only got vague flashes of a couple of episodes in different places before then.

My dad was a Stoker Petty Officer (SPO) – equivalent to a sergeant -- in the China Fleet. He supervised the ship's engineering crew responsible for keeping the ship running. In those days, ships were powered by burning coal in furnaces to heat huge boilers of water and produce forced steam to turn the propellers. Smoke stacks were a prominent feature of those ships. [A movie "The Sand Pebbles" depicts Steve McQueen in a similar role on an American gunboat in China during that era.] I remember my dad had huge forearms with tattoos on them -- like Popeye -- probably from shoveling coal in his earlier years. [I always called him "Pop."] His naval career started in 1917 -- during WWI -- and was due to finish in 1939; but WWII was just starting in Europe, so they kept him on for the duration. After the war ended in September 1945, recruits drafted for war service were demobilized first. Regulars weren't released 'till almost a year later.

Dad's family – my grandparents, his brothers and sisters -- lived in Wigan, Lancashire, in the north of England. My grandmother Annie was a McGrath -- from Ireland. My dad had four brothers and two sisters. My grandfather Peter, and uncles were all coal miners. As a very young kid, my dad tended the pit ponies who dragged tubs of coal through tunnels in the mines to the mine-head. But as soon as he turned 'teen -- during WWI (the 'Great' War) – he ran away to join the navy; several times. Each time his father was called to fetch him home; until eventually, my grandfather gave up and said "You can keep him." So, that's how my dad began his career – as a boy apprentice in the Royal Navy. [Later, my uncle Peter also joined the Navy; and during WWII, uncle David was also at sea in the Merchant Marine, on ship convoys.]

My mother was from the south of England. The Fullman family lived in the Cockney area of London's East End. My grandfather Jim had his own business as a chimney sweep – just like Dick Van Dyke in the Mary Poppins movie – with a push cart, brushes, and a young boy assistant to scramble up on roofs, and crawl down chimneys. They were also a large family -- eight kids. Her two brothers were also in the military during the war; uncle Albert (Alby) in the Army, and Harry in the RAF – Royal Air Force.

To sum up, I guess you could say our families 'cornered the coal business' -- from digging it out, using it up, to cleaning up the mess.

I only saw my dad briefly and intermittently during the war, so pre-teen, I was an only child living with my mother. However, my mom sometimes took me to visit my grandparents and cousins in Lancashire and London. I remember Wigan as a dark, dirty, sooty place, with huge slag heaps from the mine wastes they called the 'Wigan Alps.'

I don't know if you know much about England, but although the country is small -- much like the US -- the Northern region is quite different from the South. Wigan particularly --

in Lancashire – with collieries was a grimy, industrial area; very cold, and lots of rain. It also rained a lot in the South as well as being cold; but by contrast, Kent – called the ‘Garden of England’ -- was pleasant, green and sunny; except yellowish ‘pea-souper’ fogs sometimes enveloped the area during the winter from factory and home coal (for heating) smoke mixing with the cold damp air.

The British are also very parochial. Northerners tend to think of Southerners as sissies, while we in turn characterized them as rough louts; and never the twain should meet -- except to argue and fight in pubs, or at football games. [But in truth, while most other Northerners seemed dour, I always found ‘Lankies’ to be warm and friendly – very much like Cockneys; although with a different accent.]

Q: You mentioned your father was in the China fleet?

SMITH: Yes, he was on HMS (His Majesty’s Ship) Kent. It was a heavy cruiser; and the China Fleet flagship. I guess he was transferred from Devonport to join the Fleet sometime after I was born, because the Kent’s home-port was Chatham, Kent. From commissioning in 1928 ‘till early in WWII, the Kent was stationed at Weihaiwei, on the northeastern coast of China; but cruised the entire China Sea area. In the Royal Navy ships stayed in their region -- wherever -- for about two years; then would come back briefly for renovation and refitting; then return to station. So, while the ship was in Chatham dock, he could come home for a week or two every couple of years. The first time I remember seeing him was when I was about 7 years old. I came home from school one afternoon; walked in the house, and saw a strange man with a beard there. I ran out, screaming until my mother appeared and said, “Don’t worry, this is your father.” Nevertheless, it scared me sh*tless and took me quite awhile to adjust.

Some additional background: For England, the war began on 1 September 1939, but the Kent didn’t return home from China until late 1940. Her initial war duties were anti-raider patrols on the China Station. Then early in 1940 she was reassigned to the Indian Ocean for troop convoy escort duty. Italy declared war on England in June 1940, and the Kent was transferred to the Mediterranean Fleet for convoy duty, and based at Alexandria, Egypt. During intense fighting 17 September, they were aerial-torpedoed by an Italian plane off the Libyan coast near Tobruk. Although badly damaged, they were towed to Alexandria for repairs; then resumed convoy duty until December 1940, when they returned to England just after Christmas.

He was then reassigned to North Atlantic convoys on HMS Mansfield – a U.S. Lend-Lease ‘four-stacker’ minesweeper-destroyer -- with escort duty between the US, Canada and Europe for merchant ships. I remember visiting his ship once in Chatham drydock and receiving a personal guided tour by one of his shipmates, who – among other things -- sent me climbing a mast to look for eggs in the ship’s ‘crow’s nest’. Later, the Mansfield was turned over to the Canadian Navy and my dad was reassigned to another ship – I don’t know which one – escorting convoys to Russia on what was called the ‘Murmansk Run.’ His ship was torpedoed on one run; he convalesced for a couple of months in

Cheshire, then was sent back for sea duty until the war's end. [The movie "The Cruel Sea" depicts typical convoy escort events like he endured.]

When my dad eventually retired from the Navy, he had a hard time adjusting to civilian life. He had seasonal bouts of malaria for about a week – when he would turn pale yellow and go to bed alternating between sweating with high fever and shaking with chills. After the trauma from the war, although genial, gregarious and a workaholic by nature, he was a lost soul in his early 40's -- an alcoholic with 'shell shock.' [Today they call it 'PTSD' – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.] Any unexpected movement or noise nearby would trigger him into flinching and ducking, then turning into a frightening 'fight' mode and ranting rage before he calmed down with the shakes. That resulted in him quitting -- or losing -- several jobs. My mother used to say she always 'walked on eggshells' to avoid setting him off. I also learned to be cautious around him, and would deliberately make noise well in advance to signal my approach.

As a young teenager I would sometimes go along with him to the pub. There he would socialize with his buddies – mostly former shipmates -- while I'd have a pork or steak & kidney pie, drink a Vimto (like a Dr. Pepper) and munch 'Smith's Crisps' (crunchy potato chips). He never talked about his war experiences at home, but I learned a lot by eavesdropping on their war stories. He could drink lots of beer and stay jolly, but whisky would bring out the aggression.

Q: You had your own war experiences during the Battle of Britain.

SMITH: We lived in Loose [pronounced LOOS], on the outskirts of Maidstone, Kent – about 10 miles from the Chatham dockyard. In the fall of 1940, the 'Battle of Britain' was fought overhead. German planes would fly over in droves every day, but our outnumbered RAF (Royal Air Force) spitfire and hurricane fighter planes resisted; and eventually the 'Jerries' quit. Winston Churchill subsequently noted "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." However, at the time I really didn't appreciate the danger of it all. Every day was like July the 4th in the USA. Anti-aircraft guns shooting, shell bursts, smoke-puffs and contrails all over the sky like fireworks; planes maneuvering and 'dog-fighting,' getting shot down, crashing and burning; and sometimes pilots bailing out in parachutes. We also had an 'ack-ack' gun crew in the orchard near our back yard contributing to the din. Night-times were more of the same -- flashing and banging -- with searchlights sweeping the sky. Whenever a plane crashed, or a parachutist came down nearby we kids would rush over to see where and who it was; and hunt for souvenirs. Daily life was very eventful. I had a footlocker full of shrapnel -- pieces of bombs – as well as bullets, cartridges and twisted metal from crashed aircraft.

Everybody was also worried about German spies, so in addition to playing 'war games' we kids would also go 'spy tracking.' We'd see somebody we didn't recognize and decide to follow them – conspicuously 'inconspicuous' until they noticed us, and chased us away. However, though fun for kids, the war was really serious and scary to our parents. My mother used to caution me; but I still hung around with other kids playing in bomb

craters in our area and bombed-out buildings in town; and it was mostly lots of fun. We'd team up, then toss a coin to determine who would be the British side. 'Germans' had to wear their caps backwards.

Loose village-proper was in a very steep valley. We didn't actually live in the village cluster; but about a mile away, next to a farm. The village school and urban sprawl from Maidstone was on the other side of the valley. To go to the village school – or Maidstone via the village -- we'd go down the hill into the village, then up the hill on the other side. So, I used to tell my kids -- quite truthfully -- "When I was your age, I had to walk a couple of miles to school every day, and it was uphill both ways."

Our group of houses adjacent to the farm were rented out by the landlord-farmer. He also had other 'tied'-cottages nearby, where his laborers lived. It was a beautiful area, surrounded by apple, peach, plum and cherry orchards, under-grazed by sheep and cows. Because my mom had a steady income from my father's naval career, we were essentially lower middle class. My mother never had regular work, but occasionally did seasonal work on the farm. For a while during the war, she worked the telephone switchboard for the National Fire Service; and looked very smart in her NFS uniform. She also pulled volunteer duty as an air raid warden. Later, she worked part-time in the village grocery store, where she was at the hub of all the village gossip. But essentially, she was a stay-at-home mum.

Q: One of the things the Americans hear about this time is the British tried to empty the major cities of children during the blitz. You were in a more rural area so that didn't affect you?

SMITH: Not immediately. After the Battle of Britain, the German planes would fly over us primarily to bomb London; and occasionally dropped bombs on us, or got shot down. But at night, although some 40 miles away, we could see the glow of London burning. Several of my aunts' (and cousins') homes in London were bombed and they were evacuated to stay with us for about a year. Then, when the war got more intense for us locally, they went back to London. Once in a while my mom would take me to London to visit them. If there was an air raid while there, we'd all go down into the Underground – the subway. Lots of bunks were set up there and many Londoners lived, or would stay overnight; then come back up during the day.

Sometime later -- I'm not too sure of the dates but when I was around 12 or 13 – kids in the Maidstone area were also evacuated. We assembled at school with our gas masks and suitcases, they tied ID labels on us, bussed us to the train station and sent us to London. From London my batch was sent to Cardiff in South Wales on another train, with kids from other schools.

Q: By '44, Americans were assembling in England for the Normandy landing. Did you see any of that build-up?

SMITH: I didn't notice any build-up prior to the invasion, but we saw lots of Americans -

- both Army and -- around Kent throughout (as well as after) the war. During the war, they wore the same khaki uniform. Maidstone was a garrison town with troops from all over the British Empire, as well as Free French and Poles who regrouped there, so there were always lots of military around. Americans camped on bases nearby but mixed freely about town and were always very friendly, handing out gum and candy to us kids. Collecting insignia—buttons, badges and patches – from all services was a major hobby. Everybody loved the ‘Yanks,’ except I remember when calling one a Yank he corrected me: “Hell I ain’t a Yank; I’m from Mississippi.” (Laughter). My dad once befriended a Yank at the pub, and brought him home for an impromptu meal – much to my mom’s surprise. The second time he came prepared for an overnight stay, and even gave me one of his Army officer’s shirts for my boy scout uniform. Clothing was both scarce and rationed, and my mom couldn’t get me one. I was a patrol leader and very proud of my distinctive Yankee uniform and wore it ‘religiously.’ It was the wrong color – dark brown (rather than khaki), and a bit big for me, but my scoutmaster let me wear it anyway.

Q: By ‘42 the war’s going on, you joined the air training corps; what was that?

SMITH: When I went to grammar school, they had a compulsory Cadet Corps, but we were allowed to choose between the Army or Air Force. I chose the Air Training Corps (ATC).

But first; I need to clarify. An English Grammar school then was not like grammar school in America, but more or less equivalent to an American Prep school for boys; socially quite selective, and highly competitive, academically. Maidstone Grammar School (MGS) was one of the earliest -- established by royal charter in 1549 – and steeped in tradition. In 1902, the national government established new ‘modern’ grammar schools, but also provided a few scholarships for existing grammar schools, such as Maidstone’s. Even so, only about 10 percent of the population actually attended grammar school, and local authorities were very protective and selective about who attended. Academic ability was the prime criterion for the few hoi polloi scholarship seats.

The British are very socially-conscious, and kids at my social level only went to the village school until age 15, although they could take the competitive exam for grammar school at age eleven; if their parents were so inclined. If successful, a five-year curriculum followed after which -- normally – students would sit for a ‘school certificate’ exam – then leave; regardless whether they passed or failed. For those interested in pursuing a university degree, a 6th year program was also available to prep for their entrance exams. However, my level didn’t know much about university except that ‘posh’ people went there before taking over their family’s estate or family business; or going into the officer ranks of the military, civil or colonial service.

Upper social-level classes generally regarded grammar schools disdainfully, as they and their kids attended ‘public schools’ -- such as Harrow, Eaton or a lesser-known boarding school (which were really private) -- before university. [Frank Richards stories about Greyfriars boarding school -- which I used to read occasionally -- with characters like Billy Bunter and Harry Wharton; as well as today’s Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies

– without the wizardry – also depict English school life & structure.] But for me, my parents proverbial ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ was simply attending -- and leaving -- grammar school when eligible.

What was unusual in my case though was that both my parents pushed me to study hard and get a ‘good education’ in order to ‘get ahead.’ Both for different reasons, however. While he always spoke respectfully of his military superiors, my father was a socialist; very scornful of and antagonistic towards his civilian ‘betterers.’ He wanted me to get a good education to prove I was just as good as they were. My mother, on the other hand, wanted me to do what the British call “getting above yourself” and join them; even though she couldn’t ‘climb’ socially, herself. So, in their own way they both drilled into me that with a good education I could do, and be, anything I wanted. [My dad presumed I’d join the Navy; my mom hoped I’d get a good ‘white collar’ government job and ‘be somebody.’]

While Maidstone Grammar maintained most places for upper middle-class ‘heritage’ parents, the ’11-Plus’ scholarship exam in the Spring was the gateway to grammar school in the Fall for other aspiring town and village kids.

I took the exam a year early – since my 11th birthday was in December – but suffice to say, I won a scholarship to MGS to the delight of my mom; but p’ed off everybody else in our immediate community, because we were now ‘getting above’ ourselves; and they wouldn’t speak to her for the longest time. Fortunately, the other kids still played with me – though they often mocked me as ‘professor’ – whenever I was available to go out and play -- Whatever.

Now back to answer your question. My father had expected me to follow in his footsteps – “Join the Navy and See the World.” – was their slogan. But the grammar school didn’t have naval cadets; only army and Air Force. Enamored with the Air Force since the Battle of Britain, I chose the Air Training Corps (ATC), which really gave me a ‘head start’ compared to my peers when I was conscripted after I turned eighteen, and subsequently served my two years of compulsory National Service in the RAF.

Q: There’s a thread there we’re going to visit any number of times. Now this is during the war, and things are not always settled. I think you mentioned you were evacuated to Cardiff?

SMITH: Soon after I got into grammar school, the local bombings got pretty intense and many of us younger kids were evacuated. Although our foster parents were kind to us, the Welsh in general didn’t take kindly to ‘foreigners,’ and we didn’t mix with the kids at school very much. They didn’t bully us, but we were oddballs to them. But we were only there for about a school year. Then, I guess the government decided the bombing in Southeast England had reached a ‘new normal’ level, because we were returned to Maidstone, rejoined MGS and ‘carried on.’

Q: By 1944 the tide of war had changed. After the Allies had landed in Normandy the

German response to England was the V-1 and V-2s.

SMITH: Oh yes; I remember ‘doodlebugs.’ [The V-1 rocket was what we called a doodlebug.] It looked like a large cigar with stubby wings and a big blow-torch engine on top. It sounded like, and traveled about as fast as, a loud motorcycle – brrrrrr. We could hear -- then see -- them coming over. But they weren’t very well targeted. After launching from Germany, they came over the English Channel, and flew until the engine cut out; then dropped and exploded. As the doodlebugs came over, we used to watch our Spitfires intercept them. Our planes developed an interesting maneuver – they would fly close and parallel but slightly lower, then roll out and tip the rocket under its wing. That would knock it off course, and it would spin out of control; crash and explode. It was fascinating to watch. One dropped quite near us. The blast shattered our windows. After it exploded, we kids ran to the crash site to get souvenirs. I got a piece with part of an insignia on it. By the end of the war, I had quite a little war museum in our backyard, but after I left home my mom threw “all that rubbish” away.

After the doodlebugs, the V2s came over. They traveled about three times the speed of sound. You could hear and see doodlebugs, and anticipate where they were going; but V2s were silent. Just a sudden explosion. Then, after the explosion was when you heard them coming -- with a whoosh. Fortunately for us, the V2s were aimed at the urban areas, so we only got bombed when they were off course.

Q: You noted that you’re at the Maidstone Grammar School in Kent. The war ends in ‘45. How did things feel?

SMITH: I remember I was downtown Maidstone when “VE day” (Victory in Europe day) was announced on the radio. People all around me just went crazy. Some climbed up lamp posts, yelling and waving. I was waiting for a bus to go home and asked, “What’s going on?” and people screamed “The war’s over.” Things gradually calmed down after that, but didn’t go back to normal because the war was still going on in Asia against Japan, and we still had a lot of military troops and vehicles around Maidstone. Although the atom bomb was a big deal on the news, us kids hardly noticed, but just went back to school and carried on doing ‘our thing’ – studying.

The other kids in the neighborhood went to the local school until age fourteen and then to work. I was an only child so most of my time during and after the war was spent studying. I learned to read at home even before I ever went to school, and had school books. My mother bought a huge encyclopedia and dictionary, as well as complete sets – world history, geography, travel, health, classic literature, as well as stories [all from Odhams Press] which were kept in a cabinet with glass doors in our ‘sitting’ room: where I did my ‘homework.’ [I also used to buy weekly English comics – Hotspur, Champion, Adventure, Rover & Wizard – which were serialized stories for reading, rather than picture cartoons like American comic books.] Since my dad was away in China, my mom made me read about Asia, so I was quite familiar with place names and people. In addition to world geography, I was particularly interested in the history and culture of

different countries. I had a stamp collection and a big album with blank pages for different countries, and would buy as well swap stamps with other kids. The war news and my collection of army badges, buckles, buttons, shoulder patches, etc., all reinforced that interest, and I was looking forward to being in the military and traveling the world when I grew up.

Q: After the war, quite a bit changed. Churchill was voted out, the government changed.

SMITH: Yes. Churchill took command of a coalition government and led Britain to victory in WWII, saying “I did not become the king’s minister to preside over the demise of the British Empire.” But immediately after the war, Churchill was voted out and the Labor -- socialist -- party took over; instituting nationalization of major industries and utilities at home; accelerating the collapse of the Empire abroad, as many countries got their independence and changed their names. It was quite a shock – particularly to my mom. My dad, on the other hand, thought it was great. He was struggling to find (and keep) a decent job equivalent to what he had had in the Navy, and said everyone would soon be taken care of ‘from the cradle to the grave.’ England spent a lot of effort trying to hang on. But as you well know, it was futile and eventually fell apart. I remember the subsequent partitioning of India and Pakistan in 1947 was quite a turmoil.

Q: With the end of the war and foreign troops, American and Canadian troops leaving, the Lend-Lease food ending, our impression is England had a spot of trouble there.

SMITH: Uh-huh. Everything was in short supply and still rationed – especially food, clothing and coal; and jobs were difficult to get. After he got out of the Navy, for a while, my dad planned to emigrate to Australia because they offered employment, with an assisted passage scheme, and were much more egalitarian, socially. He applied for papers, but at the last minute, decided not to go because that would interrupt my grammar school education. Then, finally, in early 1948 – while I still had a year left before finishing grammar school -- he landed a good engineering job in the London area. For a while, he roomed near his work in West Drayton and came home weekends. Then, in the summer, we moved to Ruislip, Middlesex – actually an ‘overground’ stop on the ‘underground’ train system at the west end sprawl from London -- and he commuted to work from there.

For my 5th year, my mom succeeded in getting me transferred to Harrow County Grammar School. [NOTE: This was Harrow County Grammar School, not ‘The Harrow’ Public School.] Harrow, academically, was one of England’s top ‘modern’ (1902+) grammar schools, and in stark contrast to traditional MGS, had a very egalitarian motto: ‘Virtus Non Stemma’ (Worth, not Birth.). I remember adjusting to their program in my 5th year was one long grind. However, I dropped scouts and cadets and buckled down to studying. I also took a one-month foreign exchange immersion in France over the Easter break to help brush up my language. I could read French fairly well, but was never very good at conversation. They spoke too quickly for me and my ear to understand; although I could make myself understood as I went around -- despite my atrocious accent. After

several years of classes and a month in France, I was probably still only an S2:R3 on the Foreign Service language scale.

All the studying paid off, as in June 1949, I not only passed the London Schools Leaving Certificate exam, but was also matriculated in London University. [But in any event, there was never any expectation I would go on to university now, or stay through the sixth form -- the normal route to prepare for university matriculation.]

Then, in mid-summer 1949 my father went to Cornwall, in the West Country. So we packed up and followed, moving to Newquay, until it was time for me to start my mandatory two-year National Service stint in the RAF.

My father was an experienced and self-styled engineer from the school of hard knocks, and at this juncture, wanted me to have a trade. He even speculated about starting his own plumbing business, with me as his apprentice. But my mother was adamant. "He didn't go to grammar school to be a plumber," she insisted. "Now, he's going to be somebody." And from her level looking up that meant a 'white collar' job; preferably in the government.

So I went job shopping around the town. I checked at a couple of banks, and several other offices. I also applied to the local government council office. To appease my father, I checked with a company that was starting with something new: -- "Hotel Air Conditioning." [Long after the fact I recall a similar situation in the movie 'The Graduate' where Dustin Hoffman was advised to go into "Plastics."] But when my father came home later, he was furious with me. He said he'd stopped off where I'd inquired about becoming an air conditioning apprentice, and he thought that was great. But Newquay was a small town where everybody knew everybody, and as he went further into town, different people -- at a real estate agent's office, and the bank, etc., etc. -- came out and told him "Oh your Kenneth just applied to go work here." So, by the time he got to the pub downtown, he was really mad at me. Then his elder sister -- my aunt Doris (who had lived in Newquay for years) -- showed up and said "The council office manager just told me Kenneth applied for a clerical assistant job, and it's his if he wants it." My mother was delighted I was now on track to being "somebody" in town, working in the council offices — and my dad didn't dare cross his sister. So, there's where and how at 16 I began my Public Administration apprenticeship. (Laughter)

Q: An office job like that would require some typing skills, right?

SMITH: That was the first thing they did. I went to the office during the day, but went back to school every evening for about a month. I got up to competitive speeds – touch typing -- and even though they knocked off a few points for errors; I graduated with honors. But flunked Pitman's shorthand. [I got most of the squiggly script – like secret code -- but no speed for dictation.]

At the council offices, I was a jack-of-all-trades. Everything was rationed in those days, so the local government managed coal, electricity, and food stamps for the citizenry; as

well as voter registration, collecting rents, public health, public works, regulating businesses, the airport, traffic, police and the court. As an office boy I would go around the different offices to help out as needed, and chat with people. [One of the guys in the engineering office had been a Japanese prisoner of war in Changi, Singapore, and was always good for a few war stories.] On that two year ‘Public Administration apprenticeship’ I got to know a bit about everything while honing my typing and other administrative skills. Typing, I tell you, was one of the best tools I ever learned and ever had -- even to this day. When computers were invented, I was able to switch over to ‘word processing’ very easily and write my own notes, letters, and reports; while most managers and executives were still having to rely on dictating to secretaries, and waiting for typed transcripts to edit; to get anything done.

Q: There's still an outside world, and in 1950 the Korean War started. Did that reverberate?

SMITH: Yes. Since I had my ATC (Air Training Corps) cadet experience -- soon after my eighteenth birthday I went into the RAF for two years. Although the Korean War was raging, I was assigned to an RAF base at Wyton, near Cambridge, in England that the Americans were co-sharing -- with their B-29s -- and I got to meet ‘Yanks’ close-up. They were as curious about us Limeys as we were curious about them, so I palled-up with a couple and became their English cultural interpreter and tour guide to various places in nearby Huntingdon and Cambridge.

From ATC, I already knew a lot about the RAF structure, signaling and navigation, as well as military drill, and had even had an orientation flight in a DH ‘Tiger Moth’ – a bi-plane with an open cockpit. I’d hoped to be a navigator on a bomber crew, since I wore glasses and was not pilot qualified. But with my background in Newquay’s council offices, the RAF made me an administration specialist; and I was assigned to the orderly room with several other guys, handling personnel records and pay accounts. After a couple of months, I was called to the Air Ministry HQ in London for an interview as a potential officer candidate. [I’d never had any prior expectation or aspiration of being an officer, as that was way above my ‘social station,’ but I went excitedly.] I took the written exams in the morning, and was then asked to stand by for an interview. The interview was very imposing; conducted by nine board members in a huge room. There was a long table at one end of the room, with five members sitting at it, and flanked by smaller tables with two more people on each wing in a wide U-shape. The board members were a mixture of civilians, RAF officers and a couple of army officers in uniform. I was in a chair facing them.

They all had copies of my background and service record, so they knew who they’re talking to. Nevertheless, they conducted a pseudo-interrogation in the following manner while I sat facing them. It went something like this:

The Chairman: “Oh, Smith; any relation to Sir Admiral … Smith?”

“No sir.”

“Your father was in the navy?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What rank was he, Smith?”

“He was a stoker petty officer sir. That’s sort of like a sergeant in charge of the ship’s engineering room.”

Response by the chairman: “Ewh.”

Then several others asked me a few questions on current affairs: Israel & Palestine, Iranian oil nationalization, East African Mau Mau, the ‘cold’ war vis a vis the Soviets, and the Korean war; all of which I thought I answered quite well.

Then a double-barreled question I remember quite vividly: “Do you ride, Smith?

Have you ever ridden a horse?”

“Yes, sir. But only farm horses.”

[Muffled laughter.]

A few more questions I don’t remember exactly.

Then the Chairman said,

“I tell you what Smith; we can’t accept you now; but if you sign on today for an extra year, we could probably consider you later.”

Not quite getting it, I replied, “If you send me to Cranwell – the RAF Officer Cadet School -- I’ll sign on for a career now.”

“Chuff-chuff-chuff” tittering around the room.

Chairman: “Okay, that’ll be all, Smith. We’ll let you know.”

As I walked out, I passed by an army captain -- three pips on his shoulder tab -- who said in sotto voce to his neighbor (but loud enough for me to hear) “Who the bloody hell does he think he is? Jumped-up grammar-school nobody. The bugger can’t even ride a bloody horse.” I knew then that I had gone ‘way above myself’ and had just been put back ‘in my place. Thoroughly humiliated, I returned to my pay accounts job -- and the friendly Yanks -- at RAF Wyton.

Actually – in retrospect -- they were quite right. I shouldn’t have even been considered

for a commission, because I really didn't fit in. I wasn't a university graduate; I was not flying-qualified; was from a 'nobody' family, and socially didn't belong in the officer class. So, I don't know why they called me in the first place and went through the charade. At that point my limited ambition had been to reenlist after my National Service, and stay on for a career. But the most I'd ever expected was to be a Sergeant. Now, like my dad, I was soured on the snooty upper-class structure.

Then just before Christmas 1951, the RAF called for volunteers to go to Germany with the British Army of Occupation on the Rhine (BAOR) in support of NATO's Allied Tactical Air Force. I volunteered; and shortly after New Year, shipped out to Germany; where I was assigned to an RAF Regiment to handle their admin and pay accounts. The RAF Regiment is the infantry and artillery arm of the Air Force, with prime duty to defend their bases. Although I was not in the Regiment, they wanted their support troops trained in basic ground commando tactics. So before assuming my admin & payroll duties, I had a month of intense ground combat training; learning how to creep and crawl to knife sentries, fire a Sten gun, throw grenades, and all that good stuff -- to kill the enemy. After a month I 'graduated' as a 'would-be warrior' (laughter), then took up my admin & pay duties in the orderly room; and only got to wear a side-arm on bank runs and pay day parades to protect the cash.

Q: What part of Germany was this?

SMITH: This was northern Germany; the British zone, near Hamburg. Initially, I was at RAF Luneburg, on the allied edge of Luneburg Heath, with a strip of woodland on our side. The Russians were on the other side of an open heath. As part of the Regiment's duties, I also had to take turns patrolling the camp at night. In my suppressed teenage exuberance, I hoped the Russians would try and infiltrate while I was on patrol, so I could put my new-found skills to good use. But fortunately, it never happened. (Laughter)

While at Luneburg, wearing uniform, we could walk downtown; or even take the train to Hamburg on weekends, and stay overnight. However, Luneburg had been the Nazi Gestapo headquarters, and many locals still held bitter feelings towards us occupation forces. Once, while downtown, I went for a haircut and shave. While I was leaning back in the chair the barber said, "Just think, a few years ago I would have slit your throat." Then he – and everyone else waiting -- just laughed. That's the closest I got to being killed in Germany during the cold war. (Laughter)

Then we moved to another base, near Bremen. Unlike Luneburg -- which had survived the war relatively unscathed -- in 1952, Bremen was still derelict from wartime bombing, with people living among the ruins. I had to escort the payroll officer to pick up our money from regional HQ. This was another occasion when I wore my side-arm, on the alert for somebody desperate enough to try and hold us up. But again, I only ever used it on the firing range. [Another teenage day-dream fortunately averted.]

Finally, we moved to establish a new base in Jever, near the Peenemunde rocket area and

Wilhelmshaven, the former German U-boat submarine base.

Q: Your tour in the RAF seems to have opened a special door, because you're saying in '53 your assignment in Germany was over, but three months later you immigrated to the States. How did that opportunity come up?

SMITH: After the humiliating experience with the air ministry interview -- especially the 'bloody bugger jumped-up grammar-school nobody' remark -- I had second thoughts about pursuing a career in the RAF. Constantly at my social level, we endured disparaging sneers and condescending slights. 'Little man,' 'Know your place and do what you can, but don't get above yourself. Social climbers not wanted or respected above or below' was the prevailing ethic.

Ever since grammar school I had been enamored with America from reading a massive book, "Inside U.S.A." by John Gunther, and a couple of American Heritage history books. I think I learned more reading about America than even most Americans knew experiencing it. And my 'American Ideas' were reinforced by my 'close encounters' with Americans at Wyton. I 'daydreamed' that maybe, if I went to America, I could 'get above myself' because that was the 'land of opportunity, social equality, the American dream;' -- all that good stuff we heard about.

Then towards the end of my two-year RAF enlistment, the recruiters gave me several options.

The career option was "Instead of getting out, you can sign on." Normally, 'signing on' was for 'twelve years and ten,' i.e. You reenlist to complete the first twelve years, then again for ten more; to retire with a pension at 40 after twenty-two years of service. I already had two years, so I could sign up for ten years.

They also proffered, "It's going to be the queen's coronation so if you extend for just one more year, you can be in the queen's parade and get a medal." I could defer the career option, and just stay another year. Then decide on a career later.

They also had an 'Empire Deal.' The Australians were recruiting, and I could transfer to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and get promoted to corporal when I got there.

NOTE: I had been in the RAF almost two years, but although I had the work experience, skills and responsibilities of a corporal, I was never promoted beyond senior aircraftman. At my last base, the finance officer said "I'm being transferred to Vienna, Austria. If you reenlist now, you can come with me, and when we get there, I'll give you your corporal stripes." But I'd heard that kind of deal before, so I responded "Give me my corporal stripes now and I'll sign on and come with you. But I want my stripes before I sign on." He said "I can't do that here; but come with me to Austria and I'll promote you when we get there."

So, it was “No deal.”

Then at the last minute, the Canadians made a similar offer -- “If you want to go to Canada, we’ll sign you on as a corporal in the RCAF now, and send you there.” I thought very strongly about that; but then started wondering about the differences between Canadians and Americans.

But I still had one more option. During a two-week home leave from Germany, I had already checked at Manston -- an American base near my parents’ home in Ramsgate, Kent (They’d moved back from Cornwall), and asked the personnel officer if it was possible for me to join the U.S. Air Force when I finished my National Service. At the time he was very encouraging. He said “Yes, the Korean War is on and we can recruit foreigners. You can take the exam here; we’ll enlist you, then send you back to Germany for basic training at Spangdahlem. [At the time, they were also recruiting refugees from Poland and other East European countries]. After that, we can send you anywhere. You’ll be sort of the American Foreign Legion.”

After weighing my options, I decided joining the USAF would be the better alternative.

When I was demobilized at the end of January 1953, I went back to Manston and told the personnel officer “I’m back from Germany, out of the RAF, and ready to enlist.” Then he dropped a bomb on me. “I’m sorry son, but Congress just changed the rules. We can’t enlist people here anymore. You now have to enlist in the US. You can sign on when you get to New York. The war’s still on, and we’re still recruiting foreigners.” He administered a test, assured me I was highly qualified, and gave me a letter to show the Embassy for my visa application.

So I applied to the US embassy in London for an immigration visa. I had to shuttle to London a couple of times from Kent for a physical exam and interview. When the consular officer asked me why I wanted to go to America, I told him I wanted to join the US Air Force as a career. They gave me a visa – the Air Force was effectively my sponsor -- but the Embassy added one more requirement: I had to deposit \$100 with them, which I could pick up from a bank once I arrived in New York.

Then I booked passage on the SS United States, America’s flagship. My mother also gave me fifty pounds cash to travel with. I boarded the ship at Southampton, and waved good-bye to England. It was its nineteenth run. [I even saw myself recently on TV in a news clip about the ship’s history. I was waving from the deck wearing an Aloha shirt.] It was a rough passage; we rolled around, and I was seasick for most of the voyage. So I was glad I never joined the Navy.

I thought I knew everything about America so I was expecting to go to Ellis Island. But it had recently been closed, and instead, immigration officers came on board ship to interview us before they would let us land. That was probably my saving grace, because he asked “Why are you coming here?”

"I'm here to join the Air Force."

"Who is going to meet you?"

"Nobody's going to meet me; as soon as I land, I'm going to join the Air Force."

"Do you know anybody in America?"

"Well, I knew some GIs I'd met in Germany; and even stayed with for a couple of weeks at their base near Frankfurt. In the best American tradition, they told me "If you ever come to the U.S., look us up." But I wasn't planning to do that right now, and hadn't told anyone I was coming."

He rolled his eyes at that – probably wondering what he was going to do with this dumb kid -- then asked "Do you have a place to stay?"

"No, I told you I'm joining the Air Force as soon as I land. I know where the recruiting office is. It's in Time Square." I showed him my letter from the Air Force.

Then, his attitude changed, and -- very helpfully now -- he wrote and handed me a note, and said "Well, I tell you what. Go to this place. It's the Sloane House; the YMCA at 356 West 34th Street between 8th and 9th Avenues. They'll put you up." Which I did, and they did. [That was way before the Village People's song.] I learned later the 'Y' worked closely with the USO to support the military services.

One funny incident shortly after I arrived. When I went to the bank in Wall Street – forgotten which one -- to redeem the \$100 I'd deposited at the Embassy in London, I was ushered into a huge office suite where I met with a couple of bank officers. It was reminiscent of the scene I've subsequently seen on TV and the movies when the exiled politician, secret agent or drug lord goes to Switzerland to collect (or deposit) his millions in a secret account. They didn't show it at the time, but the bankers must have been amused at the sight of a 20-year-old immigrant kid walking in to collect a measly \$100, and thinking it was a big deal. [Well to me it was a big deal – my New World Nest Egg.] Anyway, they humored me, chatted awhile, welcomed me to America, gave me my hundred bucks in various denominations, and wished me luck.

To cut a long story short, after I checked into the Sloane House -- for just one day -- I went to the Times Square recruiting office to enlist. But eventually, I had to stay almost two more months for bureaucratic processing before I could be sworn in. One area that had me worried was the military psych exam. The psychiatrist was a civilian contract doctor rather than a military officer. While waiting for my turn on his couch, I wondered whether he might think I was weird for wanting to get "in" the armed forces during wartime, or perhaps one of New York's less-than-finest looking for a government license to kill. Whatever; I passed with flying colors.

In the meantime, I survived by working temporary jobs in the city --from the Bronx to Brooklyn.

Q: I don't understand the visa structure at that time. What kind of visa did you come under?

SMITH: I got an immigration visa because that's what I applied for. Countries were allocated quotas at that time, and the UK immigrant quota was never filled. When asked who would guarantee my support, I said the U.S. Air Force. The only reason I was going to New York was because they couldn't sign me up in England.

Q: Right. Where did you do basic training?

SMITH: Most basic training was in Texas at Lackland. But we went to Samson -- an old Naval training base that the Air Force had taken over -- near Geneva, New York; up in the Finger Lakes area. Actually, basic training in the American Air Force was a breeze for me. Although the drill sergeants were 'mean and lean' -- which I was used to, and expecting -- it wasn't as harsh as regular every-day living in the RAF.

Q: You were lucky. Sounds like it was summer time. Soon after you got there the Korean War ended. [July 27, 1953.]

SMITH: Not quite so lucky, this time. Normally from basic training you go to technical school. But as an alien I had to wait almost a year before my background check was completed, and they could give me a security clearance. So, instead of a tech school, I was sent with several other misfits to Charleston, South Carolina on a 'block' assignment. [Charleston then was only a civilian airport, but the Air Force was establishing a new air base on the other side.]

A military base is like a small 'company town' with a prime industry; organized and managed by various functions in a 'Wing,' 'Group,' 'Squadron' hierarchy. However, without a security clearance I could only be assigned limited-service duties, and was given a choice of the mess hall or the motor pool. Since I didn't know how to drive, I opted for the motor pool to acquire that basic American skill.

The Motor Vehicle Squadron (MVS) was responsible for the readiness and operation of all vehicles (and related personnel – mechanics, drivers, etc.) to meet the base's transportation needs. The sergeant in charge of the motor pool assigned me to the administrative production-control section -- scheduling maintenance and repair service and monitoring the status of all the base's vehicles. [Our Squadron's effectiveness was tracked and rated daily by various operational-readiness (OR) status statistics.] Later, when the Squadron's First Sergeant learned I could type and had accounting experience, he pulled me out of the motor pool and reassigned me to the Squadron's orderly room for general administrative, personnel and payroll duties.

Q: Talking about new experiences in America; Charleston is in the American South. I suspect that your exposure to segregation in the South must have been interesting.

SMITH: For sure. That's where and when I got my first exposure to segregation. Most of the British Commonwealth population were colored (black or brown), and those I saw in England were way above my station in life – visiting government officials, university students, and international sports players. We also had black NCOs (non-commissioned officers – corporals and sergeants) in the RAF, and I didn't have any particular problem with that. There were also many blacks in New York, but no segregation issues; although some were openly aggressive and hostile, with a chip on their shoulder about 'Whitey,' and protective of their area in Harlem.

When I went to Charleston, by contrast the blacks I encountered were noticeably more friendly. President Truman had ordered the military integrated in 1948; and that order was effectively reinforced on base by President Eisenhower in 1953. We didn't have any problems in our motor pool squadron. Guys worked together. Indeed, to earn my stripes I was assigned to teach a black recruit -- Johnnie Stewart – to do my job. Literally, before I could get promoted, I had to work myself out of a job. Looking back, I guess that's when I began my consulting career. Johnnie was from the South, and had never worked in an office before, so I had a real hard time. But I remembered my first job and learning to type, so empathized and buckled down; and we got along well. During the day we'd eat together at the snack bar, and occasionally go to a movie on base.

One weekend, I suggested we go down town, but Johnnie deferred.

"No, I can't go downtown with you."

"Why not?"

"They don't let whites and blacks go together."

"Sure they will. We're in the Air Force, we'll wear our uniforms."

"Okay I'll come; but you'll see."

We got the base bus to the highway, where we caught a civilian bus. I sat down at the front, and as Johnnie started walking to the back, I called him to sit with me. But the bus driver intervened and told Johnnie to go to the back. Then I got up and went to the back with him. But the driver still wouldn't let me sit next to him and insisted he wouldn't move the bus until we sat down. To avoid further disruption, Johnnie sat in the first row of the black area, while I sat in the last row of the white area – to the amusement of other passengers on the bus. When we got to the bus station in Charleston, there were "Whites only" and a "Blacks only" toilets. There were also "Whites only" and a "Blacks only" water-drinking fountains. By this time, I was getting really upset at the segregated bus system.

It was now lunchtime so we went to a nearby Walgreens drugstore for lunch, and encountered a similar situation. There was even a line marked on the counter. He had to sit on one side, while I sat on the other, to eat our ‘three-course’ meal – hamburgers, French fries and coke. After lunch we tried to go to a movie across the street, where I had a cultural double-shock. [In England, balcony seats were the best, and you paid extra to go there. But in America -- at least in this place -- upstairs was for coloreds, and downstairs for whites. When I said I didn’t mind going in the colored section because I wanted to sit together, the movie attendant insisted “You can’t go up there, and he can’t go down here.”

That’s when I exploded. I told the manager in no uncertain terms that I thought his treatment towards my Air Force buddy – indeed the attitude of the whole Goddamn area - - was nothing but bigotry. He in turn called me a “Yankee nigger-lover” and threatened to call the cops on us for causing a public disturbance if we didn’t get out of there right away. Johnny – who had stood quietly by until now -- restrained me from retaliating physically; and I gave up. We quickly walked out together while the manager was phoning the cops to come and throw us out. Then, instead of taking the bus, we hitch-hiked back to the base, (luckily, we got a ride from another Air Force guy) and I eventually cooled down; with Johnny simply saying “I told you so.”

Q: This is the 11th of December, 2020. We’re returning to our conversation with Ken Smith. Ken, we left off in 1954, your duties in the .

SMITH: Right. I was the general factotum in the orderly room -- sort of like Radar in the *M*A*S*H* army comedy movies of the Korean War – keeping track of personnel records, administration, and payroll. I had the mail run, and anything else the squadron commander, adjutant or first sergeant wanted done. We were in Charleston for a couple of years.

Although the Korean conflict had ended, a provision in the Immigration & Naturalization law still permitted aliens serving in the armed forces to achieve accelerated citizenship within 3 months, rather than the usual minimum 5 year waiting period. So – along with several others from the “Foreign Legion” in the Squadron; as well as individuals from various countries living in the greater Charleston area -- on Friday November 20 1953, I took my Oath of Citizenship and was Naturalized at the US District Court in Charleston, South Carolina. Another Major Milestone accomplished.

Our outfit was a troop carrier wing. I don’t know if you know the military types; it was a C-119, a flying boxcar and looks like a big fat bumblebee with twin booms. They could detach the ‘clam shell’ at the back to load vehicles; and troops could also jump out when doing air drops.

Then, somebody way above my paygrade came up with a Rube Goldberg project -- the most complicated way to do simple things. During the Cold War the US wanted to know what was going on in the Soviet Union, and ‘Operation Moby-Dick’ was conceived. High-altitude balloons -- with cameras attached -- were released from several points in

Europe to drift across the Soviet Union. Then planes were to catch them -- like aerial flying fishermen – in Asia. These were really high-altitude balloons -- fifty to a hundred thousand feet when launched -- but gradually lost altitude. Initially the concept was tested releasing balloons from California and catching them in the Carolinas and the Caribbean. I guess a lot were spotted back then, and reported as flying saucers.

Our squadron spent a year preparing and practicing. Then we reorganized into three separate composite detachments, and deployed from Alaska to Okinawa in late '55. My detachment went to Japan.

Q: You were in Japan?

SMITH: Yes; for about nine months. I was at Johnson Air Base, Irumagawa, Japan; a little northwest of Tokyo. While in Japan, I was promoted to staff sergeant. We caught a few balloons, but don't know how many big ones got away. Then the planes flew back to the U.S.; the detachment was disbanded, and we support troops were dispersed. Before returning to the U.S. I was given a choice of several bases. One was Larson Air Base at Moses Lake in Washington. I know you were from that area. I elected to go there because my vision of Washington state – from John Gunther -- was mountains and forests and trout streams. I got there and to my amazement this was in the middle of the desert between Ellensburg on one side and Spokane on the other. I was there for a year. Of course, if I had thought about it a little more, I would have realized you don't land planes in those other areas.

Q: Let me ask you to go back to Japan for a second. The Korean War is over, World War II is over; what did Tokyo look like?

SMITH: We often went into Tokyo for weekend R&R (rest and recreation). That was a unique experience. I remember there was one big building on the Ginza – a department store like Selfridges in London. We used the Tokyo Electric Building as an international military NCO club. But in those days, apart from the Imperial Palace and nearby buildings occupied by General MacArthur's Headquarters, much of Tokyo was fairly primitive. The rest of the city looked more like a huge village with a few large buildings here and there. Even one block off the Ginza were small bamboo shanties on little alleyways. It was just a huge sprawling area although they did have a subway, with trains that went around the city.

People also walked around in traditional Japanese clothes. It was very quaint to me.

Q: Not much damage from the war still evident?

SMITH: I didn't see much.

Q: Were the GIs paid in Japanese yen or U.S. dollars?

SMITH: The military issued 'scrip' -- its own kind of currency -- to preclude black

market activities. There were some complicated arrangements to get dollar scrip converted to yen, and I had to arrange for obtaining local currency for the troops as well as to facilitate Squadron petty cash transactions.

Q: Before you went to Japan, you were married.

SMITH: In the summer of 1954 -- when I thought I was more or less settled in my Air Force duties and responsibilities at Charleston -- I returned to England to marry my fiancee. She got her visa shortly thereafter, and arrived Thanksgiving week. However, that was when we were informed our outfit would be deploying to Asia the following year. So she only got a few months exposure to the American South before returning to England for the duration of our mission.

Q: So she did not go to Japan with you?

SMITH: Oh no; this was a TDY (temporary duty) mission. As I mentioned earlier, its true purpose at the time was top secret. The cover story was we would be catching high altitude weather balloons for a research project. And that was plausible because some of the flyers and aircraft in our Wing had transferred from Miami where they previously had 'Hurricane Hunter' duty – flying into, and tracking, storms for meteorological research and reporting purposes. [Some members even had an unofficial 'Skyhook' patch on their flight suits depicting the process.]

Q: So Moses Lake, Washington, is high desert. And you were at Larson Air Force Base. What was that assignment?

SMITH: I did similar administrative support work as before, but now centralized for the whole base at a much higher – Wing – level. Soon after my arrival, the Finance section chief left, and I assumed his role as full-time supervisor of several other staff handling the base payroll. I did that for almost a year, until my four-year enlistment was completed. But during the final months before reenlisting, I started wondering what next?

To recap: I'd emigrated to the U.S. for a career in the Air Force, with ambition to become a sergeant; although the exact nature of my work had been undefined. Now -- four years later -- I was a supervisory staff sergeant; married, with a one year old child and a new baby; living in base housing, and driving a big Buick. I had essentially attained my American Dream. Nevertheless, although not unhappy, a couple of things were beginning to bother me about the future. We were not big spenders, but even as a staff sergeant, my income was barely enough to meet my family's day-to-day living requirements. On weekends -- along with several other sergeants (who were 'lifers') -- I often went to the farm labor office (competing with itinerant Mexicans) for seasonal work and quick cash to supplement my Air Force income. And I knew I was not the only airman in that situation. I had not anticipated this penurious outcome, and did not want to continue in an Air Force career under those circumstances.

In a pre-exit interview with the Wing retention & recruiting sergeant, he was very upbeat

and tried to allay my concerns. “You made staff sergeant in three years (almost unheard of),” and outlined my immediate reenlistment prospects if I reenlisted for six more years:

- Instant pay raise on completing 4 years of service (and annual increments thereafter)
- \$2,000 cash reenlistment bonus to alleviate my current cash flow concerns
- On ‘fast track’ for promotion to Tech sergeant (with further pay increase)

Plus several other options:

- Instant transfer to a Base of choice for my next assignment, if desired
- Assignment to a technical school in a different career field, if desired
- Application for Officer Candidate School (OCS) [AKA ‘90 day wonders.’ If selected; you were commissioned a second lieutenant after three months of intensive training, with a considerable increase in pay.]

The next interview on my exit checklist was with Sergeant White at the Base Education office. To enhance my knowledge of Air Force operations, he had previously helped me enroll in several short correspondence courses for Air Force career fields with the Air University Extension Institute. Harking back to non-discrimination in the military, Sergeant White – who was black – was a major mentor in shaping my career. Since coming to America, I’d never thought about becoming an officer, but he reaffirmed I’d be a good OCS prospect. However, Sgt White also cautioned me about the OCS option. Officers were not guaranteed a career like enlisted personnel. It was an ‘up or out’ system. Moreover, without a college degree, he said I’d probably never get promoted beyond Captain. And if you don’t get promoted within a certain time, they just thank you for your service. You’re released short of a career, and no pension.

I discussed these options with the adjutant -- my boss, Captain Snead -- who informed me there was yet another option. Instead of reenlisting, if I went to university, he said I could join the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC). That way I could earn both a degree and a commission; then return to active duty as an officer. He arranged for an officer from Washington State University to meet with me and give me more details about their ROTC program. I then learned I might even qualify for a fully-paid AFROTC scholarship for the Senior -- last two – years at the University.

When I returned to the Education office to explore this option to reenlist with Sergeant White, he filled me in on that. He explained the ‘GI Bill’ would pay me \$160 a month while studying for a four-year degree and ROTC commission. That was almost as much as I was earning as a Staff Sergeant. Then I could return to active duty and resume my career as an officer. I also talked everything over with my wife, but she was non-committal. [She never did tell me what she was thinking.]

Finally, I discussed the university/ROTC option with some of the guys working for me. One -- Al Medeiros, from Hartford, Connecticut -- reassured me the GI bill would be a good deal, but to go to the east coast – i.e. Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York. “Besides, with six cents a mile for travel pay, you can maximize your cash out.”

Money wasn't the major criterion of course, but roughly summarizing the cash options I figured the Air Force would pay me two thousand dollars to stay in, or five thousand to get out. A no-brainer. Comparing university tuition costs, I saw that the University of Connecticut (UCONN) was less expensive than the University of Massachusetts, and considerably cheaper than Yale, Harvard or Cornell. So I chose UCONN. At that point in time, I had no awareness of the difference between State and private universities.

My major error then – serendipitously as it eventually turned out -- was failing to seek Sergeant White's assistance in filing my application for UCONN; and instead reverting to my DIY (Do It Yourself) mode. I wrote a letter to the UCONN Registrar, introducing myself and informing him I would be coming to UCONN at the end of the month (June) to sign up for my degree program under the GI Bill. How naïve can you be? (Laughter). I didn't wait for a reply. We had our household goods shipped to Hartford to await further instructions for delivery; packed our bags, and drove across the US to Connecticut with my wife and kids. It took about a week -- no sight-seeing along the way, only necessary rest stops -- and on arrival, checked into a small colonial inn, just off campus.

Then next morning -- family in tow -- I drove to the registrar's office, walked in and said "I'm Ken Smith. I sent you a letter and I'm now here to enroll on the GI Bill program. But of course, the office staff didn't know what the heck I was talking about. They said, "Classes don't start 'till September. We've already made our class selections. There's no way we can admit you now. We don't have any school transcripts of you. Where did you go to school? Did you take the SAT -- (Scholastic Aptitude Test)?" I'd never heard of a SAT. Then they dropped the bombshell: "You can't just walk in here and automatically enroll just because the military's going to pay for you." Who knew?

At that rebuttal, I created a major scene, ranting to anyone within sight or hearing that I was entitled to a university education under the Korean GI Bill; had just driven across the country with my family to enroll, and demanded to see the Registrar in person. I insisted I wouldn't leave until I'd presented my case to him in person. Fortunately for me -- the President's secretary heard the ruckus and came to investigate. When she heard about my plight, she took charge of the situation. As it happened, she was retiring, and was interested in getting somebody to take care of her father -- a retired professor living on campus -- and asked if my wife would be interested in looking after her father. "He's very old and senile but harmless; and I just need somebody to look after him, because I'm leaving the area." My wife readily agreed.

She then called the Registrar and we went to the President's office, where I related my background and situation to them. To cut a long story short, I was eventually admitted as a foreign student (they still had vacancies in that category), registered as an in-State resident, and on the basis of my London University Matric from English Grammar school courses and military service, they entered me as a transfer sophomore. Talk about Dumb Luck. (Laughter)

Then, more good fortune. Master Sergeant Forrest Hahn -- the First Sergeant at the nearby Air Force Reserve unit contacted me. He said "I hear you just got off active duty

and transferred to the Inactive reserve. If you want to remain active, since you're an administrative management specialist, you can continue your career, and also do extra duty to help me." I agreed in a New York minute. [Johnny Carson once defined a New York minute as the interval between a Manhattan traffic light turning green and the guy behind you honking his horn.] So now I had a paying part-time job two or three days a month at the local reserve unit plus a couple of nights a month for reserve training meetings; and annual two-week active-duty assignments at various operational Air Force bases.

The reserve unit offices were in the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) building, so people used to joke that we were drinking and telling war stories in the VFW. Actually, we were taking military-related correspondence courses from the Air University extension program. Most of the other members in the unit were World War II types, in professional positions; attorneys, engineers; you name it, throughout eastern Connecticut. The commander -- a bird colonel -- was a professor at the university. We used to rotate who would be the lead facilitator for each course module, so I got extra OJT experience 'stand-up teaching / briefing' everyone who outranked me! They were very congenial though and didn't 'pull rank' on me; and I learned a lot from them in addition to the formal courses we had. I also became the unit factotum, helping the sergeant in charge; while taking ROTC and other university courses. After a year, I was promoted to Technical Sergeant, so got my formerly-coveted fifth stripe after all.

Back at the university, the AFROTC detachment faculty wanted to know my major course of study; but I told them I didn't know, I just came to get a degree so I could get a commission; then go back on active duty. They then advised me to take government & international relations courses which would lead to an operational career as an intelligence officer. They also suggested I take some education courses to prepare to conduct stand-up briefings; which were very important in the military; particularly for junior officers.

However, later, I encountered a couple of problems in the ROTC program. First, between the basic and advanced program, we had to go for a physical exam at Westover Air Base, which I failed -- because of my poor eyesight I wasn't flying qualified. When I protested that I was on track for a non-rated career field, the flight surgeon was adamant and refused to qualify me. He said he only gave flying physicals for the ROTC. [I think that was BS and he was just peed off because I dared challenge him.] The ROTC unit said I could continue taking courses and apply for a waiver, but the opportunity for a scholarship was lost.

Then the administration office told me my monthly GI Bill payments would cease at the end of the school year; but if I signed up for summer courses, I could keep the money flowing. By that combination I graduated in December '59 -- off-season -- in two-and-a-half years, instead of the regular four. And right after I graduated, I received a direct commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Force Reserve from my reserve unit. Mission Accomplished. The other members in my Reserve unit then congratulated/commiserated with me being 'demoted' from a Senior NCO to a Junior officer. I immediately applied to

return to full time active duty. However, HQ USAF Personnel said they only needed flyers at that time, and turned me down.

I was devastated. I had only come to UCONN to earn a degree – which they had paid for -- and return to active duty with a commission, and continue my career. And I had been an outstanding ROTC cadet with – ironically -- an award from the Sons of the American Revolution. But what to do now? I hastily came up with a ‘Plan B.’ Since I still had a year & a half GI Bill money remaining, I immediately enrolled in graduate school to resume study towards a Master’s degree in international relations; while continuing training with the local Air Force Reserve unit.

Then, that summer, my new career field kick-started with two weeks orientation at the Air Force Intelligence school in Wichita Falls, Texas. The commander of our group – Everett (Buck) Burlando -- was a reserve lieutenant colonel and also a senior civilian intelligence specialist in the Pentagon. Getting acquainted after class, I told him I had hoped for an active-duty career in the Air Force, rather than simply training indefinitely like we did in Connecticut. Then he literally turned my life around -- stimulating my interest in international development. He told me that prior to his present civilian position in the Pentagon, he had been a development officer in Latin America with the Point 4 Program, and subsequently the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) -- predecessors to the -- then -- recently morphed United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Buck said “You do not need to return to full-time active duty. You can have a dual career – as both a civilian and in the Air Force – as a ready reservist, and be as active as you want.” He advised me to volunteer after Intel School as a Mobilization Augmentee (MA) – don’t you just love all these acronyms. – and I would then be assigned to a specific operating unit, working with them on an intermittent part-time basis. And I could also apply to the State Department and have a civilian or foreign service officer career with USAID in international development.

Back at UCONN, my graduate program was in international relations -- my Master’s Thesis was on Great Britain and the Marshall Plan, and Buck’s counseling had fired up my interest in a possible career with USAID. My professor advised me to also apply for the Civil Service Management Intern Program right away, as the government typically took a year to process applications. I followed his advice; but USAID soon turned me down flat. They told me my military background was incompatible with their humanitarian economic & social development mission; but helpfully suggested I apply to the Defense Department for a civil service position. I was successful in the Civil Service Management Intern (MI) competition; and then the military contacted me. When I graduated in the summer of 1961, I received an internship with the US Navy Department in Washington, D.C.

After I arrived in Washington, I reported into the Navy Department on Constitution Avenue -- across from the State Department, where the Vietnam and World War II memorials are now -- and Buck concurrently arranged for my reserve mobilization assignment to an intelligence position with the Air Force Headquarters across the river in the Pentagon. [While only a Second Lieutenant, I was filling a Major’s slot in the

Pentagon.]

A couple of funny stories with that. I remember my first full two-week active-duty assignment at the Pentagon quite vividly. It fell during a major snowstorm that completely snowbound Washington. The weather was so bad, the Defense Department put out an announcement over the radio that only “essential personnel” needed to report to duty. However, since it was my very first active tour of duty in the Pentagon, I didn’t want to be considered derelict -- or AWOL -- so I got up very early, and took the first available bus to Arlington. I then struggled about half a mile through knee-deep snow that had encased the area surrounding the Pentagon. When I eventually got to the Pentagon and reported in, I was greeted by an incredulous duty officer -- “Lieutenant Smith, whatever made you think a 2nd Lt. is essential in the Pentagon?” He signed me in, then gave me a “leave of absence” pass and sent me home. It took me several more hours to retrace my steps and return.

I don’t know whether you’ve ever been in the Pentagon, but in the corners on the inner ring -- the E ring -- there are little coffee/snack take-out kiosks. As the eternal junior in our office, one of my duties was to go -- in-basket in hand -- and get coffee for everybody. One day while standing in line, a Major General came behind me, doing the same thing. When I turned around and looked in astonishment at him performing this menial task, he said “That’s okay, son, I’m the lowest ranking man in my office, too.”

Back at the Navy Department, the Intern program was great. In addition to group classes and guidance, they rotated us for about a month at a time through many offices for exposure to different types of jobs. One of my rotations was with the Polaris Special Projects Office (SPO) developing guided nuclear missiles for launching from nuclear powered submarines. Admiral Rickover was famous for his management of the submarine project, while Admiral Raborn -- not so famous, but just as effective in his way -- for the missiles. I had an extended rotation with the SPO, where I learned the ins and outs of PERT/CPM & LOB. PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) and Critical Path Method planning were techniques for estimating & scheduling -- new tools and techniques they applied to a research and development project to accelerate missile production. By the time I got there they were into mass production with another technique -- Line of Balance (LOB) -- essentially a series of overlapping concurrent critical paths, with specialty crews staggered from working on one missile, to their function on the next. [This approach shortens the overall schedule significantly.] In addition to the Polaris SPO, I had a rotation with the Bureau of Weapons (BUWEPS) Management Engineering office which looked at existing situations to improve processing efficiency and effectiveness within the Bureau; then was permanently assigned as a Management Analyst to the Navy Department’s central Management Office (NMO) to do similar work throughout the Navy. The Navy also sent me to night school at George Washington University where I took a course on operations research. I just had a great time working and learning in/with the Navy.

When the Secretary of the Navy John Connally learned I was also an Air Force lieutenant. He apparently didn’t like the idea of an Air Force lieutenant working as a

Navy civilian. I was offered an opportunity to resign from the Air Force, join the Naval Reserve, with a one-step promotion; and assignment to ONI – the Office of Naval Intelligence. I knew my dad would have been delighted, but I'd fought hard for my Air Force career. Also, I didn't think I'd do so well in the Navy; particularly if I had to do sea duty. So I respectfully declined the offer.

A funny anecdote: With the election of President Kennedy, during the early 1960's Washington was very "Irish." Indeed, my "chain of command" ran from President Kennedy, to Secretary of Defense McNamara, SECNAV Connally, and NMO Director Ed Dwyer. Further down the chain within the NMO, I was under Bob Meehan, and Joe Fitzgerald, and also worked with Marine Corps Colonel "Mickey" Finn. After I was appointed to the Navy Management Office, Ed Dwyer would often comment in the opening remarks of his presentations "I have finally achieved the ambition of every Irishman; I have an Englishman working for me."

When the Cuban Missile Crisis broke out, the Air Force personnel office called for reservists to volunteer for extended active duty. Buck advised me to ignore it and not relinquish my civilian job, as I already had my mobilization assignment. If I opted for recall, I would simply be assigned full-time to where I was already working, part-time. So I continued working my day job with the Navy while putting in some extra shift work for the Air Force during the week and weekends until the crisis abated. At that point I was rotated to Arlington Hall; you probably know that's where the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) ultimately moved to. We used to do some of our top-secret stuff there. Another funny story. Although I had a generic top secret (TS) clearance, and could move around HQ USAF in the Pentagon you still had to have a specific TS clearance to move around inside the building at Arlington Hall. Until I got it, somebody had to escort me to and from the cubbyhole where I worked. Actually, the reserve lieutenant next to me was a Special Assistant to the Director of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in civilian life. He escorted me everywhere in the building; even to the toilet, and waited till I finished my business. We had photo intel, and all kinds of other exotic stuff at the Hall.

The Navy missile project came on line two years ahead of its planned schedule, and DOD Secretary McNamara decided the PERT/critical-path technique was so great, he ordered all the military services to adopt it to manage their projects. [A critic at MIT -- professor Harvey Sapolksy – wasn't so sure critical path was the reason for the unprecedented feat, but offered dubious support "PERT is less effective than advertised, but more so than rain dancing."] Nevertheless, the Defense Department created an interagency PERT Orientation and Training Center (POTC) and I was reassigned from NMO as a resident faculty expert. The civil service then reclassified me as a management systems specialist. The director – Guy Best -- was a senior civil servant and former Navy submarine commander (a dynamic real-life character not unlike Sean Connery in the 'Hunt for Red October' movie). We used to joke that PERT/CPM and LOB were "Best's Practices." Our mission was to travel around the country teaching contractors about CPM and LOB as well as assist -- hands-on – managers getting them started on-the-job.

One day a couple of engineers from USAID – Frank DiMatteo and Bill xx -- met with

Guy and said "We've got a contract claim against us on the Tan Son Nhut airport runway we were constructing in Saigon, Vietnam. The contractor slipped schedule and overran the budget by several million dollars; and is supporting his claim with a critical path chart. Do you have somebody who can help us analyze it?"

Knowing my Air Force background as well as my interest in USAID, Guy detailed me to work with them. Initially, I was supposed to go to Saigon, but at the last minute, USAID's on-site representative came to Washington instead. We worked in the State Department for a couple of months, reconstructing project progress reports into a critical-path format to compare "Actual" vs "Plan." and highlight the constraints. Then the engineers could see what that impacted and when; the attorneys could decide who was at fault, and the accountants could figure out how much it was worth. I then presented the CPM charts in the claims court as an expert witness to make the case for acceptance/rejection of items in dispute. Despite the fact that I was not an engineer, and had not even visited Vietnam, Saigon or the job site – which the claimant's attorney harped upon in his attempts to discredit me (as not understanding the situation) and my findings -- the contractor was awarded considerably less than originally claimed.

Then I went back to training defense contractors all around the U.S. in PERT/CPM & LOB. A year later USAID's Frank DiMatteo came back to POTC and asked for my services again to analyze another claim on a bigger project. This time the project was a telecommunications system -- constructing a series of radio relay towers from Turkey through Iran to Pakistan. AID learned their lesson on the previous claim -- where the contractor's defense attorney tried to undermine my credibility because I hadn't visited the job site, and wasn't an engineer; so didn't know what I was talking about; merely 'an artist drawing hearsay.' This time Frank and I went to Ankara for a month, where I visited the job site, and met with the mission's managers, engineers, attorney, contractor and others. Ever after that I've always insisted that I go to the job site, walk around with the experts, shoot the breeze as well as the basics, and kick the concrete. I don't pretend that makes me an expert, but I get 'Ground Truthing' -- a Reader's Digest understanding from a site visit what the project is, and what they're trying to do. I quickly realized this project was a repetition-type project; ripe for line of balance analysis.

I specified the progress report information I needed, then returned to Washington and worked with the engineers and attorneys to reconstruct this one. We were able to reduce the award by a few million dollars in the claims court, so jokingly I asked for my percentage as an expert witness. The engineers laughed at that, but said AID could hire me as a full-time employee.

I was a GS (general schedule)-13 at the time, and they said they could promote me to a GS-14 position, but it would take a while to process. So I returned to the POTC and resumed teaching and traveling around the US every week. Then someone else I had previously worked for in the Navy Management Office contacted me. He had transferred to the White House, was working for Kissinger, and asked if I'd be interested in working with their operations management room. I told him I had already been contacted by AID, and they were processing me for a 14 position. He said that wouldn't be a problem as

they could also give me a 14.

So I talked it over with my wife. Essentially, she summed up “For the past couple of years with POTC, you’ve been traveling all over the country and go to the airport Sunday afternoon, then come back Friday evening. With AID, while working at the State Department you were here, but also went away for a month. It would be nice for you to be home more often.” She was right, of course, but I thought with the White House job, I’d probably be spending long hours in the White House basement every day, so might not even get home much on weekends. So for my wife it was Hobson’s choice. I said I’d accept the first offer I received. AID came up first. So just before Christmas, I bade farewell to my boss and co-workers at POTC, and reported to AID/Washington’s Personnel office at the State Department.

Q: This was 1965, right?

SMITH: Yes. Then I got a major shock. When I reported, the personnel specialist said, “Mr. Smith, we have a problem. You’re not an engineer.”

I replied “I never said I was. I’m a management systems specialist.”

She said, “But the job is in engineering, and we only appoint engineers there. Can you go back to where you were, because we really can’t hire you.”

No Way. I threw another fit – similar to my initial reaction at UCONN when they told me I couldn’t be accepted. I told her the AID engineers recruited me, and I’d turned down a position at the White House for them; and I had relinquished my civil service position with the Defense Department without a break in service when AID formally notified me I had been appointed and gave me the date to report in. I was a career civil servant – though not very civil right then – and demanded AID honor their appointment.

She said, “Come back this afternoon, I’ll talk to my boss and see what we can do.”

I then high-tailed it to the Engineering Office and told them what had just transpired. The Director – Walter (Stoney) Stoneman called the Personnel office and told her they knew I was not an engineer, but had worked with them as a consultant; and they needed my skills as a management systems specialist. When I went back after lunch, she said she would discuss the situation with the Director of Personnel, and asked me to come back tomorrow.

Driving home, I realized what I had done, and was really worried. I’d just thrown a fit and berated a female personnel specialist who had the power to cancel my appointment, as well as file a harassment complaint against me. When I returned the next morning, I apologized to her, which fortunately she accepted graciously; saying she understood my frustration; then ushered me into the personnel director’s office.

The Director -- Art Hughes – was busy talking on the phone as we came in, but he waved

for me to sit on a couch. His office wasn't anything like I'd seen in a government office. It wasn't a utilitarian government issue, like Pentagon offices -- even executive ones -- but was nicely decorated, with upholstered -- rather than leather -- furniture, and an oriental carpet on the floor. While waiting for him, I studied a couple of pictures -- side by side -- on his wall, labeled "Before" and "After." 'Before' depicted a Pakistani squatting on the floor drilling a piece of wood. 'After' showed the same guy squatting on a chair drilling the wood -- now on a table. I knew then this was a guy with an appreciation for management analysis, and a sense of humor.

When he turned to me, he said "I heard what went on yesterday. We can work this out." We chatted for a while, then he called in the personnel specialist and told her "Move that position from Engineering to the Executive office in the Far East Bureau. He can be the Agency's consultant to introduce critical path and line of balance for projects throughout the agency."

Relieved and ecstatic, I called home right away to inform my wife I still had a job; then called the engineering office to inform them of the new arrangement. They were also delighted because in addition to other offices, I would now be on-tap in the future. I was assigned a nice office and settled in to start work. But not much productive work was going on the week before Christmas. Instead, people were making the rounds visiting Christmas parties in different offices. But it was a great opportunity to make initial contacts and get introduced to a lot of people in a short time.

Then, shortly after New Year, the central Engineering Office asked for my assistance. "We want you to go to Bangkok. We have a new irrigation dam proposal to review. We need you to help review the status and scheduling."

Q: So in February '66 you went off to Thailand?

SMITH: Yes. I went with Larry Donnelly -- an irrigation engineer from the Central office. When we got there, we met with some Thai Government officials, as well as Phil Lewis -- another engineer from the AID mission, and some AID contractors. In addition to Bangkok, we visited a few sites in northern Thailand. Later, we also met up with Frank DiMatteo who I'd worked with on the two contract claims, and Alan Replogle, another engineer from Bangkok.

Q: Give me a refresher here. This critical path analysis that you're presenting to them; what does it actually involve?

SMITH: It's basically a project planning and monitoring tool; logically identifying what you're going to do in great detail, checking the sequence in which it gets done, as well as what comes before and after. Then you estimate how long it's going to take depending on the resources available. Next you can schedule how long it will take, and estimate how much it's all going to cost, so you can set up a time-scale budget. Before critical path, bar charts -- called Gantt charts -- were the mode. The problem with bar charts is they're put together by planners, but linkages between activities are not shown. So when others come

to implement the project, they inherit the Gantt charts with a series of concurrent bars representing work, but no indication of the linkages between them, or what -- if anything -- is affected by any activity. Nice for presenting a 'big picture,' but useless for monitoring unless you know the details -- or want to obscure them.

With critical path you have definite linkages, and checkpoints -- 'milestones' -- in a continuous flow diagram to schedule and track progress. God only knows how they built the Pyramids without them, or perhaps that's why it took the Chinese so long to build their Great Wall; but Critical Path was a completely new paradigm in 1957, for both business and engineering process management. It can be applied to any type of project, as any process can be a project. You just have to map out the detail, then follow it. Critical path charts are often referred to as 'roadmaps.'

Harkening back to my dad, he always insisted "You've got to have a trade." Instead of a hammer wrench, saw and screwdriver, my tools were typing, critical path and line of balance flow charts, time & cost estimating, and simple statistical analysis. Later, I added another tool and technique: the 'logical framework.'

Q: This '65-66 period is when the U.S. is ratcheting up in Vietnam. Were the US projects and politics in Thailand associated with the emphasis on Vietnam?

SMITH: Maybe; but I didn't get involved with any of the Vietnam-related stuff in Thailand. I knew there were US military bases operating from there, but didn't have time for any Air Force-related activity. In this instance, I was working strictly on a couple of infrastructure projects for the Thai government through USOM managed by AID's central engineering office in Washington; as well as a rural water pump project managed by the local mission.

When we finished our assignment, the mission director said, "I like the kind of work you do; how would you like to join the Foreign Service and work for me here?" Wow. Bangkok at that time was the most exotic place I'd ever been. "Yes, but I'll have to talk it over with my wife first."

We also stopped by the USAID mission in Korea on the way home, to visit the Korean Productivity Institute as well as look at a couple of other USAID projects. There I looked at another irrigation project -- a big dam construction by the US Bureau of Reclamation in the planning stage with the Korean Government. They had also planned it with bar charts, but when I transformed it on a critical-path chart, I showed it would take a year longer than they planned -- five years instead of four -- because some of the linkages between activities were overlooked, so the bars weren't in the correct sequence. This is the beauty of critical path; you get into the detail, and the linkages have to be highlighted.

Just before leaving Korea, Washington sent a cable telling me to detour via Saigon. Because of the build-up, AID/Washington wanted a rapid appraisal of the mission's information system. So from Seoul, I went to Saigon. That was in chaos. The mission was building up rapidly, and they didn't know who or what they had. There was no current

organization chart or staffing pattern. In addition to direct hire personnel, there were contractors of all kinds – companies, PVOs (Private Voluntary Organizations) such as IVS (International Voluntary Services), as well as individuals working for or on behalf of USAID. At that point AID/Washington was also forcing their Foreign Service Officers to go there; and some were even quitting AID rather than go.

The officer preparing the report to Washington – Barney Blair -- was a former newspaper type from USIS (United States Information Service). He did the best he could, asking people to send him tidbits of news, from which he compiled a weekly newsletter that he sent to the ambassador and AID Washington. But it was more like the military ‘Stars and Stripes’ newspaper than a comprehensive systematic status report of mission activities. I spent about three weeks there and wrote my report, essentially saying it was utter chaos. There was no semblance of systematic reporting; nobody knew what was there or what was being done. Then I returned to Washington.

When I’d gone to Thailand a couple of months earlier, I had been with the Far East Bureau. When I returned, it was now the Asia Bureau. But more than that; Vietnam had been pulled out and created as a separate bureau. When I went back to the office I’d left, all my personal belongings were in a cardboard box; and I was told to report to another office in New State. There I was informed I was the new Vietnam Bureau’s Director for Information. I had a Foreign Service officer as a deputy and a Foreign Service Staff secretary (both on rotation) – who had actually been running the show in my absence; plus several civil service officers and staff. We were responsible for preparing a daily report on the Vietnam situation to the Bureau Assistant Administrator, as well as research and prepare responses to ad hoc Congressional inquiries.

From my limited contacts to date, AID/Washington also seemed very chaotic and disorganized. Their organization chart was an absolute horror of a wiring diagram. Some major infrastructure projects – like airports, schools and hospitals -- were centrally designed, contracted-out and managed; but I discovered later that regional offices, regional bureaus, as well as country missions initiated and managed their own projects as well. And they were staffed with a mixture of civil service administrative and technical specialists, foreign service officers and staff on ‘rotation’ from overseas, institutional consultants, and individuals on personal service contracts; as well as quite a few political appointees.

I did the best I could for about a month; attending daily staff meetings and following up on new instructions. But I am not a multitasker by nature, and this was driving me nuts as well as giving me frequent migraines. At that point I really empathized with Barney in Saigon whose reporting I had unfavorably critiqued. I seriously thought about quitting, but held on waiting for the Bangkok appointment to the Foreign Service to be approved. However, that fell through at the last minute as the Agency underwent an externally-imposed budget cut and RIF (Reduction in Force) of all unfilled positions – all except the Vietnam Bureau.

Then salvation. I was asked if I would like to go back to Saigon to conceptualize and

supervise the design and installation of a formal management information system for the USAID Mission. [Note, this was way before the internet, so it was to be a manual system.] Several civilian consultants were to be hired to do most of the leg-work then operate it full time; but didn't know diddly about AID -- truth to tell at that point I didn't know much about AID either. I was to head up the team; but since I was Civil Service, I could only go out for up to ninety days at a time. So I would 'commute' to Saigon from Washington.

Fantastic. I could get out of AID/Washington and back into the field where I felt I could really be effective. That's what I did for three years. Before returning from Saigon each time, the mission director asked if I would like to convert to Foreign Service, and a promotion. I was a GS-14 at the time and could be appointed to a Foreign Service Reserve (FSR) level '3' which was about equivalent to a GS-15. But after I talked it over with my wife, she said "Why would you want to do that? Then you'll be there for a year or more. Right now, you're only there for ninety days at a time. [There was an option where the family could go to another mission in the area – such as Bangkok, or the Philippines; but she said why should I do that if you're still in Saigon?] Carry on commuting." The boss was right.

Later, the Vietnam Bureau reclassified my Director's position to a GS-15 – anyway. At first that sounded great; but under the Civil Service rules I quickly discovered I had to compete for my own job. I almost lost it, but fortunately my former Far East Bureau bosses plugged for me and I managed to retain it against all would-be competitors; and was now upgraded as a 15.

Q: Let me ask a question. Going back to Thailand, you've got an embassy, an in-place AID program, and what you were asked to look at was the expansion of that program? Was there a water pump team?

SMITH: We went to Thailand for a central office project. But while there, we were also asked to meet with some contractors from the Battelle Memorial Institute working for the mission. They were planning to install water pumps in many tambons (villages). But when I looked at the process and how they planned to use the crews – i.e. identifying a site, getting agreement with the villagers, getting a well drilling team on site, digging the well, installing the pump, cementing the base, then turning it over for use, and moving on to identify and new site and repeat the process -- I said "at the rate you're planning per site, then working sequentially, it's going to take about fifteen years to finish the project. You need to get more crews and reorganize them to work concurrently; staggering from one site to the next." This project was another repetitive line of balance scheduling process to figure the optimum time to get the job done -- similar to the Turkey-Iran-Pakistan telecom project.

Q: So the AID Mission on its own is coming up with these projects?

SMITH: I don't know what they had before -- or have now -- but when I was with AID

the Missions developed country development strategy statements (CDSS). The AID Mission conceived and developed potential assistance programs with the host government, then applied for approval and funding from Washington. But AID/W Regional Bureaus, as well as Central technical offices – like Engineering, and Health -- also initiated projects and managed them. There was almost always an internal struggle; was the Mission in country to implement Washington’s program, or was Washington there to backstop the Mission’s program? As somebody explained to me, “Where you stand depends on where you sit.”

Mission directors are usually very protective of what they were doing but Washington always retained some funding for other things -- particularly with infrastructure projects. At that time, they had many capital-development projects outside of the regional bureaus – such as hospitals, schools and airports -- managed by the central engineering office covering several countries. Externally, I’m sure there was also plenty of back-and-forth with the embassy’s Political section, as well as political pressure from State -- back in Washington. But I never got into that. That was above my pay grade. But in any event, from my ‘worm’s eye’ perspective, any political expectations of US influence emanating from throwing money at USAID projects were – and are -- over-optimistic; as their budget is vastly overshadowed by international and regional multi-lateral donors. For example, I was an ADB (Asian Development Bank) consultant team leader for a small Philippine Health project for 6 provinces, and that budget was almost as great as the USAID Philippine Mission’s entire multi-sector portfolio for the whole country. [And AID’s Philippine mission at that time was one of AID’s largest in the world.]

Q: So in a country like Thailand, AID had people in the field, with people in the capital thinking up the larger projects?

SMITH: Yes. Actually, in Thailand the mission was called USOM (United States Operations Mission) though it was never explained to me why it wasn’t USAID. It was hinted that in the Thai language, the inflections on USAID sounded like an offensive word. But nobody would explain. People would just laugh whenever I would say USAID. The Thai mission kept its original name of USOM.

The program office was the heart of the USAID mission where economists would work closely with host government counterparts to see what USAID could do to help their development; then oversee sector program and project proposals for approval and funding by AID Headquarters in Washington. Now – as I said earlier -- I know the embassy often wanted USAID to undertake some projects to support US political objectives, but although part of the “country team,” several USAID mission directors I knew would sometimes be at odds with the embassy, and try to resist political pressure in favor of perceived economic development priorities.

Q: In Thailand for example you had USAID officers in the various tambons, in the various provinces.

SMITH: Yes, in addition to the country capital, we also had people in-country scattered all over the boondocks. That's where most of us liked to work, out in the field. 'Short-sleeved diplomats' we were sometimes called. Some AID Foreign Service officers – we were FSR (Reserve) then, to distinguish from State FSOs -- got a little 'above themselves' (to use my earlier British social structure phrasing), but – to put it bluntly – I always thought of myself and USAID FSRs as essentially the State Department's blue-collar workers, rather than traditional Diplomats. (Laughter)

Q: In Thailand the royal household was very interested in community development. Did you have an opportunity to meet any member of the royal household?

SMITH: Yes, I did, but not on that initial assignment. Years later, when I was working with the Thai auditor-general on a consultancy for the Asia Development Bank, I met several of the king's cousins. One was a tour guide at the Grand Palace. [I can tell you a story about that later.] At that point in life, though, I was really focused on the nuts and bolts of our projects. I was only in Thailand on TDY (short term temporary duty) and didn't participate in mission country development planning. I was just there to assist the central engineering office and mission to review a few projects that had already been selected, or were under construction.

Q: Did USAID operations in Korea look similar to the Thai operation? Or was each unique to the country it was assigned to?

SMITH: I didn't look at their entire portfolios. Later, in other Missions I visited, many were similar, but that was to be expected since AID personnel transferred from one to another and did 'their thing.' [As Mark Twain once said, "To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail." And I also was no exception.] As a humanitarian development agency, USAID focused on improving the lot of the poor; regardless of governmental politics. That encompassed many dimensions of health, education and welfare, and supporting infrastructure. Agriculture – and organizing cooperatives for community food production and marketing – was big. Nutrition, particularly for children. Rural electrification, farm-to-market roads, etc.

We also had a few centrally imposed themes – such as family planning. [Much later, the overall AID mission was expanded to encompass private sector business ventures.] But most projects were 'home grown.' What we normally did in USAID was a three-stage process – known as 'Point-Line-Network.' First, we'd fund a pilot project -- where consultant contractors or teams of experts would develop and test a concept. When successful, it would then be demonstrated by local officials and/or target beneficiaries in several areas; usually with support from the AID contractors. Then USAID and the host government would decide whether the demonstration could be replicated in different areas. If so, we'd finance and initiate major areas or even nation-wide projects to achieve a spread effect.

As an evaluator, one of the problems I frequently found was ‘overkill’ by the aid-implementers to ensure the pilot project was successful. So although a pilot project showed great results on the research station, it might not do so well on field demonstrations when implemented by local government agencies or end users. Even if reasonably successful and showed promise then, often there was no way the government could replicate it nationally. They just didn’t have the resources; and implementation would just peter-out. Those that were completed, might not be sustainable in the long run. [Business failures occur, even in the US. In developing countries, it’s ten times harder.] Development is a tough business.

Whenever the host government wanted a project, they would come to USAID and talk with our program officers. More often than not -- I was quite familiar with this in the Philippines -- we would be working with them in their government offices, and have ready access to the minister, bureau chiefs, or whoever was in charge and invite them to work out what we could include in the country strategy statements and budget requests to AID/Washington. What we couldn’t get into the budget cycle, we’d often hold over as ‘shelf projects’ to resubmit the following year. Some large USAID missions appeared to function like shadow ministries of the government; others just to supplement and fill in critical gaps. Nevertheless, we in AID were always very thin as we only had a limited budget and personnel; although we sometimes cast a big shadow. For instance, I worked very closely with numerous Philippine Department of Agriculture and International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) personnel – from the highest to ‘rice roots’ levels; planning and implementing Masagana 99 -- a nationwide ‘Green Revolution’ Rice production program. USAID only had a small personnel and resource input, but the project was highly successful and received world-wide recognition.

In addition to our projects, USAID also managed other funds for PL-480 (public law) to distribute surplus US food production, and a commercial import program -- where we brought goods in, and the government sold them for local currency which was used to undertake additional local projects. There were several different sources of funds the program office managed. I didn’t get involved with the source of funding. My function wherever I went was to facilitate designing and implementing projects -- and once in a while -- check how they were doing.

Q: This is a time where things are changing rapidly in Vietnam. In Vietnam was there the same kind of AID operation? Or had it already been taken over by the military?

SMITH: Oh, God only knows. The ‘Strategic Hamlet’ approach had been a big bone of contention between AID and the military long before I arrived. Later AID and military programs merged. But I’m getting ahead of myself and our involvement. When I checked in the USAID Mission, I had four great civilians in a team, to work with. Ross Boyle was the permanent team leader, while I came in-and-out as system designer and technical adviser for what they should be doing. When we first met with the mission director, Don McDonald, he explained to us “This is like trying to build a house while it’s on fire.

Nevertheless, we've got to do our best and carry on because this is what our government wants us to do." What kind of mess is this we're into?.

I mentioned earlier that many AID officers had been force-placed in Vietnam. There was a good reason for their recalcitrance. USAID's mission was to improve the lives of the poor – the 'productive poor' as Jack Sullivan later eloquently clarified it (rather than the down and out destitute) -- and the traditional AID officer was a humanitarian-development 'missionary' type who wanted to do community development work in many dimensions of health, education and welfare – as well as supporting infrastructure. The military on the other hand are oriented and trained to 'kill the enemy and break things.' Their Vietnam mantra was 'search and destroy' – specifically communist enemy and its sympathizers embedded in communities, as well as regular armed forces from the north. They had a secondary 'Pacification' objective to 'win the hearts and minds' of the population, but usually adopted a heavy-handed approach doing it. You've probably heard that one – "Grab them by the balls, and their hearts and minds will follow."

Consequently, most AID personnel saw the military as the problem; the military viewed AID as a problem, while the Vietnamese saw us both as problems – or, in some cases, opportunities. I guess the embassy was struggling to cope with it all, and striving for a positive political solution for everyone, somehow.

Since I was spending a lot of time backwards and forwards and was interested in history, I started reading the background of French Indo-China and got a better understanding of the situation on the ground. When I first went out the 'Domino Theory' was prevalent, and the military response was Eisenhower's "kill the commies" approach. Later came Pacification. Then, when I read their history, I saw the root cause was way back in World War I, when Woodrow Wilson wouldn't entertain Ho Chi Minh's request for freedom and equality. And after WWII, the Vietnamese -- even in the South -- were suspicious of U.S. motives; afraid we were going to help the French reinstate Indochina, or take it over for ourselves. But the way the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong behaved; they were not simply peace-loving people trying to regain or establish an independent country; they were just as ruthless towards their own people as they were to us.

When I got there in 1966, the build-up was increasing rapidly. While the program office was working at the national level importing goods and trying to do balance of payments; our task as the management information team was to find out -- and let both mission and AID Washington know -- what else was going on. The AID mission had FSRs assigned in Saigon, and deployed others to the provinces as AID representatives. In addition, many other contractors and private volunteer groups worked directly on programs and projects.

Because there was no organization chart, we had to interview people everywhere we could – catch-as-catch-can -- and ask what they were doing, who sent them, and why. Then try to create a wiring diagram, from the disparate pieces. Our team scattered around and found an incredible number and variety of sources. AID had projects across the board, infrastructure projects – roads, power, transportation, hospitals, schools – as well as social and economic development in health, education and agriculture. You name it,

and we probably had a project for it. USAID also set up and administered refugee camps for communist defectors. So, initially, our team's mission was just trying to find what was what and sort it all out.

While we were still trying to find out what AID was doing, Ambassador Lodge assigned his deputy -- Bill Porter -- to establish an Office of Civil Operations (OCO) to coordinate what other US civilian government agencies were doing in the country, and my team's scope was broadened by his representative Wade Lathram. But LBJ became impatient for results and OCO was soon superseded by a new Office of Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS). Bob 'blowtorch' Komer -- CORDS dynamic civilian manager -- audaciously awarded himself four stars to let the military know he was on a par with their top brass, and very forcefully integrated military pacification and civilian development efforts. My team was then further extended to coordinate with CORDS. I didn't get into much of the data collection detail because after I set up the basic management information system, I left Ross and the rest of the team to carry on.

In short, it was all ad hoc, and chaotic. At one point -- just before I got promoted to 15 -- our team met with the military to learn about the management information system they had developed for CORDS and launched at the Hamlet-level for reporting and evaluation -- a system they called the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES).

A humorous anecdote here. One of the habits the military have that you might have noticed is they always introduce themselves by their rank: i.e. "My name is Colonel So-and-so." By contrast in AID, we usually conversed with everybody on a first-name basis -- even at the very highest levels. But the military was always very formal. Colonel Brigham was in charge of the HES, and did the usual "My name is Colonel Brigham." I decided to pull his chain a little bit. So I responded "My name is Fourteen Smith." At that, he gave me a double-take look and all the civilian guys started laughing. Then I clarified, "My name is Ken Smith but my rank is 14." That broke the ice with us, but didn't change their habits when conversing amongst themselves.

We learned that the structure of the management information system we were establishing for AID was based on the same underlying concept as the HES. So, I was very gratified to know I was moving along sound professional management lines. However, with our limited capability, we only tried to collect information at the province level -- Forty-four provinces. We got a monthly report from each one. We designed the report by asking people at Headquarters what they wanted to know from the provinces on a recurring basis, then structured it -- questionnaire style -- by categories so it would be simple for people in the provinces to respond 'yes,' 'no,' or 'not applicable.' Then we could quantify their responses as percentages. We also requested intrinsic quantitative data HQ wanted for cumulative performance &/or target analysis (which later mostly turned out to be GIGO -- 'garbage-in, garbage-out'), plus a short narrative on problems they were encountering, and what help they wanted from their Saigon backstops. [Again, our system in AID was manual -- this was 'BC' (before computers.)] All we had to work with were paper reports, Rolodex cards and the like; and we drew charts by hand. We could also photocopy documents with Xerox machines.

The military on the other hand had a massive computer complex at MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) headquarters; and data collection was disaggregated to the hamlet level. Now there were some eighteen thousand hamlets in Vietnam; twelve thousand from which they were trying to collect data. They also devised a questionnaire, comprised of 139 questions covering 18 different aspects -- 9 pertaining to Security, and 9 to Pacification – the major areas of interest to the military and civilian agencies, respectively; to be rated on a 5-point scale, and reported monthly.

While a theoretical ‘masterpiece’ by design, in my opinion – never humble – the system was totally impractical. After a humongous effort to baseline it in 12,000-plus hamlets, those responsible for subsequent monthly reporting were completely overextended. They couldn’t get to visit every hamlet under their scrutiny every month; and couldn’t spend very much time even in those they could visit – rarely overnight, and certainly not enough time in even any one hamlet to ‘ground-truth’ the 139 questions. Whatever the baseline, without valid input, it would soon be out of date. But not my problem.

We met with Col Brigham on another occasion, and rank became an important issue in establishing the CORDS integrated provincial representative (PROV REP) military-civilian development structure. Col Brigham said the first order of business was to establish a pecking order. “What rank are your provincial officers?” he asked me.

I replied, “It depends. Actually, whoever was here. It could be a former ambassador without a portfolio, or a new FSO who had just arrived. In fact, it could be almost anybody at any rank. We just put people on the job according to their availability and capability.”

He said, “We can’t have that. We’ve got to establish some criteria.” After we discussed the varied nature of our projects and functions & responsibilities of prov reps for a while, he suddenly had an ‘ah-hah’ moment and asked, “Do they make independent decisions?”

“Well of course.” I replied.

“Aah, then they have to be at least a lieutenant-colonel.”

“Well, that’s great” I responded “because as a GS-14, I’m a lieutenant-colonel equivalent now. However, in the Air Force I wouldn’t qualify because I’m way below -- only a captain.”

But he stuck with that concept, and went back to MACV (the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) and established the provincial management rank structure. A military officer (colonel) and a civilian deputy, or a civilian officer and a military deputy (lt. colonel), with Vietnamese counterparts. However, since USAID people didn’t wear uniforms or display their rank, we didn’t change our practice; and nobody knew any different.

Q: When did the hamlet evaluation system start?

SMITH: About the same time as ours. I went to Bangkok in January 1966, and started developing our system later that year. We finally got our reporting system going mid-'67. The HES was probably launched in October '67, and grew by leaps and bounds each month thereafter. One of the wonders of the thing was they had computer data processing capability integrated with a GIS/GPS system (GIS – geographical information system; GPS – global positioning system). They could draw maps showing intensity where areas were relatively secure, and could slice the data a thousand ways. They were cranking out masses and masses of paper reports each month, whereas what we were doing was just a slim status report on USAID projects and related activities by province; which was sent to AID/Washington as well as the ambassador in Saigon.

After I set up the system and let the other guys carry on with the information system, they merged into CORDS (Civil Operations and Rural Development Support). Ross Boyle, a self-assured executive leader-consultant was in charge of our system. His assistants were equally competent professionals: Ken Halaby, Pete Liebschutz and Jay Friedman. They formed the core team, and we got additional Vietnamese FSN (Foreign Service national) staff to flesh out what we were doing. Later we got several more Foreign Service officers and staff to operate the system. After a while we had quite a little office of our own -- a subset of the agency's program office. We talked about what we could call it. We initially thought 'management analysis division' but that acronym would be MAD, so we finally settled for MID -- management information division.

After the system was operational, the mission director and program officers wanted me to continue helping out on specific projects in Saigon. I then continued returning to work with other USAID departments on specific projects in agriculture, health and education until April 1969.

Q: Your job back in Washington, who was paying attention to what you were doing? Who were you reporting to?

SMITH: Initially, I reported to a triumvirate: Jim Grant, Ken Kugel and Ken Rabin. Jim was the Assistant Administrator of the Vietnam Bureau, but he soon left AID and moved to head UNICEF (the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund). I continued reporting to Ken Kugel, then others. [Not sure of their exact titles now. There were a dazzling variety of important-sounding titles – Administrators, Chiefs, Directors, as well as Assistants and Deputies to them – sometime for a couple of iterations – i.e. the Deputy Assistant to the Director etc., etc., at AID/Washington's senior and mid-level management levels] I was nominally also a Director --of the Bureau's management information; but my backstop John Sewell – and FSR on rotation – was really running the shop while I was coming and going.

I commuted to Vietnam for two or three months at a time -- returning to Washington for a

month or so, then back again over a span of three years. There was a perpetual state of reorganization. Each time I returned I encountered a different structure and cast of characters. People were constantly shuffling – being transferred or jockeying for different positions. I had problems keeping up with what even familiar faces were responsible for.

Q: The USAID reporting out of Saigon and the projects you were looking at, was any of that contradictory to what the embassy or MACV was reporting?

SMITH: I wouldn't know. As I said earlier, I didn't get into the substance of the reports. I was just setting up the structure for what to capture and how to analyze, summarize and report it. If you ever get an opportunity to talk to Ken Halaby or Ross Boyle, an FSR George Hill, or Dick Eney, a GS -- they were the key people actually managing it in Saigon. They received reports from the 44 provinces on every AID project each month, then analyzed, tabulated, charted, graphed, edited and d the data and prepared reports for the Vietnam Bureau in AID/ Washington, the embassy, and Bob Komer who was running the CORDS operation.

Then in Washington they did whatever to inform the Congress and State.

To put things in perspective, although the capital of a country at war, Saigon was not a "hot" zone all the time. Often Saigon was relatively quiet and most of the combat action was across the river, but the press often embellished the stories they filed. I particularly remember one instance when the Central Market – located not very far from USAID 1 -- was mortared one day. We heard the noise, felt the blast, saw the smoke, carried on working, then went down later to take a look around. The mortaring did some damage of course, but it was a one-time thing, was quickly cleared up, and market activity soon returned to its normal hustle and bustle with merchants displaying and selling stuff; and shoppers shopping. Other than the mortaring incident, things were pretty quiet in Saigon for the rest of the week. I was therefore subsequently startled, amused, angry, then dismayed to have my suspicions of news bias and distortion confirmed -- when I later read in "Time" magazine how Saigon was "still reeling" from last week's mortar attack on the Central Market.

I met several State officers in the course of my activities, but didn't work with or for them. There were also quite a few CIA people floating around doing different things on different projects also. It was chaotic, exciting, dangerous, and fun; as well as professionally rewarding. Don McDonald had said, "... do your best" and although I was immersed in an ever-changing bureaucratic environment, for the most part I was able to do what I felt was needed in order to get the job done; with few restrictions.

Q: In the '67 period you noted earlier, you had dealings with the IRRI rice program. Tell me about that.

SMITH: One of the agriculture projects we had in Vietnam was to improve rice productivity and production. In the Philippines, scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) had developed a new strain of rice. There were two varieties at

the time -- IR5 and IR8 -- though I'm not sure of the technical differences between them. Traditional rice used to grow about five feet high on long thin stems, then lodge over with the weight of the grain, and was very low yield. The IR varieties grew on a short, stiff, straw and remained erect with a heavier head. With appropriate inputs of fertilizer and water the yield was increased an astonishing four or five hundred percent. These varieties also grew much more rapidly, and could be planted year-round. So instead of the traditional one season harvest in a year, farmers could plant and harvest a second, or even -- with intensive management -- a third crop. [Later, one innovative farmer in the Philippines even 'LOB'd' it; subdividing his paddy into micro plots, and had a continuous year-round 'show & tell' demonstration operation for visitors.]'

So when I was no longer working on the management information system, I was asked to assist the agricultural division. The division chief -- Bill Averill -- had worked in the Philippine USAID Mission and IRRI before going to Saigon, and he sent me to the Philippines to get some of IRRI's high-yield variety seed. That was my first introduction to the Philippine mission. I got a briefing, and brought back some samples for reproduction. USAID then distributed seed to farmers through the Vietnamese agriculture ministry. Because of their dwarf straw stalk characteristics, the military also became interested and got the farmers to plant IR rice along the roadside. The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese used to hide in the tall rice, but it was more difficult to hide in the IRRI rice. That was a great integrated sub-project.

USAID also had a research group from Colorado -- don't remember whether it was University of Colorado or Colorado State. [We jokingly called them Ratfinks.] Anyway, they determined there was a big problem with post-harvest losses, because rats consumed about a third of the crop. They recommended AID implement an intensive incentive project for farmers to kill rats. But how to measure implementation performance and keep track of how many rats they've killed? Somebody reasoned we didn't need a rat body count; just tally the tails. USAID then launched a project to pay farmers a token bounty for bundles of rat-tails -- nine tails tied with a tenth -- delivered to their local government agricultural station.

After the first season, we did a quick follow-up survey but there was no significant difference in production data. On a field trip to a nearby province during the second season with USAID's ag. division deputy we saw a minor mountain of rat-tails outside an ag. extension office. Inside, the Vietnamese ag officer had detailed records of how much he had paid out, and to whom. On close inspection of the rat mound, we noticed many of the tails were quite short and thin. So we decided to visit a farm and see for ourselves, and one of the extension agents took us to one of his prime producers to introduce us and translate.

The old man was obviously pleased to see us and greeted us with a toothless smile, mixed Vietnamese pidgin-English "Chow om' shake hands" and open arms. [Many Vietnamese called us "shake hands" because of USAID's hand-shake logo.]

We went inside his hooch, and squatted down while the extension agent told him the

reason for our visit. The farmer explained he didn't catch the rats himself but had two sons who did. The sons were called and they confirmed they were responsible for the bountiful rat tail harvest, and were proud of their contribution to the family well-being. They then took us to another part of their compound where they had rats in several cages. This was the gist of our conversation:

"These our rats. Before chase in field; catch and kill. Very hard. Not catch many. Now keep in cages. Make babies. Cut off tails."

We laughed in astonishment. The Vietnamese extension agent just smiled.

"Why do you think 'shake-hands' buy tails?" we asked.

"Americans strange. Maybe eat them? Maybe want for guests. We eat fish, but save head & tail for guests."

[Margaret Mead would have appreciated this different cultural perspective.]

They also said the Viet Cong told them Americans ate babies.

"What do you do with the tailless rats?" "Eat. Taste good. Same-same chicken."

An unforeseen nutritional side-benefit. Truly, however they didn't perceive rats as pests like we did. From the farmer's perspective, rats had as much right to be in the rice paddy as people. They probably also fed their rats with rice. We didn't ask. [Flashback: It reminded me-- my mom and I used to do the same thing during the war -- but with rabbits.]

I don't know how prevalent this particular rat-tail production process was and we didn't bother to find out. In any event, when we went back to Saigon, we told the Ag. Director "Kill the rat-tail bonus project; it's not working out the way we intended."

Q: Let me go back a little bit to Tet in Vietnam, January 31, '68. I'm sure it came to your attention. How did you hear? Where were you when the Tet attacks emerged? When did you hear the Tet offensive had started?

SMITH: Actually, I was beginning one of my commutes. I was at Dulles Airport waiting for my flight to go back to Vietnam, when I was paged at the airport. At first, I thought it was a practical joke someone back at the office was playing on me. [Who gets paged at an airport unless they're meeting someone, or are a lost kid?] But it was my secretary, Ginny; and she told me to cancel my trip and report back to the office State Department as Saigon had been attacked and the NVA and VC had overrun the place. I had to wait about a month before I was able to return and rejoin my consultant group; and listen to all the war stories from my buddies about what I'd missed.

Q: What's your evaluation of what Tet did to the programs that AID had ongoing?

SMITH: Well, it was demoralizing at first. Until Tet happened, the military had been upbeat, as they thought the enemy were running out of warm bodies. Then they suddenly discovered new ones. One of their problems was when they couldn't count dead bodies, they made assumptions. For a while (I don't know who came up with it) they were using a ten-to-one ratio -- for every one of ours we lost, the assumption was we killed ten of theirs.

A major flaw with the HES – IMO -- was the system was ‘zero-based,’ so the status of unvisited hamlets was retained as of the previous report. Consequently -- steadily but surely -- analysis indicated things were improving. No one wanted to report they were doing a bad job for fear they'd be criticized. The system reported security escalating to 90 percent ‘Satisfactory,’ until the ‘Tet offensive’ shook everyone’s complacency. Nevertheless, the HES was reassessed, reworked, regrouped and then continued as the basis for briefing everybody.

In AID, we recovered rapidly after Tet and pressed on; working within the CORDS structure. I sensed the general mood though was we were fighting a losing battle.

Concurrently while in Saigon, because I still had to maintain my reserve activity, Air Force headquarters put me in touch with MACV intel (J-2). This was a great opportunity for me because now I was a Captain in a combat zone; even though I wasn't deployed in the jungle for days at a time with a rifle, like the Army and Marines. Apart from a couple of quick forays, I was mostly in a MACV office – intermittently -- doing miscellaneous ‘intel’ work. When I eventually finished my Vietnam tour, I was promoted to Major, and resumed duty at Air Force Headquarters in the Pentagon.

Q: Were any of the programs you were connected with abandoned because of Tet?

SMITH: Abandoned? Not that I know of. We regrouped, reassessed and – as Churchill advised in WWII – “kept buggering on.” For instance, we built – and rebuilt -- schools and hospitals. [Incidentally, on the military side I spent some time targeting them because I knew what they were made of, and how best to take them out -- if it ever became necessary.]

Q: I have to assume that some of the AID personnel were killed during Tet.

SMITH: Yes. Though I didn't know any personally. Years later, I met Mike Benge – from Oregon -- who had been captured during Tet while working with USAID. He was first kept in a cage then transferred to the Hanoi Hilton. I met Mike when he was attached to the AID mission in Manila. After he was released in 1973, he took a forestry program at the University of the Philippines on an AID-related sabbatical. When Mike graduated, he was assigned to the Ag. Division full-time, and started a forestry program. That, incidentally, was a completely new thrust for USAID, as hitherto AID had only worked

with food crop programs. Ultimately Mike was very successful and received world-wide recognition for his work in forestry development.

Q: After Vietnam, you also had a sabbatical at MIT. Tell us what the MIT fellowship was all about. How did that originate?

SMITH: In early 1968, the Civil Service Commission announced a nationwide scholarship program to improve systematic quantitative analysis in the civil service. I heard about it and applied for consideration and sabbatical leave through AID's Washington Personnel channels. In December 1968 I was notified I had been awarded a fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). A terrific Birthday & Christmas Present.

The week I returned to AID/Washington in April 1969, my backstop -- Phil Sperling -- invited me to attend an AID Awards ceremony with him. When they called his name and gave him an award for developing the Vietnam Bureau's project management information system, I thought, "Oh that's why he asked me to come. My turn's next." But they didn't call me. Phil was very apologetic, and said he was unaware he was even getting an award, and suggested I follow up with John Heilman, now the Vietnam Bureau Assistant Administrator. [I'd known John previously – but in a different context.] John said he was sorry I was overlooked, but Phil was the system manager he was familiar with on a day-to-day basis. He also told me the bureau was being reorganized and I had been reassigned.

So I hightailed it over to the personnel department and they reaffirmed "You're being transferred to a newly-created Technical Assistance Bureau (TAB) – in 'Old' State." At that, I responded "Well, how about my sabbatical? I was notified by the Civil Service Commission I was selected for a fellowship at MIT." "Oh no. That MIT thing was canceled. We already informed them you were a key person on a priority program in Saigon; and couldn't be spared." That's when I blew my stack again. "I wasn't a key person. I was on TDY helping out."

Returning to the Vietnam Bureau I told John "I've been working my butt off in the Bureau for the past three years; then you gave an award for my work to somebody else. I recognize he's the one you know so have no issue with that. But now personnel is telling me they canceled my sabbatical and I'm just going to be transferred to another office." He replied "I'm sorry, but not much I can do about it."

Then I went directly to the Civil Service Commission -- across the street from Old State – to confer with Jim Sayles -- a buddy from the Navy management intern program. It turned out he was the one managing the fellowship program. Jim said, "Ken, I saw you had been selected for the systems analysis program. Then I saw later that AID had canceled it, but knew you were in Saigon, so I didn't process it. It hasn't been cancelled; I was just waiting for you to come back to check in with you." A big sigh of relief; but I told him "AID thinks they canceled it." "No problem, just go back and tell them to

reconfirm it, because we've still got you on hold."

So I went back to AID. I asked the personnel office to affirm I was still available for the fellowship, and the Vietnam bureau chief to approve the sabbatical. They both agreed that it was the least they could do since I didn't get the award. But there was one more hurdle to cross -- concurrence from my potential new boss in the Technical Assistance Bureau. Bill Siffin was a professor from Indiana University who – himself -- had just been assigned to AID under a government-to-private sabbatical exchange program. After I discussed my situation with Bill and his Deputy Jack Koteen – they were both very understanding, and agreed to me joining their Public Administration Division (PAD) staff immediately, as well as sponsoring my release on a sabbatical for the forthcoming MIT program. I returned to personnel and waited for -- then hand-carried -- the necessary confirmation paperwork to the Civil Service Commission; and had lunch with Jim and John Macy – the former Commissioner of the civil service. A heady day indeed.

So everything was now back on track; and I picked up my personal stuff and reported in to TAB. There were still several months before the MIT program started, so I settled into PAD and got acquainted with the others; and worked on a couple of studies. Bill also advised me to get geared up for academia, so I signed up for an evening Calculus course at the USDA Grad School, and a short day-time economics course at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) in Arlington. Then in late August I packed up and went to MIT in Cambridge to start a new phase of my career and education.

Q: Let me ask, in 1969 you took the FSI economics short course. That's a six-month program.

SMITH: No, what I took was a really intensive two-week short course – one week was micro-economics; the other macro.

Q: Okay. You've been in and out of academic institutions. How would you evaluate that short course?

SMITH: It was very good and very intensive; equal to a semester economics course I had back in Connecticut.

Q: Tell me about your MIT Program.

SMITH: We were twenty-five employees from different government agencies in a specially-designed two-semester program in the Center for Advanced Engineering Study (CAES); separate from the regular academic structure. One – Ed Parsons -- was a Foreign Service officer, a State type, but I'm not sure which one. Peter was an engineer from the Army Corps of Engineers. The rest were a mixed bag. We had two ladies – Connie & Martha; one from the National Statistics Office at the Census Bureau. Because of those two, CAES 8% Female:Male ratio exceeded MIT's overall rate by several percentage points at that time.

CAES had a series of core courses we all took, but we were also free to take any other courses in the Institute we could fit into our schedule. We had our own classroom and computer lab. In those days a computer lab was about as big as a room, with a mammoth machine that almost filled it, and big circular drums to store data. Computer ‘guardians’ – experts -- ran the computer for us at first because we didn’t know diddly about how to operate it.

During our introductory meeting, Paul Brown -- the program administrator said, “In looking at your applications, we noted only two of you applied to MIT.” [We had had five choices: Harvard, Stanford, CalTech, University of Virginia, and MIT.] I’d applied to Harvard. Ed Parsons and Pete were the only ones who had asked for MIT. When Paul asked me “I see you applied to Harvard. Why didn’t you ask for MIT?” I said, “I didn’t think I would qualify for MIT.” He thought that was a huge joke and retold it many times. [MIT and Harvard students used to banter with each other: They said we couldn’t read, and we said they couldn’t count.]

When we asked if we would get a master’s degree Paul said no, it was a non-degree program, but instead we’d get a CAES certificate in systems analysis. At that, Peter, Ed and I objected that we didn’t want to spend a year at MIT only to get a certificate of attendance. Paul said we could work it out but we’d have to take the GMAT” (Graduate Management Admission Test) plus a separate exam in calculus -- basic requirements for admission to MIT – and also get an advisor from one of the Institute’s departments to mentor a thesis, in order to qualify for a degree.

I contacted the political science department (# 17) -- I didn’t even know MIT had a poly sc. department until I got there. Max Milliken was head of their Development Administration program. I then learned Bill Siffin had already contacted Max, and he was delighted to meet with me because I had field experience in the area he was teaching. Max also agreed to be my advisor and mentor for my master’s degree thesis. After I passed the admissions hurdles, my on-going CAES coursework was retroactively credited towards my degree program. We also had to take exams at the end of each core course -- which the other participants didn’t need to concern themselves with. [Unfortunately, Max had a heart attack and passed away over the Christmas holiday break; but Everett Hagen – professor of Economics & Social Development – took over and guided me for the rest of my thesis work.]

CAES gave us a very intensive indoctrination in calculus, statistics and computer programming (at that time FORTRAN 4); critical path analysis and various operations research techniques. They also sometimes called upon me to present -- or supplement -- some of their CPM presentations from my experience.

One of the things that initially shocked me about the instructors at MIT was they were very young, and very sloppily dressed – a bunch of hippies. When I went to UConn, the professors looked like you – elderly, distinguished, well-groomed -- and obviously ‘respectable.’ But after years of working in Washington’s civil service, we only had two such professors teaching our core courses. The others teaching us were mostly grad

students: young, scruffy-looking kids with long unkempt hair in raggy-ass jeans and shirts. But I quickly learned my first impressions were completely wrong. These guys were fantastic. They really knew their stuff as well as how to put it across. That people could look so scruffy and be so damn smart was a big cultural reentry shock to me. The guy in charge of the computer lab was an absolute wiz in computers. Similarly, the guy who taught statistics. It was a real lesson for me to not judge people by their appearance.

Although the CAES building was a new one with a dedicated classroom, the rest of the campus resembled a factory plant rather than a university campus. When we went to take classes in other places, going down those gloomy halls with big mostly mechanical equipment in the classrooms on either side was “ugh.” [The Matt Damon movie “Good Will Hunting” depicts the long dingy underground passage that runs from one end of the MIT campus to the other.]

While I was at MIT, Jack Koteen (TAB/PAD) arranged with Mike Guido in AID’s central training office for me to come to Washington once a month -- on a Thursday night -- to teach a one-day critical path course to AID people on Friday. I then had Saturday at home, and flew back to Boston Sunday evening on Northeast Airlines ‘yellow bird.’ Also, during the Easter 1970 school break, Jack and Ken Kornher – another PAD specialist -- accompanied me to Guatemala on TDY to service a project assistance request from the Mission; and we ‘LOB’d’ a couple of agricultural projects -- tomato production, and cut flower exports.

At that time, AID’s Technical Assistance Bureau had another Division (POP) promoting family planning, and they worked out an agreement with Bill for me to include some demographic analysis techniques as a part of my program. When Jay Forrester -- one of the professors from the Sloane School at MIT -- lectured our class on computer simulation modelling, I had a brain flash for my thesis. I subsequently developed a computer program to simulate population growth rates with various combinations of contraceptive methods given effectiveness and hypothetical usage rates. Then, using POP data from the Guatemala AID mission, I ran several simulations for comparative effectiveness analysis. I had to extend a couple of months after CAES to finish the write-up & publication to meet MIT’s requirements, so didn’t graduate ‘till August, but Bill Siffin graciously allowed me the time as temporary duty (TDY).

When I returned to Washington, everyone in AID/TAB was delighted. MIT printed and TAB/POP distributed 200 copies of my thesis, then arranged for a presentation and ‘hands-on’ demonstration at Cornell University. After my presentation, participants simulated real and hypothetical data for various countries and combinations. All in all, it was a heady event and a great success. At the conclusion, Cornell’s faculty asked if I’d be interested in joining their faculty as a graduate student and earn a doctorate. Harvard’s Roger Revelle -- a TAB/POP consultant -- suggested I join Harvard’s Institute for International Development (HIID) to continue refining my population model and validating it in other countries for doctoral study & dissertation. MIT’s poli sci. department also said I could stay and continue working towards a doctorate in development administration.

When I reported back to Ray Ravenholt -- the TAB/POP Director -- and Lenny Kangas (his Deputy), they congratulated me and also asked if I'd like to make a lateral transfer from TAB/PAD to work with them full-time. Talking it over with Bill Siffin, Bill said he was very pleased with the outcome of my TDY to Cornell as well as my tech support to POP, and agreed to release me from PAD -- if I really wanted to. However, he advised me to consider whether – as a ‘mere Mr.’ -- I really wanted to become more fully immersed in Demography and Family Planning dominated by MDs and Public Health PhDs; or retain my status as a “General Practitioner” in Systems Analysis; a “cross-cutting” skill applicable to any and all Sectors. Bill also added, if I wanted a PhD, he’d be glad to have me in his department at Indiana University -- from where he was currently on administrative leave, and would soon be returning.

With a humorous twist to Robert Frost’s observation about forks in the road, I had so many; but which one to pick up?. [Actually, at MIT we were taught a technique: ‘Decision Tree’ (essentially a fork with multiple tines) for systematically analyzing situations – quantitatively; but there were too many subjective variables in this situation.]

After mulling it over, I chose to defer the PhD prospect, and ‘soldier on’ at TAB/PAD.

Q: With so many desirable options, I’m sure it must have been difficult to reach a decision. A quick question for clarification. You said you were assigned to the Public Administration division of AID; and your adviser at MIT was in Development Administration. What exactly is the difference between Public and Development Administration?

SMITH: They are really part and parcel of the same thing, under a broader umbrella of Political Science. I regard the essential difference as between ‘Static’ and ‘Dynamic.’ Public Administration focuses on defining policies for stable societies, and establishing efficient bureaucratic procedures to administer them. Development Administration is more oriented to initiating new thrusts to effectively improve the public sector, as well as the methods to manage the change. That’s where project management plays a major role.

Q: One of the tools you mentioned in your preliminary write up was a ‘Logical Framework.’ Is that something you learned at MIT? And what is it.?

SMITH: No. That’s something I got into afterwards. While I was away at MIT, a couple of consultants to AID’s central Evaluation Department developed a new tool to improve systematic project evaluation they called the ‘logical framework.’ As I told you earlier, AID was quite disorganized. The Bureaus functioned like separate fiefdoms and ran their own show; reporting was haphazard, and people kept changing horses.

The basic problem with AID projects was that many in Congress were antagonistic to the whole idea of the US spending money on overseas poverty programs when we still had plenty of similar unresolved issues at home. They were continually asking for justification and proof that what we were doing was worthwhile. Despite numerous presentations and explanations from AID officials, there was no systematic way to do it.

These consultants – Leon Rosenberg & Larry Posner – ‘Haavad Yaad’ grads (actually MIT rivals.) -- had a small consulting firm PCI (Practical Concepts, Inc.) They developed a four-by-five matrix that captured the essential elements of a project business plan identifying what you were going to do, why you were going to do it, how much it would cost, how you would measure performance, what would be the outcomes, what data would be used to monitor it, and what risks and assumptions you’d be facing and making. In a nutshell, the logframe was a one-page executive summary of a project plan that would make it quick & easy to evaluate. They field-tested it in a couple of places in Africa and were recommending it be applied on projects, agency-wide; just like my critical path method.

Bill assigned me to represent TAB on the Evaluation department’s task force – under Bob Hubbell -- to field-test the logframe. My first trip was back to Asia -- Korea, the Philippines, and Indonesia. I joined a team and we spent a couple of weeks in each place taking some existing projects and seeing if we could retroactively get the people running them to come up with the data to put in a logframe. After Christmas I joined another team and we went to Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania and did the same thing – taking a few sample projects and trying to retrofit them with a logframe. Other teams went to countries in the Near East and Latin America Bureaus.

When all came back, we shared our findings. There was general agreement the logframe was a great tool but there was one major objection to it. Everywhere, everyone told us we had the cart before the horse. We were coming up with criteria for evaluation that were not used when the project was designed. Furthermore, most of the people managing the projects right now said they weren’t involved in the planning, had inherited other people’s projects, and in most cases, would likely never see them end; and were merely trying their best to manage the situation and budget on the ground with people that were there. Also, at that time, a lot of AID technical people were being fired, and their work contracted out to consultants. Those projects were being managed strictly by the terms of their contracts, which didn’t identify or specify most of the logframe criteria; so they had no ‘buy-in’ to the projects they were managing,

In short, the logframe was seen as a great tool for ‘Monday-morning-Quarterbacking,’ but not pertinent to the immediate situation; and if adopted, would be even more detrimental to the agency if used for congressional presentations, as it would highlight the gap between the ideal and reality.

When the Evaluation Department presented our findings to the agency Administrator -- Bill Gaud – effectively said “Right; from now on every new project will be designed using the logframe. And when that’s done, every existing project should be retrofitted.”

That opened the door for me and gave me a new mission.

Q: Let me get some of this in place. The logframe working group, that was 1970. This is during the Nixon administration. Vietnam is still going on. What was the pressure behind

creating this logic framework approach?

SMITH: I guess it was the Congress banging on AID to do a better job of management. Otto Passman from Louisiana was one guy who was continually barking at AID for throwing their money down a rat-hole. The Congress generally was not happy with AID's reporting on its projects and what it was doing. AID's Top Management decided they had to take some drastic reform measures. Previously, the critical path method had been brought to AID's Central Engineering office's attention for infrastructure projects in Asia, and Near East & South Asia (NESA) Bureaus; though it also had application across the board. And now, five years later, the Evaluation Department is tackling the issue in a different dimension and in another Bureau.

Q: As this was developing you were still doing TDYs. You did a TDY to the Dominican Republic in about November of '70.

SMITH: Yes. Our role in TAB's Public Administration was essentially to market "Best Practices" and provide 'hands-on' assistance applying them. The Dominican Republic TDY just before Thanksgiving was slightly different. Bill Averill -- who I'd worked for in Saigon on a couple of Ag. projects -- had been transferred to the Dominican Republic and inherited a grain storage project which was in trouble; so Bill called for me to do a rapid assessment. Frankly, the project was a mini-disaster.

The Dominican Republic was typical "AID Country;" rural, under-developed and very poor; with rice their staple crop. The farmers in the area had tiny plots for growing rice, and inadequate means to dry and store it after harvesting, for later consumption or sale. A consultant from Kansas State had previously recommended USAID fund and import some small Butler prefab silos, and install them in several areas so they'd be readily accessible to the farmers to dry and store their grain; and subsequently available for withdrawal. Problem solved. So far, so good.

But it didn't work out that way. Either in unison, or one-by-one, officials in the bureaucratic decision-making chain – a program officer in the mission, a contracting officer or a host country official -- second-guessed what was best from their respective perspectives; but succeeded only in inadvertently sabotaging the project. First there was an initiative to use local rather than foreign currency. Rather than import equipment from the U.S. the silos could be constructed with concrete -- contracted out to local contractors. This would also provide more local employment. Finally, somebody rationalized that instead of having multitudes of mini-storage units scattered all around the country, it would be more efficient to build large storage units in three major areas.

Unfortunately, this is a typical problem when you bring in consultants and contractors at different stages. The consultants make their expert recommendations, file a report, and leave; with no further follow-through or responsibility. The contractors for implementation, on the other hand, work according to the terms of their contract, without questioning why, or responsibility for application or results after they've delivered their product. In between, the program office, host country counterparts, and contracting

officers all review the recommendation from their respective perspectives, and the final work package to outsource.

The result was that Bill inherited three huge unusable concrete silo storage facilities; built by a local contractor accustomed to building water towers. [I learned from engineers that grain stresses in a silo are different from water in a tank, and he'd used three times as much concrete as was necessary to build the structures.] They were also built on unstable land without an adequate foundation. But that was still not the biggest issue. The real problem was there was never enough grain at any time to process, dry and store in the large facilities. Farmers only had a donkey with a couple of panniers for the rice which they brought in haphazardly. There wasn't one big harvest like on a plantation; this was individual farmers bringing a sack of rice now and then. So the imported weigh scales – suitable for truck loads – were never used. The rice was also very damp from the fields, so when it was unloaded, a lot of the grain got stuck in the elevator tractors and sprouted; jamming the works. Consequently, at most, the grain storage was less than half-filled. Bill told me "The best thing that could happen to this project is for the terrorists to blow it up as an anti-Yankee 'go home' demonstration. I keep wishing for it, but it never happened."

So I wrote it up as a total disaster; another AID failure of too many cooks spoiling the broth. IMO, when you give the job to somebody, make sure they stay on the job and do it properly -- whether in-house or contracted out. Don't have people coming and going throughout the process, and making new decisions about what's going to be done. The project should be designed in the first place with a logframe for reference, then followed through with the project manager and managed; not this half-assed coming and going in bits and pieces.

Bill never got his wish. But he got from me what he wanted; an official assessment that it was a lousy mess he had inherited; and not something created on his watch.

Q: You were saying in the March/May 1971 period you also did a TDY in Africa: Nigeria and Tanzania.

SMITH: Yes, that was part of the initial logframe assessment process. We first went to Lagos in Nigeria. One of the projects they selected for our review was a rubber plantation in Benin. This project had been going for some time, but the mission wanted to upgrade it, and they had technical experts flying in from different places to recommend what should be done. Harking back to the 'hammer and nail' analogy, some said it was a basic tree problem. The trees were too old and needed to be replaced; or they were too close together and some should be uprooted so the remainder were better spaced. Others recommended fertilizer; still others insisted more research was needed. An extension technician in the USAID mission had a quick and easy solution – some tapping knives and on-the-job training, because the tappers were damaging the trees.

This was an ideal situation for capturing a project in a logframe, so I insisted on a site

visit for ‘ground truthing.’ We flew in a small plane and landed near the site, and that’s where I got my first shock. All the documents I’d read in the AID mission called it a rubber plantation project. Well it might have been a plantation thirty years ago, but this was just a jungle of rubber trees mixed with other types of trees, overgrown with vegetation. Many of the rubber trees were owned by individual farmers; some who had planted them as a secondary crop. They would tap the tree and the rubber congealed into little balls about the size of a tennis ball. The balls would be collected by middlemen riding around to the farms on bicycles, who would take them to the city for sale to a factory, where they would be cleaned and processed, and made into rubber sheets for sale.

When we inquired further, and looked a little more, we learned that only one tribe was allowed to own property. Members of other tribes in the area were only allowed to tap the trees as farm laborers. Furthermore, a lot of the ‘plantation’ land was unallocated and belonged by default to the tribal chief. Village chiefs could also pay tribute to the tribal chief and hire itinerants to tap those rubber trees on a daily basis, which they’d resell to the middlemen. There were all kinds of side-arrangements. The long and short of it was nobody really owned many of the trees or cared about them. We also learned the middlemen and factory buyers bought the rubber balls by their weight, rather than their quality. Since the farmers got paid by weight, they put dirt, chaff and even stones to make their rubber balls heavier. Then, because the balls were poor quality at the end point, the factory buyers reduced the price. So the farmers put in more crap to make their rubber balls heavier. It was a classic ‘vicious cycle’ -- referred to as the ‘problem of the commons.’ Everybody has an interest, nobody has any responsibility, so things just get worse and worse.

We went back and told the mission director and ag. division chief “You don’t need a technical improvement project. The solution to low rubber production and poor quality is beyond your control. Change the economics and pay the farmers by quality instead of weight and the problem will solve itself.” The ag. division personnel hated us because we had recommended killing their project -- and we weren’t even agricultural tech specialists; when all we did was a bit of ground truthing to study the process and apply a logical technique to help them define and plan how to improve the situation.

Q: This has been a wonderful morning, why don’t we break off here and come back Monday morning?

SMITH: Sounds great. I hope I’m not going too fast or too exuberant but I just loved my work, and what I was doing; and it’s great to have somebody to talk to about it.

Q: Good morning, it is the 14th of December, we’re returning to our conversation with Ken Smith. Ken, when we last left you, in December ‘71 I saw you joined the Foreign Service as an FSRL-2. What’s the L?

SMITH: In AID -- distinct from State who were designated FSOs, we were appointed as FSRs, Foreign Service Reserve. The initial appointment was limited to that assignment – usually two to four years – designated by the ‘L,’ and unless you got a favorable recommendation to transfer to another post, you were terminated. So in some ways, it was similar to an intern consultancy, except we were usually coming in as experienced technicians on the Foreign Service payroll. The FSR ‘2’ was another step-up from the GS-15 level; on a par with the senior service – a brigadier general in the military -- but without the command responsibility and authority that rank entails.

Q: You'd been a fireman for AID, teaching and explaining this new project management system, and now you're going to be assigned to an embassy. You suggested that you received a number of comments on becoming an FSR.

SMITH: In between the logframe field-testing task force activity, I continued working with the Public Administration Division of the central Technical Assistance bureau (TAB). Our mission was to introduce project management systems throughout AID and try to get the operational regional Bureaus to adopt and standardize them. Unfortunately, as I mentioned earlier, they didn't take lightly to outsiders telling them what to do, or how to do it; unless directed by the Aid Administrator. And even then, they'd drag their feet getting around to it.

Bill Siffin, his deputy Jack Koteen, and several other guys in our division were pretty good marketers and spent their time talking to anyone who would listen. I tagged along with the ‘show & tell’ stuff wherever and whenever they expressed interest; and was available on-call to help out whenever requested. I also got some direct business from previous contacts – like Bill Averill in the Dominican Republic, and Tom Niblock in the Philippines.

Also, the central Policy Bureau, Evaluation Office and Training Office collaborated to prepare guidance and conduct logframe training – some in which I participated. They also contracted out some of the training courses to Leon & Larry’s company PCI, as well as several other Washington area consultant companies in the international development business. [In AID, we used to refer to them as ‘Beltway Bandits.’]

[You should also realize that each organizational entity in AID had its own budget, so our central TAB assistance was ‘free money’ to the Regional Bureaus; where they might have been reluctant to use their own funds for such activities. “Follow the Money.”]

But Tom Niblock was really serious and wouldn’t wait. He wanted me to come back and start applying the logframe and critical path immediately to projects in his mission. Apart from Vietnam, The Philippines was one of the biggest missions in the Agency. So I went out in the summer and helped LOB a land reform proposal, as well as review two or three other agricultural projects. Then Tom said “I want you to come work for me full time”

I replied “I’d like to, but I’m a GS-15 in the Civil – not Foreign service – equivalent to an

FSR-3; and I have six kids and a pregnant wife. "You should get a junior officer who can do the same thing for you." [But Tom was very demanding and forceful; a 'can-do' type. I loved working for him.] He said, "No, I want you. That's no problem. I'll switch you to Foreign Service, and I can get you a promotion to an FSR-2 -- which would be equivalent to a GS-16. And we have big houses here; and an international school. Your family will be just fine."

"Okay I'll talk it over with my wife."

When I got back to Washington, there was already a request waiting for me to transfer to the Foreign Service and be reassigned to Manila. He had established a new position in the mission and asked specifically for me to fill it. AID was an 'old-boy' network.

I talked it over with my wife, and she didn't raise any objections, though I'm sure she was apprehensive – or resigned. Since I'd joined AID, I'd been flying all over the world and away for months at a time. [Maybe she thought at last I'd be home a little more often and stay longer there.] We started processing and by November had gotten all the approvals, so I was sworn in. It was just coming up to Christmas and we had to turn our house over to a real estate agent to rent out while we were gone; got my furniture packed and stored, my car sold, a new one shipped, got my kids' school records, medical exams, etc., etc.. In fact, I made a little critical path chart for myself to check that I did everything in sequence and didn't overlook anything. I didn't have any time schedules on it, just activities and milestones. I still had a second car I arranged with a friend I'd leave it at the airport for him to pick up and sell, then send me the money, whenever. That was the last item on my network.

We stayed at a Marriott Hotel near Dulles airport overnight. In the morning I got my car and a caravan of taxis to bring all our baggage along, and drop the family at the terminal entrance. Then I parked my car, walked back to the terminal to join them, and we all checked in. Twenty-seven suitcases lined up plus everybody's carry-on bags. It was quite a maneuver.

We sat down in the lounge, waiting to board, while the kids explored the airport.

Eventually we boarded a mobile lounge to the plane. [Interestingly, Jim Grant was on the same flight. Jim was an 'old China' hand. We chatted briefly in the mobile lounge on the way to the plane. He was going to the Philippines to attend a function there, and congratulated me on switching to the foreign service and going to work in "Aid Country."] We boarded the plane, got seated, and took off. When the hostess came around to take orders for drinks, I reached in my pocket to give her the money, and there were the car keys. I'd done everything on the critical path chart except check the last milestone.

Lesson Learned: It's no good having a critical path chart if you don't check all the milestones. When I got to work, one of my first activities was to send Jim a message and mail the keys through the pouch so he could pick the car up. Anyway, it was a long flight.

We arrived in Manila the evening, December the 8th -- 7 December in Honolulu -- just before the attack on Pearl Harbor thirty years earlier.

The AID mission was not in the embassy. It was in a separate building several blocks away from the embassy, because we wanted to be more closely associated with and accessible to the Philippine community.

Q: What was the quality of that office building?

SMITH: The office was a new one in Magsaysay Center on Roxas Boulevard overlooking Manila Bay. We had the fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth floors. It was a great setup.

Q: Staffing – who was your immediate boss? How was the staffing structure of the AID mission?

SMITH: Funny you should ask. The Mission Director wanted me as a generalist to get the logframe and critical path installed on the mission's projects -- not only new ones but also retroactively on the existing ones. However, the position they had established was with Population. The president's wife, Imelda Marcos, had just started a family planning initiative and I was targeted to be the adviser. But when I arrived with my large family, Tom had second thoughts that I'd be a bad example, and instead relocated me in the agriculture division, where I'd been working on TDY earlier that year, and increased production was the objective. Although I'd not had much interaction with him then, the Ag. Director became my nominal boss. Nevertheless, the mission director clarified "I'm not putting you in agriculture to be an agriculturalist, I know you can't even grow crabgrass in Virginia. Although located there, you can work across the board on any and all projects."

However, that put me at odds with the Ag. Director. He had a large staff of direct-hire personnel, plus contractors from universities and individual consultants working around the country on different aspects in agriculture.

Q: Who is this you're talking about? It's not Niblock?

SMITH: No. This is the director of the agriculture division in the USAID mission.

Q: And his name is?

SMITH: Frank Sheppard. With a Ph. D. in agriculture from Cornell, an extension background in Texas, and prior AID service in India and Thailand Frank was unquestionably knowledgeable. However, I think he saw himself more as the shadow secretary of agriculture for the Philippine government rather than a supporting USAID Director. He got involved in everything at that level. Tall, slim, very distinguished

looking, very formal and immaculately dressed -- he always wore his 'embassy suit' while the rest of us were in shirtsleeves. When I was in Manila, he would often have me accompany him to meetings with the secretary of agriculture and the heads of the Philippine bureaus to discuss agricultural policy, national strategy, research, and development of agricultural education institutions. At any rate, he struck me as an embassy FSO, rather than an AID FSR. In AID everybody was on a first name basis – except Frank. Only the mission director called him Frank; everybody else called him Dr. Sheppard. He always referred to others as Dr., Mr., or Miss, and me as Mr. Smith.

The first thing he did was send me on a series of short-term TDY trips around the Philippines to see what the other people assigned to his Division were doing. That was a great education for me, and I can't fault him on that. But I observed rather than a gap-filler with projects to address key agricultural concerns, his AID personnel were engaged in extension-like activities. He also persisted trying to teach me about the finer points of agronomy, and would bang my ear endlessly about nitrogen fixation and the like.

As I was going around on these TDYs, for example I went to Iloilo and Guimaras Island where AID had a direct-hire officer -- Bob Bartlett -- kind of the Johnny Appleseed of mangoes. Bob was going around telling everybody, "Plant a mango tree and in seven years it will be a money tree and every mango will be worth a peso." Today mangoes are worth about a hundred pesos apiece, which -- even with inflation -- is still a good income producer for the farmer. Some of those mangoes are the best in Asia; orange-colored, juicy and sweet – my favorite tropical fruit.

I went to other places where I saw rural development, community development, land reform, demonstration farms. And Frank was trying to fund all of them. Every time he had a brainstorm, especially with the secretary of agriculture, they decided another little venture needed to be done and set up a research committee and do this and that. These were all activities, not projects. This was part of the problem from AID's perspective.

However, more immediately, from my perspective, Frank kept trying to make me his chief of staff. We had a running battle about that for a couple of years. I was oriented to being inside the Philippine government and working with them, rather than sitting in the Magsaysay building issuing directives, supervising staff, or reading and writing reports. I reminded him on many occasions that I left office work behind in AID/Washington, and came to the Philippines to work with USAID Officers, contractors and Filipinos on AID projects to assist Filipino development; not to be his office boy and manage his division while he did blue-sky thinking about agriculture. While I largely succeeded in avoiding Frank's paperwork, it was not the best way to get along with your supervisor; even a nominal one.

Q: On the agricultural side you said there were AID officers and contractors. How were their responsibilities inter-meshed or separate? How did they decide they needed a contractor to do this?

SMITH: I have no idea. It all seemed ad hoc. Frank was 'old school' AID. When I got

there, as I said, he had dozens of disparate activities underway. But for the most part, they weren't projects. This was AID's overall problem with Congress; not just my issues with Frank. The old AID approach -- before the logframe -- was that AID did unstructured 'things' to support host country programs in various sectors. With budgets from different sources, Frank had his finger in many pies. He would see something he thought needed some assistance, and throw some 'seed' money at it; or have a contractor come in, take a look, and work on it. Technical people also were generally not project-oriented. Mostly either researchers supporting local institutions, or action-oriented extension agents who would push or pull their counterparts to participate and promote themes for poor farmers to adopt. We got along well with our counterparts, but there was no systematic approach. [As an evaluator, I noted one of the major obstacles to farmers adopting the recommendations of our technical advisors and their extension agents was that we had no stake in the outcome. We were all on salary so got paid for recommending new practices to increase yields; but it was the farmers who took all the risks. I suggested USAID & the ag. extension agents should also invest in the farmer's 'demonstration' and cover any loss; but got no takers. However, Frank did initiate a study for a crop insurance program, but it never got implemented as far as I know.]

Another dilemma AID faced in reporting to Congress was that even where there were projects, they were not USAID's projects. They were projects of the government that USAID was supporting -- with limited funding, equipment and technical advisors. Wherever we had a contractor who had a heavy lead role, we would require them to 'joint venture' with a local organization. We were doing lots of things and could tell war stories and anecdotes about the situation but we were largely invisible. There was no systematic reporting of where we were, how much we had contributed, and/or accomplished; what was the 'bang for the buck' or anything like that. This is why Otto Passman and a lot of other Congressmen got upset with AID.

My mission with the logframe was precisely to get things organized into a series of projects so we and they could see more clearly what was what. To his everlasting credit, Tom Niblock the mission director wanted to be one of the first in AID to do this, and that's why he'd snagged me. And why I enjoyed working for him.

Q: Did that also put you in a position to be holding seminars for your Filipino partners on . . .

SMITH: Yes, as I went around, I ran little workshops on different topics. Later, we'd have lunch meetings, or sometimes a formal training program for several days. Whatever they were interested in. Apart from project-oriented tools, I used to cover topics such as field survey work, how to sample, and statistical analysis of data; but it was all ad hoc.

Q: Those AID project managers, were they from agricultural backgrounds?

SMITH: You're getting ahead here because we didn't have project managers as such at that point. All the technical people weren't project managers. But they were technically qualified in their specialties and 'this-is-how-we-do-it' 'hands-on demonstration.'

Technical assistance in the best sense. As I said, Filipinos were the actual managers responsible for implementing the projects. AID Project managers were really technical advisors to their counterparts, and responsible for managing the resources AID supplied, as well as reporting internally to the Mission. Frank's deputy – Al Hankins – was an aggie, and a great one too; but avoided as much as possible the duties Frank was always trying to delegate. Al and I worked together with a common Filipino counterpart – Ding Panganiban – at the National Food & Agriculture Council (NFAC) of the Philippine Department of Agriculture.

What I had to do in these situations was facilitate the process, and introduce the tools and techniques rather than manage it. We'd meet and work out what to put in the logframe – what are objectives, how are you going to measure performance, what are the risks. Then develop the work breakdown structure, identify specific activities and milestones, as well as a schedule for implementing it. This took quite a lot of time and effort. Sometimes, intermittently over several weeks, including field visits.

Q: Let me rephrase myself then. As you looked at the AID people in place, were their backgrounds agricultural?

SMITH: Not just agriculture. We worked in many different sectors – agriculture, fisheries, education, public health, water & sanitation, malaria suppression, clinical health, nutrition, family planning, public works, engineering, irrigation, road construction. You name it. Anything you can think of, we probably had a division -- or people within divisions -- doing those kinds of things. For instance, we had people from Virginia Tech working on nutrition programs and child-feeding. We had a couple from Auburn University doing fish farms and later shrimp and tilapia, brackish water fish farming. Anything that somebody had an idea for, AID could and would sponsor, and get somebody to come out and do it.

Q: The projects you're talking about sound to me very Peace Corps-ish.

SMITH: Yes, AID personnel were essentially Peace Corps on a payroll. But our people were experienced subject matter experts, rather than newly graduated and enthusiastic novices. They'd come to join AID laterally from the private sector or university; so they'd start at an FSR 3-level. Later AID established its own international development intern (IDI) career-ladder program – much like the civil service intern program I started with in the Navy Department. IDIs were younger people coming at a lower level; but soon we got quite a few with Peace Corps experience. They had worked in a country (not necessarily the Philippines), acquired a language, got used to living overseas and working with local groups, went back to grad school for a Master's degree. Then they then came with AID to work at the national government level, rather than the village and community level -- but with better insight and understanding.

Later in my career, AID shifted its sights and also started working directly at the local government level. We also worked through private voluntary organizations and what we called NGOs (Non-Government Organizations) -- Save the Children and Catholic Relief

Services, World Vision, etc. These entities also got contracts, -- often outright grants -- and worked alongside with us. In the Mission, you might never know who you were talking to unless you asked; because they didn't always show up on the staffing pattern.

At one point some genius in Washington decided there were too many Americans abroad, and AID started shucking off direct-hire FSRs. To cope with the workload, Americans were hired as PSC's (Personal Service Contractors) to replace them. [I know several who immediately 'replaced' themselves.] But the 'bean-counting' bureaucrats were happy because the American head-count at the Mission was now reduced to comply with the Washington edict; though nothing really changed in terms of warm American bodies on the ground.

Q: So there was a Peace Corps program; how big was it, did AID interact with or ignore them?

SMITH: We didn't work directly with the Peace Corps at my level, though maybe the program office coordinated with them. But occasionally we did meet PCVs -- Peace Corps volunteers -- in the field. Sometimes PCVs did latch on to a project and help out and were very helpful. They knew the language and the local people where we were trying to get something done. In fact, this is one of the things that really annoyed me when I first got to the Philippines. I knew from my Grammar school experience I was not very good at foreign languages. Because I was assigned in a rush, it wasn't possible to go to FSI first, but thought I could have some basic training after I arrived. In the Philippines, PCVs went to a language camp in Central Luzon for three months of deep immersion. When they came out of that they could chat with people, listen to the radio, read the newspaper and all that. But I was told "You're a technician; you don't need that." Fortunately, for me, most Philippine government officials, as well as a high percentage of the population spoke English as a second language. And when I traveled to the provinces, I almost always had a counterpart &/or an FSN from AID who could translate when necessary. But I know I missed out on a lot by not being able to participate spontaneously in side conversations my counterparts had with each other, or villagers while on field trips.

Cultural misunderstanding was something else. One of my initial familiarization trips Frank sent me -- unaccompanied -- to a remote province in Northern Luzon to meet the Governor, and staff at the provincial agricultural office. I stayed about a week and one of the staff took me around the area to show what they did; how they collected their operational data and compiled their statistics – all of which I found very interesting and enlightening. I stayed in a little guesthouse, and one evening towards the end of my visit, we were sitting there having a beer together, and he looked at me and asked,

"Ken, can I ask you a personal question?"

"Sure."

"How did you screw up?"

“What?”

“How did you screw up?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, I used to have a nice office in Manila, but I was on the wrong side of Marcos so they sent me here. But you must have done something god-awful to have Nixon send you out here from the States.”

“It doesn’t work like that; I volunteered for this job.”

“Well, I always knew Americans were crazy, but volunteering to come here. I didn’t think you were that stupid.”

In addition to the ag. division, I also assisted the mission’s office of rural development (ORD), which worked directly with government officials at the provincial level. Tom Rose, the Director was ‘New School,’ and had already organized ORD in a series of sub-projects, and was very receptive to any additional help I could provide. [I’d also previously worked briefly with his deputy Dick Kriegle field-testing the logframe on one of his sub-projects; and Jim Brady during my earlier TDY -- who transferred from AG to ORD soon after my arrival.] Each year ORD selected a few provinces to work with, and undertook a wide variety of non-agricultural activities which could be projectized, monitored and assessed for comparative performance. In addition to introducing logframe, critical path and line of balance scheduling, I helped develop rating systems and criteria for comparative performance evaluation.

After about six months in the Mission, one of the worst typhoons in memory flooded the Central Luzon plain. It was just one big lake. I was concurrently keeping my reserve status active with a local American military reserve civil affairs unit, and had also been designated the embassy’s action officer for disaster relief and liaison with the U.S. and Philippine military, so was immediately activated. Tom Niblock was also always ready for USAID to spring into action in such situations, and sent most of the mission on disaster relief activities. USAID also diverted production of ‘ready-to-eat complete meal’ ‘nutribuns’ (developed by consultants from Virginia Tech) from its school-feeding program, and supplied sacks of ‘nutri-bombs’ to the operation. [Frank was infuriated because our disaster relief activities were disrupting his work with the Agriculture ministry. His opinion was the embassy should have just given some money to the Philippine government and left them to ‘carry on.’ But he got overruled.]

Clark Air Base was practically the only land mass in Central Luzon above water; so we set up a command post there. Thirteenth Air Force called on the Navy at Subic and they in turn brought us Marines with helicopters from Okinawa aboard an aircraft carrier. In Manila, AID personnel (and their families) worked with Philippine government officials and the military, collecting and bagging a variety of relief goods in large bulk sacks and

containers; which were then flown to Clark by C-130s. At Clark, we set up a production line process for round-the-clock operation with ‘stations’ of teams of both US and Filipino troops to unload the disparate relief goods; re-bag them into smaller 50 kilo sacks; manually load the sacks onto waiting pallets; tally the pallet loads; haul the pallets to the waiting helicopters by tugs, and load them. We had several concurrent pallet-to-plane lines so we could service multiple planes simultaneously. [The teams competed to service the most ‘customers’ per shift.] Then -- despite incredible ‘no fly’ conditions -- the helicopters were dispersed to populated target clusters around Luzon. They mostly airdropped their loads -- like bombs-- because at most places there was nowhere to land, and returned for refueling & replenishment. That went on for about a month.

I worked at Clark most of the time, as one of many coordinating operations. Until I “nipped it in the bud,” cultural ignorance of some American troops about the difference between U.S. and Philippine measurement units (i.e. lbs. vs. kilos) -- reinforced by their misperceptions of Filipino physical capabilities -- almost resulted in an additional disaster; man-made. Spot-checking some lists, I noticed the pallet tallies were being recorded as multiples of 50 lb. sacks -- rather than 50 kilos (110 lbs). When I questioned this, the tallying sergeants replied that they hadn’t weighed them, but thought the sacks “must be” only 50 lbs, because the small-statured Filipinos “couldn’t possibly be lifting 100+ lbs. so easily.” Several also admitted they didn’t know the difference between lbs and kilos; or the conversion rates. [Weigh scales were available, but were mostly being by-passed.] I quickly had them spot-check the waiting pallet loads to verify load weights and disabuse them of theirs misperceptions; then prepared and distributed a “Lbs to Kilos” weights and measures chart for reference by all the tally-ers, and set up a protocol for palletizing (i.e. matching loads to aircraft type – as much as possible) It was difficult enough for the pilots to fly their helicopters in the teeth of the typhoon, without having an additional hazard of being inadvertently overloaded. [Fortunately, most of the helicopters in use carried the same payload, so I dedicated a separate load line to the oddballs.]

I also occasionally accompanied the flights to specific areas to do drops. One place where we did land – unexpectedly -- people had been waiting for relief for two or three days, and everybody came out under the plane. Instead of landing as planned, the pilot had to pull suddenly; got caught in his own prop wash, tumbled and crashed. We all ran out like cockroaches but fortunately it didn’t explode. We set up a perimeter and I went around the area to check for damage because I knew an after-action disaster report would be next: i.e. who’d been damaged, and the extent. Eventually, a navy rescue team from the aircraft carrier picked us up and we returned to duty.

Q: What type of helicopters were they using?

SMITH: We had two or three different types. The one I crashed in was a CH-53 Sea Stallion -- similar to a ‘Jolly Green,’ most of the others were CH-46 Sea Knights / Chinooks. [The Navy and Air Force also pressed a few smaller rescue-type helicopters into service, but they could only handle much smaller loads.]

Q: This illustrates an interesting situation you were in. You had kept your Air Force reserve status and therefore you were living two lives, the Air Force and the AID life. And in this, those two vectors came together.

SMITH: In the Philippines we frequently had disasters of some sort and I was activated. This again annoyed Frank as – although most of those activities were humanitarian -- it did not fit in with agricultural development.

Q: This typhoon was in July '72. Were you recognized for your efforts?

SMITH: After the floods subsided President Marcos gave all the participating organizations a presidential unit citation at the palace. I was selected to represent both the Thirteenth Air Force and USAID at the award ceremony. I wore my uniform, and as President Marcos came around and was pinning one on me, he said "I've seen you before, giving me briefings from AID. I thought maybe you were CIA." I said, "Oh no, sir, I'm just an Air Force ready reserve officer."

He just smiled, and moved on.

Q: After this disaster relief and you took your uniform off, what were you doing then?

SMITH: The flood had wiped out the rice crop which was normally harvested about the time the flood had hit. Moreover, Central Luzon was the Philippines' prime rice growing area, so now, suddenly, the nation was facing a disaster. There was a lot of US interest by Filipinos in Hawaii in our recovery, and Senator Inouye came with a team to assess the damage, and arranged for a fifty-million dollar grant to USAID to undertake recovery operations.

The mission program office allocated two million dollars to the Ag. Division. Now Frank was happy. The secretary of agriculture – Arturo (Bong) Tanco -- conferred with Frank and said his priority was to enable the farmers in Central Luzon to replant a second crop with IR8 -- the fast-growing rice I told you about earlier, and how we'd used it in Vietnam -- so this was a great opportunity for us. Our AID input was to provide fertilizer for the farmers, because the rice needed a certain amount of nitrogen-type fertilizer to stimulate the crop; otherwise, it wouldn't do much. And if too much was applied, it would burn out the plant.

The Philippine department of agriculture organized 'Operation Rice Bowl' with NFAC's Ding Panganiban in charge. Al worked with Ding on the technical side, and I set up a critical path and line of balance monitoring system so we could keep track of who we reached and where. We identified sixteen key steps in rice planting, and how long each phase should be, with milestones for monitoring and checking performance. Then the contracting, logistics and inventory control. Local contracts for emergency fertilizer

(abuno) procurement; labels that the fertilizer was a gift of the people of the United States; quality control random sampling of the product; a process to attach labels to each sack; truck rentals and scheduled deliveries. [I was nicknamed Commander Abuno]. By this time, the flood had subsided sufficiently so we were dispatching loaded trucks from various places to the farms throughout Central Luzon. The ag. department had their extension agents check and allocate the fertilizer to individual farmers, by name. It was a great LOB operation, and highly successful in distributing and delivering the goods on time, as needed.

Unfortunately, after the flood and the replanting, there was a drought. The rice paddies dried and cracked, and Central Luzon now became a dust bowl. Whatever the farmers did manage to harvest was hit with tungro – a disease carried by leafhoppers. By February, our Operation Rice Bowl was an unmitigated disaster. At that, Tanco said we have to ‘do over’ – bigger and better – and launch a new nationwide rice production Program, he dubbed Masagana 99 – Bountiful Harvest -- with an unprecedented target of 99 cavans per hectare [A local measure with a target 4 times the norm.] This time around, we set up a management task force and collaborated with IRRI, the University of the Philippines, and all involved the ag. bureaus for the 1973 regular crop season.

For the first time, Frank agreed I was doing a good job, and that it was okay for me to work along with Al and Secretary Tanco’s people full-time. I designed the system to monitor implementation, and headed a team of Filipinos – plus a couple of Peace Corps volunteers – to implement it, troubleshoot and conduct monthly briefings for the secretary, provincial governors, and occasionally the palace. It was organized just like a military campaign and worked very well. At the end of 1973, along with other major participants, USAID received recognition for our efforts from President Marcos, and I received a couple of personal awards.

I hadn’t been working with the rest of the mission, so there was still plenty to do.

Q: In January ‘73, your Air Force responsibilities came to the fore where Thirteenth Air Force was involved in repatriation of POWs (prisoners of war).

SMITH: Yes. When I was assigned to the Philippines, initially I was involved with the Army’s civil affairs group just to do maintenance training. We went to the firing range as well as looking at local government activities and how to help them. In the meantime, my regular ready reserve position was transferred from the Pentagon to Thirteenth Air Force at Clark. [Under the ready reserve program, you are required to pull a minimum of two days a month, plus an intensive two-week period of active training. Disaster relief and other work was additional duty for me. You are also on ‘standby’ for reactivation any time the regular force needs extra help.]

In January I got called and was reactivated by Thirteenth Air Force. They had advance notice the prisoners of war were to be released from Hanoi, and Clark would be the initial staging area. General Manor was in charge of a task force under A-3 (operations)

management. (I was in A-2 intelligence). Since I had project management background as a civilian, I facilitated the team's creation of a critical path – the activities required to process each POW -- meeting, escorting them, hospital treatment, clothing, reorientation, debriefing, reuniting them, catching them up to date with the world, rehabilitation, PR & News Briefings, and anything else – in detail; what could be done concurrently, and what sequentially. Then who would be assigned to each activity, where, and how much time to allot to each. Since each individual was a separate case to be processed through this network, it was line of balance process for master scheduling. Then we set up the intel debriefing area, and professional interrogators were flown in. A-3 then managed the project, while in A-2, we functioned as traffic cops to run people through our part of the process. This went on for a couple of months, through February and March. We were running the POWs through and making sure they were taken well care of and sent back to the U.S. for the next stage of their life.

I did as much of this work as possible intermittently, evening shifts and weekends – between 'Rice Bowl' wind-down and 'Masagana' planning; until I was able to return to the department of agriculture to carry on, full-time.

Q: Something like the POW return would also be a high-profile embassy thing. Who in the embassy was also watching this, participating?

SMITH: I haven't the faintest idea. Some strange guys in embassy suits came up once in a while, talked to the General and A-3 staff; then went back. I have no idea who they were, they didn't interact with me, I was working strictly with the other military task force members.

Q: Who was the CO (commanding officer) of the Thirteenth Air Force at that time?

SMITH: General Moore. General Manor was his Deputy. As a major, I didn't usually interact at the general level; I was further down the daisy chain. We had two groups, the Thirteenth Air Force was the headquarters for Clark, Taiwan and Indonesia, and then Clark itself was run by Colonel Truesdell as Commander of the Air Base Group. Col Truesdell was essentially the mayor, responsible for the physical plant & utilities, housing, recreation and shopping facilities, schools, the hospital, as well as publicity and security of the base.

Q: For background, picking the POWs up in Hanoi – were we using Air Force equipment or chartered?

SMITH: We sent Air Force planes to Hanoi to bring them back to Clark. Every POW had an escort officer assigned full-time to them until they got rehabilitated and reunited with their family. Initially I was designated to go to Hanoi, but later, they decided I should stay in the intel area to do local processing.

Q: What you're doing isn't closely connected with the embassy. I see the ambassador, Byroade, departs post in late May but the new ambassador, Sullivan, doesn't get there

until August. Did his arrival impact AIDS to any extent?

SMITH: I couldn't say. At my level we were working hot and heavy for the Philippine government. The mission director went to the embassy for country team meetings every week but whatever trickled down to us didn't seem to change what we were doing. The only thing we noticed was more and more contractors and individuals coming in under personal service contracts; and as our direct-hire staff came up for rotations they weren't refilled by new FSRs. I did get to meet Ambassador Sullivan a couple of times – when USAID was getting awards at Malacanang Palace for our work on Disaster Relief and later for Masagana 99.

Q: Does that reflect Washington's priorities?

SMITH: Washington was trying to get away from roads and bridges and infrastructure and direct-hire technical cooperation and more into projects. This is where I was butting heads with Frank as several other of the 'Old AID Hands' in the AID mission, because Washington wanted projects so they could measure 'results,' instead of doing good and being Santa Claus in the country wherever you saw the need for it. Tom Niblock, the mission director, was supporting the new thrust, but there was still some internal turmoil due to shift in direction.

Q: My impression is every AID mission overseas had a local counterpart; that was true in the Philippines also?

SMITH: In my case I didn't have one counterpart, I had about half a dozen. For example, I was often working directly with Ding Panganiban -- the Masagana project manager -- in the National Food and Agriculture Council (NFAC) of the department of agriculture; as well as Jess Alix and Bert Damasco, Director and Deputy of the bureau of agricultural economics. But I wasn't working with any of them full-time. They were just my prime contacts whenever I showed up. Then I'd get down to the working level with my MIS team – Teng Lalap and Jesse Divinagracia were my key counterparts. Jesse was my constant companion on Masagana field survey work. But my permanent contact was really my FSN, Reine Villarosa. Reine spoke good English, was my interpreter and cultural advisor; technically knowledgeable about agriculture, the ministry, the country, and executive assistant for whatever I needed within AID, because she had worked in different areas. I didn't have to spend a lot of time learning about the AID mission or structure, or the Philippine government structure. I could just get on with the job at hand.

Q: Let me rephrase that then, did Niblock have one counterpart or was he working with different agencies?

SMITH: Every head had their designated counterpart. For Frank it was the secretary of agriculture – minister of agriculture by this point because Marcos had declared martial law and the people who stayed in place suddenly became ministers.

Q: Who was Niblock's counterpart?

SMITH: Niblock was the mission director, so his counterparts would have been the president's special assistance staff. The president had his own little committee. It was probably the chief economist Gerry Sicat at NEDA (the National Economic Development Authority) and several others there.

Q: In February '74, you're sent TDY to Nepal.

SMITH: Yes. Since I had worked before in Thailand, Vietnam and Washington on TDY, the word had gone out that I was available for TDY assistance. The Nepal mission thought I was still available, and when they tracked me down Frank reluctantly let me go to Kathmandu for a month, since the request was for help on an agriculture project supported by Cornell University – Frank's Alma Mater. They had a high-lysine maize program which had been going on for a while and they wanted an external mid-term evaluation of the project. The university had developed high-lysine maize which, if used correctly, would produce a bountiful harvest under local conditions. We visited a seed farm where they were conducting experimental trials with different applications of fertilizer, and gave me an orientation. Then we went to visit a few farmers.

Going around in Nepal was not like travelling in the Philippines. Almost everywhere they wanted to go, we had to take a plane -- either helicopter or a STOL (short take-off and landing) -- drop somewhere, then walk a day – or more --to the site where they were working, and to visit farmers.

I saw a 'Before' 'After' poster in the ministry in Kathmandu showing the improvement. But the farmers didn't go to Kathmandu. Moreover, it was hybrid corn, and farmers couldn't simply replant a second crop with seeds saved from the harvested crop, as they usually did. They had to purchase new seed from the government. They also need to apply chemical fertilizers for best results. Farmers who didn't follow the extension agent's recommendations and continued with traditional replanting, got crop failures. Consequently, the extension agents on the project were having a hard time persuading them to change their practices and try again.

We flew in and walked a while to conduct our rapid reconnaissance, but farmers had to walk a couple of days from the suppliers to carry the seed, fertilizer and other inputs they needed. The Nepalese farmers were hardy people, but walking a couple of days with bags of seed and fertilizer just to increase the crop yield apparently didn't always seem to be the best option for some of them. I also remember an AID ag adviser trying to persuade one farmer we visited, telling him, "If you feed this to your pigs, they will grow big and fat. It's also good for your kids, they will get big and fat." The farmer responded "I don't want my kids to get big and fat, I want them to stay healthy." We left him unconvinced.

In short, USAID's contractors had developed a wonderful product, but in my admittedly non-expert opinion, too 'high tech' for the local situation. The combination of logistical and cultural constraints – seemingly ignored by the advisors -- were major issues to

overcome if the project was ever going to be successful. On the other hand, it would probably be another Masagana if replicated in the Philippines.

While in Kathmandu USAID also asked me to help set up a family planning module with one of the local advisers, which took a few more days. Before I left, the mission director asked me if I wanted to transfer there, but I told him I was still in the middle of a project in the Philippines. [I only learned – much later – how important it was in AID to also keep an eye open for the next assignment; and particularly important for FSRL's.]

Q: You've been able to go to a large number of countries in a short time. What were some of the cultural differences you noted in Nepal?

SMITH: Because of language obstacles, and my short stay, I had no real ability to interact with the Nepalese, or learn much. The people seemed to be very friendly and cooperative, but formal compared with the Filipinos, who are very gregarious and very easy to interact with. The Nepalis seemed to be much more personally restrictive – I guess the term now is “socially distanced” with each other. One of the things I did notice on a two-day trip by road to Pokhara was a similarity to a voodoo practice I'd come across in Haiti. Along the way the car broke down. The driver got out, lifted the hood, tinkered around, discovered what was wrong and fixed it. Then, before we continued on our journey, he went hunting, caught a chicken, cut the chicken's head off and pooled its blood all over the car -- to make it work by driving out the devil, or blessing it; or something -- so we could carry on safely. That was quite startling.

I noticed in Kathmandu there were a lot of refugees, not Nepali. They tended to keep to themselves around the temples. Apparently, also the Nepalese did not like Indians, as some shops had signs saying “No dogs or Indians allowed.” Something going on there, but I didn't know the background.

Q: I wonder if those refugees weren't Tibetans?

SMITH: Probably.

Q: By April you're back in the Philippines and you're working with the department of agriculture on the rice production program.

SMITH: That was a continuation of the Masagana program. After the one-year success attaining rice self-sufficiency in selected provinces, President Marcos decided we should continue and even start exporting rice. We expanded the scope from forty-four to fifty-seven provinces. It was designated as a distinct national priority, and many more people were seconded from other programs. This created some personnel issues within the Philippine government as M99 employees received bonuses; while those from other agencies didn't, even working side-by-side. Another issue was personal rank (and related pay) differences between people from different agencies working together in teams rankled many.

My role changed from intermittent advisor to operational manager of the MIS. I was assigned thirty Filipinos plus a Peace corps volunteer to train on-the-job in project management, field surveys, statistics, and evaluation techniques. [Remember this was still a manual system, not computerized.] Half of them – from the Ag. Economics bureau were already proficient in agricultural statistics and evaluation techniques, which made my job a lot easier. I established two sub-groups: one to collect & process data and monitor & report implementation status; the other to do evaluations & follow-up field surveys, on a monthly cycle. Week 1: process reported data, Week 2: brief Ag. Minister & Pres. Marcos, and others on the implementation status; then -- based on the reports -- two weeks conducting field surveys in different places to validate the reported data.

I ran cross-training seminars for everybody and also mixed and matched the team members so relatively quickly, everyone became proficient in how to manage and monitor a project, report progress, then evaluate & validate it through rapid sample field surveys. Concurrent validation of field reports was very important. For example, during the previous Operation Rice Bowl, the governor of Laguna reported to President Marcos that his province was the outstanding province because they had the highest average yields. At the same time, from our analysis of the data we had been collecting and monitoring, they were among the worst. Marcos called Tanco and me and demanded “What the hell’s going on here? The governor claims his province has the highest production rate and you’re telling me they’re one of the worst.”

I hightailed it to Laguna with a couple of my team to follow up, and we quickly found the basis for the anomaly. There were widespread crop failures in the province due to tungro; but a few farms had actually survived, and they had religiously followed the sixteen steps and got outstanding yields. The Provincial Ag. Chief reported the ‘good’ news to the Governor, based on those farms; but for the province as a whole, they were practically the only ones that harvested anything. Statistics don’t lie, but liars can figure. And everyone wants to put their best foot forward.

I recently saw in our local news, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics had been reporting very low unemployment rates; but an investigative reporter revealed they only reported people who were looking for work. All other unemployed people who had lost jobs due to COVID and were not seeking work weren’t included in the base. Precisely the same problem we had in Laguna almost 40 years ago.

Q: Did you get involved in some fishery projects at this time?

SMITH: Only peripherally. Central Luzon in particular was single-crop agronomy for small farmers; it was rice or nothing. [The other crop was sugar, but only on big plantations.] We were trying to get them to diversify and had a couple of consultants from Auburn University who were teaching some farmers how to raise tilapia in fishponds; how & what do you feed them, when to harvest them and so forth. They were also doing some fisheries research and shrimp farming in brackish water. This was under Frank’s

jurisdiction.

Q: You sent me a note about shark repellent.

SMITH: Oh, yes. One day, Rudy -- who was in charge of the fish research project --asked me, "I know you also work at Clark, could you get me some shark repellent?" Surprised I queried "You're going to be raising sharks now? If so, the shark repellent won't do you much good. It doesn't really repel sharks. All it does is give you a big orange glow so when the rescuers come, they know where to look for you. The repellent is just a confidence booster."

He replied, "No, no, we want to use the repellent to trace the currents so we can see where we're going to be locating our fish."

Q: Another thing you mentioned was Art Buchwald.

SMITH: Oh, yes. As I told you earlier, President Marcos commented he'd seen me in different settings and thought maybe I was a CIA agent. He wasn't the only one. One day I went into my office in the department of agriculture and there was an Art Buchwald column. You may know -- the younger ones don't -- that Art Buchwald was a great humorist who wrote in the Washington Post and International Herald Tribune. This was a satirical article that real CIA agents were not in the embassy. They were in shirtsleeves working in the department of agriculture. Somebody had stuck that on my desk with a big exclamation mark.

Q: Again, you have this combined AID/military career. Later in the year you had to go through jungle training?

SMITH: That was part of my intel. OJT – on-the-job training. It was jungle survival training – primarily for aircrews in case they got shot down or captured. We weren't in a war now, but it was still on my 'to do' checklist. I should have had the training years earlier -- before I went to Vietnam -- but never got around to it. It's called SERE, (survival, evasion, resistance, and escape). They taught us basic jungle lore – what you can eat, how to get water from trees, what to avoid, how to start a fire by rubbing bamboo shavings with a stick. It was largely good old Boy Scout refresher training I did years ago, plus how to hide. One of the big laughs was when the instructor said, "Not all snakes are poisonous. You can tell the difference between a poisonous and nonpoisonous snake because the poisonous ones have slit eyes and the nonpoisonous ones have round eyes. Instead, the non poisonous ones just crush you to death, then swallow you whole." Anyway, who wants to get close enough to a snake to see what his eyeballs look like? [But they are good to eat. Taste like chicken.]

The other big thing was evasion in the jungle; somewhere in the mountains between

Clark and Subic. The area was inhabited by a Filipino pygmy tribe called Negritos. The jungle school hired them as trackers, and to teach us jungle lore. For the escape and evasion aspect, we were dropped in and had to hide as best we could. The Negritos then came looking for us, and got a bag of rice if they found and caught us. Most of us were caught in the first fifteen minutes. A quick ‘lessons learned’ and then we had a second shot at it. This time they didn’t find me. After a couple of hours, the sergeant in charge blew his whistle and said “the game’s over, show yourself.” But I thought it was a ruse so I stayed put. After another hour he said “Last call, if you don’t show yourself now, you’ll have to walk back to base.” At that, I jumped up. I was very proud I was one of only three in the class who managed to evade the second time round.

We learned a lot of other good stuff, but fortunately I never had to put it to the real test.

Q: In August of '74, you had big changes in the American government; Nixon resigns, Ford becomes president. Did you even notice?

SMITH: No. Not really. It was just another item in the local news. I was busy with our own work in the Philippines. I’d trained enough people on Masagana. [I also managed to get several of my counterparts enrolled in a Master’s program at Syracuse under AID’s participant training program.] I wasn’t needed at Ag. full time and could work with other AID sectors, trying to translate some of their major activities into projects. This meant divining what you or the government were trying to achieve because they weren’t USAID projects; they would be Philippine projects that had been negotiated and put into USAID country development strategy statements. For the most part, we were still essentially providing technical assistance and advice and guidance. Frank also assigned a couple of former Peace Corps volunteers to work for me directly on short-terms PSCs and I taught them how to do field surveys and analyze the data. Because of their facility with the language, they were able to do a much better job of collecting information than we ever were -- or even my MIS team in the Philippine government -- as the locals trusted them more than their own government personnel.

Q: We’re moving into 1975. On April 30 of '75, Saigon falls and the whole refugee circumstance explodes. Here again your Air Force reserve status and your embassy status come together.

SMITH: Right. This was another occasion when Frank ‘lost it’ with me over my dual career role disrupting his program. At the end of March 75 -- I was actually in Mindanao on a field trip with a couple of my Masagana team -- when somebody tracked me down where we were working and said “You have an urgent message from Manila. You need to report back right away.” No-one could tell me what it was about. I thought maybe something had happened to my family. I got the next flight out from Cagayan de Oro. When I got back to Manila, Tom Niblock advised me that Clark was preparing a contingency plan to evacuate refugees from Vietnam, and wanted me to participate. [By now, I was a lieutenant colonel.] With farewells to Masagana & USAID, to Clark – I left for another month; full-time.

When I reported for duty at Clark, planning was well under way with the 13th Air Force and the Air Base Group. The task force assigned me to liaise with a Filipino Lieutenant Colonel – Nick Olegario. [President Marcos had assigned Nick to keep him informed of our activities. [Formerly Fort Stotsenburg, Clark was a US Air Base, but subject to contentious – unresolved -- usage limitations & restrictions by the Philippine government under a 1947 Military Bases Agreement (MBA).] Nick and I met frequently and informally to discuss the situation from our respective perspectives, and exchange information on a low-key personal level and I found him to be an ally as well as a sympathetic ear; and equally interested in getting things accomplished.

I didn't have any other specific responsibilities or duties, but was given a 'roving commission' to check preparations on the base for the influx, and troubleshoot situations after they arrived; pitching in wherever there was the need, and generally keeping the task force informed of any major issues.

Q: What you're suggesting is that the airlift started before Saigon fell because when Saigon falls, that's it, Tan Son Nhut closed.

SMITH: That's right. The evacuation flights started on April 4th (April 3rd in the US), and continued for the rest of the month; with numerous round-the-clock shuttle flights between Clark and Saigon. President Ford OK'd Operation Babylift to bring hundreds of Vietnamese orphans from Saigon to the US via the Philippines. That was the first phase of a longer and broader evacuation plan to retrieve thousands of American officials -- as well as other civilians and their families – from Vietnam, and repatriate them in the U.S. We initially planned for several flights of huge C-5A Galaxy cargo aircraft, but the first plane crashed shortly after takeoff from Tan Son Nhut – killing many aboard – and the 5A fleet was grounded.

We resumed flying with smaller planes – C-141s by day and C-130s by night. Through 19 April, we were launching up to 40 military flights a day to Saigon. In addition, a variety of civilian aircraft from various sources – notably World Airways -- also participated; contributing their passengers to us. Also, when an American businessman -- Robert Macauley -- learned it would take more than a week to evacuate the surviving orphans, he chartered a Boeing 747 from Pan American World Airways and arranged for 300 to be flown to the U.S.

After the initial surge, the operation was rechristened "New Life" and our focus shifted to retrieving Americans and their – mostly Vietnamese -- dependents. Other adult refugees (mostly Vietnamese, but also a smattering of other nationalities) also joined the exodus with – and without – families. Towards the end of April, while C-130s continued evacuations, the FAA imposed a ban on all civilian flights into and out of Saigon. North Vietnamese aircraft bombed the airport on April 28, and a final surge -- Operation "Frequent Wind" –was undertaken to evacuate as many US citizens and "at-risk" Vietnamese personnel – including FSNs -- as possible; but evacuations from "my runway" at Tan Son Nhut ended early April 29. [This was the runway that had first involved me with USAID and Vietnam twelve years earlier.]

Q: Give us a sense of how confusing those early days must have been. Your input is coming by air but that's not going to last very long, and then the sea input which is going to go on for a considerable amount of time.

Well, during the month, we received about thirty thousand people at Clark to process and send elsewhere; but had to set up procedures to keep tabs on them, feed, shelter & sanitize to the best of our ability until we had instructions from the US what to do next. We put them in hangars, barracks, and a 'Tent City' to temporarily house about two thousand people. We also encountered Filipinos -- pretending they were Vietnamese -- who kept trying to sneak on base and infiltrate so they could be sent to the U.S. [We caught a few; but don't know how many we missed.]

In the meantime, numerous volunteer organizations provided food, care and comfort, as well as helping them try to locate and reconcile with their missing members. At one point we had five thousand refugees in the tent city and I remember asking no one in particular "How are we going to feed them all? What would Jesus do?" Somehow – with the help of the Red Cross and lots of Filipinos in the nearby communities -- they all did get fed one way or another. [Shortly after I left for Clark, my wife Beryl arrived with a Philippine Red Cross contingent and worked in the Tent City for the remainder of the duration.]

Initially I pitched in, "meeting and greeting" flights, arranging for "tallying and triaging" passengers, working with air police and base motor pool personnel to shuttle them to their accommodation. For a while, Mike Benge worked side-by-side with me and was particularly effective because of his fluency in Vietnamese. I also had several momentary ramp-side reunions and surges of relief as well as a sense of great satisfaction whenever I encountered incoming former USAID/Saigon colleagues – both American and Vietnamese FSNs – some whom I spotted as they were deplaning, and others who recognized me first – despite my uniform.

As their numbers continued to grow, my Philippine counterpart Nick told me of increasing Philippine Government concerns. In essence, 'President Marcos had expected normal 'transit processing' to take only a day or so for a rest stop before moving evacuees on to the U.S. But he viewed the Tent City as a blatant violation of Philippine sovereignty. He appreciated it was an emergency but it wasn't authorized and he was going to abrogate the Bases Agreement if people stayed over thirty days. I reported this indirect edict from President Marcos to the Task Force, and told them to inform the embassy 'Stat.'

But the Embassy's response was disheartening. They informed us at Clark we could not send 'asylum seekers' to the U.S. until their identity and case history and reason for wanting asylum had been verified. Only then would they be "Refugees." Several consular officers came up to Clark to make 'eligibility determinations' for temporary asylum as "Parolees."

We set up a processing center in the Kelly movie theater -- with long trestle tables on the stage for the consular officers to "do their thing" on rotating shifts -- and rounded up evacuees to fill the seats. Several of us -- military and USAID officers (my friend Jim Brady from Rural Development and several others) – then kept order and managed

the traffic flow, while the evacuees awaited their turn for hours, watching the “processing show.”

However, this formal administrative process proved to be a major bottleneck. The consular officers seemed oblivious to the crisis situation and outflows dwindled to a trickle as they demanded supporting documents to substantiate individual cases before authorizing a mere handful to continue their onward journey to the U.S. The system soon “backed up” as more people arrived at the base each day. I reported the reason for the growing backlog to both the Task Force and the embassy; but was powerless to effect any changes. The embassy’s response to Clark was essentially “Keep calm and carry on.”

However, I was never known for keeping my cool in crisis situations. I held to the parody on Kipling’s adage -- ascribed to another of “Murphy’s Laws” -- to the effect that if you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, you just don’t understand the situation. Exasperated, I told Nick we weren’t able to move many because of US immigration constraints, and needed some help from his end. Then on 23 April Marcos gave us an ultimatum and a deadline: we couldn’t have more than twenty-five hundred refugees on base and had two weeks to get the excess out, or there would be major political repercussions. I implored Nick “Don’t ask us for detailed statistics because we don’t have any; and it would be a bigger burden to try to set up a system now to collect the data.”

Fortunately, when I reported this latest ultimatum and deadline to the task force and it got back to the embassy, we got a change in policy and procedure. Jim & I, as well as several other AID FSRs were deputized as ‘temporary consular officers’ and authorized we could pass anybody through as an ‘evacuee,’ and they would get their asylum status determined at the next place. At this violation of normal protocol, the embassy consular officers were shocked and wouldn’t participate, or did so grudgingly. So we broke the dam and kicked the can down the road. [Mixed metaphors there – my grammar school teachers would be horrified.] But the military brought these waiting people in and up to me and the other AID guys and as quickly as we could we gave them visas to move on.

Andersen Air Base on Guam hastily constructed a Tent City to house them, and the head count in our Tent City rapidly reduced as MATS (Military Airlift Transportation Service) flew them for processing there, as well as to Wake Island, and Yokota Air Base in Japan -- before onward flights to the U.S. mainland. Eventually, we processed more than 30,000 through Clark. Unfortunately, that created a major problem years later. These people eventually settled in many different places throughout the U.S. and the issue of their status still isn’t resolved. I think to this day some are still undocumented aliens.

An after-action report summarized during April 1975, the U.S. Air Force flew 201 C-141 missions and 174 C-130 sorties and evacuated more than 45,000 people from Saigon, including 5,600 U.S. citizens, and more than 2,600 orphans. Clark processed more than thirty thousand of these refugees (including over 3,000 infants and children). The evacuation via Subic, Guam and other bases continued for several more months under -- Operation New Arrivals -- and brought approximately 130,000 refugees to the United States.

While I was fully occupied with emerging and evolving events at Clark, a somewhat similar scene and situation was being concurrently repeated at the U.S. Subic Naval Base.

There the exodus from Vietnam continued with US Navy ships bringing refugees taken aboard from helicopter flights from Saigon. Thousands were also rescued at sea by U.S. Navy ships and taken to Subic. Thousands more escapees – ‘Boat People’ -- were also braving the hazards of the South China Sea and arriving on Philippine shores in hundreds of assorted small boats.

Q: Those people that came by boat, some of them were picked up and then brought into the Philippines. Did that cause a legal problem for the Philippines?

SMITH: I would imagine so. Individuals were coming in by boat for several months all up and down the Philippine coastline. They landed up and down the West coast of the Philippines at Batangas, Cavite, Bataan and Zambales as well as further north in the Lingayen Gulf, La Union, and the Ilocoses; then made their way overland to Subic or Clark.

Dick Kriegle -- my erstwhile USAID/Manila coworker and neighbor – was a reserve Marine Colonel, and was also activated as an Embassy Liaison Officer. The Navy assigned Dick to Grande Island -- their R&R Center at Subic where -- rather than my ad hoc roving commission status at Clark -- I understand he assumed full command and responsibility to manage the refugee influx in that area, and established a temporary processing center. It was later transferred to the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Morong, Bataan. (We called him ‘Colonel Klink,’ from the TV series ‘Hogan’s Heroes.’)

Initially, the Philippines did not want refugees, and none of the other Asian countries wanted refugees either. Eventually though, the Philippines relented and set up a refugee camp in Palawan -- one of the Philippine’s island provinces. In fact, I worked on Palawan years later on a job for ADB (Asia Development Bank). By that time, the refugee camp had been disestablished, and the Vietnamese more or less assimilated in the Puerto Princesa community.

Q: World Airways was one of the charters that was operating out of Vietnam. What was your experience with them?

SMITH: They were doing a great job. Bureaucracy got involved, the guy in charge of World Airways took out the seats on his planes and packed people wall-to-wall and flew off. He then got cited by the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) for violating air safety regulations and they took him to court. I don’t know how that came out but I remember reading about it. We had a lot of admiration for his initiative. In the middle of a crisis, who the hell cares about FAA rules? He was trying to save people’s lives.

Q: World Airways was basically hopping from Saigon to Manila, or Saigon to Clark?

SMITH: Directly to us at Clark.

Q: Looking at that whole project of observing those people, while it was chaotic and had to be done quickly, sounds like it was fairly successful.

SMITH: Despite a few minor glitches, I think overall it worked out extremely well. We were able to process a hell of a lot of people in a very short time, feed them, and take care of their health needs as much as we could. The Philippine Red Cross was there volunteering and doing their thing. We had different agencies taking care as much as they could of everybody around. It was a shoulder-to-the-wheel effort. We'd been through disaster relief before at Clark, but this was the biggest one I was involved in.

Q: In June of '75, you're released to go back to AID, working on Masagana 99?

SMITH: That was the intensive rice production program. That had been replicated since 1973. So after I left in April, they just kept going without me. I touched base with them from time to time when I returned; but spent most of my last year in the mission working with other AID divisions as well as Ag.

Q: At that time, you had a fire?

SMITH: Oh Yeah; that was something else. A massive fire broke out one evening in a squatter settlement in nearby Paranaque. I received an emergency call to help. I accompanied General Fidel Ramos – at that time the Chief of the Philippine Constabulary (who lived across the street from us) -- to the scene. On the way I asked him "How can I help, sir?" He replied "Do you think you can get me another fire truck from Clark?" [This was in reference to a legend in the Philippines. A little background; Years ago, someone stole a fire truck from Clark Air Base. It was never recovered; but it was rumored it was repainted and used at Manila's airport.]

When we arrived at the scene, General Ramos took over and directed operations until the fire crews eventually got there and assumed responsibility; while I – along with a few of his troops – went through the smoke-filled shanties retrieving some of the frightened inhabitants, and bringing them out on the streets to safety. It was a short and intensive evening for us, and we were hot, wet, grimy and exhausted by the time we quit. But it also left me with a unique tale to tell – for who else can say that while they were grungy, the future President of the Philippines had once given them a ride home in his personal jeep.

Q: We've talked about your heavy workload. What was the social environment in Manila in those days?

SMITH: I didn't have much of it, but what we did was limited. We didn't have any social activity with the embassy as such, although once in a while there was a meeting we had to attend. My wife was more involved with our family and our church's health outreach activities in a nearby squatter area. Most of my involvement was working with my counterparts, mostly in the department of agriculture.

In fact -- still lacking cultural understanding – I did throw a party once, but nobody came.

After the success of the first year of Masagana 99, I decided to throw a party for everybody I had worked with. Filipinos loved celebrating, so I arranged for an evening party at ‘Sea Front’ -- the embassy club. It was going to be open bar and open food, around the swimming pool. I notified all of my immediate contacts well ahead of time and told them to spread the word that I was throwing a Friday night celebratory party for Masagana. In all, I’d expected about a hundred people from different places in the Philippine department of agriculture and associated agencies to show up. But after I got there, only two or three of the AID people and my immediate counterpart showed up. What the heck happened?

I grilled my staff on Monday, “Why didn’t you come? I had all this food prepared and had to give it away to the club staff to take home, so it wouldn’t go to waste.” They said it was Friday night, people go home to their families, and the embassy’s on the other side of town. Even though you told us, we weren’t really sure we were welcome. There were no written invitations. We were embarrassed to go to a big embassy party straight from work, in working clothes.

I learned later: Filipinos never want to say no, so they always said sure or maybe; which I took as “yes.” I asked why somebody didn’t tell me? “We didn’t want to hurt your feelings.” “Well, you didn’t hurt my feelings when I asked, but you damn sure hurt my feelings when you didn’t show up on Friday night.”

In retrospect, I should have told them I wanted to have a celebration; asked where they would like to have it, and been more formal about it.

Q: In these interviews from time to time the embassy has to adjust to presidential visits. I noticed in early December President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger visited the Philippines. Did you get involved in that?

SMITH: No. Not at all. I didn’t get involved in that. From time to time we did get involved in CODELS -- Congressional delegations. One memorable one was right after the typhoon before Operation Rice Bowl, when Senator Inouye and his staff came to inspect the damage, and gave us fifty million dollars to work with. Tom Niblock took them up-country by helicopter to fly over and let them see first-hand what had happened. Then they landed and we gave them a briefing. [I’d driven up in an AID van.] Inouye flew back to Manila – an urban sprawl more like southern Los Angeles -- but I insisted two or three of his staff return with me by road. I wanted them to see the real rural Philippines – where the disaster had impacted. We had quite an experience on the way back. At a couple of barangays where I’d worked, people came out to greet me -- and them -- and told them what a great job USAID was doing. We were all tired, dirty and disheveled by the time we got back to Manila. At first, they were annoyed and angry they didn’t get back in time for the embassy cocktail party, but the next day – before they left - -they told me they really appreciated what I had shown them, and promised to push through with some assistance. Soon after, we got the 50 million.

Q: I think Tom Niblock left the mission in '75, and Garnet Zimmerly took over.

SMITH: Yes. There were a lot of changes in the AID Mission that year. Tom Niblock was transferred to Jakarta; Jim transferred to Seoul and Frank retired from USAID -- but was almost immediately appointed as Director of IRRI's program in Dacca, Bangladesh. I was on my second tour in the Philippines and normally I'd also be rotated soon.

That's another pet peeve I had. We got rotated regardless of what work we were doing, whereas contractors stayed to finish the job. Another thing that happens with AID and maybe also with the State Department. Every time a key person leaves, their replacement soon brings in people they've worked with before. It works both ways. The minister of agriculture – Bong Tanco -- asked if I could stay on for a third tour because now they were starting to export rice, he wanted me to head up another task force for another major crop -- high-lysine corn. I'm sure Tom Niblock would have approved it, but he'd already moved on to Indonesia, and Zim said "You've done a great job here, but it's time to move on."

At that point the Personnel office in the mission told me they were sorry to see me leave, and then told me since I didn't have an onward assignment, my "L" -- limited appointment – was up. In effect I was fired. They said "You can go back to Washington and get your old Civil Service job back." I responded: "I can't get my old job back; I've been gone for almost five years. It doesn't exist or somebody else filled it." They told me "You should have applied for rotation." I didn't know anything about rotations, This was my first post in the foreign service. I thought they would just transfer me when the need was up – like the military did -- but in AID it was different. Apparently, a year before your tour was up, you threw your name in the ring and said where you'd like to go next, so people could vet you and decide if they wanted you. [That's when I realized the Nepal trip was a lost opportunity.]

Lesson learned: You have to manage your own career. The Personnel office just manages the paperwork.

In any event, Garnet Zimmerly's crew was coming in so I couldn't stay.

What do I do now? This was a major crisis for me. Fortunately, Jim Brady had transferred to Korea in 1974. Korea was in its waning days of AID assistance, but they still had a health, population, and family planning program going there. Jim called and told me they'd just negotiated a five-million-dollar loan for rural health development pilot project and USAID needed a project manager. But the Korean Health ministry specifically did not want a physician. They want somebody to help with the "Conditions Precedent" (CPs) – administrative processing requirements for the loan -- to get project implementation underway; and Jim asked if I'd like the assignment."

AID authorized me to take a trip to Seoul to be interviewed. [I told you Frank was the only one in USAID Manila that wore an embassy suit.] Well, now I had to wear a suit to

go to Korea. At breakfast before I left, my youngest daughter Heather -- who had been born in Manila – asked “Why is daddy wearing those funny clothes?” My wife said, “He’s going to Korea, and they wear funny clothes over there.”

I got to Korea, met with the Korean Ministry and they were all excited that I was not a physician or public health specialist, but an administrative project manager. However, since I was not a health specialist, my AID position had to be approved in AID Washington by someone in the central health technical office. I had a quick TDY to Washington and the guy I had to meet – Dr. Isiah Jackson -- was sitting behind my desk in my old office when I’d been in the Vietnam bureau. He was smoking a cigarette, and greeted me: “Smith, what the hell do you know about health?” I responded “The only thing I know about health is that the surgeon general says you shouldn’t be smoking.”

At that, he laughed his a** off, and we got along fine after that. I told him as a project manager I didn’t claim to know anything about the areas I was managing. They were the experts, and I deferred to them. My role was to facilitate the process. My prime expertise was to find out what they were doing; develop a logframe to summarize it; schedule it with a critical path and budget; then monitor implementation. I learned later, the interview was only pro forma, because the Koreans and AID mission had already asked for me by name; all he had to do was sign off on it.

In this case, since it was a loan, I didn’t even manage the budget. Which sooner than later, became a problem for me. Congress liked AID to have loans rather than grants, because it seemed more business-like. However, with a loan, the money goes to a ministry, then gets commingled with other things; whereas if it had been a grant, I would have been the one signing off and approving the money before it was released.

Anyway, Isaiah approved me and I went back to Manila to prepare for Home Leave and transfer to Korea. The FSNs in Personnel welcomed me back, and said they were pleased for me, as they had no control over the situation, and were happy I had a follow-on assignment and could now remove my ‘L’. Then they revealed that when I had my first personal evaluation report at the Mission, and had gotten into a real hassle with Frank, he had essentially written I was an outstanding technician but not a team player. I was undiplomatic and abrasive; my family did not participate in normal embassy social activities, and recommended after my tour, I go back to AID/Washington and resume civil service work, or take a demotion as an FSR-3.

This was not news to me. I’d seen that draft at the time and retorted IMO he wasn’t a good supervisor. In fact, as far as I was concerned, he wasn’t my supervisor at all. He just provided me office space. I had come to the Philippines to work with Filipinos; not to be his office boy; and had been commended by President Marcos and everybody in between for what I was doing. I was supposed to sign off on his report on me, but was so angry at the time, I didn’t bother to read it or follow through; and never even looked at his annual performance reports on me after that. So I didn’t know whether he withdrew those comments, or what he subsequently wrote about me. That was another issue I observed with AID’s internal management. Supervisors spent an inordinate amount of time

engrossed in composing annual PERs – Performance Evaluation Reports – on their subordinates.

Q: Now we're in 1976. Two hundred years after the Americans and the English had this kerfuffle. The American bicentennial. Did you get involved in any of these celebrations?

SMITH: In retrospect, that year was probably the height of my operational Air Force career. First, I received an award at Clark as the Pacific Air Force's (PACAF) Outstanding Reservist for 1975. Then, during their Annual National Convention at Miami Beach on July 1st, the Reserve Officers Association (ROA) gave me a plaque as their Outstanding Reserve Officer -- an incongruous achievement for a former British immigrant on the 200th Anniversary of the U.S. Declaration of Independence from Great Britain. [A reverse 'Benedict Arnold' award.]

Shortly thereafter, I had another 'fork in the road' episode, when the Air Force offered me a place in the up-coming annual War College class – a key military career enhancement opportunity – which I reluctantly declined in favor of securing my Foreign Service career status by transferring to Korea and having my temporary FSR 'L' removed.

Q: Today's the 17th of December, we're returning to our conversation with Ken Smith. Ken, we left you coming out of Manila, and you got this assignment to Korea but in between there, there was the session at Syracuse University. How did that come up and where does that fit in?

SMITH: While I was still with USAID/Philippines, several Syracuse University professors under contract to AID's central training office came to Manila to conduct a two-week Project Management course for the region, together with the Director, Dan Creedon. Since I was one of the original logframe & critical path trainers -- topics which were a large part of their content – Tom Niblock assigned me as their in-country escort, and to work with them. While there, they heard about the highly successful Masagana project and my participation in it, and asked if I'd ever considered going for a doctorate. They said as a dissertation on Masagana -- focused on the management information system -- would be a landmark Development Administration case study; and added "Why don't you consider applying to Syracuse?" [The Maxwell School at Syracuse is the oldest public administration program in the U.S.]

When I told them I couldn't give up my 'day job' but would think about it when I retired, they offered to work something out. With their help and backing, I wrote a unique proposal to the Dean at Maxwell that I document the highly successful Masagana MIS as a development administration case study for my dissertation; establish residence on the Syracuse campus during summer school while on home leave, and after that take whatever courses were required to complete requirements for the doctorate -- a complete reversal of the normal Ph.D. program process. Shortly thereafter, Dr. Iverson approved it. So, when my assignment at Manila ended in June 1976, I went to Syracuse and took a

couple of summer courses that established residency requirements, before my next USAID assignment in Korea; and got the go-ahead to start writing my dissertation -- which would probably be submitted by my next home leave.

While in Korea, I sent a draft dissertation outline for review and comment. Then I got the sad news -- he had just received an appointment at the Civil Service Commission in Washington, so was having to relinquish all his obligations at Syracuse. He turned me over to the next dean, who said he was sorry but couldn't continue with the arrangement; but, suggested I reapply for admission whenever I was able to resume full-time study. So I had an approved dissertation topic, but without an advisor and go-ahead, once again had to defer my doctoral quest.

Q: To keep our chronology straight, when did you arrive in Seoul?

SMITH: I got there in August 1976.

Q: Again, give us a sense of how AID was organized in Seoul. Were they in a separate building? Who did you report to?

SMITH: AID in Manila was huge; one of the largest missions in Asia – and probably the world at that time -- about 100 people in the mission building, and untold minions in the provinces. By contrast, when I got to Seoul, I was the fourth person there. AID had been in Korea for several years and was now winding down. It was widely acknowledged as a successful program -- one of the few unequivocal successes AID ever had. Dennis Barrett was the AID representative; they no longer had a mission director. Jim Brady -- who I'd worked with in Manila had gone there a year earlier and was in charge of the sole remaining program for health, population & family planning. Tom Harriman was a full-time family planning officer, and was about to leave. There was a program officer whose scope was reduced to one program for country development strategy planning. That was it.

Q: Neboysa?

SMITH: Yes, Neboysa Brashisch; that was it. He wasn't an Asia type like Dennis, Tom and Jim. Neb had recently been reassigned from the Latin America bureau. AID's comptroller had also left, so the embassy comptroller was covering for USAID. As you know, summer is the prime time for home leaves and reassignments in the foreign service. Funny story; when Leon White -- our comptroller – arrived, he was assigned a house next door to the embassy comptroller. [I forgot his first name but his family name was Wong.] So White was on one side and Wong on the other. We used to joke you couldn't tell White from Wong, except obviously they looked different.

So that was our entire mission. Shortly after I arrived, Dennis was transferred, and Jim moved up as the AID Rep. I – with my new rural health pilot project -- inherited what

was left of HPN. We had a couple of contractors from Johns Hopkins and Westinghouse winding up the family planning program, but when Tom Harriman left, that was over. My new project was the sole reason for USAID to stay there.

Q: The two contractors, Johns Hopkins University, so that contractor would be with their academic staff?

SMITH: I guess so. Whether they had a separate extension program or outreach or what, I don't know. But there were several there -- not full-time -- training the Korean medical profession in laparoscopy techniques. The Westinghouse people were making business arrangements for marketing contraceptives, and setting up logistics. I didn't have anything to do with them. Tom wound up the operation then they and he left. The rest of us went to work in the AID staff car. We all lived close together in a housing area on the US Army base.

You asked about the arrangements. Very unusual for AID then. Instead of a suite of offices in a commercial building, we were assigned to one floor of the embassy building. So every day we went into the embassy compound, through the whole Marine guard thing, to check in and work.

Q: The way you're coming from Manila to Seoul leaves me with the impression that the Koreans had much of economic development and its associated programs in hand, whereas the Filipinos were still working it out.

SMITH: The Philippines were still a largely underdeveloped agrarian country, whereas Korea was rapidly emerging into industrial and commercial enterprises. Koreans were real go-go types.

Development had gotten to the point where AID was ready to shut off Korea and put them in the graduate category. There was just one last thing, the health situation in Korea – particularly in the rural areas – was not what it should or could be. They had advanced medical professionals and facilities but they were all concentrated in urban areas, primarily Seoul and Taegu. But about 80 percent of the population was rural and unable to access the urban areas easily. At the same time, the health ministry was embarrassed because China had launched the 'barefoot doctor' program; North Korea and Cuba had barefoot doctor programs, and South Korea's Western-medicine approach was not impacting the rural area. So this became the last big push that AID was going to undertake.

Before I showed up, the Koreans had asked USAID to build hospitals in the districts and provide training; but they were ten years too late. That used to be one of AID's central engineering office operations. In fact, when I first went to Thailand, we also looked at Chiang Mai hospital that was then being constructed under an Aid-assisted project. But now, AID was no longer into hospitals, doctors and equipment; and Jim recommended they seek such assistance from the Germans or the World Bank. But we were ready, able

and willing to help with a rural health program – focused on preventive public health practices, with some ancillary clinical treatment and curative care.

At the same time public health people at the Korean universities were pushing for rural health development; but the ministry was adamantly against it. They just wanted to have better facilities and didn't accept the communist barefoot-doctor approach. Although the public image was that the barefoot doctors was the way to go in rural areas, there was no way to validate whether it was as good as it was cracked up to be, or just propaganda.

Long before I got to USAID, Jim had worked hard with the Ministry of Health, and the Korean economic development institute (EDI) and they reluctantly agreed to having a five-million dollar loan from USAID to test some rural development approaches. The public health people wanted to call it a ‘demonstration’ project but the Ministry didn’t want to condone an operational project, but simply wanted to oversee and observe, externally. To save face all around, USAID agreed to a separate Korean Health Development Institute (KHD); and this is where I came in. This is why when it was first broached, the Ministry didn’t want an MD (medical doctor) or D.PH (public health) from USAID. They wanted somebody who could help with the management and operation, organization, and set up, to treat their activities as experimental research projects. That’s how I got involved.

When I showed up, Jim took me over to the Koreans I had met earlier briefly on a TDY so it was all very congenial. Doctor Park was a double doctor -- not only an MD but also a D.PH, -- and head of the institute. Dr. Ahn was from the Ministry, and Professor Yoon -- a rural development sociologist -- represented the university perspective. Mr. Kim – a Health statistician – rounded out the core professional team. Mr. Chung -- the Secretary General -- administered their side of the Institute. Those were my prime counterparts. They also assigned me a full-time secretary, Ms. Lee, who spoke good English and was a fantastic typist. [Cultural clash; Right off the bat, it took me a while to break her habit of approaching me bowed down and holding stuff out in her two hands in front, to hand to me.]

Q: How was this institute funded?

SMITH: This was the USAID five-million dollar loan. The Koreans had about a two million dollar counterpart ‘in kind,’ to provide support, but it was basically a loan. As I think I mentioned earlier, with a loan I didn’t have any control over expenditures. The money went directly to the Korean government ministry and was set aside as a separate fund to be drawn down. If it had been a grant, I would have had control over the money and could have decided we’re going to do this and this and that. I had no involvement in the money side of it; USAID would just periodically get a statement of the draw-down.

Q: If you’re not controlling the money, then you’re not really controlling the program.

SMITH: Right. So this was a little difficult. I don’t really think there were any

shenanigans with the funding, but it was a little frustrating because whenever I saw a need for something, I couldn't implement it. All I could do was recommend they do it. But in my time there that rarely ever happened.

We had a big dinner party with an opening ceremony where the USAID Rep. handed over a fake five million dollar check – the size of a poster board -- to the Minister. Immediately after dinner, Mr. Chung asked me “Mr. Smith, where’s the real check I can put in the bank?” I told him there wasn’t a real check. This was just for show. I had nothing to do with the funding. The AID comptroller kept track and worked with the Korean government to transfer the money to the Ministry in increments. He would have to work with the Korean treasury and Ministry accountants at his end.

Mr. Chung was a hard-headed businessman; that is both a businessman, and hard-headed. He was utterly amazed. “The U.S. government doesn’t understand business. If you gave me five million dollars . . .” and he outlined his business plan to me. Seoul real estate was booming at the time. He had planned to either buy into an existing building or have a new one constructed, and rent out space to commercial enterprises. He had figured with this seed money and a balloon note, given the rents he could charge, he could cover the ongoing operational costs and repay the loan within the five years. Thereafter KHDI would be self-sustaining, and everybody would be happier.

I said “I’m sorry Mr. Chung, it doesn’t work that way.” He lamented “The American government doesn’t understand good business practices,” which as far as USAID was concerned, I agreed he had hit the nail right on the head.

After we got over that issue, my first job was to organize the institute. We had to decide how many people were needed in the institute, and had a lot of internal discussions – in Korean. [I usually sat and observed, with occasional translations made to let me know what was going on, and if there was an issue where I could contribute.]

They eventually ended up with about twenty full-time people, and decided they would have volunteers to do a lot of field work and university students to conduct follow-up surveys and gathering statistics for analysis. We spent some time getting organized on how it was going to operate. I insisted when designing a project, you also have to design the evaluation. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have any data to know whether you succeeded or not in what you were trying to do. If you just keep track of equipment provided, and number of people you treated, that won’t cut it in terms of accomplishment.

Q: Tell me again, what was the mission of the health development institute?

SMITH: Pilot-testing concepts for low-tech, cost rural health delivery. It was going to be focused on rural development, improving the health status of the rural population, and because the ministry wouldn’t let go of the curative side, it was not going to be purely preventive public health. Also, we were going to get into a new area -- health insurance. On the curative side, apart from accidents and treatment, it would be focused on OBGYN

(obstetrics and gynecology), mothers and child nutrition.

To make sure the Koreans were in line with the concepts we were going to test, Jim had done a fantastic job of working out the general scope of work, and had arranged for a one-month visit to different places in the U.S. In effect for that month, I became the escort officer to take my core counterparts around. This is where I experienced my first snag. We worked out the schedule and logistics and I told everybody to get their US visas. Within the embassy I went to the travel office and got my ticket. Then I went to my Korean counterparts and said "We'll be leaving next week, have you got your tickets yet?" Mr. Chung said "I thought you were getting the tickets." I told him, no. KHDI has the loan money.

I wasn't part of the loan, so USAID paid my way. Well, the ministry hadn't released any money for tickets; so I went back to the embassy to talk to the comptroller. [Neither Wong nor White had arrived at the AID Mission yet, and the Comptroller was busy getting ready to transfer.] "What's happened with the loan money?" He said, "Well, you're the project officer, you were supposed to arrange for the paperwork, the money hasn't been released yet." I asked "What forms do I have to fill out?" [When I was in Manila, I never had to worry about this because FSNs took care of all that.] He said there were plenty, and the process would take about a month. So I went back to Jim and told him the problem. Coming from Manila, he appreciated how FSN's took care of the paperwork there, and promised to get the paperwork processed. But in the meantime, "What are you going to do?"

I didn't want to screw up and slip schedule on the first major activity for which I was responsible and I had my American Express card – "don't leave home without it" so I went to the local American Express office for help. They put in an urgent call to American Express in the U.S. and they agreed to allow me an open-ended credit line with two months grace period to repay in full. So, fine. I managed to buy tickets for everyone.

To cut a long story short, I covered all expenses for four Koreans and myself in the U.S. for a month; charging as much as possible to my American Express card. [It took awhile, but I was eventually reimbursed.]

Q: What kind of places did you visit?

SMITH: First of all, I didn't have any input into designing this trip, but Jim had done a great job. I took them to Hawaii where we visited the University of Hawaii public health school. [They already had contracts with USAID in Indonesia and several other places.] This was a major culture shock for the Koreans. Koreans were always very formal and always had dark suits, and since AID was in the embassy, I also had a couple of 'embassy suits' to wear. We went into the dean's office at the University of Hawaii but instead of a distinguished looking gentleman in a suit – there was Dr. Manny Voulgaropoulos in sandals, shorts and an aloha shirt; with his feet on the desk. He greeted us with an "Aloha, guys." They were utterly astonished. Manny explained the kind of public health

activities they worked on for USAID in other countries.

Immediately after that, I dressed down and wore an aloha shirt, but the Koreans were shocked at all the bright colors and adamantly refused. For about a week, I escorted four mafia-type Jackie-Chan-looking guys around Honolulu. Then everywhere we went in Honolulu, they wanted to buy souvenirs but they did not like to carry the goods because everything was given to them in a multicolored bag and this was considered undignified. So I became their bag boy. I don't know whether I went up in their esteem because I was so cooperative, or I went down in their esteem because I was willing to do this mundane work carrying multi-colored bags.

The other place we visited in Hawaii was the Kaiser Permanente offices. There they got an idea of how instead of having a single doctor-patient relationship, you had a clinic where the patient saw whoever was available at the time. Manny had talked to them about general public health programs in Asia and AID; Kaiser Permanente talked to them and showed them how they were doing it locally.

Then we went to San Francisco, to Oakland, and saw the Kaiser Permanente headquarters where they received a briefing on their world-wide operation and how it worked. From there we went to San Diego to visit Project Concern, a volunteer group that had worked under contract with AID in different countries. Actually, the head of it at that point was Jim Turpin, who I had worked with a bit in Vietnam. His organization was one of the multitude of contractors working there. Jim gave them a briefing on how they worked with communities doing not only curative health but also preventive health.

From there we went to Phoenix, Arizona, and an Indian reservation to see how the U.S. government worked with the reservation from the health aspect. Next, we went to the Kentucky Frontier Nursing Service, in Lexington. Their program had been set up in 1925 by Mary Breckenridge. We got to see how they dealt with poor people in the Appalachian area, had a couple of field trips there. By now, my counterparts were starting to get the feeling of it.

We then went to Washington DC, to meet with Dr. Isaiah Jackson, the head of AID's health office. They reassured him I was doing a great job helping them get organized and get the project working, and had no problems working with me as a non-medical professional. They also got their obligatory tour of Washington monuments and photos outside the White House.

Our last stop was Baltimore where we got a briefing from the Social Security Administration on the Medicare program.

From there, we flew to San Francisco, and a rest stop, before flying back to Seoul.

One of the frustrating things for me was I was hoping for such relief from kimchi and noodles on the trip. But everywhere we went the Koreans immediately called up the Korean embassy or contacts to find out where there was a good Korean restaurant where

they could eat ‘real’ food. So even though I was in the U.S. I ate Korean food with them everywhere. Except in San Francisco. I insisted we go to Fisherman’s Wharf to a steak-house for a good old American steak. Koreans love meat anyway, so they enjoyed that.

Oh, while we were in the Washington area, the Koreans were absolutely shocked that AID didn’t send a staff car and chauffeur to take us around. But since I knew the area I rented a car, and drove them around. They were then surprised I didn’t rent a driver with it. I also took them for a quick visit to the Shenandoah, Skyline Drive. I got a little too enthusiastic at one point, and a cop pulled me over for speeding. The Koreans immediately pulled out their passports and said “We’re diplomats, you can’t do anything to us.” But I had an American driver’s license. “Sorry, buddy, you’re in your home country now.” and gave me a ticket. The Koreans said “Never happen in Korea. No respect for government officials here.”

When we got back to Korea, after we had absorbed the benefits of the trip, they had to brief the ministry and convince them it was still worthwhile to proceed. Now, they were much more confident this was not going to be just a research project, but a Korean demonstration of how to do things.

Q: After your trip to the US, did you make any changes to the original project scope?

SMITH: No. The broad outline was still the same. We already knew the ‘Why’ and ‘Who.’ But now our task was to drill down into the ‘dirty details;’ the basics: “Where What When and How”? Since we didn’t have resources to cover the whole country, we visited different areas of the country, and settled on three pilot areas and with the concurrence of their governors, would later to select some villages for testing several aspects across the board, plus a unique feature in each.

The three distinctly different sites selected were: Hongchon Gun (pronounced ‘goon’), Taegu and Kunsan. Hongchon Gun in eastern Korea is really the traditional Korea mountainside with clusters of little villages. The Taegu area is flat farming country, and Taegu a major city; we were going to focus on OBGYN in the city associated with the university; with health stations in several outlying farming areas. The third area was down in Kunsan -- a farming area but also with a number of offshore islands. The Koreans had seen military hospital ships going around treating people, and wanted to emulate it. We tried to say it wasn’t feasible, or sustainable or feasible, but since KHDI was a pilot project, we had to acquiesce and test whether or not it would work.

But first we had to comply with AID’s requirements for a logframe to identify objectives, firm up our very broad scope of work with a work breakdown structure, and a critical path chart to schedule what we planned to do. Although I had no involvement with, or control of the budget, I also showed them how to relate the budget with the schedule on an S-curve Transform chart to monitor Earned Value.

Dr. Ahn and Dr. Park spoke excellent English; Professor Yung spoke good English, and

Mr. Chung spoke English with a heavy Korean accent, “mucheet likee” sort of thing. [I didn’t disparage him for his accent, but respected the fact he was bilingual and could communicate with me.] But most of the other participants at the working level spoke no English and for the longest time were reluctant to give me any feedback, even indirectly. They were used to Top-Down direction, and unquestioning obedience.

Mr. Chung was a very hard driver, and as their administrator, my closest counterpart. His favorite tactic to get things accomplished was to take the core people plus two or three other staff to a hotel for an intensive working group retreat. I would present a concept or AID requirement in English, then my core crew would translate, and they’d go to work, writing and conversing among themselves in Korean; occasionally translating to tell me what was going on, or whenever they had a question – usually about the technique -- rather than a substance issue. Then someone would translate what they had done; for me to critique, and they’d rework it.

Mr. Chung would lock us in the conference room until we produced an acceptable version of whatever we were working on. Then we’d take a break while he and his secretary would prepare the final document to present to Dr. Park and the Minister of Health. My first exposure to this procedure was when we were developing the project logframe. In this manner we got the logframe completed during one retreat to satisfy AID – and my -- requirements.

The critical path was something else. [This was before computers so everything had to be drawn manually.] They had post-it notes to tick in sequence on flip-chart pads, and link by drawing with pentel pen – just like we used to do in training workshops -- and I tried to work more directly with them on that. But it was hard going. While my lack of Filipino was a handicap while working in the Philippines; in Korea, I could not converse or understand their discussions at all, and was also a functional illiterate; totally reliant on translation by others to know what was going on.

AID also had two FSNs – Mr. Oh and Mr. Lee -- who had been retained as translator-interpreters, despite the program drawdown. One or the other would usually accompany me on field trips. Mr. Lee was with me on this exercise, but it turned out he didn’t have a health background; so while he could translate from Korean to English for me, he didn’t have a clue what he was saying, so I was none the wiser. So my core group had to translate the activities and milestones to English, and I’d have to critique not only the structure but also question the public health procedures, to correct the sequences and linkages. Then back to the flip charts and post-its for another do-over. [I got a quick overview of public health processes doing this.] We eventually developed something understandable – at least to me – but Mr. Chung had to wait until we got back to Seoul for the final product. I then redrew a final version, for reproduction and presentation.

I had two roles to play on the project. For AID, I was the project officer, while for KHDI I was their AID adviser, so I split my time between the two. In the morning, I would be dropped off at KHDI. In their way of doing business, they each worked individually until mid-morning while I’d also work alone in my office -- unless called. Then mid-morning

they'd have a general staff meeting for about an hour while I got the gist of what was going on with intermittent translation. After that I'd go to lunch with my core group and they'd fill me in on the details and we'd chew it over. After lunch I'd go back to AID at the embassy and take any requests. At AID, I'd brief Jim and prepare any responses to KHDI.

Q: You also took another trip with the same group to Thailand.

SMITH: Yes, that was much later. AID had a big rural health project in Lampang, northern Thailand that had been on-going for a couple of years, with two prime contractors – American Public Health Association (APHA) & the University of Hawaii -- and many individual consultants; and they were winding up a mid-term evaluation with a three-day conference. I took my core KHDI group, plus a Korean army colonel, Colonel Min. [I was told he was a Korean CIA to keep watch on us to ensure we stayed safe, because they were very suspicious of North Koreans attacking or kidnapping Koreans traveling abroad.]

But what they presented wasn't a balanced evaluation; rather it was a 'show & tell' exposition of successful interventions by their project. They had lots of MDs, health specialists and rural development people concentrated in Lampang studying, measuring and implementing new practices, which also contaminated any 'before-after' findings. The attention may have been great for Lampang residents, but it wasn't clear what was replicable in the rest of Thailand because the government didn't have the resources to do everything. Nevertheless, it was a great trip for KHDI as a remarkable communication breakthrough occurred during the meeting.

The Koreans didn't speak Thai, and the Thais didn't speak Korean (or English very well for that matter). But by chance, the Koreans saw a local Thai-Chinese newspaper, and quickly discovered many of the Thais could also read Chinese. So, instead of listening to the presentation in English by the AID contractors, my guys sat down with the Thais -- writing to each other in Chinese. Before we left, they persuaded the Thais to translate their rural health manual from Thai to Chinese, and brought a copy back to Korea, where they then translated it into Korean for KHDI reference and guidance. I asked for an English copy but KHDI said it wasn't in the budget.

I asked Mr. Lee to translate the Lampang manual for USAID; but when I checked his progress after a couple of pages, it was completely unintelligible in English. [It looked like one of those early Japanese instructions on how to assemble a mechanical toy for Christmas.] At that, I said "forget about it." – Nobody would read it anyway. [There was likely to be an original with the contractors in USOM, Thailand.]

Q: What was the date of the trip to Thailand?

SMITH: I'm not sure. Sometime during 1977.

Q: You were mentioning earlier, the OBGYN was part of the public health you were looking at, but you haven't mentioned the name of any women.

SMITH: A very important point. Even though the public health people had worked with the women's university who were very interested in participating, and also the project was focused on women, with motherhood, childhood, OBGYN and family planning – there were no professional women health workers in KHD: No doctors, nurses, or health specialists of any kind. So after the U.S. trip, logframe development, and critical path chart & scheduling, I insisted we weren't going to be able to move forward until a female doctor was hired. Jim was able to convince them to hire Dr. Lee. They allowed her on-board because she had international working experience and had spent several years working in Germany as a physician.

I tried to work with Dr. Lee as much as possible, inviting her to comment, because otherwise they would tend to ignore her during discussions. I'd ask "Where's Dr. Lee? I need Dr. Lee's opinion." Since I was not a health professional, I always insisted that as 50% of the rural population were women, and much of our project thrust was for the benefit of women, we had to get input from the women's perspective. Dr. Lee quickly demonstrated her competence in the field working directly with the health workers and CHPs (community health practitioners,) who were similar to nurse-practitioners. Some were men but we also managed to get women as CHPs and we also got midwives involved and a lot of women volunteers working at the local level. But in Taegu the head of the OBGYN was a mister doctor. Coming from the Philippines where women were prevalent at all levels in the medical profession, this was a running issue the entire time I was there, although it diminished somewhat as time went on. I don't know how it is today. Hopefully they've gotten over their misogynistic attitude. In short, I found Koreans very delightful people, great to work with, but also very hard-headed on this issue.

Q: Let's talk about the embassy. Was the ambassador or anybody interested in your program?

SMITH: Jim was because he had helped set it up. Dennis Barrett left and Jim moved up to be the AID representative. Jim was like me, not a physician, but he had worked with family planning and health programs in the Philippines and had been instrumental in pushing this health research loan through. So he was very sympathetic to what was going on. But he was also busy winding down the other activities that were the legacy of the previous health activities and family planning program that had been there.

As Dennis had left and Jim moved up to replace him, I was running the project, but there was still an unfilled health slot. During the summer rotation period, AID/ Washington had another health professional -- Bill Paupe -- who was available and nominated him to the mission. Bill was the same rank -- we were all FSR-2s. Jim was also due to rotate to AID/Washington. This then presented an organizational 'musical chairs' issue: As the

only health specialist, was Bill now going to take over the KHDI project, and I moved up to fill Jim's vacant slot?

Bill had ambitions to be an administrator, but was concerned that I'd be given the position; especially since Jim and I had worked together in the Philippines, and I'd already been in the mission for a year. So he came and discussed the issue with me very openly. However, I told him I was very happy working on the project; the Koreans were happy with me, and it would be disruptive for him to take over so if he wanted to talk to Jim and take over his job as the AID rep, it would be OK with me. Actually, that made me much more comfortable because now I had a health professional as a backstop immediately on-site. It all worked out very well. Bill was a very congenial, great guy to work with and for.

Q: The embassy has a long string of important issues. How did the embassy front office, what priority did it give to AID in Korea?

SMITH: I don't know. Jim and Bill were on the ambassador's country team meetings but the embassy had plenty of other things going on and I don't think they paid any attention to us at all, frankly. Nobody ever came out from the embassy to see what I was doing; nobody asked any questions. I didn't have to do any reporting. Bill was on the country staff meetings every week so as far as I know it was between him and them. I never felt any impact.

The Tongsun Park congressional scandal blew up about the same time but KHDI didn't feel any blow-back from it at all. We just went about our business, setting up clinics in rural areas, getting them built, staffing them. Then training the KHDI staff to focus on preventive – rather than curative – health care for the residents in the communities. I was active visiting the field sites. This was my priority. Although I wanted written reports for analysis, I never totally trusted them, until I or my staff validated them by actual ground-truthing -- talking to people locally, so I could see, hear and learn what was happening – from their perspectives. Establishing and testing a community health insurance model was a concern I had that it wasn't moving very fast.

Q: In your career you have on one side you're an AID officer, on the other side you're Air Force reserve. Did your reserve responsibilities catch up with you in Korea?

SMITH: Oh sure. In fact, even before I got nominally assigned. We arrived in Korea in August. A week after we arrived, the North Koreans attacked a UN workforce who had gone to trim a tree in the DMZ (demilitarized zone) area. At that point we wondered if we were going to be evacuated as soon as we arrived. We were alerted there could be an invasion or whatever; but it all died down. A week later my orders came through that I had been reassigned from the Thirteenth Air Force to the 314th Air Division in Korea, and attached to the J2, the UN joint command at Yongsan. Families with children were housed on Yongsan army base; embassy people without children were housed in another

area closer to the embassy, downtown.

After the tree-chopping incident I asked what was the embassy's emergency program for evacuating. They said, "keep the car filled with gas at all times. On the alert signal, gather your children and dependents and hit the main road south to Pusan (Busan) and the U.S. Navy will pick you up from there." But when I checked back with the Korean military they said "Never happen. First of all, if there is an invasion, all the bridges have been pre-mined, they'll be blown. You will not get out of Seoul. If you do get out of Seoul, the highway to Pusan (Busan) is a secondary air strip, and no vehicles will be allowed to travel because that's where all our planes will be staging."

I went back to Jim and said, "The embassy evacuation plan isn't feasible" and told him what I'd learned. Then the instruction was changed, telling everybody to assemble at the commissary parking lot, to wait for the army to evacuate them with their helicopters. I went back to the military and said, "Did you know the U.S. embassy is planning to have all their people fly out on your helicopters?" The US military response: "No way, the helicopters aren't passenger vehicles; they're designed for war-fighting. You'll have to find another way."

I went back and told Jim. The instruction was modified: "Go to the commissary and wait for further instructions." That was the last I heard of it.

I wasn't going to get evacuated anyway, I was told in case of alert "Get to the bunker and do your thing there."

We did have a test run on bunker mobilization: designated bus assembly pickup points, what to bring, capacity, and timing. During after-action assessment, I said "We weren't issued any weapons." I was told, "You won't need weapons because once you go into the bunker, you will be sealed in and it is survivable for thirty days. If we win, we will dig you out. If we don't win, you don't want to be dug out. Don't worry about side arms."

Then I reported for regular duty. One of the first things we had to do was practice, get ready, the U.S. and Korea military did joint exercises; scripted war games if you will. Our job was to go in the bunker and man the command post in case there was an invasion or whatever. I accompanied the colonel in charge of intel, and we were assigned to be in control of communications for coordinating everything. The teletype was then one of our key communication links for receiving and transmitting "state of battle" information, so it was critical it be operated both efficiently and effectively. If we didn't the whole exercise would have collapsed.

Then I discovered the corporal assigned to the teletype didn't know how to type. I don't know why they hadn't assigned somebody who was competent, but now, nobody else was available. Since I was a touch-typist and also been assigned using teletype in various other operations as a junior officer, I took over his shift -- for about twelve hours, straight; until relieved by his replacement. I felt like Horatio at the bridge, or Hans Brinker putting my finger in the dyke in Holland.

My immediate boss was very pleased I'd been able to do this, and saved the exercise. But the after-action evaluation officer reprimanded me because I had not done my assigned duties (bird-dogging the colonel as his mentee of the whole command operation); and instead had taken on this lowly corporal's assignment. As far as he was concerned, I should not have done this, and the whole exercise should have collapsed to prove that USFKorea wasn't sufficiently prepared to run the exercise. Anyway, I couldn't argue. Instead, it was "Yes sir, no sir, no excuse sir." However, I lucked-out in the end. My boss ensured it didn't adversely affect my annual performance report as -- based on that exercise as well as my PACAF and ROA awards while at Clark -- I was promoted to bird colonel soon afterwards.

That was most of my military excitement; apart from my regular duties. As you know intel work is 24/7 so I could pull a shift just about any time. The regular guys were happy because I could even pull two or three shifts on a weekend, and it gave them the opportunity to spend more time with their family or do whatever they were doing. A lot of people did have dependents in Korea for two-year tours, while most lower ranks were just there for one year.

Q: During this time, was there a Korea desk at AID backstopping you?

SMITH: When I first went to Korea, there was. But it disappeared overnight when Jimmy Carter came in. He reversed Eisenhower's policy and was going to get us out of Korea. All the embassy and military were fighting the President, and ultimately, it never happened.

Since AID was now part of the embassy, I also pulled embassy rotational duty. I was on duty the day the action-immediate cable came in, I had to find the ambassador and General Singlaub. They were playing golf on the base at the time, Saturday afternoon. I got to them and handed the ambassador the telegram. He read it, said thank you. Singlaub looked at it, shook his head. After that there was a running battle between the White House and General Singlaub. He was advising that they not do it, and the president looked on that as insubordination. General Singlaub maintained he was just providing technical input and advice. But he was reassigned, and retired shortly after. I was just a messenger boy on that incident.

The immediate reaction in AID/Washington was there was no Korea desk anymore in Washington. We had nobody. Right after that I got the message that my tour would not be renewed. There was no ongoing assignment. The present people in AID were to finish their tours and go back to Washington for further instructions. So my L was removed; I was now permanent and working on a five year, five million dollar project. But getting close to my first two-year assignment, suddenly the project's management was going to be abandoned by AID, I was going to be reassigned to an as-yet undetermined location and position.

Q: What was the message to Singlaub and the embassy, what was the issue?

SMITH: To tell Singlaub to start winding down and get US Forces out of Korea ASAP.

Q: He was the head of the American forces?

SMITH: General Singlaub (2 stars) was the Chief of Staff of US Forces in Korea at the time to General Vessey (4 stars) who was Commanding General of the Eighth US Army; Commander, US Forces in Korea, and Commander in Chief of the United Nations Command.

Q: I have a note here that the project monitoring survey became a problem. Does this go back to loan versus grant?

SMITH: Project Monitoring? No. Just the fact that KHDI was going to be left without an AID project manager to monitor it. I guess it would have been turned over to somebody in the embassy to follow-up, somehow; because there just weren't going to be any AID people around any longer.

As far as on-going project surveying for evaluation is concerned, that was a technical problem. In planning for a future evaluation to measure change caused by a pilot project intervention, there are three basic approaches, which I call 'BAWWO,' essentially:

1. Before – After treatment in the pilot test area
2. With – Without treatment in the pilot test area compared with a similar but untreated area
3. or, ideally Both: Before – After and With -- Without

Initially, we had the luxury of doing Both; and planned to randomly select several villages in a Gun for the KHDI project 'treatment,' and several others where we wouldn't do anything except periodically collect data for comparison. However, after we collected baseline data in both sets of villages, but didn't come back to do anything for some of them, they protested to the Governor; and petitioned for him to provide equal treatment. We explained our reason for doing so; and also, that the nature of our 'treatment' was only experimental rather than guaranteed to be beneficial. But the political pressure was too great. The Governor perceived non-coverage as a lack of resources on our part; and invited UNDP and other NGOs to provide similar services to our 'control' villages. That contaminated their value for our experiment and rendered them useless for comparative purposes. We were left with approach # 1 in that area.

[Undoubtedly, Lampang also experienced similar difficulties in their project. This was a common problem with AID reporting; and especially with pilot and demonstration projects. We were testing to see what would work, and what wouldn't. Then try another

tack, until you get something worth promoting. Then you tried it out – and let others copy the practice – again, usually with some shortfall. You just had to cope with it. But for reporting purposes, usually only the success stories were highlighted, and the stumbles suppressed. Project progress reporting wasn't pure laboratory research-type reporting.]

In an attempt to retain a robust BA & BAWWO analysis I recommended using nationwide data for the control area, to compare with our test areas; as any contamination by emulation &/or double-counting would be statistically insignificant. But since I was transferred before completion of the project, I don't know whether that was ever adopted.

Q: You have a note you made about culture and recommendations from project personnel. What is involved there?

SMITH: The Koreans were very formal, strict -- militaristic if you will -- and top-down. Koreans at the lower level could not dispute what was given to them on top. Nobody dared speak up to power; it was just 'yes sir,' 'no sir.' But I was trying to learn all I could about what we were doing -- so I could support them better; and this attitude became a problem for me to get any feedback. However, since I was not part of the Korean culture, as a foreigner, I was able to interject myself at any time. And because I was an official from the U.S. government, the Koreans showed me face-level respect. [I don't know what they really thought of my behavior, although we all seemed to get along well, personally.]

Mr. Kim (*I called him Hongchon Kim*) -- the sub-manager of our Hongchon Gun activities -- spoke pretty good English, and also spent a lot of his time in Seoul. We developed a work-around strategy. I convinced him to try the 'American Way,' and encouraged his guys to report issues, concerns, problems, and recommendations to him to pass along to me. Then, I would raise them in the staff meetings where they got discussed and trickled down. That worked out quite well, and in this way, many issues were addressed that otherwise would have been ignored.

I found that generally Koreans would not admit to problems. They could not 'lose face' by being contradicted, or in the wrong. I on the other hand was almost always direct – Frank by name and frank by nature -- not meaning to be insulting; and insisted the entire purpose of our project was to experiment and assess results. We didn't have desirable outcomes all the time. But when we encountered problems, we had to face up to them, and decide how best to deal with them. I said, "We cannot hide anything from the minister. You have to tell him when there are issues and we have problems. He's going to find out sooner or later and better from us first, or you'll really be in trouble." [I think the Minister of health was still hoping our 'barefoot approach' would fail, and AID would eventually authorize more training &/or medical equipment.]

One of the issues that came up in one of our weekday meetings illustrates both of these cultural issues. They were discussing where best to locate the KHDI PHU's (Primary Health Units) in the Gun, but couldn't reach a consensus. So they turned to me "Mr. Smith, we have agreed on how many health clinics we can establish and support under the project but we can't agree where we're going to put them. Can you give us some

advice?"

I went to the blackboard and said, "We're dealing with people" and put 'x's' all over the board to represent scattered villages. "We're supposed to serve people." Everybody in the rural areas walked or took a bus to other areas. so I said "Right now the ministry has a long-range plan to have a hospital within a half-hour walking distance from the population. Why don't we do something similar? Find out where the population is, and establish 'walking distance' as the criterion." Since one PHU couldn't serve the entire need, I drew circles around different clusters of 'x's' and said PHUs should be in the center of each circle where it could provide the most coverage. I heard nothing more.

On the next field trip to Hongchon, we were driving along a rocky road through a mountain pass when suddenly Mr. Chung shouted "Here. Stop the van." Since we'd been riding for a couple of hours, I thought he wanted to take a pee break. So I did. But when I turned around, they'd retrieved a stake from the back of the van; and under Mr. Chung's supervision, were pounding it into the ground by the roadside.

Mr. Chung then triumphantly declared to me "This is site of new PHU." As "Here" was an isolated spot with a beautiful mountain vista, I was completely baffled and asked "Why here?" He said "You said." And got out a map and spread it over the hood of the van.

Following my suggestion in the meeting a couple of weeks earlier, the staff had taken me literally and collected detailed village and household data on the area; then -- by trial and error -- population-weighted "circular targets" on the map; and we were now standing at one of the 'winning' epicenters. Our conversation went roughly like this:

"Mr. Chung, we can't put it here. This is ridiculous." "But you said."

I said, "I'm sorry I was wrong. You took me too literally."

He replied, "Too late, minister already approved." "Well," I countered, "We'll just have to tell him KHDI made a mistake."

"Cannot do." he responded, shaking his head vigorously from side to side. "Loosee muchee face."

"Well, Mr. Chung" I replied, "I know the Embassy will not approve." "Tell the Minister I made the wrong recommendation to KHDI." "You'd do that?" he asked, disbelievingly.

"Yes, Mr. Chung," I replied. "I'd rather lose my face than lose my ass." "What can we do now?" He asked me. "Minister expecting report when we get back." I turned to Dr. Ahn and asked him "Dr. Ahn, Where would you locate the PHU? Without hesitation, Dr. Ahn said "I'd put it next to a bus station, or near the marketplace in one of the villages."

"Those are great options." I said, relieved that there was a better alternative already in mind and we wouldn't have to go back to "Square One." Then to Mr. Chung, I said "Tell the Minister ASAP we need to change the location and Dr. Ahn has two better recommendations than the advisor; the advisor has agreed, and we are going to inspect

those alternative sites on this trip before selecting the final location.”

“You’d do that? he asked again, incredulously. “Yes sir,” I responded.

And we scrutinized the map, selected a couple of places to visit, then continued on our journey to do just that. (The bus station won out.) So all the Koreans saved face, while I lost mine. But I did save my butt.

There were several other incidents like this. They would take a long time arguing amongst themselves. But whenever I made a suggestion, they’d take and run with it; without double-checking or correcting. The next time I’d visit, what we talked about would be in place – for better or worse. They implemented it; there was no fussing about with it. I was very pleased working with them on that aspect. The Koreans were great on implementation.

By contrast, when I was working with Filipinos, it was the other way round. Everybody was very gracious and polite, and had great ideas. But when it came to implementation, they’d start with great enthusiasm, then fizzle out. I had to get a bulldozer to push them into action again.

Q: In your program, did anybody in Washington come to look at it?

SMITH: As I was getting towards the end of my assignment, since the mission was going to be closed down, the Assistant Administrator for Asia, Jack Sullivan, came out. Jack had formerly been a congressional assistant before joining AID, and was a newspaperman before that. He was a major driver of the ‘New Directions’ thrust -- shifting AID from disparate activities to targeted projects. He wanted to see the KHDI project so we took him to Hongchon. It’s absolutely gorgeous just like a classic mystical Oriental mountain painting.

We had a big Chevy van at USAID that held about eight people -- we call it a white whale. The drive was about a three hour trip to Chuncheon which was the major city in the area; then another two or three hours to the Hongchon gun where our project activities were.

Now I’d been doing this commuting for almost two years. You know the experience of riding over rural roads in Asia -- you get bone-shaken, rattled and rolled for many hours. We’d usually go to Chuncheon and stay overnight for a rest stop; then continue on the next day. We spent the next day visiting a couple of PHUs and chatting with project people and residents. Jack was very knowledgeable and a great guy to chat with; and was really appreciating everything he’d seen, then we left late in the afternoon to return.. As we were approaching Chuncheon, Jack said to Mr. Chung and Dr. Park, “I’m sorry I can’t stay with you overnight, I have an early morning meeting with the ambassador before I leave. I’ll just press on to Seoul in the van tonight and send it back for you in the morning.” Mr. Chung said, “No problem, Chuncheon only one hour from Seoul by new

express road.”

Jack looked at me like he was going to kill me. Going out the day before, I'd taken him for a three-hour rock-and-roll ride on this rural road when there was an express route. So he stayed with us and we all checked into the hotel. Before dinner, I went up to his room to apologize and explain. “Jack, the express road has only just been completed; and I haven't been on it yet, myself. Anyway, I wanted you to experience what we've been putting up with these past two years, rather than just whipping in and out like a suburb of Seoul.”

After that he calmed down and said “Don't you ever do that to me again.” After that he told the story many times how Smith set him up to see a rural AID program. When I did meet up with him years later, he retold the story to our dinner companions. At this point, it was a good joke.

Q: This is interesting. Your Korea period laps over two American administrations and you hinted a little at it, but President Carter wins the November 1976 election and is inaugurated January 1977. Did you see immediate policy shifts with the new administration as far as AID was concerned?

SMITH: Only the forthcoming exodus of AID. I didn't see or pay much attention to what else was going on at the embassy side. At the time they were dealing with the Tongsun Park congressional influence issue. I noticed an increase in the number of high-level visitors, we'd often see them in the embassy cafeteria; but I never got involved with them and just stuck to my knitting. As far as the military were concerned, we were always on high alert; waiting for the North Koreans to invade and preparing to strike back.

I told you earlier I got chewed out for not doing my assigned duty. But there was a Korean general who really got incensed in one of our exercises. The Koreans had big tank traps, big revetments, just south of the DMZ, with soldiers assigned there to fight to the death. But the exercise scenario was that the North Koreans were going to push through and roll into South Korea with tanks. When the message came through that the North Koreans had broken through; were on their way to Seoul, and the defense forces had a half-hour to evacuate, and retaliate; the Korean general jumped up in the briefing; called in the colonel representing that group and started beating him with a swagger stick. He said, “This is impossible. Letting the enemy through.” We said, “No, no, it's just an exercise, so we can assess what to do next.” The General refused to accept our explanation “He was supposed to hold that position to the last man, this exercise is impossible.”

Maybe somebody should have consulted with the Koreans when they scripted it. This general was absolutely furious. The poor colonel in charge of the post got beaten down.

Q: These exercises help you focus and are annual so in the two or three years you would have gone through this annually.

SMITH: Three times, yes. I got there '76, '77, '78.

Q: Appropriate to what's in front of us, you also did some TDY to Indonesia.

SMITH: Yes. When I got the news that I was not going to stay in Korea, by coincidence -- or maybe Tom Niblock heard it on the grapevine -- he called and asked if I could go TDY to Indonesia to help set up a new Integrated Child Survival project. [Tom had transferred from Philippines to Indonesia and was mission director in Jakarta.] This was a new thrust for AID. Instead of doing our own projects, somebody, somewhere decided a better way would be to do joint programs with other regional and bi-lateral donors -- such as the World Bank Group, the Asia Development Bank, the UN, Japan and the like. Bill Paupe let me slip in between some of the KHDI activities, and I went to Indonesia to assist the working group scope the project and parcel out what was going to be everybody's involvement and contribution.

So here AID was making another shift: from activities, to its own projects, to doing projects with consultants, and now doing joint projects. But that was the mode; so we pitched in as loyal soldiers to 'Just Do It.' Getting everyone to participate and contribute their talents and some resources on a multi-donor project was relatively easy; and Logframing was OK; but how to quantify anyone's input-to-outcome as a catalyst? Everybody would take credit for the end result. If one provided the vehicles, how much share of the changed health status can they claim? It was ridiculous.

While I was working on that, the AID doctor in charge of the HPN portfolio in USAID/Indonesia had a medical embolism. He was medically evacuated, but died soon after getting back to the States. Then Tom Niblock asked if after my tour was finished in Korea in June, would I like to come back as acting director of that portfolio. I thought it would be great to be working with Tom Niblock again, and now I don't have to worry about where I'm going; and I'll get back into the tropics. I just love the tropics. After Korea, I couldn't catch a cold anymore; my blood had gotten so thin. I was really looking forward to it.

Q: This is the 19 December session of our conversation with Ken Smith. Ken, we followed you through the Philippines and Korea. How did the assignment to Indonesia in the summer of '78 come about?

SMITH: I was in Korea and my project was just getting started when Jimmy Carter decided to pull the US Military out of Korea because the situation wasn't to his liking. He figured we'd been there too long. Then the Korea Desk in AID Washington disappeared. There were only a handful of us at the mission, so I was told to wind down and expect to be reassigned somewhere during the upcoming summer shuffle. My health project, two years into a five-year stint, was going to carry on without me. I had no idea where I'd go at that point.

In the meantime, Tom Niblock, who used to be the director of AID in Manila had moved to Jakarta, and asked if I could come TDY to do help develop a regional joint health/child

survival project that was going to be run by USAID/Indonesia.

Q: You said the Korea office in AID/Washington collapsed, disappeared?

SMITH: Just disappeared overnight. It was catch-as-catch-can. We called AID/Washington:

“There is no Desk. Who do you want to speak to?” “Well, whoever was doing it before.”

“Let me put you onto somebody.”

That was about the state of it. AID Washington shuffled people around, offices disappear; get rechristened, new functional offices created, people moved around, and somebody in the bureau eventually takes care of it.

Q: So the office didn't disappear, the individual...

SMITH: We called it a Country Desk. Usually, a staff of two or three people serving and backstopping the needs of the country within the larger regional bureau. Overnight, they just didn't have an exclusive Korea Desk. There was somebody – or a group of people going to pick it up and assume the backstopping responsibility, along with maybe half a dozen other countries.

Q: The mechanism and organization of AID is also something we want to cover.

SMITH: Good luck on that. Very fluid.

Q: Anyway, you and Niblock -

SMITH: Yes; back to Niblock. I was working in Jakarta on TDY from Korea, then returned to Seoul until my 2-year tour was complete and home leave was due. However, we deferred home leave and transferred directly to Jakarta in August. I was acting director of Health, Population & Nutrition (HPN). I didn't get any confirmation from AID/Washington -- who would normally assign a physician, or public health specialist to the position. I wasn't even a “talking doctor” in those days – like I am now. I was a generalist managing an experimental rural health project, somewhat familiar with the local situation; but known to -- and trusted by the mission director -- and readily available.

Q: Give us a sense of what the AID mission in Jakarta looked like. How big was it, how many programs were they covering?

SMITH: That was also a huge program. Probably second to what Manila used to be. I walked in with more direct-hire staff to supervise in HPN than we had in the whole Korea mission. Tom said he wanted me to reorganize and redirect the HPN portfolio. It was in

the same state agriculture was in when I arrived in the Philippines -- a lot of disparate activities, but not really projects.

Remember now the logframe had been the agency's standard since 1971; this is 1978. But they hadn't gotten "with it." People had come and gone. When I got to my HPN office, I discovered another major difference: most of the direct-hire health had been phased out. The agency was shedding direct hire specialists and turning over the functions to contractors. Individual contractors we called PSC's – Personal Service Contractors. Many of these were former AID people who had been let go. AID was also awarding contracts to universities; as well as organizations mostly around Washington. [We used to call them 'beltway bandits.'] Some specialized in areas like health, agriculture, rural development, education, etc., Others were generalists. They could also sub-contract individual consultants, as needed. These companies had no other business – only working for AID; competing with each other in different aspects,

USAID/Indonesia was a large mission. But 'different country; different culture.' In the Philippines people were friendly and happy to work with us, but constantly need remotivating during implementation. The Koreans were difficult to communicate with, more aggressive and didn't mess around; but we worked very well together, and they were great implementers.

Tom told me with Indonesians, you have to use quiet diplomacy; and always remember the program's been here a long time. You can't pull a Komer like Bob Komer did in Vietnam. [He knew my history going head-to-head with Frank.] These on-going activities you're inheriting are their approved programs that I need you to turn around. Here you've got to practice quiet diplomacy. Review the portfolio; retrofit what makes sense, and let the others retire or atterit.

I went to my office and met my staff. Tom Reese was first; and he came to me. Tom was in charge of the population program and an outstanding guy. He'd been there a while; spoke fluent Bahasa; had a good working relationship with the Indonesians, and everything seemed to be going well. He had apparently checked with AID/Washington contacts and learned I'd been involved in the family planning -- both at MIT and TAB/POP -- so was concerned I was going to bump him out. I didn't want to rock the boat, and he was obviously very competent, so I told him not to worry about it. I had my hands full, and in fact, was going to recommend Population be spun off as a separate division -- because the funding for ongoing POP programs was coming from a different source. In fact, I offered for him to also take over the Nutrition portfolio because that was very closely related. At that, Tom did a double-take. Instead of having to fight to hold on to his turf, I was the first bureaucrat he'd seen willing to give his 'empire' away. As for Nutrition, he declined; apparently deciding to leave well enough alone.

Next was the Nutrition program. I had a couple of PSCs – personal services contractors -- Ross Coggins, and Louie Kuhn running that. I told them the same thing; -- carry on doing what you're doing.

That left the public health-related activities for me to tackle. I was a technical professional in project organization and management. I had gotten my feet wet with public health activities in Korea, but was not going to take over as an instant expert. Since I couldn't order everybody to 'fall in and fall out again,' I tried what essentially today you'd call the Mike Rowe approach -- getting my hands dirty looking at the different activities we were involved with; and seeing how they worked. After that I could decide whether to keep or cut them.

My personnel resources were:

- Two other PSCs -- Walt Shirkin and another guy -- working on malaria suppression. They had formerly been FSRs, but were now contractors; presumably victims – or beneficiaries -- of the 'invisible American overseas presence' policy.
- Lance Downing, a general development officer -- rather than a health-related specialty – more involved in the administrative aspects of the division than any particular aspect.
- Nick Studzinski, a newly arrived IDI (international development intern) with a Master's degree in public health, as well as experience elsewhere before joining AID. This was his first field assignment; so I assigned him to find out – independently -- what the mission was into.
- Wati – actually Widowati (one name which was typical in Indonesia) – a professional public health specialist FSN working on mother and childhood activities.
- Diane – two names, but forgot her family name. – an American Registered Nurse from the US Public Health Service, on a temporary career exchange program with USAID.
- I also had a couple of FSN secretaries – Lani, and another young lady. – Tom and I shared them for office administrative work.
- But my prime asset was Phil Smart, an FSR. Phil was a sanitary engineer, managing a series of WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) activities. Like Tom Reese, Phil had also been assigned in Indonesia for several years; spoke fluent Bahasa, a gregarious personality; and got along with everybody. So I decided to bird-dog him for a while.

Now remember, Indonesia is three thousand miles long. We had a small budget that couldn't possibly cover everything. Again, although we called them our projects, they were the country's projects that AID developed with the government, and provided some technical assistance and resources, but the ministry were actually the ones implementing them.

On one WASH aspect, Phil had a couple of university contractors from Georgia Tech (GT) – one Kermit Moh (I remember his name as it was the first time I'd heard it other than as a Sesame Street character.) implementing a project similar to the one you were probably familiar with in Thailand -- the water project in different tambons. Here, in Indonesia, the government had developed a decentralized ‘self-help’ process under local authorities to drill the wells, and install the pumps in their villages --Kampongs. The pumps were stainless steel -- much better than traditional cast iron ‘dragon’ pumps; less susceptible to breakage, or malfunction and easier for women and kids to use (who in most developing country environments were the ones stuck with the water “fetch and carry” task).

So I decided to start with that sub-project; to get some ground truth, rather than reading reports about it in my USAID/Jakarta office.

Phil took me to Kalimantan, Banjarmasin, where we met the regional health officer. He took us to a kampong where they had already drilled the well, installed a pump, and also had a toilet on top. He was very proud of their innovation -- by combining the toilet with the well they had some cement left over, and were able to build a little patio for everybody. Taken aback, I said “I’m not a public health expert but my understanding is that the well with potable water should be about fifty meters upstream from any toilet.” To which the project officer replied “No problem, Tuan; they don’t use the toilet.”

“If they don’t use the toilet, where do they go?” I asked. “In the river, or the fields -- where they always go. We tried to get them to use a stand-alone toilet before, but it was too smelly and dirty. So we decided to combine the well and the toilet to save building materials” was the response.

“If the villagers don’t use the toilets, then why were they built at all?” I asked.

“Because USAID & the Ministry contracted us to. We have ‘x’ number to construct before the end of the year.”

So then I asked “What would you do if you didn’t have to build toilets?” “We’d drill more holes and build more wells” was his answer.

So once again, the sanitary part was something imposed on them, not something they bought into at the local level. Maybe the ministry in Jakarta agreed with AID and the contractors, but the message hadn’t filtered down to the regional and provincial health action officers.

Great. That was my first order of business when I got back to Jakarta. Kill the toilet program, carry on with the wells. Then I arranged for a group of Indonesian public health officials to go to Kuala Lumpur to the government there which had a fantastic rural sanitation project. I don’t know what happened after that.

This was my first encounter on a field trip in Indonesia. We’re doing aid that we think is good for them, but at the ‘rice root’ level they didn’t know why; it was just something the

ministry wanted so they did it. That was probably the most egregious example I can give you of some of my field trips. I didn't dig into it any more.

Lessons Learned:

- Check with the community first to determine what they want, rather than what you think they need.
- Make frequent follow-up field trips -- to observe and obtain feedback – to verify that everything is going according to expectations.
- Performance against Targets should reflect meaningful accomplishment.

Back in Jakarta, I was still working on the integrated child survival project. One of the key things in that was vaccines. With COVID, you can appreciate what's going on here. A key thing they needed to support vaccines was what we call a 'cold chain.' Vaccines have to be produced, transported and stored in very low temperatures before use. I visited several health centers. Some had refrigerators; others didn't. There just wasn't any electricity in many rural areas, so there was no cold chain capability with electric refrigerators. We needed gas-powered refrigerators, and USAID agreed to provide those as part of our contribution to the integrated project.

News travels very fast over the grapevine. We're not even at the stage of deciding how many we want at this point, but in Jakarta, I soon had a refrigerator salesman come to my office and said if I could guarantee his company would get the contract for the thousands of refrigerators we were going to buy, he'd make sure I got a good cut from it. "Sorry, I don't know how you heard about this, but I'm not buying refrigerators. You'd better go see the procurement officer."

An additional thing I'd observed on the field trip was that where they did have refrigerators in the health centers, people were using them to store their food and drinks. Now I know that protocol is absolutely forbidden -- you don't store food with vaccines. The public health officials knew better -- or should have -- but they weren't following the rules. We were doing things in Jakarta but nobody was going out to the field to check what was going on. We hadn't even made sure people were doing what they were supposed to. What the heck.

I told you earlier I had a couple of PSC guys working with the malaria program. They told me they weren't having much success because USAID policy outlawed the pesticide DDT in 1972. [You probably remember Rachel Carson who wrote "Silent Spring" back in the '60s that said we were poisoning the environment with DDT?] This is now 1978. "So what are you using instead of DDT?" I asked. "Malathion." We were using malathion for mosquito nets, saturating the mosquito nets with malathion, hoping that would stop the mosquitoes from doing any damage. But it's useless, it doesn't kill the mosquitoes. It just gives them a hangover." So, we still had the problem of malaria in the houses; and still killing people.

A related story that shows the value of followup. The UN was using DDT up to 2000. I got a feedback report from the UN, of an experience they'd had in Africa. The UN had used DDT on their bed nets. But when they did a B-A follow-up, they found no

significant difference. People in the area were still getting malaria. When they visited the site to dig deeper, they found the nets weren't being used over beds for sleeping protection. The fishermen were using them. Not only weren't they reducing the malaria incidence; they were polluting the ponds and rivers. One catastrophe after another.

I kept running across things like this during my AID career.

Due to my fact-finding field trips, I didn't have much data or time to set up my project management process – i.e. what is your project, what is your objective, what is your network, what is your schedule – all that good stuff. The best I could do for Tom Niblock's Monday morning staff meetings was tell him "I'm still checking to find out what's going on." Consultants would wander in every week, and I'd ask "Who are you? Why are you here? Let me accompany you to the ministry. When you get through, give me a report and I'll file it; and add you to my checklist." Before I left, I had about twenty-five major activities going on. My predecessor never kept any organized files. Everything was in his head who was doing what. We had a contractor from Johns Hopkins University working on Vitamin A deficiency. Another contractor from a different institution working on goiter deficiency. a shotgun approach to good things in health -- just like agriculture in the Philippines had been.

But under the 'New Directions' approach, AID wanted to get rid of the shotgun activity, and focus on a few clear, precise projects. But in a bureaucracy, making a change in direction is like trying to turn a ship around. It isn't instant; it takes a while. Six years later, the Mission had never followed through with the Logframe and critical path edicts AID/Washington had issued in 1972. One of the contractors was Manny Voulgaropoulos from Hawaii who had a program like he'd recommended to KHDI -- and apparently it was going very well. But again, he had no logframe. All he had was a contract to do things. [Indeed, there was a running battle in AID between program officers, contracting officers, and legal officers about how much upfront information AID could or should be shared with private parties or given to contractors; and one of the issues was the logframe. The central offices, bureaus and field missions weren't always on the same page.]

Q: Is Niblock aware of what you're –

SMITH: Yes. He'd been working on other areas in the mission; and wanted me to straighten out the HPN portfolio.

Q: The two of you were in agreement that it was pretty chaotic.

SMITH: Absolutely, yes. When I first went out to field test the Logframe, the Philippines and Indonesia were both test sites. That's why he wanted me in Manila when he was the Mission Director there; and now Jakarta.

Q: Give me a sense of what the AID mission looked like. You have Tom Niblock as the chief. Who's under him? You're in charge of health, population, and nutrition.

SMITH: Right. I don't remember the names of the other people, but apart from HPN we had agriculture, rural development, and education. I didn't even go exploring what the other ones were. Somebody was doing roads and bridges but not the big ones like we had before. These were farm to market roads, and little things to cross creeks, stuff like that.

Q: Is this diversion of effort originating with the mission in Indonesia or in Washington?

SMITH: This is another big problem I had while with AID. People in AID/Washington thought they were running things for the Indonesian mission to do. Indonesia thought they were in charge of doing things, and asking for Washington's backstop support. Apart from the regional bureaus and country desks, there were also technical bureaus or offices in Washington that also had input into mission projects; and some programs -- like population -- funded directly from their technical office in Washington. We got funds from several sources. Sometimes we'd even run across people from Washington in the field following up on their projects who hadn't even checked in with the Mission to let us know they were in-country.

Congress would ask for special things, and so they got done. I guess the ambassador also asked for things that would support his or her political agenda. I left that between Tom Niblock and the ambassador as to who was doing what for whom. I had my hands full. Instead of being the chief administrator-executive of the health program, I was busy running around trying to find out what I had out there; and just kept adding to my checklist every week.

Q: Did the Indonesian government have an AID counterpart?

SMITH: My counterpart, my prime Indonesian counterpart, was Dr. Hapsara, Chief, Bureau of Health Planning. Since I was not a doctor of any kind, he was polite, but didn't really want to get involved with me. I was just something -- somebody -- that came with the money. All I did was show up and turn technical people over to him and ask them to give me a report before they left. He never worked with me, took trips or did anything together like my counterparts did in the Philippines and Korea. At this point I wasn't controlling any money, I left that with the program office. I was just trying to find out what was on the other end of the tail I'd gotten a hold of.

Q: One of the things that may have been more unique in the Indonesian environment is that the U.S. program was not the only program. UN programs, German -

SMITH: Oh sure; In addition to our joint-integrated child survival project; all the donors had programs there. In fact, the Dutch had a really big program in health.

Q: In its former colony.

SMITH: Another story about that. We had a nurse training program in a province. But I had to check with the ministry before I traveled anywhere. In the Philippines or Korea, I could just show up without a counterpart and say I'm from AID, and I'd get a warm greeting, "Welcome, come and see what we're doing." In Indonesia, they were very polite but very formal. We'd just sit in the front office to drink coffee and rosewater, eat cookies and chit chat. But they wouldn't let me go near anything or see anything. Now this was an AID-sponsored nurses training program, with a shake-hands billboard outside; we were building part of the facilities, and I was the acting director of the program and a major contributor to this project. When I went on my first trip and got the cookies and coffee treatment, the director said he was sorry but couldn't let me see anything unless I had an appointment, and what they called a "jalan surat" -- literally a 'walking letter' of introduction from the ministry. When I got the letter from the ministry and made an appointment, the next time I went there, I got the grand tour -- and they were doing a lot of good training.

On one rare occasion -- because I was still working on the integrated child survival project -- I attended an international donor cocktail party. I was chatting with the Dutch donor representative and told him I'd just come back from a nurse training program at one of our project sites, and showed him a picture outside the building.

He said "Oh, we have a training program like that." "Oh, really? Maybe it's in a different area. After all it's a big country – like the US." He then did a double-take, and said, "That looks like ours." We dug a little deeper and sure enough, it was the same place. When somebody showed up, they just switched the billboard for whichever agency was sponsoring it. I guess that's why they were so insistent on the letter and when I was going to show up. [I don't know how many other projects were like that.]

One cultural difference I observed from my vantage point was Indonesian doctors of Malay descent in the health ministry tended to be MDs; and often had a private practice on the side. Public Health doctors I contacted working in communicable diseases on the child survival project were all ethnic Chinese, even though they had Indonesian names.

As another aspect of the integrated project, we recognized this was going to require massive doses of vaccines. These were known vaccines; but where are we going to get them? Indonesia had a vaccine production facility in Bandung called Bio Farma – with a reputation for producing high quality vaccines. The director was very congenial, and spoke excellent English so we were able to converse without need of a translator. I got to walk through the process for producing vaccines; and although essentially a 'factory,' it had strict protocols for fear of biological contamination. It appeared they were rigorously enforced. However, Bio Farma was a small operation and when we reviewed the scope of what we were planning, there was no way this facility could handle it. What the Indonesian government was asking of the donors was to replicate his facility umpteen

times. That would be very expensive and time-consuming and we'd need a lot more people to do it.

We stayed overnight and I did a quick 'line of balance' study -- remember critical path is a 'once- through production process, but LOB replicates it, concurrently, like a production line. In the morning I told the director that if we build additional facilities to replicate the vaccines, it will be very expensive. However, if we reorganize to replicate production within the existing facility, it would still be expensive, but could shorten the delivery time for the vaccine output -- as we had done in the water pump program in Thailand. As you've heard of some of the testing for COVID, they still had to wait at different stages in processing, before they could move to the next stage. Then I had a brainwave. "Why don't you just run a triple shift for round-the-clock operation?" A lot of the activity was 'set up,' 'break down,' wait a month 'set up,' 'break down,' to do this.

Indonesians keep their calm; they are very cool and expressionless. They call it "musyawarah" and "mufakat", which means discussion and consensus. But it seemed to me most of their 'discussion' is telepathic. They don't confront each other or argue, and certainly not with me. They just sit there, make small talk, mull things over, and eventually decide, somehow. I'd been warned I had to use quiet diplomacy. Don't ask direct questions, do things indirectly. But you also can't make direct suggestions. This was always difficult for me, and I frequently crossed the line – maybe because I didn't ever know where the line was.

When I asked "Why don't you run a triple shift?" He looked at me in absolute horror. "You just don't understand the Indonesian culture. My people are professionals; doctors. They work from six am to two pm. After that, that's their day. I cannot ask doctors to work a shift like a factory worker. There's no way I could expect them to work overnight. You're out of your mind, you are American you just don't understand." I said, "Well in that case, your capacity will not support what we're planning to do. We'll have to see if the Germans or the World Bank will build additional facilities and train people to run them because there is no way we can upgrade your facility if you're not going to run shifts. The other option is we will just have to buy the vaccines we need directly from Germany, France, Switzerland, or somewhere."

He regained his composure. Thank you very much for coming; another cup of coffee. We shook hands and I went. That was another field experience.

I would go to the mission director's meeting every Monday, and report the status of the health portfolio: I've been on so many field trips and so far had problems with each one of them. Some are good but there's no way we can continue without major modifications. I never did get through my concept of a Gantt chart with a bar for every project and a schedule and logframe for every project, indicators, and reporting. In fact, on some of them it wouldn't really do. I even had doubts myself after thinking about it some more. How can you claim you have made a major contribution to the improvement of health and measure it in any meaningful way by providing a few vehicles, or by providing some vaccine even? Everybody's taking credit for an integrated project; but even with a single

project all we could say was we've delivered so many nets, tested so many people, built so many kilometers of road – but so what? You can't take a percentage of the country's improved 'health status' with a hundred and forty million -- mostly rural people? What kind of cost:benefit impact can we make? It was ludicrous. IMO, we needed to scale back to some pilot projects in certain key areas, and use them as demonstrations.

While all that was going on, my wife had a major health breakdown so I told Tom we had to go back to the States ASAP. I told him I'd try and stay until somebody came to relieve me, but I wasn't a multi-tasker executive type to manage the portfolio. He said he was sorry to lose me; and soon, AID/W sent a newly hired young physician -- David Calder -- with a very likeable personality to get the job. When Dave arrived, we visited a couple of clinics but I didn't want him to be blindsided, and have regrets later if he accepted the position then learned the true scope and objective. I told him "Dave, I know you're an MD but this isn't all clinics; it's Public Health, with lots of different bits and pieces. And your job will be to manage and turn it around." But he felt comfortable with the idea, so I told him I'd give him a list of contractors and what they were working on, and try to organize the files so he'd have something to start with. Which is more than I had. I left before he was reassigned. [Incidentally, I learned much later that he went on to have a very successful career in AID.]

When AID/Washington heard I was available, two groups wanted me. Because I had field experience, PPC -- the central office for program policy coordination (can you believe they had a whole bureau for that.) -- wanted me to help write manuals and new directives for how the agency should be run. The other group was AID's central training office. I accepted that in a New York minute.

Q: Before we get to Washington the second part of your career that's woven through this is your Air Force reserve status; what happened when you went to Indonesia?

SMITH: In Korea, I was a targeting and intel specialist, and had just completed a short course at Osan Air Base on targeting and weaponeering – what kind of weapons to use to take out targets; depending on where the target is, and what it's made of. But it was quite complex, involving geometry, equations and computations. [No computers.] I volunteered to prepare an unclassified 'how-to-do-it' step-by-step strike manual -- with obviously wrong hypothetical numbers – just for general training purposes of the process. While on TDY in Jakarta, I was able to work on the manual in the evenings. Since I needed classified references to work with, they let me sit in the air attaché's office, which was very convenient because in Jakarta AID had a separate building in the embassy compound. After work at AID, I could just walk across to the military attaché in the embassy. Before I left Korea, I was able to finish it, and turned it over to the Army to publish, and train more USFK targeteers.

When I transferred to Jakarta with AID, the air attaché asked DIA (the Defense Intelligence Agency) in Washington to reassign me in a reserve status. But DIA refused to accept me because I hadn't taken their basic defense attaché orientation course. At this

point I'd been in the Air Force twenty-four years, I was a bird colonel, and had had different intel assignments in several countries; joint military, international, and UN forces. But DIA was adamant. I wasn't qualified, and couldn't learn 'on-the-job' as I had everywhere else during my career.

Because I had to be on-call within half-an-hour of my duty station I could no longer be a ready reserve. So I lost my assignment there. Instead of being put on complete inactive status for recall only in case of a national emergency, the Air Force let me continue with ad hoc duty as a liaison officer for the Air Force Academy and ROTC program. I'd also done that as an extra activity in the Philippines, visiting high schools as well as making presentations at military commanders calls. Also liaison with the Philippine military academy and their cadets. The Academy allowed me some occasional active duty days to visit Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to make presentations to the American communities. In addition, I took a correspondence course from (ICAF) -- the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. Unlike AID, the Air Force officer career path is very structured, with continual learning. For professional development, you have to take a series of structured courses to the next level. Even if not selected to attend classes; correspondence courses are available – designed and administered by the institution. I took the ICAF course and did occasional academy duty, to maintain my reserve status.

Q: You got back to Washington in August '79 so you were only in Indonesia one year.

SMITH: Yes, instead of doing the two years, I curtailed my tour. One humorous incident that occurred soon after we returned to our home in Virginia. One weekend, we took the kids downtown to sight-see in Washington D.C. As we were walking around the White House and peering through the fence surrounding the South Lawn, my youngest daughter Heather – who was born in Manila and was now seven years old – asked "Who lives there, the GSO or the Ambassador?" She didn't quite understand that in Washington there was a President who was more important than either the GSO or the Ambassador; and he got the biggest house. She then declared that when she grew up, she wanted to be a GSO so she could live in a big house too.

And after we had been in Virginia about a month, Heather – who had only lived abroad (Philippines, Korea and Indonesia) -- gave us another laugh when she asked plaintively "When are we going home to the Philippines?" She was surprised to learn that now we were home; not just on "home leave."

Q: You walked into Washington and got this training division assignment?

SMITH: Oh yes; I hadn't finished telling you. The other request was from Dan Creedon -- the head of the central training division. He was Mike Guido's boss, back when I was at MIT and used to come back once a month to conduct a Critical Path course. Dan was civil service, so didn't rotate on overseas assignments like FSRs. Dan was also the one who brought the Syracuse team to the Philippines so he knew all about me, and wanted me to be a full-time training officer to spread the gospel about project management.

There was a lot of turmoil in AID now because many of the direct-hire officers who had been trained in the logframe were being replaced with contractors who didn't have any concept of the logframe. All they had was a contract. Most were technical services contracts in various sectors – such as health, agriculture, education, etc., So they were experts in their field, rather than familiar with specific projects they were supposed to implement.

Also, in an attempt to rectify perceived past discrimination, the government's Small Business Administration (SBA) established an '8-A Set-Aside' program where only minority- and women- owned firms were eligible to compete. [Subsequently, I and several of my former workmates were subcontracted as PSCs by these firms, as they did not have the requisite expertise to provide the technical assistance. Whenever we showed up at the Mission, or Ministry and the project officer said they thought they'd hired an 8-A contractor, we replied "Yes, we're the 'minorities' in the firm." Actually what we'd usually do, would be to have one or two of the firm's direct hires tag along as mentees, for OJT.]

Q: That brought you to AID Washington, the big building downtown. Where is the AID building?

SMITH: In those days, AID had offices scattered all around Washington; Roslyn to Connecticut Avenue, and other places in between. During my various assignments in Washington, I had previously had offices in New State, Rosslyn and Old State. The Personnel office was moved to another building on the other side of 23rd Street. We also had people on K Street. The finance office was by the Hilton, way up Connecticut Avenue. The training division was in a Rosslyn building -- forgotten the name -- above a drug store across from where the USA Today building is now. In fact, AID had its own shuttle bus service to haul us around town. AID/Washington office building dispersal was reflected in the organization disunity. I hope things are more efficient and effective now they are consolidated in the Reagan office building.

Q: I believe the State Department also had its language –

SMITH: Yes, the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) had language and other training classes nearby, and AID also had its own Vietnamese language program in another location in Rosslyn. I checked into the training office as an FSR officer on rotation, for probably a two to four year assignment. Dan -- and most of the training people -- were career Civil Service and had established a smoothly functioning operation. But Dan told me project management had been neglected and he wanted to reach out to the missions as well as AID/Washington to train FSRs, contractors, and FSNs. Not just critical path and logframes, but everything else they should be aware of to manage projects; such as finance and procurement.

I hired a contractor – Development Associates (DA) -- and worked with them to develop

a two-week project management course. Sheila Maher was my ‘counterpart’ as DA’s project manager -- a professional trainer but without prior AID experience. They had consultants – mostly former FSRs – to teach the other components while I handled the critical path and logframe components. I had a former mission director, a former procurement officer, and several other AID people participating – intermittently – as PSC consultants. We then launched a traveling roadshow, going to different regions, and missions.

At the same time, Dan was managing several other programs on various topics, and wanted a short PM-awareness module to insert in them; as well as a new separate two or three-day stand-alone course on selected tools & techniques. He also had initiated an IDI -- international development intern – program similar to the Navy IDI program; and wanted me to create a substantial PM workshop module for it, so interns could hit the ground running when they arrived at a mission.

Shirley Moreno and Cecilia Peters managed the IDI program, and welcomed me with open arms. I developed a one-month module to fit into their program. We initially conducted two or three sessions on theory in Arlington. Then we’d go to Fredericksburg for a two-week workshop with ‘hands-on’ in-depth simulations. After that, Cecilia teamed-them up and sent them to various places in Appalachia to develop a project for the local community. [I didn’t get involved in this field phase.] They then returned to AID/Washington training center for their final ‘exam’ -- presenting their cases to the bureau executives in a ‘show & tell’ to demonstrate they knew their stuff and were now ready to be assigned to the missions.

This rotation assignment in AID/Washington was very rewarding and satisfying for me. I couldn’t be everywhere all the time, but teamed up with Bob Hubbell to help me. [Bob had chaired the logframe task forces, from the central evaluation office, and was now retired.] Dolph Droke was another unforgettable character I worked with. Remember Dolph? He was long and lanky, about six foot five, with a blond afro. Dolf was one of Henry Kissinger’s mentees. Because AID couldn’t advertise what they were doing, Dolf used to go around to universities during the Vietnam days talking about what we were doing and why; trying to pacify a lot of the people who were protesting.

Once we started hitting the road with our two-week regional seminar-workshops, I even managed to get one back in the Philippines. With that –

Q: I was just going to ask, did any of this travel amount to overseas travel?

SMITH: Oh yes. The two-week program was specifically designed for overseas. It was in great demand, and almost every other month we would do it somewhere -- East Africa, West Africa, the Philippines, South Africa – Panama – you name it. Participants were AID contractors, FSNs, AID officers, and even -- once in a while -- some ministry people. Classes were twenty-five to thirty people, everywhere we went.

Q: How many people in your traveling team?

SMITH: I would usually go out in advance for a couple of days to set up the hotel arrangements. Sheila Maher was my contract counterpart. Gordon Ramsey -- a former mission director in several places and former personnel director for AID -- was also usually along with us. We three carried the core and had other people come in as guest speakers to cover our predetermined module curriculum. An accountant would fly in to do a one or two day session on AID accounting. A procurement guy would come in for a couple of days. Often, we'd get an auditor or inspector-general -- if they had one at the local mission or who could fly in from the regional office to give a half-day presentation. I would fill the gap whenever there was a short-fall. But I preferred real experts on those topics for authenticity – not my Reader's Digest synopsis. A local mission director would usually give an opening and closing presentation.

A continuing problem facing Dan was that he was trying to retrofit and catch people who were already working in or for AID, and trying to straighten them out. Coming into AID from the military, that was one of the things that frustrated me the most. You don't get into the military without first taking basic training. Then you don't get to do things until you get training for the job you're going to do. The Navy's Management Intern program was based on the same principle. But in AID, we had everybody from everywhere coming in laterally, without first having an organizational orientation program. Although most people we hired were experienced technical experts, they didn't know much, if anything, about AID, State or overseas mission management structure, programs and policies. Moreover, apart from Dan's IDI program, AID's orientation and other programs were still largely voluntary. The IDIs were the best source, these were the people getting in-depth training. At this point Washington seemed to me to be top-heavy. We were cutting back direct hire field staff, but there were more direct hires in Washington than in the rest of the world.

Q: In all this traveling, were any particular missions helpful or unhelpful?

SMITH: The mission directors were always welcoming, and wanted us to stay longer. Some even asked for us to come back on TDY to assist their program. I do recall where I surprised – and probably converted -- one Mission Director though. When conducting a project evaluation in his mission, the Director dropped by the office they'd set aside as our team's workspace to see how we were doing. He was surprised to see a critical path chart I'd developed, posted on the wall -- outlining our team's responsibilities & workflow -- and was using it to monitor our progress. He commented, "Oh; you actually use this stuff yourself." "Of course." was my response. "It's not just theory. It's an organized 'to do' list." Then I gave him a quick briefing on what we were doing, and showed him where we were – marked on the chart with a pentel pen. [Apparently, he'd thought critical path was only used for designing and planning big complex projects.]

Jumping ahead; another pertinent comment: Despite several frustrating bureaucratic setbacks and delays, on 3 May 2017 I married Katrinabel in Makati, Metro Manila. Shortly after the ceremony, I said to Kat "That's another project successfully completed." She then asked me "Was I a Project?" To which I replied "No; but the process was."

Q: There was also a flow of Peace Corps people into –

SMITH: Former Peace Corps people were everywhere. We'd run into them as individual PSC consultants, working for contractors, or as IDIs. We also met PCVs working in-country, but they didn't attend our training sessions. Most of the IDIs had been Peace Corps volunteers, though they didn't necessarily go back to the country they'd worked in. But they had had the experience of living in rural areas, acquiring the language, understanding the culture, coming back to the U.S., getting a masters' degree in a discipline, and then coming into AID. We also got some of the contractors who then reapplied to AID to be direct-hire IDIs.

One lesson I learned well. The beauty of the two-week program was usually we'd have a few days to get set up, a free weekend, as well as a weekend between sessions; so sometimes we had an opportunity for a field-trip or project site visit, somewhere. In the Philippines, I took the opportunity to take Sheila to Central Luzon -- where I'd been doing disaster relief and worked with nuns during the floods. Sheila was from Connecticut and a UCONN graduate, and we got along pretty well. But when she saw the area, she exclaimed "Oh my God, how could you possibly work and live here, it's so terribly poor." But I told her "Sheila, this is remarkable. They've got a paved road, and cinder block houses with tin roofs now. When I was here before, they were all thatch roofs on stilts with pigs and chickens running around underneath. This is a fantastic improvement from when I was here ten years ago." This was getting her feet wet in the development world. Gordon just laughed. It wasn't new to him. He'd been a mission director in several places, and knew what development was all about.

Q: The observation here is that AID had made a difference.

SMITH: Well things had improved considerably, but how much could be attributed to AID – that's another question.

Q: As is often your situation, you've got one job and you volunteer for other TDYs or assignments. You got into a contract rating system?

SMITH: We often had to hire contractors, so at one place, I developed a contract rating system for the mission. The rules are you have to have at least three proposals and should have objective criteria for selecting them; not just because you knew they were good and/or had worked with them before. So I developed an evaluation template: what are your criteria, what are the points, use a five point scale. It was voluntary but at least I gave them some systematic ways of rating and checking and selecting, so that's what I was pushing for. [Later, I automated it in a Lotus 123 worksheet; and still later converted it to Excel. I still use it in my project management seminars.]

Q: One TDY you took in this time was to Burma.

SMITH: I don't know how it came about -- Burma was not one of our missions -- but Dan got a request to help the ag. ministry in Rangoon with training for their agricultural program there. Bob Hubbell and I went to Rangoon for a month in 1983 to conduct a training workshop. We took a quick two-day trip up-country to familiarize ourselves with their rice program, which was being administered by the military. [Probably in Rangoon everything was run by the military at that time.] They also had HYV (high yielding variety) rice, fertilizers, pesticides, as well as drying equipment and storage.

When we visited the province office, they had a big blackboard with the farmers' names and targets and achievements and percentage improvement over the previous and everything else. It was similar to the Philippine Masagana 99 program setup so I felt comfortable about it. But then I noticed it was all hand-painted. This wasn't left over from the previous season; it was the beginning of the current season. Yet the matrix showed what farmers were allocated, what they'd used, and more critically -- what they'd accomplished -- not chalked in, but nicely, neatly hand-painted. I asked the officer in charge, "How do you paint these all so nice and evenly?" He said, "We don't do it piecemeal. All done at one time."

"But they haven't finished growing and harvesting yet; how do you know these targets are going to be achieved?" "It will be achieved. If not achieved, we will take their land and give it to somebody else." So, a very positive approach to project management. That's the way it was.

We returned to Rangoon a little disillusioned, and suggested to the ministry people they should not pre-determine results at the beginning of the season, but after setting targets, collect actual data week by week as it happens. And please make frequent field trips to verify what is reported.

Q: There was a hotel restaurant program that you looked into.

SMITH: That was a funny one. We stayed in a government hotel; nothing big and fancy, just a small one, like a guest house. When we checked in we were surprised to see they had a French restaurant. At dinner time, we went to the restaurant, but it was closed, so we sat at a table outside, and the waiter handed us a French menu. [We learned he had been trained in Paris for a month under a UNDP program. However, everything we asked for was unavailable.

So what was available? Fish and rice, or chicken and rice. The restaurant kitchen was closed but they had a wok outside to cook on, and a barbecue grill. After a couple of nights of this we asked, "Wasn't this rated as a UN training program?" "Yes." When they got to know us better, they took us into the kitchen. The equipment was there, still in crates. The restaurant staff had been trained in Paris and the UN had provided the equipment. But there was no follow-through. They didn't know how to install or use the equipment, or they would know how to use it if it was installed. They didn't have enough customers to run it anyway. So they got by with their chicken and fish and rice with the wok and on the grill. Another 'white elephant' development project; fortunately, not

USAID's this time. It had been identified as a need; the training had been provided, and the equipment delivered. But there was no follow-through to see whether it was actually used. There are so many of these kinds of things. If you don't have people to do field operation monitoring, and follow-up inspection, it may never get off the ground.

Similar sorts of things I observe in different places with education projects. We provided training for teachers, built schools, provided equipment and provided textbooks. I remember the textbooks at a school in Vietnam were never delivered. They were all in the principal's office because the teachers protested. They wouldn't use the books because they had their sideline -- selling their own class notes. Our recommendation was to at least release the books to the teachers so they could write better notes.

This is the kind of situation you often get into with a program that is very broad in scope, but inadequately staffed and managed. When you look at the project from the target beneficiary level, you see how different it is from the perception of the donor and the government ministry. Yes, the outputs were delivered, but implementation is not successful unless they are actually used? Was it a benefit? Who knows? You never know unless you do a follow-up audit. And in order to do that, you really need people on the ground, periodically, to ensure things are going the way they were intended.

Q: We're at about 1980 and again the second path in your life is the Air Force reserve responsibilities. How was that adjusted in Washington?

SMITH: It took awhile to get a regular ready reserve billet. In the meantime, I was detailed to an Air Force unit on Bolling Air Force Base across the river that supported the Defense Intelligence College within the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) -- also located at Bolling. [Later the name was changed because people make jokes about the acronym.] One of my assignments -- interestingly enough -- was with DIA's attaché orientation program. That was the course I'd never taken, so precluded my getting a reserve assignment in Jakarta. But now -- because of my field experience -- I was one of the instructor's teaching people what they should know before they were assigned to such duties, and giving them some of the tradecraft tools and procedures they needed to know.

Q: How was your experience received? Were you doing a good job at the attachés school?

SMITH: I wasn't a faculty member. I was just one of several others supporting the full time faculty. They invited us to make presentations to supplement their curriculum.

Q: You went to the Air War College?

SMITH: Not immediately. I'd turned down the opportunity just before I went to Korea, but here, three years later, I applied. I was selected as a runner-up, and backup in case the guy selected couldn't make it. I found out who he was and offered my congratulations. He wasn't really keen to go as -- just like the dilemma I'd faced -- he'd lose his civilian job. But he'd been nominated by his unit commander, and decided it was an opportunity

he couldn't refuse. I wished him the best of luck.

Statistically with a class this size, I knew there'd be several who wouldn't be available 3 months later when the class started, so I contacted a guy in my unit who had a key position in the Pentagon to see if I could be a standby 'at large,' instead of just #2 on the reserve list. But there was no precedent for that. My last hope was AID. They also sent someone to the Air War College each year; like State's senior program. So I asked the personnel office if I could be nominated. They reproached me -- you know more about the military than the war college. We're going to send somebody who doesn't know much, to orient them and improve relations.

Shortly thereafter, the Air Force assigned me to NSA – the National Security Agency at Fort Meade for a tour of duty.

Q: You also got involved in some ROTC programs?

SMITH: Yes; as an Admissions Liaison Officer (ALO) for the Air Force Academy and ROTC programs. Now I was back in Washington, instead of being a 'one-man band' briefing high schools and communities, there was an entire unit doing academy and ROTC liaison; so I got involved in that. We covered the area from Frederick, Maryland to Fredericksburg, Virginia, the DC beltway down to St. Mary's in southern Maryland. [Another unit covered the Baltimore area and the Eastern Shore.] We had all the high schools in the area to contact periodically, as well as military units; and gave briefings about the academy and ROTC programs. We spent a lot of time going to schools, parents' evenings. Periodically on college nights we'd set up a booth in the Fair Oaks shopping mall or wherever. On Armed Forces Day, we also set up a booth at Andrews and Bolling. We also administered physical aptitude tests -- usually at Andrews Air Force Base – to students nominated for the Academy, and conducted personal and family interviews of the candidates.

Since I lived in Northern Virginia, I also served on Congressman Frank Wolf's service academy advisory board (SAAB). You probably know -- but a lot of people may not – that a formal nomination is required in order to attend a US military academy. Congressmen control five slots at each service academy, and can nominate ten individuals for every vacancy. Mr. Wolf didn't want favoritism, and established the SAAB to make recommendations for his approval. I designed an objective quantitative rating system -- based on academics, athletics, and physical prowess, and interest – and we held panel interviews at his office. For my last four years, I was the SAAB chairman.

Q: Who's the "we" that served on the congressman's panel?

SMITH: The SAAB was composed of reserve and active officers in the different branches who volunteered their time as extra duty – without pay. I usually structured and scheduled the panels with five officers, and sat on some panels myself. The Liaison program was a great opportunity to get involved with the community. For most of my

service I was a staff support officer, but after I returned to Virginia, I was concurrently commander of the Northern Virginia ALO group for several years to cover the schools in the area and work with guidance counselors. I also serviced a couple of schools myself. On graduation nights we'd present the nominations and scholarship certificates to the students, make a little speech, and tell everybody how lucky they were. [They got paid to go to college instead of having to work their way through. They got a four-year fully-paid scholarship, a guaranteed job for six years on graduation, and an opportunity to fly at government expense.]

However, we were very careful who we recommended for the service academies, because they were essentially facing a four-year boot camp environment. Whereas -- unless they went to Virginia Military Institute (VMI) or the Citadel -- they could take ROTC as a normal college student, and just wear a uniform on Wednesdays. Virginia Tech and Texas A&M were also serious cadet corps, and wore their uniform much of the time.

Q: This is all about 1980 and in November 1980 was another American presidential election, this one was won by the Republican candidate, Reagan. With the start of that administration in 1981, any impact on AID?

SMITH: That shook up AID. When I was in Indonesia, AID's Administrator was Gilligan, and we'd get snide remarks that we were part of Gilligan's Island. But when I got to Washington and President Reagan was elected and Pete McPherson took over, they decided the private sector they decided the 'New Directions' weren't sufficient, and they established what they called the four pillars with a fresh focus on the private sector. It was probably a very good move to add, but first we had a great laugh because none of us had any private sector experience. We'd already shucked off large infrastructure projects, letting the World Bank and others go with that, while we focused on community development to improve things. But this fourth pillar created another massive shift towards contractors and contracting out; and many AID officers left to become contractors. An issue it created though was whether we were going to promote particular companies and products, or just the process. Most AID people I knew wanted to stay away from that. When I retired, I myself became a freelance consultant, and worked with/for several contractors on different AID assignments; but I didn't work to promote any particular one.

To me AID/Washington was always in turmoil; constantly changing; with new things coming up, old things going down, and people moving around. For Foreign Service officers in AID – and probably also in State -- it was a mixed blessing. AID/Washington was generally considered a hardship post by service personnel because you lost all the accoutrements of working overseas. On the other hand, this was probably the place to get a good position for your next mission assignment, and hopefully a promotion.

Q: What were the four pillars?

SMITH:

1. Encouraging a sound economic framework in host countries
2. Technology transfer -- in areas such as biomedical research, agriculture, and family planning
3. Developing institutions -- by encouraging decentralization to local government organizations; and the new fourth:
4. Increasing the use of the private sector to address development problems

Actually, we had already been using universities and specialized technical assistance companies, but this was now expanded to include commercial-oriented companies.

I was now on a two-year rotation assignment in AID/Washington, and living back in our home in Fairfax. I also started teaching a couple of project management courses in the evening at the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) graduate school. When I was more or less settled, I discussed my next career move with Dan. He told me he could probably get me extended for a year or so, but to consider my options and start planning ahead. If, at the end of my tour, I didn't accept an overseas post, I'd have to resign. I was eligible for early retirement in 1983, and told him I'd been putting off getting a Ph.D. for many years; so, could do that, then maybe teach at a University, somewhere. He encouraged me to check out my options, and perhaps even get a head start by enrolling in one of the universities in the area, as they had evening classes.

So I made the rounds to check out my options for resuming study.

Georgetown recommended I forget about economic development and focus on political - military aspects -- the two "Ds," defense and diplomacy. American University told me I could enroll in their development economics program, but since I'd been out of academia so long, I would essentially have to complete a master's program in economics before I could take 'comps,' and move on to the Ph.D. GW (George Washington University) invited me to join their political science program, and said they would work out a course of study after I enrolled. However, they were specific about one thing; to be admitted I had to sign a contract for thirty-five thousand dollars and take out a loan -- whether I stayed the course or not.

I went back to Dan, said this isn't going to work. He suggested "Why don't you try George Mason University?" I said, "When I went overseas, George Mason was a branch campus of the University of Virginia." He told me "They graduated from that several years ago. They also had a Ph.D. program authorized a couple of years ago so they've got a new program, and you might fit in." The GMU campus was just up the street from where I lived in Fairfax, so I hightailed it there, and met Hal Gortner, the dean of the Public Affairs Department. I introduced myself and explained my situation to him. He welcomed me but said, "We don't have a Ph.D. program. We have a DPA program." "What's a DPA?" He said, "A Ph.D. program is geared towards academic professorships. The DPA program is a Doctor in Public Administration. It is for practitioners. We're focusing on people to get a degree with subject matter they can actually apply – just like

you've been doing."

"What do I have to do to qualify?" Believe it or not he pulled out a 3 x 3 matrix -- an academic version of a logframe. You take courses in each block.

On the horizontal "X" axis:

'Analysis & Evaluation,' 'Leadership,' and 'Change & Innovation' and on the vertical "Y" axis:

'Individual,' 'Organizational & Inter-organizational,' and 'Societal & Environmental'.

Where they intersected was the area of concentration to write your dissertation.

Hal cautioned "This is not a 'quick and easy' program. Because we are new, our requirements are rigorous, because all the other universities are going to be reviewing and critiquing our program, before we can get regional certification and accreditation. But by the time you get through, there'll be no problem." I told Hal when I enrolled at the Maxwell School, the dean had authorized me to start working on a dissertation. He said "If the dean of the Maxwell School approved it, who are we to say you can't use it. You'll just have to have a professor who will advise you." "What about languages?" He said, "Public administration is practical. You don't have to have Latin and Greek, or French and German. You need tools -- like statistics, operations research and computer science." I said, "I already have courses in statistics; I've been working with critical path for years; I took systems analysis and some computer programming at MIT, and I recently acquired a portable computer."

He said, "Fine, when do you want to start?"

They had a one-year evening review program of the classics; 'who's who' and major aspects of public administration, followed by a comprehensive exam. Then I could fill in the matrix with selective courses, and write the dissertation. That's how I did it. I was teaching courses downtown, taking courses at night, doing Air Force Reserve and Academy stuff on the side; and in between running around the world conducting my own project management programs for AID. It was a wonderful experience. I couldn't have asked for anything better.

Q: Sounds like a heck of a lot of time and not much free time. You entered that program in '82. But back in the training division, Dan Creedon retires?

SMITH: Dan retired during my last year with AID. Dan had been a wonderful guy to work with, and a great mentor. He'd been in the Navy and Navy reserve, and was in Japan on the Missouri when they signed the peace treaty; so he was very understanding of my military comings and goings. When he retired, a former mission director -- Bill Gelabert -- came in on rotation, and took over. I'd met Bill when I was running a regional training program in Tunisia when he was mission director there. He knew his stuff, and was good, but he was tough. But his management style was also the complete antithesis of Dan's. He started with a 'fall out and fall in again' approach to break up all the existing

cliques. Bill reassigned everybody to different jobs. Except me. He left me alone because I was on the last leg of my rotation. I was accustomed to military style discipline and martinet management styles, so it didn't bother me. But he shook up all the Civil Servants who had been comfortably running the program for years, and started issuing orders for what he wanted them to do -- his way, no questions asked. Initially, they spent half their time going to the people who had been reassigned to find out what they were supposed to be doing, and helping each other find their feet. So, morale plummeted for quite a while, until people adjusted to their new boss and working environment.

Q: This is just the training division.

SMITH: Yes, within the training division itself.

Q: Was the shakeup happening in other divisions at the same time?

SMITH: Probably. But within the training division it was just the result of a power position being filled by a former mission director on a routine rotational assignment. You know, Mission Directors – like military commanders – are very powerful when they are in command. But on rotation in Washington, they often become just one of the minions walking AID's halls ‘on complement’ – same as State’s ‘Minister without portfolio’ -- and doing ad hoc stuff until they can get back out again. With Reagan coming in with the private sector thing, that established a new office of private sector and then the bureaus, many of the countries at the same time were losing their missions and they were going to regional offices, so a lot of desks disappeared again. Procurement was being reorganized, the accounting system was being changed to go on computers, this is when computers were just starting to come in. So again, organized chaos. People shuffling around, again the usual transition, coming in and moving out, losing, new guys coming in, new contractors coming in under contracts instead of under projects.

We had many contractors who were filling what used to be USAID direct hires. In fact, during a couple of our training assignments abroad, while we were running the courses we'd interact with the mission, and sometimes I'd help some of the mission people. In one place I told them how to write up a contract because they didn't know the procedures in the mission for doing it. It was that bad. IDIs were going out and instead of having mentors to show them what to do, they knew more about it because they'd had my IDI course.

Q: You're getting close to retirement. Is that an up-or-out retirement or you just decided to?

SMITH: I was still Foreign Service. If I had stayed, AID would have rotated me to another post somewhere, either as a chief of something or maybe a deputy director. But I told them I'm not going anywhere without my family. I'd neglected my family ever since I left Virginia and at each post I was always too busy to deal with my family. Frank

Sheppard was absolutely correct when he said my wife was not an ‘embassy wife’ in the traditional sense. She was a full-time mother with seven kids. And when she saw the plight of the poor everywhere we went, she rolled up her sleeves and gave it another 110% -- working with the Red Cross and/or the church outreach programs. Finally, she just couldn’t take it anymore. So he was right. He just didn’t appreciate that not everyone wanted to live the life of Reilly joining the embassy’s wives club or the boutique store or embassy trips; the cultural visits and all the rest of it.

And I was too busy to pay much attention to them, so she brought up our kids. She said it was like following the tail of a comet. She was so glad when she got back to Virginia to her own house and could reestablish herself in the neighborhood. In fact, even before all of our kids left school, she went to work in a hospital as an LPN (licensed nurse practitioner); and ultimately, went back to school and earned her degree and RN (registered nurse); then went to work until her poor health finally killed her. She was a tireless Foreign Service wife, but not of the traditional embassy crowd. In fact, she wrote a poem about what a lovely life she’d led that we sent to the dependents group but I don’t think they ever published it. I’ll send a copy if you’d like.

Q: I'd love to see it. You retired for your reasons.

SMITH: I retired for my own reasons. I say, I could have gone on. I did get promoted in a way because when Reagan came in they changed the Foreign Service titles, so in AID we were no longer Foreign Service reserves; and I was in the Senior Foreign Service.

Q: I think in 1980 there was a new Foreign Service law passed and that changed all that.

SMITH: Yes. I went from an FSR-2 to an SFSO-4 (Counselor), but wasn’t actually promoted; just laterally transferred into the new system. I got my Secretary & Counselor diplomas from President Reagan, and a new black diplomatic passport to continue traveling for my remaining time with AID.

Today is the 22nd of December and we're returning to our conversation with Ken Smith.

Q. Ken, we brought the story up to your retirement in 1983. What brought you to retirement?

SMITH: As you know I’d been in Indonesia and had to cut my tour short because my wife was ill. When I got to AID/Washington I was on a 2 - 4 year rotational tour. My Air Force ready reserve status was now back on line. I was thoroughly enjoying what I was doing in AID, but knew sooner or later I’d have to go somewhere else, but didn’t want to go overseas again without my family. I had the equivalent of ten years overseas service and was coming up to age fifty, so was eligible to take early retirement and get a pension. Plus, I had several years of Civil Service before I joined the Foreign Service, which boosted my pension a little bit. I also signed up for the doctoral program and didn’t want to interrupt it again this time. Then after completing my doctorate, I thought maybe I’d

find a university teaching job. Amalgamating these different interests, I decided to stay put and push through with the retirement option.

Q: Let's talk about your doctoral program. You had signed up before retirement and I believe you finally finished the requirements for the doctoral program from George Mason University in 1980-

SMITH: I had to continue working as a consultant after I retired from AID, because – contrary to my expectation -- I didn't graduate from GMU until 1988. After I finished GMU's academic course requirements, I had to write my dissertation. Since I left Syracuse, I'd been working on it, intermittently, and also had Bob Hubbell review a draft. [Bob was a former director of AID evaluation; headed the logframe task force, and worked with me since on IDI training and project management TDYs.] I figured after I finished my course work at George Mason, one more year would wrap it up. But when I submitted my dissertation to my GMU adviser – Louise White -- and met with her after she'd had time to review and critique it, she said, "Ken, this is a pretty good first draft." I almost fell off my chair.

She was very thorough -- a nitpicker – but also constructive. I think she wrote as much red ink on my dissertation as I did black ink. It took me 6 more years to satisfy my review committee's requirements. [One said you can't do a doctoral dissertation on a single case study; another insisted I do a comparative analysis with other projects; a third wanted to know where the 'real' data were instead of just our sample survey data. (I told him the people who published the real data got it from us.) Another comment from one of my board members was that it was too eclectic as I kept lapsing into agriculture and economics, instead of sticking to public administration – which to my mind just reflected how narrow-minded academia can be. What really shook them up though – I think -- was that many of my sources were mine, or referenced me. As an official external reviewer, Bill Siffin also provided occasional "gap-straddling" guidance and assured me to stay the course. Unofficially, Marty Landau – who was a co-trainer with Bill on one of AID's programs -- said if I'd applied to his department at Berkeley, I would have finished long ago.]

A funny incident during that period: Louise was also a consultant for AID. One summer, she went to USAID/Cairo to consult on a project. When she came back, she told me, "You know what they did to me, Ken? They told me I couldn't submit my paper until I'd done a damn logframe and followed your manual for laying it out. I protested 'But he's my student.'" "They responded: 'Well, this is the AID manual and this is what you've got to follow.'"

She said to me, "I think you didn't come back to George Mason to learn anything. You just came back to get your academic union card." I said, "I did, but I also learned a lot unexpectedly when I came back."

We both learned from that experience. But she didn't let up. It took me a long time after that to finally get my diploma, but eventually I did. I continued writing, adding,

producing drafts, rewriting, and editing intermittently during 1984, '85, '86, and '87,, while consulting around the world – from A to Y -- Australia to Yemen; until finally I exclaimed "No more. I've had it."

Louise: "Oh no. You're almost there."

I finally got my DPA diploma in 1988 -- Dissertation: Determinants of success in the design & institutionalization of management information systems for development administration: Lessons from the Philippine "Masagana 99" experience.

[Globetrotting and consulting, I also got to 'Z' – 'Zambia' -- in 1995.]

Q: One of the other trends in your life that we've been following is your Air Force reserve responsibilities. I think that runs out in 1990, doesn't it?

SMITH: Yes. As I told you earlier, I had been hoping for a one-year residency at the Air War College, but all attempts fell short. Soon after I returned to Washington, I was reassigned to NSA at Fort Meade. Then, after a couple of years, I got a different mobilization position – the military rotates as well. I was returned to Air Force Headquarters but with a mobilization position in DIA -- the Defense Intelligence Agency. During that period, I also got to attend a two-week seminar at the War College, and the faculty asked me to prepare a module on what the reserve forces do to support the active-duty service. So, while I sat in the regular class for two weeks, I also prepared -- in effect -- my term paper; and gave a presentation to the whole class. The faculty said it would be retained and reused in future sessions.

Then I went back to duty at DIA. I also rejoined the Air Force reserve unit there, and we periodically conducted seminars in the auditorium for the Washington military establishment and intel. reservists, nationwide. A funny incident occurred during one of those sessions.

An Australian army major was going to make a presentation, and brought some slides and a film clip – a sixteen-millimeter film. [We had a reverse projection screen and were sitting in a room behind the screen.] The sergeant running the transparencies didn't quite know how to handle the projector film clip; but I'd worked with them before in our Connecticut 'VFW' reserve training unit, and took over. After the major made his presentation, when he came back to pick up his stuff and saw I was running his equipment he exclaimed, "Bloody hell, I knew the Yanks were overpromoted, but I never expected to have a bird colonel running my equipment for me." I told him "In the U.S. we all roll up our sleeves and pitch in to do whatever's necessary; we don't worry about rank so much." He said, "They'll never believe this when I go back to the officers club."

Then in January 1990, I completed thirty years of commissioned service; but since I hadn't been promoted to brigadier general it was "up or out," and I was formally retired a year later, in January 1991. But, as my mentor Buck Burlando told me when I was first commissioned, "Colonel is a great grade to be stuck at." Furthermore, I'd originally

joined the Air Force only with the ambition of becoming a sergeant; so I was way beyond my American dream.

But shortly thereafter, things were blowing up in Afghanistan with the Soviets, and the Air Force sent out an appeal for reservists to volunteer for active duty. I called the Pentagon and volunteered as I hadn't wanted to retire, anyway. I'd spent thirty years preparing for this. They said, "We're only looking for captains and majors. You're overqualified. Enjoy your retirement, Sir." So reluctantly I hung up and a few days later I received my certificate signed by President George Bush that said thank you for your service, and all that good stuff.

However, I was on a consulting assignment in the Philippines later that year, and attended the turnover ceremony of Clark Air Base to the Philippine Government on 26 November as an unofficial observer.

I did continue as a volunteer academy liaison officer with Congressman Wolf's office, and worked with the ROTC for almost another twenty years. I still wore my uniform on academy and ROTC programs in Virginia and Washington D.C. so I didn't really feel retired. Then, when I left the DC area and moved to Honolulu in 2009, I finally hung up my hat.

Q: So we can close the door on that part of your life story. Speaking of stories, in talking about your continuing association with AID in the next few years I wanted to break this up in particular events you were involved in. You had been a direct-hire with AID; now you're one of those consultants.

SMITH: That's right. I wanted to keep working and had the option of becoming either a PSC personal services contractor -- where people could call me individually; or working for a 'beltway bandit.' I made the rounds of the consultant companies, but they all wanted to hire me as a full-time employee. I said I wasn't interested in being a full-time employee, but would be available for any short-time projects that came up. For a while, I also continued conducting IDI training with Bob Hubbell for AID, as a PSC.

I was running a simulation group in one of those IDI programs. I split the participants into two groups and told one group "You've just been assigned to Lothar." I got the other group to play the host country, and told them to spice it up a bit. "Put on some funny clothes and speak in an unintelligible language. Make these guys work for it." But one of the IDIs was a Nepali who had become an American citizen; and he immediately got upset. He admonished me "They're not funny clothes, it's you wearing the funny clothes. Americans wear the funny clothes when they come to my country."

It was a good reminder to me that we from AID are in other people's countries, and we are the oddballs. After that, I made that a point in all subsequent IDI programs; and constantly reminded my team members when on consulting assignments.

Q: The first story I want to get into is your involvement with Grenada.

SMITH: A few months after I retired from AID, political problems erupted in Grenada – the ‘Spice Islands’ of the West Indies. On 19 October 1983 an internal power struggle resulted in Grenada’s Prime Minister, Maurice Bishop, as well as three of his cabinet ministers and two union leaders being assassinated by hard-line Marxists. There was public concern in the US that some 1,000 US medical students there at St. George’s University were in danger of being caught up in the anti-US communist fervor and takeover. The US launched a military airlift and evacuated the medical students to Charleston, South Carolina on October 25th; then -- in response to an urgent plea from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) plus Barbados and Jamaica -- President Reagan ordered an armed US military intervention (Operation Urgent Fury) to quash the political uprising.

Opposition forces were quickly quashed; and major fighting was over in a week. [Clint Eastwood made a movie -- ‘Heartbreak Ridge’ -- that highlighted one of the communication inadequacies when a marine under fire in Grenada had to make a commercial phone call to Ft. Bragg, North Carolina to provide geographic coordinates for a supporting air strike on an enemy approaching his position.] The US military did mopping up operations and withdrew most of its combat forces by December 1983; but -- as part of Operation Island Breeze – remaining elements (including military police, special forces, and a specialized intelligence detachment) performed security missions and assisted members of the Caribbean Peacekeeping Force and the Royal Grenadian Police Force.

The US invasion was protested vigorously by the European Community, the UN and almost everybody else. Grenada had been part of the British Commonwealth before independence, and Maggie Thatcher was particularly upset with Reagan for doing this without pre-warning her. President Reagan had been concerned however – not only by the imminent danger to medical students, but – by leading indicators of significantly-increasing Soviet interest in the island. A longer-range threat of "Soviet-Cuban militarization" of the Caribbean was seen by Grenada’s new airport at Pointe Salines in the southern tip of Grenada – which was under construction -- with an excessively long runway; as well as intelligence sources reporting missile silos being constructed elsewhere on the island. At the time of the invasion, the airport was reportedly about 85% complete.

President Reagan and his White House advisors then decided the best way to counter Marxist-Cuban-Soviet incursion in the area, and also make amends with the international community at large was for USAID to complete the Grenada airport construction by 25 October 1984 (to coincide with the anniversary of the US invasion). It was conceived as a ‘Gateway to Grenada’ to foster tourism. [A related project was to establish a USAID Mission in Grenada’s capital -- St. George’s -- to undertake assorted infrastructure, economic & social activities to develop the island’s economy.] We had a Presidential deadline to meet before any feasibility study had been conducted to determine the scope of work remaining to be done. This project was the absolute antithesis of any AID project I’d ever encountered before -- unprecedented in its targeting, status, scope, scheduling, constraints, and managerial concerns.

My involvement began in January 1984 when Jim Holtaway -- USAID’s Regional

Director for the Caribbean -- contacted & contracted me as a PSC to prepare a critical path network analysis for an interagency task force review to complete construction of the airport. [Jim and I had worked together during 1971 field-testing the logframe at several African Missions, and getting its use institutionalized world-wide, within AID.] The project would be managed by Jim and his staff in nearby Barbados, in close collaboration with AID/Washington and other government agency entities in Washington D.C., and closely ‘bird-dogged’ by politicos in the White House. US firms would be contracted to finish building the airport.

I attended a briefing in Rosslyn with Jim, several other AID officers and a couple of representatives from DOD and various other agencies, and the White House. The airport had been designed by a Canadian firm, and construction managed by Cuban military engineers and para-military forces. Right off the bat I could see it was a military-grade airport. The 9,000-foot (2,700 m) runway and numerous fuel storage tanks were unnecessary in that area for commercial flights. Intelligence estimates concluded the airport was probably destined to be a Cuban-Soviet forward military airbase from which the Soviets could launch bombers and missiles to attack the US.

After the plenary meeting I followed up with each of the principals (&/or their representatives) independently to glean the needs, activities, interfacing and sequencing – and the level of detail necessary to be made explicit -- from their perspective. It then took me several days to piece together a comprehensive sequential (but non-scalar) network flow chart. [NOTE: This was all done manually with notepad and post-it notes; then laboriously transcribed and hand-drawn by pen and paper on a long roll of graph paper.] After that, I had multiple copies blueprinted and disseminated for review. At the next meeting, the assembled reps scrutinized the master chart then added, dropped and relinked the remaining activities and milestone progress check-points to everyone’s satisfaction -- for me to redraft, blueprint and recirculate.

Now a feasibility study – ground truthing -- was needed to determine the dirty details for reconstruction. Immediately, a bureaucratic problem arose. AID had been charged with this responsibility by the White House, but Grenada was not in AID’s portfolio. Although Grenada was one of the poorest countries in the Caribbean -- it was a non-democratic country, and politically precluded. Consequently, there was no AID budget. There was just no way direct-hire AID personnel could go there. However, fortunately for us – although unfortunately for the people involved -- AID had defunded its activities in Lebanon after a suicide attack on the US Embassy in Beirut, April 1983; and a subsequent attack on the Marine barracks in October. Thus, that money was readily available for reprogramming -- for contractors.

Now, in addition to being a former AID Senior Foreign Service officer, it was presumed my rank as a colonel in the Air Force reserve would facilitate access to, and cooperation with, the US military occupying forces in Grenada. So I was designated the task force representative, [It was also presumed by others that because I was an Air Force officer, I knew more about airports and air traffic control needs and equipment requirements than I actually did.] Two engineers were hired as PSCs to accompany me to Grenada to conduct a rapid feasibility study. This must have been late January or early February; it was all

rush-rush.

Q: I think it's around January '84.

SMITH: First we flew to Barbados; then chartered a light aircraft to Pearls – a smaller airport in the north of Grenada. We checked in with the military, then stayed at -- and worked out of -- a cavernous mosquito-plagued hotel. We took a couple of weeks going around and studying the situation. The engineers were concerned the runway would need a ‘do-over’ because heavy U.S. aircraft had been using it before the surface had completely cured, while the extension was still unfinished. Moreover, much of the construction equipment was unusable -- damaged in the invasion and/or subsequently vandalized – so new equipment would have to be brought in – by ship, or airlifted at considerably more expense.

But worse was the equipment itself. So many aspects were incompatible with US standards. The airport had been designed by the Canadians based on the metric system, rather than feet and inches; the British were installing 230volt electrical equipment instead of the 110 U.S. standard, while the Soviet communications equipment (installed by the East Germans under the direction of Cuban military combat engineers) was antiquated 1930’s state & style, outdated and unsuitable for modern use. It would all have to be torn out and replaced. Air traffic control and navigation aids also needed to be upgraded and installed. In addition, upgrading and constructing an access road to the airport was hitherto unforeseen, and was a new component to add to the mix. In short; there was no way an American company could just come and retrofit the remaining 15%.

Back in Washington, in addition to finding funding to implement the project, there were several other constraints for me to add to the implementation plan. The ‘legal eagles’ asserted the airport – or at least parts of it – had been built on land seized by the government from its legitimate owners without recompense. Consequently, the US was legally constrained from working on it until land titling and compensation issues were resolved. Moreover, the project’s higher level “Tourism” development objective was beyond USAID’s Congressionally-authorized portfolio scope for economic and social development. So, without Congressional approval, AID was precluded from getting involved. And even if they did, US Government “US source & origin” procurement requirements and sub-clauses also prohibited USAID from using the current foreign contractors to finish their work, or to purchase, use or replenish on-site foreign equipment, materials &/or supplies in the process.

I documented our findings from Grenada together with these issues for Task Force resolution; redrafted the network -- with time estimates for each activity – showing a ‘tentative’ multi-year critical path; then blueprinted and distributed it for review at our next meeting. The critical path analysis probably generated the most intractable consternation. The estimated schedule far exceeded President Reagan’s mandated deadline – primarily due to the long lead times required for the procurement process to solicit bids from contractors, and to purchase and ship equipment and supplies to the island. So ways and means were needed to expedite these processes.

Congress and lobbyists also got into the act. At this point, Senator Jesse Helms from North Carolina -- who had taken over from Louisiana's Representative Otto Passman as AID's number one critic -- suddenly had a change of heart and thought this would be a great project. He asserted he could send a general contractor from North Carolina to manage the whole thing. Whatever. The ball was then tossed to Hugh Dwelley -- AID/W's Director of Procurements and Contracting. Hugh was a constructive 'can do' guy -- instead of the typical 'can't do' contracting officer types. I'd worked with him and a couple of his staff for the past three years as his technical representative on several of my training contracts. And I wished him the best of luck.

But my role in Grenada's airport construction completion project was now over. I wasn't party to those high-level machinations and decisions; so I don't know how they were resolved, and who -- or what -- eventually won out. I learned later the airport was 'technically' completed on October 28th 1984 -- only three days after the original deadline -- with a commercial passenger airline flying in VIPS for a brief ribbon-cutting ceremony. Nevertheless -- given all the aforementioned constraints -- that was still a minor miracle worthy of the US Marine Corps: "The Impossible we do Immediately. Miracles take a little longer." [But I learned it was several more years before the airport was fully operational, and even then it was difficult to establish regular schedules to other destinations with commercial carriers.]

Nevertheless, soon after I'd turned in my Airport report, USAID's Regional Caribbean Office asked me to return to Grenada for another couple of months under another Personal Services Contract. This time I was a supporting team member -- with several other individuals from various engineering companies -- who had been hired to do feasibility studies for a Comprehensive Infrastructure Development Project (CIDP). The project components included roads & bridges, power utilities, water, open pit sanitary waste disposal, telecommunications, factory shell construction, hospital and school rehabilitation and tourist site facilities. My role was to work with each individual preparing a log-frame and critical path implementation chart for each component -- based on their technical inputs.

While we were there, AID did finally send an economist, as one of AID requirements was that the cost-benefit analysis had to be computed for infrastructure projects. He was tearing his hair out, how to show a positive result on the airport? I suggested he factor in revenues from tourists for the next twenty or thirty years and juggle the discount rate.

Concurrently, a USAID Mission was being established along the harbor in St. George's; but although our work would eventually course through the resident representative, and he was aware of what we were doing, he was too busy at the time to get deeply involved in our day-to-day activities.

Q: Let me note here some of the pressures you were under with the Grenada thing. The invasion was October 25, 1983. By February 2, the State Department opened an embassy in St. George's; there hadn't been an embassy there. On February 7, Secretary Shultz visited Grenada while you're trying to see if this airport can be established. Which leads me to the question, did you have much interaction with the people that were in the

American embassy there?

SMITH: I had no interaction at all. The only guy I met was the to-be mission director of Grenada, but I met him in Barbados. He was busy trying to set up his mission. He was still looking for where he would even be operating out of so he told us to go ahead and not get him involved.

Q: This is James Hebron?

SMITH: I don't remember his name.

Q: You were wrapping up this story by saying on October 28, a commercial airplane –

SMITH: Yes, the airport was three days behind schedule in opening. Hugh must have worked extraordinarily hard to find ways and means to ‘waive’ &/or ‘work-around’ all the red tape, enabling contractors & suppliers to apply First Lady Nancy Reagan’s edict to “Just Do It.” The reality was air traffic control was only managed from a military communications van for the VIP flight; and it was many more months before the control tower and passenger-support amenities were actually completed, staffed & functioning as intended; and the access road from-to St. George’s widened and paved. I don’t know whether they got a general contractor or if they negotiated separately with different companies. But after I turned in my assessments of what was needed for the airport and for tourism infrastructure, I was out of the picture.

I was working on the CIDP components at that point.

Q: So you weren’t there when this inaugural flight came in?

SMITH: No, I just heard about it.

Q: The next interesting story that comes out of your contracting relates to Papua New Guinea. in October 1985 you initiated a consultancy with the Papua New Guinea authorities. Where did that come up and how did it unfold?

SMITH: The Papua New Guinea thing was a joint World Bank/UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) operation. Dan Creedon -- who had been my boss in AID as the director of training -- knew somebody, who knew somebody in the World Bank – the consulting world is an old boys’ network. Dan had a contract to go to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, to improve the government’s personnel management system. They also wanted somebody who could do project management. One of the things that amazed me about the World Bank and ADB and other regional development organizations was how much money they had for projects. For instance, when I was in the Philippines, AID

had a mission budget of about a hundred million; which was pretty large. But World Bank projects were a hundred million or more for individual projects -- not for whole country operations. I don't know how much the PNG (Papua New Guinea) one was, as I didn't get involved in the money side.

Dan recommended me, and I went along with him on the first assignment. We worked with the Ministry of Finance. (MOF). I was then assigned to conduct training to improve project management both at the center, and in the provinces. I started with a core group within the Finance Ministry in Port Moresby. That was a problem in itself because they had a cultural practice they call 'wokabaut.' Any time anybody felt they didn't want to work, they just didn't show up. They'd disappear for a few days and come in again. [This was what Dan Creedon was wrestling with. How do you set up a personnel management system when people aren't there half the time?] I did have a good counterpart, though; Theo Varpian. Theo stuck with me the entire time I was there. Which was essential, since everywhere I went, I needed a translator as well as a cultural interpreter.

At first, Dan and I stayed in a Travelodge at the hilltop, with a lovely vista overlooking the town and Fairfax harbor. On checking into the hotel, I had my first encounter with pidgin English [Tok Pisin] when the desk clerk asked how I was going to pay my bill. When I presented my American Express Card, he exclaimed appreciatively 'Qwik Qwik Amerika Plastik Plant Mani' -- with evident satisfaction that the bill would be paid promptly.

After a month at the MOF in Port Moresby, we went to the rural area to conduct more project management training with/for local government officials. That was a very different situation; a combination of native -- almost primitive -- and modern stuff. For instance, on the flight to Lae, in Morobe province, a businessman boarded wearing a grass skirt and top hat, with a pen through his ear, and carrying a briefcase. You can't make this stuff up.

We spent a month in Lae, where we conducted 'echo training' both central and local agriculture personnel. My new MOF proteges took the lead, and I backed them up. We had two weeks in the classroom, then followed it up with 'hands on' applications on local projects. From my perspective this was one of the best training approaches I'd had to date, and it was a great success. [Lae was also interesting to me because that's where Amelia Earhart took off on her round the world trip and where she was last seen.]

They then decided we would go to Mount Hagen in the Western Highlands. Lae is on the East coast and Mount Hagen is very difficult to access, but a highway had been built several years earlier to truck goods from the port to the mountain areas; and coffee, other produce and minerals from the mountains back down to the port. [AID's infrastructure mantra is 'Development follows the road.'] My counterparts told me the road was a highly successful international donor development project. But while we were travelling, we weren't seeing many trucks coming down. Then, we encountered a road block. There was a village on the road; huts, pig styes, everything. Apparently, after the pavement had been laid, people thought it was a better platform than living in the mud; and relocated

their village onto it. So now there was a permanent -- but as yet unconstructed -- bypass to get around the village. Another example of the unexpected consequences of good intentions. Even when you think your project implementation was successful, you need a follow-up assessment to see if it's serving its intended purpose.

Just past Goroka -- another place along the way -- a bikpelaman (village chief) wanted us to stop and have coffee with him. He took us to his hut in the jungle, with a little pathway to it -- lined with skulls. These guys were headhunters; or they used to be. He looked at me and laughed "Long pig no more." [They used to call white men 'long pig.'] He also had little shrunken heads on a string hanging in his window space -- like a wind charm. [PNG did not shrink heads, so these weren't local. They were South American. Somehow somebody had either sent or gifted them to him.] Anyway, it added to the bizarre atmosphere and we all got a good laugh out of it.

I shuttled to and fro on various short-term assignments in PNG over a period of about three years. During one memorable event, a crisis erupted when Iambakey Okuk -- the popular Minister of Primary Industry (Agriculture) -- died while being treated for cancer at a hospital in Sydney, Australia. The distorted word on the street was that 'waitman sorcery' had killed him, and the local population went on a rampage. He had his own plantation in the province, and the villagers cut down all his trees. They were also rioting and looting in Port Moresby; and looking for white men to kill. It was time for me to go 'wokabaut' as quickly as possible. Theo managed to hide me low down in the vehicle, got my stuff out of the hotel and spirited me to the airport. The airport was barricaded and people were rushing around, rampaging there as well. It was eerily similar to "The Year of Living Dangerously" movie about the overthrow of Sukarno in Indonesia. Theo managed to smuggle me inside the airport past the guards. Fortunately, the PNG police and military were protecting the airport from the rioters. Along with several hundred other expats, I hunkered down in the airport for a couple of days, until eventually some small planes came from nearby Cairns in northern Australia came over and rescued us. That was quite a hair-raising experience, but at least I didn't lose my head.

Q: That was November '86.

SMITH: I remember my last assignment. I was going from San Francisco to PNG, but had to go through Sydney and get a connecting flight. The flight was delayed for some reason leaving San Francisco, and a British passenger -- one of these "do you know who I am" types -- was raising all kinds of hell about being late because of the "bloody Yanks" inefficiency. Since we were late when we got to Sydney, we missed our connecting flights out of the country to PNG, NZ, Timur and elsewhere. The Australians were very sticky: if you did not have a visa for Australia on arrival, they wouldn't let you in immediately; but would give you one at the airport after an interview. It was very pro forma, they asked a few questions, and stamped our passports.

But as much as he disliked Americans, Mr. 'Do You Know Who I Am,' must have disliked Australians more, because we were sitting there waiting while he's being interviewed and overheard the exchange: When the immigration officer asked "Have you had any criminal past?" He responded, "Oh, sorry, I didn't realize it was still a

requirement.” The immigration officer said “Right Mate. Go sit over there”.

The rest of us got in, relatively quick & easy. We waited awhile then they got us a bus to take us downtown, and put us up in the Marriott, across from the harbour and the Opera House. This was about eight o’clock in the morning. Well, at three in the afternoon we’re sitting in the Marriott lounge having snacks and drinks, when he showed up. They’d kept him waiting at the airport until the last passenger of the day got through before they gave him a visa.

The Australians and the British don’t generally get along well together. I do pretty well. When I was in the Philippines a few years ago, Bill Tweddell -- the Australian ambassador -- went to our church, and he told me when an Australian calls you a “pommie bastard”, they really like you. (Laughter)

Q: There’s one more adventure in Papua New Guinea, in the ‘87 period you went to Rabaul, a workshop which the governor attended.

SMITH: This is where we were doing project management training in Rabaul, East New Britain, for the provincial government; as opposed to the ministry of agriculture from the central headquarters. Theo was with me -- as usual -- as my companion, bodyguard, translator, and cultural adviser. The governor was very interested in what we were doing, and at the end of the course, wanted us to take a field trip and see if we could identify some projects within the province that ADB or the UNDP would support. As we were flying into an area called Pomio-Bainings, Theo asked me if I’d heard of the cargo cult. I replied “Yeah, that was during World War II, where the natives had never seen white men before and thought the Americans were gods, bringing in all their equipment and goods. Theo said, “They haven’t seen any white men since. So be prepared. Just stand there and wave.” Sure enough, that’s what had happened, and I did. Except he’d overstated a bit. A couple of Belgian missionaries and several nuns had been there for about fifteen years. When the GIs left, they left all their equipment and stuff behind. The natives had since constructed airplanes and sentry boxes out of bamboo, to worship them; hoping for a second coming when the Americans would return with more cargo.

We stayed at the missionary camp for a couple of weeks, and would trek out from there. Going across the river near the camp, in a dugout canoe, the boatman was wearing a pink Michael Jackson loincloth. Utterly bizarre. We got to walk to one village which was just a circle of huts, and in the middle was a Japanese Toyota, a field vehicle. How the heck did it get there? We learned this was Japanese AID. There were no roads there; it was jungle. They brought it in by helicopter and dropped it off. More cargo for the cult. Kids playing on it -- just like kids in a playground in the U.S. The chief then squatted down with us, and my counterparts asked what we could do to help them out. Here instead of telling them what we were going to do, we wanted to know how could we help with what we had.

I now had a laptop computer which I carried on these trips. Periodically I would put it on a tree stump and sit down and write in it. The chief wasn’t interested in my laptop. [Theo

advised me he was afraid of the machine with pictures, and had warned me at the outset of my consultancy not to use my camera as natives thought it stole their spirit. So I only have these images in my mind's eye.] I also had a plastic pocket protector with lots of different colored pens -- these were still everyday working tools during that era. The chief coveted that, so I gave it to him. In exchange he gave me a bead necklace with feathers, teeth and some indescribable stuff. He said, "This is a bride price." Theo translated. The chief didn't speak any English. "What's a bride price?" Apparently, you could give it to the parents of the girl you wanted. So, thank you very much; souvenir. But then he waved in half a dozen beauties who'd been hiding in the huts, peeping at us, and giggling. All they wore were skimpy grass skirts. The chief wanted me to pick one as my instant bride. The other guys on Theo's team from the province urged me "go ahead, go ahead." and said it would be insulting to refuse. But there was no way I could. Finally, Theo managed to persuade the chief that I couldn't do that, but I would keep it as a memory of my visit with him.

We learned the village had once had a Japanese Peace Corps group, JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) there who had started a chicken project. They had brought chicks and raised them for a couple of months. The idea was they would then perpetuate a cycle of chickens and eggs to feed the village. But what happened was -- when the chickens got to maturity -- instead of selecting them, the villagers slaughtered all the chickens, and also killed the project. The villagers had a big feast then laid around for a couple of days before they had to go hunting again. That evening we had the traditional bonfire reception with feasting, dancing and drinking; and getting splitting headaches the next morning.

The missionaries did have a health project, and small lay-in clinic run by several of the nuns. They didn't charge anything. They treated everybody for whatever, and got paid with food from the villagers; so that's how they coexisted. Periodically the missionaries would also go to Port Moresby to replenish supplies for their needs.

Q: This raises an interesting question of, when you're trying to do development projects, your success depends on the acceptability of the recipients. You have discussed earlier where you're working at the highest level of some government and they don't understand the whole program. Cross-cultural relations is an important part of the AID development process.

SMITH: It used to be. I don't know how it is now. That's what I was concerned about all the way from Vietnam, then going to the Philippines, Korea and Indonesia. We were getting further and further away from cultural understanding. We had been doing what we thought were good projects for them, instead of finding out what they really wanted, and finding how we could meet their needs. Even with the Indonesian toilet project, the ministry in Jakarta thought it was a great idea; but at the local level nobody ensured they understood how the toilets were to be used, and that it would be better for them. That step just hadn't been done. You need people actively working, communicating and following up at that level to make that connection. This is what Peace Corps volunteers were very

good at doing, and this is what I was looking for every time I went on a project. I wanted to make sure the target beneficiaries were actually understanding and receiving the benefits from our projects.

On one lengthy consultancy in Colombo, Sri Lanka, during 1991, I had regular working hours, and enjoyed weekend breaks in and around the city. I took the opportunity to connect with a local fishing club located at the nearby port. There I made the acquaintance of several individuals and during weekends accompanied them in their boat on day fishing trips. Harris -- the boat owner -- was facing imminent retirement from the Sri Lankan Civil Service and was wondering and worrying what he could do to supplement the reduced income from his pension. I suggested he capitalize on his boat, fishing equipment and experience to charter sea fishing trips for tourists. He demurred that his boat was only an uncomfortable old ‘wooden crate’ slow inboard ‘stinkpot’ diesel, jury-rigged with an old barbershop chair -- rather than a modern high-speed sport fishing boat with flybridge, high horsepower twin mercury outboards, outriggers, padded seats and a fish-fighting chair. But I assured him there were lots of tourists who – just like me -- would enjoy a break from their slick organized city & country bus tours, and would willingly pay to take a half-day ‘change of pace’ laid-back fishing ‘adventure’ in a real traditional local open deck boat on the nearby ocean – with, or without, their spouses and kids -- just for the experience.

I eventually persuaded him; and he had some colorful flyers printed to advertise his boat fishing trip -- with his buddies and me proudly holding up some of our specimen catches -- and proffering small competitive prizes for the ‘first caught,’ ‘largest fish’ and ‘most fish caught.’ Then we prominently displayed the flyers at the Taj and Galle Face hotels, as well as placing them with several tourist travel offices around town. Before I left (and soon after he retired) he had developed a steady demand for half-day fishing trips on his boat -- to the extent he had hired a supplementary crew to manage, and run, the trips. Although the enterprise was now lucrative, and he enjoyed fishing as a pastime, he quickly realized it was too much like work, and didn’t want to have to do the same thing every day.

I also felt a great sense of achievement in that -- in addition to my work with the Sri Lankan government and USAID -- I had been instrumental in creating an unofficial ‘micro-enterprise,’ and remained long enough to witness its implementation and on-going successful -- and hopefully sustainable – operation.

Oh, one more story, since you’re familiar with the Chinese. I was giving a lecture in Beijing on the critical path. Of course, I had a translator -- a professor of English -- but he didn’t know anything about project management. While I was talking to the audience, he was doing almost simultaneous translation. I’d say something, then he’d translate; and I’d try to see if they were ‘getting it’ by their reactions. But as I launched into “critical path” I got a lot of puzzled looks. Fortunately, I had an American-Chinese ADB officer with me, who spoke Chinese; so I asked him what was happening. He said, “He’s translating ‘critical path’ as ‘difficult road.’ [Laughter.]

Q: Lack of local language capability can do that to you.

SMITH: My priest says language is the key that unites us to others. Everyone has a special affinity to those who speak their language.

Q: Let me go to another cultural area. You had some exposure to the Middle East. In June of '85 you were involved with Yemen, with USAID. And in March of '93 you were a consultant to Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza. Could you talk about those two instances, especially in terms of the cultural environment in which you were working?

SMITH: Let me start with Jerusalem. This was under a USAID contract to a private voluntary agency (PVO) called ANERA -- American Near East Refugee Assistance.

As part of a peace settlement, the US Government was giving the Israelis a billion dollars a year to do whatever they wanted. But for Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, USAID only funded numerous small projects through volunteer agencies, and required detailed monitoring and progress reports. ANERA was headquartered just across the Green Line in the same building as the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). That's where I had an opportunity to meet Hanna Misrawi, and brief her on what USAID was doing -- helping to develop humanitarian type projects -- people to people -- not politically in-fighting. We had a very interesting discussion. Hopefully it opened her eyes somewhat, and she saw us in a new light, despite the disparity in magnitude and monitoring requirements.

Even though my counterparts were mostly Arabs -- with one or two expats -- some of the people I was working with were Christians; but no-one showed any animosity towards me. Each project was limited to fifty thousand dollars, and had to have a logframe, with a critical path schedule and monthly progress reporting. I conducted a training program on logframe and critical path and USAID's needs for documentation in Jerusalem for local staff of ANERA and several other PVOs. Then I traveled to each project (or potential project) site -- from Nazareth to Gaza to help apply them. They already had some projects on-going; it was just a question of documenting them in detail so after planning they could get funding approval; then subsequently -- when completed -- be reimbursed for whatever.

There were many different kinds of projects. Here it was truly development -- what projects did they want, locally -- not what USAID thought they should have; or was directing. Everything -- from dairies, to clinics, to office work, to construction -- you name it, they had a proposal for it. One that really struck my funny-bone was in Jericho. It was a YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) secretarial training project for women; non-sectarian, managed by a Muslim woman teaching girls typing and shorthand (just like the course I took on my first office job in England).

Whenever we went to Gaza, I had to wear a headdress. We drove our car to the border, then had to walk across an open space under the watchful eyes of armed guards, and were picked up on the other side. Then counterparts there took us around showing what we might do. Again, I made it clear, I wasn't involved in politics; but strictly focusing on

what types of projects we might be able to undertake. It was a lot of fun sitting down with people and using a logframe to describe and develop a business plan; then creating a critical path to identify the details when they were going to implement it.

The Yemen experience was with Pragma -- a different consulting company, that I subsequently spent a lot of time working with. I was the team-leader on this trip to evaluate an on-going project and recommend possible improvements. One member was a retired USDA Manager; the other a Public Admin professor on summer break. Oregon State University (OSU) from Corvallis was the implementer and had been there several years; helping the Ministry of Agriculture develop their agriculture in diverse ways.

When we arrived, the Minister wasn't available so the AID mission director -- Tom Rose (whom I'd worked with in the Philippines on their rural development program) -- took us to meet Yemen's President Saleh. To our surprise, instead of a formal introduction, the President sat down and gave us a lengthy discourse on how he wanted to restore Yemen to its former glory in the days of Solomon. At those biblical days there had been a huge Marib Dam which irrigated everything; but had fallen into disrepair. He wanted it rebuilt. However, all the foreign advisers to date had rejected the concept as futile. They'd argued it would be a massive infrastructural undertaking, and also uneconomical; because Yemen could import wheat from Canada, Australia or the U.S., much more cheaply; so the economics of external funding were out of the question. Nevertheless, the President still wanted the dam built for national self-sufficiency reasons. [I'm sure Tom had heard this before; but it was beyond our team's scope of work.]

When we met later with the Minister of Agriculture returned, he lauded the work Oregon State was doing: -- a great job; he had no problems, and wanted them to continue. He just wanted us to explore whatever else could be added under their contract. He invited us to travel around and see the country, consult with anyone, prepare our report and brief him before leaving. [NOTE: I sensed his concern as an increasing trend within AID was not renewing long-term contracts -- regardless of how well the contractor was doing -- but to award follow-on work to another institution; in the name of 'equity.' This happened to Syracuse University in the central training office before I retired.] While we were talking to the Minister, with bodyguards standing around, people were coming in and out of his expansive office, sitting around drinking coffee and tea and chatting with him and each other. Everybody -- but us -- carried an AK-47 and/or a great big knife in their belt. He also had a half-dozen phones on his desk, which kept ringing until one of his aides answered it; and would occasionally hand him the phone. He continued chatting with us while all this was going on, and people were interrupting.

After a while, the Minister smiled at us and said, "You think this is chaos. I'll show you chaos." And he ordered the guard to shut the door. A couple of minutes, then bang-bang-bang and yelling. Eventually a whole crowd broke open the door with weapons drawn -- wondering what we were doing to him. He said, "I cannot just visit people like you do; I have to put up with this." He was a calm multitasker; just sitting in his chair, administering his office; and delegating tasks to individuals. This was one of the big issues with AID's public administration advisers. They had been pushing for him to

organize – with an organization chart, delegation of functions, personnel staffing structure -- with bureau chiefs, and Indians -- as well as bureaucratic management protocols. However, he told us nobody wanted to talk to underlings until they had seen him first and related their situation. Then he could refer them to somebody else to deal with the issue. “I’m the traffic cop here, I have to do this” he told us.

He had a master’s degree in public administration from the U.S. -- from a former USAID participant training program -- but said classic Western ideas of bureaucracy and management were not practical in the Arab environment except Deming’s ‘open door’ policy. “You have all your theories of public administration and management; but they just don’t fit our culture.” I said, “I’ll remember that and pass it on when I get back.” However, it was a more immediate concern for Jack -- my team member – that was his area to evaluate.

When we wrote up our report, I had my rough draft but they wanted a finished one in both English and Arabic. [I didn’t get to see Jack’s final assessment and recommendations, because he had to return to the campus prematurely, and promised to write up his report and send it to Pragma after he got back.] I took our draft to the typing pool -- all women, completely covered from head to foot -- and the manager (a man) called one of the ladies and handed it to her. He told me to come back in a couple of days. But when I returned a different manager was on duty. He asked me who I gave it to. I didn’t know -- they all looked alike. We walked around and only their hands were visible, but I recognized the ring on the hand of one of the typists, and I said “I think that’s the lady.” She was the one.

Yemen gave me yet another couple of lessons in cultural differences, and I was very pleased to hear that Oregon State was doing a great job there. I just hope they got to keep their contract, and carry on, instead of being peremptorily bumped for being on the job too long.

Q: This is an example of contracting; you were there as a private contractor and Oregon State was there, how?

SMITH: We were both contractors. They were a long-term institutional contractor to help the Ministry. We were just three independent short-term PSCs subcontracted for a couple of months under another organization’s IQC – indefinite quantity -- contract. They were technical assistance, while we were there to evaluate for USAID what they were doing.

Q: AID is a long way away from direct-hires working on all these programs.

SMITH: USAID had a mission director and several other direct-hire Foreign Service staff and a couple of FSNs. The AID mission was not in the embassy; it was in a separate building on the other side of town. Essentially what they were doing at that time was getting contractors to do the technical assistance field work. The mission personnel –

even the technical ones -- were identifying the needs and running the contracting process; or passing it back to Washington to do the contracting for them.

Q: You had been stationed in the Philippines during one of your tours but now in retirement you repeatedly come back to the Philippines for individual projects. Could you talk about some of those? This is the '88, '89 period.

SMITH: There were a series of health and agriculture projects. The AID Mission wanted me, since I'd worked with the ministry of agriculture before. I even went back in late '87 while I was finalizing my dissertation because one of my marching orders from Louise was to do a post-project follow-up. I held a workshop and interviewed some of the people I'd worked with who were now at ministerial level and/or in more important positions.

Funny situation there with one of them. We were reminiscing about the 'good old days' and they disclosed "One of the things we never told you. You taught us how to do correlations, but we didn't find any correlations between inputs and outputs in a couple of areas -- like cash or fertilizer, and increased productivity. We didn't want to tell you there were no correlations because you had said the correlations showed the relationship." I said "That was a most important finding. If there was no correlation, it meant the policy wasn't working; that the project was doing something unnecessary. Just because there's no correlation doesn't mean it's faulty; that's an equally good finding."

Another different cultural example – they hadn't wanted to hurt my feelings at the time and tell me correlation wasn't working. So, hopefully I taught them another lesson a little later; and it was also something I was able to add into my dissertation as another finding.

I got involved with several different projects in the Philippines over the next 20 years. Since I no longer had Reine Villarosa or Jesse Divinagracia, while working on long-term assignments I hired Art Parducho -- an accountant -- so in addition to being my traveling companion to facilitate communication, he was able to view the projects and give me feedback from the financial and economic perspective. When working on Palawan for 6 months, Malu Martinez was assigned by the province as my official counterpart. Also, on long-term consulting assignments in other countries, I similarly had Girgma in Ethiopia, Tanom and Karanee in Thailand, Fahed in Jordan, and Ellawalla in Sri Lanka from the Ministry or the project to facilitate my way.

Agricultural education was another area USAID wanted to improve throughout the Philippines. I was a team leader to visit universities around the Philippines; find out what they were teaching; what they would like to teach, and what resources they would need to do it. Then we prepared a report for the mission, so USAID could decide what, and how much, they could support. One of the things that startled me was we discovered several institutions were teaching computer theory and programming -- although they didn't have any computers. Now I had learned the rudiments of computer programming at MIT; but how in the heck could anyone possibly write – and test --programs without a computer? Well, Filipinos are very smart, I think today they're probably some of the world's best. Here, apparently it wasn't technical assistance needed, but equipment. However, in some

places we couldn't do that immediately because they didn't even have electricity in the area. So, more supporting infrastructure requirements. Again, more grist for our report.

I went back and forth to the Philippines several times during this period. One big job with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) – for an entire year – was as team leader studying the organization and effectiveness of the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

Another big job with ADB was for a German company (Forst Consult) that had a consultancy with the department of environment and natural resources (DENR) to study community reforestation. Bob Ellis – an American – was the team leader. The issue was there was a lot of slash-and-burn ‘kaingin’ farming – itinerants who would cut down trees, grow their crop, deplete the soil, then move on and repeat the process elsewhere. The theory underlying the community forestry project was for DENR to get the itinerants settled, pay them to replant and be responsible for looking after and trees -- with a separate plot for growing food. Then they would have a stake in the area; and stop the wanton destruction of trees and environmental desecration. That was the theory – but reality was something else. It was an uphill battle. Illegal foresters had more power. Follow the money.

Later, Forst hired me to work with them – and Bob -- again on a World Bank forestry project in Uganda. It was different there. In Uganda, the British had set up a fantastic tree plantation system in the 1930s but since Idi Amin had come in and taken over, the whole thing had gone back to jungle. They were trying to rehabilitate it. My job was to help the technical people prepare a plan -- what it takes to institutionalize the forestry department, and ancillary activities for clearing, replanting, as well as marketing the product -- and monitor it with a critical path plan and schedule. The same basic tools -- like a plumber going around and fixing things. Same tools, different project.

One of the funny things about Uganda. We all stayed at the project manager's bungalow. But we would occasionally eat downtown Kampala at the big hotel; -- not sure whether it was a Hyatt or a Sheraton; but one of the big American chains. At first, it was a little scary because there were vultures sitting in the trees and bushes all around the garden of the hotel and the outdoor restaurant. Apparently, in the bad old days, the hotel was used by Idi Amin as one of his torture centers, and they used to throw the bodies out for the vultures. This was several years beyond that era, but the vultures were still hanging around, waiting. I'm used to pigeons -- and even monkeys in the tropics -- grabbing scraps off my plate, and was very wary the vultures might try the same thing.

Q: Going back to the various projects you had in the Philippines as a contractor. Sounds to me like there are some individual projects, somebody brings you in, you logframe it for them, design it, but is there any overall connection in all these things? Or is the Philippine government, the agriculture people are doing their thing, the forestry people, the fishery people doing their thing?

SMITH: The Government had its own priorities. USAID was there to support them where it met our criteria. The overall connection was USAID's CDSS – the Country

Development Strategy Statement. This was done at what we called the program officer level. They met with the executives of the Philippine government and then negotiated what they saw was the long-range -- probably a five-year plan -- of what the government wanted to do and then AID would see how they could help the government at the highest level. AID would then contract for either individuals or companies to come in and conduct studies, and/or help implement those projects or activities' as well as conduct follow-up evaluations. That's basically the way it was. It was usually focused department by department.

USAID was getting concerned about so much activity centralized in Luzon. There are three major areas in the Philippines: Luzon in the north, the Visayas in the middle, and Mindanao a big mostly Muslim region in the south. One of the things AID wanted to do was decentralize its assistance to the provinces, or even large municipalities. Even though the government had regional offices they didn't have much power, and almost everything seemed to go to the ministries at the national level, then trickle down to the provinces via national agencies, through the regions. So, AID was trying to find ways and means to focus directly at the local government area. The public administration 'Governance' interests were pushing for decentralization so we could fund directly at the provincial, governor's level.

USAID did have a PSC consultancy to address this – I was nominally the team leader for a decentralization study. This involved the distribution and utilization of budgets, and approaches for dealing with different ethnic and regional and political groups. I say nominally because my two team members -- both Filipinos -- were Cesar Virata & Ben Diokno -- a former prime minister, and a former national budget director. So, rather than managing them, I tagged along; let them do their thing, and learned a lot from observation, informal discussion and interaction. They then gave me their reports, to which I added my own two cents as an outsider; but I really had no substantive disagreement or input. I packaged the report to turn into the AID mission. That was the highest-level team I ever had, and I was the lowest man on the totem pole.

Q: Let's jump ahead then to 1995. Brian Atwood becomes AID administrator and you say '95 was a tipping point in the AID world.

SMITH: At this point I think AID was still reorganizing, coming up with new ideas and different approaches. We'd gone through the privatization pillar in a big way with a separate bureau, but more and more AID was spending its time on procurement. And the government procurement cycle was very long, involved and tortuous. This was slowing things up to get anything going, even once you'd identified what you wanted to do. The boiling point came in 1995, when Senator Jesse Helms put in a bill to abolish AID. He said in effect "I've had it with you people." He picked up from where Otto Passman from Louisiana left off; harping on the same theme: "You've got a lot of expensive failures, you don't know what you're doing, you're taking money from poor people in rich countries and giving it to rich people in poor countries; there's a lot of corruption, all you're doing is supporting despots." The real problem IMO was – and still is -- AID undertaking work beyond its effective span of control -- lack of oversight capability to

follow through both the money and the technical results to the actual and/or intended end users. A classic violation of public administration principles.

Brian Atwood was the AID administrator and -- as an astute and adept manager – for the sake of survival, he acquiesced. He responded, essentially saying “We recognize the problems you are raising, and we are going to completely rework AID management.” In short order, a reengineering initiative came up with a new “New Directions” slogan. Shortly thereafter, an Office of Private & Voluntary Cooperation (PVC) was created in a Bureau of Humanitarian Response (BHR). Their prime impetus was to expand outsourcing by giving competitive grants to U.S. PVOs to help host country non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups undertake miscellaneous local initiatives.

With the support of President Clinton and frequent photo ops with Hillary visiting AID activities, and lots of blah . . . blah . . . Brian Atwood managed to stave off critics; making representations to Congress that AID was reforming and things were going to be great from now on. A number of country missions were closed, merged or managed in regional missions, and a new high-level Strategic Objective with a positive-sounding ‘Results framework’ was launched with great fanfare. A ‘New Management System’ (NMS) was also promised that would computerize, analyze, and keep tabs on everything. Whatever. The strategy worked. He saved AID.

It might have been good PR (public relations) to palliate Jesse Helms; but to me, the description I read of the so-called Results framework was 58 pages of bureaucratic BS. It was page after page of high-sounding objectives, with Five generic areas identified for AID to attain ‘Intermediate Results’ (IRs) – but without precise indicators or any quantitative targets. The objectives were simply to: “improve” “increase” “strengthen” do “more” or “better” – and there was no real ‘framework’ – just a lengthy narrative. Flim-Flam. I don’t know what else they did at the upper management levels of AID – at that time I was on the outside looking in, and never got directly involved with the NMS -- but at the project working level where I occasionally interacted, the logframe had mostly been discarded as an antiquated instrument of bureaucratic red-tape. Nevertheless, the old direct-hire hands still had to deal with the projects at the lower level and the logframe survived at the project level *sub rosa* with people that knew about it. But the rest of AID abandoned it.

Since AID direct-hire personnel were not so involved in projects ‘hands-on’ anymore, the agency slid from systematic objective project design, and reverted to multiple activities by technical contractors, PVOs and NGOs, and random progress reporting with unstructured anecdotes always accentuating the positive. [Frank would have loved it.]

A humorous ‘New Direction’ I gleaned from the ADST – Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training -- archives was a comment by George Laudato; a program officer I’d worked with a little, way back when I first went to the Philippines in the 70’s. When assigned to Egypt in 1998, George said “We don’t do feasibility studies. If it’s in the plan, we do it. If it’s not in the plan, we don’t do it.”

Most contractors had only been aware of logframes through osmosis when they'd inherited projects, because contracts didn't come with a logframe, they just came in with the scope of work and terms of reference in their contract. Fortunately, on the civilian side, critical path was now a recognized best practice tool, and routinely used; so a lot of firms and individuals were familiar with it; even if they didn't learn it from AID. The logframe or something similar to it was also being used by some of AIDs contractors. Management Systems International, (MSI), was one of the big users; but primarily for evaluation purposes, and I got involved on several evaluations using the logframe.

But "New Directions" in 1995 wasn't the last of it. With each new administration, AID / Washington continues the transformation process with beautiful buzz words and ever-optimistic prose. In 2007, State and AID concocted 'Transformational Diplomacy;' with seven Strategic Goals to coordinate development with diplomacy; and for the past three years AID has been making noises again about new "New Directions." Only last week, I saw this news item:

The first phase of the Transformation of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is now complete: The new Bureau for Development, Democracy and Innovation (DDI) is operational. As of November 16, 2020, DDI joins the new Bureaus for Asia, Resilience and Food Security (RFS), Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), and Conflict Prevention and Stabilization (CPS), which became operational earlier this year. The new field-focused structure will allow the Agency to make more effective and efficient investments to help communities in partner countries on their Journeys to Self-Reliance. DDI is USAID's central resource for technical assistance to overseas Missions. DDI includes several critical components of the Agency's efforts to further the Journey to Self-Reliance, and is the home for technical leadership on 13 of USAID's 17 Self-Reliance Metrics. DDI's global perspective will enable the Agency to anticipate and respond to evolving trends and critical issues by adapting programs in innovative ways. DDI houses USAID's technical expertise in democracy, economics, education, energy, environment, citizen-responsive governance, human rights, religious and ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, infrastructure, and market development, as well as cross-cutting development priorities, such as equality between women and men; religious freedom; innovation, technology and research; private-sector engagement; partnerships with diverse organizations, including local and faith-based groups; and inclusive development. The new Bureau will support USAID's field Missions by helping them design and implement programs that are innovative, learn from successes and mistakes, and address emerging issues. DDI will advise Missions and Operating Units on key interagency priorities, lead the development and implementation of many of USAID's corporate policies and strategies, and manage funding associated with Congressional and presidential directives.

Whew!

[But what happened to focusing on traditional technical areas like Agriculture; and Health, Population & Nutrition? They seem to have been lost or obscured in the shuffle

for higher-sounding cross-cutting sociological categories!]

The quest for the perfect organization for AID/Washington & USAID is seemingly endless:

**For forms of government let fools contest,
whate'er is best administered is best. –**

Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Essay on Man, 1733.

I haven't been directly involved in any AID project activities for almost ten years now, but USAID's objective of supporting US interests by improving the social and economic well-being of democratic developing nations seems to be constant. My last direct participatory project management assignment for USAID (coinciding with my 80th birthday) in 2012, was conducting a two-week project management and evaluation workshop in Jordan; then following through to provide "hands-on" assistance to the participants a wide variety of projects in several different NGOs and community development organizations (CDOs). The World Bank Group, and the Asia Development Bank were the other two major international development organizations where I've worked directly on projects since retiring from AID.

Fortunately, the logframe continued to thrive in the rest of the development world. In my other roles as a consultant, Jacques Defay's Pragma was instrumental from the outset -- with Carol Pearson as my constant companion (and Angie Obmasca in the Philippines) -- enabling me to continue conducting logframe & critical path training and consulting for AID. Larry Cooley's Management Systems International (MSI), and later Moses Thompson through his Team Technologies (TT) enabled me to reach out to the British Department for International Development (DFID) and others. I worked intently with Charles Chandler of the World Bank and Graham Walter of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) -- to institute the logframe in their operational management systems, as well as apply it for evaluation in the African Development Bank (AfrDB). Many other bilateral Aid-donor countries also adopted the logframe in planning their assistance programs. I was particularly privileged to work with Roly Tungpalan of the Philippine National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) to institutionalize the logframe in their government's internal project management and quality review procedures. So the logframe lives on to serve many purposes. Even though the logframe left its founders, it has found new fields to flourish. Everybody who got hold of it tweaked it a little bit. Andrea Ifflin of ADB rechristened it the DMF -- the design and monitoring framework -- with a different matrix structure; but essentially the same content. The Australians threw out the activities level, the UN added a couple of columns, and in NEDA-Philippines, we added a 'RACI' column – Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed – for Stakeholders, as well as an automated checklist for quality-at-entry rating. But, regardless of the variants; essentially the same concept -- a summary business plan for what you're planning to accomplish, and a tool to check performance after implementation.

Another incident that heightened my sensitivity to evaluation from different perspectives

occurred in 1995; when I was conducting a two-week program for UNDP at Adama university in Nazareth, Ethiopia. The university president came in and said "You're talking about project management and evaluation; could I have a session with your students? I want to tell you a story about evaluation." In essence, the situation was that the World Bank funded, and finished building, the university in 1993. But when they evaluated the project – using a logframe -- it was rated a complete failure. It was finished behind schedule; over budget, and did not attain the objective for which it had been built -- which was to be a four-year liberal arts university.

But the president said "You know, we're here today; and we think it's a great success. We don't care if it was over budget; we don't care it was behind schedule. It is here now, and they're right -- we're not granting academic degrees. But we are a technical school, and we're cranking people out for the business sector like you wouldn't believe. They're into computers and programming, and going everywhere with their business skills. I don't care what the World Bank evaluation report says; I think the project was a fantastic success." When he concluded, everybody gave him a great round of applause.

I often cite that case in my courses as another lesson learned. Success and failure are in the eye of the beholder; where you stand is where you sit. Some things don't fit neatly into the logical framework, no matter how hard you try. Just because you're behind schedule doesn't necessarily mean it's a failure if it is used appropriately when it is eventually completed. Just because you're over budget because you did a bad job of underestimating in the first place doesn't mean the project wasn't worthwhile and you shouldn't have undertaken it. You were just wrong at the time for not guessing accurately. It costs what it costs. I tell people, "Pad your estimates as much as possible. Allow yourself extra time for doing things, and extra money to fix the unknown-unknowns, the things you could not possibly anticipate. Then you might even finish ahead of schedule, with a cost saving. Think about that. And always follow-up with the end-users, to check how things worked out, and unintended consequences from good intentions. Then pass the 'Lessons learned' on to others so they don't make the same mistakes."

Q: This has been a fabulous conversation. I think you've already done it, but looking at AID and development projects for the last thirty or forty years, how would you summarize your life's work?

SMITH: Well, I think we've made a significant change. I can't say we can claim responsibility for everything that happened. Things that went wrong, we learned how to fix. I passed the lessons back. One of the things Haven & Jeanne North built into AID as Directors of Evaluation was a big lessons-learned documentation center. When I left (and I hope AID continued), anyone developing a new project had to review the lessons learned in the same sector, as well as the same country, and read the auditor-general's reports before finalizing your own project. That helped me, and I think that has helped others. Everywhere I went throughout the developing world, I found there's been tremendous support for what we were trying to do.

Unfortunately, the American public doesn't know very much about AID; they only hear

the bad things. People love the ‘horror stories’ that are funny in retrospect -- just as I’ve been giving you some. But they are the exceptions. There are a lot of good things that came out of AID. Probably one of the most useful aspects is people-to-people contact. A prime area was education -- people who went to the U.S. for training, then returned to work in their own country. I think USAID has been invaluable in demonstrating what U.S. values are. There are tremendous human needs throughout the world. I think we make an impact simply by trying to make things better. But we don’t have enough resources to resolve it all. In my opinion, we should scale back to a few pilot projects in certain key areas, with demonstrations of successful pilots, for others to emulate. Then, perhaps supply some seed money and equipment.

One of the things that concerns me is that from the early days of the Marshall Plan -- which the world universally recognizes as a fantastic success -- AID has morphed from its original mission of reducing global poverty to becoming a ‘carrot & stick’ asset of State. We don’t make policy, or political decisions of where we’re going to work. While that may be necessary to some extent, it is very disruptive of on-going programs, and short-sighted. From my perspective it appears that the size and scope has also dwindled drastically since Marshall Plan days, and the means has shifted from large capital infrastructure development, disaster relief and humanitarian assistance and development in health, agriculture, rural development & education, with an internal technical assistance workforce and university-based support that was the primary mode during my tenure.

To carry out its mission, the Agency has also gotten smaller, and the ways in which we’re doing business have changed from our own army of ‘do-gooders’ (if you will), plus academic research groups like Oregon State University in agriculture, Auburn in fisheries and Virginia Tech in nutrition. I could cite quite a number of other universities I’ve come across doing fantastic work on the ground. Also, the PVOs and NGOs are invaluable in working directly with host country communities outside the government structure. Now AID is hiring contractors to do the front lines work for us. I’m sure they are equally as dedicated as we were, but they are in business to be in business -- where the bottom line is profit. Although they have taken up AID’s mantle, they’re fighting with each other to get our business. It’s not AID’s own staff; it’s more of a mercenary army even though they have good intentions and are working towards the same objectives. [And, I have been on both sides, now.]

AID/Washington is more and more like a contracting agency broker for State. AID direct hires are being reduced to a small corps of people recruiting and advertising and procuring equipment, materials and people. USAID direct hire personnel in the field have also been relegated to a catalytic role of determining requirements -- in consultation with the host governments -- then acting as bureaucratic brokers to obtain resources; with increasing reliance on private sector entities, PVOs & NGOs to provide the technical assistance on the ‘Front Lines.’ I enjoyed being in the front lines or supporting them rather than in the bureaucracy at the center.

Another disruptive factor providing development assistance with direct hire AID FSRs –

now FSOs – that I observed (and contributed to) was what I called the ‘Home Leave Hiatus.’ Every couple of years we were up for a couple of months of home leave and return to post, or rotation to another post. This meant that in May/June every year a significant number of mission personnel left post – and projects – until the influx of returnees or replacements during August/September. In the meantime, FSNs were left holding the reins, responsible as caretakers, but without authority to act. Their only recourse was to seek assistance from an FSR/O still in the mission who had authority, but no background or responsibility. Classic violations of public administration tenets. Furthermore, if the FSR/O didn’t return to post, the FSN had the additional chore of ‘breaking in’ their replacement.

So, on reflection, short of significantly upgrading the status of FSNs – many who IMO are equally technically competent -- maybe contracting out is the best way to go; as people working on projects can stay on their projects, and not get rotated like FSOs every couple of years.

When I got my doctorate – funny story, my youngest daughter was with her friend and she said “My dad just got his doctor’s degree; but he’s not a real doctor, he’s just a talking doctor.” Okay. But this points up something. The private sector does not give as much weight to academics, and academicians as USAID. But in 1969, the Project Manager Institute (PMI) was established as an international professional organization; to foster ‘Best Practices’ in project management. The private sector recognizes PMI’s PMP -- Project Management Professional -- as a ‘gold standard’ trade credential. The Best Practices are largely taken from engineering, but can be applied across the board to any project. These days most large organizations require you to have a PMP as a project manager. If you don’t have one, they give the contract to somebody else. If you are already in the organization, you don’t get to be appointed to a project manager position until you get your PMP. So this has become an important credential in the private sector, just as doctorates were/are in AID and academia. To improve the quality of their projects’ implementation, AID officers should bear this in mind now when contracting for, or hiring consultants to manage development project activities. And remember – Every Process is a Potential Project.

In retrospect, I have been fortunate that my health has held up so far, enabling me to have had so many diverse opportunities to live, travel and contribute to professional project management, and projects to improve the quality of life for millions throughout the civilized – albeit often less developed -- world.

These days, I provide project management training – intermittently -- in the private sector through PMI. With long term, and continuing, support of Patrick Ferrer, Ruben Manga and Casel Ganihong I’ve been able to conduct a series of intermittent short-term Project Management workshops and technical sessions -- way past my expected useful ‘shelf life’ -- for the international Project Management Institute (PMI) chapter in the Philippines for 25 years; as well as prepared participants for formal PMI certification exams, and been a guest-speaker at several annual PMI conferences in Hawaii through PMI’s Honolulu Chapter Kane Ng-Osorio. At the urging of Lorenzo

Yatco -- my long-time friend and business associate -- to preserve my ‘legacy,’ in 2018 I wrote a book – Project Management PRAXIS (available from Amazon) – and through the license of David Pell, have also written several articles for the Project Management World Journal (PMWJ) on various best practice tools and techniques.

I’ve had a very happy, productive life, and always enjoy what I’m doing. I think the projects I worked on were worthwhile for the people I worked with and for the end users; even though I didn’t choose them and even though I ran across a lot that perhaps shouldn’t have been done in the first place -- or could have been done better if we’d had more feet on the ground to see what we were trying to accomplish.

Q: Ken, I want to thank you very much, this has been a very exciting conversation. I look forward to you getting the transcript of this so you can edit it and toss in some more dates perhaps.

SMITH: There’s a couple that come to mind as I’m talking.

Before we leave, let me leave you with a Christmas story.

In Philadelphia, a kindergarten teacher was asking the kids, “Where was Jesus born?”

Little Johnny put up his hand, “Miss. Miss.”

“Yes?”

“Harrisburg?”

“No.”

“Scranton?”

“No.” “Pittsburgh?”

“No, Johnny, it was Bethlehem.”

He said, “Dammit; I knew it was somewhere in Pennsylvania.”

End of interview

ADDENDUM

THE FOREIGN SERVICE WIFE [and all in Like Circumstances]

At first, she followed willingly her husband's Guiding Star,
And went with him excitedly to live in lands afar.

She tried to make a home of sorts, 'midst famine, flood and 'quakes;
And smiled, and hid her tears when told "Why Heck -- that's just the breaks."

She bore her children far from home and tried to keep them
well, 'Mongst dirt, disease and ignorance and every kind of
smell.

She battled on as years flew by, though some were not so bad,
And tried to keep from thinking of what she might have had.

At last, when it was over and her friends heard she was dead;
They sighed, and whispered enviously, "But what a LOVELY life she
led."

Beryl H. Smith USAID
Jakarta, Indonesia September 1978

Beryl achieved final rest and peace during her sleep Friday evening -- the day after Thanksgiving 28 November 2008 – known in the US for different reasons as “Black Friday.”

Indeed, she did live a lovely life – for us. Because of the human misery she encountered in our life abroad and so much of her work, however, she often saw (and experienced) the glass as “half empty” rather than “half full”. While we will all miss her physical presence, she will always be with us in memory, and we give thanks for giving us -- and so many others – a better quality of life.

Her Loving Husband -- Kenneth Frank Smith

7 December 2008