

Interview with Quentin Roy Bates

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

QUENTIN ROY BATES

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Q: I guess that you went to school at Parsons College, Fairfield, Iowa. Did you grow up there?

BATES: Yes, It was my hometown.

Q: Did you grow up on a farm?

BATES: Yes, on a farm about four miles from Fairfield. It was just a normal corn-hog farm, 130 acres or so. I went to a one room country school house for my grammar school days. It was just about 100 yards from my house.

Q: A one room school house! You got a bachelors degree in social science. What did that involve?

BATES: My major was History and Government, but I had two or three economics courses and a minor in English.

Q: And then your resume said you switched eventually to foreign relations. That was after you left and then came back to Parsons College?

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BATES: Yes. I went into the army in World War II.

Q: What happened in the meantime?

BATES: I had joined the National Guard when I was in college and I had been in the Guard for over three years when the war broke out. The Iowa National Guard was activated before the war. I went down to Louisiana for training about the first of March, 1941. I was a combat medic in a regimental medical detachment. I'd been sent to Ft. Sam Houston, Texas to a surgical technician's school when the war broke out. We were immediately alerted to prepare for overseas. That was December of '41. We went very early in '42 to Camp Dix, N.J. and embarked on the first troop ship that went to Europe. We left in January, about January 20 of 1942.

Q: You were first posted in the United Kingdom.

BATES: In Ireland, for seven months. Then I took an exam for officers candidate school. I was a non-commissioned officer and was sent to Camp Barkeley, Texas for the medical administrative officers training course. I was commissioned in December and went to training courses at the St. Louis Medical Depot, to Washington, D.C., (Surgeon General's Office), N.Y. Port of Embarkation and then was stationed at the Seattle Port of Embarkation. I was in charge of medical supplies for first the Alaskan Forces and later the central Pacific Forces. It was a very challenging responsibility for just a young kid of 24 or 25.

Q: You were with the military then until 1946, all the way through the war years, and then you went back to school.

BATES: I went back to Parsons where, as an undergraduate, I'd become interested in international affairs. I was a student assistant for three years to the head of the history and government department who was also dean of the college. He was very much interested in international relations and gave a lot of speeches, wrote articles, etc., and he got me

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interested in that area. One year I was president of the Parsons International Relations Club. So when a circular came around in 1945 inviting applications for US Foreign Service officer positions, I applied for and took the exam that November.

Q: And obviously passed because than you went on to have a number of State postings from 1947 on through 1955, it looks like.

BATES: Yes, I was overseas continuously except for when I came back for a university training course at Harvard in the academic year 1949/50.

Q: So your first posting was for the State Dept. and it was in Ottawa. You didn't have any background in Canada. Did you have any input as to the first post you got?

BATES: No, as a matter of fact, as I was taking my basic Foreign Service officer training, I had no idea that I was going to have anything to do with agriculture, having majored in history and government, I had, incidentally, applied for and obtained a fellowship to Columbia to study international law at the same time that I was taking my examinations for the Foreign Service. Acceptance for both came within the same week. I gave up the fellowship because the personnel people at the State Department told me I'd have a good chance of being given a university training assignment while on duty, which did come through 3 years later. During the basic training course or at the end of it, really, the first indication I had of any involvement in agriculture was when we were called forward for our first assignments. The other officers were posted to France, Paraguay, or wherever. When my name came up, my orders were for the Dept. of Agriculture for training.

Q: Really! That was pre FAS.

BATES: Oh yes. As I say, at that time I was just another all purpose Foreign Service officer.

Q: So that was when you had to do the Ag. Tech. school?

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BATES: Yes, I went to the Dept. of Agriculture Graduate School.

Q: What did that involve? So that was even pre FAS?

BATES: Well, OFAR (Office of Foreign Agriculture Relations, the predecessor of FAS) had asked for me. Francis Flood, the assistant director of OFAR, had been on my oral examining board. In those days the head of OFAR was called director. During the war they had a lot of agricultural officers overseas but most of them were on loan or leave from the Department of Agriculture or land grant colleges, etc. and were called either reserve, staff, or auxiliary officers. After the war most of them went back to their pre-war jobs. Therefore, the Foreign Service was facing a growing shortage of agricultural officers. So during my oral exam, the assistant director asked me a lot of questions about agriculture even though I was a social science specialist, but because I had grown up on a farm and had taken economics, social sciences, etc., apparently I knew enough about it to satisfy him. So he recommended that I be sent for some additional training at the Dept. of Agriculture and go into agricultural economic work. And that's what happened. I spent four or five months in an OFAR organized training program. It included courses at the Dept. of Agriculture Graduate School.

Q: Did you have to choose between FAS and the State Dept. in 1955?

BATES: Yes I did.

Q: What motivated you to choose FAS as opposed to State? I noticed it was right in the middle of your posting in Bogota from '53 to '55 and it looks like in June 1955 is when you switched.

BATES: Yes, I think the actual transfer date was in September, but the actual paper work started a little earlier. It was a hard decision because I enjoyed agricultural work, which I had been doing more or less full time, although I'd also done some normal Foreign Service officer work. For example, when I was in Winnipeg, in addition to doing agricultural work,

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I was also issuing non-immigrant visas, and doing some other consular-type work, and I did some political reporting. I reported, e.g., on the CCF, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation which was the socialist party of Canada. It was very important then, more important than it is now. They had their annual conference in Winnipeg, and the embassy asked me to cover it and report on it. I got a commendation for it, so I thought I was capable of doing political work, too.

Q: That was when you were in Winnipeg?

BATES: Yes. But when I was in Bogota as the attach#, it was a hard decision, but the understanding was that virtually all of the agricultural work would be done by FAS officers, and I just couldn't bring myself to give that up completely. As it turned out, nearly all of my 12 colleagues who were in the same category - FSOs who had been in agriculture, - like Philip Habib and Howard Cottam, e.g., had great careers in the State Dept. after they opted for State over Agriculture. Phil had a legendary career and Howard was an ambassador to Kuwait as his last post. There were at least two other agricultural officers who became ambassadors and others who became ministers and counselors. So there was life after ...

Q: After State. So when you were doing the State Dept. duties it sounds like you had a wide range of duties, consular, everything in the political office, also. So once they created FAS and you had chosen to go into FAS did your duties change significantly?

BATES: They didn't change at all. I continued to be the attach# in Bogota. The only thing was that I had somewhat more freedom of action because no longer getting my paycheck from the Dept of State, even though technically I was still ...

Q: A Foreign Service officer?

BATES: No, I wasn't a Foreign Service officer. I started out as a GS-13, but I was still an embassy officer and of course responsible to the ambassador and, when he delegated

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his authority, to the economic counselor of embassy. So I worked very closely with the economic counselor as well as the political counselor but there is always a difference when your paycheck comes from another agency. You feel a little freer to act on your own.

Q: Let's take two different postings examples like I noticed that you worked for Paris and Paris is probably one of the larger and busier embassies and involves, probably, greater work loads than some other postings and, I suppose, a number of challenges. Was there anything that you enjoyed most or was there anything that was most frustrating about such an active embassy to work in?

BATES: Well, in some ways a big post can be easier than a small post.. depending on the circumstances. For example, in Bogota, I was the only agricultural officer there, with one part time secretary.

Q: Not even local staff?

BATES: No local staff. A part time secretary that was also secretary for one of the other economic officers. And that was it. In Paris we had three agricultural officers and several local staff and three or four secretaries, so it was well structured. Each of us had an assigned job to do and that was mostly what we did. There was a lot of work to do, but a lot of people to do it. In Bogota there was less work to do, but there was nobody else to do it but I and half a secretary! So that is the difference between a large post and a small post.

Q: Then it must have been quite a change to come from a post like Paris with so much support and then go straight to Bogota. Did you have language skills? Had you studied both French and Spanish?

BATES: French was my language in college but I don't know whether you've had the experience or not of studying... I'd had about three years of French, two years in high school and one and a half years in college. It didn't help much as far as speaking was

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concerned, but of course I worked on it while I was there and was able to get along fairly well.

Q: Did you have any language training between Paris and Bogota?

BATES: Yes, I took a very short course because my posting to Bogota was fairly close. I had come home on home leave from Paris in 1952, and in 1953 there was a major layoff, a major reduction in force, a RIF. A lot of people lost their jobs and they cut staff positions out. They eliminated one of the assistant attach# positions in Paris, so then they had to find a slot for me.

Q: and "RIF" stands for?

BATES: "Reduction in force".

Q: I hadn't heard that before. I'm like .. what's this an acronym for?

BATES: Being "RIFed" then was a big deal.

Q: What was the political environment in Colombia?

BATES: It was a very interesting time to be in Colombia. Just a few months before I got there an army general had overthrown a right wing dictatorship and established a sort of middle-of-the-road military dictatorship. General Rojas Pinilla was his name.

Q: You arrived in Bogota right after the civil war?

BATES: 1953.

Q: So the civil war was just waning.

BATES: Well, the civil war was still on, really. There were still many guerrillas. All the time I was there, there were guerrillas in the countryside and we would have what they

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call “retens,” which were checkpoints, all over the country. You would be stopped if you were driving from one town to another and you would have to identify yourself. And you'd better stop! The foreign minister's driver once thought, “Well, everybody knows this is the foreign minister” and so he didn't stop. And the first thing they knew a bullet went right between the foreign minister and the visiting guest into the back of the seat. Anyway, it was a very uneasy calm, although it had eased up quite a lot from what it had been earlier in the so-called “Bogotazo” in 1948 after the left-wing leader was assassinated, when they practically sacked the whole city. We also did have one major attempt to overthrow the government while I was there.

Q: Was the US Embassy in the same place as it is now.

BATES: No, it was in an old building, I can't remember just where.

Q: Security was just as big an issue then.

BATES: Yes, for a couple of days we had to be escorted to the office with half-tracks,

Q: What are half-tracks ?

BATES: Military vehicles with machine guns and cannon mounted on them. It was a funny feeling having one in front of you with that cannon pointed directly at you!

Q: It was for your protection. It must have been necessary because working in agriculture, since that was what you were doing, you had to go to the countryside and that's where a lot of the violence was occurring - (Right) - where people were divided between conservative and liberal lines and there was a lot of violence going on. (Exactly) At that time, did you encounter any of that?

BATES: No, in my travels around the country I never had any problems. As I said, the guerrillas were mostly in pretty remote areas. They had been pretty well compressed. They'd come out every once in a while and raid a bank or a ranch or something like

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that but it was relatively quiet compared to what it had been, but still there was a certain amount of tension. It was quite a challenge - getting information was very difficult, and it is a difficult country to travel in, a rugged country, and the agricultural areas were very widely scattered.

Q: Well, Colombia's biggest export has traditionally been coffee, but Colombia also produced its own wheat.

BATES: Colombia had some wheat, but it also had to buy some wheat.

Q: But didn't that grain production of Colombia wane when Colombia went into an agreement with the United States?

BATES: It might have slightly, but production was not very high and costs and prices were exorbitant. I negotiated that first PL 480 agreement with Colombia in 1954. Not the first one in the world but one of the early ones.

Q: You must have spent a lot of time on the initial agreement with Colombia?

BATES: Oh yes, because it was so new and all.

Q: What did that involve? Did that involve Colombian importation of wheat only?

BATES: I think that was almost exclusively wheat but now I just can't remember what the composition of it was, but I believe it was wheat that was the major commodity.

Q: How did Colombia react to that?

BATES: They were very happy to get it, and at the very highest levels. I know, I have a picture of the signing that I just saw the other day showing the foreign minister, and the ambassador, and I was there, and the minister of agriculture who was a good friend of mine. Q: Did you make good contacts?

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BATES: Oh yes, (in the local government) The minister and the deputy minister of Agriculture had both studied in the United states. The minister had studied at the University of California and the deputy minister at Houston University. Both spoke English fluently and at that time, as I said, I had been sent to Colombia with virtually no Spanish background.

Q: With your French background?

BATES: Yes, well French doesn't help at all with speaking because the pronunciation is so completely different. It helps with reading. I could always read Spanish fairly well, but I took intensive training courses there, language courses. I got along pretty well and, with the top agriculture officials speaking English very well, it made it a lot easier. I could always get through to the minister personally. It makes things easier when you can do that. (Right, exactly) Still, I also had a lot of lower-level contacts. You can't go over the heads of the departments too much.

Q: What about the other agricultural things? You talked about negotiating the first PL 480 agreement. But everyone speaks about the cocaine problem in Colombia now and also the other product that Colombia is known for most widely, I imagine, is coffee. Did you go through the Zona Cafetera in Colombia then? Did you have to go visit coffee plantations?

BATES: Yes, but the US wasn't as interested in coffee as it was in competitive commodities. Because we bought a lot of coffee, of course, they were interested in it from the point of view of what the crop was going to be like and so forth. I didn't visit the coffee producing areas so much but the president of the coffee association was a friend of mine and I could always call and get information. He was very good about giving information about production, price and that sort of thing. So I had no problem with getting coffee information, that was one of the easiest things because it was the commodity, the life blood of Colombia.

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Q: What was the most difficult thing to get information on?

BATES: Probably cotton. Cotton was a new crop that they had just started producing in any quantity at all just a few years before. It was in three of four different areas up a little further north in the Monteria area of the tropics. They had more traditional producing areas which weren't quite as tropical - it was more in the middle altitude, not quite as high as Bogota, but not the tropical area. So they got some terrific crops for a couple of years in the tropics and then the insects starting taking over. And this was right in the middle of that period when I was visiting the area, and they didn't know what to do about it. Being a fairly new crop, there wasn't anyone who knew too much about it, because, in almost any of these countries that are fairly large (this was true in all the posts) you have to rely on people. It is impossible for one man to do a very good job in estimating what the crop is going to be over millions of acres scattered over tens of thousands of square miles. So you do have to do some eyeballing and you get a feel for whether they are conning or snowing you about what the crop is going to be. But generally speaking you keep in touch with elevator operators and the grain boards. (The National Grain Board in Argentina. The Chairman was a good friend. So I just had carte blanche to visit any of the elevators and they were all told to be completely frank and open with me). The interesting thing was that the reports that I would write after that would, sometimes, become..., my crop estimates I would often find being reported in the press. They were given out by the government as their official forecast.

Q: I'm sure that still happens.

BATES: I would often give them a copy of my report or tell them what my estimates were. I remember one time in particular I was very amused when an official report came out which went right down the line with my estimates.

Q: Can I ask you a couple of questions about your personal life? Did you have your son first?

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BATES: No, I had one daughter who was born in Iowa, in my hometown when I was at Parsons just after the war. Then my second daughter was born in Winnipeg. The son was born in Paris in 1950.

Q: What was it like to have children overseas?

BATES: Of course it varies a lot depending on the facilities. In Paris there was a good American school. However, my kids at that time weren't old enough so the girls went to a small private school which was near where we lived in Garche, a western suburb of Paris. It was a wonderful experience for them because they had to speak all French. It was sort of a preschool because they were there between the ages of four and six. In Bogota, there was also an American school. There were many US oil people in Colombia. We had quite a large A.I.D. mission and also a Rockefeller Foundation group. I worked closely with all of those people. See - I had good posts, they were nearly all capitals and most of them were fairly large cities.

Q: Where you were posted they all had fairly good medical facilities?

BATES: Yes, and we also had embassy medical personnel at most posts.

Q: What about your wife? Had she expected to be a part of the diplomatic ...?

BATES: No, she hadn't. I was married twice. I think the stresses of foreign service were largely responsible for the failure of our first marriage. She had not gone to college. She always felt a little insecure with the wives' groups. They often had a University Women's Club, which she couldn't join, which was a little embarrassing for her. Learning to entertain large groups of important people was stressful. But I think she did a fairly good job and most people thought so, but she was not happy with it. She didn't want to go to the Philippines, although she finally did, but our marriage broke up there. She came home by herself before I did and we were divorced a few months later.

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Q: Did your children stay with you then?

BATES: The girls stayed with her and our son stayed with her at first. When I got remarried, he came to live with us. My second wife was a graduate of Maryland and a commercial artist who also worked in the Department of Agriculture.

Q: A commercial artist worked in the Department of Agriculture?

BATES: In the information division of ARS - a visual information specialist.

Q: Really, OK. Did you meet here?

BATES: Yes, she was in my car pool.

Q: That's convenient.

BATES: We were both living in Arlington Towers in Rosslyn. So after we were married, my son went to Argentina with us. There were many failed marriages in the Foreign Service. Things are getting easier now because they are giving women more opportunity to express themselves, to work and so on. In those days, wives were not permitted to take jobs except in very limited areas such as nurses or teachers, for example. Both of my wives had worked and, of course, my second wife had been a professional. She continued to work again for a while after we came back from Argentina until we went to Brussels, which was my last post.

Argentina was one of the most difficult posts in some ways. It was a period of great tension.

Q: From '61 to '65?

BATES: Yes. We had seven fairly large scale attempts to overthrow the government, in which in at least three of them, there was quite a lot of fighting and quite a few people

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killed. The streets were often closed off. There was fighting in the streets occasionally. So it was a difficult time politically.

Q: How can you work in situations like that? Was it very difficult - did it affect your day to day work?

BATES: No, it didn't very much. These were strange types of revolutions. It was mostly an Army versus Navy thing. The Navy officers were generally a very conservative group and the president at that time, Frondizi, was a left-of-center politician. He had the support of the army, but the navy was very strongly opposed to him - the navy and the right wing political parties. So it was usually a military confrontation between the navy and the marines versus the army and the air force. The worst one occurred when we were on a trip with the minister of commerce. We had been visiting a number of areas in Mendoza, the fruit and wine area, and went from there to the mountain resort area of Barralоче. On our way to a major hotel, we were stopped by the military and told about the revolution. We immediately went back to the plane and headed back to Buenos Aires without knowing where we would land. The rebels had seized the airfield that we had taken off from so we knew we couldn't land there. We were going to head for an air force base, but the air force hadn't decided yet which side they were going to be on so we didn't know until fairly shortly before we were to land whether the air force was in rebel or government hands. It turns out the air force decided to stick with the government. We landed and the minister, personally, took all of us by bus back to our homes, going on side streets because all of the main streets had been blocked by the Marines.

Q: Were you in danger because you were American? It was obviously an internal thing.

BATES: No, there was no anti-American feeling about it. It really didn't worry us too much because very few civilians ever got hurt unless they just happened to be in a area where there was fighting. They were pretty careful not to hurt any civilians so that was not as much of a problem as you might think.

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Q: Well, I want to talk a little bit more about your postings. At FAS, obviously officers were not encouraged to develop an area of specialty, - sometimes people do, sometimes they don't. Were you encouraged in the State Department? A lot of your posts seem European-oriented or Latin American, with Manila being the only Far Eastern post. Is it like once you got involved in a certain area, you were sent back or . . . ?

BATES: At that time, - I don't know what they are doing now - but at that time the State Department was not particularly encouraging officers to become long term area specialists. A Foreign Service officer, if he expected promotion to the higher levels, should have experience in several different areas of experience as well as geographical areas. In FAS, most of us moved around quite a bit. There were some who stayed pretty much in the same area, but I, after Bogota, went to Manila, and then Buenos Aires and then Brussels, each of them in a different area. I had two posts in Latin America and two posts in Europe.

Q: Yes, the bulk of your career was overseas whereas presently the reverse is happening.

BATES: Yes, I had 17 years living overseas out of the 28 all together.

Q: I want to talk about your time in Washington, too and when you worked for FAS. Are there any accomplishments you are particularly proud of in any of these posts? Are there any of these postings you were much more fond of or would never want to do again?

BATES: No, I enjoyed them all. There was usually something very enjoyable and interesting about each post. As I said, the negotiation of the PL 480 was one of the highlights in Bogota. I think that my contacts there were at high levels of the government for a fairly junior officer. For example, the minister of agriculture, personally, his whole family, the deputy minister and some of his staff came to the airport to say good-bye to us when we left. He also gave a big dinner for us. He invited our ambassador, Phil Bonsal,

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but sat him at the end of the table because he didn't know anything about protocol! I was terribly embarrassed.

Q: You didn't get up and move around?

BATES: No, Phil signaled to me to stay put and laughed. In Buenos Aires, also, the Minister of Agriculture (who later became the Economic Minister) was a very good friend of mine and I worked with him in getting some help to develop their agriculture and that sort of thing. The embarrassing thing was the Ambassador, Rob McClintock, was grateful that I had helped the AID director because I knew top AG people so well. When he was being briefed for another post, they had me in to the Under Secretary's office, Clarence Palmby at the time, and the Ambassador said "Oh, he's the finest Agricultural Attach# I've ever worked with", but the main reason he gave was "He was a tremendous help to me in our AID program." I could see some eyebrows going up a little bit because that was a time when market development was our top priority. I did a lot of work with market development at most posts but there wasn't much of that to do in Argentina because Argentina is a major export competitor. The Ambassador's compliment did not have the effect that he thought it would. Anyway, it was a very satisfying tour and one that I enjoyed, but it is a very large country where you have to do a lot of traveling.

In the Philippines, I worked on a couple of PL 480 agreements. I'm not sure whether any were signed while I was there. There I had Chip Bohlen as my Ambassador, one of the top career Foreign Service officers of our time, the No.1 Russian expert and a great guy to work for. We worked very closely together. So in that way, it was satisfying. Our domestic difficulties clouded that tour and actually, I came home early because of it, but otherwise it was very interesting . .

Where I feel I did the best was in my relationships both with my embassy colleagues and with my local contacts. I feel that I always had good working relationships with all of them. I don't think that any of my colleagues in the embassy thought that I wasn't cooperative.

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One of the things that they appreciated was, because of my political science background, I was very closely attuned to the political implications of certain agricultural developments, and in many countries political parties were closely connected with agricultural groups. I know, in one instance, I wrote a memo to the Ambassador in Brussels on which he commented favorably at the next staff meeting. The DCM stopped me at the elevator and said, "Where did an Agricultural Attach# learn to do political reporting like that?" I have always felt that the broader your background, - you have to have a certain basic core in Agriculture, - but the broader your background both in and outside of agriculture, - in economic and political affairs and so forth, - the more effective an agricultural officer can be. Some of our failures have been excellent agronomists, or agricultural economists, but focused too narrowly on their major agricultural field. At Harvard, John D. Black believed in the very broad approach. He called his course "The economics of agriculture". He said he didn't like the term "agricultural economics". He said, "There is no such thing as agricultural economics, there is economics, and I'm teaching how economics applies to agriculture. Which is not what they do at Cornell." Incidentally, his deputy there was Ken Galbraith who was my faculty advisor. That was a great experience.

Q: Oh, I imagine. There is an economist for you.

BATES: I have not kept in close touch, but I have seen Ken from time to time. In fact, he and his wife came to our house when we were in Paris, my next post after I left Harvard.

Q: What about other visitors? Now people are expected to escort congressional types around.

BATES: Of course, in Paris, we had a lot of visitors. Even in a place like Bogota we had quite a few visitors. In the small posts, you are more likely to be Control Officer for the top ranking Agriculture visitors. For example, when Secretary Benson came to Colombia, the Minister of Agriculture took me on the President's personal plane to pick him up in Venezuela. I was in charge of his visit. I took him to call on the President and was invited

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to the official luncheon given by the President. Then there were all kinds of groups, the International Farm Youth Exchange delegates, for example. One of my interesting experiences in Paris was to be in charge of 25 or 30 "IFYE's" who convened in Paris before moving out to several European countries. They arrived on a US election day in 1952. Ben Bradley, of the Post, was the Press Attach# and he helped me organize a post-election breakfast. Because of the time difference, we thought that the election returns wouldn't be final, probably, until about that time. The IFYE's enjoyed it , although an early Stevenson concession had ruined any suspense. I've seen Ben a few times since. He was a great guy to work with, - wonderful personality.

Q: Let's switch gears for a minute and talk about your term in Washington. Why was the agency looking for so many recruits? Because they had just become an new agency?

BATES: Well, if you remember your history, the Agricultural Trade and Development Act of 1954 established a greatly expanded market development program. The AG. attach# coverage was very thin anyway, but it was so difficult to get funds. Agricultural intelligence is not a very sexy subject to talk about to Congress. When we talk about money-earning exports, then they start to listen. So it was easier to get money and, of course, we needed more at the time when we were working on exporting more. That was the major thing.

Q: Who were some of the people you started with in FAS?

BATES: I started in 1946. (Your colleagues ?) Les Wheeler, the founding head of FAS in the 1930's, was still the director of OFAR. Fred Rossiter and Francis Flood were Assistant Directors. Bob Tetro and I were both in the State Department. Both of us transferred to Agriculture. He was in Rome when I was in Paris, that's when I first met him.

Q: You held numerous positions. The longest (Reports and Training Officer) was from 1955 to 1958.

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BATES: Yes, Ray Ioanes came to Bogota and asked me if I wanted to take that job, which I did. That was an interesting job. It was very useful in my later career because I redrafted the reporting schedules and reorganized the whole system of scheduled reports and voluntary reports. And I worked with the commodity divisions and all of the agencies, divisions and branches which used agricultural intelligence. We had to keep reporting down to the essentials because we were pretty thinly staffed at that time. I had to approve all of the requests for unscheduled reports that went out. Then when the reports came in, I sent them out to the various agencies. I also established a training program which they hadn't had on a formal basis.

Q: For incoming people ?

BATES: Yes, for officers and secretaries. We were beginning to build up.

Q: So, the initial J.P. training, or whatever you'd like to call it, you started.

BATES: Well, you can't say I started it. They had had a training program but it was on a case by case basis, almost. I think it is fair to say that this was the first formalized training program. It was an ongoing program that has been improved and expanded and so forth, but it's based on what I started.

Q: So that was before you went to Manila? Then you came back and before you went to Argentina you were a program coordinator for what area?

BATES: PL 480. Then I became Acting Division Director of the Program Development Division. I was also the Executive Secretary of the Trade Staff Committee, the interagency Committee which developed and approved the PL 480 agreements. I was also the Executive Secretary of the Wheat Exporters Association which was an inter-governmental association of the major wheat exporting countries: Australia, Canada, Argentina, the United States and France.

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Q: You were in the Agriculture Department when the EC production began taking off?

BATES: That's right. I was in Paris at the time that the Steel Pool, the first of the Common Market organizations was established. They were also beginning to develop the Common Agricultural Policy which was at first called the Green Pool.

Q: I notice your last overseas post was Brussels. You were in the International Trade Policy Division before you went to Brussels. Did that help you a lot?

BATES: I was at the embassy in Brussels and was not directly concerned with day to day EC matters. Ernest Koenig was the USEC representative. Ernest and I worked very closely together.

Q: Were you a counselor?

BATES: At that time we didn't have counselors. But my most important Washington assignment was when I was, first, Division Director and later Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Trade. For most of that time I was one of the key agricultural trade negotiators.

Q: Those were the years when things were really hot.

BATES: Things were really hot — the years of the Kennedy Round. I was in Geneva the night that the Kennedy Round Agreement was signed and attended the big party the next night that the ambassador, Mike Blumenthal, gave for the members of the negotiating team which included Under Secretary Schnittker and Ray loanes. That was an exciting time. Later, for 2 years, I was the US representative (delegate) on the GATT Agriculture Committee, requiring frequent trips to Geneva for its meetings. I had to be prepared to discuss all aspects of US AG policy, to justify our subsidies and quotas and to attack, aggressively, those of our trading partners! This was one of the most difficult and challenging, but very satisfying, assignments of my career.

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But perhaps the most time consuming and certainly the most frustrating of my assignments was to take day to day charge of our battle against Japan's grossly protectionist system of high duties, low quotas and even embargoes on most agricultural imports. An entrenched and all-powerful Japanese bureaucracy was practically immune to political pressures and stubbornly resisted even the smallest liberalization measures. Most of our gains were achieved at the very last minute of major multilateral trade negotiations only to prevent the failure of an agreement that was of great overall benefit to Japan. Bilateral negotiations, in Tokyo, Geneva, or Washington, were rarely fruitful and even when successful were often not implemented in good faith. As an example, we started a major effort to get grapefruit, not even produced in Japan, liberalized by a delegation to Tokyo, but it took 2 # years of continuous pressure to obtain that concession, and it was announced on my very last day on that job. Even then, full implementation was slow in coming. Our negotiations with the EC were equally frustrating, but although involved, I seldom participated in active negotiations. However, I was a key member of the interagency group that drafted the position papers and instructions for negotiations.

Q: Did you work in any other divisions in FAS?

BATES: I have never worked in any commodity division but I worked in PL 480 and trade policy divisions and headed the Reports and Training Unit, which was not exactly a division but was a staff function. I was Acting Director of the PL 480 division and Director of a division in International Trade before becoming Deputy Assistant Administrator.

Q: Have US and EC trade relationships changed a lot since then and were you at the forefront of establishing how things were negotiated? That's when (the late 60's and the early 70's) the flour and the grain production issues came up and became a bone of contention between the two.

BATES: Yes, US - EC agricultural trade relations were undergoing a period of great strain during those years. The Common Agricultural Policy - CAP - which restricted imports,

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stimulated domestic production and subsidized exports was seriously damaging US markets, not only in the EC but worldwide. Our ability to obtain redress was severely hampered by: 1. The great political strength of agricultural interests in the EC; 2. The necessity for unanimous approval of all EC member countries for any concessions; and 3. The lack of support within the US from other government agencies, particularly State, and from much of industry, for employing the amount of political and economic muscle necessary to force the desired changes in the CAP. State's reluctance to get tough in this issue was not wholly irrational. The conventional wisdom at that time was that the CAP was the glue that held a fragile EC together and US policy has consistently been to back strongly European political and economic unity. What was not generally realized until much later was that the CAP would constitute a growingly heavy drag on the EC economy that would eventually become unsustainable both economically and politically. The difference between the negotiating climate then and now is that Agriculture now has across-the-board support within the government for a hard-nosed line, and EC governments are finding the courage to begin, although painfully slowly, to phase out the most egregious provisions of the CAP. Also, the US has finally agreed to put US supports and subsidies on the table, which we adamantly refused to do during that period. My justification for this before the GATT AG Committee in Geneva was that we could not be expected to remove our own supports and subsidies unilaterally in the face of much more protective and restrictive policies followed by our trading partners and competitors.

Q: Let's talk about FAS itself for a minute. The last two Assistant Administrators for Management have come from outside the agency and now I understand all of Management is open to Foreign Service Officers. I don't know if you want to comment, but what do you think of FAS management.

BATES: I got along quite well with Management. Art Minor, an old timer, was there for years and years as Assistant Administrator for Management. A very strong personality - you had to be diplomatic with Art - but very capable and highly respected. In my early days, nearly all top level officials were career. But, in recent years, both Democrats and

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Republicans have put mostly political appointees into schedule C positions. I still have a lot of friends in FAS. It seems to me, and most of the old timers agree, that morale is not as good as it used to be and I don't think there is as strong a feeling of loyalty to the organization. Part of that may be due to the fact that most of the working-level people don't really expect to get into the top positions. Of course, there are some exceptions.

Q: The other issue I wanted to bring up was about the dual career track. If you want a position with more responsibility in the FAS you almost have to be Foreign Service. Do you think that is still an issue or was it when you were in FAS?

BATES: We didn't have a dual system while I was there except for the first few years. There were only a dozen or so Foreign Service officers assigned to Agriculture during those early years.

Q: Mid '50's, early '50's?

BATES: Yes, - that had come in by examination as I did. So I didn't have much experience with a dual system. All of the Agricultural Attach#s were FAS after 1955. There was some feeling among some of the Washington staff that didn't want to go overseas that they were discriminated against on promotion and assignments, but many others recognized that was a very important part of a career in FAS and, if you wanted a top job and you didn't want to go overseas, maybe you should get with some other organization. There are people who resent that, understandably, so it's always going to be a problem, I think. I suspect that now with things more formalized, having a real foreign service with top official FSO's again, that the resentment is exacerbated. I find people that are unhappy about it.

Q: Politically, how do you view FAS now, having worked in the private sector? If you're doing work on an agricultural consulting project, how much do you utilize FAS?

BATES: I utilize FAS a lot. I have no trouble getting cooperation in areas where it is possible to do so and it's not too sensitive. Usually, I can avoid the sensitive areas and

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I have other sources to go to. You can get much of the sensitive information outside of FAS. But anyway, the cooperation has been very good and the caliber of the personnel is good. I don't find quite the same breadth of expertise and knowledge across the board in today's more specialized professionals. We were a smaller group. We had to become knowledgeable in a lot of different areas. Now if you call someone up for information on a certain subject, they do very well if it is a subject they are specialized in, but often, you find if you ask a question about something that is somewhat related, but not too directly related, they don't seem well-informed. Now, that may be that they are just so busy that they don't have time to follow other areas, but I always felt that I had to keep myself informed on not only agricultural affairs but general economic affairs and not only economic affairs but overall political affairs. I felt I had to know the whole politico-economic area pretty well to do my job properly. Of course, a lot of the jobs that I had required that breadth more than did the average job at FAS.

Q: If you had it to do all over again and spend another 20 years of your life in the foreign service, would you do that?

BATES: I doubt very much that I could have taken a different track and had a better career. It might be interesting to speculate what would have happened if I had stayed in State as a Foreign Service Officer, for example. I think I would still have had a very interesting career. I probably would have held a higher title in the field because the titles of counselor and minister were not available to us then. But I didn't mind that, it was not a major deal for me. I can't say I regret opting for FAS, at all. I think I enjoyed my work more than I would have in the other track because I was lucky enough to be able to do much of the same sort of things as the Foreign Service Officers but doing it in my preferred area. I worked right with them on negotiations, PL 480 and all that

Q: Would you recommend that type of career for people to go into?

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BATES: I'm not sure. I don't know enough about the current system. I'm not sure the current system would permit the kind of career I had, that's the point. If anyone could have the kind of career I had, I would recommend it highly.

Q: As a sort of summary, which post did you like the best and what you thought your major accomplishments were?

BATES: Well, it's always been hard for me to say which posts I like the most because I liked them all. Each post had its good and bad points - its rewards and defeats. They were all very interesting, partially because I was very fortunate to have had good posts. I'm satisfied that I performed to the best of my ability.

Q: At which post do you feel that you assimilated the most of the local culture? Is there any post where you really felt an affinity for the culture that you were living in more than any other one?

BATES: Well, I suppose it would have to be Canada but that's an easy answer. I felt I got to know the people in Argentina pretty well. Belgium to a certain extent, too. Belgium is an interesting country that not too many people understand, with a tremendous ethnic problem between the French and the Flemish speaking people. I feel I got an understanding of that, that was very useful.

Q: What was the feeling in some of these posts toward the United States?

BATES: I ran across very little anti-American feeling. It was not detrimental to my functioning. Take Cuba even — now this was not my post, but I visited Cuba a year after Castro's takeover. My friend Lloyd Williams was assistant attach# there in 1960. I was in Washington. I had just come back from Manila. Lloyd had been assistant attach# in Manila. I visited for a week. I wandered the streets of Havana in the daytime and the evening. I was obviously an American. I would ask people questions and directions and so forth. I didn't encounter any antagonism even there. I certainly didn't in my other posts.

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Now, in the Philippines, there was some antagonism toward Americans, but it didn't affect me particularly. There would be a lot of griping by some of my friends there about the Yankees and what they were doing.

Q: Were you ever asked by an ambassador or anybody in the government to do anything you didn't agree with?

BATES: Oh yes, but not too often.

Q: Is there anything that sticks out in your mind that you really think the government should not have done?

BATES: I can think of very few instances when my conscience really bothered me about something that I was asked to do. For one thing, we had such broad latitude in most posts. The kind of instructions you got were usually not that specific. You could finesse them a little bit so you could soften the blow. I was criticized sometimes — one specific time that I might mention was when I was here. I refused to approve - or rather, I criticized - a diplomatic note, making a formal diplomatic complaint to a Latin American country, practically ordering them to do something on pain of - whatever. It was a case where Venezuela was trying to stop the importers of a product - black beans - from reselling them at a very high price. The government wasn't able to control that so finally they took over the importation and bought the beans themselves and resold them at a lower price. He wanted to ask the State Department to send this formal note telling them that this was not acceptable, that they must turn it back to the private trade. I said that would be very much resented by Venezuela and would be rejected out of hand. The officer was very upset. He said "when I want a State Department analysis, I'll ask the State Department for it." I said, "I resent that. I'm giving you my own judgment based on many years of experience, and that's it." He was still angry but that note didn't go out.

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Q: You said you covered a wide range of things politically, did you have to report to other people besides FAS - on political activities- that type of thing?

BATES: Of course, you report to the ambassador, and such reports can be made available to other agencies. Overall, I felt my greatest strength was in the area of getting along with and working with my colleagues in the embassy - the politico-economic people across the board - and my contacts within the country. That is the difference between success and failure in any foreign service work.

Q: Are there any instances that really stick out in your mind?

BATES: I think I've mentioned some already.

Q: Anything particularly humorous happen to you?

BATES: That's so hard to answer on short notice. Well, when we were back in Buenos Aires, Dick Welton and I had a farewell party for a friend of ours who was from Cornell University who was with the AID program and was going back. That was the night of one of the revolutions. So we had to go a round about way to get back home but we didn't think it was very serious. So we went home and went to bed. Around about 1:30 A.M. there was a rap on the door. "Who" is that? "This is the Weltons." They had run into a roadblock at the city limits and they couldn't get to the suburbs so they came back and had to spend the night with us.

Q: Are there still some people left at FAS now? Don Novotny?

BATES: Don and I were in a car pool together for about four years. I understand they still have that car pool. Dick Welton also was in it. Dick is still one of my closest friends, - we still play golf together. Dick Smith was also in it. I was in another car pool when I first came back from Bogota that had already been in existence for 35 years. Bob Tetro was in that one for a while. One member of the car pool had been working for the Department of

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Agriculture since about 1910. The car pool started in the early 20's and this was in the mid 50's. Three members of that car pool had flown planes in World War I. There were only 1,000 US pilots overseas with the Air Corps and three of them were in our car pool!

Q: We're closing up. Is there anything you'd like to say? It's encouraging for me to hear you say that you couldn't have asked for a better career.

BATES: All the time I was working, I would often think, "How could people with a hum drum working life stand it?"

Q: That's what motivates many people to have F.S. careers. But coming from Iowa, what motivated you to choose it?

BATES: It's kind of like the Navy, - the Navy used to get most of its recruits from the Midwest. You're a couple of thousand miles from the ocean. I think there is a certain attraction. Then, political science was my major, and I was a student assistant for three years to a charismatic professor of history and international relations. He had been in the army overseas. He had written books. He was very well known as a speaker on international affairs. So I had that core of interest. I never in my wildest dreams in those days thought I would be a diplomat.

Q: No one in your family had?

BATES: No. There was only one other person in my hometown that I know of who was ever a Foreign Service officer.

Q: One almost gets addicted. .. Did you ever contemplate leaving the Foreign Service to do something in the private sector?

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BATES: No - there was a time, not to leave the FAS, but when I was offered a job in AID at a higher salary - which I reported to FAS and that was when I got my promotion to a GS 15.

Q: You negotiate very well! Did you ever go back and visit the posts?

BATES: We've been to Paris a couple of times since then. One of the local secretaries, - this was about 10 years ago - was still there. I have been back to Ottawa and Buenos Aires to conferences. Those are the only three. I'm hoping to get back to some of the others. I'd love to go back to Bogota, but maybe not right now.

Q: It probably wouldn't be a good idea. Well, I appreciate talking to you. Thank you.

BATES: I've enjoyed it. You are very welcome.

QUENTIN ROY BATES (Interview II)

Interviewer: Richard Welton Date: May 1994

Q: I'm here with Quentin Bates who's had a lot of experience overseas. Quentin did a few tapes about 5 years ago and so we will supplement that tonight. This is May, 1994. Quentin, would you like to comment on some of your experiences in Winnipeg as one of your earlier assignments. You mentioned some of the broad gauged activities that you were involved in that most AG attach#s don't have to deal with.

BATES: At that time I was a Foreign Service officer and was in Winnipeg on sort of a dual assignment. The Department of Agriculture wanted me to learn a bit more about the grain trade in Western Canada - the prairies - but also the State Department wanted me to learn more about the consular work. I issued visas, visited a few Americans who had gotten themselves into jail for one reason or another, and drafted some commercial reports. But the most interesting assignment I had there was in the nature of political reporting.

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One of the three major parties of Canada at that time was the CCF, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation, which was a left of center party that consisted of an amalgam of Socialists, labor unionists, farm cooperative members and populists in Western Canada and the prairies. The CCF actually controlled one government, the Government of Saskatchewan, and was a strong third among the national parties, having, at that time, I believe, about 29 members of parliament.

Q: Does it still exist today, do you know?

BATES: Yes, it changed its name to the New Democrats and I think in the latest election, the Democrats did quite well, coming in second. The party that was controlling the government, the Conservatives, only got 2 seats in Parliament after having had a large majority! That year the CCF was having its annual convention in Winnipeg. It was during a crucial time because one of the major issues was whether or not to support the Marshall Plan - to endorse it. The State Department felt it would be embarrassing to both the US and Canada if one of their major political parties were to condemn the Marshall Plan. See, this was still fairly early, 1948. So they asked me to cover the convention. The left wing of the party had, a lot of people thought, many Communist sympathizers, who tended to support the Soviet Union in a lot of political matters and had announced that they were going to offer a resolution condemning the Marshall Plan. So the political section of the embassy in Ottawa asked me to cover it and give the moderate wing any support that might be useful in the way of materials and information on the plan but keep a low profile. I had the good fortune to have met some of the CCF leaders in Winnipeg, where several of the top leaders lived. So I was able to keep in very close touch. I went to the open sessions, and they informed me on what went on in the closed sessions. It turned out that the ones who supported endorsing the plan won rather handily. I made a report to the embassy and got a letter of congratulations. (Good) So that was a big thrill for me. That was just my second year in the Foreign Service.

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Q: I noticed that you had sort of a split tour. You went to Ottawa for about a year, you were in Winnipeg for about a year, then back to Ottawa.

BATES: Yes, both State and Agriculture wanted me to get some experience in other areas. But it was mostly for agriculture that I went out there.

Q: Were you single at the time?

BATES: No.

Q: Did you find a house?

BATES: Yes, we found a house, a nice little house. It was warm, it had to be - Winnipeg is one of the coldest cities in the world! It was just supposed to be for a year. Then I was to go to Ottawa to finish up my tour.

Q: So you had to move a lot in that three years in Canada.

BATES: Yes, and after another year, they pulled me out and sent me to Harvard on a Fellowship.

Q: Well, you went from Canada over to Bogota.

BATES: Actually, that was my third post, my second post was Paris. And then I ran into the 1953 Reduction in Force or RIF. Although I was a Foreign Service officer and wasn't in danger of being RIFed, they did abolish a lot of FS positions and my position in Paris - we had at that time an attach# and two assistants - was one of those abolished. After I finished a course in the Intermediate Officers Training Course in the Foreign Service Institute, they sent me to Bogota.

Q: Although that was before my time, I heard people tell about getting rolled back quite a bit in grade during that time, as well, people who worked in the Civil Service I guess, but...

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BATES: Well, about that time they also reorganized the Foreign Service and some of the FSOs also were reduced in grade but not in pay. I transferred to Agriculture before that went into effect.

Q: I see, that was right around '54. Yes, when did you actually switch over?

BATES: 1955, in the fall.

Q: So then, after Paris, you went to Bogota? You were involved there with one of the early PL 480 agreements?

BATES: Yes, that was something like the 12th agreement. I don't remember exactly. It was a few months after they had negotiated the first one. It was a fairly modest agreement. I don't remember much about the details. I think that the interesting thing was, as I mentioned in that other interview, that I had very close relations with the Minister of Agriculture. He and his deputy both had gone to college at Universities in the United States and spoke fluent English. We became very good friends so it made negotiations a lot easier.

Q: Did you have pretty much the lead role in the negotiations in the PL 480?

BATES: Well, of course, the Economic Counselor was the titular leader, but being the only Embassy agricultural officer there, naturally they counted on me to do most of the work.

Q: You didn't have an assistant in Bogota at that time?

BATES: I didn't have an assistant, I didn't even have a secretary. I shared a secretary with one of the Economic officers.

Q: You didn't have foreign nationals either, I guess.

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BATES: No, no foreign nationals. The last year I was there FAS did send me an American secretary after I became a Foreign Agricultural Affairs Officer.

Q: That was when you had a trade complaint, I believe, on egg imports?

BATES: Yes, that was interesting, I think. Bogota had an egg shortage for some reason, and they started importing large quantities of eggs. Then, all of a sudden, the chief veterinarian, whatever the title was, said that there was a poultry disease in the United States, I think it might have been Newcastle, that they didn't have in Colombia, and that the disease could possibly be transmitted through the eggs. So he wanted to get a certificate with every shipment that it was free of Newcastle Disease. Our veterinarians said that was not feasible, but that there was no possibility that it could be transmitted through the eggs. I visited the Minister and he called in his chief veterinarian who said "Well, we're fairly sure that there is a possibility of it. Our poultry industry is very important to us. We can't take that risk." I said that our veterinarians claim there's no risk, and I have a lot of confidence in them. The minister gently but firmly cut me off. He said "Dr. So-and-so is my chief veterinarian and I've got to follow his advice". That was the end of it. I learned my lesson. You can't push personal relationships too far.

Q: Let's see. What else should we try to cover here. Later on I know I worked with you in the Trade Policy area in Washington. We dealt a lot with Japan in those days. Trade relations with Japan are still very much in the news today. Would you care to comment on some of our experiences back then in dealing with Japan?

BATES: Yes, I think that it's interesting that back then we had the same kind of experiences that the State Department and Agriculture Department are having now with Japan. It's very difficult to get them to remove their restrictions on imports. For the reasons I stated before, the Japanese have been the most fiercely protectionist of all of our major trading partners. They had made very few concessions in the 1967 Kennedy Round Trade Agreement, almost none on agricultural items and the US mounted a determined

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campaign in 1968 to force liberalization on at least a few of the most severely restricted commodities, both industrial and agricultural. A series of working level discussions in Washington and Geneva were fruitless, so we insisted on a higher level meeting in Tokyo before year's end. The Japanese grudgingly assented, but set the date for Dec. 27, which meant the US delegation had to leave Washington Xmas day! I was the USDA member of the delegation, chaired by our OECD Ambassador, Phil Trezise, who did not leave Paris in time to sit in on the interagency meetings in which the instructions to the delegation were drafted. Therefore, he did not realize how strongly Agriculture felt about getting some commitment on relaxing grapefruit restrictions, a product not even grown in Japan. But after 2 days of negotiations, the Japanese, citing political pressures due to the upcoming elections, had refused even to discuss grapefruit until the following September. The delegation met to consider the Japanese response, and Ambassador Trezise asked "Is that proposal acceptable to Agriculture?" I was really taken aback because our instructions had made it clear that grapefruit was a top priority item. So I blurted out "Is that a serious question, Mr. Ambassador? The answer is - No!" before I realized that was not a diplomatic response! Afterwards Ambassador Trezise asked one of his staff with whom I'd worked in Washington "Is he always that hard nosed?", and his response was: "No, he's aggressive but not abrasive." But we finally, much later, got the grapefruit in. My last day on that job as Deputy Assistant Administrator for International Trade, a cable came from Tokyo- let's see, that was in '71- and the conference was in late '68 so that was over two years later.

Q: Well, at least it came through just before you left. I was wondering, perhaps we should discuss some of your experiences with our Foreign Service nationals some of whom I know from my own experience stayed with us for 30 years or more. I know that you served in three major areas of the world. You could contrast some of your experiences with them at different posts.

BATES: As I mentioned, the only post I didn't have a foreign national assistant was the first year I was in Bogota. I think in all my other posts we had foreign nationals. On the whole,

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I can't say too much about the ability and the loyalty of the foreign national employees. Some were better than others, of course. But the general level was very high. Many of them had advanced degrees in Economics. Our Agriculture Assistant in Buenos Aires, as you remember had been a senior economist in the Ministry of Agriculture in Argentina. I guess in Ottawa I didn't have local assistants except two local secretaries who were very good. We had a large staff in Paris. We had Carl Boussingault, who had been on the French purchasing mission right after the war, a fairly senior position, who was excellent. We also had four local clerks and secretaries. In Manila, we had both a local professional and a secretary who had served there for many years.

Q: Were any of these educated in the United States?

BATES: I don't believe so.

Q: Probably not in the early years.

BATES: Not in those early years. There are probably a lot more now. As I said Carl had lived and worked in the United States but he hadn't gone to school there.

Q: They were always invaluable sources of information. I'll always remember the experience we had in Argentina. I don't know if you remember this story or not. We got a letter from a potato researcher (Oh, yes) at Penn State about something that happened 25 years ago. Eduardo said "I remember who the potato expert was then and he's retired but still alive" and we got the answer. We sat back and replied just like it was a routine letter.

BATES: I should mention, it just occurred to me. In Winnipeg, we had a local assistant who was much more than a secretary. She also did some reporting for both the commercial and agricultural sections. In fact there had been a hiatus there - there hadn't been an agricultural officer there for about a year when I came, and she had been doing the reporting on the Prairie Provinces grain crops. She was a graduate of the University of Manitoba, had many friends in fairly high ranking positions in politics, in government,

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in business, and in the arts, and she was just invaluable. She was one of the reasons I had such good contacts in the CCF. And that was the sort of thing that turned out to be very helpful. More recently, we had an excellent professional employee in Brussels, who unfortunately died of cancer a few years ago.

Q: I don't know how much distinction there was in the host country contacts that you ran across in terms of being helpful and providing information.

BATES: Well, the life blood of our reporting work is the contacts because it is extremely difficult for one person to try to estimate what the crops are and the trade and all that. You have to rely extremely heavily on contacts. I've been fortunate, but I worked very hard at developing contacts. I think I've mentioned several times how close I was to the Minister and Deputy Minister in Colombia but I also had good contacts across the board there.

Q: That's particularly true in most Latin American posts but in the smaller posts you get greater access that is sometimes more difficult to get in larger posts.

BATES: Well even in Buenos Aires, which is one of the larger posts, the Agriculture Secretary who became the Minister of Economic affairs a few years later - became a friend. I also had a good relationship with the Secretary of Commerce who later became the Foreign Minister.

Q: Did you have any experiences where you felt they were deliberately trying to mislead you?

BATES: Really only once in response to a question about grain sales to Russia by Argentina. They may not have deliberately mislead me but they certainly didn't tell me about it in advance. I had an interview with a local newspaper in which there had been a rumor that there had been sales of wheat to Russia. I had tried to find out from the ministry and they didn't deny it outright but gave me a definite impression that there hadn't been

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any sales. The next day it came out that a million tons of wheat had been sold to Russia - somehow.

Q: Where I saw more of that was in coffee reporting in Bogota. They all had quotas and they wanted to convince us that they really needed more quota and they had a big crop coming along, etc.

BATES: When I was in Bogota, they didn't have quotas. The head of the Coffee Federation was a good contact and never mislead me in any way.

Q: You've had a lot of experience overseas. Would you like to comment on any of your favorite or outstanding ambassadors that you served with, Quentin.

BATES: Yes, I was very fortunate in being able to serve with some of the most outstanding of our ambassadors in this era. One of the most outstanding would have to be David Bruce who was ironically a "political" ambassador but was an ambassador longer than most Foreign Service Officers served.

Q: Was he in Canada when you were there?

BATES: No, he was in Paris. He had been head of the French Mission under the Marshall Plan and then he came over to the Embassy as Ambassador. Then of course later he became Ambassador to both Great Britain and Germany. I think he was the only ambassador we had that headed up all three posts. Chip Bohlen in Manila was really very outstanding, as everybody knows. Rob McClintock was a very good Ambassador as was Ed Martin, both in Argentina. And some other names - there was John Eisenhower for a short period of time in Brussels and Robert Strausz-Hup# who later served many years as Ambassador to Sweden and Turkey. He had about 12 years as Ambassador, also another political Ambassador. He was in Brussels for 2 years. There were several others who were very good. Phil Bonsal, in Bogota, Jimmy Dunn in Paris.

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Q: I won't ask you to name the worst ones you had, unless you really want to.

BATES: I wouldn't say he was the worst, but one of the worst experiences I had was due to an Ambassador, Ray Atherton, in Ottawa, my first post, just a few weeks after I had arrived. I was invited to the Residence for a luncheon in honor of the Australian High Commissioner. We had just been there a couple of weeks. We had never been to the Residence before so we got a taxi and the taxi cab driver got lost and delivered us to the Residence about 15 min. late. We got there right after the guest of honor. The Ambassador berated me loudly in front of the Australian High Commissioner. I thought my career was over, but it turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me because everybody felt sorry for me as he was notorious for his hot temper. The DCM came up to my office - he didn't call me down to his office - he came up to my office personally to console me and tell me I had learned my lesson and that he had heard from my boss that I was doing a good job and not to worry about it - just to take it as a lesson. The Australian High Commissioner and his wife felt so sorry for us they invited us to many of their parties.

Q: Good. Well, that was a good result anyway. We had sort of the opposite case. We had a farewell party for the Defense Attach# and it just went on and on and on. We were sort of standing on one foot and then the other. The Economic Officer told us "Oh, you can go". So we proceeded to say goodbye. The Ambassador didn't jump on us but his wife did. "You're leaving before the guest of honor!" He had to have a big staff meeting to point out the proper protocol.

One of the other points I thought we should cover is that you were one of the few who served in the State Department and came over to Agriculture, when we were separated in 1954. I was wondering, did that cause problems within the Embassy later on or what was your experience in that regard?

BATES: The Ambassador in Bogota at that time, Rudolf Schoenfeld, was one who believed that the Foreign Service should be an elite group and should not include any

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of these “crass” commercial or agriculture types, nothing but political officers. He would like everyone in the commercial or agriculture areas to get out of the Foreign Service. That played a part in my decision to leave because I was enjoying agricultural work and I didn't want to give in up completely. He said that the Foreign Service was not going to be doing any more agricultural work at all. Of course, it turned out that the State Department found out that they needed agricultural officers or someone who knew something about agriculture in their economic sections. Of course, we felt more freedom. We didn't have to report to quite so many people. We were more our own bosses from then on. But in Bogota, Ambassador Schoenfeld retired in 1954 and as far as my relationship with the rest of the staff of the Embassy, there really was very little change.

Q: OK, well I think that probably does it. Thank you.

End of interview