Interview with Richard A. Ericson Jr.

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

AMBASSADOR RICHARD A. ERICSON, JR.

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Q: Today is March 27, 1995. This is an interview with Richard A. Ericson, Jr. on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. I am Charles Stuart Kennedy.

To begin with, could you tell me something about your background—a bit about your parents, when you were born, where you grew up, etc.

ERICSON: My parents were both born in Two Harbors, Minnesota, which was a major ore port during World War I on the north shore of Lake Superior about 25 miles northeast of Duluth. Both grew up there. My father got an appointment to West Point...

Q: You are what, Norwegian descent?

ERICSON: Well, sort of half and half. I am really a good Icelander. Icelander 65%, Norwegian 35% and Irish...I come along more 50/50. But my paternal grandparents were both immigrants from Norway. My maternal grandparents were Scots-Irish who abandoned the wilds of Canada's vicious climate for the vicious climate of northern Lake Superior.

That particular little town was divided by a highway and all the Scandinavians, being smart, lived away from the water, and all the others, who were mostly Scots-Irish, lived in

the southern part along the lake shore. The town retained its ethnic characteristics until well after World War II. If you went to a church in the northern part of the town you heard your sermon in Swedish or Norwegian. So, my parents were one of the first couples to marry across the line. They were high school sweethearts. My father went to the University of Minnesota first and then got an appointment to West Point, at which time it looked as if we were going into World War I. He graduated from West Point and they were married afterwards. I was born while he was stationed at Fort De Russy on Waikiki in Hawaii in 1923. Queen Victoria's birthday, 1923, May 24.

We didn't stay long in Hawaii. We moved to a variety of ... Dad was transferred to West Point as an instructor; then to Fort Monroe in Virginia, and then in the early days of the depression, he was stationed and asked for an assignment to the University of Minnesota. He was adjutant of the military department there for...well in those days, when the depression came, the army didn't transfer anybody who didn't want to be transferred. He opted to stay there and did so for seven years. I went through grade school in Minneapolis. We then went to Panama for a couple of years, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Fort Toten, New York and ended up here in Washington where my family spent the war years while he was overseas.

Q: What was your father doing?

ERICSON: My father graduated into the field artillery, but they sent him to France. He was unfortunate, his whole class was, in the sense that they graduated November 1918, which was the worse possible time for anybody to graduate from West Point. The war was just over and the hump was there...all those people who had been taken in and given permanent commissions after World War I. He stayed a 1st Lieutenant for 17 years. In those days promotion was strictly by seniority. Somebody died and everyone moved up one file. I don't know why he stood it, as a matter of fact, but he did.

They sent his class to France on a tour of the battle fields and in Europe, after the tour was over, they were assigned to various units of their respective branches in Europe mostly. He ended up with an artillery unit that was part of the Polish relief expedition. He spent a year delousing Poles and came back saying if that was what field artillery was all about he wanted no part of it. So he transferred to the coast artillery. He was mathematically inclined, more or less, and wanted to do the anti-aircraft work that the coast artillery had fallen heir to. So the result was that we lived a very pleasant life at mostly very nice posts, but in a branch that ultimately proved to be a dead-end. Actually he commanded anti-aircraft units that landed in New Guinea and got invalided out of that with scrub typhus. Then he commanded the anti-aircraft unit that went into Leahy and got invalided out of that with so-called jungle rot. He ended up as an inspector general and served in Japan with me in my early days in Japan. He came out as inspector general of the 8th Army and ended up as chief of staff of the Family Logistical Command which was what was left over when the 8th Army went to Korea when the Korean War broke out. Anyway, we were there concurrently and that was very pleasant.

Q: Where did you go to get your higher education?

ERICSON: I went to high school in Panama, a government one which was excellent and to a little Catholic school in Leavenworth while in Kansas, and then an enormous high school in Bayside, New York. I went to the Foreign Service School at Georgetown. I entered in the fall of 1941 and, of course, World War II came along and the faculty just disintegrated. I think most of us would admit we were majoring in ROTC rather than anything specific. I did not graduate from Georgetown until 1955. I had just completed the first semester of my junior year when my ROTC class was called in.

Q: Did you go into the Army?

ERICSON: Oh, yes.

Q: What did you do?

ERICSON: Well, Georgetown's ROTC was infantry and if you were in senior ROTC and were taken in during the war, they were obligated to send you to OCS. I didn't really want infantry, I wanted something a little better than that, but I weighed about 125 pounds at that stage of the game. I volunteered for something called the tank destroyers and went down to help build what is now Fort Hood, Texas. Got through basic training and they decided tank destroyers were a lousy idea so they shut down the OCS and abolished the whole branch. I went back to infantry basic training. OCS was closed, they sent us back to Georgetown under the ASTP program. They closed that down and I went down to Benning for another basic training cycle and finally got through infantry and into OCS. I ended up not being one of those sent overseas immediately. I suppose it was partly because I was such a strapping physical specimen! They sent me to a regiment that had broken off from a National Guard division when they so-called streamlined the National Guard and cut them from four regiments to three. Everyone of them had one extraneous regiment. Mine was sent up to the Aleutians where I spent two or three years doing not much of anything, but freezing. Then we came back down and we were dispersed and sent overseas. The cadre was kept and they turned it into an advanced infantry replacement training center to train anti-aircraft non-coms how to become infantry non-coms. I did that for a while. Then I was heading overseas when they dropped that golf ball on Hiroshima. I ended up in Korea.

Q: When did you go to Korea?

ERICSON: I got there in October, 1945 and because I was a good army brat and signed the wrong agreement...I signed the agreement to stay in 18 months after the cessation of hostilities...which, unfortunately, they held me to. I had a good experience. I was an instructor for various kinds of weapons and IRTCs. When I got overseas, they lined everybody up on the dock and told every fifth guy to step forward and I ended up in the Corps of Engineers as adjutant of the boat battalion of the 592nd Boat and Shore

Regiment, which was the outfit that ran the boats in the harbor of Inchon. So I spent all of the time in Korea living on Wome Do and...

Q: It is an island...

ERICSON: Yes. “Do” means island and “Wome” means moon tail. It is located in the port of Inchon.

The adjutant of the battalion, when they broke up the battalion and transferred everybody to...I transferred to the Corps of Engineers in order to get a promotion and then they broke up the battalion and turned us all into a transportation port company. I ended up commanding the whole thing the last eight months I was there. Anybody with any points went home and we weren't getting any experienced boat people so I had a nice little fief out there on Wome Do.

Q: I think it is important to capture this period because you are going to be returning to Korea a number of times. What were your impressions of Korea at the time and how did the Americans, from your perspective, operate there?

ERICSON: Well, remember we were on an island and our looks were always to the sea. We operated lighters to and from the shore. We were on duty 24 hours a day and you may recall something of the tide problem...

Q: Oh yes.

ERICSON: You were there after they had built the big tidal basin which Wome Do is actually part of now.

Q: I was there in 1953 during the Korean War.

ERICSON: Well, Inchon when I was there the port had the second highest average rise and fall of tide in the world, next to the Bay of Fundy, and you had to operate strictly in

accordance with the tides. You couldn't get in or out of the tidal basin unless the tide was correct. You couldn't even get up to Charlie Pier in Inchon harbor for much of the day. You would look over the area one hour and see nothing but shining water as far as the eye could see and six hours later it was nothing but shining mud as far as the eye could see. But we operated LCMs and LCTs, which the Navy had left us. All of the supplies at that time for Korea for the 24th Corps were coming in through Inchon because the railroads were broken to Pusan. Pusan was more or less inoperative anyway and the troops were all up towards the 38th parallel.

Anyway, how did the Americans operate? Ignorantly, I would say was my impression of the American occupation of Korea. Of course, the decision to go into Korea was made at the last minute and the 38th parallel was an arbitrary and not well chosen demarcation line. We were totally unprepared. We had a plan for governing Japan. We had military government people who theoretically had done some homework on their business and we had some policies and plans in motion. We had none of that for Korea, nor did any of the distinguished civilian or military minds, in my opinion, get much applied to Korea. I think we were there primarily to keep the communists, the Russians in particular, from coming any further south at that point and threatening Japan. We were there to do what we could to stabilize that situation as quickly as we could and then get out of it, which is basically what we did. But I have often thought trying to create a democracy out of a country as Korea was then, or even as it is now, is a difficult task at best and in the face of military tensions, etc., it gets to be damn near impossible. Anyway, we were not set up to try even.

I took my Foreign Service exams while in Korea because they had advertised in the “Stars and Stripes” that they would let people who hadn't graduated but who had military experience at a certain level, become eligible to take them and they were going to be given in Tokyo. Of course, I had no idea that I would pass, but I did want to go to Tokyo. So I signed up for them. Apparently everybody in Korea with a like mind did the same because they gave them in Seoul, so I never got out of Korea for that purpose.

When I took my oral exams, one of the examiners had been the political advisor to General Hodges, the commanding general of the 24th Corps, and a Foreign Service officer, of course, was on my panel. He started asking me questions about Korea and I spouted off pretty much in the same vein saying that if we weren't any better prepared to do right by the country than we had been then we had no business going there. Well, he passed me. Maybe he thought the criticism was valid, I don't know. I didn't know who he was at that time.

Q: Did you have any dealings with Koreans while working in Inchon? Were they laborers, etc.?

ERICSON: Yes. Not so much in the boat battalion. A boat shore regiment has two elements. It has a boat battalion which runs the boats and keeps them repaired and then it had a port battalion which furnished the beach people. In our situation it did the stevedoring both on board ship and in the tidal basin. The ships couldn't come into the tidal basin which couldn't take any more than a LST. A Baltic class freighter, the kind of thing the “Pueblo” was, could get in. Most of the supplies came on Liberty size ships and everything had to be lighted ashore. We ran the lighters and the port battalion provided all the stevedore troops. They, the port battalion, after the big exodus of World War II veterans, began to hire fairly large numbers of Koreans as stevedores, primarily. We used some in our maintenance...we had some wooden hull boats, some command boats, and the Koreans were very, very good shipwrights, good boat carpenters. I will never forget the first time I saw a Korean shipwright drive a long screw through the outer planking of one of our things and into the hull member with a power driver. He had a look of beatification on his face like nothing you ever saw. It would have taken him hours to get that thing in. We also hired them for kitchen help, for barrack cleaning, the donkey work in the motor pool. We didn't hire very many skilled ones and didn't come in contact with very many educated ones.I don't know where your question is leading...

Q: I just wondered if you had any impressions of the Koreans at that time?

ERICSON: Of Korea and the Koreans. I thought Korea was hopeless as a society then. It was this curious mixture of more or less 20th century and 15th century. You could smell it forty miles at sea. You doubtless remember that.

Q: The so-called honey pits.

ERICSON: Yes, the only fertilizer they had was human excrement. Honey wagons were all over the place. Our places were serviced with honey wagons. The agricultural tools that they used were all out of the remote, remote past. If you went up to Seoul you saw street cars and relatively modern buildings and that kind of thing, but in the countryside between Inchon and Seoul why agricultural and other methods were ox carts and that sort of thing were way, way out of date. The people were not excessively friendly. I had a house on the side of a hill in Wome Do in what had been an old Japanese complex and summer resort. Our club had been the governor's mansion. There were four hotels out there...you missed them because we managed to burn them down. Each of our companies was billeted in one of these hotels which was joined together by wooden passageways with a long passageway out over the water to join a square pavilion where they had their parties, etc. But I lived on the hillside in one of the separate cottages which they also maintained. But we let the Koreans live in all of the others. But they were very aloof and there was no fraternization, which we respected mightily. If a man was looking for a woman he had to go up to Seoul, possibly because most of Inchon was off limits. Up to the time I left, there was no inter-marriage, no real fraternization of any sort.

But, these were obviously a society totally alien to us young Americans. We had no comprehension of it. We heard mutterings of various political difficulties. There were times we were under arms against sabotage and that sort of thing. There were trouble with the communists down south and there were skirmishes, etc. But nothing ever untoward ever happened.

One lasting impression of anyone who served at that level and in that kind of work, was in terms of pilferage at which the Koreans were quite adept. They used to steal the dunnage...when we were unloading the cargo we would take the dunnage off the ship and pile it on the shore, and of course that was sacrosanct as American property, even though it was probably worthless, but Koreans desperately needed housing materials...

Q: Dunnage being wooden braces and things?

ERICSON: Well, yes. And cargo separating devices. Third class lumber for which there was no use in the United States, very raw. It was on the ships to protect the cargo. We would have fairly good size piles of it and Koreans would come over at night in their boats and try to make off with dunnage, which we permitted to a certain extent. We didn't really want to be stolen blind, but we did permit them to take that kind of thing.

There was one famous episode in Inchon where...When the army arrived in 1945 we had no winter equipment and the '45-'46 winter was a bitter cold winter. My people on the island got through that winter in tropical barracks where the screens had been sprayed with plastic. That was the winterization. Down the center of each barracks was a coal stove and they kept it red hot all winter long, and still it was freezing. Anyway, they determined they were not going to have that happen the next winter so they sent over winter uniforms, blankets and stored them in big old Japanese warehouses off the highway at the entrance to Inchon and put guards, dogs and machine guns around them. They went to open them that fall and found that the center of the warehouses had been eaten away by people digging in from across the highway underneath the warehouses and up through the floor and into the boxes. They had just about taken everything in one warehouse. There were lots of people wandering about wearing GI blankets and coveralls that winter.

Anyway, I did not conceive any great love or liking for the Korean people at that point. I really didn't know any other than those we hired. My job didn't put me in contact with any.

Q: Did you have any contact with our embassy?

ERICSON: No, we didn't have any embassy at that time because it was a military occupation. But I had entered the Foreign Service School before the war, not with the intention of joining the Foreign Service, because I was told the examination was virtually impossible to pass, but of going to Brazil in some commercial capacity or other. So I studied Portuguese at that point. But I was willing to take a shot at the Foreign Service and when they offered these exams and were going to permit me to take them even though I had not graduated and had really had no more than 5 semesters of college, and send me to Tokyo to boot, why I very happily signed up. Then when I got back to Georgetown after I was discharged...I left Korea on Christmas Eve 1946...I reentered Georgetown that spring semester 1947 and it was a mess. The school had expanded enormously without the facilities. All the veterans were coming back with the GI Bill and organizationally it was a mess. You couldn't get the courses you wanted and they told me that after I finished that semester I would have at least two more years to get a degree. I was feeling pretty discouraged. I hadn't heard from the State Department and went down and jiggled their arm. They said, “We have been looking all over for you, you passed. Do you want to take your orals?” So I took my orals and they said, “You passed your orals but you have to come in right away. How much longer are you going to stay in school?” I said, “Two more years.” “Oh, no, you have to take your appointment right now.” So I came in with something less than a college education and took pride of that for a few years and then found out it wasn't all that much of an advantage one way or another.

Q: Of course, after the war people were not as impressed...everybody's career was all messed up.

ERICSON: Yes. And the Foreign Service people, quite frankly, the examiners seemed to me much more interested in what you had done during the war, what kind of responsibilities you had had above and beyond what anyone normally would have had

who was going to college, etc. So the fact that I hadn't graduated didn't seem to bother anybody.

Q: We are talking about 1947. What did you do?

ERICSON: Well, I found out later that this was not true, that I could have stayed and graduated. There was no legal bar to putting off my entry for awhile. I thought I had been tricked a little bit, to tell you the truth. But, anyway, I came in that summer and took the A-100 class. When they asked us where we wanted to go I said Brazil and then Japan. I put Japan as my second choice because in the fall of 1945, before I left Korea, I had become eligible for an R&R and they had sent me to the Biwako Hotel just outside of Kyoto. This was a part of Japan which had been totally spared the war and compared to Korea it was very well organized, very lovely, very decent kind of civilization it seemed to me. Since I didn't know much about the rest of the world I felt if I couldn't go to Brazil I would go to Japan if they wanted me to. There was no opening in Brazil but there was one in Yokohama and I got assigned there.

I meanwhile had married. My wife and I actually didn't decide to get married until I was departing for New York in the last week of the A-100 course...

Q: Did you meet her in....?

ERICSON: Oh, I had known her for many, many years, well before the war. I had expected to go in and ask personnel for leave without pay or temporary assignment to Washington for 3 or 4 weeks, but they had had an unfortunate incident in the class before mine, 3/4 of which was still waiting in Washington for appropriate transportation or so they said. It was actually Bill Sullivan's wife who sat next to the brand new director of personnel who was asked what her husband did. She allowed that they were waiting for transportation to Bangkok. He did a little bit of research and concluded that there were too many people waiting for transportation in Washington and he ordered that everyone leave immediately, including the class that was graduating the next week which was mine. So they refused

to give me any leave for marriage or a honeymoon, so I took it. I went AWOL with the connivance of a very nice lady in the transportation department who said, “I can't give you a reservation two weeks away, but I can give you one for three days away. You can go down to Northwest Airlines after you get this ticket and tell them you can't make that flight and they will reschedule you. When you get to Yokohama they will report your date of arrival and somebody may or may not awaken to the fact that you were two weeks late.” Well, they awakened to it all right, but I got what I wanted. We were married and Betty had to wait until late April to come to Japan...I had left in October...because you couldn't bring people into the occupation unless you had housing and you had to wait your turn to get your housing.

Q: What was your impression of your class and the training you got and the people who were in there with you?

ERICSON: Not terribly good. The man who was the experienced relatively senior FSO and our guiding light was a fool and widely thought of as such. We did get the essentials needed to do the job we were going to be sent out to do. For example, we got very good consular training from a very pleasant young lady who used to sit on the front of her desk and swing her legs at the class and got undivided attention. But she also knew her business. The guest lecturers were not particularly good or distinguished. I can't really remember much of it other than the nuts and bolts of consular work. The class was not enormously successful. We had people like Hermann Eilts, who was probably the leading light of the class...an Arabist. I served with him later in London. There were about 40 in the class and 3 or 4 eventually made ambassador.

Q: Did you have any feel about what type of people these were?

ERICSON: Oh yes. We were told, of course, consistently, that we were very different from the kind of people who had come in prewar. Actually looking at prewar entrants, I don't think we were all that different, but you could prove statistically that the number of schools

that sent people into the class was much broader in our case than it had been before the war. We were from all over the country. There were a lot of people from the middle west, quite a few from the west coast. It wasn't the largely eastern oriented sort of thing that people told us it had been pretty much before the war. We had our Yale, Harvard and Princeton graduates. I was the only one from Georgetown. They were a pretty good cross-section. Almost everyone had been an officer in the military.

Q: Male?

ERICSON: Totally male, no females. We had people in their "30s in that class. I was rather surprised having stayed in the army so long that I was one of the three youngest in the class.

Q: What was your assignment to Yokohama?

ERICSON: Yokohama was a very interesting post at the time. Alex Johnson was the consul general.

Q: That was U. Alexis Johnson.

ERICSON: Yes. I thought that I would have bosses like Alex Johnson for the rest of my career and wasn't that going to be lovely. I should have known better because I had seen the guy who took us through the A-100 course. Alex Johnson was an extraordinary man. He had two more or less deputies, Tex Weathersby and Doug Overton, who were also prewar. Then he had a whole bunch of juniors who were just learning the ropes...anywhere from 6 to 8 vice consuls. The main jobs of the post were (1) to sort out the citizenship claims of some 80-90,000 Nisei who lived in Japan during the war, and (2) to service the occupation.

General MacArthur was very peculiar at that point about State Department operating in Japan. He had what he called his diplomatic section (PSQSCAP) which was staffed by

Foreign Service officers and was to help him with his relations with the representatives of foreign countries. It wasn't to do a hell of a lot of reporting and was to stay out of Japanese politics. It had a consular arm but they were not empowered to do anything. They could take a passport application but could not renew the passport. Their powers were severely circumscribed. This agreed with Alex too. He didn't exactly trust the characters up in Tokyo to do right. So most of the applications that were made in Tokyo were sent down to us to process. And, of course, they came to us individually in droves. Kobe-Osaka was also open at that time and doing some consular work, but there weren't many occupationers in that area.

Before the Korean War broke out we had opened the offices in Hokkaido, Kyushu and Nagoya.

We were also doing commercial work, consular invoices primarily and the old type of seaman work, witnessing marriages and the general consular procedures. I was the visa officer in Yokohama and did some visa work, but not to Japanese who were not allowed to travel until about the time of restoration of independence.

Q: I would like to get the dates you were in Yokohama.

ERICSON: From October, 1947 until early 1951. We left Yokohama in 1951...I was in Tokyo when the Korean War broke up.

Q: You were in Tokyo when the Korean War started which was June 25, 1950, so you left Yokohama....?

ERICSON: I misspoke, we left Yokohama and went on home leave in late 1950. We left Yokohama in early 1950 to go to Tokyo when the supervising consul general was moved to Tokyo.

Q: Well, now in this 1947-50 period, let's talk about dealing with the Nisei. Later on I got involved in doing the same thing with dual Americans in Germany out of Frankfurt. What was the situation in Yokohama?

ERICSON: First let me discuss how Alex ran the post. He got us all together early in the day and said, “Look, there are three people who have rank. Me, Doug and Tex. The rest of you guys, regardless when you arrived, have no rank. If I appoint you as chief of the citizenship section and the guy under you outranks you, that is just too bad, he will be chief some day.” But he rotated us all through each office. We all did everything. He was meticulous seeing that we learned what it was we were supposed to do. My first job was as general consular affairs officer...marrying Sam, doing the deposit of ship papers, notary public, etc.

Dealing with the Nisei. We had two women whose names really ought to be blazoned somewhere in gold, Yuki Oski and Yuki Weminome, both of them Nisei who had married Japanese and come back to Japan and lived there during the war. Especially Yuki Oski who was a 70 lb. little wired up bundle of energy. They really ran the program and taught every guy that went through there what he was doing.

Q: I had some Germans that did that to me too.

ERICSON: Well, they knew the Immigration and Nationality Act backward and forward and they WERE Americans. Yuki Oski was married to a professor at Tokyo University which bestowed upon her considerable social status, but she was an American and nobody ever forgot it.

Yokohama did almost all of that. We had a backlog at one point that was a year and a half of appointments. But the Nisei would inquire and it was much to their advantage, whether they wanted to identify themselves as American or not, to have identification because then they could be hired as foreign nationals by the military and the Japanese gave them extra

rations because they were foreigners. It pained the Japanese to do it, but they did. If they could establish citizenship, they could go to the United States.

Anyway, we had a vast backlog of cases and we would schedule... A consular officer would schedule about 8 interviews a day. People would come from all over the country. Before the interview we would send them out the list of documentation that they had to provide...what citizenship based on, prove were born, prove you are who you say you are, get the Japanese records which shows that as well as your American birth certificate. We made it as difficult for them as we possibly could to prove that they were who they were. They had to have identifying witnesses, etc.

So these hordes of people would come up. A lot of them came from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, particularly Hiroshima. When we bombed Hiroshima we did two things. Hiroshima was the center of immigration to the United States. A large portion of the poor farmers who came to the United States came from the Hiroshima area. Many when they returned to Japan left relatives back in the United States. Hiroshima was also the center of Christianity in Japan.

So, applicants would come up from Hiroshima and after three nights on a train...Yuki Oshi had a horror of little bugs that jumped around and she used to spray her office every day after the last applicant had left. They would submit a formal application and then it would be reviewed by an officer. Then we had to write an advisory opinion. The advisory opinion and the application had to be sent back to Washington in those days to the immigration people.

Q: Ruth Shipley was one of the preeminent dragons in the civil service.

ERICSON: Speaking of the A-100 course, we each drew some distinguished guest to introduce to the class as part of our training. I drew Ruth Shipley. I was scared stiff

because she had that dragon reputation. But I went over to her office and it was the most pleasant interview I ever had. She did a very, very good job for us.

Anyway, somebody back in Washington, had to approve the restoration of citizenship and then it was sent back out. This whole process could take as long as two years.

Those who did show up were not from the higher strata of society. People would usually get off the train dirty, tired and smelling not particularly attractively, so all of this stuff was carried out in the basement of the consular building in Yokohama. We all got our chance. I think it was Harry Pfeiffer, a consular office, who devised the Pfeiffer automatic opinion writing document which was a great help. It had various paragraphs which you just filled in dates and information and then sent it up to the typist saying, “Paragraph A, subtitle B, fill in this information.” So you didn't have to write the whole thing out all the time. It was our first stab at automation, I guess. But it was a big job. Part of it was providing evidence and testimony to support the government in its attempts to prevent the Nisei who we had turned down from suing for restoration of their citizenship.

There was a man by the name of Mike Matsuuta who became a very good friend of mine because we saw a lot of each other, right up to the time he died a few years ago. Mike was a lawyer for the Japan-American Citizens League in the US at that time. He was the one who brought suit on behalf of a family in the United States for some relative in Japan who had been denied citizenship by us. Of course, this was post-war II, very close to the end of the war and the feeling in the States about Japan and the Japanese wasn't all that tender. But Mike cheerfully sued the government every time he got a good case. I don't recall that Mike ever lost a case. I can remember cases where young men did everything conceivable to lose their citizenship...joining the army, taking what was considered an oath of allegiance, voting in elections. The outstanding case I think was the kid who had been brought back and hadn't been registered as a Japanese so he didn't have dual nationality when his parents brought him back in the 20's or early 30's. He went through a process called Kaifutu in Japan which is restoration of citizenship of Japan...Japanese law required

registration within six months after birth at that time or you forfeited your nationality. He was put through this nationalization process when he was six or seven years old. He volunteered for the Japanese Navy and was a naval pilot during which he took all kinds of oaths, etc. Anyway, the guy had done everything. And he spoke no English. There was nothing American about this guy and we thought we were going to nail this fellow. Mike thought differently. He said that the renationality was done under duress, his entry into the Japanese Navy, since he wasn't really a national of Japan at the time because the process was done without his consent, he was serving as a Japanese national. Voting was under compulsion. At that point the government decided they weren't going to fight it any longer and he went back. A few years later, of course, the Act was changed.

Anyway we had that kind of entertainment. Then we also had the other sole interesting aspect of that job which was ferreting out those who had served in the Japanese Army who claimed that they had not. That was all brought about by this guy Mito Kawakita, who had been a prison guard. He actually hadn't served in the army but he was a Nisei who had been employed as a prison guard somewhere down in southwestern Japan. He had been very brutal to Allied and American prisoners. He got his citizenship back very quickly. He got a passport, went to the United States and was recognized in a Los Angeles grocery store as one of the two Japanese tried for treason. There was a big hullabaloo over how Kawakita got to the United States. That happened fortunately before I got to Yokohama, but we instituted a system of background checks by the CIC. Every male who could conceivably have served was from that time on investigated by the counterintelligence people to determine whether he had or hadn't served in the army because what they would bring as a certificate if they hadn't served was something issued by the local village register. Everything is entered in the local register, if you served in the army it is there. The demobilization bureau of the Japanese army would also issue certificates, but their records were a mess and it was better to rely on the local record, but the local recorders got to sympathizing with these guys. Here this guy has the chance to go to the land of milk and honey and simple justice requires that I give him the certificate. When this process was

first started they actually pulled 10 or 12 people off a ship who were actually on board and made them go through the process and found 4 or 5 of them who had actually served in the army.

Q: Serving in the army was considered a disqualifying factor?

ERICSON: Yes, under the Nationality Act of 1940, while a citizen. But these were Nisei, almost every one was a dual national.

That business had begun to decline by the time the call came for my transfer to Tokyo. When we went home on leave we bid farewell to the consular business.

Q: Did you have anything to do with marriages?

ERICSON: Oh yes. Before the war there were not too many Korean-Americans, but in Japan they had whore houses dedicated to the occupation within two weeks of the time troops landed. There was a lot of fraternization. A lot of it might have resulted in marriages if it hadn't been for the fact that the Nationality Act of 1940 also prohibited the issuance of an immigrant visa to a person who was 50 percent or more of specified races, including Japanese. The army found this very convenient. There was a very small business and missionary communities in Japan. Almost everyone who was an American was affiliated with the occupation and the occupation's rules. The occupation's rules on marriage was that you cannot marry anybody who cannot accompany you on transfer. Therefore all these GIs who hooked up with Japanese girls were told they could not marry unless their intended was allowed to go to the States. They would transfer people if things looked like they were getting too hot. You could be transferred from Sapporo down to Kyushu. Nonetheless, the GIs became aware that political pressure could be brought to bear to rectify the situation, so there were several periods when Congress passed special legislation which said in effect...notwithstanding provisions in the Immigration and Nationality Act foreign spouse of an American citizen, veteran of World War II, may enter the United States provided the marriage takes place within 60 days from the

passage of this act. So it gave guys 60 days to get the army to approve their marriage. That was done a couple of times, at least one very famous time before I arrived there. The army dodged giving permission and made it as difficult as possible. You had to have Chaplain interviews, parents consent, etc. So the result was that everybody who finally got permission to marry ended up sitting in the consulate yard on two or three days before the 60 day period elapsed. They tell me it was quite a sight.

There is a marvelous story involving Alex Johnson who was consul general in Yokohama where virtually all of these marriages were being done. Incidentally consular officers were forbidden in the words of the time to celebrate marriages. But Japanese law said that a marriage between a foreigner and a Japanese is not legal unless it is dully registered with the Japanese and unless the consul, the representative of the government of the foreigner would certify that he is legally free to marry in accordance with the laws of his country. That poses a problem for us because (a) we can't do the marriage and (b) a federal officer cannot certify the state law and marriage is governed by state law except for the District of Columbia. Anyway, the way around it was to enter into an agreement with the one ward office in Yokohama or Tokyo, etc., that you will let them appear before you and the American citizen will swear that he is legally free to marry. Then if you are satisfied that he is legally free to marry in accordance with the laws of the state he claims to be a resident of, then you will sign these certificates to witness to marry, take all the papers from both the Americans and the Japanese involved, so that the Japanese can then tell the Japanese is okay and the act of our giving the papers would indicate it was okay by us. Then they would enter the thing in their local ward registry and then send the girl's papers back up to her so that they can properly be entered in her home ward. Then it is all nice and legal and we can issue the certificate of witness, etc. A lot of these guys came from states where there were still anti-miscegenation laws.

Q: Also there were laws prohibiting marriage of different races. This was basically to keep whites from marrying blacks, but it could spill over into Asians.

ERICSON: There were places, Idaho for example, which specifically mentions Japanese. But, you are right, many of the southeastern states had anti-miscegenation aimed at blacks, not Japanese, but they applied to Japanese because of the way the law was written.

Anyway, getting back to this Alex Johnson business, Alex was a rather imposing character. He is a little stiff. He can be frightening at first appearance unless you know him really pretty well. He is a very impressive guy. He closed the consulate for everything but these marriages in order to take care of these teeming customers and get those children out from the front yard. It was August, as I recall it, and the consulate general had a big circular desk out in front. You came in the door under the great seal of the United States and the place looked like the White House. It was deliberately built during the Hoover Administration to resemble a little White House. It was a very imposing edifice and it was a little awe inspiring when you came in. You came to this big desk and then to Alex Johnson who is standing behind the thing. One day, Alex was in short temper. It was hot. The guy was carefully instructed to come prepared with all of his papers ready and his would be wife by his side. A Negro soldier, a sergeant, came in with his girl and he approached the desk. Alex rather brusquely took his papers from him and started sifting madly through them. One of the things, as I mentioned, that had to be provided, in addition to all the Army paraphernalia, was an extract from the family census register called a Koseki from the girl so that it could be given to the War Office and sent to her to complete the cycle. He is looking through the papers and can't find the Koseki. The sergeant meanwhile was thinking he had gotten this far but he was still not sure of making it. Here is some guy who is obviously irritated looking through his papers. Johnson looked up and gave him his cold, blue, Norwegian stare and said, “Sergeant, have you seen this girl's Koseki?” The sergeant backed off and said, “No sir, I haven't seen nothing yet. This thing has been on the up and up.”

I didn't participate in one of those things, but I did do the marriages among members of the occupation who had to have much the same kind of approval. What we did constituted the only legal marriage. Getting it accepted by the War Office and registered in Japan in accordance to Japanese law establishes legality in almost every state which state that Americans married abroad must be married in conformity with the laws of the state in which they are resident. But that kind of thing uncovered the fact that there probably are quite a few people who were nurses, civilian employees, etc. who married other Americans very early in the occupation and whose marriages were not legal because they were probably done by chaplains who gave them a nice certificate saying they were married. However, if any one wanted to contest one of those marriages, they probably could make it stand up.

Q: Then you went to Tokyo for a little while before you went on home leave.

ERICSON: Yes. We established the supervisory office. Johnson had left by this time. Let me tell one thing about Alex Johnson because I think it is one of the great examples in a very small way of what makes a first rate Foreign Service supervisor. I was the visa officer. There was a man in Seattle, a Nisei, who we will call Mr. Imada. Mr. Imada was a prominent Democrat, the leader of the Seattle Nisei political Democratic community. Before the war he had been a large scale importer to the United States of scrap iron. His mother was an issei, a first generation. She had come to the United States with her husband...

Q: Issei is first generation?

ERICSON: The issei were immigrants. They were the Japanese who came, never acquired citizenship but settled in the United States. Nisei is second generation, born in the United States, and probably dual citizens because most of the issei registered their children promptly and had them established as Japanese. We hated the idea of dual nationality and that is what the Nationality Act aimed to eliminate.

Anyway, his mother had lived in the United States for a few years and had given birth to this guy but they had left an elder brother behind in Japan and he turned out to be quite a successful businessman in Japan. So, in the early 30's the mother had gone back to Japan with a returning residence permit meaning she could get back to the United States as long as she kept that valid. It had a year or two period of validity. She had gone to Japan and never returned to the United States allowing her permit to elapse long before the outbreak of the war. In the three year following the war she had never applied at the consulate for anything and we hadn't heard word one from Mr. Imada either in Seattle.

However, Alex knew of him. He showed up at the consulate one day intending to see Alex and Alex was in Tokyo for a meeting. So Tex Weatherby saw him and what he said was, “I have this ancient mother. She is now in her late '70s and I feel she will be much more comfortable in the United States and I would like to get her a visa to return.” Of course it was totally against regulations and policy at that time to issue a visa to anyone who had shown no inclination to go back. She really had no claim to returning resident status. Tex told him this and he got furious. Tex came in to see me and said, “Dick, take care of this guy. I have ruffled his feathers, he is mad at me.” So I took this guy and talked to him for a couple of hours. I went over and over the regulations and instructions we had. But I told him, “Look, your mother is old and infirm. Why don't you go back and get some doctor to issue a certificate to the effect that she needs medical attention which is not available in Japan.” I said, “I think I could probably swing a temporary visa for medical treatment and if she goes to the United States for such treatment, who knows what will happen.”

Well, he thought that was a good idea and he left the office and met Johnson on the way out. They chatted and he showed no signs of alarm or anything. Anyway, he went back to Tokyo and found a telegram waiting for him at his hotel to get back to Seattle right away, so he took the next plane. On the plane he probably absorbed a few drinks and started thinking and he got mad. He wrote a letter to his lawyer...I think he was thinking of Tex but the only name he remembered was Ericson...accusing me of everything under the sun. I

had two policies with respect to Nisei and Caucasians. I treated one terribly and treated the other with great courtesy. I spent more time at cocktail parties than I did in the office. I had treated him viciously and failed to listen to the justice of his request, etc. Most of it was the allegation of dual standards. His lawyer sent it to Senator Walgren and Walgren sent it to the Department with a covering letter saying that this person was a good strong supporter of Democratic activities in Seattle and important to me and I want to know what you are doing to my constituent and what kind of punishment are you going to give this miscreant out in Yokohama.

The Department, of course, sent it on out to Alex in a dispatch saying, “We want to hear promptly what kind of punishment you are going to mete out to this guy Ericson? What is with him anyway?” There was no question in the Department's mind that I was guilty. Anyway, Johnson sat down and started his response by saying, “Your charges are misdirected. If there was anything that went on in this office that was wrong, they should have been directed at me because I am the consul general and everything that happens in this office is my responsibility. Then if there is something further to be done I will act against the individual. But first and foremost it happened here if it happened at all and it is my responsibility so you should have been charging me and not Ericson.” Then he went on to say (he went on for four pages, I still have a copy of it), “I know this guy he couldn't have done this kind of thing. Here is probably what actually happened. Etc.” Then he had Tex and me both write our recollections of the incident and enclosed them with his response. He said, “I urge the Department to inform the Senator and Mr. Imada's lawyer and Mr. Imada that until each of them has apologized to Mr. Ericson in writing we will not take Mr. Imada's case out of the file.” That was the last we heard of it officially from the Department. I thought that was a rather extraordinary thing for a boss to do. If Alex Johnson had asked me to lie down on a railroad track right then I probably would have done it. The outcome of the case doesn't show the Department in too good a light because six months later, by this time Johnson had left, I was still visa officer...it happened to be Larry Taylor, the guy who had been my leader in the A-100 course, and he took me aside and said, “Dick, can't

we do something about this? The Department still feels Walgren wants this done and can't you see your way clear to making an exception of some sort?" I said, "No, I can't and I won't. If I do I am knuckling under this kind of pressure and if I don't I am being vindictive. I don't even want to hear about the case any further." Actually we had nothing against the old lady. She was a sweet old lady. She came down for her visa because he went to Jaybird Pilcher who was the consul general replacing Johnson and he suspended me as visa officer for the day and made Owen Zurhellen visa officer who cheerfully issued the visa contrary to all regulations. I was perfectly happy that Owen had done it because she was a nice old lady and what the hell difference did it really make except it was a matter of principle by that time, of course.

That was one of the things that made Alex Johnson such an extraordinary person. I was looking forward to having all my bosses be like him, but unfortunately that was not the case. In matters large and small, he was something else.

Q: Now you went to Tokyo....

ERICSON: I went to Tokyo for the first part of 1950. I was in the consulate in Tokyo when the Korean War broke out. I was sent to Tokyo with Pilcher because I had had experience of every aspect of consular work and nobody in Tokyo had and a couple of the other guys were designated to open the new posts in Nagoya and Sapporo. I wanted Nagoya very badly but didn't get it because they wanted me in Tokyo.

Anyway, we were in Tokyo when the Korean War broke out. My parents were in Yokohama. We had been stationed together for about a year and a half, I guess. Anyway, we were in the consulate and then went home sometime late 1950 and I came back into the economic section of the embassy. Quite frankly, I told Jaybird that I was not coming back into the consular section because I felt I had done it all at that level and I wanted to get some other experience and besides I had great difficulty with the man who had been running the Tokyo office and who was now his deputy. A fellow by the name of Glenn

Brunner who had been a missionary before the war and when his missionary society during the impression proved incapable of supporting him any more had taken a job as clerk in the consulate at Nagasaki and had lateraled into the Foreign Service and was now consular officer in Tokyo.

Q: One of the real problems, I think, of the consular business was the lateral entry of people who had limited ability and limited intellectual prowess.

ERICSON: Amen! I won't go into detail about Glenn but he made it impossible for us. He was a niggling little nitpicker, scared of any initiative or action and he made life just miserable for us.

So when I did come back I was assigned to the commercial section. By that time the Korean War was booming along and our attitude and our policies toward Japan were very, very rapidly changing. The Peace Treaty started to be negotiated about that time and we hired on John Foster Dulles to represent us. John Allison was his special assistant for that purpose. There was considerable concern...of course the American army in Korea in 1950 was woefully understaffed. My wife had taken a job in Yokohama, I was the lowest paid Foreign Service officer going for the first two years of my existence in the Foreign Service. We had some extraordinary expenses and we had to get Johnson's permission for her to go to work. That was spurred on by the fact that between Owen Zurhellen and me we had the two most disreputable automobiles in Yokohama and he didn't like us parking them out in front. So one of my stated desires was to buy a new car. Alex with great reluctance gave Betty permission to take a job and she became secretary to the Chief of Staff of the 8th Army and as such took the notes of General Walker's staff meetings. She would come home and tell me what was said about the state of readiness, and the lack of equipment and how everything was going to hell in a hand basket with this army of occupation. So, when the Korean War broke out we were woefully unprepared for it. The Chief of Staff, incidentally, was General Dean when she went to work. He was a friend of my father's as a

matter of fact. She worked for him for about 6 months and then he got his division that he took to Korea and lost.

Anyway, we assembled the forces as well as we could, as everybody knows, and threw them into the line in Korea and we denuded Japan. There was nobody really left to run an occupation for 75 million people. And, of course, there was concern, but there was never any indication that the Japanese were going to do anything contrary to what the occupation wanted them to do, despite the fact we had no force to back it up. They remained totally cooperative and as a matter of fact set up their own national police reserve at the time which became the foundation of the current Japanese ground forces. But there was no move of any kind that would have given any American administrator basis for concern.

And then we began to rely very heavily on Japan as a base of operations. Airplanes were taking off to fight over Korea, the hospital system in Japan was devoted to caring for our wounded, and the Japanese economy which really up to that point hadn't recovered a lot, began to prove capable of doing all kinds of things in support of the action in Korea and the Japanese began to make a lot of money out of it. This was the real beginning of the revival of the Japanese economy, the demands of the Korean War. A lot of interesting things came up on the economic side and I was quite happy to be assigned to that section despite my total lack of knowledge of economics.

Q: I was economic officer and having got a D- in economics in college I was a little worried about this, but it didn't make a lot of difference. What was our mission setup at that point? You were there from 1950-52.

ERICSON: The occupation stayed until late April, 1952. So during the first two years of the Korean War the Peace Treaty negotiations were going on a pace but it was still formally an occupation. The Department people at that time were still formally part of the SCAP Headquarters. We were called by them the Diplomatic Section. We were called by the

Department, the Office of the Political Advisor to the Supreme Command. There was constant war between MacArthur and Washington as to what our status really was and the occupation gave ground very grudgingly, but as it began to fade out our economic section began to take on much of the burden that the economic section of SCAP had. The consular officers were allowed to do quite a bit more. Political officers began to be able to report and we got involved a little bit in politics and it sort of gradually evolved to the point where when the Peace Treaty became effective we were really pretty well prepared and into sufficient things to start functioning immediately as an experienced and capable embassy. But MacArthur never...I don't know what difference Ridgeway made to all this...as long as he was SCAP accepted any kind of independence or activity without his authority by State Department personnel.

Q: You were there when MacArthur was there?

ERICSON: Oh, yes. I was there at the airport when he left.

Q: Did you feel the heavy hand? Did you feel like a pariah?

ERICSON: Well, remember, first of all I am an army brat and I know something about General MacArthur and his World War I incarnation. He was an extraordinary man although he went very bad towards the end as most great men do. But I have more respect for him than I have loathing and dislike. You could see why he took the attitude that he did. He was the supreme commander. That is what it said. Supreme Commander of Allied Power. None of the powers had any more rights in theory than any of the others. The British established an embassy to him. He almost felt like his own government. But his was the responsibility and he was going to exercise it strongly.

Did I feel personally like a pariah? No. Life in Japan for practically any member of the occupation was a great pleasure in those days. You could go and do anything. There was no physical danger of any kind, no crime, nothing to worry about. If you want to play golf you can go anywhere you want to. I was a member of the Kokane Country Club and well

past that. What does it cost to get into Kokane today? A million dollars? You don't have to pay an entry fee but you have to buy a bond that is worth a million dollars before any individual can be accepted and you damn well better have a Japanese name.

Anyway, we were well housed, we had inexpensive servants and were reasonably well fed. The medical care was perfectly okay from the standpoint of then. The military, as long as you didn't offend any of their precepts, treated you pretty well. We had an officer who was down in Kobe-Osaka, for example, who insisted on bringing a lady into the bachelor officers quarters where apparently rules were rather rigidly maintained. They didn't know what to do about this guy so they asked to have him transferred and he was transferred up to Tokyo...and the lady followed him. You really had to step on their toes in order for them to say anything.

Q: During the MacArthur time, what were you doing?

ERICSON: Well, I was in the consulate until just before the Korean War broke out and then after home leave I returned to Tokyo and was in the economic section. The economic section was beginning to phase out and the embassy economic section was beginning to be involved in a lot of things. I was fortunate in that sense to be in the commercial section, rather than doing economic reporting. One of my responsibilities was the Japanese iron and steel industry. I can look back on those days and say, “Gee, I was personally involved and to a certain extent responsible for a lot of developments in the Japanese steel industry.” For example, we were charged with issuing on behalf of the Department of Commerce, what were called priority assistance certificates. You would have a Japanese company that wanted to obtain something from the United States in the way of specialized machinery or specialized technology. Because of the strains the Korean War put on the American economy, it was usually something that was being rationed out in the United States and for an overseas client to get it required some special effort and certifications. One of the big cases I worked on...there was an outfit called National Boat Carriers, an American company probably owned by Greeks but registered as American, which was

involved in tankers and the transportation of petroleum products. Well, the Korean War put an enormous demand...one minute World War II oilers were a dime a dozen and the next minute they were gold and the demands for them jumped by leaps and bounds. Well, they wanted to start building tankers, especially to service the Korean War. The National Boat Carriers saw this opportunity and decided they would like to build them in Japan with cheap labor, marvelous facilities...they built the Yamato...

Q: The largest battleship ever built.

ERICSON: Well, it so happened they went down to Kure where the Yamato was built and where the huge Kure naval yard was. In that neighborhood was located a major Japanese shipbuilding company. The naval yards at Kure were part of the industrial complex of Japan that had been designated as reparations to the various claimants against Japan during World War II. Fortunately we didn't behave like the Russians, who denuded Korea, we didn't have to. We said to our allied friends, “Look, we designated all this stuff for reparations and if you want it, come and get it.” But how are you going to move a major shipyard? So the naval yard in Kure sat from the time of the end of the war until the Korean War broke out, more or less abandoned. National Boat Carriers saw this and said, “Ah, here is where we will start building our big tankers.”

What it required, of course, was the occupation to release it from reparation designation and among other things, the United States to release steel because the Japanese steel industry was not producing sufficient steel for this kind of thing. I got involved then on behalf of the embassy in investigating this and writing justifications from Japan and making the recommendation to Commerce. The next thing that came up, of course, was that National Boat Carriers decided they didn't want to build tankers of riveted construction, they wanted to build a welded ship. Well, this put an entirely different light on things because the Japanese steel industry sure as hell was not producing any welding steel ship plate and they would have to get everything they needed from the United States. So this required special exceptions. I then wrote a recommendation back to Commerce which

said, 'No, don't do it. The purpose for which the shipyard was released from reparation designation was to permit the employment of Japanese in the area and benefit the growth of the Japanese economy and the Japanese steel industry." The whole thing looked like a very good deal for the Japanese economy which was still in pretty sad shape. I said, "If you start letting them import welding steel, the next thing they are going to be asking for to get faster and quicker will be something else they can get in Japan, so lets draw the line here and say No."

As a result of that National Boat Carriers turned to Yawata, a big Japanese steel company, and helped Yawata invest money to produce steel of the quality they required. That I say to this day is one of the foundations that later became a major, major industry in Japan, namely, shipbuilding. Now it is not as important because they have found cheaper places to do the job, like Korea.

Q: Yes, and they are moving away from Korea to India or some place.

ERICSON: Yes. Labor is very intensive in this kind of thing and a very expensive element so if you can get cheap steel plate...tankers are easy to build, a very uncomplicated ship, although huge. Anyway, I still think today that that recommendation was one of the foundations of the resurgence of the Japanese economy because it forced them to invest in modern technology.

The Japanese were running their steel industry much like they run everything else on a very cooperative and friendly basis. Things were rigged and jobs allocated. We, in the embassy in the declining SCAP were interested in using this Korean War to introduce the element of competition into the Japanese economy. One of the ways we tried to do it was by improving the ability of the smaller companies to compete with the big three in Japan...Nippon Kokon, Fuji and Yawata were the big three, but there were a bunch of others. We had an application from an interesting little company between Yokohama and Tokyo by the name of Kawasaki. Kawasaki Steel Company wanted to build the first really

integrated steel plant in Japan. Yawata's plants and some of Fuji's could be said to be integrated, but if you were an American and visited any of these things and you saw the way the materials crossed each other and the lack of a logical flow of things. They sort of grew like Topsy and were really pretty bad yards. Kawasaki wanted to build what would be the first post-war steel production facility from the ground up with the latest technology, etc. I had the privilege of writing the justification to get release of the equipment that they needed and to get a loan. The plant was very successful.

Of course, we had told them not to muck around with this kind of thing. Don't get yourself tied down to single buyers. Find out who makes the best of whatever equipment needed and go and get it. Design the plant not to accommodate some piece of land, but design a piece of land to accommodate the plant. And they did that. They put it in Tokyo harbor and made a landfill into the harbor which was designed to accommodate the plant they had designed so ships bearing ore could come up Tokyo Bay and dump it right at the blast furnace. This was true of any other raw materials. They could be delivered right into the plant and at the other end of the plant could be loaded into ships for shipping. This was one of Japan's major economic advantages that people don't think about very much, almost all of Japanese major post-war industries is built along the sea coast and behind it is a marvelous railroad network which makes Japan really tick. So their internal economy is very well served transportation-wise, but externally also. This is one reason why the American steel industry lost out to Japan...In the United States you had to dig the ore from the Mesabi and take it down to Lake Superior, put it on an ore boat, take it over to Cleveland or Gary. Gary was pretty good because the plants were close by, but Cleveland always involved a certain amount of transshipment. Going down to Pittsburgh was another very expensive train ride. Whereas the Japanese could and did buy their much better quality ore (the Mesabi was running out at the time) than we had from anywhere they wanted to in the world and could ship it by sea right to the blast furnace. And they could export it right from the plant without having to put it on a train if they didn't want to. That was an enormous advantage and probably as much or more than what their labor costs

were at that time. Anyway, Kawasaki was successful and the plant was copied then by virtually every other Japanese plant that has been built ever since.

So it was interesting, that work in the commercial section at that time. I met some very important Japanese economic people, especially in those industries which I was covering...the metal working industries, the automobile industry, etc.

Q: What was the embassy's impression of Japanese business people at that time?

ERICSON: Well, in the first place, it is a little difficult to answer that question because...you stood apart and looked at this organization and it was very different from anything you expected in the United States. You didn't see the dynamic CEO, take care sort of people. What you saw was major economic organizations run on a highly cooperative basis headed by somebody to whom everybody paid great deference, but you never saw that guy do much of anything except ceremonial things that would give you rise to believe that he was somebody due that kind of deference. But, nonetheless, within the Japanese system there was that reason, he had paid his Japanese dues and he got where he was because he was best at doing the things that the Japanese respect. In many respects that is different from what you would expect in an American. They were slow at that time and cautious in many ways. But from the very beginning they were dedicated to making a Japanese and making sure that whatever they got from abroad that they assimilated and made theirs, and then, if possible, they would not continue to rely on the outside source. I saw this time and time and time again.

Remember the Korean War was still going on and they were still crushed. It is hard for Americans to appreciate...those people who worry about a military resurgence in Japan, for example, really should have been there during this period because this country was really more or less paralyzed with uncertainty. Everything that was theirs had more or less been rejected because of the war and they were going to reassert that, but in this period they were still operating in a vacuum.

Q: How about labor unions at that time? This was the time when labor was a very big item in the American context.

ERICSON: The Japanese labor movement to the extent that it was effective was almost always company oriented. You had company unions, you had some company-wide unions. They never achieved national organizational status. They never became a major national political influence the way they did in the United States. There was no national automobile organization, for example. There were Nissan unions, Toyota unions, etc. The few that were nationalized represented institutions, which themselves were nationalized. For example, the teachers union. Everybody came under the Ministry of Education so if you were a member of the teachers union why you were a member of a nationwide organization and when you struck or sounded off well then you could make your voice heard. If you were in the railroad workers union, the national railroads covered every part of the country you were a nationwide force and if you threatened to strike well then the whole country would tremble.

But there was much more compartmentalization in unions in Japan at that time than there was in the United States. The Japanese didn't look favorably on unions and never have and it was a constant struggle for them. Then, of course, politically, the union leadership was always accused, rightfully or wrongfully, of being socialist oriented politically and that was anathema to the conservative leadership of Japanese business which really controls the country and they made it very difficult for them.

Q: How did the developing military situation in Korea with China's entrance and the eventual firing of MacArthur hit you all?

ERICSON: After the war, the Japanese having had the privilege of being the first recipients of the atomic bomb, the American military was kind of godlike for a while, and this went right to MacArthur, himself. We were kind of godlike to the Koreans too during this period. The Koreans were not fools. Before the Korean War they knew...Koreans and I have

argued in the '60s and '70s when they would say, “We knew who the power of the world was. We knew who did the bomb. We knew who supplied the Russians. We saw the Russians coming down in GM trucks and jeeps. We knew where their industrial basis was. We knew they didn't have it. We knew that if you wanted to you could have kept them north of the Yalu, but you didn't want to. You sat down there and drew this stupid line across the peninsula.” But the same thing applied to a certain extent in Japan until the Korean War broke out and then this terrible weakness in the early days of the war and then the entry of China and our inability or reluctance to go after the Chinese was the first in a series of...it has been a long, slow, gradual process, perhaps we never had the respect that we had in June 1950 militarily from the Japanese. Nonetheless, when the Chinese came in there was no terrible feeling that Japan was in danger, and that was what they were concerned about, they didn't give a damn about Korea. They didn't feel that they were militarily threatened really, except perhaps down the road should we fail utterly in Korea. So, they welcomed eventually the renegotiation of the armistice and all that.

Now MacArthur. Well, I think MacArthur up to the Inchon landing was still a man for his time. After that he went down hill pretty badly. The Japanese by that time were pretty conscious of the fact that we were relying rather heavily on them. MacArthur had pretty much done his job in Japan. He did some marvelous things.

Q: Oh, yes.

ERICSON: I don't mean that he did them, but the occupation did some marvelous things. And you have to say that MacArthur did because he was very reluctant to take instructions.

Q: It was his creature and it worked.

ERICSON: The Japanese didn't understand what the issue really was. They couldn't equate Harry Truman with the Emperor and so the fact that MacArthur was defying the President of the United States and saying things that he shouldn't be saying...in Japan it

would equate to some Japanese general who said that he didn't think the Emperor was right and he was going to go his own bloody way. So they really didn't understand the issue, but on the other hand, I think they basically sympathized with General MacArthur. But on the other hand, he had run his course. There is no doubt that for a long time there he was pretty much idolized. You could see this. MacArthur never went anywhere. You would joke during the occupation that MacArthur knew Tokyo from A-Z, avenues that is. We renamed all those streets in Tokyo. He went from the American embassy where he lived to the Daichi Building and then back to the American embassy again. He very seldom went anywhere else. But his time of arrival at the Daichi Building was very well known. He always arrived around mid-morning. Every morning during the time he was there, there was a goodly crowd of Japanese, 3 or 4 hundred would stand there and watch him leave his car and walk into the Daichi Building. He never paid much attention to them.

He was given enormous respect. My father at this time was chief of staff of the Japan Logistical Command headquartered in Yokohama, one of the senior officers in what was left of the occupation when MacArthur left, and we had grandstand seats at the airport for the departure ceremony. We drove from Tokyo into the airport that morning ahead of MacArthur's motorcade in order to get to our seats in time. That route was lined all the way from downtown Tokyo, two or three deep, all the way down to Haneda Airport, which is a long ways away. Japanese standing there, some of them waving Japanese flags, standing very respectfully. I am talking 6 or 7 miles. Nobody cheered, they just stood there and watched him go. Three or four years later he might just as well not have been there at all. As long as he was there, and as long as he was behaving MacArthurish, they revered him. Did they retain any long time affection for him, I don't think so. The famous joke when Douglas MacArthur II, his nephew, was appointed to Japan, the Japanese Prime Minister was asked how he looked upon the appointment of MacArthur's nephew as ambassador, he said, “Well, he is a good man, we won't hold his name against him.”

There are probably some elements of Japanese society that feel more strongly, if they know the origin of their present well being, who feel better towards him than others do. I

have in mind the land reform program , for example. I think it is probably one of the more important factors in transforming Japan from whatever it was to a reasonable facsimile of democracy. MacArthur was sensible enough to bring in one of the world's great land reform experts to plan with a Japanese, who happened, incidentally, to be a socialist, the land reform program for Japan. I shared an office with Wolf for eight or nine months in the old embassy building. Wolf and this Japanese, whose name I can't remember, he was a Socialist Diet member for a long time and was then working in the Agricultural Ministry, planned the thing together and they plotted it to have certain effects. One was to destroy the wealth of absentee landowners and the other thing was to provide that land to the people who worked it. They did it by putting through legislation which required the absentee to sell...to transfer the land to those people, to give them ownership rights. They didn't have any money so this was to be accomplished by the government paying the landlords in government bonds and then making the farmer sign a promissory note to reimburse the government the value of the bond. Well, of course, this was done when the Yen/Dollar exchange rate was 50 to 1 and it ended with the Yen worth 360 to 1. The inflation was probably worse than that so in effect the Japanese government had considerable loss to itself and also there was great loss by the landowners who were paid in what was really rather worthless paper, while the new landowners paid it back at 1/10th the cost. So it was a very effective way of transferring ownership and stood up. These people until today have been the backbone of the relatively conservative element in Japanese politics...these new land owners who suddenly found they had an interest in certain political activities that they never had interest in before.

This was Douglas MacArthur. A conservative, old American military type, who probably couldn't see beyond the end of his nose in the opinion of most people, but he did a very far reaching and far sighted thing here and it has been enormously valuable to his country's interests right down to today...I mean the United States.

Q: Was there much of a change in what you were doing in the embassy when MacArthur left?

ERICSON: No, of course Ridgeway came in and the Peace Treaty was being negotiated, so the whole thing was changing gradually anyway. Well, perhaps not so gradually, rather rapidly as a matter of fact. So by the time the Peace Treaty was signed in April, 1952, the embassy was almost functioning...Bob Murphy was the first post-war ambassador and he arrived the day after the Treaty went into effect. Then came the first political explosion on May Day, 1952 when the newly independent, all of its authority in its own hands, was challenged by the left wing in the May Day riots of 1952. At that point we were a functioning embassy. By that time we had a full complement of everybody on board and we were moving back into the chancery, the Residence, etc.

The May Day riots, I think, was a test of the ability of the Japanese government to maintain the course that it had been following which culminated probably in 1960, but we will wait for that for awhile. Anyway, this was a student riot in which left wing student organizations got together and paraded. I have some great pictures. My wife had another job at that time, she was working at 5th Air Force Headquarters which was on the main drag right across from the Imperial Palace and she had a window overlooking the riot scene and she took a bunch of pictures.

That night at an affair of some sort at the embassy when Murphy was commenting on...I didn't see the riots we were over at the Mitsubishi main building by that time and my section had not moved back into the chancery...we were together that evening and Murphy made a rather astute comment, I remember, he said that he thought what had transpired in the Imperial Plaza was probably the deliberate work of the Japanese police who permitted the students to march from Meiji Park down through the streets of Tokyo, snake dancing as they went...of course you call it a riot but the Japanese don't riot. They march and are quite well organized. Anyway, they snake danced all the way down to the Plaza. They got in front of the Emperor's house and then the Japanese police moved in on them. They

beat the holy whey out of them. They really were pretty brutal toward a number of the students. But Murphy's comment was that this was deliberately done so that it could be done at that place and in that fashion to show that the government is in control and is not going to allow anyone to besmirch the name of Japan, etc. Anyway, there was no aftermath. They arrested hundreds and hundreds of students and beat up a hell of a lot more. We lost a couple of cars that were overturned and set on fire. There are lots of stories. This was an internal thing. It was not aimed at Japan's support for the Korean War or anything else. There are any number of stories of occupation people who got caught up in that thing.

We had a guy by the name of Nelson who had an Austin Atlantic convertible, a car I envied very much, who spoke excellent Japanese. He got caught in the middle of this thing. The students started surrounding his car and rock it. He stood up and said, “I'm Nelson with the American embassy.” And they all said, “Oh.” And they left him there. There are lots of other stories about women getting caught up in the riots but never really physically threatened at all. It was the government versus the people who wanted to shame the government and we were extraneous to them.

Q: What was the feeling you were getting from the embassy about the Soviet threat at that time? We are talking about 1950-52.

ERICSON: We all, obviously, saw the Soviets as the instigators of Korea. The Chinese were not blamed for this at all. After all it wasn't the Chinese but the Soviets who had put Kim Il Sung up there. But when the Soviets refused to act, or didn't act, when their clients were being pushed back up to the Yalu...the country that acted was regarded as the potential threat and even then not Japan by a long shot. In many respects the same could be said about the Soviets. After all they didn't have the atom bomb and we had a superior air force and the Soviets were realizing Korea was a pretty distant place from which to mount a military operation against Japan. So, aside from the Japanese irritation

over the northern islands, and that kind of thing, I don't think the embassy was ever terribly concerned about any immediate Soviet threat to Japan.

Q: The Kuril Islands were not a major issue at that time were they?

ERICSON: Well, I mean the Japanese irritation over the southern Kurils. The Japanese knew the Soviet presence there was not a threat to them in a military sense. But that was Japanese territory and they didn't want the Soviets having it, they wanted it back, but they didn't regard it as a basis for a real threat. They were something that had been stolen from them and the United States, incidentally, might be in a position to get back for them. Why didn't we? Why weren't we more aggressive?

Q: At that time was Okinawa on the horizon or not?

ERICSON: Only in a minimal sense. The time we are talking about was still a time when Japan was trying to get its basic sovereignty back for the mainland islands. Okinawa, when the Japanese had it, was a third grade society.

Q: Like Puerto Rico for us.

ERICSON: Worse, worse, because the Japanese didn't suffer Okinawans going to the mainland islands. There was no Okinawan problem in Japan as there might be with Puerto Ricans in New York.

Q: Were you getting that with the Japanese more at this time?

ERICSON: No, we were getting it from the Okinawans. Back in those days there was a fair occupation presence on Okinawa. We had Kadena and we had a military government unit down there, etc. So from Yokohama, when I was in Yokohama, we used to send Doug Overton down to Okinawa once every three or four months to sweep up all the consular work that was generated in Okinawa...marriages, renewed passports, added children to families, etc. I went down once when he was not available. Tex Weatherby went down

once. There is a very famous story about Tex's trip. They wired ahead that the consul was coming down, consul Weatherby, and they wired back that they didn't want him, they wanted the vice consul!

Anyway, the Okinawans were always the ones who were a little unhappy about this heavy preponderance of American presence and the fact that they were not going back to Japan and that they were going to be orphans in the Pacific for quite some time. They were agitating more about the Okinawa situation than Japan was. And, of course, when the occupation came along it was understood that Amami O Shima would be returned to Japan whereas Okinawa would not. The Japanese considered Okinawans third class Japanese and weren't disturbed as much about them as they were in establishing their basic sovereignty. Later, of course, that changed.

Q: After leaving Japan you went to Japanese language school. What prompted you to do that? Once you took Japanese you kind of knew that was it. I had a colleague, John Sylvester, when I came into the Foreign Service, who took Japanese and was not seen again anywhere except I think Vietnam.

ERICSON: I know John, yes. Well, I took Japanese for a number of reasons. One of them was medical. We were having a fertility problem. There was a guy at Harvard by the name of John Rock, who developed the pill while doing research primarily for fertility. At the end of our second tour in Japan, the Department came out with this announcement that they were looking for people to take hard languages and were offering certain financial incentives. I was a little tired of being the lowest paid Foreign Service officer in the Service for several years running, so I looked upon that with some favor. We realized Japan was going to be a major player in Asia and whatever came of it I would probably be doing something reasonably important and significant. And, we liked Asia. We liked Japan. From where I sat at the time it looked like this was going to be the only way that I would ever get an assignment in Washington for a long period of time. So based on these factors, we

decided to go for it. And, we chose Harvard, not because of its language program, which was frankly pretty bad, but because of the presence of Dr. Rock up there.

Q: Such a Foreign Service officer's career is made of.

ERICSON: Yes.

Q: Could you talk about the people who came in...we are talking about 1952 and I like to get people's characterizations of those who took Japanese training. What may have inspired them, pushed them, what kind of people they were, etc.

ERICSON: First of all, I also got interested in Japanese because I had been studying with Eleanor Jordan at the embassy's language school. Many of us took it on a part time basis. I was under the happy delusion that it was not all that difficult. It wasn't what it was cracked up to be. I got disabused of that.

People who were studying Japanese at that time...you know, most of our best language officers were naval wartime trainees who had gone through the Boulder, Colorado Navy program. Almost all of our competent Japanese language officers came out of that program. The Army had a program, but the people we got from the Army, with the exception of Dick Lamb, were not all that competent in the language.

Q: Why was this?

ERICSON: I honestly don't know. I think the Navy was more selective of their people and it was a very, very intensive program. When I first arrived in Yokohama, about a year afterwards three people straggled in who had been off finishing off their Japanese...Owen Zurhellen, Dave Osborn, and Ed Seidensticker. Those three were certainly among the three best of the post-war language people. They had all been through Boulder, they had been Navy people. Osborn was a linguistic genius. He picked up Chinese along the way. There are all kinds of stories about Dave. Somebody walking in on him in a dark barracks

in the middle of the night coming back from a night on the town and a voice comes out of the corner and says, “Is that you Bob?” The guy says, “Yes. Is that you Dave? What are you doing?” Dave says, “Well, I am studying braille.” Osborn was that kind of person. Zurhellen had a marvelous natural flair for the language. It was said that he could hold a conversation with anybody and if a word he didn't know threatened to interrupt the flow of his words, he would make one up that would sound very plausible and leaving his Japanese interlocutor with a sense of wonder...wondering what he said. And, of course, Seidensticker became the great translator of Japanese literature and got Kawabata the Nobel Prize.

The Department's own program, from where I sat, and I am not one of its products, was nowhere near as effective, neither prewar or post-war. Alex Johnson who is absolutely admirable in every other respect is not, frankly, very good in the Japanese language. The same for Jerry Warner and many others. The reasons...I wrote a critique of my own program to the Department after I finished my language program and I said what it lacked was intensity. You shouldn't send people to American universities, especially to graduate school atmospheres for area and language competence because nobody is ever going to get a program that suits him. My experience at Harvard in the area part of the thing was disastrous in terms of what I wanted to study. You look at the curriculum in the book and think you can get all sorts of courses and marvelous instructors and when you get there they are not offering that this year because they are tuned to a three year Ph.D. program and teach courses only every three years. And in my case Fairbanks was in China. The old man who ran the Yenching Institute at Harvard, chose to retire that year. He was the first Caucasian to graduate from Yenching University and got on a boat a week after graduating and as far as I know never went back. He certainly didn't go back to revise his teaching material because his subordinate in Yenching was Ed Reischauer, who was teaching from very badly outdated prewar language materials. And they were trying to teach research scholars while the Department of State wanted me to be able to read a newspaper and hold a conversation. So we were totally out of sync and I took a lot of

extraneous course which really had nothing to do with Japan but were what was available. Reischauer, I must add, was an absolutely marvelous teacher. He taught Japanese history in the survey of Asia thing and in that he was absolutely superb. His language teaching was pretty badly outdated. He revised it some years after I left. His wife's illness made it very difficult for him to attend very much to us. There were no other State Department people in my class that year. Kingdon Swayne went to Yale where the language instruction was much better. Yale was really the only competent Japanese language program in the States at that time, I think.

Q: Yale had a much stronger missionary influence. Did that have any influence on their program?

ERICSON: The missionaries weren't a major factor in that. Yale was strong because that is where Eleanor Jordan and Bernard Schwartz had developed the spoken Japanese program for the military services during World War II. He had stayed there and Eleanor had come out to Japan. But they were the first ones to teach Japanese from a modern scientific linguistic point of view and that is why Yale is better.

Q: Yale through missionaries to China were also looking more abroad than Harvard was.

ERICSON: Well, their Japanese language program was better because of this peculiar circumstance. As years have gone by I guess other places have developed better and better programs and language instruction at this stage is much better than it ever was. But nobody who went through language school about the time I did really distinguished himself in the Foreign Service either in Japan or elsewhere.

Q: While you were taking this I was a private first-class in the Air Force going to the Monterey Language School taking Russian for a year.

ERICSON: Well, Monterey had a fairly good reputation.

Q: It was intensive.

ERICSON: In my opinion, that is the only way to teach a language of this kind. The best language officer the Foreign Service ever had in Japanese, at least during my day there may be better now, was Bill Magistretti. He grew up in Los Angeles with a bunch of Nisei kids and went to Saturday school with them. And then he went to Kyoto and lived with a Japanese family and went to Japanese high school and to Kyoto University before the war and studied in Japanese on an equal basis with Japanese students. He was linguistic gifted and he had that kind of background. And he carried it over into intelligence work during the war and came into the Foreign Service later. Magistretti was the exception. There were very few people who had anything like that kind of experience. But that is the way you have to do it. You have to start when you are very young. You have to have an intense interest in it that's based on something besides the language itself, I think. And you have to go and study it with your peers in the country before you can really be able to say that you...no white man can speak Japanese like a native.

Q: How long were you in language training?

ERICSON: Well, you went one year to a university and then you were assigned back to Tokyo for another year of so-called intensive language study with Eleanor Jordan. The language school still exists in Japan, but I don't know whether they still send people to universities or not.

Anyway, I went back for what was supposed to be a year and a half of full time intensive language study, nothing but, come to the office in the morning and get eight hours of instruction and go home. But, this is not terribly good either because I had...Eleanor was a marvelous teacher and we had very, very capable Japanese nationals...a wife and by that time a child...Dr. Rock succeeded...and my mother-in-law came back with us that year. Here again there were just too many distractions. If you are really doing this thing you have to do it full time and intensively.

Q: I must say that one has a certain admiration, although there were other problems, of the old British Foreign Service where you didn't get married until about 40. They would take you and sort of throw you in a foreign country and you kinda just did that, but you can't do that with a family.

ERICSON: No, you can't. Of course there was some criticism of that system too in that there were a number of British Foreign Service officer prewar and a few Americans too who would come up with strangely feminine type statements...

Q: And Japanese being one of these places where there is a woman talk and a man talk.

ERICSON: Yes, and some of the times the men talked women talk and you began to wonder why.

Q: This is called pillow talk.

ERICSON: Anyway, I was never better in Japanese than the day I left full time language training with Eleanor in 1954. That was the absolute peak of my Japanese powers. I used it. I could read the economic section of the newspaper, I could read the editorial...the editorial in the “Asahi” looked absolutely fearsome except when you read ten of them all of a sudden you realized you could probably write the damn thing because they used the same sort of language over and over again. I could by and large read the political news on the front page, but put me on the sports page or the social page or anything like that and I was totally lost. There was something in me that resisted, as far as spoken language was concerned, the idea of using a respect language.

Q: Will you explain what a respect language is?

ERICSON: Japan, painting it with a very broad brush, is one large hierarchy. You always have a position relative to somebody else. It is not a land of equality. People sense when somebody older, or of a high caste, is speaking to them and usually acknowledge that

in the way they reflect their verbs. If you are speaking to somebody superior to you, you speak in a very polite language upward. If you are speaking to somebody far below you, a servant, you use a very different kind of language. If speaking to your peers, you use a colloquial form but it also depends on whether your peers are close or not close. It can be a very difficult language to handle on social occasions and the Japanese tolerate foreigners using all the wrong forms. Nonetheless, if you don't like the idea of putting yourself in some kind of a hierarchy it becomes rather difficult.

To illustrate why this is important in Japan, because it is: I say they tolerate it, but they don't like Americans' inability to do this very well. A great example why this kind of thing is important to the Japanese. People wonder why Prime Minister Yoshida fell. Yoshida was, like many major figures in history, did some marvelous things in his early and mid career, but in his very late career he obviously had overstayed his time and the things he used to insist on weren't working any more and there was a lot of political resistance to him. The incident that really brought about his political demise took place in a Diet meeting. He was testifying before a committee...I forget which committee... and was being pressed for some budget figures. He didn't have them ready at hand and the Socialists were raising hell. He told them something to the effect, “I will give them to you tomorrow,” and the room erupted. People started throwing ink pots and rushed the dais trying to assault him physically. The police had to be called in to separate the brawling legislatures...which was not all that rare an occurrence in the ''50s in Japan incidentally. If you were an American and read the translations of the news accounts, unless it was accompanied by an explanation, you didn't realize what had happened or why the Socialists got outraged when Yoshida made a seemingly reasonable statement..”I will give them to you tomorrow”. Well, the point was, he had used language saying, “I will give them to you tomorrow,” of the sort one would use in telling your servant you are going to give him your dirty underwear tomorrow. To a Japanese this is much more insulting than if he had cast dispersions on the legitimacy of their mothers. For Americans who are raised in a more democratic tradition and who

speak on a peer level with people who they meet rather rapidly it is difficult to get into these differences and that was terribly difficult for me.

Q: Did you understand your difficulty and all that at the time?

ERICSON: Oh, yes. I was keenly aware of it.

Q: Did some of our colleagues, I am talking about the diplomatic profession, sort of proceed rather blithely not realizing that they were running their fingernails down a blackboard with the Japanese?

ERICSON: Yes, of course, from time to time there were cases of that sort. But frankly people in the embassy didn't use their language with the Japanese in a business sense all that much. You would see that kind of thing more on social occasions than business occasions. Your primary dealings were with people in the Finance Ministry or MITI or primarily the Foreign Office and these were among the best educated of all Japanese and were the English speakers in the country and were eager to speak their English. Most Americans sort of backed off and said, Okay.

I don't think we will ever get to a point where we will have a staff that is comfortable in the Japanese language. We are always going to need an interpreter. Ed Reischauer always used an interpreter for every conversation he ever had.

Q: So you got out there in 1953. Were you part of the embassy at all during the year of language training?

ERICSON: Unfortunately, yes. I say unfortunately because I think again if you are going to study the language you ought to be separated from all other temptations. You shouldn't be meeting your English speaking friends for lunch. The school at that point was in the Mantetsu Building which was our annex about a block from the chancery. It housed the consular section, USIA, administrative section and virtually everybody except the very

core of the political and economic sections. We were surrounded by embassy personnel. There were two or three rooms devoted to the language school on the floor, but you were really in with the embassy. You were living in embassy quarters. Later they took over the old consul general's residence in Yokohama for the school and that was better. The only time, though, that we were away from the embassy studying language was in the summer time when we rented a place down in Mito on the Izu peninsula and there we lived in a total Japanese setting and probably learned more about Japan and the way people live in Japan and what their problems are and the language to boot than most of the time we were studying it in Tokyo.

One of the problems in Tokyo was that Eleanor wasn't really prepared at that time for full time language studies and she also had the idea that the way you learn Japanese was the way a baby learns it. You hear, you listen, you start formulating key phrases, you manage your vocabulary, your situations, etc. and you end up speaking and understanding Japanese. She took pride at that point in herself not knowing any kanji, no characters. And the Department, of course, wanted us to not only speak it but to be able to read newspapers and things of that sort. So she had her people preparing lessons in some cases literally one day ahead of the students. You would get lesson material that had been written out the night before and in somebody's long hand. So in my day it was not the refined thing that it became later on.

Q: It was 1954 before you actually took a job at the embassy?

ERICSON: Yes. I cut my language training short by six months at the request of Frank Waring who was the economic counselor then, a very distinguished guy in fact who I admired very much who really wanted somebody in the economic section badly to help him and do whatever Japanese language was needed in the section. The political section had seven or eight people with varying degrees of competency, but the economic section didn't have anybody. So he asked me. Frankly by that time I had staggered up to the sixth

of many plateaus and was beating my head against the next brick wall and I said I would be happy to do it.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time and talk a little bit about your impression of him at that time? And then about the situation in Japan at that time as you saw it.

ERICSON: In 1954 the ambassador was John Allison who suffered the...he was a complex guy as a matter of fact..handicap of having been a teacher in the Japanese school system before the war. But he knew Japan. He had been Dulles' assistant in negotiating the Peace Treaty. He had been Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. He had been, as a matter of fact, on my oral boards and when I first came into Yokohama in 1947 shortly after he came out on a trip as assistant secretary. Alex Johnson was an old friend of his so he stayed in the Johnson's apartment which was adjacent to the office in Yokohama. My desk was just inside the door that led to the Johnson's apartment so I was the first thing he saw when he came through the door. I was sitting at my desk one day and this bald head character came storming through and stopped in front of my desk and whirled around and looked at me and said, “You are Ericson aren't you?” I stood up and said, “Yes, sir.” He said, “You don't know who I am do you?” I said, “No, sir, I do not.” He said, “I am John Allison and I was on your selection board.” This made me feel rather ridiculous at the time, but it gave me a strange hold on him and we got on personally very, very well. I think Allison was very clued in to senior Japanese. He was not good with people and he was known to his staff as the “terrible tempered Mr. Bang,” because he did have a very short fuse.

He was an absolute genius at dictation. I have never known a man more capable of coming back from an important meeting with somebody to send a cable to the Department. I was duty officer one Sunday and he had gone out to talk to somebody about something of terrible importance. He came back and got in touch with me and said, “Send the duty secretary up here I want to dictate a telegram.” So we went up to the Residence and here he was in the bathroom in his undershirt shaving. The secretary sat on the toilet and I sat

on the tub while the ambassador dictated what seemed to me a very cogent, well thought out, well phrased telegram. When it was over, I said, “Thank you Mr. Ambassador, we will get a draft up for your perusal as soon as it can be transcribed.” He said, “No, no, no. Send it exactly the way it is. That's fine.” And it was. It was a great telegram. A great little exhibition of the art of those days.

But he was terribly short tempered and he, of course, got himself involved with a female of his staff which led to her reassignment at the request, I understand, of other ladies on the staff. It didn't do him much good either. Of course, he went on to two other embassies after that...he went to Czechoslovakia and then to Indonesia. But he was a difficult man to deal with. For example, when he gave a reception, language officers always worked the doors of the Residence. Everybody had a chauffeur in those days so it meant when a car pulled up to the door, people got out and a language officer would approach them, particularly if they were Japanese, although any other guests too, and ascertain their name, if he didn't know it, and went to the head of the receiving line where the ambassador would always be standing and said to him, “Mr. Ambassador, may I present His Excellency, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shigeru Yoshida” and he would turn and say something like, “God damn it, of course I know who this is.” But if you failed to give him the name he would fail to remember it and then couldn't pass it on to the next guy. So the guys in the line fought this unending...you got glares from him when you were introducing somebody who was perfectly obvious, but slip up one, well you were in real trouble. So we lived through continuing glares.

He had an excellent DCM, Jeff Parsons, for most of this period. I later worked for Jeff when he was Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. So there was always a good buffer. Tokyo was blessed with good buffers, I think, in those days.

Q: At that time what was our view of the situation economically and politically?

ERICSON: Well, it was a funny period. The Japanese under Yoshida's pretty strong leadership had succeeded in achieving goal one, the Peace Treaty and the restoration of Japanese sovereignty. Having done that the coalition between the Democrats and the Republicans that had achieved this political triumph were beginning to drift apart. Not that there were any very strong ties in Japanese politics along party lines, it was just the group of people were shifting and looking for what would be next. Having achieved their independence, in order to get their independence they had to agree to certain things which eventually became a real sore point. They had to agree to a security treaty which permitted us to station our troops in Japan and they had to agree to permit us to use those troops in pursuance of maintaining the peace in the Far East without their say so. The Peace Treaty was also incomplete in that we remained in full occupation of Okinawa. So from the Japanese point of view there were some loose ends there. From our point of view, of course, we had achieved what we thought...I think most American policy makers were very much surprised at a number of things in connection with Japan at the time. One was their total cooperation during the Korean War. There was never a vestige of any Japanese unhappiness with the way things were done during the Korean War. They sometimes got unhappy for example when an airplane went through the tower of the administration building of the university down in Ryukyu. They were a little unhappy about things of that kind and who was to be compensated, how and why. That sort of thing. But these were compensation issues and not “why are you taking that airplane off at all” kind of thing.

We had a focus on the Far East and that was security. We had just been through the Korean War and we didn't want a repeat of that. If the truth be told we didn't fair all that well, it had damn near torn our own country apart with the MacArthur thing and all the rest of it. And also at that point Southeast Asia was shaping up as a flash point.

Q: We are talking 1952. Dien Bien Phu and all that.

ERICSON: Yes and John Foster Dulles' massive retaliation, etc. All that kind of thing was going on in the background. And the Soviet Union, of course, was the arch enemy and the Chinese, lo and behold, under the communists were exercising rather effective control over that great huge mass of potential, so we were very antsy about the security situation in the Far East. We wanted to preserve our position in Japan very much and we very much wanted to retain the cooperation of the Japanese. The Japanese economy was beginning, also, to move and we were interested, frankly, in promoting that. One of the essentials of stability in the Far East we thought was...Japan had proven itself to be a real arsenal in the Korean War. It saved us an enormous amount of money by being able to repair...we had huge repair facilities, for example, on the outskirts of Tokyo for all kinds of military vehicles, ship repairs, R&R...perhaps the less said about that the better.

Q: All I can say is in 1953 I was in Seoul and took R&R in Japan. I didn't get outside of Tachikawa.

ERICSON: You didn't want to?

Q: I didn't want to. I was a New England trained boy and had never seen anything like this. It kept my interest for the week I had.

ERICSON: Sometime around 1951 or 1952, during the Korean War when it was at its height and the number of Americans passing through at its height, before the Japanese economy had really begun to move, there was an effort to ban prostitution, to really crack down because this was a shame and a disgrace. Somebody in MITI did a quite serious report which said that prostitution was Japan's leading export item. The R&R industry, the association of men with Japanese women, the purchasing of Yen by American soldiers to finance this kind of thing, amounted to what was then Japan's leading export item. So they decided for economic reasons they wouldn't pursue it at this point, and they did not.

Getting back to Japan and what was happening, this was a period when politically Japan was beginning to drift pretty badly. Having gotten the Peace Treaty during the '50s but having also achieved an imperfect...they didn't know where the hell they were in the world and started casting about for a better sense of identity, I guess. This meant a lot of agitation within political parties and led to the demise of Yoshida who had lost his grip on things having achieved his main purpose in life. He was really a great man in his way. A guy who came in from being a diplomat to...

Q: He was kind of like the Adenauer of Japan.

ERICSON: He was a fatherly figure and people trusted him. He was a man of integrity. One of the things everybody says about Japanese politics is that it is among the most money fueled in the world. I would hate to say dirty, but politics in Japan runs very much on money, more so than in the United States, I think. Yoshida was above all that. He lead by means of his own moral principles and he was basically a very good man. He turned a little dictatorial which was his problem.

Anyway, when he finally fell, he was replaced by Hatoyama who was an old line politician who frankly was given the job because he deserved it. He had been instrumental in bringing the party together in the post-war period and he was sitting around in second place to a man who is really not in line. Yoshida came from elsewhere, the diplomatic ranks, while Hatoyama was a homegrown, up from the ranks of politicians who had served his apprenticeship and it was time to put old Ichiro in. Unfortunately, old Ichiro was senile by the time he finally got in. Well, probably not at the time he went in, certainly shortly after he assumed office he began showing rather serious signs of incapacity. There are stories of people having to wipe his drool, mental lapses and wandering attention, etc. It was covered up fairly well for a long time. Anyway, he did very little and with that kind of leadership at the top it wasn't really possible to develop coherent programs or sit on the Socialists or whatever the conservative political party had to achieve. It was in no condition to do so under Hatoyama. In the meantime, the opposition was gaining, getting stronger

and louder in their activities against the government. When a strong hand was needed there was none there. In the United States we weren't paying all that much attention to things at the upper levels in Japan at the time. Both sides were sort of drifting through the '50s and we had some very nasty incidents, of course, that strained relations severely. I think of the case of the Fortunate Dragon.

Q: For the record will you explain that case?

ERICSON: Well, the Fortunate Dragon was a fishing boat, a deep sea tuna fishing boat from a small port...I think it was based in Island of Shikoku or else somewhere down in southwest Japan anyway...not a major port. It was fishing in the south seas for tuna when we set off the first nuclear bomb at Bikini. The crew reported seeing this very weird sky and sometime later strange stuff kept falling out of the sky and they kept fishing. When they got sick...of course they were in an area which had been prohibited to them and the American military maintained that notices to mariners had been insistent and loud and clamorous to stay the hell out of the area, but nonetheless there was this Japanese fishing boat.

They went chugging on back to port with a sick crew and a hatch full of fish. When they got to port the fish were unloaded and distributed, put into the Japanese distribution system and then they began reporting to the hospital. Then it came out that this strange thing they had witnessed was the explosion of the thermo nuclear weapon and what had come down out of the sky was probably highly radioactive material and what they were sick from was radiation sickness.

Of course, in Japan, which had been on the receiving of a couple of those things during the war, why we had this enormous explosion of feeling against the United States for having exploded the bomb and exposing the Japanese nationals to its effects, etc. The Japanese, of course, made terrible blunders of their own. They let that catch be distributed throughout the country and you could smell the fish markets in Japan for miles weeks

afterward because nobody...they didn't know where the fish had gone, they lost track of distribution. Even in Tokyo the enormous fish market sold very few fish for weeks. It was a serious economic disruption in addition to being a psychological body blow to Japan.

And then, of course they made a couple of other silly mistakes, some of which didn't come to light until long afterwards. They started demanding compensation, of course. Two of the crewman died. One of them was brought up to Tokyo to be hospitalized where he was given blood transfusions which it later became clear gave him the hepatitis that killed him. He probably didn't die of radiation sickness. We in the embassy were jumping up and down and the United States was jumping up and down because the Japanese refused to allow him to be examined by American physicians. They were demanding enormous compensation from us in various forms but were not allowing us to have any part in the treatment. Perhaps we had that coming, I don't know, because all through the post-war period our policy on the nuclear weapons was in no way to acknowledge that nuclear weapons were anyway different from any other weapon of war. People would argue, where would you have rather been in Tokyo on March 13 or Hiroshima in August? In Tokyo on March 13th 80 some thousand people died in one night and they died horrible deaths. They saw fire storms coming towards them, they felt the oxygen being sucked out of the air. They went into the rivers trying desperately to escape this thing and very few of them succeeded. And that was deliberate, we did it with incendiary weapons. In Hiroshima, it all went up in a flash and if you died you really died pretty quickly and didn't know what hit you. Of course there were thousands of people who suffered for years and years afterwards.

One of the manifestations of this policy of ours was the fact that we established the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission, a group of medical researches financed by the United States who worked down in Hiroshima and Nagasaki to measure the effects to radiation among the population. People who got sick were brought in and given physical examinations and the progress of their illness was monitored and the effects were noted and scientific

papers were written, etc., but they were not treated. We were not offering any treatment and they were more or less volunteers.

It must have been some time in 1956 that we had some PL 480 money available, and I can't remember if it was a request initiated by us. I was in the economic section and since it was PL 480 money it was basically the economic section's responsibility. We had an AID mission at the time, but the director of the AID mission was subordinate to the economic counselor in the embassy hierarchy. Anyway, Ambassador Allison asked me to write a justification for using this money to construct a hospital building and equipment at the University of Hiroshima Hospital, specifically to treat nuclear victims. I remember he said, make it lurid. That money was eventually granted and the hospital was built. That to my knowledge was the first thing we ever did, 10 to 11 years after the war, we started to help with the treatment of these people. So, when the Fortunate Dragon incident burst upon us, in addition to the fact that we had dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki there was a lot of pent up feeling that we hadn't really been properly charitable towards the victims of what the world would recognize of course, as a rather special use of weapons.

Anyway, there were incidents like that which were making US-Japan relations a little bit difficult. The thing that turned it around, I think, was Hatoyama was finally voted out of office and the arrival on the scene of Kishi, who to my mind is probably Japan's...he and his brother Sato certainly must combine as the two most effective prime ministers in Japan in the post-war era. Kishi came in and began to whip the Liberal Democratic party into some semblance of shape and to bring Japan out of what was a malaise internally. The Japanese political fabric was going to face rather severe tests of course in 1960 when the Security Treaty was going to come up for what we call renewal.

Q: During this period in Japan you were there from when to when?

ERICSON: I arrived in Japan in October, 1947 and left in the summer of 1958 except for the year at Harvard.

Q: You went to the embassy in 1954?

ERICSON: Yes, the next four years I was in the economic section in the embassy.

Q: Were people nervous about the Security Treaty renewal?

ERICSON: Well we constantly expected that it would be renewed and we expected that the Liberal Democratic party, despite considerable agitation on the left, was going to control things and that the treaty would be renewed. Perhaps it would be modified slightly but not significantly. And it became a growing issue with every passing day and it got complicated, of course, by Okinawa, agitation over the revision of Okinawa.

Q: I want to stick for now just to this 1954-58 period.

ERICSON: I remained working on Japan, incidentally, through 1961. When I went back to the Department in 1958 I was offered the chance to chose between working on political things in INR on the Northeast Asia Division, or taking advanced economic training and certifying myself evermore as an economist. I decided you really had to know something as an economist and you weren't going to get it in one year, which is what they were offering, one year as a university, so I chose to go back to work on Japan for another two years in INR. Then I got sprung from that and was Jeff Parsons staff assistant when he was Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs in 1960-61. That was the period when the Treaty came up for renewal.

Q: We are going back now to the 1954-58 period. During that time the Security Treaty was not like a black cloud hovering over us. We knew we would have to deal with it...

ERICSON: Well, it was a cloud on the distant horizon. It looked like a white cloud, but still a cloud. The closer it got the larger and darker it got as the opposition to a Security Treaty began to grow,

Q: How did we feel at that time about the left?

ERICSON: Well, there were a lot of very good people among the Socialists. For example, for a year I shared an office with Wolf who ...

Q: He is a name connected with land reform in Japan.

ERICSON: Yes. Well, he was one of MacArthur's major appointments, and land reform was probably the most significant act of the occupation and maybe the most enduring in assuring that Japan would remain a stable Japan style democratic nation. But in doing this he worked with a man who later became a Socialist member of the Diet and was a major critic of American politics. But the two of them combined to devise the land reform program in Japan in the late 1940s which probably saved Japan from an awful lot of political turmoil by getting rid of the absentee ownership system, by turning land over to those who tilled it and providing a very substantial base for the conservative parties that ruled Japan and still more or less do almost 50 years later. They did this very cleverly, incidentally. They limited the size of anyone's holding and forced those who held more than that and did not occupy it personally to sell to those who did occupy it on a sharecropper basis. They issued government bonds with which the sharecroppers were to pay the landowners and they would be redeemed the next year. In the meantime the inflation wiped them out. The bonds became worth about 5 cents on the dollar, so the new landowners got his land eventually for about 1/20th of its value, and the owners received about 5 percent of its value. The thing was accomplished, a lot of people lost a lot of money, but many of them probably could afford to, and the sharecropper really did benefit.

Q: Was there nervousness on our part about the Socialists

ERICSON: No, not really. There were times, I should say when there was a great deal of nervousness in the government in Washington about the communists. There was a famous confrontation between Dick Nixon when he was Vice President and when he came

to Japan as the first really senior American to visit Japan, and this would have probably been in 1954. He came out and gave a famous...among us embassy people...he stood on the balcony on the old chancery and addressed the entire assembled staff down below in which he told us in effect that the greatest danger facing Japan was from communist usurpation of the powers of government. That the government ministries were shot full of communist sympathizers and Communist Party members and the country faced a real danger of revolution. Well, this was pretty contrary to all of our experience. We hadn't seen all of these fellows and we wondered where he got his information, frankly. Sam Berger was the political counselor and he took him on in a closed meeting apparently in the ambassador's office and argued the fact that Japan was relatively stable. There were communists but they were not a threat, etc. Nixon got so enraged, the story is, that he had Berger transferred to New Zealand, which put him safely out of harms way, I guess. However, it was there where he met Phil Habib who was just a junior officer struggling along and might never have emerged if he hadn't been brought together with Berger who took him to Korea.

Q: Sam Berger, I might just say for the record, is famous for the fact that he was the labor attach# in London and when the Labor Party took power shortly after the war he was the only person who knew people. He was a key person.

ERICSON: I was told that he was the only person in the embassy who Attlee would speak too.

Q: Later Sam Berger became ambassador to Korea and also deputy ambassador in Vietnam. He was my boss in Vietnam.

ERICSON: He was a feisty little guy who didn't hesitate to speak his mind and was a lot of fun to be around. Anyway Sam and Phil ended up in New Zealand and were later together in Korea.

I don't know how many people in Washington actually shared Nixon's view, but it was totally wrong. We didn't see anything of this kind. We knew they were potentially dangerous, yes. And we knew that the Socialists had a certain amount of following. Reischauer at the time, incidentally, was writing that if you extrapolated from the Socialists 2 percent gains in every election every year since 1920, sometime around 1965 they are going to take over the government. We didn't believe that either. But they were strong enough to be real nuisance value especially if the central government were weak, ill organized and unable to develop effective counter policy. The Socialists seemed to us to be much better organized and, of course, had the labor unions with their enormous organizational ability behind them, so there was some concern about them but fundamentally the country was not socialist, certainly not communist.

Q: I might just point out that Richard Nixon as vice president started off very right wing, but this was early Nixon on the national scene because later he developed a reputation for really doing his homework and listening to people and not taking off on this type of thing. He got very savvy. But this sounds like one of his earliest trips.

ERICSON: A little later I am prepared to comment on Mr. Nixon in his presidential years and his dealing with Japan because I saw a fair amount of that kind of thing. But you are quite right, he didn't ever go to this kind of extreme again. He was really pretty successful with a lot of things he did with Japan later on when he became President. He had one terrible flaw, however. This comes much later when we get to Kissinger and Nixon, but Kissinger and Nixon believed, I think having watched them operating in Japan, that the way you conducted relations with a foreign government was to find the people, the man, who could really get it done and then you dealt with him. They continued to search in Japan all during the Nixon Administration and they never found the man, of course, because there wasn't one.

Q: Kissinger in his book, “The White Years,” talks about Italy as being a place...obviously he couldn't relate to Italy because there wasn't a man.

ERICSON: Yes, they did this all over the world. It was true in some places, but not in Japan and I will take your word for Italy.

Q: In my interviews of people who worked on Asia during this period, the very firm hand of Walter Robertson played a major role. I was just doing an interview of somebody who was in Korea during this time. The ambassador realized the embassy could say nothing evil about Syngman Rhee who was a very inept ruler and was building up trouble for himself because he was the darling of the right. Was Japan out of the Walter Robertson orbit?

ERICSON: Well, I think Walter Robertson was, despite the fact that Dulles negotiated the Peace Treaty, he didn't seem to pay much attention to Japan when he was secretary of state, and Walter Robertson was probably the strongest Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs that we have ever had. He did have a great, great deal to say about American policy in that part of the world and in Japan. He and Allison had a very bad relationship. Robertson announced a visit to Japan at one point during this time and Allison simultaneously announced his intention to be absent from the country. Not only that, but he conceded with great reluctance to having Robertson stay in the Residence in his absence, but he said, “Put the Cadillac away, he will not ride in that car.”

On that visit, for example, Robertson came up...

Q: This would have been about when?

ERICSON: Oh, this would have been 1955 or 1956. Anyway, Robertson came out on the visit and we had a reception for him including many Japanese political leaders. He had his business meetings but I didn't attend those and don't know what went on... but at this party a very prominent Japanese politician, a liberal democrat and elder statesman of consideration influence as a faction leader and generally thought of as the next foreign

minister, although he never made it...I can't remember his name but he was from Kyushu, I know that, and that may possibly explain this...somehow Japan had got to make friends with China. It was obvious to him that the Communist government in China was going to last and it would behoove Japan now, in the early 1950s to start making friends with China and as a matter of fact the United States should too. Under Japan's leadership the three of us should get together and do something. Anyway, he asked for a meeting with Mr. Robertson but he didn't get it in the normal course of events. But at this party it developed that Mr. Robertson and this man and a Japanese from the Foreign Office who was going to be the interpreter, were wandering off towards the ambassador's study. Allison got me literally by the ear and threw me in the direction of the study and said, “Now you go in there and you make sure that the interpretation was going to be right.” He wasn't going to be in the meeting himself. He didn't want me to interpret but to make sure there were no mistakes in the interpretation because interpretation is an art and a problem, as you know and you had to be particularly careful with this particular Japanese.Anyway I went into the library and the conversation went along fairly predictable lines. I didn't know what was coming, frankly, but I heard the man say that he was advocating and Mr. Robertson should give some consideration to means where Japan, the United States and Communist China should get together and reach a modus vivendi for each one's benefit and mutual prosperity, etc. I broke into the conversation at that point and asked him to repeat his cast of characters. I heard it fairly plainly but I didn't want there to be any mistake that he was talking about Communist China because I could see that red was beginning to appear in Mr. Robertson's neck heading for his face, he was getting angry. So he did.

Robertson then turned on me and said something to the effect that I was a fool and that anybody could see that that was what he meant, that he meant Communist China. I tried to assure him that I was just making absolutely sure that there was no mistake because of the importance of the point. Anyway, he ended the conversation very abruptly, quite angry at the turn it had taken. He felt he had been sandbagged. He hadn't been warned that this was likely to come apparently. I was not there to take notes and hadn't been taking

notes but he asked me for a verbatim transcript of that conversation to be on his desk by 8:00 the next morning. He was going to come down and sit in the ambassador's office and he wanted a verbatim transcript of that conversation, verbatim mind you without notes. I did the best I could. You know I can't remember to this day whether his middle initial was Walter H. or Walter S, but I had him down as Walter H. as a participant. He got very angry at that and didn't read the memorandum at all but he did pick up the point that his middle initial was wrong and dismissed me very abruptly.

Not a very pleasant man. But he certainly had more influence than the ambassador did about the way things were done in the Far East and he was very conservative, very right wing and he wanted no truck with the socialists or communists.

Q: One sort of had the feeling that the Eisenhower Administration wanted to strengthen NATO in Europe that being where they saw the great danger. The right wing of the Republican Party had a fixation on Asia and China. In a way it almost like Asia was tossed to the right wing of the Republican Party with Robertson running it, while Dulles and Eisenhower could deal with really a very European centered program regarding particularly NATO and all.

ERICSON: I personally think the end of diplomacy, as it used to be, came with the jet aircraft. In the days when you had to take a sea trip or a punishing propeller plane, not too many people were willing to go. Once the jet came in travel just expanded and everybody started showing up on your doorstep, including the very most senior people. I can't remember whether Dulles visited Japan during that period...I'm sure he did...and Eisenhower...

Q: But he wasn't there during your time.

ERICSON: Eisenhower, no. His famous trip was 1960.

Q: We will treat that later. A little point, you mentioned that Allison said you were to sit in on this Robertson meeting but you also mentioned that Allison was going to be out of town at the time. Was this a different time?

ERICSON: This was a different time. I guess Robertson must have been there a couple of times.

Q: Did you get any feel from our political officers, I assume the economic officers wouldn't be involved in this, that they felt they had to say the right things because we don't want to extol the Socialists or something like this?

ERICSON: Not that I recall specifically. You are right, the economic officers lived a part in that period. During almost all of the period we had Frank Waring as economic counselor. Waring was a very competent, totally grey man. He even dressed grey. He was very reserved but very strong willed and very experienced. He had been appointed economic counselor...he had been the administrator of wartime relief in the Philippines in the Truman Administration and had been given the economic counselorship in Tokyo in lieu of an ambassadorship when it became apparent Truman couldn't get him approved. We were lucky because Waring was a very fine person. But the ambassador and the DCM focused almost entirely on political activities and left Waring to run the economic and AID business almost all by himself. So we weren't afraid of offending Walter Robertson because he wasn't interested in economics either.

However, most of my friends were in the political section and I did not get from them the sense that they feared the great dragon back there in Washington.

Q: Well, in a way Japan was not a problem whereas you had Vietnam, Korea, Taiwan, etc.

ERICSON: Despite the sense of drift and all that, it was a sense of drift and not a sense that we were in any maritime battle. We may not have been going in the right direction but it wasn't very exciting except for those episodes like the Fortunate Dragon.

Robertson's departure wasn't missed. But he was still in office until Eisenhower left in January 1961.

Q: As economic officer during these four years, what were you doing and how did you see the economy there?

ERICSON: There were terrible problems in the economy in those days. Japan had enormous trade imbalances, negative ones believe it or not. But looking back on it is almost laughable because in retrospect we are having exactly the same kind of problems in the trade field with Japan as we have with them today. That is the question of whether Japan would open its market to American goods, give us a level playing field. We didn't really start running serious deficits with Japan until some years later, but even then there were a number of complaints about Japan.

One was automobiles. One of my functions was to accompany the economic counselor to the Foreign Ministry for a weekly meeting of the American economic counselor and the chief of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry who had a standing meeting on Thursday. We would go over every Thursday to discuss our mutual problems. Our mutual problems were always the same. Japan wasn't buying our cars or anything else for that matter, and setting up all kinds of informal trade barriers and the Japanese distribution system was all loused up and calculated to favor Japanese and the exclusion of everybody else, etc.

And then there was the Japanese deliberate penetration with specific goods in order to break down some of the structures of American industry. On the latter point we were talking about textiles. We were having trouble with Japanese dollar blouses. They were

flooding the country with blouses that sold for a dollar and this was very bad for American industry. Gingham exports to the United States were ruining the gingham section of the American textile industry. We had cotton velveteen. We used to argue for hours about the Japanese having laid waste to the American cotton velveteen industry by deliberating concentrating on that segment of American industry so they could move on to the next segment and eventually expand their control all over the American textile industry. Of course textiles remained a major problem right through the Nixon years. Things like thermometers, umbrella frames, bicycles, sewing machines are variations on the problems with Honda, Toyota and whatnot of today.

The Japanese really were not buying American automobiles. They were content to buy and import all the American automobiles they needed by buying the cars of members of the occupation, the armed forces who went back to the United States. That took care of their requirement of cars that could be chauffeur driven, for the barons of Japanese industry. So they were not interested in buying other American cars.

And, of course, the Americans for their part...American importers of Japanese goods, people like Sears and other major American retailers, were assiduous in coming out to Japan and saying, “We know that you can make camera lenses as good as the Leica. Now what we want you to do is give us a camera to such and such specifications which we can sell through our outlets in the United States.” American retailers very quickly saw that Japan was a marvelous place to have a very wide number of products made in Japan and of good quality, because the Japanese had believed our lectures about quality control and were beginning to turn out some quite impressive stuff. Not cars, but some pretty impressive stuff.

If somebody writes a history of American trade problems with Japan they ought to give a lot of credit to the major American importers of Japanese goods who really came to Japan much more than Japanese went to the United States to find sources for the kinds of goods they wanted at the prices they wanted.

In the meantime, American exporters did very, very little to develop markets in Japan. No American car maker put out a right-hand drive car designed to drive on the left hand side of the street. No American auto manufacturer ever prepared a brochure in Japanese. No American manufacturer ever tried to set up a sales force in Japan or looked for a Japanese partner. The same thing applies to refrigerator, stoves and electrical appliances. And the Japanese, of course, were happy with this because it reduced the appeal of American products, but they also borrowed assiduously from American products.

I remember one major incident in 1956. The then president of the EX-IM Bank, an Omaha banker who was one of the first presidents of the EX-IM Bank, came to Japan with the enormous sum of $14 million in his pocket to be dispensed primarily to the Osaka Power Company. He had his vice president with him and I was detailed to accompany him to Osaka to make sure his trip down there and meetings with the businessmen there went satisfactorily. I must say it was the most marvelous visit I ever had anywhere because the Osaka people went all out to impress this gentleman. We visited the site for the machinery which this $14 million was suppose to finance. It was a new generation, high pressure Westinghouse or GE steam turbine, something new and radical in the power generating business. When we looked at the site there were stands for four or five of these things. This one was obviously not the only one that was going to be put there. Eventually very similar things were put there but they didn't come from Westinghouse or GE, they were all domestically manufactured to specifications developed by Japanese engineers after looking very carefully at what they had been furnished. There were many incidents of that type where they would exploit American industrial prowess to their own ends. You can't blame them, but this kind of thing did happen.

Q: Did you make any effort to inspire American manufactures to make more of an effort to sell in Japan?

ERICSON: Not really from the embassy that I can recall. Actually this would have been primarily the business of the Department of Commerce or somebody back in the United

States. We wrote a lot about the subject, about what was necessary, but the embassy itself, as I recall, did not organize anything. Groups which come out, textile manufacturers would come out, the Cotton Council people would come out, but certainly the automobile manufacturers and people like that were not and probably would not have. We used to think that these were important problems but when I put it in context, what we are talking about were fairly minor, but they were very irritating to the people involved. But to the automobile manufacturer it didn't matter a damn whether they sold another 10 or 20,000 cars in Japan. Hell, they had the American market all to themselves and a good part of Europe. So they weren't terribly interested in it. But it was very clear to those who were working on the problems, if these things had kept on going it would apply in a major way to much bigger things, as it does today.

Q: Did you get involved in trade disputes?

ERICSON: In the very early years when I was in the commercial section I got involved in a couple of those things but not...one of the interesting things I did get involved in for example, which focuses on American attempts to get into the Japanese market, RCA got very interested in Japanese television. There was no Japanese television, The television that had established a foothold in the United States at that time was still black and white, color was just on the horizon, but there was still no television in Japan. They asked for a market survey of the potential for their type of product in Japan. Was there going to be television in Japan, and if so, how successful would it be? I was detailed to do this thing and as part of it I went to interview the man who took over a major newspaper after World War II and threw out the communists from the newspaper staff. This caused a tremendous brouhaha in Japan because most of the Japanese press is well represented by Marxist thinkers on the staff. It was a major stink, but he stuck to his guns and developed...it was the number 3 newspaper then, today it is the biggest paper in the world... He was spearheading the idea that television should be brought to Japan and of course it was, both commercially and by NHK. I went to interview him, had a great deal of fun talking to him, but it seemed to me that the country's economy at that time was so weak and

personal incomes so low, and television equipment at the time was so expensive, that if there was to be television it would be a long time coming, probably five to ten years at least for major network activities. I felt that color was very far down the road and that on the whole it would probably be a very struggling industry before it got going. I also put a date to it as the earliest possible date for any commercial broadcasting in Japan. They started about a week after that date.

So, we did have Americans who were interested in the Japanese market. Incidentally, RCA did quite well originally at the beginning with studio cameras and the broadcasting equipment. But they lost it fairly quickly.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to talk about this period before we move back to Washington?

ERICSON: Yes, in a sense the change that came along in 1957, which I think is a fairly critical year. I remember I went for some reason with, I think it was Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II, to call on Kishi. I can remember Kishi getting up and embracing this man who he had known for many years and saying, “It is great that the two of us should come together at this time.” Ambassador MacArthur was much reviled in many ways because of his right wing political leanings, I suppose, and because he is identified with what some people refer to as the Security Treaty fiasco. He, however, to me was very much a man of his times...Allison was not a very forceful advocate, he was much better as a reporter and observer and that kind of thing, it seemed to me...MacArthur, on the other hand, was very much an activist and he came at a time when Japan was beginning the post-Hatoyama era. Kishi had just become prime minister and it was quite obvious that something had to be done if we were to face this thing, the Security Treaty, three years down the road. Mr. Kishi was very much his counterpart on the Japanese side, also a man for his time. Between the two of them I think they got things pretty much in order to face the confrontation that was coming over the renewal of the Security Treaty, which was

really a tremendous break point not only in Japan's relations with us, but Japan's whole orientation towards the world.

Anyway, MacArthur was a hard working guy and was always in the office and expected everyone else to be in the office too. Under MacArthur it got to be Saturday morning, Sunday, it didn't matter, if you weren't around and he wanted you, there was something very much wrong with your attention to your business. Fortunately by that time we also had a marvelous DCM, Outerbridge Horsey, who is probably the world's great buffer. Thank god for Horsey because he saved us down the line an awful lot of grief and absorbed in the process a great deal of the ambassador's pressure to get things done.

Later, after I had left, Bill Leonhart came as DCM and he was a man cut from MacArthur's own bolt of cloth and between the two of them they made life about as unpleasant for the staff as any two ambassador/DCM combination ever have.

But policy wise he saw the importance of Japan and saw the drift and he knew something had to be done about it. He worked very closely with Kishi.

Back to the meeting with Kishi, Kishi was bemoaning the fact that they had just been appointed, that the two of them had come together at this moment. Something was going on but I can't remember. It might have been concerning the Fortunate Dragon incident.

Q: Well, then you left there in 1958. What was the next assignment and from when to when?

ERICSON: INR in the State Department from 1958-60.

Q: What was the role of INR at that time in policy? Were you doing things that nobody paid any attention to?

ERICSON: From where we sat the function of INR was to prepare the Bureau Director for the Secretary's morning meeting. If he couldn't ... (end of tape)

Q: From 1961 you were special assistant to Jeff Parsons.

ERICSON: We didn't call them special assistants then. He only had two of us and one of us was a staff assistant and the other one was the assistant staff assistant. That was J. Graham Parsons who had been DCM in Tokyo when I was there in the early 1950s. As a matter of fact we made a crossing with him when he was going out to his post and I was going back from language school. He and my wife, who was very pregnant at that time, won the shuffle board championship of the Pacific. Jeff was a very, very competent kind of guy, but he was very short on small talk. Both he and Peggy, his wife, were somewhat ill at ease, it seemed to me, among especially junior staff. They just didn't know how to communicate very well with them. One of my jobs, of course, was to be a buffer in that respect. Whenever the Bureau did anything that required this sort of thing why I was to help.

Q: What did you do?

ERICSON: Oh, just introduced people, came up with somebody if they looked like they needed someone to talk to. It wasn't odd at all to find Jeff standing off by himself. But he was a great man to work for in many respects. He was very clear about what he expected of you. He said, for example, “I want the cables on my desk, I want them arranged properly, I want the important things where they belong and the unimportant things where they belong.” He used to leave his home at 8:00 and turn on the CBS news, which was all radio in those days, and by 8:15 when the news ended he would hit the Department garage, so he was up in his office about 8:20 and had about ten minutes before he had to go to the Secretary's meeting or something like that. He worked very calmly and very efficiently and I was supposed to be there having prepared things. So I had to get there early and not to leave until I cleared up his desk after he had left.

In the interval I was working on any number of assigned tasks, of course, but I was to listen to every phone conversation he had except those with his wife. He held nothing back from me that I know of on the telephone. He was very good about that sort of thing. He also said, “When you are listening, if I promise to do something, and it obviously is something that the Bureau should do, get on it. Don't wait for me to call you in and say, 'Dick, I told the Under Secretary that we would have a paper up on blah, blah, blah.' You get down to the Southeast Division and tell them what they are going to do. You heard what I heard.” In those days you could use those snooper devices, they have been outlawed now, but they were very useful things in their time.

That year was very heavily Southeast Asia for the Far Eastern Bureau.

Q: Particularly of all places, Laos.

ERICSON: Yes. Out of the blue comes an assault on the government and all of a sudden it gets connected with Vietnam problems. So Laos was the big thing. He had been ambassador, himself, in Laos, so he knew a great deal about the situation. He was desperately eager that the problem not be resolved the wrong way. So he spent an awful lot of time, himself, on Laos.

That was also, of course, the period in which in Japan the Security Treaty was important in Korea because...let's see it was April 1961 that the student revolution took place, so that was before I got to Jeff's office...but it was still a time of turmoil in Korea and we were building up to the Security Treaty riots and the Security Treaty crisis in Japan. We had also a lot of things going on in the international front like the Khrushchev/Eisenhower confrontation, Gary Powers, and all of that thing. So that was a very busy and a pretty interesting time.

I'm sorry, the Security Treaty and Eisenhower's visit to Japan took place while I was still in INR.

Q: Yes, that was Eisenhower's last year in office.

ERICSON: That was one important issue that we did deal with on an intelligence basis. This was in 1960 in the summer. What had happened in Japan is a little more complicated than most people think because people talk about the Security Treaty riots. Well, they weren't riots, they were demonstrations and they were Japanese and it is very different from what it is in many other countries. What it was was essentially, to me anyway, the contest between those on the left who supported what they called a policy of unarmed neutrality, a go it on your own, or is Japan basically a member of the non-Communist world and does it align itself then to the extent it can and thereby obtain for Japan the advantages that will flow from such an alignment. But this was much more of a Japanese domestic, political problem then it was a problem of international relations because whichever way this decision was made, policy was going to be administered by those who advocated it and they were going to control Japan. This was Japanese politics' most serious test.

What had happened of course, people don't usually recall this, but a U2 had crashed in Japan some time before the Gary Power incident. I don't know how it got there. Maybe it was from Okinawa. It had been noted in the Japanese newspapers. The deal was that Eisenhower and Khrushchev was going to have their summit meeting and Eisenhower was then going to come to the Far East and was going to visit Japan. Of course, when Gary Powers went down the Japanese press began to recall that this same sort of plane had come down in Japan. Did this mean that the Americans were conducting spy flights over the Soviet Union from Japan? This would, of course, be permitted by the Security Treaty because we didn't have to tell the Japanese what we were doing with our bases. But the Japanese began to mumble about this being a terrible flaw in the Security Treaty.

Then when the Gary Powers incident exploded, the Paris Summit meeting was canceled and Khrushchev went to the UN Security Council and pounded his shoe on the table reviling the United States, and what looked like a promising move towards some kind of

detente just went up in smoke and increased tension all over the world. Wherever there was a Soviet confrontation of any kind people began to get a little antsy. This, of course, provided the opposition elements in Japan with the issue they needed to get going on the Security Treaty renewal because here was the United States in an era of increasing tensions with the Soviets encamped in Japan with all these forces and able to do with them as they pleased without so much as a “if you please” to the Japanese government. The Security Treaty that permitted that had expired and was coming up for renewal or extension or change. Everybody knew that was going to have to be done or the attempt was going to be made to do that because it was in the interest of the United States, of course, and presumably the Japanese conservatives also.

Anyway, Kishi had invited Eisenhower to Japan. Kishi was a very staunch ally of the United States. Totally committed to the idea that Japan really belonged with the West. He was a Japanese but he saw Japan's welfare very much going in this direction. And he wanted it to be his crowning achievement in his political life to stabilize that relationship and make it possible forevermore for Japan to be part of the free world. Well, as furtherance of this, he had invited Eisenhower to come to Japan some months before the Security Treaty expired because he envisaged a visit of a congenial man but one of authority, someone the Japanese would respond well to.

Anyway, all these grand plans went up in smoke when Khrushchev did his UN speech and the confrontation over Gary Powers. Eisenhower canceled the meeting with Khrushchev. What to do in the meantime? He decided he would take a Far Eastern trip stopping off in the Philippines, Taiwan and then on to Japan in response to Kishi's invitation. As a consequence they sent an advance party out to Japan. Mr. Hagerty, his press secretary, went out to Japan to advance the visit and students who were mobilizing at that time against the Security Treaty surrounded him at the airport, rocked his car. They didn't hurt him but had him totally in their power. They jumped up and down on the roof of his car and rocked it. What they did do totally disgraced the Japanese security system. Many of the things that the students and union organized demonstrators did was not designed to kill or

throw anybody out, but designed to embarrass the government for its inability to maintain control. I touched on this earlier on the May Day riots when Ambassador Murphy said, “ They let it get out of hand deliberately to show that they could control it.” Well, this time they couldn't control it and the students did what they wanted pretty much with Hagerty and then when adequate security forces came on the scene they let him go. But they shook him up pretty badly and they shook up the United States pretty badly because we weren't used to seeing our Presidential emissaries being treated in this way in a country like Japan.

The situation in Japan had evolved in such a way that the legislation...the extension had been negotiated and it gave considerable concessions to Japan. We had in there the “prior consultation” statement to the effect that we wouldn't use our forces in Japan for any purpose outside of Japan without prior consultation with the Japanese government. And it had a lot of other concessions to Japan which the Japanese wanted. It by and large looked pretty favorable to the Japanese interests, so they submitted the legislation to get Diet approval of the Treaty before the Eisenhower visit was scheduled so that it would be before the Diet when Eisenhower was visiting and then it would be passed by the Lower House and the Upper House and become law before the effective date of the Security Treaty. The schedule was to get the Eisenhower visit out of the way and Eisenhower left for the Philippines while the thing in Japan was beginning to build up. And it was featured by what the press called almost daily riots and massive, massive demonstrations of 100,000s of people snake dancing their way through Tokyo. It has been interpreted as an anti-American thing. It really wasn't. No American was ever hurt or ever really seriously threatened during this period. But the policy was threatened because these guys were able to demonstrate at will. They did so in a very controlled fashion, but there were masses of them.

Q: Why couldn't the security forces control them?

ERICSON: There were just too many. In a sense they were controlled because they never got out of hand, but they were controlled more by their organizers than by the police. The police didn't oppose them because to do so would have brought on a real riot. So the security forces let them develop and were trying to handle them more in the context of a domestic Japanese thing rather than a US-Japan thing.

Anyway, Eisenhower left for the Philippines and we were back in Washington busy trying to say what was going to happen in Japan. I can't remember what kind of intelligence estimates we were coming up with, except that we were certain that the Socialists were going to push this to a showdown and that the conservatives were not going to make a blood bath out of it. We didn't know just how it was going to come down. Well, what really got it going was a trick that Kishi pulled on the opposition. In order to get it passed by the deadline in that session of the Diet, without having to extend the session of the Diet...the decision had to be made by a certain date, I don't recall exactly when. But Kishi had to allow the Socialists and the opposition their day in the Diet, he had to give them a chance to say everything they had to say so that it could not be said that he was ruling with tyranny of the majority which in those days was a terrible thing. You just couldn't force on the people your will because 90 percent of the people were behind you!

One day things got very tough in the Diet and the Socialist members rioted. They were obviously very determined that they were going to debate this thing to death and it was going to go passed the deadline and couldn't possibly be passed by the Upper House in time to meet the Treaty expiration deadline. As part of their strategy they resorted to physical violence where upon Kishi did the awful thing of bringing the police into the Diet building and threw all the Socialists out of the Diet. Then he made what was either a stroke of genius or a terrible mistake depending on your point of view. While they were out he said, “Let's pass the Treaty,” and they did that with the conservative members only. It was a majority of the members present, but they did it with the Socialists out of the Diet and that really lit a spark to the demonstrations. This made it possible to refer the thing

to the Upper House immediately and it needn't be debated. Japanese law at that time said that if it shall lie before the Upper House for 30 days within the same Diet session, it shall become law if the Upper House does not reject it. So, it lay before the Upper House and became law. But in the meantime, of course, the opposition complaints became so vigorous and so far reaching and so apparently dangerous that Kishi resigned as Prime Minister. He had accomplished his purpose, the Security Treaty was legally amended, etc.But Eisenhower was in the meantime floating around the South Pacific. He had gone to Taiwan and he actually didn't change his mind...Jeff Parsons was with him and he told me later that Eisenhower on board the ship that carried him from the Philippines to Taiwan and supposedly on to Japan, was being besieged with telegrams from everyone and his uncle in Washington offering him various advice as to whether he should go to Japan or not. He said that Eisenhower always took the position that Kishi had invited him and until Kishi told him he couldn't come, he was going to go. He didn't give a damn how many rioters there were in the streets. Kishi finally acknowledged that he shouldn't come, that it would be just too much. They had achieved their objective by extraordinary measures but the visit had to be put off. Eisenhower on practically an overnight decision went to Korea instead and had a state visit that was organized on the spur of the moment.

Q: Yes, Marshall Green in the interview I did with him talks about all of a sudden a President appears which was like an unexpected typhoon.

ERICSON: Yes. Of course the Koreans were going to make Eisenhower forget all about Japan. He was welcomed with open arms in Korea. Crowds were so big that as I recall they had to ad hoc the parade route. They had to duck down side streets to avoid the crowds because they were afraid he would be swamped in Korea.

But the funny thing about the thing in Japan, of course, was that they made their decision which was that they were not going to have a...the Security Treaty was important and had a very strong US/Japan element in it, but the decision was fundamentally where Japan was going to stand. That was the decision that was made and when it was over,

the Japanese people accepted it. As soon as Kishi resigned, the air went out of the whole thing and the demonstrations might never have happened.

Q: You were in INR at the time. Were you telling Hugh Cummings, for example, that this was really domestic? How was this playing in the State Department?

ERICSON: Parsons was assistant secretary at the time and I think the people on the Japan Desk and he, in particular, had an appreciation of what this was really all about. But a lot of American politicians, of course, viewed it quite differently...this was a life and death struggle between the communists and socialists for the government of Japan. Nobody ever though that the left wing was going to take over the government at this stage, but they did think that they might force the government to adopt the policy of unarmed neutrality. That was the Socialist position.

Q: We still thought of China as being part of the monolithic bloc and to have Japan neutral would have been a disaster from our point of view.

ERICSON: Well, the idea would have been that the Security Treaty would not have been extended and we would have lost the right to station forces in Japan which would have been a terrible risk for our forces in Korea and the security of the rest of the Far East. So, this was really a fundamental, terribly important breaking point in the whole history of the Far East, but it was basically a Japanese political domestic decision that Japan was going to identify itself with that portion of the world from which it can make the greatest profit, if you will. But I think also the Japanese fundamentally would make very poor allies for a communist or socialist country.

The Japanese communists slashed across the horizon so to speak for a brief period after the war and then have gradually degenerated into a rather friendly domestic...

Q: You are talking about the Japanese Socialists?

ERICSON: No, the Japanese communists. I am getting ahead of myself a little bit. When I left Japan in 1970, if you went to a Japanese election rally, the softest voiced, probably female, gentlest of all the political orators, the one who was most concerned about day care for working mothers and the garbage get collected on time, that was the communist. They had long since abandoned talking about international issues and were working solely on domestic issues.

Q: I recall something very vaguely and my timing may be off, but at one point there was a lot of talk in the United States about almost a religious organization that was thought to be the third force. Was that arising...?

ERICSON: You are talking about the Soka Gakkai. That was later. By the time I was there as political counselor in 1968 it was a major political force.

Q: Okay, now we go back to the time of Jeff Parsons. Your title was what?

ERICSON: Staff assistant.

Q: The Kennedy Administration was new and had a lot of young, so-called geniuses running all over the place, full of beans, particularly in the early stages, knowing more than the diplomats, etc. Did this hit the Far Eastern Bureau much or not?

ERICSON: Well, something else hit Japan. It didn't hit the Far Eastern Bureau terribly strongly. The man who was brought by the Kennedy people to be Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs was Walter McConaughy, an old line Foreign Service officer who had had five embassies and was a China hand.

Q: And was of the far right persuasion at that time.

ERICSON: I worked for Parsons until the Kennedy Administration came along and then he was relived and went into limbo for a while and then sent off as ambassador to Sweden,

much to his discuss because he ached to be ambassador to Japan. McConaughy came in from Korea. It would be awful hard to attribute McConaughy with major political influence because he couldn't make up his mind on anything. I actually left, outsmarted myself in a way, accepting another offer to get out of McConaughy's office simply because he couldn't. He was a marvelous ambassador. He was a genuine person and people responded to him. He was a good analyst, he wrote well, etc. But if you put him in a position of authority over a lot of diverse activities, he could never make up his mind what to pay attention to. If you gave him five telegrams on his desk he really...this may sound silly but his secretary and I used to go into his office before he got there every morning and rearrange everything. He would put things on the bottom of the pile that need action and we would put them back on top again. He was terribly difficult to get to come down on a decision. He didn't like making decisions very well.

Anyway, he had many other fine attributes but I wouldn't say he was a strong influence of policy.

Q: He had the reputation of being a China hand and part of the very strong supporters of Taiwan. When he came in he didn't really represent any political group.

ERICSON: I think he thought of himself more of an adviser than an activist in that sense.

Q: He didn't fit the Kennedy mold.

ERICSON: Oh, he certainly didn't fit the Kennedy image at all. There were two deputies in those days, one for general affairs and one for economic affairs. John Steeves had been Jeff Parsons' deputy who stayed on and he wasn't terribly active minded either. So I wouldn't say that either of them were strong defenders of the holy Taiwan grail, no.

Speaking of that, the Kennedys made it very clear that they were going to change, this is one of the things that did come down from the Harrimans, the Bowles and various other people who inhabited the Kennedy Administration, that there was going to be a

change in China policy, don't make any mistake about it. And to that end we are going to appoint a new ambassador to Taiwan who is going to be a symbol of what we are going to accomplish with respect to that part of the world. The guy who was then ambassador to Taiwan was an old line, right wing kind of Foreign Service officer. It was clear that he was not going to stay there. But they didn't want to name the new guy until they had found just the right man who would be the Excaliber of their policy. They waited and waited and waited and finally after about a year of not having done anything a Chiefs of Mission conference came up which was going to be chaired by Bowles. There were telegrams coming in from various parts of the world about attendance by various people. One came in from Taiwan and Bowles picked it up and read it and said, “I am not going to sit across the table from that man.” The question was then whether the ambassador should go home on leave or should wait and go directly to the Chiefs of Mission Conference. Bowles said that he was to come home on leave and he was not going back. So they appointed some poor retired admiral, who was terribly sick, to replace him and he was not the man who stood for the new China policy.

Q: I interviewed him.

ERICSON: I remember when the question of his going came up it turned out he suffered from various ailments and couldn't go unless accompanied by this nurse or that doctor.

Q: His main interest was advising or not to make landings on the China coast.

ERICSON: Yes. He was totally at sea in a diplomatic context. I guess they decided if they couldn't find just the man they had better send somebody like this.

Q: This is what can happen with a administration of huffing and puffing and posturing and standing tall and then not producing.

ERICSON: I think the Kennedys were wrong on Japan. Where Japan was concerned, Ed Reischauer, who was an eminent, eminent teacher of things Japanese at Harvard,

and my language teacher as I mentioned earlier, had written an article in “Foreign Affairs” earlier on, before the Kennedy Administration took over, called “The Broken Dialogue With Japan.” It centered on the evidence of this inability of Americans to communicate with the Japanese. That we don't understand each other. The evidence of that, of course, in his view, was this enormous upheaval of public feeling over the extension of the Security Treaty and the powerless of the American President who couldn't even visit Japan. The powerless of the Administration to deal with this because it just didn't know how to address Japan and Japan's concerns. But the Kennedy Administration was going to do this. It was a very important article in US-Japan relations and, of course, it made Reischauer the automatic nominee being a Harvard man and all, and there was never much doubt about his being the next ambassador to Japan.

Incidentally, Reischauer did predict the Socialists were going to take over Japan. There progress was inexorable. This statement is not in his later books, it got edited out sometime or other. This simply says that even the wisest of us could be wrong.

Parsons wanted to be ambassador to Japan very, very badly. He had been out there during the prewar period, he had been a secretary, he had been Joseph Grew's staff secretary, paid by Grew before he entered the Foreign Service. He met his wife there and he regarded becoming ambassador the absolute pinnacle of one's career and he wanted it very, very badly. He wasn't very good at State Department politics and he told me that I was to keep him informed of any move in the direction of a nomination that ever came to my ears, he knew among Japan hands there was quite a network of people who had their ears open and contact with Japanese. However, he was one of those who was identified as right wing and was to be swept out of office when the Kennedys arrived. Nonetheless, he still harbored passionate hopes.

The idea that Reischauer would be appointed had come to the Japanese attention some time earlier. Now Ed Reischauer was a marvelous man in many respects and in the end he turned out to be an extremely good ambassador, but the idea that the

Japanese welcomed him from the outset was a very mistaken idea because they did not. They opposed his nomination. Not the whole nation, but the Japanese establishment represented by the Foreign Ministry and people in the business organizations didn't like the idea. The thinking was that he was not terribly well connected. His expertise was solely Japan and this wasn't always what they want in an American ambassador. Secondly, he was a professor at Harvard, and that meant when he came to Japan he visited with professors at Todai and everybody knows that Todai is a Marxist institution with all left wing professors. This was his association in Japan. He is the equivalent of an American Todai professor. Thirdly, he had remarried after his first wife died the daughter of a very distinguished Japanese family. Her father had been a cabinet minister and the family had very high connections. She had been educated in the United States and her Japanese language was not everything it should have been. In the post occupation period, she had consorted with foreigners in that she was a correspondent for a number of foreign publications and (of course she was a woman doing this kind of work which didn't help either) her principal operating area was Shimbun Alley with all the foreign correspondents. So she was kind of an expatriate in Japanese eyes. And there is nothing the Japanese dislike more than someone who is one of them but one who has distanced themselves. Furthermore, it just didn't seem fitting to these people to have a Japanese woman in the ambassador's residence. How should they treat her, as a Japanese or as an American? The pressures on her, incidentally, during the period he was ambassador were so severe that she was ill a lot of the time.

They let it be known one way or another that they didn't want him as ambassador. Bowles and Harriman and company were meeting to decide who was going to go where...the headhunters were picking out their political ambassadors early in the Kennedy Administration. As I recall the story the Far East correspondent for AP was there when they emerged one night and asked if they had decided on the ambassador to Japan and somebody said there is always Ed Reischauer. He called Reischauer and got him out of bed, it was midnight. He told him that his name had been mentioned for the

ambassadorship to Japan and how would he feel about it. Ed responded that he would be very happy to go. And this was put out on the AP wires and the Japanese began agitating. Word of this came to Rusk's attention, so much so that he called in the Japanese ambassador, Asaki. He said, “What would your government's reaction be if we appointed Ed Reischauer as our ambassador?” Asaki was thought by many Americans to be the most Westernized Japanese that you could want. He was urbane, he wore western clothes well, he ran a nice western style embassy, spoke good English. But, he was Japanese down to his toenails. If they had asked the guy who was then DCM who was a rather scruffy looking fellow who appeared very Japanese, they probably would have gotten a more direct answer. But Rusk asked Asaki and his response was “Of course our government will accept anyone your government sees fit to appoint.” Then he went back to his embassy and called in the Japanese press corps and for an hour or so he lectured them of all the shortcomings of Mr. Reischauer in the Foreign Ministry's opinion. Also they didn't like Ed, I might add, because so many of them thought he knew too much or could learn too much. He spoke Japanese. He was born and raised in Japan. His parents were missionaries and he had studied Japan all his life. They don't cater to someone who knows too damn much about them.

Anyway, the newspapermen may have filed their stories first but they were very shortly all over the State Department. I went into Jeff and said, “Did you hear what Asaki told the Japanese press corps?” He said, “No.” I told him what the general line was and he said, “Well, what do you think this means?” I said, “Asaki was saying what he would have liked to say to Rusk but couldn't have said. But he is representing at least the Foreign Ministry.” He called us all in to verify this. Then he went to Rusk and told him that this had happened. Rusk said, “Well, what do you think it means?” Jeff said, “Well, my Japan experts all tell me that he is expressing extreme displeasure at the prospect of this appointment.” Jeff told me that the Secretary said then, “But, Jeff, I can't go behind the word of the Japanese Ambassador.” So the appointment was made and Reischauer went out there and he was cold shouldered for a long time. He didn't help himself very much.

One of the things that happened while he was there was a visit by Bobby Kennedy in which Kennedy made a very, very famous speech at Waseda University to the students on his own behest.

Q: This was very much in the Bobby Kennedy style.

ERICSON: Oh, yes. He insisted on doing this apparently. The story is that he had an appointment with the leadership of the LDP which he canceled in order to do it. This was a grievous offense to the Japanese establishment who didn't much cater to the idea of his coming as more or less an official visit and talking to the guys who had been in the streets not too long ago opposing their policies. But also in order to do so he would cancel an appointment of this sort was close to unforgivable.

Reischauer did much, much better later on as it became seen that he really was a man of good will and understanding and a good ambassador and that their fears were misplaced. Again, when he got attacked in the embassy they gave him the hepatitis that eventually killed him. He was taken down to that hospital across the street from the Mantetsu Building apparently and had a number of blood transfusions. Of course he was lucky not to die. He was attacked in the embassy lobby by a nut of some kind and it was only the quick work of some embassy employee who got a tourniquet on him and into the hospital. But the blood transfusions gave him the hepatitis that eventually led to his death quite a few years later. That was the crowning thing, the Japanese had to take him to heart because they had done him such grievous harm.

The Kennedy Administration takeover in Japan was dominated by the question of who was going to be ambassador, Reischauer's reception and their attitude to him and that sort of thing.

Q: Before we move back to the Kennedys, just quickly to Parsons and Laos because the Laos thing came up later on with Harriman getting involve and all, but this was the end of

the Eisenhower period. Do you have anything to say about how we were dealing with Laos at that time?

ERICSON: You know, I wasn't directly involved because we had a staff in the Southeast Asian Division who were totally devoted to the question of Laos and saw Parsons constantly. I did not sit in on those meetings and I don't know much of what went on except seeing the cables, etc. I would say that an inordinate attention was given to Laos because we were determined that we were going to do everything policy-wise that we possibly could to see that these unknown characters with suspicious affiliation did not take over in what had suddenly become viewed as a very strategic part of Southeast Asia.

People like Chris Chapman, Dick Unger, Dan Anderson were involved. It was always a puzzle to me why Chris, who was a junior officer at that time, opted out of it halfway through the excitement and went on to another assignment when he was certainly welcomed to stay because he was very well regarded. He was the Laos Desk officer at the time the stuff hit the fan.

At least 50 percent of Parsons' time was spent on Laos. He had a personal feeling about the country and damn it we were going to do everything we could to shore up friendly elements.

Q: When McConaughy came on I heard reports that the Kennedy Administration couldn't take this guy because he seemed to be dithering.

ERICSON: I was staff assistant and I would get calls from the S/S all the time and from the Secretary's staff aides screaming for papers. They were usually still in the process which meant sitting on McConaughy's desk. Then Rusk, who was not above dithering on papers himself, got pretty short sometimes. What actually happened was we tried to make what sense we could out of McConaughy, but I saw that he was a sinking ship and I had done everything I possibly could. At that time the proposal to send Lyndon Johnson on an overseas trip came up and I was very happy to get that relief, and also shortly

afterwards to move on to work for Roger Jones. I thereby outsmarted myself because although McConaughy was a sinking ship I didn't think he would sink that fast and I didn't think Averell Harriman was going to replace him either. I got myself a job on the 7th floor but I could have worked for Harriman and that might have been very interesting.

Q: Did you accompany Lyndon Johnson?

ERICSON: Oh brother, yes.

Q: Lyndon Johnson as Vice President and President was renown for his demands.

ERICSON: I am writing a book some day called “Old Bore Stories,” and this one may be the most boring of all.

The Kennedy Administration came in sort of helter skelter in a lot of ways. Who did what to who was not always clearly decided and who was in charge of what in the foreign affairs field...there were people like Bowles and Harriman, whose positions were never totally clear, operating heavily in foreign affairs. The relationship of the Secretary of State to them was not always clearly defined.

Q: Steven Smith was wandering around...

ERICSON: Yes. He was on the trip with Johnson and his wife.

I can't remember if I had already accepted the job with Roger Jones or not...when the trip first came up my understanding is, and I think it was a very significant trip, incidentally in terms of Johnson's later orientation, but when the trip first came up Johnson had nothing to do with it. It was not an ambition of his. But Bowles and Harriman had decided between themselves that you had to get Lyndon Johnson involved in foreign affairs. Why? Because he had 20 Senate votes in his hip pocket on any damn issue that anyone wanted. He was a consummate maneuverer in the political scene and they ought to take advantage of it by getting him interested in it and involved in foreign affairs. I don't think anybody really

consulted closely on the subject because it was perfectly clear that the Kennedy staff wanted no part of Johnson anywhere...not in domestic politics or foreign. He had done his work during the election and now he was to be kept at arms length.

But Bowles and Harriman decided he should be involved and the way to do that was to send him abroad. Well, they sent him abroad first to some place in Africa. I can't remember where it was, but it was a place where they had a newly installed chief of state and he had attended the ceremony. He and his staff were not aware of what this was all about so they accepted the arrangements that were made for them. And the arrangements that were made for them was that they would stay in the Residence where there was room only for Johnson and one staff person. The rest of them were quartered apart from him. Well, his staff told me that what happened was he went over there and what they didn't know was that Johnson didn't sleep at night. He would sleep a couple of hours at a time and that his valet carried a folding board with him which was placed in the bed to help him sleep. However, he didn't want people to know that he had the board, that he had this weakness. When he woke up at these odd intervals he often wanted to talk to someone. So here he was waking up at odd hours in Africa and not being able to talk to Joe Blow who is down at a hotel. He also gets up and wanders around in his pajama bottoms looking for a Scotch and soda and something to munch on. He was a great muncher and drank fairly regularly during the course of the day and the evening. I do not mean to imply he was a drunk, but he did drink. And when he wanted a drink he wanted it there and then. If he wanted cashews with it, that is what he wanted and not anything else. Anyway he went down and searched for whatever he wanted and the ambassador's wife apparently heard him stirring around and she came down stairs in her curlers and caught him in his pajama pants and this was very embarrassing. He had the decency to be embarrassed about this sort of thing, but he didn't want to be interrupted by ambassadors' wives with their hair in curlers while he was searching for something..

So, he came away from there just cussing mad about the State Department and Foreign Service and all its activities, etc. Also, he had nothing to do except sit around and

watch the ceremony. So next time they tried it they thought they damn well better have something significant for him to do. It was talked about around the Department and the idea was to send him to Saigon. Diem is in trouble, he has political unrest and Buddhists were demonstrating. We were going to assess that situation very carefully before we did much of anything significant and we needed a high level assessment. Diem needed encouragement. So send Lyndon Johnson out there to do the job. Once the decision was made, exit Bowles and Harriman, we never heard from them again.

I was made the coordinator for the trip and it was understood that I would go along. I began to figure out the logistics and getting agendas written concerning who he would be meeting with, etc. I was sending cables back and forth and enjoying life when all of a sudden it seems we are going to fly over the Philippines but we can't do that without a stop. Johnson was interested in stopping. Well, once you did that the right wing woke up and said that Chiang Kai-shek was causing us some difficulty so we have some important things to say to him so Johnson has to go to Taipei. So Taipei was added to the trip and things started to grow. Mrs. Johnson actually called somebody in the Department and said, “Do we really have to go to Taipei and talk to that man?”

By the time we got to Taipei we were tired, but we hadn't been to Bangkok which was after all the focus of everything in Southeast Asia. You can't leave Southeast Asia without going to Bangkok. So having already cleared the Taipei end of things, we had to turn around and schedule Bangkok. And if we are going to Bangkok we might as well stay in Hong Kong because we are going to be tired. So we will go to Hong Kong and rest a little and then go on down to Bangkok and do our thing there.

Then he came into it again and said, “How about Australia?” He passionately wanted to get back to Australia.

Q: He had been to Australia during the war.

ERICSON: He got a medal and a theater ribbon, I think, for his...

Q: For being on an airplane that was shot at.

ERICSON: Anyway, his staff started reflecting his own personal interest in going to Australia, but it didn't work out because enter Bowles again who said he should go to India rather than Australia. So, with great reluctance Johnson decided to go to India, and, of course, once you got to India you go to Pakistan. So there we were given an itinerary. But it came to a thudding halt re Pakistan because the White House suddenly got into the act and became aware that we had scheduled him as far as Pakistan and it was obvious we were going to return home by way of Europe. But Kennedy is planning a visit to Europe about that time and they want no part of Lyndon Johnson landing in Europe in and around that time frame. So it was literally after we left Karachi that we found out that our itinerary the rest of the way was going to be Athens, Bermuda and home. As a matter of fact we didn't know about Bermuda until we left Athens.

The thing had grown like Topsy. One of the problems was that aside from me coordinating the administrative aspects, there was not anyone really in charge of the policies things. On the trip there wasn't going to be anyone clearly in charge of the policy issues. As it evolved, the State Department party was under the nominal supervision of Bill Crockett, who was then Assistant Secretary for Administration. He was the senior Department man on the trip and he brought along his deputy, Henry Ford, who brought the cash. They were nominally the two senior people on the trip and neither of them knew anything about Asia. We had Frank Meloy who really kind of took over in absence of anyone else as coordinating policy matters. He had sufficient seniority. And we had Ed Martin who was China chief at the time on the trip. Then we had Horace Smith, who had been ambassador to Laos and came along as Southeast Asian expertise. And a number of other people. But we had, for example, on the Johnson side of things, most of his personal staff...Busby and

Jenkins, Liz Carpenter, etc., but he said he wouldn't travel unless he had a Kennedy on the plane. Enter Smith and his wife, Jean, the youngest Kennedy.

The Senate also wanted in on this and they sent Frank Milao, who was the secretary of the Senate at the time. He showed up and since he had been secretary of the Senate during the time Johnson was there, he was welcomed.

All of us got on that airplane distrusting the other. Johnson's people, Milao was totally a third force, the State Department people, active and like Smith, not so active. We also had on board the guy who was name ambassador to Bangkok. He was an oil man who had a career in and out of the government. The idea was that he was to go with us to Bangkok and get introduced and then stay behind and present his credentials. In the end that is what he did, but it took a struggle to make him do it.

It was a very weird group of people that took off finally on that trip. We prepared an enormous book, briefing book, for him. We had a number of meetings with him and his staff. We would go over to the Executive Building and meet with his staff about what was going to happen on the trip and who he was going to meet. He would come to the meetings but he was concerned almost entirely with the protocol of the thing. It meant more to them where the photographers' vehicle was going to be in the motorcade. That was terribly important. But we never, before that airplane left the United States, got to brief Lyndon Johnson on anything that he was going to do and to the best of my knowledge he never read anything of the voluminous papers made available to him about what the issues would be on this trip. Now, I say that with a strong caveat he did a lot of loony things on this trip, very strange things, but I am not convinced to this day that he did any of them on an ad hoc basis. He did them all very carefully thought out in advance for effect on somebody. Now he may have been extraordinarily well briefed, he may have known in his own mind what he wanted to do and how he wanted to do it, but as far as we are concerned he absorbed none of that from us, because he would walk out of these meetings very early on and they would just sort disintegrate because there was

nobody there to talk to. Another characteristic of these meetings was that his own staff, Horace Busby, his speech writer; Walter Jenkins, etc, weren't taking any responsibility for this. It was out of their field and we were the guys who were supposed to be the action people on this. While on the airplane I would go to Walter Jenkins and say, “Look, I have a problem and need the Vice President's decision on this.” And he would say, “Yes, you do.” “Can't you help us Walter, we have to get this done?” Walter would say, “No, go take your chances.” They were not very helpful.

Q: I would stop here but want to pick up next time because this is a fascinating story. Was anybody coming at you while you were getting ready and saying, “We sure want the Vice President to do this or that,” or was everybody sitting around saying, “Just get him in and out without upsetting relations?”

ERICSON: Well, he was such an unknown quantity to the Department. There was nobody in the Department who had had any experience with Lyndon Johnson really. As a senator he hadn't really been involved in any foreign relations operation of any kind. People were not coming at us like that because for one thing his presence in some of these countries was theoretically going to signal some major changes. Why were we sending the Vice President to Taipei? What was he suppose to say to Chiang Kai-shek that was so important? That didn't come from us, that came from over there. What was he suppose to do about Diem? We understood the general purpose of going out there and bucking him up and assess the situation, but was there anything beyond that? The Administration was that new and the lines of authority were so unclearly drawn and the policies themselves were not yet formulated so I think nobody was willing to take a real chance and go say, “Well, let's go get this guy to do this.” No, they weren't coming at us. That was one of the reasons why we couldn't get someone at the assistant secretary level on the airplane.

Q: Normally it would have been the appropriate assistant secretary of the area visited. Who was the assistant secretary?

ERICSON: McConaughy in East Asia. And, of course, we had a brand new one in South Asia, too. But nobody was really wanting to take over charge of the trip and the Secretary, I might add, and his people didn't really intrude themselves on this. The arrangements were between us at the FE level and Johnson's staff and what interjections we would get from the President. We were sort of left to do this more or less on our own.

Q: Let's stop at this point and we will pick it up where you took off now that we have the background. Is there anything else you would like to add at this moment?

ERICSON: I would like to add one thing before I forget it. We were worried about Johnson. We had heard about his reputation. What we were really elated about was the idea that we would have a Kennedy on board because we were all sort of swept up in the Camelot fever. If we couldn't have someone who bore the name Kennedy, well, we would get the youngest sister and that would be absolutely great thinking of her as the girl next door, down to earth type. On the other hand, the other lady on board would be Lady Bird Johnson. A lot of us were very, very leery of Lady Bird Johnson. Personally, I was. I couldn't stand her public persona. It seemed to me that she was the gushy Texas club woman kind of thing with a terrible Texan accent. My impression of Lady Bird Johnson as we took off on that trip was not very good. I want to tell you that by the time we finished that trip...I got off that airplane three weeks later thinking that Lady Bird Johnson was the greatest woman who ever lived, as fine a person as I have ever met. I wish she wouldn't when she got up on the stage come across with that Texas sentimentality. But she was absolutely marvelous on that trip.

And Jean Kennedy Smith and her husband were absolute albatrosses around our necks wherever they went. They were drags, they were difficult people to deal with. She, in particular, was just as difficult as she could be. Arrogant, demanding, forgetful, quick to blame people...she left her purse in a night club in Hong Kong, for example, and he raised holy hell because no one from the party who was there had the presence to pick it up and

bring it to her. She left a trail of soiled laundry all through the Far East. She was late for everything. They were a disaster.

Lady Bird, on the other hand, after we left the Philippines for the rest of that trip spent more time in the back of the cabin with us curled up on a seat with her shoes off and her feet underneath her than she did in the forward cabin. She let us talk about ourselves and was genuinely and deeply interested in our experiences and how we saw things and where we were going next and what we were going to do and how she should behave, etc. She was intellectually very much alive and just as nice a person as you could ask for. I admire her deeply, right down to the present time.

Q: Okay, we will pick it up when the trip starts.

Q: Today is April 12, 1995. Okay, Dick, we will start. You mentioned something and I am not sure we covered it last time so why don't you cover it now.

ERICSON: I simply wanted to stress that those of us in the Department who were scheduled to go on the trip and who were called over for the briefings in the Old Executive Building had the distinct feeling that the Vice President's party and the Vice President, himself, was going to be very, very badly briefed for the trip because they apparently did not seem to take very seriously the substantive portions of what we had to say, but were interested in only concentrating on the administrative aspects of this thing, particularly those aspects that would pertain to press coverage. The line up of the press truck in the motorcade, for example. Where the newsreel camera men were going to be. It was stressed over and over and over again that the truck with the cameramen had to precede the car in which the Vice President was riding. We tried to explain, of course, that at times local custom dictated some of these things and there might be some objections along the way. But they insisted that the people who were managing this do it their way.

I am not sure I stressed strongly enough the line up of people on the trip and the lack of coordinated leadership that we had.

Q: I was talking to Tom Stern and he said this was an important trip for a number of people on the trip because it gave them a boost up. Was Idar Rimestad on the trip?

ERICSON: No, he wasn't.

Q: Oh, perhaps it was another trip.

ERICSON: The senior officers on the State Department side were on the non-Vice Presidential side. The senior man was Bill Crockett, Assistant Secretary for Administration, and he brought his deputy, Henry Ford, along, and Ford brought the cash along. The most impressive part about that thing was the wad of cash that Henry Ford had in his pocket.

Crockett was not a substantive man. He did not know what the Far East was all about and he didn't pretend to. For substantive officers we had as senior man, I suppose, China Ed Martin who was a division chief in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs. He was added to the trip after it was decided that we would go to Taipei. Previous to that Frank Meloy, who had served in Saigon, was to be the senior Southeast Asia man although Horace Smith, who had been ambassador to Laos was added to the trip as expertise outside of Vietnam. Then they added the Standard Oil man who was going to Thailand as ambassador was also sent along more to introduce him to Bangkok under the auspices of the Vice President than anything else. He was supposed to stay in Bangkok for a briefing and then return directly to the United States for his Senate confirmation hearings, then report back out and present his credentials later on.

Harry Thayer was an administrative officer at that time in the FE administrative section and he was called back from leave to handle the administrative details of the trip...the room assignments, baggage handling, motorcade alignments, etc.

Q: Watching this trip develop, just to get a feel for how these things can go. Harriman and Bowles said we need to get Johnson out to expose him to the world in a way, but did the State Department come up with a theme for this trip?

ERICSON: Not really. That was one of the puzzling aspects of it because here we were...incidentally it was obvious they were going to get a good deal of publicity because there were two planes and the second plane was going to be full of press. The press were signing up like mad for the trip. They detailed Carl Rowan, who was at that time assistant secretary for public affairs, to ride the press plane and ride herd on the press.The one thing that came out of the Department was that the Vice President was going to go to Vietnam and then the rest of it just sort of got added ad hoc. So there wasn't a unifying theme to the thing. I think the Department at that early stage of the Administration was somewhat in disarray. And, of course, they had a lot of things on their plate like the Laos situation. A theme simply did not emerge. But we did roughly know what we wanted him to do in each place and we did have things to brief him on substantively for each place. Johnson's people took the briefing papers but there was never any evidence that they had read them or would listen to the briefings as they were offered orally. I think we had two sessions in the Old Executive Office Building and they were almost entirely devoted to administrative affairs, and Johnson, himself, appeared and disappeared quite quickly.

So, we took off really without a terribly cohesive plan for the trip and certainly with a very loose organization. I mentioned that Frank Milao came along. I am not sure, you will have to ask Frank what brought him on the trip. He was the secretary of the Senate. He had held that position when Johnson was the majority leader. He was interested in foreign affairs and maybe he just asked to be included. Maybe Mike Mansfield had put him in to keep the Senate's interest alive. I never did understand why, but Milao got on the trip with the Senate staffer's typical attitude towards the Departmental people, which was elbows out and I don't trust you. And we looked at him in some what the same way. When we got off the trip, we were very good friends indeed. Many of us trusted each other implicitly

because we were forced into this cauldron of activity and everyone getting assignments which didn't necessarily relate to any expertise or anything. As we went along we got to rely on each other a lot as we faced our common enemy who was riding up in the front cabin of that airplane.

Q: Known as the VP.

ERICSON: Yes. He was a very, very hard taskmaster as is very well known. By being rough on all of us I guess he brought us all pretty much together. In the end it worked out reasonably well, but it didn't work out in developing a coherent plan for the trip.

Q: Let's talk about where you stopped and what happened.

ERICSON: I don't want to lose track of the substantive issues that were involved here. The important stop on the trip was, of course, Saigon and it was the first stop. The trip was scheduled pretty much as follows:

From Washington to Honolulu, with a refueling stop at Travis Air Force Base. That leg of the trip was pretty much devoted to things Hawaiian. By that I mean Johnson was going out there to make a speech and he was going to lay the cornerstone for the East-West Center in Hawaii for which he had some legislative responsibility for and which he looked upon as his baby forever after. For that purpose he had on board the plane, Senator Fong and a group of Hawaiian politicians. We did not have a shot at him on that leg of the trip. We flew out to Hawaii in comparative peace and calm, although in refueling at Travis I left the lounge where we were suppose to stay to see my parents. We had been told the plane was going to take off in about 30 minutes but it actually did in 15 minutes and I almost got left behind.

We were going from Hawaii then to Saigon accompanied on each leg by a press plane. Now, the advantage that the press plane had was that it was a turbojet which was brand new and chartered from Pan Am. The Presidential aircraft was a straight jet which meant

the press could see us take off and then scramble aboard their plane and then land and be in formation to watch us land at the next stop, which was sort of a neat arrangement in its way. Rowan and somebody else from his office rode that plane all the way.

We got to Hawaii a little bit early. I remember we had to circle for a few minutes in a holding pattern. The Air Force, of course, taking great pride in having those Presidential aircraft land exactly to the minute of their allotted time and Colonel Rudd, who was the pilot, was not about to land early or late for anybody. We landed precisely on time and we had a very nice little stay in Hawaii. We stayed at the Royal Hawaiian. This was somewhat before the enormous expansion out there and was very pleasant. We still didn't get a chance to talk to Mr. Johnson.

The next day we were to fly from Honolulu to Saigon, stay in Saigon three nights and then to the Philippines, and then to Taipei, and then to Hong Kong, and then to Bangkok, and then to New Delhi and finally to Karachi. From that point it was a mystery, as I think I mentioned at our last meeting. The Kennedy forces had decreed that the Vice President would not be in Europe about the time Europe was anticipating the President's visit. So we didn't know exactly where we were going. We had made no plans at that point. But as it turned out we went to Athens and then to the Azores and then to Bermuda and then home. That was the outline of the trip.

From Hawaii then we took off for Saigon, except that the Air Force plane did not have the Vice President aboard. He rode on the press plane for that leg of the trip. It was the only time he rode on the press plane. By and large he avoided the press as much as he could on the whole trip. You would have to get a more accurate account of that from Carl Rowan, but every time I saw him talk about the press tagging along he was expressing irritation. But he did ride the press plane to Honolulu to Guam where we were going to refuel. Of course it was on that leg that the Air Force plane lost its hydraulic system and we made a very hairy, scary landing, at least it seemed to me, because everything had to be done manually. When Colonel Rudd emerged from the cockpit his uniform was just

sweated through. It was a skidding, yawling landing, but the Vice President was spared that. We all got on the press plane to fly the next leg which was straight into Saigon.

On that leg we finally, at the urging of various people, got to brief him substantively. We went up into the front lounge of the Pan Am plane and there was a crowd up there. I, as custodian of the books for the trips and briefing materials got to sit with my betters in the lounge. I can remember I was looking out of the window and you could see the islands of the Philippines down below us and Johnson finished perusing his briefing book for Saigon. Whether he was making a show of this or whether this was really the first time he had ever seen it, I don't know. At the time I certainly thought it was the first time he ever saw the material. Later I wondered whether he was playing games with us and he may well have been, probably was. But at the time I did not think he was playing games with us or he was the most magnificent actor who ever lived because he shut the book with a slam and said, “Turn the plane around, we are going home.” We all reacted as you might expect, rather dumbfounded. He was asked what was wrong and he said, “You can't do this with the Vice President of the United States. You are sending me out there to hold his hand. You can't do that. I am not going out there just to wave the flag. This man needs help, we have to help him. There is no help for him in here. No help for his government, no help for his situation. Turn the plane around we are going home.” Much palaver ensued and eventually he graciously conceded that we should continue the trip. The fact that a couple of thousand people were awaiting his arrival in Saigon, and there were as a matter of fact. The route to the airport from downtown Saigon was lined with what must have been the majority of the Vietnamese army at the time, all of them incidentally facing outward because the VC had threatened his life and there were some security concerns.

Q: Was there any response to “well you didn't have a policy?” You couldn't say, “we do have $20 million.” What could you do?

ERICSON: Well, as I recall, he was not given authority to make any offers in the material we were taking with us. I honestly don't know what he might have had in his hip pocket

from some private consultations he might have had in Washington. I don't think there was anything of the kind. It is not an impossibility given the way the man operated. We finally persuaded him not to turn around by telling him such an act would be the worst thing he could do for Diem. To leave him standing at the airport with half his population around. He understood that and did understand that he was there, after all, to make a survey of the situation and what he came back with in the way of recommendations might well be the kind of thing that he needed to really help him, etc. But, we weren't able to assure him that yes, there were $20 million in surplus AID funds lying around that he could pledge on a moment's notice.

Again, looking back on the trip and the way the man did operate I find it perfectly possible that he was playing the kind of mind game with us that he enjoyed playing with subordinates. On the other hand, I think that the total apparent sincerity of his reaction to this thing indicated that he hadn't really thought it through at that point and when he saw what his talking points were he was pretty much disappointed and thought he was being badly used again, remembering his African trip where he was just a tool of some kind and badly misused.

Anyway, we flew on into Saigon arriving in the late afternoon.

Q: This was when?

ERICSON: May, 1961, very early in the Kennedy Administration.

There was a large crowd at the airport. I saw this on a number of occasions with Johnson when he later made Presidential visits and wasn't a member of the traveling party but stationed in the post concerned. He feasted on public acclaim. And this would be his first opportunity to get any foreign public feedback. It was very important to him it seemed as we went along, that the population recognized and acknowledged his presence. In Saigon he got a good measure. There was a large turnout and nice military ceremony. On the way in, of course, it couldn't be lost on him why the people were all facing outward. He

was staying at the Palace and the rest of us were in the Caravel Hotel. This again was a ghastly error on the embassy's part and he didn't like that at all. But there had been discussion about that and the Vietnamese government had insisted that guests of this nature must stay in the Presidential guest quarters and it was very well protected. Security was a problem. And that was what you always sold it to him on, that security was the problem. Even though he totally ignored it sometimes and in frightening ways.

Anyway the first substantive meeting was that evening in the embassy. It started rather late in the evening after dinner. A few of us who were responsible for substantive matters went back to the old embassy that had that creaking two man elevator to the top floor where the ambassador's office was. Some of us climbed the stairs and some rode the elevator. We sat down for a briefing with the ambassador and his staff. The ambassador, Fritz Nolting, was brand new and had only been there a matter of weeks. As a matter of fact he had come into my office while I was still organizing the trip to say, “I understand you are going to Saigon. You can't go there first, I have to get out there and present my credentials. I have to go to Hong Kong to get new suits made, I haven't got any clothes that are suitable for the tropics. And I have to get there, get my feet on the ground and learn a little more than I can get from briefings before you dump this trip on top of me.” By that time all I could say was, “I'm sorry Mr. Ambassador. You had better hustle out there as quickly as you can because we can't give you any more time.”

Anyway, he hadn't had much time on the job and he was not familiar with all the situations and all the personnel involved. I think Johnson found him...well, the personal chemistry wasn't very good. The longer we stayed there and the longer probed for what was planned, what the State Department had in mind for Vietnam, what the situation was, what the needs were, the unhappier he got with the answers he got, which were usually along the line of, “we don't know”. He was not in a very good mood and that meeting lasted until after midnight, as I recall. Then we went down and he let us know that he wanted to convene for a further meeting in the Palace. The motorcade was formed up outside the old embassy building, and those of you who served in Saigon will recall that the old embassy

building fronted on a very wide avenue which had a service road on either side. So there were two rows of trees that ran down the road and on the other side was a row of shops which had awning that projected out over the sidewalk. So between the trees and the awnings you had very shady areas in the day time and very dark areas at night because the street was not well lit.

When we got out of the embassy...this is one of my favorite episodes of the trip because it was indicative of the way Johnson operated in situations like this...it was so dark that you couldn't really see all the way across the street. You had a sense of a very large crowd of people over there. You could hear them murmuring and the shuffling of feet and that kind of thing. Of course there were military police all over the place. Johnson got into his car, the lead car, and I was about three back from him and we got into it and the motorcade moved off. It went about 50 feet and the lead car stopped. Johnson got out of the car, walked across that street with his security coming along behind him probably sweating peanuts, went into that crowd and started shaking hands. Those of us who remained in our cars could tell where he was because the press, of course, was hanging around and went with him and you could tell where Johnson was by the popping of flash bulbs as he proceeded up the street. He walked into a crowd where anybody could have put a knife to him and he did it for about a half a block, although it seemed to last for an eternity. He took a terrible risk given the security situation at the time and the threats that were made against him.

Anyway, he gets back into his car and we go to the Palace and we look for a room with a light. The only room with decent lighting in it happened to be in a bedroom which was occupied by Mrs. Johnson. Mrs. Johnson got out and moved down the hall to bunk in with Mary Margaret so we could have the room for a conference. The conference went on for a while and we were all dead tired. I don't think we were very responsive. He issued some orders to get messages back to Washington. What they were I do not know.

The next day he was involved with conferences with Diem and with various efforts to get in touch with Washington. We had a hell of a time doing that. He actually sent the airplane up at some point during these conversations because it was reputed that Air Force One or Two could get in touch with any place on the globe at any given time. Well, that didn't work, we had sun spots or something that were just lousing up communications and it was difficult communicating with Washington. The schedule called for him to have a couple sessions with Diem and I don't know, I wasn't there and no State Department person that I know ever made any notes on what went on. Maybe Frank Meloy did, I just don't know. But the emphasis was clearly that Johnson was very unhappy with the way things were going and was desperately trying to get in touch with Washington. I think he wanted authority to offer something concrete to Diem before he left. He eventually did get such authority, including the promise that a very high level military technical mission would be sent to really assess the needs of the Vietnamese army and what was necessary to defend the country against the North Vietnamese. And that, of course, was the Taylor mission and out of that mission came a series of recommendations that brought Diem an increased number of American advisers, increased monetary and material aid and on and on. But I think that more than that, what Johnson, himself, carried away from this experience...this was his very first involvement with a foreign situation and he got into it very passionately. He really felt strongly about this. I feel he got a personal interest in Vietnam beginning with this mission of his that has never been given its due weight in subsequent assessments of what happened. He was personally involved. He was really the first one who ever made any loud noises of what was happening there and what we should be doing about it.

On the more amusing side in Vietnam, he was asked to do some things like visit a textile factory, one of the pride and joys of the Vietnamese and AID apparently had something to do with it and wanted him to see that. It was out in the country and he had a motorcade, etc. He always carried with him in those days an electro cardiogram. He had had that heart attack and he had a reduced electro cardiogram about the size of a card. Whenever he

wanted to do something and somebody didn't want him to do it, he would pull that thing out and say, “See? That shows I can do that. I am fine.” When he didn't want to do something he would haul it out and say, “See? I have had a heart attack and you can't make me do that out in the hot sun.” This textile factory was one of those hot sun things. He finally agreed to do it but he put up quite a squabble.

He also came away from the Palace convinced that palaces and residences were not for him. What he wanted was hotels because the Palace, although secure and all the rest of it, after he had checked in went down to a skeleton staff. It wasn't stocked to his liking either. So apparently, subsequently that night after we had all gone, when he wanted something he couldn't get it. This vexed him and made him mad. I guess he wanted to keep talking to people but his staff was all over at the Caravel and he couldn't talk to anybody. He did not like that.

So, we went through the visit with Johnson having no faith in the embassy, unhappy with the program he had been sent with, and irritated with everything except the crowd turnout which I think pleased him. And he liked Diem. He apparently responded pretty well to Diem because on the morning we were supposed to depart for Manila arriving about noon and there were about 60,000 people at the airport to greet him, he kept that plane waiting for at least two hours. He had a breakfast meeting that extended well into the morning until he got something back from Washington on something that he had sent off and presumably it was his authority to offer Diem what aid was available and the prospect of a mission to really study his problems.

We left Saigon with considerable mixed feelings and already half way exhausted with the prospect of six or seven more stops ahead of us.

Q: This chemistry between Diem who was the type to out talk people and Johnson who also talked a lot is a mystery to me.

ERICSON: I don't know why they got along. You are quite right, the two just totally disparate personalities to say nothing of the difference in their size.

Q: Diem was rotund and small and Johnson was huge.

ERICSON: Yes, Johnson was gargantuan to most very large Americans. Because of the force of his personality he was just overwhelming, and Diem was an autocrat who was used to dominating. How these two got along as well as they did, I just don't know. It may have been that Johnson felt such empathy with the situation the country found itself in that he thought something really had to be done. Of course it is a terribly dangerous situation when you have a man with that much force and influence cut lose in a country that he doesn't really know anything about.

One of the things I neglected to say in my earlier discourse about the 1950s was that I shared a room with Wolf in Tokyo, the land reform expert.

During the McCarthy era when Agriculture took over the Foreign Agricultural Service he had been serving in the embassy after the occupation as agricultural attach# as an employee of the State Department. Then Agriculture took them over right in the midst of the brouhaha about security in the State Department. Agriculture had a security officer for the first time in its life and he decided that he was going to be just as good as Scotty Meloy, by god, and he was going to find him a security risk and he latched on to Wolf. Wolf was a Russian Jew. An immigrant from Russia. The streets of New York and no money. Sold newspapers and got into Columbia University. Got a Ph.D. and became an expert in land reform. He was brought to Tokyo by MacArthur to reform the whole Japanese system. He used to get up at cocktail parties and cry, “Look at me. Look at my background. This country gives me this education and employs me in this kind of a position. Where else in the world could anything like this conceivably happen?” Wolf had the misfortune of having a sister still living in Russia and he also had the misfortune of having been a chauffeur for Amtorg a year or two. All of this spelled communist to Agriculture's new security officer

so he refused to take Wolf on. We in the embassy signed a petition to try to get him kept in State, but State being the courageous organization that it was refused to take him. But AID picked him up and sent him to Taipei where Wolf made the first of a series of mistakes in his life. He invested in a pottery factory or something that AID had some business with and AID fired him for conflict of interest. At this point, Diem reached out and took him. He brought him to Vietnam and ensconced him in a very large old French colonial mansion with a huge servant population out back. Wolf was supposed to be his adviser on land reform, rural problems, etc. Wolf stayed there probably two or three years. By the time I visited him in 1956 or 1957 he had quit that job and had come up through Tokyo and he said very frankly," it isn't going to work, they can't make it. The situation is so complicated, so froth with conflicting interests. The ruling upper class had so little real interest in the fate of the peasantry, etc. And they don't acknowledge the need to establish their own political base through measures in agriculture and furthermore they are incompetent. And the country is much more complicated than people think it is. You think of the Vietnamese, but there are 77 different societies, each of which has its own agenda. There isn't the leadership necessary to pull this all together. It just won't work and I don't want to be associated with it any more, so I left."

Anyway, speaking of Johnson, it was dangerous to turn a man like that lose with that much enthusiasm into a situation of that kind. If he did get his first interest and sense of responsibility for Vietnam from this trip it is rather tragic that it had been thrown together in such haste and that the measures that were taken were taken while he was there screaming for communication with Washington. It was a very hasty and poorly thought out proposition, although that could have been corrected, of course.

Anyway, here we are in the air breathless from Saigon with 60,000 people standing in the sun at Manila airport and we have another little episode with Johnson and his mind games. We are about half way there. I had written the arrival statement for the Philippines. Two things happened. First of all we had a brief meeting with him in which he had discussed his reaction to the protocol at the Philippines. He expressed his displeasure

at the accommodation situation...that was our fault...and he expressed his displeasure at the way the party disembarked from the airplane for the greeting ceremony. He had some labor leader along for the entire trip. I don't know what his contribution was, but it seemed that this guy and a number of his own staff and Colonel Buris, his military aide, and various other people had gotten out of the front of the airplane. We cats and dogs knew where we belonged and went out the back and headed right for the embassy cars. But this crowd of people had sort of confused the welcoming ceremony and he didn't like that and said that hereafter nobody would get out from the front of the airplane but he, Mrs. Johnson, Steven Smith and Jean Kennedy Smith. That was going to be the front end party. Everybody else was to get out the rear exit, including Colonel Buris.

The other episode occurred half way to the Philippines when he opened the door of the front cabin, himself, one of the very few times he ever came into the back cabin, and he either had slippers on or was bare foot, I can't remember, but I do remember he was wearing just an undershirt. He came through the door and he had between thumb and forefinger a piece of paper, holding it in a very disdainful way. He looked around the back cabin and said, “Who wrote this?” I can quote him directly because I had written it and I remember distinctly. He said, “You god damn namby-pamby State Department people, I don't talk like this. Can't none of you write the way I talk?” He opened his fingers and dropped the thing on the carpet, then turned around and walked back into the forward cabin. Well, everybody had long since been looking at me. So, I got up and picked the piece of paper up and got back to my seat. I read it fairly carefully and it seemed to be full of stirring phrases reasonably expressed, it wasn't going to get him into any trouble. I didn't know how Texans talked, I didn't know how I was expected to talk like he talked. I changed about four words and sent it back up to the forward cabin and he gave it exactly the way he received it and never said another word about it. He never made another comment on it but appeared to relish the giving of it as I observed him.

Anyway, the Saigon arrival was fairly informal and they kind of hustled him into the motorcade, probably for security reasons. In the Philippines there was no such overt

problem, his life hadn't been threatened away. There was an enormous crowd out there and President Garcia was there to personally greet him. And they had a full military reception planned. So out the front of the airplane comes Mr. Johnson, Steven Smith and their wives and Johnson is faced with a full military review and all that sort of nonsense. Later, on the way to Taipei he raised holy hell with Colonel Buris. “Where the damn hell was Buris when he needed him? Why wasn't he out of the front of the airplane standing by his side? Couldn't he see what he was facing?” Anyway, there hadn't been adequate briefing apparently on the kind of ceremony he was going to get. Later on, of course, he handled that kind of ceremony very easily, but he wasn't all that used to a full military international honors type thing.

I don't remember very much about the Philippines beyond that. We were busy cleaning up after Saigon and most of us who were on the trip from the Department of State were around the embassy and the hotel. Incidentally, Johnson was in a hotel in the Philippines and that pleased him mightily. We were beginning to realize things were serious and there was a lot of correspondence to be done and a lot of things to be written...arrival statements, remarks, and a lot of record keeping. He had let it be known that he wanted a full record of the damn trip. So at that point we were getting together all the records so far of the trip. I honestly don't know what we did in the Philippines except just show the flag. He went to a lot of affairs. I remember I had to deliver some papers at one point to some location where they had to be brought in. I was there on the ground, whatever it was we were looking for had to be brought in by helicopter and I remember sweating like mad and going out to the helicopter too soon and getting fine red dust all over me. So, it was that kind of a trip. The Philippine part of the trip seemed to have gone all right.

And then came Taipei. As I say, there was considerable trepidation on the Johnson side about the politics of the thing. The visual thing of being too closely associated with that reactionary, Chiang Kai-shek and his people. There, I think, Johnson and company ran into one of the better, smoother operations and ended up being somewhat surprised at how nice these people, which they feared so much, really were. On that leg of the trip and

only on that leg of the trip were we escorted into the airport. The Chinese Nationalists sent up a flight of F-86s. I have a picture in my own personal file taken out of the window of one of them off our wing tip escorting us into Taipei.

Q: These were American made jets?

ERICSON: Yes, Saber jets of Korean War fame. They were a bit outmoded by that time, of course, but there they were to escort us in. And then from the airport to the hotel in Taipei, a nice arrival, a good military ceremony, Buris was there. I forget who greeted us, Chiang-Kai-shek certainly did not. All the way from the airport into the hotel the street was lined with primarily school children as well as representatives of every conceivable organization in Taipei. The whole motorcade route was lined with people and they were all waving Chinese and American flags and many of them let out loud cheers as we went by. It was not spontaneous, the flags were all the same size and the children were in school uniforms, etc. But it was very well organized and that was characteristic to the visit to Taipei. Everything went very smoothly. Johnson was in a hotel and got everything he wanted and his meetings with Chiang Kai-shek apparently went reasonably well. I still don't know what the heck...I knew at the time but it was not of such shattering importance that it remains with me to this day. But the meetings with Chiang Kai-shek went a lot better than anybody had expected them too. And largely it was because of the Chinese effort.

There was one interesting little incident that occurred and that is in order to make room...and this is part of the story of Johnson's and any modern president's travel overseas...when you move one of these enormous groups into a hotel you are going to hurt somebody along the way, somebody is going to be moved out. Well, the press, of course, was very eager for any kind of news of this kind and sure enough it turned out that over 15 American tourists, some of who were fairly influential people in their own right, had been bounced out of the hotel in order to make way for the Johnson party. This was noted in the local newspaper. The embassy prepared its press summary for the party and early in the morning, Al Harding, the Chinese language officer who was in

charge of scanning the local press, had included this item prominently in the press briefing which was passed out not only to President Johnson but to all the members of the party including the press. I can remember coming down early in the morning into the embassy and walking into the middle of an argument between Crockett, who had been talking to someone on Johnson's own personal staff, who had expressed extreme displeasure at finding this item in the English language thing that was going to be handed out to all the American press. Crockett was demanding that this summary be recalled and the offending article expunged and the fact that Americans had been evicted be kept a secret. The DCM was saying no. He said, “The press summary is intended to convey what is regarded as important about this visit from the Johnson trip. It is in there and to expunge it at this stage of the game will call attention to it. It stays. I won't take it out.” Crockett was jumping up and down beside him. In the end it stayed and the press picked it up and sent it back to the States but it didn't cause any fatalities and as I say that has been part of the landscape ever since. Nobody worries about it anymore.

The other problem with Taipei was when we got there there was no Cutty Sark.

Q: Oh, yes. Cutty Sark is a Scotch whiskey.

ERICSON: Yes. Johnson, strangely enough was not a scotch drinker, he was a Cutty Sark drinker. We didn't have any Cutty Sark in Taipei. The order was for Cutty Sark and the embassy thought they could substitute, but they couldn't. An airplane was actually sent from Hong Kong to Taipei with a couple of cases of Cutty Sark. And that got into the press and caused a hullabaloo at the time. If these press people had been administrating the trip, they wouldn't have thought twice about getting that Cutty Sark out there because it certainly saved more grief than it was worth. But, when Johnson wanted something, he wanted it then. And he wanted what he wanted. He didn't want any substitutes. Commenting on his drinking habits on the trip. The stewards' working area on the plane was in the rear of the plane and they had to pass everybody to go to the front to deliver anything. We all saw the one scotch every hour and a half, or something like that. He

was never inebriated, but he did drink fairly steadily. He usually wanted cashews with the drinks. But he would ask for other things and sometimes switched just to confuse people and make them unhappy. They damn well better be able to supply it.But, anyway, we did get the Cutty Sark from Hong Kong which was our next stop.

The Taipei sendoff was in keeping with the arrival and we left Taipei feeling pretty good and looking forward to a couple of days in Hong Kong. We got two nights there.

Q: Hong Kong at that time, and still may be, the R&R spot for the whole Far East.

ERICSON: Especially for anybody who wants to do any shopping. He did go shopping incidentally. What he did there, I think it was under Lady Bird's urging, was to buy quantities of sport shirts and things of that kind that he gave away as presents later on to those who had been on the trip. He also gave away some other things. He enjoyed Hong Kong. We were in the Mandarin Hotel and it was kind of a relaxed period made famous only by his conversation with some press people in his bedroom while he was sitting on the john.

Q: Did you by any chance, while we are talking about his personal habits, encounter his demand for a masseuse? I am told that some places this could be quite a problem.

ERICSON: Well, that was one of the reasons that he wanted hotels because he wanted all kinds of services, including services of a masseuse. That was part of the scene wherever he went. I told you, I think, that his valet carried with him a bed board. Now it wasn't just an ordinary bed board that you put under a mattress. It had fold out sections that would elevate it and when locked in place it would raise his head. I don't know why he slept like that. And he did not sleep well. He slept for two or three hours and then would wake up. And that was when he would start demanding what he wanted then and there. Sometimes he wanted a massage when he wanted to get back to sleep. Sometimes he wanted scotch and cashews. Sometimes he wanted tapioca pudding. That happened to us in Seoul many

years later. He got up in the middle of the night and asked for tapioca pudding and we turned the city of Seoul upside down trying to find tapioca pudding.

Anyway, on that particular trip I am not aware that there was ever a masseur incident. He had massages, but there was never a problem that I knew of.

We went to Bangkok for no particular reason other than the fact that Bangkok was regarded as the center of Southeast Asia and at the time a class 1 post. There was not a terrific number of things to do except...and nothing really untoward happened in Bangkok of great interest. He did a lot of sightseeing.

On the trip from Taipei to Hong Kong, I sent a telegram, we were still discussing his schedule in Bangkok, and it was there that I sent a telegram suggesting certain things to be done in Bangkok including...I was totally out of sync with my customer too...an early morning trip through the klongs (the canals). This was before they paved over most of them to make streets. It was quite a lovely experience to get up in the cool of the morning and go along these misty canals watching people doing their morning washing in the canals and getting their water from the canal. It was a real slice of native life and at that time at the end of one of the major klongs was a shopping center. Now I gather they are all over the place on the few klongs that remain. It was really a trip through the old, old city that wasn't touched by modern life. It was fascinating. I had done it some years earlier and thought this party would enjoy it. So I sent the telegram suggesting this. We did the trip, but it was not what Johnson was looking for and I should have realized it by that time.

When we got to Bangkok the most amusing thing of his activities...he was beginning to like life in the Orient I suspect by this time...It was one of the hottest days I have ever experienced in my life. Bangkok had turned out the whole diplomatic corps to meet the Vice President of the United States. I recall I was in one of the very last cars of the official party and the Soviet ambassador was two or three cars behind us. We started in from the airport to Bangkok, which is quite a good run, after the arrival ceremony... incidentally,

Colonel Buris was present at every arrival ceremony from then on...about half way in there was nobody along the road, just this long string of cars traveling the dusty road in the heat of the day. About half way in, we all came to a grinding halt. What has happened? Well, Johnson has seen a bus coming in the opposite direction and he has stopped the motorcade and is out in the middle of the highway. He flags the bus down and it comes to a halt and the door opens and on to the bus bounds this character. He starts shaking hands with all these Thais and he took his time about it. He did not hustle on and hustle off. He really wanted to press some flesh with the Thai. Anyway we sat there in that sun for many 20 to 25 minutes which seemed to be an interminable period of time. And the Russian ambassador was just beside himself. He is out of his car and pacing back and forth with hands on hips. Most everybody else was restrained, but this character, I guess thought the Soviet Union was being insulted. I don't know what Johnson accomplished. He only saw 20-25 people on the bus. But he seemed happy and got back into his car and off we went.

Well, the next day passed, I guess, in official meetings and we were working very, very hard. The morning after that was scheduled for the klong trip. I think I have alluded to the fact that Jean Kennedy Smith was not a pleasant traveler. This trip had been scheduled but the scenario had been considerably altered because the Thai navy had gotten into the act. It was going to be their trip! And that, of course, meant it was going to be no trip because the Thai navy didn't have anything that could go up the klongs. All the Thai navy had were relatively large boats that can go up and down the river and up and down the one large klong that lead to the place where the imperial barges were stored. So what they had scheduled essentially was a sightseeing trip where you could see the Temple of the Dawn and who knows what from the main river, see the little boats and go up and inspect the barges and then back to the hotel for breakfast or brunch and that was going to be it. A far cry from what I had in mind.

We didn't know whether either the Johnsons or the Smiths were going to go on the trip. It wasn't until just before the trip started that the word came down that the Johnsons would

go and so would the Smiths. So we went down to the landing with the Johnsons where we were supposed to board the Thai navy vessel for the rather dull outing, I thought. There were two of them actually. A larger one to carry all of the press and the cats and dogs and a smaller, more luxuriously one appointed for the Johnsons and their crew. In the end, of course, the press ended up climbing onto the smaller one, nobody kept them from it. And the cats and dogs on the staff rode the much larger boat. On the smaller boat whenever something was pointed out on one side the boat would tilt a little more with everyone going to that side. Before starting off we had to wait for the Smiths who arrived quite late, which was the story of their behavior, they were always late. It was mostly blamed on her.

Anyway, we finally got underway and I don't think the Vice President was taken with this very much because this political animal who fed on the adulation of crowds isn't going to do very well in a fast flowing river. But he paid attention until we turned up the klong to the royal barges. There he did sometime...I never have seen a picture except the one I took myself. We were going very slowly up this canal towards the landing of the royal barges and he saw a bumboat in the stream with not much on board. They usually had a lot of fruit or vegetables being primarily very small delivery vessels. Here is this guy sculling this maybe 12-15 foot thing up the river and not making very good progress either. The Vice President lets out a sharp whistle and the bumboat man turns to see who is whistling at him and he sees this great big foreigner signaling him to come along side this Thai navy boat. Of course it was not something the bumboat would usually be doing. He comes over to the side of the boat and before anybody knew what was going on Johnson was over the side and into the boat with this man. He was joined by two or three other people. This is not an easy maneuver. The Thai boat had a very low freeboard, but even so, going into what is essentially a canoe in the middle of a flowing stream is not an easy maneuver. But he did it and so did a couple of other people. I have a picture of that moment with them crouching down in the bottom of this boat.

Johnson points to a house on the side of the klong, one of these Thai houses on stilts with a ladder leading down. The bumboat man rows him over to the house, he climbs up the

ladder and enters the house and was followed by the other people in the boat with him and everybody else is signaling madly for boats. Only a couple of people ever made it because even then with six or eight big foreigners...they were all press people who got there. None of us were going to try it. The house looked dangerously top heavy. But he was very pleased with that. One of the people who got in the boat was his interpreter and he found a woman in there cooking. He had had a very good conversation apparently with her. I think she must have been startled out of her wits, but she offered him tea and he declined apparently. But he had a very good brief conversation with her and he was rather pleased with himself and he had sown total consternation which may have been his objective.

We went through the royal barges and he was quite bored. I have a picture of him coming back from that which I think illustrates that very clearly. He liked getting into the bumboat and going to the house. The rest of the klong trip you could have.

It was in Bangkok, however, that we began to think of the termination of the trip and his staff suggested...before we got to Bangkok as a matter of fact...that we buy him a silver tray and have it suitably engraved with “All the way with LBJ” and everybody's signature, etc. Such things were available in Bangkok. So we all chipped in except one man. There was only one person on the trip that I knew of who didn't chip in and that was Colonel Buris. He said that he would be god damned if he gave ten cents toward any such project. Buris is apparently wealthy in his own right so it wasn't a financial decision, but he had been ridden so unmercifully all the way. Johnson was fond of giving him jobs and saying, “Do you think you can handle that Buris?” in a rather deprecating tone. And Buris did not last, I don't think, much beyond this trip as his military aide. He just couldn't stand him. Anyway, we get the tray and later presented it to him.

On to India, Chester Bowles' project. We had nothing to do with this visit. Bowles had nothing in mind I think other than to introduce Johnson to a great nation of the subcontinent. When I was in London he used to come through frequently. He was by

that time ambassador to India and he used to get me by the scruff of the neck, so to speak, ...I used to go out to the airport and escort him to the embassy for his meeting with Ambassador Bruce...and say, “Dick, you have got to come to India. It is vitally important that we have officers in the Foreign Service who are familiar with these two great bastians of democracy at either end of Asia. You are a Japan specialist and know all you need to know there, but you got to know India so that you can know the forces that bare on all.....” All he really wanted to do with Johnson, I think, was to get him exposed to India, its bigness and its problems.

Well, if that is what he had in mind we got it in spades. As soon as they opened the door of that airplane a blast of hot air entered the plane. The temperature was just ferocious. He had an interview with the president and the prime minister and a dinner given by the vice president and that was just about all. As a matter of fact there was the better part of a day that we had trouble filling it up. The Indians wanted to fill it up by putting him on an air-conditioned train and sending him up to the site of some irrigation dam that had just been completed and get a full briefing in how beneficial this was going to be in terms of power generation, irrigation, etc. He wanted no part of a damn train ride, air conditioned or not. That was just a total waste of time as far as he was concerned. He wanted to rest a little longer and then go down to Agra to see the Taj Mahal. Delhi was at its worse. It was May, the middle of the hot season and things were not great. The Indians did everything they could. They put a bottle of scotch in everybody's hotel room, which I thought for non-alcoholic Indian was quite a nice gesture. But it was not a very satisfactory program in a lot of ways.

All I can remember about India basically was that we did have an elaborate dinner that impressed Johnson mightily in the old residence of the raj. Underneath the portraits of all these famous characters out of India's history and this huge table set with the finest gleaming silver and silent bear footed, turbaned waiters going by with huge covered silver dishes. It was really quite a display. The only incident that happened there was that the Indian vice president chose to make a toast which went on and on interminably. We

were standing there with glass in hand. Spencer Davis, who was the AP correspondent on the trip and a very good friend of mine, was sitting next to me and he literally fell asleep standing on his feet and went head first into the soup. I made my one heroic gesture on that trip, I got him before he hit the table. I thought he was collapsing. He came awake right away and stood up again. And the toast went on. It was not in all respects a satisfactory meal.

The next morning we went down to the embassy and found Johnson there and we had a little conference on what we were going to do and he was in the midst of an argument with Colonel Rudd, the airplane pilot, and Crockett and others. They had already informed the Indian government that they declined with thanks the offer of a car, but thought they would go to see the Taj instead.

I'm sorry, I did not go down to the embassy I was already at the embassy and had been up all night as had all of us because it seemed that the press had been complaining that they weren't getting enough output from the party. Johnson seemed to be avoiding them and they weren't getting enough meat. So, Johnson's orders were that we were to stay up all night if necessary to provide him with sufficient briefing material so that at that point he could sit down with the press and run over the whole damn trip. So we were put under the direction of that senior officer of the State Department, Steven Smith. This was the one responsibility he was given on the whole trip. He was to coordinate pulling all of these papers together. So all the working stiffs stayed at the embassy all night writing these various briefing papers for each stop that had occurred earlier and duplicating them, making handouts for the press and putting together a whole mass of press material to prove to the press that Johnson really had their interests at heart. We didn't finish that job until 7:30 in the morning and he arrived about 7:40 and started talking about what he was going to say to the press, etc., also discussing what they were going to do with this day which they had canceled.

The administrative side of the trip had already been talking about a trip to Agra and that is why Colonel Rudd showed up. He was there to say, “I can take you to Agra because the temperature on the runway here will be okay in the morning, but by the time we get ready to take off from Agra, if the temperature on the runway is today what it was yesterday, I cannot take the Air Force plane off with the fuel load I am required to carry for emergency purposes. Jets don't function well in hot air. The colder the air the better they function. I don't have the reserve power necessary to carry the fuel load and insure a takeover in 130 degrees (or whatever it was). My regulations are very firm on that and I do not risk a passenger of your magnitude in violating my regulations. And Sir, with all due respect, I will not do it if that is the case. I will take you down there and I will take you back if I can, but you must face the possibility that we may not be able to take off.”

Johnson didn't like that. “Well, no problem, the party will go down on the press plane.” Johnson said, “Like hell. I am not going to get cornered on that airplane by the press.” He wouldn't go on the press plane. The solution was to hire an Air India constellation. He didn't want to go on the Air India plane unless it was absolutely necessary, but he would if he had to fly back on it. So three planes went down. By that time everybody, including the press, they were kind of pooped too...so the press plane had maybe a third of its passenger load. The Presidential jet had I don't know what because I didn't go. I have always wanted to see the Taj Mahal, one of the great sights of the world, but I was physically incapable of going. I was so damn beaten down and tired by this time that I went to my room and slept the whole day in preference of going to the Taj Mahal. But Mr. Johnson and party...the story is that either he or Jean Smith, I think it was he and Harry Thayer thinks it was Jean Smith, dipped bare feet in the reflecting pond and Johnson went into the Taj and tested out the acoustics by yelling “yahoo” at the ceiling and they got quite a bit of notoriety for that in India. I don't know if it ever got into the American press or not, but he didn't behave with great dignity apparently on the whole thing.

Anyway they got back, we reassembled and we went off to Pakistan. Here there was another very, very good operation. The leader that impressed him most strongly, intellectually, on that trip was Ayub Khan, who was then the president of Pakistan. He was Sandhurst educated, very smooth..

Q: Very pucka British.

ERICSON: Very pucka British but I think the guy had a lot of smarts because he got Johnson...the conversation between the two of them...we didn't have much time in Karachi, I think we spent only one night there. We flew from Delhi in the afternoon, spent the night and had part of the next day, but only the one night in Karachi. He had a private session with Khan. But we also had a session at which most of the substantive people on the trip were and many of Khan's people in a very hot briefing room which had a circulating fan. Everybody was sweating like mad, it wasn't air conditioned. He had Johnson up on a dais for this briefing and he talked to him for a long, long time. What Khan talked about was water problems. And he was talking to a man from Peridallas and Johnson responded to that.

Q: I just might mention for the research, Peridallas is a very dry area of Texas and that is where Johnson came from.

ERICSON: Yes. Although when I went through it two years ago it was through a heavy fog.

The two of them talked water problems...irrigation, salinity, developmental schemes, etc. Johnson was very interested and Ayub was very familiar with his subject matter. He had a marvelous British military briefing with slides, charts, etc. He got something out of it too, I might add in terms of aid. He got some promises of help. But he really fascinated Johnson and you wouldn't have thought that this type of Asian would have appealed to Johnson either.

I remember that night we went to the Presidential Palace for dinner and it was one of the most remarkable dinners I have ever attended. We were served dinner outside. We were all at small tables under trees which had been festooned with very small Christmas tree like lights so you had a dim light but no central light. Again the quiet, unobtrusive turbaned waiters very skillfully balancing large trays of god knows what. I never identified anything that I ate that night. I was at a table with Horace Smith who was stouter then I am and I've never seen a trencherman go at it in my life like old Horace did. It was very good, but to this day I don't know what it all was. There was some lamb I know and many rice dishes and lots of curry like things. When it was over, after toasts and all that sort of thing, we heard the far off sound of bagpipes and then through this sort of magical cooling off night with all these pretty lights and magnificent building, etc., came the fully kilted Khyber Rifles Bagpipe Band and they played beautifully. Talk about getting back to Kipling!

I was very much impressed with Pakistan after India. Forever thereafter in any Indian/ Pakistan imbroglio which I was involved in , and I was in London, I always sort of instinctively sided with the Paks because they just impressed me with their order, their organization and this element of romanticism that cropped out. It was great stuff.

Anyway, as I say, we didn't know where we were going from there, at least the staff didn't. Johnson or somebody may have known, but Bill Crockett didn't. I shared a table with Crockett and Ford all the way around the world and I know Crockett didn't know where we were going until just before we left Karachi. Maybe the Air Force knew, it would have had to it seems to me in order to file a flight plan. Anyway, word came we were going to Athens. So we made that interminably long flight to Athens and I don't think any work was accomplished. The trip was over and we all just collapsed. I think I slept most of the way to Athens.

Anyway, we arrived at Athens which was to be just an overnight stay. At one point we got around to the Acropolis and stuff like that. I have another picture of Johnson climbing Acropolis Hill and the Acropolis toward the Parthenon. We did do sightseeing in an

organized kind of way, but there was nothing...Oh, yes, the embassy took the State Department types to Piraeus that evening. We cut loose from the Johnson party, I don't know what he did that night. We went to Piraeus and got drunk. We really relaxed. The embassy people were hospitable and sympathetic to us. They had been put under enormous strain, of course, by all of a sudden having this whole party...I don't know how much forewarning they had, they couldn't have had much, but they did a beautiful job and then had time and energy left over to look out for their own. We left thinking very highly of the Athens embassy of the time.

We took off the next day and flew to Wheelus Air Force Base in Libya. That was the first time I had ever been on the African continent. We landed there and refueled and then went on to the Azores. Just before we left Athens, that night just before we went on our respective ways, the substantive members of the trip were convened by Johnson for a brief meeting where he told us for the first time what was going to happen after Athens. He said, “From here we are going to Bermuda for a rest. That is I am going to rest. I can't go before the Senate, the National Security Council, the President and TV cameras looking like this. I am going to take a couple of days in the sunshine. But you are going to work.” And, so indeed we did.

We got into Bermuda. We all went to the same hotel. It was that old, old hotel with a marvelous golf course. The hotel was extremely hospitable. They said, “The place is yours. If you want to play golf, clubs, carts, anything you want for anybody, you name it. Well, I never got out of room 406 in that damn hotel for the entire 48 or more hours that we were there. I would look out once in a while at this beautiful golf course and think, “Oh gee, how I would love to be out there.”

Johnson did rest. He assigned each of us various tasks. My task, actually this was done while still in Athens and the Department was sufficiently prepared to have two secretaries who arrived down there. We had one Foreign Service secretary on the trip from the China Office, and they sent two more down to help me do my portion of the job, which was to

prepare the book of the trip. Now, somewhere in the archives of the United States is one of these 19 books that resulted from this effort and if so, you have a total and complete record of the trip. My job was to prepare the book for the Vice President. It was to be divided, after a general statement, by a post by post breakdown of everything, all tabbed. I was given rather explicit directions about how it should be done. It contained all the speeches he had made, all the memoranda of conversations that had been prepared of his discussions, all of the telegraphic reporting that had gone back and forth, all of the press reactions...the whole thing was about like that before I was finished with it.

Q: About six inches?

ERICSON: Yes. And we worked on it for the entire time we were there. I probably slept but I don't remember. We really didn't have much in the way of assets. We had the stuff that we had saved, but it was not methodically saved with this in mind, so we were at odds to try to pick up things and get the Department to wire us stuff that we didn't have. It was sort of a slam-bam-thank-you-ma'am operation. But we got it done and pretty well. The paper was all different and that sort of thing, but we had a nice book.The night before we left Bermuda he gave his reception for everybody who had been on the trip. It was his nice gesture in way of saying thanks. And there was much more to it than that. On the way in from the Wheelus to Bermuda, Liz Carpenter and I were asked to sit down and write tag names for everybody on the trip so that Johnson could hand him a present and say something that would indicate that he knew who each person was and have something personal to say to them all. We did that and had a lot of fun doing it. She is an entertaining gal.

Q: Her position at that point was what?

ERICSON: She was Mrs. Johnson's press secretary as well as close friend. But she is a lively character and, of course...I can't remember how we tagged people, I can only remember Mary Margaret. I wanted to tag her the sleeping beauty because she slept all

the way around the world. She was there ostensively as Johnson's secretary but she didn't do squat. She was a very pretty girl. We all had in mind that Johnson would have liked Frank Meloy to get interested in her because he came away very fond of Frank Meloy. Of all of us, the one he liked and trusted most, was Frank. But Frank was not having any of that and worked very hard to keep from being assigned to him in subsequent years. In the end she married Jack Valenti and I gather still is married to him.

We went to the party in a large room in the hotel and in addition to writing the tag names I had written...they asked if somebody could please do skits. We have to have something to pass the time sort of thing. So, I had responded by writing a parody of the Whiffinpoof song which Mike O'Neil (NY Daily News), Carl Rowan and I sang. I add with some pride that we were the only skitters that were asked to give an encore. But it was full of bah, bah, bahs and was on the theme “all the way with LBJ”. Carl Rowan, incidentally, in his biography has a chapter on this trip and he recalls this incident although he describes authorship of the song to himself and he has written a totally different set of lyrics for the occasion. I have often meant to write to Carl and point out the errors of his ways to him and let him know that at least somebody knows he is faking it.

I was very, very tired and the couple of scotches I had had affected my judgment a little bit I guess. We did sing the song and as we came off the stage, Johnson got up from his table and said, “Who wrote that?” just like he had said it before. I said, “I did.” He looked down at me and said, “Now I know what you have been doing all the way around the world.” I think I could have surely slaughtered the man right then and there. I had been doing everything but writing songs all the way around.

At the party it was rather surprising because he had shopped in Hong Kong for the many, many gifts he gave to the crews and the guards, etc. For those who had sweated directly for him and who had been ridiculed by him and who had it up to here with him by that time, he had a vice presidential presentation gift which was a Benrus alarm gold wristwatch with a black dial face and his motto ascribed around the edges: “Do Unto Others As You

Would Have Them Do Unto You - LBJ” written across the center post. I still have mine. It worked for many, many years and wrist alarms were not so prevalent in those days, kind of a new thing, and we thought a rather generous gift. You can't read the motto anymore and I thought it was sort of funny anyway. His motto really was “Do It To Them Before They Have A Chance To Do It To You.” Anyway, I was very impressed with that. It came accompanied by a card signed by him saying thanks very much. He also provided me with a signed picture which says just “To Dick Ericson, Sincerely, Lyndon Johnson.” He also wrote me a letter in which he said something like “I would take you as a diplomat or song writer any time.” Now, I know that Walt Jenkins did all of these including the signature because I sat with Walt while he signed some of the pictures. Johnson apparently very seldom at that stage signed anything personally at all. Anybody who got an autographed picture from him at that time can rest assured that it was signed by Walt Jenkins and not Johnson.

Anyway, we landed in Washington in late May, just before my birthday, I guess. I was terribly tired. Roger Sullivan who was my assistant in FE at the time met the plane and told me rather cheerfully that he had been called upon to send somebody to Moscow to join the party that Averell Harriman had led there for discussion with the Soviets on various problems. He said that I was the logical choice, of course, but since I was obviously going to be so tired after this trip I wouldn't be able to go, but he was going the next morning. That didn't cheer me up very much because the next morning was Saturday and that meant the office wasn't covered by him so who else was supposed to cover it.

Anyway, I got off the plane and was a little bit disgruntled at that turn of events. I went home and got a telephone call late that night and discovered the trip wasn't over for me. I got a call from Walt Jenkins and he said, “Dick, the Vice President likes your book very much. So much so that he wants 19 more of them and by Monday. He wants them by close of business tomorrow, actually, because he has to brief the National Security Council first thing Monday morning and he wants a book to hand to each person who is going to attend that meeting.” I said, “Walt it is impossible. It is Saturday, everything we had we put

in that book. It can't be done." Today you would take that book and warm up a Xerox and just wack it off. But in those days we were using thermafaxes.

Q: Thermafax was a very special paper that comes out sort of brown...

ERICSON: And is very unsatisfactory. And besides, Johnson didn't want that. He wanted originals to the extent it was possible to get them. I argued and Walt said, "Dick, do you understand what I am saying? The man wants 19 books by close of business Saturday." I said, "All right, I will do the best I can."

So I went down and with what I think was a herculean effort we assembled three or four secretaries, got them to come in, got a couple of officers representing the various segments of the Far East and we assembled what I thought was a damn good bunch of books. The paper was better, the formats were more uniform. In order to do it we had to tear apart his book so things could be duplicated. The guys and the gals worked their butts' off all day long. We put his book in a special binder with a big Department seal on it. I delivered the whole mess over to the Executive Office Building and I went back home and the next morning, do you know what happened? I got a call from Jenkins and he said, "Dick, the Vice President is very pleased with those books. There is only one problem." I said, "What is that?" He said, "He want his book." I said, "Walt that one with the big seal is his book." "No, no, he wants the book he had before. He wants the one you gave him when we left Bermuda." I said, "Walt, it is all over the State Department and it is not possible to get the damn thing together." "Well," he said, "That is your problem Dick. The man wants his book." So I went back to the Department and I was by this time just about out of my mind by weariness and exacerbation, irritation, etc. So I got together what I could. I had the original binder and put the papers in it. It was missing 50 parts. I sent it over with a note on it saying, "This is the best I can do," and I never heard another word about it. Obviously it made totally no difference to him whatsoever.

After that Johnson made strong efforts to get people from that group to come work for him. He was especially interested in Frank Meloy, but Frank managed to decline. He invited all us to various social occasions, lunches and things like that for the ambassadors of the countries he had visited. A nice gesture, no longer done I am sure. He would know us and remembered our names and what we had done. He was very gracious about it and so was Lady Bird. But none of us reacted favorably to the idea of joining his staff in any capacity. He was just too fearsome to work for.

Oh, I forgot two items, in Pakistan, of course. You can't mention the Pakistan trip without the camel driver. This is one of those stop the motorcade kind of thing. He had seen this guy in the process of going from one place to another, stopped the motorcade and gotten out to talk to him and asked him if he wanted to come to Washington. The man said sure. He was literally a camel driver using a camel to pull a cart. This got a lot of publicity and Johnson followed through and actually invited the man to come to Washington. The guy did come and was shown a great time. When he left they gave him a Chevrolet pickup to replace his camel. That truck didn't last very long. I understand embassy Karachi and embassy Islamabad, or maybe both of them, may still be supporting that guy to this various day giving him odd jobs of one kind or another so that Johnson's friend would not end up in penury. I think the trip went to his head pretty badly, he was never a camel driver again.

We also, however, on the trip were each asked to subscribe $25 to support a medical emergency visit by a Pakistani girl who had some inoperable in Pakistan kind of disease that could be taken care of in the United States. One of those great humanitarian gestures. But for some reason or other the press never took up on this one. I know the girl came and I know our money was well-spent, etc., but Johnson and company did not get the publicity out of it that ordinarily would have ensured, although the camel driver legend lived on and on and on.

And thus endeth the saga of my around the world trip with Lyndon Johnson.I came off the trip, as I have told people many times, terribly impressed with the man, glad that we had a man of such force. He was a very intelligent man, very shrewd. I was glad to have a man like that dealing with some of our major problems. I wish he had been less fond of playing games with people. I never wanted to be within 50 feet of him again if I could conceivably avoid it. People have asked me why I didn't try to get on his staff and I think from what I have said the answer is probably perfectly obvious.

Q: How about Steven Smith and Jean Kennedy?

ERICSON: Except for a drag on the events, totally non-contributors. The only job that Steven did on the trip, the only time he surfaced really, was in India where he was told to pull together the stuff to give to the press. And even there, he didn't do it. He was nominally the head of it, but we were by that time a fairly smooth functioning group. He never worked with us and didn't know what we were doing. We did it without him but he took the credit as the mastermind behind it all.

She, as I say, was difficult, always late, inconsiderate, unapproachable, unfriendly, suspicious and demanding. There was the episode in Hong Kong when apparently they went to a nightclub and there were some other members of the trip there too. She left her purse on the table and then was furious because no one in the party had noticed she had left it and retrieved it for her. She felt someone should have checked the table to make certain she hadn't left anything. She never got her laundry out of any hotel in time. Of course, maybe the embassy should have kept tabs on that sort of thing. Anyway, she took it out on the administrative people on the trip who weren't keeping track of every pair of panties she sent down to the laundry. She left a string of dirty laundry behind her which was always trying to catch up. She was non-communicative. She was a nothing.

Lady Bird on the other hand, as I have said, came back very often. After the time we left Saigon, she came back very, very often and spent a lot of time with us being a very

intelligent and inquisitive and friendly and totally delightful fellow passenger. She was absolutely great.

Q: When you came back, was there any interest in what you had done in the State Department or was it just let's get on with the task ahead?

ERICSON: Good question. You know I have never even thought about it. The Vietnam things was humming. The promises had been made about missions in the future and people were really working to get something going. But beyond that...Ed Martin may have gotten a lot of interest in what was done in Taipei, I don't know. The rest of the posts along the trip we really didn't accomplish very much except have a good will visit. No, there wasn't all that much interest. There was a lot of press interest. Press people who weren't on the trip and who wanted to get an angle came around for a couple of weeks. But, of course, we weren't talking. It was Mr. Johnson's visit. They could go talk to Carl Rowan if they wanted to.

Q: Then you continued in FE?

ERICSON: Not for long. I was already, as I think I said earlier, thinking of leaving FE because McConaughy was so difficult to work for. He was a sweet man, a gentleman, intelligent and kindly and had been an excellent ambassador in a number of places. But he was not a good administrator not being able to make up his mind on many major policy issues. Particularly if he had four or five pressing issues it was almost impossible to get papers through him. He delayed and delayed and fussed and it began to be noticed upstairs by the S/S people and the Secretary's and Under Secretary's people began to wonder where FE's contribution was. It was getting to be difficult. It just wasn't fun after the Christmas that went with Jeff Parsons who knew just what he wanted done, of what he wanted of you.

I had made several friends on the 7th floor including Hugh Appling and Bill Galloway who worked for Tyler Thompson. Thompson was the Director General of the Foreign

Service, Galloway was his assistant, and Appling was special assistant to Roger Jones who had been brought in to be the chief administrator officer of the Department. Appling and Jones were just totally snowed under and needed help. One of the problems was senior personnel problems in the Far East. Getting the proper representation and reflection of the Kennedy Administration to go out to the Far East. They had been through a long, long session, a very difficult time in this headhunting business. Appling was warned to a nub and Jones wanted more assistance. Appling said he didn't know the Far East or South Asia and I had some smattering of both, would I please come and be a second special assistant to Jones. I agreed at some point, and when they found my replacement why I went up to work with Roger Jones.

Q: So you were in administration. Was it called administration?

ERICSON: It was called 'O' at that time. He was the chief administrator of the Department. He was the Deputy Under Secretary. It was not an under secretary designation at that time, that came later. Jones, of course, was a Republican. He had been the head of the Civil Service Commission under Eisenhower and in many respects I think Roger Jones was one of the finest civil servants I have ever known to work for. He was a marvelous human being, a great guy. My disillusionment with the Kennedy Administration started with the treatment of him.

Q: Let's pin this down. You were with him from when to when?

ERICSON: I was with him until July 1961 to when he was fired about a year later in 1962.

Jones, of course, as I said, had been a Republican, head of the Civil Service Commission, and they thought he was the idea man to clean up the State Department. Then the first wave of problems come: 'What are you going to do with your representation overseas and particularly your ambassadorial and senior representation?' At that time that was very much his problem. The Office of the Director of the Foreign Service was a two-man office operation and he was not at that time chief of personnel. The Director of Personnel

was completely different and under the Assistant Secretary for Administrative Affairs. The Director General of the Foreign Service was just an appendage and advisor to the Deputy Under Secretary. Senior personnel problems were very much the Deputy Under Secretary's after they had been filtered through the Personnel Office and Crockett's office. And, of course, Crockett and Jones did not see eye to eye on a great deal. Crockett wanted to be THE administrator and personnel man. Jones, of course, felt he had statutory responsibilities in those fields. So, between the career guy and the political appointee we have our traditional friction. The Head of Personnel at that time also had his ambitions vis-a-vis Crockett. So every step he went there was some kind of personnel abrasiveness.

Anyway, I grew very, very fond of Roger Jones and his style of operating. He had a personal assistant, a woman, that he had brought with him from the Civil Service Commission, and whenever there was a difficult problem he always convened a meeting that involved the four of his assistance...Mary, Hugh and me and Bill, Tyler and himself ...and the six of us would talk it over. He didn't always take our advice but we felt we had a lively input. I asked Roger when I first came on the job, 'What do you want me to do?' He said, 'Look, here is my in box, take what you like.' He was not quite that free wheeling and he often directed, but the office was completely open to you with very few things withheld. He was very decisive. He was a little more cautious than he might be, but he was also, in that sense, hampered by the fact that Dean Rusk seemed to have a strong aversion to administrative matters. We would send something in for approval by the Secretary and his own people would say, 'Look, we put it on the top of the pack and we picked it out this afternoon and there it was back in the bottom.' He wouldn't act on some things. He was a little bit like McConaughy in that respect concerning administrative things. At one point we went so far as to advise Roger that if he wanted to get something done why doesn't he put it to the Secretary this way. 'Unless I receive notice of your disapproval within x days I intend to .....' Try that and see if it works. But Jones never would and deferred to the normal way of getting the Secretary's approval. I can't tell you any particular instance this would happen but it happened very, very frequently.

Of course by the time I got there the great backlog problem of representation had been solved. Most of the ambassadors had been selected and put through their routine, so the huge demand that was the reason of my being there had evaporated a little bit. But it was an instructive year, an interesting one, in that I attended the Secretary's staff meeting when Jones was unable to go, and even when he was able to go. Sometimes these senior assistants sat against the wall and listened to all this going on. However, I never wanted to be part of the 7th floor mafia. But, I must say in terms of contacts I made...

Q: Well, in all the interviews I have done and talking to people, this is probably the best route to move up, not the only route. But to become a special assistant and get to know people and essentially have a sponsor, plus the contacts you make on your own, you could control your career more and at a higher level.

ERICSON: That's right. In my case, of course, Roger got fired. But he did give me one nice boost. First of all he took me up there and that by itself was a big boost. And then when he got fired, I'll go into that a little bit...but he came back into the office the day he was told they were bouncing him and it was a terribly emotional scene. He said that he apparently was without influence anymore but he did have sufficient influence to get each of us what we would like to do. Now, what would you like to do? I told him that I would like to go to the War College, so I went to the War College.

A lot of the people I have subsequently worked with at reasonable levels were floating around the 7th floor at that time as somebody's special assistant, or in S/S, or staff assistant of a Bureau, etc. By and large people who have those jobs, I don't like to say this because I had them, they are pretty good operators. They are there because they are pretty good operators.

Q: Ability gets you into it and the connections plus ability keeps you going.

ERICSON: Unfortunately, there are some people who make a career of that kind of thing and it gets a little off putting. Guys who are always seeking the place where they got the in with the new politician on the block. Anyway, there are some who succeed more by operating ability than by real ability. I never wanted to be part of that scene, but I certainly did enjoy the one year I spent on the 7th floor. I was custodian, for example, of the promotion list when Jones was given the one copy that came up to the 7th floor and it was in my safe for about six weeks. I had more damn friends during that period than I could shake a stick at, people I hadn't heard from in years were offering luncheon invitations. We saw the efforts that were made to amend that list and which Roger Jones turned aside. He was very, very much a merit man. We had some trouble where to draw the promotion line on the list. This was largely a political decision. Personnel could rank order it for you and recommend where you drew the line, but the final drawing was made at that level.

Galloway and Appling proved to be marvelous people to work with. Mary was a very nice lady. Roger was great. Tyler was one of the more congenial people the Foreign Service ever produced. So, all in all, it was a very happy office until our boss got fired.

Q: What happened?

ERICSON: There were a number of things. I think there was a lot of suspicion in the White House, particularly to Roger's reliability as a Republican. But to my recollection, the immediate cause of his dismissal, was Wayne Hayes.

Q: Wayne Hayes was the senator from Ohio who was in charge of government operations who was a very autocratic guy. He eventually ended up outside things as he got involved with...He was the one who had a secretary who couldn't' type, wasn't that right?

ERICSON: Yes, that's right. But she had large breasts.

Anyway, he was a very, very powerful congressman because he chaired the subcommittee on State in whatever committee overseas executive branch operations, and you couldn't get appropriations through that subcommittee without his personal okay. He was not adverse to catering to his own personal prejudices in this process. He was a very strong liner and a rather nasty man in many ways.

When Roger came in, he thought he was going to be doing administrative stuff, personnel stuff, and he didn't quite realize his job involved a little bit more than that. He had responsibility for consular affairs also. One of the problems with consular affairs was migration. One of the problems with migrations is constituents. As I recall it, the Kennedys did not like the way Hayes handled certain bills pertaining to refugees and immigration affairs. These were critical to some of the political lobbies, of course, who operate on the hill. There was a bill pending at that time that the Kennedy's wanted very much to get through the congress. They did not want to have point men for this particular legislation. For some reason, I don't remember why...but it ended up with...what I'm saying is Roger would be the main water carrier for this particular piece of paper and he would not work with Hayes. Legislation was to be introduced through Walter's subcommittee rather Hayes'. Before they had a chance to spring it on Hayes in the congress he got wind of it and he threw a fit. He considered it his, he wanted the credit for it, he wanted it to go his way, he wanted to form it, etc. His response was that that legislation doesn't move an inch until Roger Jones is fired and the State Department doesn't get any appropriations through my subcommittee until he is fired. He called up and told one of Kennedy's principal advisers this and the upshot of it was that Roger Jones was fired. I don't know what happened to the legislation because I left shortly afterwards. But I do know that the White House did not stand behind the man they had put on this spot. I thought that that was a ghastly betrayal of trust and ceased to be a member of the Camelot crowd from that moment.

It was done brutally. Dean Rusk called in, the White House people didn't even do it, and said to him something like, 'Roger, I have to ask for your resignation. We have got to have legislation and the White House says this is the only way it can be done. Hayes wants your scalp, he gets your scalp. But at least you can go out standing up.' Jones came back and told us about this interview. He said, 'He told me at least I am going to go with honors standing up, whereas as I, when I go, will be carried out on my shield.'

I don't know what kind of a fight Rusk put up for Jones. I always thought Rusk was an extremely honorable man, but I don't know whether he put up a strong fight or not. Obviously it was a losing proposition if he had.

Jones came back and he broke down and cried. I hate to see a grown man cry, but he cried in front of the five of us who had been on his staff and he said, 'I am out, I lost all my influence, but I still have enough to see that you guys get to go where you want to go.' So I went to the War College and I guess Appling stayed on to...I was due out. Tyler Thompson wasn't going, Galloway stayed with him and Appling stayed on to shepherd the new deputy under secretary.

Q: Which war college?

ERICSON: National. I wasn't interested in leaving Washington.

Q: You were there from 1962-63. What was your impression of the War College?

ERICSON: That it was a year of great relaxation for Foreign Service personnel unless they wanted to work hard and go for a degree of some sort at GW which was offered at the time. They gave you some credit for attending the War College, although you had to do some other course work and they would give you something like a masters in international affairs. I did not choose to do that. We were there, it seemed to me...I will never forget one of the skits that was done at the time I was there when one of the members of the military class stood up as member of a committee and screamed...'Damn it, this is suppose to

be a war college.' We were there as sources in international expertise for a bunch of to be senior military people who hadn't thought in these terms before and was being introduced to the problems of international affairs as they related to the military. Not introduced, but such knowledge that they had was being honed and enhanced. We were there largely to provide source material. It was interesting in that, in my day at least, when you formed your committees...for each problem you studied, the class was divided into committees which always had a representation from the civilian community and from each of the military services. It was almost always the member of the civilian community...he was usually State Department, sometimes CIA, sometimes USIA, but normally State Department...who wrote the material, who wrote the report. The Air Force representative was always off getting his flying time in. This is not fair, in fact the outstanding star in our class was an Air Force colonel. But by and large the Air Force guys were more interested in keeping up their flight status and getting their flight pay then they were in working on weekends on committee reports. My impressions of the other services...the Marines were the good stalwart, hard rock 'I'll do it but tell me what to do' types. The Navy was very by the book and rather difficult to penetrate. The Army people furnished both the best and the worst. If you had a good well adjusted Army guy interested in expanding his horizons you would have a pretty good one. On the other hand, some of the real duds in the class were Army also.

But it was a great experience in that sense for all of us because everybody got to see what the other's point of view was and I think that is probably one of the major purposes. We learned to work together. We formed some associations which stood us well in later years. For example, one of my best friends and golfing partner at the War College...of course we played at least nine holes of golf every day...was Murphy. Later, when I was DCM in Korea, he was a Lt. General by that time in the Air Force and he was the deputy commander of the United Nations forces. We were counterparts. We knew each other and consequently started off our relationship in Seoul with a great head start. His knowledge of me helped me greatly then in the esteem of General Stilwell, who was rather

crotchety. That kind of association carried on. Some of the Navy people I had known turned out to be senior in the Pentagon in later years when I was on the Japan Desk and I could play through them on naval problems...nuclear weapons in Japan, visitation, etc. So, in that sense the War College greatly achieved its purposes. Education-wise? Yes, I was exposed to a lot of different areas of the world, lots of different points of view and all the rest of it. It was one of the best years of my life. Was it a taxing educational experience? No, not really. I know one State Department guy who managed to paint his entire house inside and out in afternoon time. But it did introduce me to Win Brown, which was important to me later on.

Q: This is the time of the Cuban missile crisis. How did that play at the War College? How were people looking at?

ERICSON: That was rather interesting in a sense. It was a time of considerable tension. There was tension elsewhere in the world too. The Cuban missile crisis was just a reflection of tension that was very wide spread since Khrushchev's banged his shoes on the table at the UN in 1960. We had a Berlin crisis, we had all kinds of trouble in Southeast Asia with the Vietnam situation becoming more active, and we never knew what the Russians were up to or where. It was rather interesting I thought because from my State Department contacts I got no word of what it was. When the announcement that the President would hold that news conference that night, we all sat around and speculated what it was. Looking back on it I find it remarkable that as well clued in as these people had been...some of the military were right out of the Pentagon into the War College and certainly their contacts were still in place. Nobody seemed to be aware that Cuba was the issue. The CIA types didn't. If they knew they weren't saying. I think the whole place was taken very much by surprise when they found out the magnitude of this thing. There was total comprehension of what it meant among the service people, of course. The next day there were some very agitated military personnel around that post. A lot of them were jumping up and down saying, 'And here I am stuck at the War College and look what is developing. I would like to be back in harness somewhere.' A lot of them were making

very serious efforts to find out from friends, etc. what was going on. I don't think there was any serious criticism of any kind of the steps that the President had taken. Military people, as I recall it, were all rather proud of the way the military and intelligence agencies had functioned and the result was that the President had the weapons at his disposal, state of preparedness sufficient to take this fearsome, terribly dangerous step.

There were a lot of people very, very concerned. They knew, of course, by that time by what the President had said and I think people started talking about that time that the Soviets were not in any position at that point to project the kind of power that they were seeking to put in there. The stuff just wasn't there yet and ready to go. But it was on its way and it looked like a serious effort by the Soviets to penetrate this hemisphere and expose the US in the kind of nuclear danger that the Soviets had been more or less exposed to all along. Nobody wanted to see this kind of equality. They were scared because Khrushchev in his way was an impressive little guy. He had made threats and nobody knew exactly how he was going to react. And frankly, nobody had a great deal of confidence...I mean, Kennedy was really an unknown, people probably felt they knew Khrushchev in a situation better or as well as they knew Kennedy.

Q: Well, Khrushchev apparently judged Kennedy to be weak.

ERICSON: Yes. Well, one note. The first time they met was in 1961 at the Vienna Conference. The first reporting telegram that was sent out of the first meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev...there was a summary of that first meeting sent out in a telegram very highly classified and very restricted that was distributed in the Department to assistant secretaries only. Of course, I received it for FE. No matter what the restrictions at that point, Jeff Parsons wanted me, unless it was absolutely clear that nobody but the Secretary was to see it, to see the thing because actions would flow from it. After it had been delivered it sat on my desk for a while and I was in the action of opening it preparatory to scanning it and putting it on his desk with any note I felt necessary, when it was recalled. Somebody came around from S/S and picked up all the copies of

that telegram. I didn't read it thoroughly, but I read it enough to see that Mr. Kennedy had not performed well. Khrushchev had run all over him. It was an assault of sorts, was not expected and he didn't react very well. I never saw or heard of that message again. But impressions that came out of that meeting certainly bore my impressions out that Khrushchev thought he had a patsy. He must have been very taken back when the President responded the way he did to the Cuba crisis.

But the War College people, themselves, were...our commandant at the time was a guy by the name of Grisswall, who had been Lemay's's deputy at SAC. He was a very intelligent, forceful, decent guy, but he was no great foreign affairs specialist or intellectual along those lines. When he talked to us briefly about these things he said, 'By god, the President is doing the right thing and thank god we have the material to back him.' Well, what happens if nobody backs down? Well, somebody's got to blink and somebody did.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point and pick it up the next time when you left the War College in 1963 and went to London.

ERICSON: Fine, but let me add one little bit here because I don't want to forget this before I go.

One of the things that you do at the War College is your individual research paper. You are supposed to do it on matters that you are not familiar with, new ground. Well, I didn't buy that because I had always wanted to unburden myself of my feelings about Japan in 1960. So I asked for special dispensation and got it to go into that fairly seriously. Somewhere in the War College archives is my marvelous paper on the nature of the 1960s crises and its resolution in Japan. I thought it was a pretty good paper and it was one of those selected to be read to the class. The deputy commandant at that time from the State Department was Winthrop Brown. Win Brown had come up through the economic route. Win at that point was the oldest 52 or 53 year old you have ever seen. He looked like an elder statesman, even at that stage. But, he had been ambassador in Laos and had been

through the siege of Vientiane when the Pathet Lao had run amuck in Vientiane and sent bullets through the embassy while he and his staff were gathered in the central hall and there was fighting on the front lawn and all sorts of things. He was to me one of the most remarkable men I have ever met. I think my wife, if she was here, would agree that in terms of serving with a Foreign Service couple, Win and Peggy Brown were absolutely the best that we ever served with...ambassadorial couple anyway.

He was the deputy commandant and I made an impression of sorts on Win who later took me as political counselor to Seoul. I just wanted to make note of that because it is important as the interview goes on. I made my War College trip, incidentally, to Europe, I had never really been to Europe before. However, I also knew by that time that my next post was going to be London. It was a very interesting trip in its way, but my participation was rather badly hampered by whatever it was I ate in Belgium that first night.

Q: Today is April 19, 1995. Dick, we are at London. You served there from 1963-65. Can we talk about what you did in London?

ERICSON: Well, in those days and probably even today, the embassy had three or four officers in the political section whose function it was to cover US-British interests in places outside the UK. We had an African man, a Near Eastern man and while I was there we had two Asian types. We didn't have any Latin Americans because there apparently wasn't much conflict at the time. The two Asian types divided Latin America. When I got there, Oscar Armstrong had been there for a year or so and was senior to me, so he and I formed the extraneous Asian-cum-Latin American division. We divided the work up pretty much. Oscar was a China specialist, of course, and he took everything pertaining to China and Southeast Asia and I covered Japan, South Asia and Latin America, the Caribbean and Antarctica. There was also, of course, a European specialist. Hermann Eilts was the Near Eastern man. Bill Eagleton was the Africanist. We worked under the loose supervision of the political counselor, Elim O'Shaughnessy, and when I say loose supervision I mean very loose. Elim was an old, old line Foreign Service officer who

maintained a nine-to-five day. If you did anything from nine-to-five you had to do it with Elim's prior knowledge and detailed consent for everything that happened, but after five, everything went. Which is to say that if you were drafting a telegram and didn't get it ready by five, well you sent it out yourself because certainly the DCM didn't want to see it and we all soon learned never, never submit a telegram before five in the afternoon. As a matter of fact much of the business that the external political types did was unfortunately by telephone. On South Asian matters, I would talk to the South Asian division or the India/ Pakistan people in Washington directly by telephone.

Q: This should be an interesting note for those people who are plowing the papers because in later years because when you look at this one doesn't think of the early 1960s as being particularly telephone time, but it was at a large post.

ERICSON: This points out one of the great dilemmas for historians who take a piece of paper out of the files of the State Department, an action telegram from x post to the Department of State, and say this reflects the situation as it was. Well, it probably doesn't because there was a lot of preparatory work that went into it and not everything is illustrated in there. Decisions may well have been made before the telegram was sent and it becomes simply a confirmatory thing or something of that kind. There was an awful lot of that carefully disguised for security reasons telephone conversations. It was dangerous business re security, but everybody was doing it. As a matter of fact just as a sidelight to this, I was asked to do a report for the Department in later years on the efficacy of reporting from the posts in order to satisfy various congressional demands that there be such an assessment. They put a lot of money into it and I think it was largely a wasted effort. But the only agency, when I was doing this—I started on the UK as a matter of fact because I had had that experience—that denied excessive frequent use of the telephone was the CIA. They all professed sensitivity to the possibility of polygraphs to which nobody else was subjected to, but everybody else in Commerce and all through the State Department, Agriculture talked to their counterparts as much as they sent paper.

Q: What were the issues in 1963-65 that concerned you? Let's divide it up. Was Cuba part of your bailiwick or was that taken out?

ERICSON: It was part of my bailiwick but it never got terribly active. Remember, I got into it only when the Brits were into it. The Brits were not into Cuba very much. In the UN they were fussing around some but that was handled by our people at the UN Mission and didn't require any local action.

I want to add one thing. Oscar Armstrong left after a year and he was succeeded by Ben Wood. Now the Department had told me that Wood was a War College graduate and all that sort of nonsense. The Department had sent me to London with the idea that I would be the senior one in the East Asia section after Oscar and they reneged on that. They sent Ben, I don't know why. He was a Southeast specialist, he had been in Vietnam. By the time he got there the Vietnam War and the British reaction to it was heating up enormously and so were our activities in Vietnam. For that last year after a bit of sparing initially, Ben and I divided up the world. He took the Vietnam War and I had everything else from Japan to the Antarctic by way of South Asia and Latin America. But he was kept quite busy doing nothing but Vietnam.

My first assignment in London told me why Lyndon Johnson drank nothing but Cutty Sark whisky. It was because the Texas Society of London had scraped up some money to put a commemorative plaque on site of the Texas Legation. My first assignment there was to take the former governor of Texas, a fellow by the name of Price Daniel, to the site of the plaque and he would dedicate it on behalf of Texans and their hands across the sea relationship with the Texas Society of London. I picked up Mr. Daniel at his hotel and we proceeded to St. James Square. In a little entry way off the street across from St. James Palace, fixed to the wall in such a place where you couldn't possibly see it unless you went into the entryway, which was very dark, next to a door that led to the second story of the building was this plaque commemorating the location there of the Texas Legation from the

early 1830s. We duly dedicated it. I made note of the place, of course. If you want to see it it is still there but you have to look for it.

I found out that it was on the wall of the headquarters building of a wine merchant by the name of Berry Brothers and Rudd. They have been there from time immemorial. During the 1830s they had apparently fallen on hard times and rented out office space. If you look on the Cutty Sark label you will see Berry Brothers and Rudd is the exporter and bottler of the scotch whisky known as Cutty Sark. Incidentally a replica of the Cutty Sark is moored not too far from that place. It was a very famous British China trader clipper ship. It held the record from China to England at one point. A very graceful and lovely ship. It was this affiliation with the Texas Legation that made Lyndon Johnson an adjunct of Cutty Sark whisky. I later asked Liz Carpenter if this were true and she said, 'Yes, it was true. He doesn't know one scotch from another but he treasures this Texas tie in.'

The other things that concerned me while I was there were...one of the great pleasures, I might add, of working in London was the fact that I was largely independent and had no supervision at all from within the embassy itself, except when Mr. O'Shaughnessy interfered from time to time. I reported back to the various desks in my areas in the Department and it was fun, kind of freewheeling. One of the things that was interesting was covering South Asia, for example. I never had any experience in South Asia.

Q: Talking about South Asia in this context means India and Pakistan?

ERICSON: Yes, primarily. It wasn't too long since separation and a lot of things were unsettled. I had the great, great privilege of working with an Englishman by the name of Cyril Pickard, who was the Under Secretary of the Commonwealth Relations. This was in the days when they had a Foreign Office and a Commonwealth Relations Office and a Colonial Office. Cyril was an under secretary in the Commonwealth Relations Office responsible for India and Pakistan and was a walking encyclopedia of knowledge of the subcontinent. I found it rather strange, as a matter of fact, working with Cyril to see such

depth of knowledge and experience and wisdom at the very top of that office and then underneath him the competence tailed off remarkably to the extent that if Cyril wasn't present in the office, no decisions got made.

Q: Was this part of the Foreign Office?

ERICSON: No it was the Commonwealth Relations Office, a totally separate thing and it dealt with UK relations with members of the Commonwealth. It has now been pulled in with the Foreign Office which is now called the Foreign and Commonwealth Relations Office.

Q: It sounds like it wasn't a very good career track for people.

ERICSON: Of the three, obviously the Foreign Office was the elite service and Commonwealth was probably next and then people who couldn't do elsewhere probably ended up in the Colonial Office, although I had some very good experiences with Colonial Office people.

Anyway, during this period, for example, the Indians and Pakistanis went to war in a little squabble that is generally forgotten but over the Rann of Kutch. The Rann of Kutch is down at the southern end of what was then West Pakistan bordering India and the Arabian Sea. It is largely desert. Nobody lives there except nomadic people and they apparently crossed the border fairly freely. I don't remember who first sent tanks into the area, it was probably the Indians. At any rate they threatened a full scale conflict and they actually did have minor tank battles. Both called on their good friends in the United States and the UK. We had the problem of determining how each government would behave and preferably in concert. We thought it was primarily a British problem, but as anything in that part of the world we had major interests and appreciated the opportunity to consult with the British about the solution. When the fighting broke out and the Brits were starting to get engaged, Cyril was in Scotland on holiday...anyone who has served in the UK knows how sacrosanct a man's holiday is. So we couldn't get any action out of the Commonwealth Relations Office, either above or below him, until Cyril, the fount of all wisdom on the

subcontinent returned. They were very reluctant to disturb him. He was off in the wilds somewhere and presumably out of touch and as badly as they needed him they were going to let him finish his holiday. But they did in the end send somebody up to haul him off a trout stream and bring him back down.

He was extraordinary good on these things, very decisive. He is one of the finest public servants I have ever met anywhere just in terms of all around competence and ability. I remember one incident when we had a very loquacious deputy secretary in IAS in the Pentagon who came in to see Cyril between planes. He didn't take me with him. After he departed Cyril called me over and dressed me down for not having accompanied this fellow. I said that I was told my presence would not be necessary. Cyril said, 'Here is a pencil and paper, take down what I have to say to you.' He dictated a telegram to me and then said, 'Now you go back to your embassy and you send this telegram and you say that this is what Mr. Pickard would have said in response to this fellow's presentation with which he disagreed entirely if he had been given a chance to get a word in edgeways.' So I sent the message off which caused a stir at that time. But it was typical of the way Cyril operated.

Q: On the Indian-Pakistan war, from your level what kind of role were we doing? I believe at some point the Chinese were making ominous noises.

ERICSON: This was pretty far removed from direct Chinese involvement, but Chinese support for one or the other of the contestants could have been decisive.

Q: If I recall I think the Pakistanis at that point were looking to the Chinese for support and we made noises that we wouldn't stand for this or something.

ERICSON: They were very unhappy, of course. They expected us to support them vis-a-vis India. The Indians and the Chinese were having their own strain at the time, so the Chinese saw an opportunity and began to make noises about offering aid, as I recall it, to the Pakistanis in terms of military assistance of one kind or another and the Pakistanis

were being fairly receptive. So the problem became one of defusing that situation while you all are trying to settle a dispute between India and Pakistan which is like going into a bottle with a couple of scorpions and they are not apt to listen to reason. It took quite a while but I think in the end they both realized that this was a fruitless kind of endeavor. Neither of them had the kind of resources to devote to a major war, that we were not going to permit a major war, and in the end they backed off and settled it more or less as it has been in the beginning. But it was dicey for a while. People today don't even remember the incident, but it was one of those India-Pakistan things that threatened...

Q: Again I go to it from your perspective at that time as far as what you were relaying and talking about, were the British and the Americans pretty much in accord of how we wanted things?

ERICSON: Yes, pretty much. The British at that point in terms of projecting their power were at full retreat. They were turning over colony after colony after colony and there were all kinds of demands on the Treasury for assistance by these newly independent countries who needed something to start themselves off with. So the demands on them were very, very heavy and it was pretty clear that any major input into a dispute such as the Rann of Kutch would have to involve American financing and not British. The Brits had very little to offer along those lines, although I must say for a country in that position they took some pretty firm stands. We, of course, were in our expansion mode if you will. But there was never any major difference between us about the overall picture. We had very similar objectives and we worked very well in concert.

As an example of that, another issue that came up during the time was the establishment of a military base area somewhere from which force could be applied in the event of a Middle Eastern crisis. That was basically Hermann Eilts baby as the Middle East guy, however the location was going to be in my area in South Asia. We had a series of conferences with the Brits which involved travel to Washington by various delegations of the Pentagon and State Department people to explore with the Brits where we could

put a base in the India Ocean. Of course, it ended up being in Diego Garcia. But we explored and had a number of meetings at which the CRO and the Colonial Office came up with various suggestions. They were very cooperative about it. We had one ideal base on the western side of the Indian Ocean, near the coast of Africa which looked like it was perfect for the purpose except one problem, and that was it was the major breeding place for a sea going turtle of some sort. The ecologists were up in arms in England about the disturbance it would cause and actually forced the British government to drop the consideration. We ended up over at the Seychelles because it was manageable, politically and every other way. The island Diego Garcia was privately owned and could be purchased actually. The only economic activity on the island was a rundown coconut operation, although in later days all sorts of claims were made. In truth it was very sparsely inhabited, very well located and quite suitable for the purpose. The point I am trying to make is that the British were very forthcoming in these negotiations. They wanted our military presence in that area very badly and were willing to run some political and financial risks in order to get us there.

I will never forget the Colonial Office's background paper on Diego Garcia, however, that they presented at the very first meeting, that started out saying, 'Diego Garcia is overrun with rhinoceros.' That sort of landed on the table with a thud. But they forgot the word 'beetles' whoever typed it. Apparently rhinoceros beetles and copra go together.

Anyway, the agreement was made while I was in London and I believe construction of the base started about that time too. That was one incident that occupied a good deal of my time.

Another thing that I got deeply involved in which I will be a little bit careful about. One of the colonies that was being given its independence at that time was British Guinea. It had a very interesting political makeup at the time. There was a communist party there, although I don't recall whether it was labeled as such, but it certainly waddled like one and it was headed by Cheddi Jagan, who was an Indian. The population was more diverse

then you would expect. There was a heavy presence of Indians from India, people from the other Caribbean areas and there weren't all that many native Guyanese. Jagan was threatening to win the first post-independence election and it looked very much as if the party he headed would win it. He was a bit of an embarrassment to us because he was married to a woman from Chicago who was a flaming left wing...

Q: Marxist of the first order.

ERICSON: Yes, she certainly was and she was not beyond spouting her views into the public press at every conceivable opportunity. He was a very difficult person to handle for us. The combination of that couple spelled, we thought, a great deal of trouble. Of course, we had a base then in northern Guyana. It was more of an emergency base than anything else, so we would have liked to have kept it. An air base for transit to Africa and on into South America. We wouldn't need it today. The mainstream party, if you will, was led by a man Forbes Burnham, who was black and while probably more socialist than the British would have liked, was acceptable. He would represent the kind of elements the British wanted to see remain in charge. Our policy there was to keep communism out of the area, Cuba's Castro was enough. And the thought there was that Castro would be supporting Jagan rather enthusiastically. The problem was now do you insure that when you establish this fine thriving democracy on the shores of the Caribbean that it will be governed by the right kind of government.

Our intelligence people and the British intelligence people worked very, very closely together. I wish I could remember the name of the station member who did it for our side because he was a hell of a man. His British counterparts were also obviously quite effective. I did the more overt side of all this in concert with a man named Peter Piper who was the Caribbean Division Chief in the Colonial Office. Again he was sort of a Colonial Officer counterpart of Cyril Pickard. He was a merry little fellow. He suit his name perfectly. He was a little short, pink cheeked, very sweet natured man. He was a delight to work

with. Very, very knowledge and very firm in his dealings with people despite his rather beguiling nature.

In the end we studied 67, I think, different kinds of proportional representation models to determine which would be best for British Guinea, i.e., which would insure the kind of government that we wanted. I can't for the life of me today give you the details of whatever form was finally decided upon, but we did go for a proportional representation type of government which would insure that Burnham's forces plus a third element on the political scene, whatever it was, in combination could out vote Jagan and his communists and that is the way it happened. We had a Burnham government for a number of years afterwards. We kept our base probably as long as we needed it. When jets came in it became less and less important. We kept communist off the mainland of South America, or the system did. Of course, Burnham turned out to be perfectly ghastly, I think, but he lasted long enough. Is Jagan the head of the place now?

Q: I think so.

ERICSON: He must be an old, old man by now. He hasn't turned out to be as ferocious as we thought he was, but he was a real bogeyman in those days. That was an interesting project.

Nothing terribly important, I think, transpired with Japan or China during that period except our mutual concern about keeping Japan in the community of free nations and consulting very closely on China affairs for UN representation business and all that sort of thing. The British were very supportive. There were no major disputes.

Q: Did you run across an element of Japan hating within the British community? Whereas we fought Japan we did not have the real humiliation that the British had.

ERICSON: We won our war and they lost theirs. There was a great, great deal of that. Of course, the funny thing about the UK for me in terms of their looking back at their recent

history and deciding who their friends were was the enormous fixation in England on World War I as opposed to World War II. Now, there was a lot of the kind of feeling about Japan that you mention...the treatment of the British prisoners of war in Southeast Asia, the barbarous acts in China and all the rest of it, the surrender of Singapore and Hong Kong and the lost of the Prince of Wales...of course they were fond of telling little stories of how they foxed the Japanese here and there. You no doubt have heard the story of what the British intelligence pulled just before the attack on Singapore in an effect to try to persuade the Japanese that they had better not mess with the British garrison they planted large supplies of oversized condoms up and down the peninsula for issue to the British troops to make the Japanese feel small, I suppose.

Anyway, those ignominious loses rankled the British a great deal and a large part of the British population was adamantly opposed to doing anything that smacked of being helpful to the Japanese or bringing the Japanese closer or cooperating with the Japanese. But then the British didn't have all that much to say about the Japanese. They were by that time a very small part of Japan's trade, a very small part of Japan's activities. So, while the thing was there and palpable when it did arise it didn't arise all that often.

Q: The British had recognized China. Did this cause any problems in dealing with them on UN recognition which we were violently opposed to?

ERICSON: Here again the scene of action shifted primarily to the UN headquarters personnel. If a lot of it was done, it was done either in Washington or at the UN. It was not a prominent part of my landscape in London.

Q: Were you getting much out of the Brits about what was happening in China? One of the stated reasons for diplomatic recognition by the Brits was so they could find out more about what was going on in China.

ERICSON: From time to time, yes. But, the nature of my assignment kept me more often at the Colonial Office and the CRO than it did the Foreign Office. But I did see a great deal

of the East Asian people in Foreign Office and they did keep us informed by and large. It was really a special relation. We had a very close relationship with the Brits. And I would think virtually anything we wanted to get if they had it we could get it.

Indonesia for example. Sukarno and company were acting up, the whole Malaya problem. Sukarno's ambitions in Southeast Asia came into conflict with the Brits and their positions. You may recall that sometime during that period, 1964, the Indonesians sacked the British embassy in Jakarta.

Q: Oh yes, while a piper stood on the wall and played in defiance.

ERICSON: He was later ambassador in Iceland, incidentally, and presided in somewhat the same circumstances over the cod war. I think the most vicious demonstration ever seen in Iceland was the one where some rocks were thrown at the British embassy.

Anyway, he did lose his embassy and some of them took refuge in the American compound as I recall. David Bruce, our ambassador, hastened over and told the British foreign minister that we would be happy to handle all their communications. There communications were out and had no means of communicating with their embassy except by open wire, if they could do that. Anyway we offered the services of our embassy. Bruce said we would put two officers on duty night and day to make sure that anything that comes into our message center from your ambassador or his people gets over to you promptly. So Oscar Armstrong and I were detailed to be these two officers. That meant sleeping in the damn embassy, of course. I drew the first night and lo and behold in comes a British equivalent NIACT telegram.

Q: Night Action telegram. You wake people up.

ERICSON: Yes. It was about two in the morning when I got the damn text. I trotted over to the Foreign Office and bludgeoned my way past the security people and got to the head of the security section who said, I shall have to awaken the night clerk. They called him

and he came down. He was a fairly senior officer in the British Foreign Service and not feeling very happy about having to stay in the building either. He looked at it and said, 'In future, let these wait until morning.' So we ceased our night watch after one or two more nights. Oscar and I pleaded our case. They soon got back on line. But it was an interesting example of the kind of cooperation that we did have with the Brits.

On Bruce, I have to say a word about him.

Q: This is David Bruce.

ERICSON: David Bruce who is one of our great ambassadors. He had been in the Foreign Service as a very young man and had left the Service to go into business. He had been an ambassador to other places.

Q: Germany, England, France, China.

ERICSON: Yes, many of the big posts. He was practically regarded as being career. He had made a career of being an ambassador, which was kind of nice, I guess. He was fairly wealthy. His wife, Evangiline, had a fair amount of money of her own, of course.

Q: I think she was a Mellon.

ERICSON: Yes, she was a Mellon. They lived in Betty Hutton's house in the middle of a big park and it was quite an establishment. He was a man of great, great distinction. At one point while I was there the Senate was looking into the way the Department ran its affairs and invited David Bruce back to address the Foreign Affairs Committee on how you ran an embassy because he was a diplomat of such distinction. He gave them what the Department said was a letter perfect description of how an embassy should be run. At this time the country team concept was about to evolve and I think Ambassador Bruce was the first one to enunciate it. The Department took his text and published it and distributed it

around the world as an example of how other ambassadors might consider running their embassies.

The problem was that his description of how an embassy should be run and how he ran his embassy were at opposite poles. Working for Bruce is like being part of a catamaran...one hole was here and one hole was off there and never the twain would meet. He was very difficult to see, very busy. Certainly the man had access to them any time, any place to the top levels of British diplomacy or society or anything else in the town of London. The top 3 or 4 percent of anything was David Bruce's to attend to. The consensus among those of us who were working in external affairs was that David Bruce never saw a damn thing that went out of that embassy before it went out except the stuff that he wrote himself. It was not unusual for him to write a telegram that nobody else ever saw in the embassy because he classified them so...he had a direct line to the President and the Secretary...which begin by saying I disagree with embassy so-and-so. Well, embassy so-and-so had been sent out over his signature and it must have puzzled people back in Washington a little bit. Needless to say, however the two telegrams differed, they accepted Bruce's. I had little to do with Bruce. I attended his weekly staff meetings when he would come in and sit down at the head of the table and look around the table and say, 'Are all my 43 agencies represented here this morning?' And then we would all sound off and tell the ambassador what we were doing and then he would thank us very politely and gentlemanly and disappear. He had an absolute rule that he would never go to the airport to meet anybody except possibly the President of the United States. David Bruce never stirred out of the heart of London. If somebody wanted to see him they could ask for an appointment and he would give it to them.

He accepted my expertise on matters Asian and made it known on several occasions. It all stemmed from an incident where he called me into his office one day and I found him sitting there with an art dealer who had a series of Chinese prints of some sort. They depicted military campaigns of the Han people or something. He was about to buy them but the dealer couldn't figure out what order the prints should be in. Of course they were

numbered in the Chinese numbering system and I was able to put them in order from 1 to 15 and he considered that a very impressive performance. From then on I was accepted as a real expert.

Q: Oh yes. Many a career has prospered by this sort of thing.

ERICSON: Exactly so.

He did not entertain staff very much. I think I was at several Fourth of July receptions and maybe one or two other receptions.

But it was an interesting experience watching this really great man and great, great ambassador. For all I wanted to deride him a little bit for some of his habits, but if the word ambassador means anything he had the kind of access an ambassador really ought to have. And he had his deputies, of course. The first year I was there it was Lewis Jones, who was very experienced and long time European careerist. He was replaced by Phil Kaiser for my last year there, who brought in a political counselor, Brubeck, who had been on the White House staff. Brubeck, of course, replaced Elim O'Shaughnessy. To Brubeck's credit he acknowledged that he had no diplomatic experience. He was brought to London right out of the White House as a political appointee. But he was a sensible man and to his credit he made as few waves as possible and was generally a nice person to have around. Bruce's deputies were certainly adequate to the task. I played bridge with Phil Kaiser the other night, as a matter of fact, and he still talks about his experience with Bruce.

Speaking about Bruce being hard to get in contact with, Kaiser did not have free access to him. He had to make appointments like everybody else unless it was a real crisis. I can recall one time, I can't recall what the situation was, when he and I wanted to talk very badly with the ambassador and we made our appointment for 12 noon and got there and found he had left for lunch, which left his DCM and First Secretary standing there and wondering when the next opportunity would arise.

I also had too interesting assignments as so-called control officer type. They both involved Kennedys, Bobby and Teddy. And I was going to be the control officer for the visit of Lyndon Johnson to attend Churchill's funeral which was one of the more hysterical exhibitions by Lyndon. He did not come in the end, he had a cold.

Q: The fact that he didn't show up became quite a case...

ERICSON: He was invited, of course, to come, but he had a serious cold and he didn't really want to come. I think the British put Lyndon off a little bit. But nonetheless the orders came out that he was coming and to make the preparations. So we took over the London Hilton practically. Took over the top two stories and knocked out walls; evicted wealthy Saudi long term occupants who were not very happy about being evicted; and we had all the preparations entrain for his arrival. While back in Washington he was in bed and apparently in a very dramatic episode he called in a bunch of reporters into his bedroom, sat in bed with a hood over his head absorbing steam and telling them how sorry he was that he wasn't going to be able to go to London. And that is the way we found out he wasn't coming, of course. Finally they told us officially that he wasn't coming but that he would send the Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, and the Chief Justice of the United States, Earl Warren to represent him. And, of course, Earl Warren was the senior ranking member of the delegation, but of course the British press would focus on Dean Rusk instead. One of the two of them got ill while in London and didn't attend the funeral. I think it was Warren who stayed in the hotel during the funeral. I had to buy a new coat so that I could go sit in the cathedral there, it was cold.

But the main visitor, of course, from the United States was Eisenhower who was not made a member of the American delegation and who made it very plain that this displeased him mightily. He thought if Lyndon wasn't going to come than he should. I talked to General Eisenhower as I was control officer, but it was very obvious from his comments and from everything that appeared in the press that he felt he should have been named if the President couldn't come. He said in a BBC television room, in the bowels of the cathedral,

watching the parade and making appropriate comments, which included remarks about the nature of the American delegation and how happy he would have been to have served in such a capacity as the real American friend of the British people dating back to World War II. Ike made it very clear that he was very unhappy and, of course, the British press had a field day with the American government on this particular issue.

A very moving parade, I might add and moving, moving ceremony.

Q: Talk about the Kennedy visits.

ERICSON: The Kennedy visits were not political in nature nor official, they stemmed from rather unusual circumstances, but nevertheless being who they were they rated control officers and it fell to my lot to be named control officer for Bobby. I don't know why David Bruce assigned me this particular job, or whoever did it. Possibly because he had come out of the Far East. It was early 1964, not too long after President Kennedy's death and he was still attorney general and had made a trip down to Indonesia and had finished by coming around the world and ending up in London before going back to the United States. He had an appointment with the foreign minister, who was polite enough to receive him, although he really had no particular business. I mentioned it primarily because I think historians should have some confirmation of the fact that Mr. Kennedy was an extraordinarily disagreeable man and very, very difficult to handle personally to people who were subordinate and with whom he had no ties. They were there to serve him. Quite different from his public image and it was a very disillusioning experience for me.

He was only going to be there two nights. He arrived one afternoon, had the next day and was going to spend that night and leave the following day. It was to be a little rest stop basically. But en route, for example, there were telegrams discussing what kind of program he wanted. One of the messages, I forget whether I got it by telephone or by telegram, said that he wanted above all things to visit the school that he and his brothers had attended in London as children when there father was ambassador there. On receiving

this word I fitted it into his schedule. I called the head master and explained to him that the attorney general would like to visit the school and the head master said, 'Well, that is very kind of him. Ordinarily we would be delighted but it is spring hols and there won't be anybody on the campus. Further more he must realize that it is not the actual school that he attended which was bombed out during the war and moved. There really aren't that many people here who would remember him.' In his polite British way he was saying that they would be greatly honored to have the attorney general if he were coming during normal hours he should not expect a rousing reception because it was his visit and not the kids, who didn't know him very well, and it wasn't the same place. He would be welcome but it was spring hols and it wouldn't be much purpose of doing it, is what he was saying. It was a very polite turn down.

Well, I went back and got an answer saying, 'I want to do it.' So I went back to the head master and said, 'Even though it is spring hols, the attorney general does really badly want to pay his respects to the school. Aren't there some people who live in the area who might be assembled, a few of the masters and a few of the young men?' The head master sort of signed and said, 'Yes, that could be done.' And so we put it on the schedule and confirmed that it was on the schedule and it was on the schedule when I handed it to Mr. Kennedy when he arrived at the airport. He was supposed to visit there the afternoon of the second day. Just before that he had an appointment with the ambassador in his office. I had had an unfortunate experience with him that morning, but nonetheless I was there picking him up and took him to Ambassador Bruce's office and they were having their discussion. When it came time for them to leave for the school, knowing the distance that had to be traveled, it would take 15 or 20 minutes, I was sitting in Bruce's outer office and I asked his secretary to buzz in and tell him it was time to depart. She did and I was asked to come into the ambassador's office where they were having their discussion. He said, 'What is this all about?' I said, 'It is time to leave for the school for your visit with the head master and the assembled students, etc..' 'What school visit?' says he. I said, 'They assembled a few people to greet you at the school you said you wanted to visit, the one you attended

when you were here as a child.' He said, 'I'm not going to see any school, I got to go see my tailor.' At which point he got up and walked out of the office and went off to see his tailor, leaving me to explain to the school that he wasn't coming.

Q: What was the other thing that had happened in the morning?

ERICSON: Well, he had an appointment with the foreign minister at 9:30 or 10:00 and I went to...he was staying in the London townhouse that was owned by Princess Radziwill, Jackie Kennedy's sister and her husband. They had a very nice, very eloquent little townhouse in London which was staffed by one maid. She was the only one on the premises when I got there. I got there deliberately a half hour before we were due at the foreign ministry although it was only ten minutes away because I thought I might have some difficulty. Well, when I got there the maid said that they were not up. I said, 'Well, you know we have an appointment with the foreign minister very shortly, shouldn't you awaken them?' 'Well, no.' Her orders were not to disturb them. Ethel Kennedy was along on the trip. Anyway, I had to go up and knock on the door and he had just gotten up, but he was stomping around the room in a vile temper making all sorts of comments about people who schedule him to do things at ungodly hours and he had had an exhausting trip, etc. etc. He couldn't find his glasses. Of course, nobody in the world knew that he wore glasses at that point, but he wore half glasses, reading glasses. He had misplaced them and was stomping around in the bedroom screaming at his wife where the hell had he put his glasses, making things very, very difficult and very nasty.

We got going and on the way to the foreign office Mrs. Kennedy was going to attend this thing too and she was a little embarrassed, I think. After the meeting with the foreign minister, which lasted 30 minutes or so. I did not attend the meeting, just the two of them did. I sat in an ante room with some Foreign Office functionaries while we talked to Mrs. Kennedy. We went back to the embassy for something. I guess he was going to see Kaiser or something. He had to go up to the ambassador's floor where the rogue's gallery is kept of prior ambassadors. As we left the elevator, I turned to the right to go to the office

where he had his appointment, and he on his own turned left and started going down the hall. I said, 'Mr. Attorney General, your appointment is in this direction,' and he snarled at me. He said, 'Well, I want to see the portrait of my father.' I said, 'Well, you father's portrait is down this way also.'

It had been very nerve racking. The incident of the school is just part of it. He had been very unpleasant all the time and I was ready at that point to go back to my office and say, 'Buddy, you can get yourself to the airport and the rest of your appointments on your own. I quit.' There was a churlishness to his behavior. It wasn't a some time thing, it was a constant thread through everything we did on that visit. Maybe he didn't like being shepherded by a control officer.

Q: But, you know, it comes through again and again. I always felt he was a nasty person. In fact, I swore I would never vote for him even if it meant Richard Nixon or not. Actually I voted for Nixon because McCarthy was a nice guy but inept. No, I found the sort of deification of Robert Kennedy as being a gentle soul one of the most peculiar things that I can think of, because here was a really nasty piece of goods.

ERICSON: In contrast, I might say, to his brother, Teddy, who arrived somewhat later in the year on a mission to thank overseas personnel, including embassy personnel, who had contributed to the Kennedy memorial. Remember there had been quite a campaign to raise money and the embassy personnel had done quite nicely and so had a number of Brits. But we had the embassy staff assembled in the auditorium in London, I was control officer again, and he was to make a speech. But it struck me at that point that here was a man who was over his head. He really didn't know what he was doing. He had no political instincts at that time it seemed to me. He had to be led by the hand to the dais and to his seat and all that sort of thing and cued in very carefully as to what he was going to say. After it was over he turned to me and said, 'What will I do now?' I was sitting up on the stage with him and I said, 'Why don't you go down and shake some hands.' So he went down and shook hands. But he was obviously looking for further directions, he turned

around and looked with an expression saying 'Have I done it long enough?' He seemed to be bewildered.

Q: He was a very young Senator and was sort of considered not the brightest of the clan. And there was talk that he had cheated in college, someone took his exams for him, etc. He was sort of the dumb bunny. He really grew into the job.

ERICSON: Yes, he grew into the job. I think he was basically intelligent enough but he just hadn't had the experience up to that point. But of all the politicians that I have ever escorted around various places, he was the least instinctive about things.

The other incident that I got involved in that strikes me with particular force was...we had five little children at the time. Findley Burns was the administrative officer at that time and when I went on my War College trip and popped into London, I dropped by his office. He was an old friend of mine and said, 'Dick we are saving this house for you. You have so damn many kids and you ordinarily wouldn't get an embassy house, but we have this one for you because it has enough bedrooms for you. But we are not going to do anything with it because after you go we are going to sell it. It is an old place and it has been painted recently and I bought you a new vacuum cleaner.' Well, what we ended up in was a marvelous old place on Moor Street in London in the Chelsea, Kensington area very near Harrods and Old Brompton Road. I used to walk with Hermann Eilts every morning to the embassy together. That was kind of nice.

But the house, itself, had been built in the 1830s or 1840s some time and was a six story house but I called it a 12 story vertical rambler because there was a front and back arrangement and the staircase went up in the middle of the house and at every landing there was a room. So you had twelve landings, 12 levels, 12 sets of rooms. Only on the ground floor was there any depth to the place. We had a living room, a study and dining room on the first floor. The kitchen was in the basement served by a dump waiter. The wiring was all exposed and painted over with 50 years of paint accumulation. Everything

in the damn house was fused to prevent fires, but if any fuse went out you had to look at the fuse in the appliance, the fuse in the fuse box that covered those two floors and then the large fuse center halfway down and the big fuse box in the basement to find out which fuse governing this particular circuit had blown. It had its joys. It was a house with lots of character and no convenience. And of course the vacuum cleaner that Findley had bought for us was the largest and heaviest Hoover known to man which I used to carry up to the top floor on the weekend and my wife and our housekeeper hoovered it down over the week so I could carry it back up again.

Anyway, personally it was a good living situation. Who wouldn't give their shirt to live in the heart of London. We had no yard, of course, whatsoever. But the kids made out all right. They attended British schools and did quite well. I am very grateful for that educational experience for them. And, of course, we lived within walking distance of the Royal Court Theater and not far from the theater district and halfway between Harrods and Peter Jones, the Royal Albert Hall, etc.

Anyway, in the summer of 1964 we rented a place for a month down in Dartmoor, on the edges of Dartmoor. One of the great, great experiences of our lives was living a perfectly gorgeous month, it rained once to show you what Dartmoor could really be like, but the rest of those days was absolutely glorious. I only had two weeks of it and went down on weekends. My mother and dad came over and they stayed there. I think this was really the great experience. But we didn't get to play the amount of golf we wanted to play, and we didn't get up to Scotland to do it. During the last week we were there we had reservations at Glen Eagles and finally I was going to get to play the great Scottish golf course and then the Vietnam War heated up. I don't know where Ben Wood was at the time, but it fell to me to escort Henry Cabot Lodge to make a speech before the Oxford Union. This was my last experience in London and one I will never forget. There was a lot of domestic opposition to the Vietnam War and to the UK's support of the US cause. It had reached such a point in England, we were having our own troubles back in the United States, that Michael Stewart,

the Foreign Minister in the Wilson government and who was a very admirable character I might add.

Q: This was Harold Wilson, head of the Labour Party.

ERICSON: Yes, he came into office in 1964 and who was in office most of the time we were working on that Guyana business. He connived in this. He had a rather difficult farther left member of his party as Colonial Minister. All of these discussions about Guyana were held without the knowledge or consent of his minister, but with the knowledge and consent of the Prime Minister, which made it all a bit dicey for all concerned. If the Colonial Minister had ever blown the gaff on these arrangements we would have been in very deep trouble. But Wilson was very good about things like that.

But he had Michael Stewart as his foreign minister and things on the Vietnam front had gotten so dicey in England, that the British government, Michael Stewart in particular, decided that somebody from the United States should go to some place where there would be a lot of publicity and make a reason in defense of the American position, and not leave it all up to the British to carry because they were having a lot of trouble with it. After all they were socialists and it was beginning to be embarrassing for them politically. So Ambassador Bruce said in effect that he didn't want any part in making any speech at the Oxford Union. He knew what the Oxford Union was all about and didn't want any part of giving a speech before them. But the United States government was prevailed upon to send Henry Cabot Lodge who had been and was going to be again ambassador to Vietnam.

Henry Cabot Lodge, a great American name resonated well in England. He arrived in London one morning and was to make the speech that evening. David Bruce gave him lunch, which was extraordinary for David Bruce to give any ambassador a lunch. Not a big lunch, just him, me, as control officer, and the DCM and political counselor and Ambassador Lodge. That was when we got our first look at the speech he was going to

make. It turned out that the speech he was going to make was one he had literally given for a major rotary club meeting the previous week in Boston. Its intellectual content was fairly low. The Oxford Union contains the greatest young minds in England and the most skeptical and most penetrating. He was certain to have a rough time and he had better go up there with a pretty tough minded, factually based, certain of his position kind of thing. But this speech was just full of overblown phrases about the beauties that would emerge in Southeast Asia if only the communists wake up and realize that they were fighting a foolish war. And it had a very definite rotary club flavor to it.

After Ambassador Bruce had read it he said that he didn't think this would do at all. Lodge got very unhappy about that and said in effect, 'Well the President has seen it and thinks it is just fine and I got a great ovation when I gave it in Boston last week. What do you mean it won't do?' Bruce didn't really prepare him terribly well. He just said, 'Well, you are going to be in for a very hard time up there.' Well, he did not accept the advice and try to improve it, he was going to give it as written. As a matter of fact the main problem that emerged was that he couldn't read it as typed and he didn't want to wear his glasses so he wanted to have it typed in big type. So we scoured London because we didn't have a speech typewriter in the embassy looking for a typewriter. And then because he was getting very testy having thought over the content of this text at noon...and the speech wasn't going to be ready unless we typed it on route so we assigned the most beautiful secretary in the embassy to go with us. Henry was not adverse to being around beautiful women. She was a secretary in the political section who later married Eagleton. She had been a Powers Model and really was a beautiful girl and a good worker. She sat on that train going up to Oxford typing the speech which was just about finished at the time we pulled into Oxford station.

Meanwhile he is fussing at me about all of the arrangements that he didn't like and he didn't like any of them. He got into the hall and faced this audience, which was not just Oxford Union members, but apparently had some very nasty ringers in it. Anyway, he was into his speech for about five minutes when the feet shuffling began and cat calls and

other signs of disapprobation. It wasn't a very long speech, about 20 minutes or so. By the time he finished with it he was just seething and he got some extremely hostile questions and not questions. He once told one member to sit down, he said, 'If you are going to ask a question, ask a question but don't make a speech at me.'

Because all America's errors and sins were being displayed for the world to see, this prompted Michael Stewart, who had been president of the Oxford Union and who had preceded us up there, to get up and give extemporaneously one of the finest offenses of American policy in Southeast Asia that I think was probably ever made during that period. I wish I had a copy of it. Of course, Michael Stewart had the extraordinary advantage of being president of the Oxford Union, which is a debating society, and of course he had been in the House of Commons and was used to this sort of thing. But to get up before that audience that had Cabot Lodge on the run and stop them...they didn't shuffle their feet while he was speaking...and to pull Henry Cabot Lodge's irons out of the fire the way he did was to me a marvelous example of what that kind of training can do for you if you have the intellect behind it. He was just great.

The problem for me on the way back was Henry Cabot Lodge knew that he had had to be rescued and he was absolutely furious at everything. He was mad at me, he was mad at Bruce, he was mad at Stewart, he was mad at the world, mad at Johnson for sending him, but mostly, 'Why the hell didn't somebody tell me it was going to be like this?' Of course, we had tried to tell him but he wasn't listening. To do him credit, I will say that he sent me a very nice letter of appreciation for all that I had done during his London visit...whether he had drafted it or somebody else, I don't know, but he had done the proper thing.

That was the last thing I did before we left London. It was in all respects a great tour because I was able to work more or less independently on major projects and in a city like London why...

Q: Why was it so short, because you were an outside expert? If you were concentrating on Britain itself, you would have stayed for four?

ERICSON: Oh, yes, you would have had two two-year tours. It was a clear understanding that as an area specialist you got two years and then get back into your own area. My wife never forgave me for not staying a third and fourth year. We had five small kids so it was kind of restraining on her and she didn't get to do half of what she really wanted to do.

Q: Then what happened?

ERICSON: I went to Seoul.

Q: You were there from 1965-68.

ERICSON: Yes, I was there from 1965-68, I had a three year assignment. As I mentioned I had met Win Brown in the War College when he was deputy commandant for the State Department, and he wanted a political counselor.

Q: He was the ambassador?

ERICSON: He was the ambassador. Again, I will say from the outset that I have served with some pretty good ambassadors...Alex Johnson, David Bruce, and a number of other people with staggering reputations...but I never worked for anybody for whom I had greater respect than Win Brown and as a couple, I would say Win and Peggy Brown would be our all time choice. A man of towering integrity. Brown was the son of a Presbyterian minister in Maine. He sort of looked the part. He was the oldest 53 year old I think I have ever met. He looked old and had premature gray hair, rather craggy features, and slim build. Looked like a very austere, ascetic sort of person. And he had a sort of abrupt manner to him. He was really one of the kindest, nicest, but very firm when it counted. When action was required he could take it very swiftly, almost carelessly in some ways. He was a damn could surgeon cutting out the nonessential. Nobody ever tried to pull the wool over Win

Brown's eyes. He was much too clever and the integrity was just much too much. He was absolutely great. And he interested himself in all kinds of things. I will never forget when Win Brown looking over a draft of mine at some point after we had talked over the policy aspects of it and interpretation of it, he looked over his glasses and said, 'But Dick, I want you to redraft parts of it and please have respect for the English language.' He went to the important things first, he was by no means a nitpicker. Anyway, he was the ambassador there.

He had been the ambassador in Laos during the Vientiane crisis, and he had been deputy commandant at the War College and now he was ambassador in Korea. The Koreans incidentally had tested him as Koreans will do to see how vulnerable he might be to certain aspects of their culture. They had given him his first dinner party out at Walker Hill. The foreign minister at that time was a young fellow in his '30s, who was married to one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen, but he never went home from a party with his wife. The Browns usually took her home as a matter of fact. Walker Hill which is the great big pleasure dome that the Koreans had built along the Han River which was designed to keep American GIs from going to Japan to spend their R&R money. It was not entirely successful in that regard, but it had a big nightclub which had a line of dancers scantily clad and all that sort of nonsense. Of course, women are one of the enticements that Koreans offer to visitors one way or another. They thought they would try Ambassador Brown out. It was a stag party and they had one of the lady's in the line in her skimpy costume come up and ask for the first dance of the evening with Win Brown. The other Koreans and I guess maybe some of the Americans in attendance (I was not there) apparently urged him to get up and have that first dance. So he took the lady gingerly in his arms and waltzed her around the floor once and sat down and was never known to dance with a Korean woman for the rest of his career. He was not going to put up with that sort of thing. Of course, the Koreans abandoned that. As a matter of fact there were all kinds of kisaeng partying going on (the kisaeng being the equivalent of a Japanese geisha, although not quite) around Win Brown while he was there, but he never attended, never

accepted an invitation to a kisaeng party. Well, I am sorry, he went along on one or two very large ones when visiting congressmen and their wives were included, but he never went to a stag kisaeng party that I know of in the two years that we served together.

It was a good embassy staff in Seoul at the time. We arrived there in the summer of 1965 when Park Chung Hee, who was president of the republic, had just passed two enormous measures through the national assembly. One of them was a bill providing for authority to send Korean troops overseas. They had already done that but unconstitutionally apparently and they wanted to make it specific that the government had the power. The other one, of course, was the bill ratifying the treaty of reconciliation with Japan. These were measures that were causing enormous political strain in Seoul. Not the overseas troop thing so much, but the Japan thing caused terrible dissension in Korea. As a matter of fact when I arrived, if you read the American newspapers you would think the air was full of tear gas and bricks. Actually in and around the universities there was quite a bit of agitation and a lot of tear gas in the air. They were facing some very serious demonstrations. Of course, the Koreans were very, very sensitive to student participation in demonstrations dating way back to the Japanese occupation days and, of course, the 1960 uprising against Syngman Rhee. It was the student participation that really broke his back. It was the military refusal to put down the students that caused Syngman Rhee to fall or cause him to submit his resignation.

Anyway I was very busy the first couple of weeks I was there trying to sort out what the heck was going on. Another sidelight on Brown. He invited me up to the residence, alone, for a tete-tete, hours after my arrival and sat me down on the sofa and fixed me with his gimlet eye and said, 'Dick, I don't want you to do to your family what your predecessor did to his, is that understood?' I kind of blanched a bit. I didn't know what he was talking about. My predecessor was Phil Habib. It turned out what Win Brown had in mind was his experience at that nightclub in Walker Hill. Phil was political counselor under Sam Berger when Park Chung Hee overthrew the Chang government and Phil had gotten very close to the junta who ruled during the immediate period after the overthrow and

in trying to sort out who was going to emerge on top, he got very close to a number of actors. And the actors, of course, were all military types and the military types, of course, were all hard drinking and playing. The only time you could get to them was in the evening in an informal situation. So Phil had developed a system and habit of attending poker games and kisaeng partying three or four times a week. And that was what Win Brown was referring to. He did not like this kind of institution and he did not think that Phil had paid adequate attention to his family while he was political counselor. Having this warning in mind I was allowed to do it but I had to be rather circumspect. By the time I got there things had changed. The American Affairs Bureau of the Foreign Ministry no longer were getting the money to host their wild dog parties.

Q: Those things were very expensive.

ERICSON: Yes.

Q: Even for the time for anybody.

ERICSON: Yes. In those days $50 a head was fairly inexpensive. Some of them were pleasant parties for the most part. Some time you would get into a drinking competition and they would start pouring out...I often said if I could be reincarnated a Korean, I would want to have the Johnny Walker Black Label concession because that was what they drank. And if you tried to give them anything better or different they would feel insulted. It had to be Johnny Walker Black Label or it didn't qualify.

Anyway, Park managed to weather this political storm and it was one of the beginnings of the Korean economic miracle, which it has been. I was there in 1945-46 with the army of occupation. Except for a few isolated urban areas in South Korea, you were back in the 10th century. When I arrived in 1965 the per capital gross national income was still somewhere between $50 and $100 and that amount in Korea will not buy you very much. In some places like Indonesia it would go further because food grows on trees, the temperature doesn't get cold. Korea has a harsh climate and is a harsh land. People were

terribly poor. In the winter time in those days the newspapers used to keep track of the bodies found in the street.

Three things were responsible for Korea's economic development. One was the Japanese reparation payments. Now these were regarded by many Koreans as totally inadequate in light of the 40 odd years of occupation by Japanese and their efforts to totally wipe out the Korean culture, all the insults and indignities imposed on the Koreans all through the years by the very harsh Japanese system. But nonetheless the reparations played a major role in developing Korea.

The second thing, of course, was the Vietnam War; Korea's participation in it from which they reaped considerable economic benefit. The third thing which is really basically ignored is the way that American aid over the years had been channeled not into individual products really, but into reconstruction of an infrastructure that became the basis for successful projects in later years. I'm talking about communications, electric power development, roads, certainly central industries that were foundations for others. For example, cement was one of the first that American aid helped to develop. And, of course, the money that went into improving the agriculture provided labor surpluses that fueled other industries in later years. We did a pretty good job on the aid program. We didn't do well politically in Korea because I don't think we had an agenda of any kind, but we did pretty well on the aid side.

The fourth thing, which I really think is terribly important and history ought to correct sometime was the nature of the president, himself. Which is to say that all of my politically correct friends will shoot me when I say things like this, but I think Park was one of the great men of recent Asian history. Now this isn't to say that he didn't have blemishes, warts, even cancers. The man was terribly flawed, but he also had a fixation on being the one who brought Korea into the modern era, and economic development was the key to that and he pursued this with extraordinary vigor for his first two terms in office over eight years. I think he has never been given adequate credit for that. The American press

always portrayed him as an autocratic little monster of some kind that stifled all Christian and democratic elements unmercifully and was cruel and supported cruelty, etc. And to a certain extent some of those charges are reasonably accurate. The point with Park was that he also had this burning intent to take Korea where he thought it should go and he had the conviction that he and he alone was the one who could do it. And you know, he may very well have been right.

Q: I came there about ten years later and this was the impression I got, and Korea and company had already started to work and there was this feeling that this gentleman was one thing the only one of the leaders around who really had a feel for economics.

ERICSON: Yes, but beyond that Stu, he had a feeling for economics but he also knew that he didn't have himself much economic knowledge. He had no training in economics. But we had an AID director in the embassy who was a fine economist in his own right and he had a weekly appointment with Park, this was in 1965-67 period, for an hour or two and he would sit there and Park would tell him ' I am going down next week for such and such a project. Now let's go over where this fits into the scheme of things. When I get there what shall I say? What questions will they ask me? Then what should I say? And then what questions will they ask me?' He tried to go beyond what should I say. What are they likely to be discontented with? What do your people say, is it really worthwhile? What are its deficiencies? What are its strong points?He went into these things and when he went down to one of these places people were absolutely flabbergasted. He also spent a lot of time in the economic planning agency building next door to the embassy. You could always tell when Park was there because his security was all over the place. But he was in that building and going down to section chiefs and asking them why they were screwing up a project somewhere off in the boonies. The guy was startled to have the President come in and tell him more than he knew about his own project. He was remorseless in pursuing this kind of thing. He put in an enormous amount of energy into it. Bernstein, the AID director, said I could sit there and tell Park that he was stupid, that this was a dumb thing to do, that he didn't know his foot from his elbow about this and he had better wise up and

do something else, but I had the strong feeling, and this may be true of any Korean, if I had ever said 'you have no right to rule this country,' diplomatic immunity or not I would be in jail before the hour was out.

Q: It must have put a tremendous amount of beneficial pressure on AID or our people because they had to know what was put on. When you know you are part of the machine rather than off to the side, it does something to you.

ERICSON: Yes, he was a stimulant to everybody around him. He was politically a very nasty, difficult man to deal with. But he thought, incidentally, that his opposition, and he had evidence to prove this, was just as nasty in its way, particularly to him, as he was to them.

Q: I don't think there is any doubt about that.

ERICSON: Well, you know one of the stories on Park was that he had planned the coup in the immediate aftermath of the Rhee government, but that he had seen this democratic regime under John M. Chang come in and had withheld moving because he thought maybe he wouldn't be well received.

I only go on hearsay about that people, but all the Koreans I talked to in later years about the John Chang government said in terms of democracy it was delightful. Here we had an elected government with opposition, people who had been opposed to Rhee and put down by him for years and years who finally had their chance at power. They were good people, some of the finest in Korea. Unfortunately, the government turned out not to have any kind of a program, no idea of where it was going and it started going in sixteen directions at once. It also proved to be enormously corrupt. That these guys that got into office, everybody all the way down the line, was going to get his while the getting was good. It was terribly corrupt, getting worse by the day when after a year in office Park decided the time had come for him to make his move. He got the Korean military to support him without the support of the UN Command, which was supposed to be in control of the ROK

military, of course. It was the first of several episodes of that nature. To a certain extent we got blamed for Park's succeeding because we should have denied him the use of Korean forces, but, of course, one could not have denied him the use of Korean forces. They followed him and they supported him.

Anyway, there was a period of junta rule, but he had promised when he came in to have another democratic election for a government and a new constitution. It proved very difficult, he thought, to keep that promise and besides the junta despite some corruption allegations and difficulties, was doing all right. It took a very strong arm move on the part of the United States...I think Habib and Ambassador Berger were largely responsible personally for having US aid suspended until Park followed through on his promise to hold the first elections, in which he then became a candidate. Habib, incidentally, was under the illusion, I thought it was an illusion, that he was well beloved and esteemed by the Koreans for his part in this activity...for forcing the Koreans to adopt the democratic form of government after the military takeover. He was probably correct in this with regard to most Koreans. He was not correct in this from my observations in respect to Park, himself. Phil could never understand in later years, and he used to become very irritated at his lack of accessibility to Park, himself. When he took up golf, for example, Park would play golf with the UN Commander but never play golf with Phil. Phil had no close relationship with Park, although he thought he had Park's friendship and admiration, etc. As a matter of fact, Phil was sent down as deputy ambassador to Vietnam and he sent a message out asking for a statement of support of some sort from the Park government to the Vietnamese government, which he didn't get.

Anyway, Park resented, I think, very much what to him was an humiliation, this act of force on the part of the United States was contrary to his public position and he had to swallow it. Of course, he got himself elected three times afterwards. He then took office as the president and proved to be a pretty adept maneuverer. When I got there in 1965, which was two years after he had been elected president, he was following a divide and rule sort of strategy among his own supporters. The opposition didn't amount to much. They made

noises and got some attention in the international press, but domestically they basically were not particularly effective. Within his own party he had a number of factions within the so-called Democratic Republican Party, which wasn't democratic and not necessarily republican and not really much of a party. He had basically to contend with the ambitions of Kim (inaudible) who was his nephew by marriage and the organizational genius within his group as opposed to the varying ambitions of a fairly wide group of other Korean political figures and ex-military leaders, etc., who formed a kind of loose faction to oppose Kim. Park played these two elements for many years quite skillfully. But on the other side you had people like the bag man for the party and Kim Jae Kyu who was a political operator who was primarily remembered for being director of the ROK CIA during most of this period. And Chun Doo Hwan, who had been everything in Korea except president—chief of staff of the army during the Korean War, president of the assembly, prime minister which was an appointed office. These people and their supporters were played off by Park against his supporters, and he did it very, very skillfully for a number of years.

As a matter of fact, during the entire time I was there from 1965-68 this was sort of the way it went. They and their organizations competed among each other for Park's favor, which is one of the reasons why the 1967 re-election went absolutely...well, the United Nations had a supervisory commission there at the time and they certified that the 1967 election was free and fair and all that sort of nonsense. And it was probably an accurate reflection of the way the country felt, but there were certainly excesses in it and most of these were not by Park, himself, saying that he wanted this or that done, but by people who directed such organizations as the KCIA. The union leaders all want presidential favors. Teachers' unions were particularly effective in this kind of regard. Or people who were running the party, they wanted to turn out large votes in their areas. The Koreans were very good at corrupting elections. They used every device that had ever been heard of. There are more drunk elderly women on election day afternoon than you could shake a stick at. In other words, everybody was competing very earnestly for Park's favor. I don't think he ordered any of the excesses, except that he did say that he wanted two opposition politicians

beaten. He wanted Kim Dae Jung beaten, who was then a very young, up and coming politician in the opposition's camp, and he wanted the present president, Kim Young Sam beaten. They were kind of vying to be the leading young Turk of the time. But, Park was farsighted enough to say that these guys are my trouble in the future and I want them beaten.

Kim Young Sam was from Pusan, as I recall, and Kim Dae Jung was from Mokpo. I went to Mokpo to see what was going on down there because all the forces that I have enumerated were active in Mokpo were really active on Park's behalf. They were running demonstrations, using intimidation, bought votes, drunk votes, etc. Don't ever underestimate Kim Dae Jung if he still has a political future in Korea, which he may not. But don't underestimate him as a force to counter this kind of force. It was my observation in Mokpo at the time that Kim Dae Jung matched Park thug for thug and rock for rock and wane for wane and pitch battler for pitch battler. And with the aid of the fishing and some other unions in that area which Park could not control, Kim Dae Jung beat him and it was serious. Park had made his minister of construction one of the most lucrative jobs of all in the Korean government and the only guy from Mokpo ever to hold such a place he made resign and ordered to run as a home boy against Kim Dae Jung. And even with that, Kim Dae Jung beat him. Kim Young Sam, of course, had not very much trouble down in his stronghold of Pusan and beat Park in that election too.

I went around to many, many rallies that were held by the various parties and they were very impressive things in Korea when you get a mob of 30, 40, 50 thousand people in an amphitheater or somewhere and inflamed speakers, etc. It struck me that Park was a very poor campaigner because in contrast to the opposition's method of coming in and speaking more or less informally, but without much fanfare, very little ceremony to these people, if you went to a DRP rally that the president was going to speak at you would get this crowd made to be orderly in the first place by security personnel and then in would come this motorcade of motorcycles and cars with flags flying off the fenders and that sort of thing. The president would get out and would not look right, left or down the middle. He

would get out of the car and march up to what was always sort of a throne raised on the dais and he would sit there very coldly not making eye contact, not communicating with anybody. When the time came, he would get down and deliver a very poor speech. By that time the crowd started to melt away. They were probably paid to come and by that time they felt they had done their duty and he started losing his audiences time after time. Nonetheless, he did win the election and I think in all fairness that it was probably...and I was glad because the opposition was incompetent to me.

Q: Was this a case where the embassy was sitting back and watching how things developed?

ERICSON: We were reporting, we were not interfering.

Q: Country's have reputations of being AID countries and CIA countries. Korea had a somewhat reputation that there was a very cosy relationship between our CIA and the KCIA. Did you feel they were messing around at all?

ERICSON: There were two periods of my experience in Korea with the Foreign Service. One was the 1965-68 period.

Q: Let's stick to that one.

ERICSON: The station chief during the greater part of this time who ran a pretty tightly closed station. But, I think Win Brown had him under quite good control. We had some other people working in the political section under State cover. I never heard much of anything from them. But we were not controlling...the ROK CIA was a very, very powerful element in Korean.

Q: For the record ROK stands for Republic of Korea.

ERICSON: The station chief had a very close relationship to the ROK CIA and they were closely tied in. They also had various assets here and there and you were never really

sure whether you were dealing with an asset or not because they were not declared to the embassy.

Q: Again for the record, an asset means somebody who is essentially on the CIA payroll. An informant.

ERICSON: Yes, an informant or a source. In other words they were doing their job in a politically sensitive area and they were doing it reasonably...they did not have the capacity to direct very much of anything. They had the capacity to get information, but I do not believe they had the capacity to control. If they had, we might have had less trouble with some of the incidents that happened during this period. And, after all, their contacts were very close to the ROK CIA people and they had to be for a good reason because we were facing...our interests, of course, were the activities in the North and that was a matter of desperate interest to the Koreans as well as to us and our whole partnership evolved around the security relationship. We were there to help defend the Republic of Korea not to dictate its politics. And, I think, by and large, Americans would have been pretty well satisfied and there was no political reason at the time to oppose Park. After all, if Lyndon Johnson had been asked to comment on it he would have said that they were the only people supporting him in Vietnam. Others were doing tokens and getting a lot of money out of it, but the Koreans had troops there.

I want to touch briefly on the 1967 election again because I think that something happened then that the world has overlooked that caused Park to forget any thoughts that he might have had about stepping down at the end of his second term, as the constitution which he had put in required him to do and to continue to rule until he eventually got himself assassinated for essentially having hung around too long. But during the inauguration ceremony following his election in 1967, he had invited a large number of foreign guests to witness this great moment. They chose to hold the ceremony outside in the national capitol grounds and assembled the various dignitaries, including the Prime Minister of Japan and the Vice President of the United States and equivalent dignitaries from

many other countries. This was a great moment for Park, who incidentally was extremely sensitive to his international reputation and his international relations. He hungered to be acknowledged as the dynamic leader that he was, in my opinion. There are all kinds of stories on that score. But, this particular ceremony they had out doors, I think it was June, a very nice day and two blocks from the capitol grounds was the headquarters of the opposition party. As soon as the ceremony started, the opposition party that had surrounded its headquarters with a group of trusted young men began to broadcast speeches and music and loud noise from the army of loudspeakers that they had placed on the roof of their headquarters. They made so much noise that you could scarcely hear what was going on at the ceremony, itself. And they kept it up until the police finally got mobilized and moved in forcibly and forced them to stop, by which time the ceremony in the main plaza was virtually ruined. They even made noise over some of Park's remarks during his speech.

He took this as a bitter, bitter humiliation and in front of the world. He was never going to be friendly, I think, to the opposition after that. It was an insult of the kind that I don't think we can really appreciate. But it cut him right to his bone. Also, the fact, of course, that the opposition boycotted the national assembly, even those opposition members who had been elected refused to attend the assembly. The opposition for weeks and months agitated for a new election claiming the previous one was fraudulent. They refused to go back and suspended government operation for a long, long time. This did not exactly affirm Park's belief in the virtues of democracy. Now, here is a man who is willing, I think, up to this point to make a lot of concessions, but this experience turned him cold. But you could not expect Park to be a democrat because here is a guy who is born into an occupied country. He went to Japanese schools. He became a teacher in the Japanese school system. A pure Korean of this period. You think about what this meant, you subjected yourself to that fearsome discipline of a school system that is trying to alter the culture of a whole nation, and you are part of that nation. Then he went to Japanese military school, the Manchurian West Point. He got himself a commission in the Japanese

army. This isn't going to make a democrat out of him either. Plus the fact that he is born a Confucian to start with. He is a rural Korean, not a sophisticated city guy, and his life work up until that time, after World War II, had been in the Korean army. And here is a guy who served, fought and existed all of his life in intensely hierarchical situations and all of a sudden the world expects that he is going to pay a great deal more than lip service to the principles of democracy. Well, it didn't work that way. He was willing to make concessions, but you could not challenge his right to rule, that was political hearsay and that was cause for slapping you in jail or doing something worse to you.

When you add to that the fact that he the threat from the North to play upon as a justification for all of his political discipline, as he might wish to call it, then you have a situation where if you raise your head above the crowd and start criticizing him politically, you are going to get hammered. And many Koreans did. I don't think that this damaged the essential virtue of the man which is that he made Korea a semi...Well, when I first came there in 1945, it was the middle ages and in 1965 it was somewhat better. When I came back and left in 1976, Korea was virtually a modern nation. They were making wooden boats in 1945 and from 250 to 300 thousand ton tankers in 1976. This took some doing and President Park is responsible, I think, for a very, very great part of the success.

I could talk about Korea for days. By all odds it is the most interesting post I ever served in by a long shot.

Q: Let's talk about the Korean contribution because it was an interesting one. I know when I was in Saigon it was not an all of a plus thing at all.

ERICSON: No. Well, it turned sour in a lot of ways. The Koreans were organized chicanery. In some respects the Koreans take a backseat to nobody, and that is what happened to a certain extent in Vietnam. I can remember in 1945 when we had a terrible winter (winter of 1945-46) when blankets and winter clothing was not supplied. We had no appropriate housing and it was a very, very cold winter. So, the army was going to

be prepared for the next one. In the summer of 1946 they shipped in all kinds of winter equipment and put them in great warehouses down in Inchon and put guards around them, fences, lights and dogs, etc. When they went to open one of them in September or October, they found that the Koreans had tunneled under the highway from a location a couple hundred yards off the highway, up into the floor under the warehouse and sucked it dry. There were a lot of strangely dyed blankets in circulation in Korea along with Eisenhower jackets and god knows what. The Koreans developed that kind of reputation in Vietnam, I think, too, and deservedly so. They were known as the great PX raiders.

When I got to Korea in August, 1965 as political counselor at the embassy, they had just passed the bill authoring the despatch of troops to Vietnam. Johnson wanted foreign troops in Vietnam. He wanted a lot of them. Americans were getting killed and it didn't look like the world was supporting us too well, so he was doing his damnedest to persuade other countries to send troops. The Koreans had already sent a regiment of marines. They were already there and there was also a headquarters unit and a supply unit of some sort. The legislation authorizing further troops, division strength, etc., was just passed and the Koreans were responding by sending the first full infantry division to Vietnam.

Now, people got very cynical about the Korean contribution. When that division went down there they were largely composed of volunteers who by and large went to Vietnam because most Koreans honestly, deeply felt they had a debt to pay. They were a poor, poor country and the only way that they could do it was to respond to America's call for help. The United States had helped them during the Korean War and ever since, and by god here was an opportunity to repay that debt.

I will never forget sitting in on a conversation between Ambassador Brown and General Che, who was the first commander of the Tiger Division just before it went down to Vietnam. Che and his people came down to speak to Brown, to say their farewells, to pay their respects to the United States as they went to help the United States. He and senior members of his staff, there must have been about eight of them, came into the

office wearing sidearms, camouflage fatigues and a tougher bunch of human beings I... I remember Ambassador Brown asking General Che what it was that he intended to do in Vietnam. General Che, through his interpreter, said, 'You must remember Ambassador Brown, I am a North Korean. My family was decimated during the Korean War. They [communists] killed my family, all of them.' One way and another during the war he lost his brothers and sisters. 'You ask me what I am going to do in Vietnam? I am going to kill communists.' And this statement had a ring of sincerity to it. As a matter of fact, the Tiger Division was quite effective.

Q: Kept an area very quiet up in the Second Corps.

ERICSON: That's right. Later, of course, we issued another call and the Whitehorse Division was sent down. The Koreans got compensated, of course, for sending divisions to Vietnam. We gave them some additional military aid because it was felt that we had to make some gestures and we were weakening their position in Korea by sending some of the finest forces they had and they deserved some compensation. Of course, the question of direct compensation to those who went was negotiated. The United States was going to pay the pay of the troops that went to Vietnam and there was a lot of talk in congress about our hiring mercenaries with the usual smear that goes along with that. I always thought that was misplaced and gratuitous because we are talking about increasing the pay of a guy who got a dollar a month to something 20 times that. Percentage wise that is a hell of a pay increase, but basically it wasn't much to us. They got some death benefits and that kind of thing. They also insisted on getting the same food rations that our troops in the field got. The Koreans got on their high horse and said they were not going to be second class citizens and were going to get the same food that the US soldiers got. That took a lot of negotiating but we finally agreed. They did a study later of the effect of this on the average Korean soldier. They said that the average Korean soldier in Vietnam gained something like 6-8 pounds the first month he was there and then all of a sudden the weight dropped off...large amounts of US field rations were being thrown away. They didn't like the food. This was when AID was moved to try to develop some kind of preservable form

of kimchi because that was what they were hungry for. AID put a fair amount of money into this and actually did produce kimchi that was not good but satisfactory for the purpose.

The point is, the first troops that went, I think went out with a sincere sense of being there to repay an obligation and the satisfaction that came with that. They took great pride as a nation, it was palpable, they were helping as others had helped them. I don't recall at what stage, however, that Korean tactics in Vietnam became difficult for us. They were vicious. Korean troops did kill communists and apparently killed just about anybody who they suspected of harboring communists. By the time the Whitehorse Division went down there were so many Korean troops there that serious thought was given to giving them an entire sector to administer and to police. They were policing very effectively taking many fewer casualties than we did. They were much more ruthless with the Vietnamese who sheltered the Viet Cong and that sort of thing than we were. But it reached a point where this kind of campaigning caused the United States government to ask that we approach officially the Korean government in Seoul to stop using the kind of tactics that they were using which was causing so much havoc among the civilian population, killing so many innocent people. Korea probably in the early days of their forces down there had a number of My Lais...

Q: My Lai was where American troops basically slaughtered a lot of people in a small village, for which they were court-martialed. It was quite a scandal.

ERICSON: The Koreans were probably guilty of a number of those.

I was with Ambassador Brown when we went to Chun Doo Hwan, who was then Prime Minister, and officially presented this request. Chun read us a lecture in response to this in which he said in effect, 'You Americans don't understand Asian communists. We understand Asian communists. You must recall that during the Korean War there was a communist uprising down in the Cholla provinces in the southern part of Korea. I was chief of staff of the ROK army at the time. I left that position to organize the countermovement

because we regarded it critical to organize against this communist uprising. Our patrols went into villages looking for communist sympathizers and if they drew fire, we eliminated that village. We burnt it and killed everybody there. You know, it didn't take us all that long. We didn't get the firing from villages nearby. They weren't harboring communists, they drove them out. They didn't love us. We didn't win their hearts and souls, but we won their minds. And that is the way we handled that situation and that is what we are doing in Vietnam. You Americans have great sympathy and sensitivity for human life and you want to discover only the confirmed VC and you want to kill him. I would challenge you as to which is the more effective method. We will kill a lot of innocent people. In the end you are going to fight a much longer war and it will be much more difficult for you. You are going to spend much more treasure and in the end I will wager you will have killed many, many more innocent people than our kind of system. But, of course, we will restudy our tactics and request our troops to be less forceful.' And they did, I guess.

Anyway, the Koreans turned largely into 'let's get out of it what we canners.' Let's keep it reasonably quiet in our areas and we won't be as aggressive. Besides, they were beginning to get body bags too and the political reaction was beginning to set in. The wave of enthusiasm for the first effort...the second division that went down there, of course, we had to make many, many more concessions in terms of additional aid and that sort of thing and there were much more difficult negotiations. As a matter of fact to Ambassador Brown's credit, somewhere in 1968, there came a telegram from the Department asking our reaction to the idea of asking them for yet a third division. Brown was on leave in Hong Kong at the time this telegram arrived and we fed it to him. His telegram back to the Department, which the embassy did not participate in, started out 'Will it never end.' He seriously discouraged the idea of asking this structure to take anymore burden than it already had, particularly as nobody else was doing much of anything. The Philippines had an engineer battalion and a medical unit.

Q: It wasn't very military. The Thais had their tiger regiment but it really wasn't doing anything.

ERICSON: Anyway, Brown seriously discouraged us from asking for any more. Of course, there were a number of kind of amusing things that happened because of a result of this. The Koreans also at this time began profiting economically because the money that the guys down there were making and sending home made a significant difference in the cash flow situation. They also began to send down a lot of people, individuals first and then companies later, to do engineering and other construction contract work. Civic action was the buzz word. They worked on bases.

Q: Sure, they were called third country nationals. They were the Filipinos.

ERICSON: First they worked for American firms and then their own firms began to get into the act. So it became a very lucrative source of money for Korea and it was being reflected in the life back home.

There is the story about Park visiting the front lines in Korea about this time. He was up along the eastern part of the DMZ and he talked to some sergeant in a Korean outfit up there and asked what he thought of his life, what were his problems, etc. The sergeant said that the major difficulty was getting our children educated. We would like to bring our children here to live near the DMZ if we can, but the children who do come up here, and the wives, too, are outcasts. They come from another province, they don't fit into the life here. The kids goes to school and are not accepted by the other children or the teachers. It was very, very difficult. It would be very nice if we could have at least a high school that we could send our kids to and keep the families intact. Park turned to the Minister of Defense and said, 'build them a school complex.' The Minister of Defense stuttered and said, 'But Mr. President, there is no budget for a school complex.' Park said, 'Did you hear me? Build them a school complex.' So the Minister of Defense being the adroit Korean that he was, went back to his office and figured out a way to build them a school complex without a

budget. What he did was, the divisions in Vietnam had artillery and were firing and using up quite a bit of 105 ammunition. This ammunition came with brass cartridge cases so there was a fairly substantial amount of brass. Korea has a very fine brass industry. Pretty soon Koreans artillery started turning in its brass. We had given the Koreans two LSTs...

Q: Landing ship tanks.

ERICSON: ...they put the brass from Vietnam on the LST and stopping off shore, unloading it onto smaller boats, sending it home, all under military control, and selling brass and taking the money they created and building a school with it. We found out about this story shortly before the buildings were finished. For one reason or another we chose not to blow the whistle on them until the schools were finished. However, shortly thereafter cast iron replaced brass in the Korean artillery's stuff in Vietnam.

The Minister of Defense also took his shares, it being a Korean operation, and Park was driving around Seoul one day and he saw a very handsome house going up. He asked, 'Whose residence is that?' The hemming and hawing went on until somebody confessed it was the Minister of Defense's house. Park said something to the effect, 'I didn't know he had that kind of money' and called him in the next day. He said, 'I saw a house and was told it was yours. Is that true?' The minister knew better than to say no, and acknowledged that it was. Park said, 'Well, you are to report to that house and you are not to leave it until I give you permission to do so.' And that was literal. The man did not leave the house for something like five or six years. Obviously he was no longer the minister of defense. Park didn't try him and didn't make him make restitution, he just cooped him up in the damn place and left him there in isolation. And nobody, of course, would dare come within miles and miles of him.

That was one of the things about Park, he didn't like corruption, when he found it he did something about it. He was not corrupt himself. When he died there was no evidence that...you were there probably when he died.

Q: I left just before.

ERICSON: Well, no evidence was found that Park had enriched himself mightily in all the time he was president.

Anyway, the Vietnam troop thing was a tremendous experience for the Koreans in many ways. In addition to the fact that they had a sense that they were paying back an obligation, it gave them influence in areas that they had never expected to have influence. I can remember one episode when the president of the Philippines sent a message to the Korean government asking the Korean government to exert its influence on a third Southeast Asian government. I don't remember which one it was...part of the SEATO organization, I think. General Hwan asked Ambassador Brown, George Newman and me, 'What do we do?' They didn't expect that they would be looked upon by others as a source of influence.

Q: It really was a catalyst. It put Korean overseas construction firms into the thing and it began as a power.

ERICSON: Yes, that was very much the picture in the 1970s when the construction firms went into the Middle East. They made a lot of money and they became a force to be reckoned with in a lot of business ways in addition to being recognized as a pretty strong military force.

Q: I want to cut this off fairly soon. Did you go down to Vietnam at all?

ERICSON: Yes.

Q: Okay, then we will talk about going down to Vietnam and your observations about what was happening then. And then when we come back you might talk a bit about American commercial ties in Korea and the role as you saw it of American missionaries and any

thing else you would like to talk about. Also the raid on the Blue House and the Pueblo business will also be covered next time.

Q: Today is May 4, 1995. Dick, you said you went down to Vietnam to take a look at things.

ERICSON: Yes, I did. After it seemed quite likely that the Koreans were not going to be contributing anymore troops and American policy shifted to a certain extent from getting more third country troop involvement to trying to see what could be done about the infrastructure in Vietnam by means of more foreign civilians, particularly Asian participation. Somebody in the administration got the bright idea that there was a major role for discharged Korean veterans to play in Vietnam. They had proven themselves as capable soldiers and they knew how to operate the machinery of war, and much of that is also machinery of peace. We were asked to form a team to go to Vietnam to examine what the prospects were for increased Korean civilian presence down there on an organized basis, not just those who individually were going down to work for specific companies, to work on the infrastructure.

I was named to head the team and we had a colonel from the United Nations command and two AID officers. The four of us went down and were received, I think, quite warmly by headquarters. Lodge was the ambassador and Phil Habib was there and became my principal point of contact. The idea in part was to give the Koreans a province where they could both maintain security with military forces and do all of the civilian infrastructure work that had to be done. Tay Ninh was the province that was under consideration so, of course, we flew up there and took a look around. We also went to Plai Kuo and visited the Filipino contingent down there. We visited the Korean military headquarters. And we talked to various officials in and around Saigon, both Vietnamese and American, and then we sat down and wrote our recommendation.

One of the striking things that happened, of course, was when at a meeting up at Tai Ninh one of the AID officials broke down and cried, literally, at the conference table at the prospect of turning the lovely Vietnamese over to these very difficult Koreans. The station chief then in Saigon had a bright idea. He asked me what the prospects were for a program which would bring permanent settlers from Korea. What this plan was concerned with was the prospect of getting Koreans down there to build roads, schools and bridges, dams, or whatever was needed to be done to strengthen the civilian components. Teach them agricultural methods, and all that sort of thing. What the station chief had in mind was bringing discharged Korean veterans down and putting them in the Mekong Delta and establishing them on farms, having them marry local Vietnamese women with the idea for the long run that you would stiffen the spines of the Vietnamese by this infusion of good northern Asian blood. He was quite impassioned with the idea.

Anyway, we sat down after we had done all of our in-country work and sent a telegram back from Washington from Saigon. It ran some 13 pages and the fundamentals of it were, 'No, no, no, no, no, and no.' It simply did not seem to us that Vietnam was the kind of place where you wanted these cultures to clash the way they would without a third culture overseeing them. We thought there were enough Koreans contributing enough in terms of the growing Korean civilian presence down there with the construction firms, etc. The scheme was fraught with so many problems for the future and the immediate presence, in terms of acceptance by the local population and all the rest of it that we recommended strongly against it. In any event, it was the last that was heard of this scheme.

It was rather interesting of course, while we were there we saw a rolling thunder raid, or rather we heard one.

Q: This was a B-52 raid on a Vietnamese location.

ERICSON: Yes. And we saw from helicopters some fire fights on the ground. And Saigon, of course, was a fascinating city to be in at that time in terms of security and the rest of it, but we did not see a major role for our Korean friends in a civilian capacity.

Q: In 1969 I...

ERICSON: I might add that this was January, 1967.

Q: Yes, because in 1969 I was in Saigon as consul general and there was great reluctance on the part of the Vietnamese government to have third country nationals, mainly Filipino and Koreans, to come in in capacities. They were trying to control the numbers and we were trying to push for more. What was the attitude of the Vietnamese government people when you talked to them in 1967 on this?

ERICSON: They very much reflected the attitude that you mention which was one of the reasons our decision was negative. We thought it would be extraordinarily difficult for the Koreans to gain acceptance in that community. It would be different than being there under military status where they were there under orders and command and were fighting. But to come down there and work side by side with the Vietnamese was a different situation. It didn't look like the Vietnamese wanted them intruding. The Vietnamese had, I think, good grounds to fear that the Koreans, being very strong people, would siphon off whatever benefits there were to their detriment. The Vietnamese obviously did not trust the Koreans greatly and, of course, by that time the Koreans had pulled in their horns to a certain extent in terms of the way they were conducting their battlefield operations and turned instead into PX raiders, which I gather they were better at than the Filipinos. The Filipinos held the world record up to then.

Q: The Filipinos were free enterprises where the Koreans were well organized and they would sort of march in and I understand each one was allowed a ton to take home or something. It was a very interesting operation.

ERICSON: Well, if anyone had studied what went on in Korea before they looked at the situation in Vietnam, they would have realized this is the way the Koreans would have operated because all through both of my tours in Korea, and I assume every period before and since then, one of the major problems for the American military in Korea was this siphoning off, the black marketing of American goods. And, as you saw in Korea, when a soldier came to Korea he had an opportunity to right away acquire a wife, a yobo, and she, of course, was a member of an organized gang that used their PX and Commissary privileges to the maximum and the goods usually went directly off base to a waiting taxi outside and disappeared forever. The soldier made a little extra money, the woman made a little extra money and the gang made a lot of extra money. There were fights in the aisles of the Commissary over the last box of something. If there was anything good coming into the PX why the Korean wives were waiting at the door and went right to the counter. It was a very well organized operation.

As a matter of fact, at one point General Stilwell put in a policy which said that certain days of the week...he had two days a week for one category and four days of the week for the other with one day a holiday. The two categories were dependents who had made a change of station move with their principal versus those who had not made a change of station move with their principal. Of course, this avoided the outright discrimination against Korean women but most of them obviously had not made a permanent change of station, whereas the American wives obviously had. The problem was you came up against those soldiers who did marry overseas in Korean, who both were from the United States and the wife then found herself in the Commissary with the combatants, and they didn't like it very well. And, of course, there were other complaints about it so it was suspended. But, they tried all kinds of goodies like that.

The Koreans in Vietnam got their full share, which meant a lot of people didn't. They were organized and went into it on a highly systematic basis and there were a lot of complaints

from Americans and others. The Thai did that in Korea, however, the little Thai contingent in the UN command.

Q: I watched the Thai march in and out of the PX in Vietnam too. Before we discuss some of the major things, can we talk about two things. First, could you talk about your impression of the American missionaries in Korea. We are talking about the 1965-68 period.

ERICSON: The American missionaries in that period, as I look back on it...First of all, Christianity in Korea is a very interesting thing and worthy of many, many books. The Japanese, during their period of occupation, had never hounded the religious organizations the way they did everything else. They hadn't tried to take them over, so belonging to a Christian congregation was one way dissidents could get together and communicate with one another. They found it very difficult in other ways, but particularly up in the northern part, the Christian organizations, run by missionaries, of course, became political organizations too. Not that that was their main thing in life, there main thing in life was obviously religion, but they also provided this opportunity for at least political communication if not activity. It was kind of a tradition by the time the Japanese occupation ended and Korea got its independence. But many, many, many of the Koreans who came from the north were Christians. The American Christian missionary movement in Korea has been a long, long standing thing so that when political difficulties arose during the Park regime, I don't know how it was under Syngman Rhee, but under Park's regime the Christian community in many ways was one of the focal points of it. And, of course, many of these Christian communities were headed by American missionaries.

During the period of 1965-68 when I was there, the Christian missionaries supported or were certainly sympathetic to the activities of the political dissidents in Korea who opposed Park, his methods and his regime and thought the elections were fraudulent, etc. They were not, however, active. They would petition the embassy to do certain things, which the embassy and the United States government were in no position to do. If Park

arrested somebody who was a good upstanding member of the Christian community, the missionaries would be heard from. They would generally come in a group to petition. Ambassador Brown always handled them extremely well, I might add. Bill Porter was probably a little shorter with them and Brown was courteous and gave them their full hearing and let them leave feeling relatively satisfied. He was a master at that kind of thing. There really wasn't much the embassy could do or should have done, I thought. In that period the American Christians were not as active via-a-vis Korea as they were in my second tour, for example. For a while the missionaries of that time were being heard from and we saw a lot of them and we listened to them. We tried to point out the position of the United States did not permit, as it would not in any country, direct interference in domestic politics.

Then we said we would talk to senior Koreans about policies and actions that got the missionaries agitated. The missionaries did not get to the point where they felt they had to take part personally, it seemed, on what was going on politically. The ones we saw most frequently were the Protestant missionaries, not the Catholics. Certainly it was fair to say the missionaries were sympathetic and supportive of anti-Park political activity.

Incidentally the missionaries in Korea ought to be given credit at some point for having done a really marvelous job in Korea in terms of not only religious proselyting but also in terms of education and medical advances. During the Japanese occupation in particular, the only non Japanese education that was available to Koreans was through the aegis of the missionaries. Several of the greatest universities in Korea were established by missionaries. By and large their reputation in Korea was very, very high. Of course they were sympathetic to the Koreans vis-a-vis the Japanese.

Q: Well, they kept the flame alive. It was really an admirable role and they suffered badly when the North Koreans came in.

ERICSON: They did indeed. Well, there certainly are none left in North Korea.

Q: One other thing before we move to some incidents. How did you feel about the role of the American CIA there at this time?

ERICSON: As perhaps a necessary evil. We had two station chiefs during that period while I was there. One deputy who stayed there all of that time and various case officers known and unknown. They were declared, of course,...

Q: Would you explain that.

Mr. ERICSON: They were identified to the Korean Government. And that caused some problems because it tended to identify them with the Korean CIA. One of their purposes was certainly gaining intelligence on what was happening in North Korea. The other, of course, which was not done in cooperation with the KCIA, was keeping tabs from their own point of view on South Korean political activities and to ... anyone who was identified with the KCIA, of course, which was the enforcement arm of the Park regime at the time had some of that onus wash off on him. So, you couldn't say you admired everything the CIA was doing at the time, but it was doing what had to be done.

When Park took over his nephew by marriage and right hand man organized the KCIA and one of its purposes was to maintain the regime in power. He also organized the DRP that was the overt political arm of Park's regime. The two functioned together very effectively. I may have described the 1967 election, I don't know, which I think went totally awry because agencies like those two...KCIA and DRP...plus the unions, plus the various ministries of the government plus everything else wanted to please the president by handing him a big victory and went to some major excesses. I think the ROK CIA was responsible for a great deal of that.

Also, of course, were the stories from time to time of what the methods the ROK CIA used in handling political prisoners of one kind or another. They were not very pleasant. So, if your CIA is declared and identified with them, you would expect them to keep these

excesses down and you get unhappy when they can't or don't. Anyway, I do think, that they were quite effective. One of the difficulties was that you weren't always aware of who they were dealing with themselves on the internal political side. Which is to say if you were talking to an opposition politician you almost had to assume that he was an asset and we didn't always know who the assets were. But in that sense I think they kept a pretty effective tab on them.

I might add that I was not terribly fond of the two directors. Joe Lazarski was a good egg but not terribly effective.

Q: Well, lets come to these major things that happened. The Blue House raid came before the Pueblo?

ERICSON: Yes. The Blue House raid was the culmination of a series of very nasty incidents along the DMZ throughout the 1965-68 period. We thought that the North Koreans probably were stirring things up along the border to give us something to worry about in addition to Vietnam. There was never any evidence of concert between the North Vietnamese and the North Korean regimes, but it seemed peculiar that there was this long series of incidents along the DMZ, which worried us because President Park was so unpredictable . He had a phobia with respect to assassination. The North Koreans had good reason to hate Park, really despise him personally, beyond what they might feel about any South Korean leader. The North Koreans used to drop leaflets accusing Park of all kinds of things. They were all over the golf course, all over open areas under US control - but picked up quickly in Seoul itself. They might have been brought down by balloons but chances are somebody much closer at hand. was distributing them. Witness the fact that I found a couple under the doormat of my house. Basically they accused Park of having been the source of information back in the 1940s which resulted in the rounding up the Korean Labor Party by Snake Kim, the notorious chief of Syngman Rhee's CIC. This story may well have some truth in it, although you will never find any records to bear this out. The North Koreans claimed that Park had been arrested by the Rhee Government

because the battalion he commanded during the communist-led Yosu rebellion in the later 1940's had defected to the rebels, but secured his reinstatement in the army by divulging all he knew about the communist party in South Korea, of which he had allegedly once been a member and of which his brother was allegedly a senior official. This, of course made him a marked man - an arch enemy of the government in the North. Thereafter, he had a very good career in the army and rose to be a Major-General without much contact with the Americans. We didn't know him when he came to power. But he brought with him an abiding fear that the North Koreans were going to kill him at some point. And, indeed, there were a fairly large number of attempts, none of which came terribly close but were well enough known to him and his security people to keep this morbid fear alive. And it was not from his own people; he never feared assassination from any South Korean, he thought it would come from the North.

Anyway, these events along the DMZ included things such as this example. There was a mixed group of Korean and American engineers in the base camp just south of Panmunjom, where they were working on a project of some sort. The camp was close to the southern border of the DMZ and pretty well defended, but the perimeter wasn't patrolled. There were only trip flares out there. This engineer group was lining up for dinner one Sunday evening when a trip flare went off. Nobody went out to investigate because they thought it had been set off by a deer or something like that, which happened fairly frequently. So they stayed in the mess line and the North Koreans, who had come through the DMZ to a hill on its southernmost edge, hosed them down with a machine gun. Being caught in enfilade, they suffered a large number of casualties, both Americans and Koreans. The incident was not reported very broadly in the American press. Something was happening in Vietnam I suppose, and there were no American correspondents in Seoul.

There was another such incident the morning that President Johnson arrived for his visit in 1967. This again was not reported. A friend - a high school classmate - who headed the investigative team gave me the details. It seems that the 2nd Division had sent a patrol

up into the DMZ in this particular location at scheduled intervals for years. They followed virtually the same route every time. They went along a well known path until they reached an area where there were two hills, one a little higher than the other. The lower hill had a nice stand of grass and it was apparently the habit of these patrols to take a break there. This particular night they put out a lookout, but he was looking out for somebody coming up from their company headquarters and not from the direction North Koreans might take. Anyway, the North Koreans were probably already there, concealed in the thick undergrowth of the higher hill. Six of the seven men of the American patrol were sitting or lying down, smoking cigarettes or just flaking out, when the North Koreans lobbed a series of grenades onto the hill top and killed five of the six. The poor fellow who was on lookout duty opened fire and was also killed for his pains. The only survivor on the hill top feigned death and the North Koreans took his watch and a few other things. We didn't report that one, but North Korean propaganda labeled it a present for President Johnson.

Q: Why didn't you report it?

ERICSON: Oh, the Embassy reported it and the UN Command reported it, but I meant the American press did not report it. Why, I don't know why because god knows a enough reporters came along with Johnson. But there was a series of things like that. There were boats that came down periodically and landed people well below the DMZ . The South Korean security was very well organized down in the south and they were always chasing infiltrators. They usually caught them all, although during that period there were networks of North Koreans sympathizers who probably sheltered some of these people from time to time.

Anyway, to the Koreans, the Blue House raid was certainly the most critical event - and I mean the Blue House raid, I do not mean the Pueblo - during that 1965-68 period because it came as the culmination of a long series of incidents on Korean territory. People were very tense and Park used this tension to justify many of his repressive measures. As I say,

he was very fond of quoting President Lincoln to all the congressmen who came through protesting these measures, both during this period and my later assignment.

Thus the Blue House raid came at a time when there already was a hell of a lot of tension. Park was feeling very unhappy about a number of things. He was beginning to think, I believe, that his commitment to Vietnam had weakened him too badly. He was starting to agitate for more military aid to Korea. And then we got reports that thirty or more well armed North Koreans had been seen inside the DMZ by a couple of woodcutters. They had been allowed to go back to their village, with a warning that if they told anyone that North Koreans were in the country, the intruders would come back and wipe out the whole damn village. Well, of course, word spread immediately through the South Korean government and it threw up road blocks, mobilized internal security teams, and covered all the routes into Seoul - but the infiltrators just plain disappeared. For two days they were not heard from. Then about 9:00 pm on January 23, a cold , cold night , a column of men in South Korean uniforms came marching from the North toward a police checkpoint on the road that ran along the south side of Puk-san toward the Blue House. This checkpoint had been established specifically to look out for the infiltrators. The police challenged this column and their leader, using remarkably good Korean psychology, told the South Korean policeman to button his damn lip. He said that his men were ROK CIC returning to the barracks following a search mission. He sneeringly told the police that they should know better than to muck around with the CIC. And, of course, the police backed off.But one of the guys in the police block was a little annoyed by this. He felt it was embarrassing to be talked to like that. So radioed his headquarters to complain that they should have been warned that there were CIC in the area. The headquarters came back after a while and said, “There are no CIC in your area.” A police lieutenant on duty at the Blue House heard the broadcast and decided to investigate. He got into his jeep and intercepted the column. By this time it was within 800 yards of the Blue House and into a fairly heavily populated area. Seoul in those days was not all that populated to the north; now it is. You couldn't do this thing today. The lieutenant challenged the column and was promptly killed. The North

Koreans opened fire on him but in the process they opened fire on everybody else around them, killing and wounding a number of civilians, including passengers on a bus. Then strangely they separated into groups of two or three. They apparently had no dispersal plan, no contingency plans as to what they should do if something happened before they got to the Blue House.

To make a long story short, they split into small groups and the ROKs devoted enormous resources to rounding them up. They captured two almost immediately, I think two more just disappeared and were never heard from, and the rest were all killed in fire fights with ROK security forces. Of the two they captured, one they took to the local police station. Once inside, he managed to detonate a grenade he had concealed on his person, killing himself and about five senior Korean police officials. They didn't shake him down very well, obviously. But the other one, after severe interrogation, broke down and told all about himself and his unit.

We were not aware that there were units of this kind, but he said there was an organization of at least a thousand people currently undergoing training in North Korea for just such missions. The Korean military had never heard of anything like this, so they asked him where they had trained.. He told where the camp was and drew a map of its layout. When the spy plane photographs were developed, the camp was where he said it was and his map was almost an exact overlay of the photos. They asked him whether these units used radio during their training. Yes. Frequencies? He gave them frequencies. The ROKs denied ever having heard anything on these . He suggested they try again, and up they came. So we began to believe this guy. He said that their primary mission was to assassinate President Park. They were supposed to deploy not very far from where they had been intercepted, they were getting pretty close. Their idea was to rush the Blue House, raise hell and kill Park, who was there. He also said that their original mission had been to split into three groups, one of which was to go to the American military headquarters at Yong-san and kill the UN Forces Commander and other senior officers, such as the UN representative to the Armistice Commission.The third group was

to come into American Embassy Compound 1 and kill the ambassador and anybody else they could lay their hands on there.As I say, we believed him. It so happened that the girls high school right next to the wall of that Compound had a very large open play area, but a new building was being constructed right along side the wall, where a lot of construction materials were piled. The wall might as well not have been there. We had armed security guards, but we didn't trust them all that much. So, at that point the ambassador issued a weapon to each family in Compound 1 and some residents of Compound 2 . And the UN Command designated a platoon of tanks to stand by to go to our rescue should the North Koreans come again. The tank crews were billeted in the Yong San post gymnasium, thus depriving soldiers and high school kids of their basketball court, and the tanks got lost trying to find the compound on the one attempt they made to hold a dry run of the rescue effort. But the knowledge that they were there was reassuring to some. Of course, the Blue House raid was never duplicated, but the North Koreans had succeeded in making everyone nervous.

Anyway, Park went ape over this incident. It came close. It clearly demonstrated that his phobia on assassination was well grounded and he reacted by doing what he occasionally did in periods of great stress. He went up to the mountains with a couple of friends and a couple of ladies and a large supply of alcohol and disappeared. But we got stories that he was enraged, just beside himself, out of control..

Now, the Koreans looked upon this threat to their President as a major, major event, and we were seriously concerned that out of that mountain fastness of his would come the order to go get them, to cross the DMZ seeking retaliation of some kind. But he was out of touch and there was no way that you could get to him directly. Meanwhile, the ROK security forces were hunting down the infiltrators and finally found all but one. The way they broke the one prisoner, incidentally, was to align all of the bodies on a hillside, 26 or 27 corpses in various states of disrepair, and march their prisoner along the line. This was a man who was still refusing to talk. When his escorts reached the last body, they kicked its head and the head rolled off down the hill. At that point, they say, this fellow decided

that he would be willing to tell all. As far as dealing with the North Koreans was concerned, some ROK generals felt that if they weren't going to declare war, they should at least haul the corpses up to Panmunjom and, after flaying the North Koreans verbally, dump them on the conference table. However, calmer heads eventually prevailed.But it was several days after the Blue House raid that the Pueblo was seized , and that is where we really got into trouble with the South Koreans. They had no knowledge that the Pueblo was there.....

Q: You might explain what the Pueblo was.

ERICSON: The Pueblo was Noah's Ark rigged with electronic listening gear. I say Noah's Ark because it was what we used to call a Baltic class freighter, a slow, most inefficient, very small coastal freighter. I forget what its tonnage was. Maybe under a thousand I can't remember. It was not armed, except for a few small arms. It was a sad excuse for a US Navy vessel. But this particular ship was one of the Navy's electronic intelligence gathering vessels and it had replaced a similar ship called the Banner which had been there for quite some time. It was fairly new on the job, but it had been patrolling up and down the coast of North Korea, picking up what it could by way of North Korean electronic activity. CINCUNC may have know it was there, I don't know, but the Ambassador was not informed and neither were the South Koreans.

It was approached by North Korean patrol boats off the North Korean port of Wonsan. I think it was pretty clearly in what we considered international waters. It was likewise pretty clearly not in what the North Koreans considered international waters. They were claiming a 12 mile limit at the time and the ship's orders were to stay outside the three mile limit. The North Koreans were certainly aware that it was there and had been for some time. They had tolerated it, probably not wanting to kick up a major fuss. But then when the Blue House raid came along, they took it, killing one seaman and capturing 51. My theory has always been that they had no idea of what it meant to attack and seize an American naval vessel on the high seas, what it would mean to us. They were fearful that since the Blue House raid had failed to kill Park, he might order some kind of major hostilities and they

didn't want a vessel with this kind of capability there. It was something to be gotten out of the way. You have to remember the North Koreans had been taking South Korean boats on the high seas regularly. It was their habit to pick up South Koreans fishing boats, take their crews off, brainwash them and send them back to South Korea. There had probably been 50 to 100 incidents of that kind. I don't think they were fully sensitive to what the taking of a US naval vessel would mean to us.

Anyway, it turned out that it meant a great deal to the US as a nation and to its leaders, much more than the Blue House raid. One of our major points of difficulty with the South Koreans was that they thought the Blue House raid, an assassination attempt on their President, was by all odds the more important event. To them, the Pueblo was a sideshow. And back in the United States, Americans from Lyndon Johnson down thought that the Pueblo seizure was the heinous crime of the century and the Blue House raid was something few had heard about. That became a real bone of contention between us. Washington reacted violently to the Pueblo and Johnson ordered the carrier Enterprise, which had just finished a visit to Sasebo, to come steaming up the east coast of Korea and to station itself off Wonsan. The idea was maybe we were going to take out Wonsan and all its defenses and recapture the ship. Or perhaps it was simply to intimidate the North Koreans into acceding to whatever demands we might make for reparations. All kinds of wild ideas were floated about what our reaction should be. Our main concern in the embassy was trying to get Washington to focus on the fact that there was a real problem with the South Koreans because of the Blue House raid and the disparity between our reaction to it and the Pueblo. We were not concerned as much with the North Koreans, who probably were not interested in a real war at that time, but who would respond certainly if attacked.

That, of course, was what determined the United States to send the Enterprise back on its way. Those interested in a cold assessment of the situation rather than histrionics estimated that it would take everything the Enterprise had and probably a good deal more to penetrate the air envelope around Wonsan and that we might very well find ourselves

facing a full scale war in Korea if we tried to do anything of that kind. My own feeling was that if we had attacked Wonsan it would have encouraged Park to the point where he might just, UN commander or no UN commander, order South Korean forces to go. The man was out of touch with reality during this whole period.

So, we had to figure out how to get the ship and the crew back. That is where we got into further difficulty with the South Koreans. The South Koreans, more emotional that rational, were already, many of them, looking at our reaction as pusillanimous. Of course they weren't aware - although perhaps they should have been aware - that the forces that we had in Korea, two divisions, the 2nd and 7th, were in very bad shape. They had about two/ thirds of their complement of troops, the shortfall being made up by KATUSAs (Korea augmentations to US Army). These were basically Korean soldiers detailed to serve with American units. That was always an iffy situation; they never fit in very well, although some of them did very, very good work and certainly without them we would have been in vastly worse shape.

Incidentally, the Blue House raiders had deliberately come right through the 2nd Division's lines. The captured raider said that they figured they couldn't get through the South Koreans because the South Koreans did their patrolling, kept awake, did not smoke cigarettes on the line, did not huddle together for warmth and all that kind of thing. Whereas, he said, the Americans up along the DMZ smoked...you could smell their smoke, you could hear them talking, they did huddle together when it got very, very cold and did rely on electronic sensors installed at American - but not South Korean -positions. But a lot of these sensors - anti-personnel radar, seismic detectors, and stuff like that - had been developed for battle in Vietnam, but unfortunately nobody had made sure they functioned as well when the temperature sank to 20 degrees below zero. And they didn't.

The 2nd Division commander was furious when he heard this North Korean say they came right through his lines. They took him up to the fence - there was a big chain link fence along the entire front of the 2nd Division's lines - and the commander said, 'Prove it to me.'

The Korean went up to the fence at the point where he indicated they had penetrated and kicked it, and a large section of the fence fell out. He knew exactly where to go, and this incident certainly enhanced his credibility. Incidentally, they had come down over the hills. During the two days that they were undetected it was way below freezing all day and all night. It was a marvelous feat of endurance - carrying all their equipment over rough and mountainous terrain in vicious winter weather and getting to Seoul so fast.

How to get the crew of the Pueblo back became our main concern but to us in Seoul, placating the South Koreans was as important. And, of course, our tactics in getting the crew back made the South Koreans even angrier. The embassy wasn't really consulted very much in this as I recall. The powers that be in Washington decided , once it became clear that negotiations with the North Koreans were possible, that they should be held at Panmunjom. We discarded various other possible places. And the North Koreans, with their own objectives in mind, wanted Panmunjom. Washington decided to use the United Nations Command representative to the Military Armistice Commission , (at that time a US Navy Rear Admiral) and his American staff and to do it at Panmunjom. Now, Panmunjom has been called a village, but it is not a village and never was a village; it was just an inn. It is now and was then just a full fledged armistice meeting place and it was regarded as neutral territory. It was close to the scene, with good communications for both the North Koreans and us and therefor had a lot to recommend it. The problem was the South Koreans regard it as their territory. The idea was our team would negotiate directly with the North Koreans and no other nation represented in the UN Command would be present. . We wouldn't take any of the UN Command members and most specifically we wouldn't take any South Koreans. The North Koreans had the Chinese with them for every meeting from the very beginning.

When word of our intentions reached the South Koreans they erupted. When their initial protests were delivered to Bill Porter, then our ambassador, he gave them sort of short shrift and this enraged them to the point that they would not talk to him. They said that

they would refuse to discuss this matter with Ambassador Porter. Anyway, we were going ahead to do it.

Q: Was this being called pretty much from Washington?

ERICSON: Yes, entirely. At first, it was being called by Lyndon Johnson personally. He was on the telephone a number of times when the Enterprise was there. The Department quickly set up an inter-agency crisis team. The South Koreans were absolutely furious and suspicious of what we might do. They anticipated that the North Koreans would try to exploit the situation to the ROK's disadvantage in every way possible, and they were rapidly growing distrustful of us and losing faith in their great ally. Of course, we had this other problem of how to ensure that the ROKs would not retaliate for the Blue House raid and to ease their growing feelings of insecurity. They began to realize that the DMZ was porous and they wanted more equipment and aid. So, we were juggling a number of problems. But once the venue for the negotiations was agreed on with Pyongyang, we had to find solutions for our problems with the South Koreans. Park, by this time, I think, had returned to Seoul.It was decided that I would be the operating officer in Seoul on the Pueblo negotiations. The official arrangement was that Admiral Smith, who was the UN Military Armistice Commission representative, would be the chief and only negotiator for us. He would take his negotiating team up there, all military personnel except for one Korean-American civilian employee (the invaluable Jimmy Lee). and they would conduct each negotiating session. They would then return directly to the Embassy, where I and some of the political officers would debrief them. We would write the immediate reporting cable covering the highlights of what had happened, and then we would also transcribe and send the verbatim text of the meeting, which had been taped. Then we would review the transcript and concoct an interpretation of what had happened, what the significant points were, and add whatever comments and recommendations the Embassy might have for what was going on. I am not sure what impact our recommendations ever had. Then, after that had been done, it was my job to inform the ROK Government of what had transpired, because as part of keeping them in place we had agreed to keep them

informed of each step along the way. I would have to do this by going up to the Foreign Ministry, usually around 10 or 11 at night, into that freezing cold, enormous stone building, the old Japanese capitol which housed the Foreign Ministry, among others. The lights would be out and the elevators not working. I could hear a scurrying sound in the dark corridors of that ghostly building. I would walk up the four floors to the office of Park Kun, who was the director of North American Affairs at the Foreign Ministry at that time and my good golfing buddy. The Korean's idea was that only he and I could communicate on this subject because only he and I had a friendship capable of withstanding the strains created by this terrible thing that we were doing. The scurrying, of course, was newspapermen who were hiding around the building and would get a debrief from Park after I talked to him.

I would sit down in Park's office and he would read me the riot act. Every time I was told exactly how we were giving the North Koreans the status and propaganda ammunition they craved while trampling on the sensitivities of the South Korean people and undermining their confidence in us and in our alliance. I used to ask Park, 'Why don't you just put it on tape and I will take it home with me. Then we can get right down to business and I can go home and go to bed?' But I think his diatribes were delivered under orders so that I would report duly that the South Koreans were still outraged. And then I would tell him more or less what had happened on that day at Panmunjom. In the early months there were frequent meeting at Panmunjom and many sessions of this sort with Park. From about the first of April until I left in July there wasn't that much to tell the South Koreans because meetings at Panmunjom were less frequent and there wasn't all that much happening. It wasn't until almost Christmas Eve that the Pueblo crew was released.

But in the first two months, when we were meeting almost every week, some interesting things emerged . For one, we got a good look at North Korea's negotiating style. People should study the Pueblo sessions whenever there are negotiations with the North Koreans, because I think they show how their system functions and why they are so difficult. As one example, we would go up with a proposal of some sort on the release of the crew

and they would be sitting there with a card catalogue...I never went on any of these trips, incidentally - the military command went...and if the answer to the particular proposal we presented wasn't in the cards, they would say something that was totally unresponsive and then go off and come back to the next meeting with an answer that was directed to the question. But there was rarely an immediate answer. That happened all through the negotiations. Their negotiators obviously were never empowered to act or speak on the basis of personal judgment or general instructions. They always had to defer a reply and presumably they went over it up in Pyongyang and passed it around and then decided on it. Sometimes we would get totally nonsensical responses if they didn't have something in the card file that corresponded to the proposal at han.

George Newman, who was then DCM in Seoul, and I were quite proud of the telegram we wrote sometime in fairly early February, just before Washington finally decided to negotiate at Panmunjom. We called it the slippery slope telegram and it is somewhere deep in the Department's archives. We based it on our analysis of what had happened in previous incidents, not like the Pueblo but the two or three incidents we had had of people who strayed across the border or got shot down, killed or captured. What we said in effect was this: If you are going to do this thing at Panmunjom, and if your sole objective is to get the crew back, you will be playing into North Korea's hands and the negotiations will follow a clear and inevitable path. You are going to be asked to sign a document that the North Koreans will have drafted. They will brook no changes. It will set forth their point of view and require you to confess to everything they accuse you of.. If you allow them to, they will take as much time as they feel they need to squeeze every damn thing they can get out of this situation in terms of their propaganda goals, and they will try to exploit this situation to drive a wedge between the US and the ROK. Then when they feel they have accomplished all they can, and when we have agreed to sign their document of confession and apology, they will return the crew. They will not return the ship. This is the way it is going to be because this is the way it has always been.And that is pretty much what happened. We went back and forth, back and forth, for ten or eleven months. We very

quickly abandoned the idea of getting the ship back. We figured it had been dismantled and all its sensitive equipment sent to Moscow. We thought they might eventually tire of holding the crew, because the propaganda value of holding the crew would erode with time and they might be leery of having the situation turn against them if the crew started to become ill and their care began to appear inadequate, as eventually it would. Of course, there were all these incidents of the crew being interviewed and sending messages by signs, etc. The crew held up pretty well I think, except for perhaps one or two members. On our side, the chief negotiator proved to be something of a problem. Rear Admiral Smith was too much his father's son and too much of a Navy man. It galled him beyond description to think that a US naval vessel had been taken by a gunboat on the high seas. There was a lot of talk at the time that the ship should have been scuttled, the captain should have gone down with his ship...if anybody wanted to go down into the waters of the Japan Sea at that point, he was a braver man than I. After the crew was released, the Navy held an extensive inquiry into the capture and, I believe, exonerated Captain Bucher of responsibility for allowing the ship to be taken. Anyway, the Navy was very unhappy the way things went. And Smith, in particular, was very disturbed. He was kind of a nervous guy. His father was H.M. (Howling Mad) Smith, a World War II Marine Lt. General of towering reputation and Smith very badly wanted to get his third star to equal his father's rank, etc. He was scared that the State Department was going to make him do something that would besmirch the family name and persuade the Navy that he was not a man to be promoted. He particulary feared being made to admit to any of North Korea's allegations about the ship's activities, its violations of its orders or international law, or its position when captured. The story goes that he made General Bonesteel give him orders in writing to take his instructions from the State Department through the Embassy. These things affected his judgment and his ability to get on with the job. He was replaced by an Army general named Woodward, who had dealt with communists and their negotiating tactics in Berlin. Smith had had absolutely no political dealings in his life. But Woodward came from this background in Berlin and his first words when he came to the Embassy to talk to us were, 'Well, what are you bastards going to have me do? Let's get it over with.' He

was the negotiator who achieved the final result. He was a delight to work with. I must say that Admiral Smith's staff, the UN Command people, were also absolutely great. One of the problems with working in a place like that is that there really is no institutional memory except that which is provided by relatively junior and sometimes out of the mainstream types. In the case of the Pueblo negotiations, one of the real stalwarts was a Korean American civilian - Jimmy Lee - who had been an employee of the UN Command for years. Within the Command, among the military, he was just a civilian. But he was the institutional memory and provided the most cogent comments and deserves an enormous amount of credit for whatever successes we finally had.

You know the Pueblo thing was finally settled when...there had been a previous, and I don't think the people in Washington were terribly aware of it, although we had reported it as part of our analysis of what was going on and what might happen. In this instance, a feisty American Armistice Commission representative named Ciccollella had been negotiating for weeks for the return of the body of a helicopter pilot who had strayed into North Korean territory. The North Koreans had stonewalled everything and had insisted he sign a document admitting all sorts of evil intentions on the part of the dead pilot. General Ciccollella finally got authority to sign that paper. What he didn't get authority for was what he did spontaneously, and that was to sign it and hand it over while saying, 'Here you sons-of-bitches is your god damn sheet of paper. It isn't worth the paper it is written on. The only reason I am giving it to you so that we can get the body of this man back. ' He continued with something like, 'You people should be ashamed of your conduct. You are not worthy of wearing the uniform of a soldier. I spit on you.' The North Koreans took it with equanimity, looked at the paper, saw it met their requirements, and returned the body.And that, on a larger scale, is essentially what happened with the Pueblo. I am given to understand that back in Washington, Jim Leonard - he was a member of the task force - was shaving one day and moaning because they hadn't reached a solution and things were just stumbling along , when his wife asked whether they had tried offering to give the North Koreans the paper they wanted. The piece of paper they wanted of course was

to acknowledge that the Pueblo was a spy ship, that it was trying to steal the secrets of the People's Republic of Korea, that it had repeatedly penetrated (even though we had proven at the negotiations that it had not penetrated) their coastal waters without authority and with the intention of spying, and to apologize for the gross insult to the North Korean people. That was the essence of it. Leonard's wife said, 'Have you ever thought of giving them their piece of paper and then denouncing it orally?' Jim took it to the Department and said, 'Will you try this?' It should have been suggested long ago because there was a history for it. Washington approved it and Woodward was instructed to say, 'I will give you exactly what you want, but I am going to denounce it publicly as I do ' They said, 'Okay.' And that is what happened. He did give them the piece of paper and he said in effect, 'It is a worthless piece of paper and doesn't mean a thing and is not a reflection of what happened. But we give it to you simply to effect the release of the crew.' The crew came back.

That period was, I think, the low point in our relations with the South Koreans. What happened on the Blue House raid and the Pueblo left the Korean's feeling that we had behaved badly where their interests were concerned, that they were a hell of a lot weaker along the DMZ than they thought, there was more danger in Northeast Asia than they had thought, and that they had weakened themselves unduly by sending two divisions and a brigade to Vietnam. They began to hint that they were either going to pull some troops from Vietnam or we were going to beef them up. We didn't want any Korean troops to come out of Vietnam at that stage of the game, so Washington sent Cy Vance, accompanied by Dan O'Donohue, who was later political counselor in Seoul and Ambassador to Thailand, to Seoul to negotiate with Park and company over what additional aid we would give them. I don't remember the exact amount, in terms of dollars, but he was authorized to offer substantial additional equipment and a lot of other concessions.

It was interesting though that at this time there was a contact of mine, Kim Chong-pil's lieutenant, Kim Yong-Tae, a very, very tough ex-army guy. Park had banished him from

Seoul because of his participation in another one of Korea's political incidents that had earned Park's wrath. Park had told him to resign from the National Assembly and get his butt into the countryside and out of Seoul. Until cleared to come back. He came into my office during this thing...he sneaked in.... he was not supposed to be in Seoul, and was defying Park's orders which you did at your peril...and sat there and said, 'Dick, you are going about this the wrong way. You are sending Vance over here to offer a lot of equipment that is going to arrive six months, two years down the pike. What you have to do first is get to the man, get to Park and do something about protecting him personally. The man is crazy with fear. The Blue House is a damn sieve. Anybody with a well organized group could probably go in there and assassinate him. And that is what he fears. That is why he is up in the mountains, drinking and screwing around with these kisaeng. He is scared to be in the Blue House.' We had Kim talk to our station chief and various other people, and the upshot of all that was a significant part of what Vance finally came to offer him. It was an immediate survey, done by Air Force specialists, of the Blue House, turning it into its own little fortress. That was done. It is a very well guarded installation to this day, at least it still was when I left. I thought it rather courageous of Kim to make this effort on Park's behalf, because if he had been caught in Seoul things would not have gone very well with him.

Anyway, Vance arrived maybe two weeks after the Pueblo seizure. During all that time Park had been out of communication and when he met with Vance it was his first appearance for at least two weeks..

Q: Vance had what position at that time?

ERICSON: You know, I don't remember. This would have been 1968 and it was the last year of the Johnson Administration. He was a special envoy.

Q: He was used in Cyprus and other places. I don't think he had an official position.

ERICSON: As a matter of fact he was apparently told to negotiate in considerable confidence- which meant excluding the Ambassador, CINCUNC and their staffs.. It was kind of funny; I remember when the then Foreign Minister came to office he was characterized by his Korean associates as a cautious man, a man who would knock on a stone bridge before crossing it. But he knew that his neck was on the line in this negotiation. So he invited Vance to come alone to a negotiating meeting at a hotel. And he held Vance virtually prisoner all that night. Porter, at a formal dinner party, was not told of the meeting. He arrived uninvited at the hotel about 11:00 in black tie and stayed there with them. It was very clear that the Foreign Minister was going to hammer out an agreement and get the credit for it that night. He wouldn't let them leave. They got out sometime very early in the morning, very much chagrined, very unhappy and the agreement was not concluded that night.

At any rate, when Park appeared at his first meeting with Vance, people said his hands were so shaky that he couldn't hold his coffee cup. Eventually, of course, we came through with adequate additional assistance and the Koreans got used to the idea that things were happening at Panmunjom that they weren't privy to but they were getting adequate briefings. The insult to Korea had taken place at the first meeting when the two sides met on Korean soil without South Korean's present, and they got to swallowing it at the end and the emotion died down. But things were never quite the same during that period I was there.

Q: Was there also the feeling that the United States really sort of a paper tiger?

ERICSON: Well, in South Korea there was a lot of that feeling well before that. They didn't like the way we were conducting the war in Vietnam. The constant theme was, 'You don't understand Asian communists; we do. You can't fight them on a curb bit. You have to go all out. If you are going to beat them, beat them in Hanoi.' This was their theme. 'You can't confine it to the South. If you really want to win it you have to use everything at your disposal. You can't be kindly to the villagers. You have to wipe out whole villages

in order that the next village won't be supportive.' They weren't happy with the way we were running the Vietnam war and certainly not happy with our response to the Pueblo and the Blue House raid. They thought that we should have punished North Korea, but we didn't act. In the end, of course, even the most belligerent among them tempered their belligerence with fears of what the consequences might be for the city of Seoul. Seoul was just beginning to emerge as the ROK's major industrial and commercial area. Anybody who has lived in Korea, like you have, knows that people who have gone through the Korean War experience, when the war rolled over that city three times, knows how close Seoul is to North Korea.

Q: Even when I was there, 1976-79, the feeling was there was a damn good chance North Koreans could take Seoul. They would lose the war, but Seoul was certainly at risk.

ERICSON: By that time, of course, Seoul was infinitely more important to the whole scheme of Korea than it was 10 or 15 years earlier.

I often thought, especially when the North Koreans were acting up and after the Blue House raid, that I was in a city under siege. We thought idly of sending dependents out. It was discussed at staff meetings.

Q: What did you think the North Koreans' intentions were at that time?

ERICSON: Obviously, anytime during their recent history if the North Koreans had perceived the South as weak and the American support as questionable, they might have launched a military attack. God knows their stuff has always been located in forward positions. It has just been a question of how far forward. My own feeling was that they wanted to get rid of Park. I do believe that they had a very special feeling about Park and I do think it is because of this allegation that he was the source of information that destroyed the communist party in the South. Beyond that, they wanted to keep us as agitated as possible but short of war. I don't think they really wanted a war, but they wanted to distract us, to help the Vietnamese to the extent that they could, to keep things boiling, keep

the South fearful, help produce conditions in the South that might lead them to a better opportunity. But I don't think they ever took it to the point where they really wanted to make an attack unless conditions were just so overwhelmingly in their favor that this was the time. Even then they must have sensed that the South was going to be developing...they could have seen the same things that you and I saw happening, if indeed the word got back to their leaders, and I am sure it did. But they wanted to embarrass us. They wanted to make us appear as a weakling in the face of other Asians and I think that is very clear. That is why they worked against our troops all the time and with a fair amount of success. There was another incident where they crossed the DMZ and came right into one of our encampments, blew up a barracks and killed several people and got away clean. They wanted to keep things in agitation, but I don't think wanted it to get to the point of war unless the circumstances were such that they were assured a good chance.

Q: Did we feel that the Chinese were a supportive ally, as well as the Soviets?

ERICSON: Well, the Chinese were always present at all the Pueblo negotiations and, of course, a good deal of the North Korean posturing might have been for the benefit of the Chinese observers, I don't know. Were the Chinese supportive of the North Koreans at this time? Yes. Stu, you know I can't even focus on what strains there were, if any, between these two supporters of North Korea. Maybe we weren't that knowledgeable at that time. The Soviets were still providing them with military equipment, but on the other hand this was also a period when the North Koreans were developing their own military arsenal and the capability of making a great deal of their own stuff. Certainly the two supported them politically, there is no question about that.

Q: To move away from these sort of mega things, could you tell me a bit about Lyndon Johnson's visit.

ERICSON: Are you aware of the book that Ambassador Brown wrote, Postmark Asia? It was privately published for his own family and friends. He has a whole chapter on Johnson's visit.

Johnson had been to a Vietnam troop contributors conference in Manila. He was hot for more third country civilian and troop contributions and it was decided that he should visit Seoul as the major contributor on his way back to the United States. So he arrived. The Koreans took this sort of like the second coming. Eisenhower had visited them of course....

Q: That was an ad hoc visit.

ERICSON: Yes, but this one they had a chance to prepare for. I must say, in terms of civic improvements, it was a great success. I used to drive out to the Seoul Country Club golf course, up along the Han River in the eastern part of Seoul .You drove past miles of squatters shacks, I mean just indescribably poor housing, and the road was bumpy and rutted. That was also the road to Walker Hill, the huge resort the Koreans had built right after the Korean War to keep the Americans troops from going to Tokyo for R&R. Anyway, Walker Hill was quite a presentable place and that is where they decided to put Lyndon up. The plan was that he would go back and forth by helicopter, but on the off chance that he had to go by road he would follow the standard route. I went off to play golf one morning and the shacks were all standing. I came back about four hours later and they were gone. I am talking about a couple of miles of shacks. I think half the bulldozers in the Korean Army engineers were there. It was an indescribable scene. People running in all directions trying to salvage what they could before the bulldozers ran over them. There certainly wasn't any legal process involved here. And then, of course, after they cleared the shacks away they hastily planted things, most of which later died. Then they came along and repaved the road, so there was a very nice road to the golf course for the rest of my tour there. Well, Lyndon never traveled that road and the shacks never reappeared.

They put Lyndon up in Walker Hill in the special villa on the top of the highest hill. But Lyndon liked a good strong shower and he liked it coming at him from several directions. His was a lovely villa, but the water pressure up there was the worst and the story is that Lyndon's valet had to hold a garden watering can over his head while he took his shower. He found that most unsatisfactory and let the whole party know about it.

Other than things like that, the visit was an enormous success. Johnson was wiped out....totally exhausted and visibly so when he got off the plane at Kimpo. He looked around and you could see that here was a man who fed on public adulation. He had seldom in his life had such a feast spread before him as he found in Seoul. An enormous crowd at the airport and full military honors. The way in was lined with Koreans ten, twelve deep all the way from Kimpo to the City Hall Plaza . And in City Hall Plaza was the biggest crowd I think I have ever seen in Korea, or anywhere else as far as that goes. Now, a great deal of this was spontaneous. Lyndon was genuinely looked up to by the Korean populace, but I couldn't deny .that a fair amount of it was somewhat less than spontaneous. But the Koreans planning the visit had told me, 'Now look, we know your man likes to see and do various things and you just tell us what you want in terms of a motorcade and that sort of thing. We will arrange it just the way he wants it. But, along the way we can't let him stop anywhere he wants to. So there will be three or four places where it will be possible to stop the motorcade and he can jump out and shake hands. It will be secure in those places.' And that's where he stopped to press the flesh of this admiring public. They said, 'In the matter of signs, we will have lots of signs but they will not be all the same. There will be no uniformity to them.' So, we saw things like, 'We love you Lady Bug,' and signs with his name spelled forty different ways. But everything looked very spontaneous. There were no groups of uniforms. There were lots of Korean and American flags, of course, but all of these individual signs looked very spontaneous and some of them may have been, but most of them were very carefully prepared. And the difference between Johnson's demeanor when he arrived at the airport as compared to

when he stood on that platform at City Hall Plaza to make his speech, was night and day. Here was a guy who had just come to life.

But the problem with the City Hall Plaza speech was...Paul Crane, a prominent American medical missionary spoke the best Korean of any round eye in Korea and was chosen to read Johnson's address in Korean. There was no room for him on the platform, so he was stationed in an alcove below .. The speech was supposed to be canned, and Johnson was told where to stop to permit translation. But in the event, of course, he didn't stop where he was supposed to and he extemporized. It was windy and the acoustics were terrible. Crane couldn't understand what Johnson was saying, but he sure as hell had the speech, so he just read it. He did the very best he could and he did as well as any human being could have, but the embassy switchboard began to light up about two-thirds of the way through with Koreans calling up saying, 'Fire that man, he is not saying what the President is saying.' There was a big fuss about that. What they didn't realize of course was that Crane couldn't hear Johnson and that Johnson was winging it because he was so hepped up about this damn enormous crowd.

There were enormous receptions and big state dinners and all the rest of it, but no real substantive business was conducted. Lyndon woke up, for example, during the middle of the night and wanted tapioca pudding, which I mentioned earlier, and he was agitated. He wanted tapioca pudding and here in the biggest hotel in all of Korea there wasn't any to be found. We finally found some in the kitchen of one of the embassy's staff.. We woke up half of Compound 2 in order to see if anybody had any and somebody did and we got it out there and that appeased him.

Somebody gave the suit he was going to wear on the second day to an American embassy Korean driver to take to be pressed at the one place that was adequate to do it. The guy took it and had it pressed but took it home with him that night, intending to bring it back five or six in the morning. But Lyndon somehow became aware that the suit was missing so practically a door-to-door search of Seoul went on to try and find it.

We had all sorts of incidents like that. We had a great reception at Walker Hill and right in the middle of the reception with every dignitary in Korea present, the lights went out. Everything was pitch dark. Of course the Secret Service people were running around elbowing everyone right and left, trying to hustle the President towards the door when the lights went back on again. It was just one of those things that happened in Seoul from time to time. But everyone thought, 'Oh, my god the North Koreans are at it again and if they drop a bomb on this place they've got the whole United States and Korean governments...the Secretary of State was there and everybody else.

It was a hilarious and typically imperial Presidential visit. It must have impressed the Johnsons because the welcome was (a) so spontaneous and genuine and (b) so well contrived. They couldn't help but feel they were among friends.

The visit did have one enormous political effect - in a sense it helped Park, his self esteem, tremendously. One thing the little man wanted was acknowledgment from the United States. He got to wanting it even worse in later years. But the fact that the President of the United States would come and visit Seoul helped with our relations with him, personally, a great deal. That was important in Korea, where he held total sway.

Q: Before we leave Korea, did you find that there were any differences between you, the political section at the embassy, and the Desk in Washington?

ERICSON: Not except for the details of how to handle all the crises that came up, like the Pueblo. The reason we wrote the slippery slope telegram was to let them know that our intended course of action was really going to screw us up with the South Koreans. That was probably the major point of difference. The Desk reflected political pressures on the Department from within the United States. Everybody has his own agenda and when something happens in Korea, some interested party or his political representative is going to exert pressure on the Department to do something. We felt that sort of pressure,

although we often felt the complainant didn't have the whole picture. But there were no serious problems with the Desk.

Q: It looks like the incident reflects how crises often get handled. Something happens and all of a sudden it is taken away out of the hands of the people who know how to deal with it and all of a sudden get centered away from the experts and into the hands of the political movers and shakers in Washington.

ERICSON: I want to deal with that very subject in my later tour in Korea. You are absolutely right. We, in the embassy, thought that the Vance mission was unnecessary and it should not have been sent. It was an embarrassment. We eventually achieved what objectives we had, I guess, which were to mollify the Koreans, but it could have been done much more easily. The problem with doing things that way, in my point of view, is that you focus the local's attention on Washington and he thinks thereafter...and when you are dealing with a man like Park, it is important because he controls... he thinks then that the only people he can deal with are in Washington. If Washington ignores or undercuts its embassy, then he thinks the embassy can't be of much help to him. So he tends to ignore the embassy too. And this was true of the whole Kissinger period of foreign relations, when having contact with Kissinger himself became much more important than doing things the normal way, through people who have the experience and some knowledge of what is going on. In that sense, I think the Vance mission led to a lot of things later on that Park, if he didn't originate at least supported, in terms of trying to buy influence. Park never, to my knowledge, made any effort to suborn any American official in Seoul. No Korean politician ever approached me by saying, 'Hey, Dick, we want a favor,' or that kind of thing. This was done in Washington with American politicians and White House personnel later on in the Park regime, and was done rather flagrantly to the point where, for example, a woman who I was convinced was a ROK CIA agent sat in the front office of the Speaker of the House of Representatives as his receptionist.

Q: Let's talk about the status of forces. We are still talking about the 1965-68 period.

ERICSON: During the Korean War and from the end of the Korean War until the middle 1960s, there was no agreement between the United States and the Republic of Korea defining the legal status of the American military forces in Korea, including such sensitive questions as Korean jurisdiction over crimes committed against Koreans by American personnel or in general over any activities by American personnel. American military authorities had jurisdiction over American soldiers and the Koreans had none. In any country that values its sovereignty, however welcome foreign military personnel may be, their presence inevitably engenders friction of one kind and another. If these problems are handled unilaterally by the country which provides the forces, ignoring the home government, eventually you arouse resentment on the part of the general population and a desire to institute some means of exercising some influence over what the foreigners do on their soil. Anyway, this was the situation in Korea. The Japanese, after a long negotiation and considerable difficulty, had gotten a status of forces agreement with us and the Koreans were agitating for their own. Phil Habib, my predecessor in Seoul, had all but completed the negotiation of this agreement with the South Koreans, but there was a major stumbling block involving jurisdiction over military personnel. Under just what circumstances would the Koreans be able to try an American soldier for a crime committed off base or off duty and/or against a Korean. We were being very, very tight, reluctant to acknowledge Korean jurisdiction over American soldiers. In virtually every context we wanted to retain jurisdiction. One of the reasons, of course, was that the American veterans organizations back in the United States were strongly opposed to giving foreign governments jurisdiction over American military personnel. If you read the 'American Legion' magazine at the time, you saw cartoons featuring long-toothed, vicious Oriental guards wielding batons and beating helpless American prisoners in substandard jails.

So there was a great deal of reluctance to do this, but about the time the Koreans started sending troops to Vietnam the attitude in the United States changed. It softened considerably and at some point in early 1966 the decision was made that we would complete this negotiation and that we would grant Korean jurisdiction over military forces

in the case of crimes that were committed off post, off duty and against Koreans. This made it possible to finally wrap up this agreement. I had the honor of being the designated chief negotiator for something that was essentially a one meeting affair, with the thing all cleared out in advance. The great thing about it was that we were able to persuade Secretary Rusk, who was very highly esteemed...the Koreans liked Rusk...we were able to persuade him to come to Korea on his way to Vietnam and to hold a signing ceremony in the big rotunda of the capitol building. You can't imagine what this really meant to the Koreans. It was an irritant to us, by and large, but to the Koreans it was a major acknowledgment of their place in the world. They were going to sign an agreement with the Secretary of State. He was coming to them to sign it. They decorated the hall like nothing you have ever seen before. There were enormous flags, for example, American and Korean flags made of the various flowers that were in bloom or raised for the purpose at the time. There was an enormous banquet and a very elaborate ceremony. I got my measure of a lot of Korean Foreign Office people during the process of producing the treaty documents themselves in two languages, as they had to be. First the thing had to be translated. Ron Myers, who was our very junior officer in the political section at the time, but our best Korean language officer, participated. The night before the ceremony I was in the Foreign Ministry all night with Ron and a bunch of Korean Foreign Ministry personnel going through the...they were typing it as we went along, producing and accepting translations of various segments of the English language version. Of course the thing was drawn up in English, but they had to reproduce it in Korean. They had to produce two copies absolutely letter perfect, the Koreans wouldn't allow a speck on any one of those pieces of paper. Anyway, a large number of those fellows dropped out during that night and we were left with only a few Foreign Ministry officials at 6 in the morning. I always held these in very high regard. Well, we had this ceremony with Rusk and the Korean Foreign Minister signing the agreement and the president sending his best wishes. It was televised and engendered a great deal of feeling. So, how did it work out? It became almost an embarrassment to the Koreans to have jurisdiction. They wanted the right to exercise jurisdiction, but they didn't really want to handle Americans in jail.

Q: No, Americans are a pain in the neck to have in jail. There is a different kind of food.

ERICSON: Americans wouldn't do what the Korean would do, bring in the whole family to cook for them and that sort of thing. The few foreigners the Koreans had in jail before the agreement were always pampered. They had special accommodations, special food. They weren't forced to work as Koreans prisoners were. After the status of forces went into effect and they began to assume jurisdiction over Americans, the Korean habit was to convict them of whatever crime they were accused of, but to give them a suspended sentence on condition that they be sent out of the country. The sentiment among GIs was that you got off lighter in a Korean court than you did if you got court-martialed. And if you did get sent to a Korean jail, it would be better than being in the military stockade because you got special food, people could come and see you, you didn't have to work. The long and the short of it is that the Status of Forces Agreement over the years has worked out much, much better than anyone in the Pentagon or the American Legion thought it was going to. The same is true in Japan where the same fears existed earlier on and exactly the same kind of things have happened.

I was happy to be associated with that sort of thing and it was one of the times when the Embassy and the UN Command worked very close together. But that leads me to another point of how our affairs are conducted in Korea. A great deal depends on the nature and character of the UN Commander and the Ambassador and their relationship to each other. The UN Commander in Korea is in a rather odd position. If he were the kind who would try to exploit it, there were things that he could exploit. He is the commander of the UN forces, but he is an American general. He is subject to orders from Washington as commander of the United States Eighth Army. As commander of UN forces, in theory he reports back to the UN Security Council through the United States government. And that makes him think that he is a little different from military commanders in other countries, vis-a-vis his relations with the American ambassador. He has a unique position. If you have an egotistical UN commander, you just might have trouble on your hands in the sense that he

does not recognize that in matters political certainly he is subordinate to the ambassador. That was a prominent feature of the landscape in both of my assignments to Korea.

When I got to Korea there was a UN commander named DwightBeech, who was the same kind of guy I had in Iceland. Wen I arrived there, the Keflavik base commander said, 'Look, I will take care of the military things and you take care of relations with the government and political stuff . I am not skilled in that and don't want to be bothered with it.' And that was General Beech. He and Ambassador Brown got along absolutely perfectly.. Nobody was ever going to be insubordinate to Ambassador Brown. No American in Korea was ever going to doubt who was the senior American while Brown was around. Brown was replaced by Porter and Beech was replaced by Bonesteel. General Bonesteel was at least a second generation general officer...I had run into his father as a matter of fact years earlier when he was commanding Fort Benning. Old Bonesteel was too old for World War II but he took the American forces to Iceland before the US entered the war. His son had lost one eye and was famous for his patch and also for his ego. He was a very good general, but he saw himself as the United Nations Commander and he didn't cotton to being subordinate to any other American in that country. Even he and Brown had their difficulties. When Porter arrived as the new boy on the block, we really had difficulties. I have sat in meetings of the two of them when they were both talking at the same time and, like ten year old kids, neither would stop to oblige the other. They had a constant struggle. They did not get along. It never amounted to anything serious, but ...

The other part of relations with the UN Command is that Korean Presidents, from the time Park took over through Rho and Chun, until Kim Yong Sam took office, were all out of the military. Park's instinct was to look first to the military in dealing with Americans. If, for example, you were going to hold a joint exercise with distinctly political overtones - as in the reaction of the North Koreans - he would not ask the Foreign Office to get involved - that was something to be worked out with the military command. The military commanders would discuss it and then the UN command would back-channel the stuff to the Pentagon. By the time it surfaced on an intergovernmental basis, the military commanders and

the ROK leadership were in agreement on what was to be done, and if there were any changes to be made for American political reasons, the Embassy had an enormous uphill fight. The UN Command always had this advantage of learning about military things first and getting it through the Pentagon, getting their ducks in a line and then springing it on the Embassy. This could at times offer serious problems. I think the situation still exists. Personally, if I could do it, I would wipe out the whole back-channel capability of both State and the military. It is an insidious kind of thing.

But, there were difficulties between Bonesteel and Porter and, as I will say later on, between Habib and Sneider and Stilwell.

Q: You went to Tokyo from 1968-70.

ERICSON: Yes. Alex Johnson, who had been my boss in Yokohama when I first came into the Foreign Service, had kept a friendly eye on me ever since. In 1967, he was ambassador to Japan and came over to Seoul on a visit. We flew him in a helicopter and went around the DMZ with him and showed him what the thing was all about. We played golf the second day of his visit, and I laid a second shot on a long par four hole about six feet from the pin and was concentrating on my first and only opportunity to birdie that thing. Between my second shot and the green he told me he wanted me to come to Tokyo as his political counselor. Needless to say, I missed the putt. Anyway, I always had enormous admiration for Johnson. Also, I had been in Seoul for three years and Tokyo was Tokyo and I am a Japanese language officer, so I said I would go. I thought I would be able to serve with Johnson for a long time. He had always wanted to be ambassador to Japan and intended to stay. Of course, that didn't pan out. About four months after I arrived, they hauled him back to be Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and they replaced him with Armin Meyer.

The main feature of that tour in Tokyo was our decision to revert Okinawa. This is something that Alex has to be given enormous credit for. It was probably one of the finest

accomplishments of American diplomacy anywhere, anytime, anyhow. A peaceful return of territory to a defeated enemy negotiated in friendship and peace and done with great smoothness. It was a subject of enormous importance to the host country. The main opposition to it, of course, was in the Pentagon, which was fighting a war in Vietnam at the time and which thought it might have to fight a war in northeast Asia at some point, witness the Pueblo, and thought it was essential that we have territory under our total control. The military never trusted the Japanese government to take a firm enough stand on any military subject. So they treasured the control that they exercised in Okinawa. They could store nuclear weapons, take off and land on missions without having to ask anybody's permission, and simply to do pretty much as they pleased down there. But it wasn't going to stay that way very long, obviously. Japan was a nation that was resurgent to say the least, and while the Japanese had never treated Okinawans as real Japanese, they were always sort of second-class citizens, the urge to reclaim Okinawa was overpowering. The Japanese couldn't very well keep wacking the Soviets over the head about those lousy little islands up north, while the United States was sitting on quite substantial territory in the south. Basically, the Vietnamese war, the idea that we were using Japanese territory to fight it without any say so by the Japanese, gave the opposition in Japan a lot of ammunition and they were using it against the government.

And there was also, of course, the unrest on Okinawa itself over such issues as aircraft noise, a terrible problem for communities in and around the bases, and simply the fact that it had been 20 years and more since the end of the war and Okinawa was still pretty much in political limbo. They had a measure of self government but real sovereignty was still in the hands of the occupying power, and while they might not aspire in all honesty to go back to Japan...maybe they would have preferred independence or statehood in the United States, but they didn't want continued occupation. If they were going to be second-class citizens of Japan, well so be it. And there was getting to be considerable pressure against the status quo.

As a matter of fact, a Socialist had been elected as governor on a reversion platform, a guy by the name of Yara who was a very persistent little fellow. He would come up to Tokyo rather frequently to agitate with the Japanese government and to visit the ambassador. I remember one visit with either Johnson or Meyer, I don't remember which, but he went through his litany of political grounds for reversion and why it was best to get it done quickly. After it was all over and we were off the record, he turned to the ambassador and said through his interpreter, 'Gee, those things are really noisy!!' He was complaining primarily about the tankers that took off from Kadena with a full load for refueling B-52s going to and from Vietnam. They objected to the B-52s taking off from Okinawa, don't make any mistake about it, but what they were really unhappy about were those KC-135s which are among the noisiest airplanes ever invented.

But the situation was serious and in Japan, itself, of course, it was a very real threat to the maintenance of the Security Treaty, which would become subject to revision for the first time in 1970. The Security Treaty of 1960 had a provision that it would run for ten years without modification, but at the end of ten years it could be modified at the request of either side. Of course, that was a period of great student agitation all over the world and we had our share of it in Tokyo. In Tokyo part of their issue was the Okinawa situation. Japanese student movements are not to be dismissed lightly. The organizational genius of the Japanese extends even to these demonstrations. There were constant demonstrations and parades in Tokyo during this whole period.

Protestors - mostly students - used to parade to the embassy in the early part of this period, and come right up to our gate...a hundred or two hundred of them brandishing signs and rattling the gates and making nasty noises at the Americans. But if some Americans wanted to come out of the compound, they would fall peacefully back to let them pass, and then return to banging on the gates again and voicing their wrath. I don't know in these Japanese demonstrations of any American having been really seriously threatened. One sailor was thrown into the palace moat in 1950 and some have been

jostled, and, of course, Hagerty's car out at the airport had been beaten on, but no Japanese mob was threatening to tear an American from limb to limb. Their objectives were pretty much internalized and pretty well controlled.

But, we had an amusing incident in front of the embassy. Because the protestors were concentrating on the embassy, we decided to build the wall up another two or three feet. We had building material lying on the sidewalk on the side of the compound facing the Okura Hotel. The student organizations, there were three or four of them, were vying among themselves for publicity, for news space and television room, etc. One day one of these groups told the television networks that if they would be in the building just catty corner from the embassy they would see something interesting happen at the wall.. So the newsmen set their cameras up in that building and along about noon a whole bunch of these student types came racing down the street, and up the building material we had left on the sidewalk and over the wall and into the chancery compound. The chancery sat in the front of the compound and behind it were two apartment buildings, one of which had been converted to office space and housed the CIA station chief and his immediate staff. The top floor of that apartment building was covered but open. People used to go up there and have parties at night. The student's intentions were to get up on that roof and unfurl a banner proclaiming their slogan of the day, so that the TV cameras could register the fact that they had successfully invaded the Embassy compound to unveil a banner proclaiming their feelings. Well, instead of running up two flights of stairs they ran up one flight and straight into the CIA offices, where they stopped, looked around and, realizing their mistake, bowed very politely and said, 'Sorry.' They then backed out the door, ran up the next flight and unfurled their banner.Of course the pictures made all the newspapers and news shows. In this episode they never threatened any American. They just wanted that publicity...and to embarrass the Japanese police, to whom this escapade was an immeasurable affront. The police had a little guard box on the traffic island in front of the embassy, which they promptly turned into a platoon-size subterranean stronghold with a projecting guardhouse above surface holding not one but three or four policemen. Then

every day they stationed two or three truckloads of riot police up in the streets behind the embassy to be ready for instant deployment in case this happened again. It never did, but the cops were there sitting in their trucks at all hour for the two years that I was in Tokyo. It left you with a fairly strange feeling.

There were other manifestation of student unrest and displeasure during that period, including the war at Tokyo University, which, I think, far surpassed anything that happened on American campuses at the time. Interestingly enough, it went on for at least 72 hours. It was on television virtually every moment of the time it was happening. Basically various student groups coalesced for this demonstration of power. Student groups took over the main administration building at Tokyo University. When I say took it over, I mean took it over. They threw everybody out and barricaded the windows and entrances.It was decided that they couldn't be moved peaceably, so the Tokyo police decided they would move them out forcibly. There ensued a very dramatic attempt by the police, successful in the end, to remove these guys one by one. Groups of students were up on the roof of the building, where there were large bricks and pieces of stone available to could throw down on the police three or four stories below. They also were well equipped with Molotov cocktails. So, the police attempting to get into the building, had to run the gauntlet of these missiles from above. To do so they built a canopy to protect themselves , although some did get hit by the rocks. You saw all of this playing out before you on TV. Some of the police were set on fire by Molotov cocktails. To counter that they anti-riot trucks with powerful water guns stationed nearby and as soon as a Molotov cocktail would land near a policeman, they would knock him down with a blast from the hose and put out the flames. This went on for two or three days. In the end the students were driven floor by floor upward until all that had not yet been apprehended were assembled on the roof - in full view of the entire nation's TV screens - where the police doused them with tear gas sprayed from large canisters suspended from their hovering helicopters. When the police broke through to the roof in strength, the students moved to the edge. The police stopped respectfully, and the students sang one last defiant song before surrendering. The

students did not suffer a single serious injury, although their were numerous injuries to the police and firemen. It was very dramatic and skillful action on the part of the police. But it also was a good indicator that the students felt there were many things wrong in their society and Okinawa was one of them. It was very clear to us that everybody in Japan was dedicated to reversion.

Q: You got to Tokyo in 1968. What was the situation at that time regarding Okinawa? Where did things stand?

ERICSON: The decision to revert had been made in the United States government and it had been communicated to the Japanese. The question was under what terms and in what time period. The Japanese, of course, wanted a specific time, a deadline, but we did not. We wanted to leave the timing indefinite, settle the details first and then decide exactly when the transfer of power would take place. The details had not been negotiated out. The question of storage of nuclear weapons, for example, was still in the air, and the circumstances under which we could continue to use the airbases for actions outside of Japan. Whether the Security Treaty would apply in total to Okinawa and if so, immediately or after a grace period? All these little details were still to be worked out.

Dick Sneider, who had been in the Embassy's political section in the '50's, had been on the National Security Staff handling Asia Affairs and had run afoul of Henry Kissinger..Sneider was one of those whose phone Kissinger tapped, suspecting him of leaks, etc. Sneider was much too aggressive a character for Kissinger. Anyway, he was designated by the Department to be the principal negotiator of the American side for the reversion treaty. Now, Armin Meyer was the ambassador by this time. When Johnson was taken back to the States to be Under Secretary for Political Affairs, there were moves to replace him with a suitable political appointee. Johnson protested, saying that the position should be kept in the Foreign Service and he wanted to stay on, but he was told that he was needed more in Washington and since no appropriate outsider had been willing to take the job, that he should choose a Foreign Service officer as much as possible like himself. Now, what made

him land on Armin Meyer, I don't know. He later admitted this appointment was probably an error.

Q: Armin Meyer was a Middle East specialist.

ERICSON: Not only that, Armin Meyer was an Arabist and very sensitive about being identified with Jews, lest this damage his standing in the Arab world and interfere with his career. His wife was even more sensitive. Mrs. Meyer was a very difficult personality. She had a very changeable disposition and you could see the changes. Like reading an old fashioned thermometer, when she was displeased, you could see the red rising and when it reached her face you knew that things were about to pop. She was a strong influence on him, too. She shared his concern about being closely associated with Israel or Jews lest that hurt him as an Arabist ambassador, which he was going to be again. She told me at one point with respect to Armin, 'I saw him standing across the room and I said to myself, 'there is a man I can make an ambassador of.'' He had come out of Iran where he had apparently worked extremely effectively on a close personal basis with the Shah. As a matter of fact, all of his stories about Iran were of the 'the Shah and I' variety. He couldn't understand, and I believe never grasped the way Japanese society and the Japanese government function.

Q: It is much more collective.

ERICSON: Much more collective. We always used to say the best contact the American embassy can have in Japan is the section chief in the ministry that handles the problem that you are interested in because ...in Japan things generally boil up from below and you get a consensus behind them and then they are passed to successive levels of leadership, which may modify them or may simply endorse them and pass them on. But you don't get a prime minister saying, 'I want to do such-and-so, and pass it down the line and staff it out for me.' That is not the way it works. Armin who was used to 'the Shah and I' had a terrible time with the idea that Herb Levin could go over to the Foreign Ministry and come paddling

back with information that Armin, himself, could not get at his level. Or that a junior officer could get a proposal moving and could achieve a decision by working through his opposite numbers, while Armin could talk to his counterparts about a new issue but would wait much longer to get any reaction than if he had started down in the section chief level.

Armin was never at ease in Japan. He was very uncomfortable with Japan specialists too. He had a staff full of Jews and Japan specialists.

Q: Dick Sneider, of course.

ERICSON: Dick Sneider was Jewish, Herb Levin was Jewish, the station chief was Jewish, the administrative officer at the time was Jewish, and most of the rest of us were Japan specialists. So we had a very uneasy ambassador on our hands. He was particularly uneasy with Dave Osborn, a dual specialist in Japan and China who had been Johnson's colleague way back in the early China talks and who Johnson had brought in as DCM. When Dave got to Japan, Johnson found out that although they had a long association, sometimes they were very different people. Dave was never in my period a real factor in the embassy, unless Johnson was absent. Then all of a sudden things would change and we were doing things very differently. Dave was very interested in analyzing the amount of traffic generated by and coming into each section of the embassy, assigning an appropriate degree of importance to it ,and coming up with a statistical analysis of the relative importance of the various Embassy functions. Johnson, in his book, acknowledged that when the time came to institute a lot of cuts in personnel, Dave's analysis was very useful.When Johnson left, Dave became Charg# for the lengthy interim before Myers' scheduled arrival just before the Fourth of July, a significant date at any Foreign Service post. Dave and Helenka decided, as Charg#, that they would issue the invitations for the annual Fourth of July reception at the ambassador's residence. When they did arrive, the Meyers were angry to find that the reception was in train. Well, why submit the guest list to someone who knows nobody in the city? But they hadn't had any input and they looked upon this as an invasion of their sphere. It didn't help at all that Helenka is a charming

and enormously talented lady. Mrs. Meyer did not like really pretty women or all that talent...Helenka was a marvelous artist who filled her walls with her paintings. But, Mrs. Meyer did not like female competition.Of course the rupture between Dave and Meyer really came when Secretary Rogers made his first visit to Tokyo. Armin was not disposed to ...traditionally at a time like this the ambassador and his senior staff would go to the airport to receive the visitor and as well as to say goodby. You had to do it fairly formally because the Japanese would close off the Shuto -Tokyo's Beltway - so you could whisk the distinguished visitor into town, and that disrupted the entire transportation system of the city of Tokyo. The road from the embassy to the airport would be closed except to official traffic. Armin for some reason or other insisted that only Levin, why Levin I don't know, and the administrative officer would go out to the airport to see the Secretary of State off. They had the airport well covered for security, but while Meyer and the Japanese Foreign Minister were talking to the Secretary and members of his party at the foot of the gangway just before take-off, a demented Japanese somehow got through police lines and came at the party with a homemade knife. Now, Dave and I and a few others were sitting back at the embassy listening to the police radio and we heard that this man had come through the line and had knocked Meyer down. Levin managed to distract the assailant a little bit until the security people got in and got the knife away from him. Meyer was knocked flat on the tarmac. The Secretary and party, of course, bundled themselves up the gangway in a big hurry and the plane took off. The National Police reported to us that an attempt had been made on the life of the Secretary of State by a demented Japanese who had been taken into custody; that the weapon had been recovered and that nobody had been injured, although Ambassador Meyer had been knocked down in the scuffle. We immediately sent a flash to the Department reporting all this, so that if there were press reports the Department would know the Secretary was safe and in the air and the man had been captured and everything was going as well as could be expected. Meyer later got back to the office and asked Dave if we had heard about the incident. Dave said, 'Yes, and we sent the message.' Armin said, 'What message?' Dave said, 'Well, we told the Department what happened.' He said, 'Let me see it.' And, he got absolutely furious. He

said that “This attack was not made on the Secretary of State, it was made on me. I was the target. I was knocked to the ground.” He gave Dave a severe dressing down for having sent that message and from that moment on Dave's, days were clearly numbered in Tokyo and he eventually left. But the man meant to kill the Secretary of State.

Q: Sure, if you have a top guy and a subordinate there, you have to assume the top guy is the target. We are talking about ego.

ERICSON: Yes, we are talking about ego. But poor Armin got another jolt when Sneider was named DCM in addition to his duties. He had been sent out in Johnson's time as the negotiator of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty. The arrangement, of course, was that the Ambassador and Foreign Minister would be the nominal chief negotiators and Sneider was there to assist the ambassador. And there was a Navy admiral to watchdog for the Pentagon and a small staff that was sent out to assist Sneider. In reality, Sneider negotiated the treaty, and Armin and Foreign Minister Aiichi would approve the final agreements at each stage of the game. In that sense he participated, but Sneider really did it all. Then Sneider was made DCM. Armin must have agreed to that, but he wasn't very comfortable with him. Dick was a very aggressive, hard charging kind of guy and the two of them did not pull terribly well in harness.

The details had been under negotiation for some time when I was sent back to Washington to handle the negotiations at the working level as Japan Country Director. So I left after two years in Tokyo.

Aside from the Okinawan reversion negotiations, the importance of which I cannot overstate, a few things happened in Tokyo at the time but none of them really earthshakingly importance. It was kind of a quiet period in Tokyo. We were having trade difficulties with Japan, of course, as we have since Japan got its independence. At this time they were centered mainly around textiles and Mr. Nixon was interested in preserving his Southern strategy by getting limits on Japan's textile exports, which were negotiated

with some difficulty. Beyond that, you know, it was really a quiet period, except you can't say it was quiet because there was the Okinawa thing and there were constant demonstrations, etc.

Q: Did the situation of the Russians in the Kuril Islands come up at all?

ERICSON: Well it was a subject that was constantly before the Japanese political eye. It always seemed to me that the Soviets shot themselves in the foot on this issue, over and over again. The Japanese didn't mind losing most of the Kurils but they did feel that Etorofu and Kunashiri, the most southern of the islands, and the Habomai and Shikotan groups, which can be seen from Hokkaido, were intrinsically Japanese. These islands give the Soviets control of the strait into the Sea of Okhotsk. Economically they are worthless. They certainly are not good for housing your excess population, but strategically they do have a role. The Soviets on Habomai and Shikotan are within sight of Japanese land. It always seemed to me that the Soviets consistently erred on this issue because their only tactic was to stonewall. Later years they held out the tantalizing prospect of well, maybe some day, somehow.

Q: People talk about how inept American diplomacy is or was during the Cold War and when you take a look at what the Soviets did...

ERICSON: Well, until our own experience with the MIA's in Vietnam , I always thought the Japanese were the most ardent bone hunters in the world. So, I always thought that had I been responsible for Soviet policy towards Japan, I could win significant good will in Japan and concessions for my own country if I were to offer the Japanese the opportunity to find out what happened to all those people in the armies that the Japanese had along the Manchurian border...

Q: The Guangdong Army.

ERICSON: ...before the end of World War II when the Soviets took over and sent them all to Siberian slave labor camps. The Japanese would give virtually anything for access to that kind of information. The Soviets might have been intelligent and exploited Japanese technical ability with some of their resources in the Far East too. This could have been mutually profitable and would have given the Soviets considerable political influence in Japan But the Soviets have never really offered the Japanese any major concessions.

So, yes, the northern territories surfaces periodically and was an issue. The Soviets stonewall helped us, didn't help them.

Q: We are talking about when you were in Tokyo, the 1968-70 period, did you feel that Nixon or Kissinger paid much attention to Japan?

ERICSON: Not as much as they did later. I was much less conscious of that in Japan than I was later. The answer to your question has to be no. Particularly Kissinger, who paid much less attention to Japan than Japan warranted. There was also the fact that when they did pay attention to Japan, when they did have something they wanted done, they did not use the embassy to do it.

Q: Still this thing of not really using any expertise.

ERICSON: Well, there is that, but it is also the idea that some American Presidents, and Nixon certainly was one, and some of their appointees, and Kissinger was certainly the most important of these, have never felt secure working with career specialists. They seemed to feel that these people, especially the State Department, were out to do them in the eye one way or another, that because State Department personnel have worked for their predecessors, and even the other party, somehow or other they are against the guys now in power. That holds for both parties. Carter is another example. Jack Kennedy had this disease to a certain extent too.

When Kissinger did want to accomplish something in Japan, he worked through his own emissaries and used CIA communications.. The embassy did not see messages that went back and forth between his people when they were in Tokyo and we were not consulted on what the hell it was he was doing. Part of it stems from a feeling, which I probably have mentioned before, that struck me about these two men...Kissinger and Nixon. They shared the conviction that in virtually any country you could get things done by getting to the one politician who had the power, and that there was such an individual. All you had to do was find him and pull his lever. That was the way to do it and you could safely ignore the bureaucracies, etc. Well, maybe you could safely ignore the bureaucracies in the United States, but you can't do it in Japan. But they were convinced that this was the case. Whether they were successful or not, I really don't know. Did they irritate the embassy? Yes!

We had a great bunch of people at the Foreign Office at that time. You are so seldom able to grow fond of foreigners, etc., but the two politicians that were the Foreign Minister and the Vice Minister were absolutely superb. The director of the North American Bureau, Fumihiko Togo, who later became ambassador in Washington, was probably the best friend the United States ever had in Japan. I am told he was of Korean descent and for that reason something of a social outcast as a young man, which could explain why he was chosen to marry the daughter of the Togo who was Foreign Minister at the end of World War II. The daughter was half German and therefore also difficult to find a husband for at her father's social level. She was an absolutely marvelous person. She was highly articulate in foreign languages and an effervescent, outgoing personality. He was neither. Even in conversations with us in his office about Okinawa, he would open with a hesitantly delivered, brief statement and then turn the discussion over to his deputy, Okawara, who was also ambassador here, or to the American Desk chief, Kazuo Chiba, and let them do all the talking in English. Then Fumi would wrap it up at the end. But there was never any question of who was in control on their side. He just couldn't articulate in English. He had the same kind of difficulty in Japanese, although they tell me he was a holy terror

sometimes when crossed or displeased. But right down to the junior Desk officers they had great personnel, and they accorded Togo great respect. Except for experiences like Cyril Pickard in London, it was certainly the greatest pleasure I have ever had in diplomacy working with a group of foreigners. And they were good friends. They were Japanese, make no mistake, but they also respected the United States and wanted to preserve their country's relationship with us and took some chances, I think, from time to time, in the process.

Q: Okay, next time we will pick it up where you are Country Director for Japan from 1970-73.

Q: Today is May 19, 1995. Dick we have you from 1970-73 on the Desk. Could you describe what the Desk was at that time?

ERICSON: Well, as you know, they had abandoned the old office system some years earlier and in theory the country desk was to be the focal point of virtually all activity within the State Department on any given country. The Japan Desk was one of the largest in the Department at the time. We had seven or eight officers...political, economic, political/military ...and three or four secretaries when I got there. Basically, I think it worked quite well in the sense that Marshall Green, who was the Assistant Secretary at the time, did funnel virtually everything that came to EA involving Japan to us. We worked very closely with and through him.

What issues did we deal with? Well, I was sent back primarily to do the Washington end of the Okinawa reversion negotiations. We had one officer who did an absolutely superb job, I might say; Howard MacElroy, whose wife really ought to get a blue ribbon and seventeen decorations from the State Department. Howard worked very late, many, many nights and Sue, who walked with two arm crutches due to polio, had to drive all over Virginia to pick him up at all hours of the night. This was before the Metro, of course, and you took

whatever bus would take you towards your home. And she did it uncomplainingly for two years.

Anyway the Okinawa reversion negotiations were our major problem during that period. Trade problems also cropped up all the time and the Office of the Trade Representative was not in the picture anything like it is today. It may not even have existed. The problems of how President Nixon and Dr. Kissinger and Bill Rogers interacted with respect to Japan were always a source of great entertainment, if not education. And there were the Japan aspects of our recognition of China, which provided the Japanese with the greater of the “Nixon shocks” so dear to the media critics in Japan.

Q: When you got there in 1970, what was the status of the Okinawa reversion negotiations?

ERICSON: Well, the decision had been made to revert. The major pending decision was the date of reversion. The Japanese, of course, wanted it sooner rather than later and we wanted to make sure all our ducks were lined up before we agreed to any date. These involved not only Okinawa, itself, but other little problems like the problem of Japanese textiles imported into the United States, which actually dominated Nixon's mind rather than the reversion negotiations because for him the textile problem had political resonance far louder than the Okinawa issue. There were a lot of details to be cleaned up in terms of the specifics of reversion. How much money the Japanese would pay us for the infrastructure improvements we had made on Okinawa during our occupation? We had to decide whether to acknowledge the presence of such things as poison gas and nuclear weapons on Okinawa in order to determine the schedule for moving them off, if they existed. We had to hammer out the final agreement on when the Japanese-US Security Treaty would begin to apply to Okinawa in place of our unlimited security rights with respect to Okinawa. There was quite a bit left to be done, but the basic decision had been made and the general framework...there would be a reversion date, we would

remove things, the Japanese would pay for the infrastructure, the Security Treaty would apply but exactly how - these things had to be worked out.

The major problem, of course, was the Pentagon's reluctance to give up rights they wanted. The war in Vietnam was still going on and they wanted to maintain as much freedom of action as possible for as long as possible. For example, on the application of the Security Treaty, their idea was to have a grace period of x years during which Okinawa would have reverted in every other way except that the provision of the Security Treaty with respect to the use of the bases for overseas activities would not apply. Eventually they were persuaded that this was not sensible and in the end the Security Treaty applied from the day of reversion. But it took some doing. A lot of the negotiation was with the Defense Department as well as the Japanese.

Q: What was your role in this?

ERICSON: The negotiations themselves with the Japanese took place in Tokyo and were done primarily through Dick Sneider and his operation. Our role was the formulation of the instructions to Sneider and his team...receipt of his reports of their meetings with the Japanese, consultations with the Defense Department, consultations within the State Department, referral where necessary to the NSC and the White House, and then the sending of approved instructions back to Sneider and his team to agree or disagree or to get this point or not to get that point. It was a very busy time and it is all lost in a welter of all...going into my own mind I have such difficulty remembering all the specifics. The final agreements were reached in about April, 1972.

Anyway, illustrative of how these things were done, how it all came about, I said that the major thing for the Japanese was to get a firm date for reversion. They wanted a date, as I recall, in June. They were facing the necessity of another Diet election and they wanted to get this triumph under their belts before they had to call it. Along about April we had finished virtually everything and Mr. Nixon had met with Prime Minister Sato, and they had

made their later to be famous agreement that the United States would agree to reversion within the time period desired by the Japanese. Nixon and Kissinger thought that Sato had said he would take care of the textile business. We were seeking a 'voluntary' limitation of Japanese textile sales to the United States because of their major incursions into our textile market. This was one of the problems with dealing with Nixon and Kissinger, incidentally. We were aware that some arrangement had been made, but were never given an opportunity to vet the way Nixon and Kissinger had interpreted the language, the Japanese phrase, that Sato had used in allegedly promising to take care of the textile problem. I forget the phrase he actually used, but whatever it was, it was interpreted in much more positive fashion than Sato intended - or would have been capable of delivering on.

Kissinger and Nixon thought that they were talking to 'the politician of influence.' But this is not the way things are done in Japan. The prime minister can say, 'I will try,' but he has a lot of opposition to overcome and has no authority to order anything. It is even rare that a prime minister inspires any kind of policy movement in Japan.

Anyway, they thought they had an agreement so the only thing remaining in April, 1972 was to set the date. The Foreign Minister of Japan at the time was Kiichi Aichi, a very nice guy, as this anecdote will bear out. He was a Japanese politician, which you had to remember all the time, but he was basically a man of good will and a man of his word. When the reversion negotiations had been completed, it was arranged that Secretary Rogers would meet with him at an OECD meeting in Paris which both would be attending. Their meeting would be the summit on the Okinawa reversion negotiations, They would approve the final agreement and Aichi would emerge to announce to an eager Japanese press corps that the agreement had been struck and that reversion would be take effect on such-and-such a date. So they proceeded to Paris, and Alex Johnson called me in and said that unfortunately the Pentagon was balking. There had to be a change one point in the agreement. Now, Stu, for the life of me I can't recall what that final issue was. It was petty and had to do, I think, with the payment of reparations or what have you for our

infrastructure. It was not significant, but it did mean the Japanese would have to accept a change in what had already been agreed upon at such pain. So, he said I had better go to Paris to provide Secretary Rogers with backup at the meeting and to brief him on this change so that he could obtain Aichi's consent and the agreement could be finalized. I was also instructed to brief Aichi's staff in advance, because you wouldn't want to surprise the Foreign Minister at that last meeting.

I went over there with a nice briefing book for Secretary Rogers, neatly tabbed and containing material on all the issues. I established myself in the Hilton and went over to the control room to seek an appointment with the Secretary. I found that extremely difficult. He was very, very, very busy. He couldn't see me, and as a matter of fact he did not see me until we were in the car en route to the embassy for the meeting., despite my repeated requests for some time with him. That morning, I went to the Ambassador's residence early in the hope of snaring a few moments and waited in the ante room while he and Bob McCloskey discussed in loud tones what they should do about some misunderstanding that had arisen with the press over something Rogers had said following the OECD meeting . Nothing to do with Japan. But their debate went on for an hour before Rogers came in sort of out of breath and led me to the car.

Now the previous night I had had some difficulty persuading the Japanese to accept this final change. After all, they were away from their home base and any changeat this stage was significant and risky. I had gone to their lavish space in the Crillon - a Japanese Foreign Minister and his entourage always travel first class. The principal staffer on the reversion question was Okawara, whom I knew very well. He had several of his people from North American Affairs Bureau with him and we sat down to talk about this change that we wanted. They were aghast. They said, 'No, no, no, no, it will never go. Nobody could agree to that, it is too late. I am sure the Foreign Minister will say no.' Along about 10 o'clock, Aichi walked into the meeting. He had been at a dinner party given by the American Ambassador to the OECD for a group of American Senators and had returned early, to be informed of our meeting. He asked what was going on and I explained to the

problem. He said, 'Is that the last change that you want?' I replied, 'Mr. Foreign Minister, if you had asked me the question back in Washington, I probably would have said yes, it is the last.. Now that I have come with a change, I obviously am in no position to promise you that this will be the last change, but to the best of my knowledge, yes, it will be the last change.' Aichi said, 'Okay. I accept it.' His people were all over him saying that he just couldn't do that. He said, ' Never mind, I will take the responsibility. We will accept it.'

So, back to the car with Rogers the next morning. Late that night in the embassy, I had inserted in his briefing book a tabbed, separate briefing paper outlining the change at issue. I told him that the only things he really had to know were the basic outlines of the agreement plus this one change, which he did have to be familiar with because, for the record of the meeting, he had formally to propose it to Aichi and Aichi had formally to accept it. He appeared to have absorbed the briefing. At the embassy, Rogers sat at the ambassador's desk and Aichi sat in a chair facing him. The rest of us disposed ourselves around the room. The conversation about reversion began and Rogers had his briefing book open on his lap to the critical page. During the course of the conversation he inadvertently closed the book and lost his place. I suppose he didn't want to appear any more foolish than necessary, so he did not reopen the book but tried to wing it. After making his general remarks, he tried to wing the change and asked Aichi if he would accept it. Unfortunately, he got it totally backwards - had it all wrong. The change as Rogers had proposed it was what the Japanese wanted, not what we wanted. I was about to say something when Aichi jumped out of his chair and said, 'No, no, no, Mr. Secretary, that is not the way it is. It is the way Mr. Ericson and I agreed last night. It is this way. Is that right Mr. Ericson?' I said, 'Yes, that is right.' So it was accepted, but that was sort of typical of our experiences with Rogers. He really never got into Japan and he never got things straight and wasn't of much use to us in pursuing our interests with respect to the Japanese. I thought it was a great thing for Aichi to do.

Q: I want to come back to the Kissinger/Nixon thing, but first lets still talk about the reversion thing. How did we handle the nuclear issue? Did we acknowledge that we had stuff there? Did we get it off? What did we say?

ERICSON: I don't think we came right out and said we had them there, but we did say we would remove all hazardous things under adequate safeguards, and we did. It was a monstrous operation. The roads were closed, guarded and trucks bearing unnamed material proceeded from various dumps to loading points. The Okinawans ran for shelter as these convoys proceeded and villages were deserted. But the stuff was removed.

Q: Where was your support and where were your problems within the Department of Defense?

ERICSON: Well, the Air Force was the major problem, of course, because it was the arm of the services that really used Okinawa. The Marines had a divisional training camp down there. But the Air Force wanted the use of Kadena and the Navy, in addition to their Marine base, had the question of port calls by nuclear powered submarines. The Army was not terribly concerned. It seemed to me that the higher you got in the military hierarchy, the greater the resistance and thus the less understanding with respect to our position. Alex Johnson did a superb job with the Chiefs of Staff. He went over and briefed them a number of times, talked to them personally and finally overcame the main resistance, which was largely at the top.

We did get the tacit understanding of the Japanese that the B-52 operation would continue and the KC-130s would continue, even with the terrible noise problem. The Security Treaty doesn't prohibit use of American bases for overseas activity, it simply says we can't do so without prior consultation with the Japanese government and in effect the Japanese government gave us that consultation. And, as a matter of fact, the senior military were finally persuaded that if they tried to retain complete freedom of action in Okinawa, they would lose the Security Treaty in Japan. It came down to that simple an equation, because

the strength of feeling in Japan was such that that probably would have been the result. If not immediately, then certainly over a period of time. We persuaded the military that the United States should look as understanding of Japanese feelings as possible as the best way to preserve our interests and to persuade them to let us do certain things if a crunch came...to do it right and not insist on extraterritoriality in that atmosphere.

Q: Can we talk a bit then about Nixon and Kissinger and your impression of how they dealt with Japan? Were you there in the time of the "Nixon shokku" and all?

ERICSON: Oh, yes.

Q: Well, let's go before that because one of the things that I think is very interesting is that you have Henry Kissinger, who is really a Europeanist, and as soon as he got away from Europe his great brilliance fell off a lot although there was still a lot of confidence. How did you as a working officer dealing with the problems of a major country that was not European deal with Kissinger?

ERICSON: It took us a little while to realize that Henry Kissinger didn't really give a damn about Japan, know anything about Japan, or care anything about Japan, and that Nixon was a heck of a lot better except where his domestic political interests were concerned. Nixon's major problem with Japan it seemed to me was always on the trade side and the debt that he owed the Southern textile interests and the South, perhaps in general, for the support they had given him. He had promised them that he would do something about Japanese competition. And I suspect there is a lot more to it than that, that not only had he promised them, but he literally owed them, having received some major campaign contributions, I suspect. This, of course, is language that Japanese politicians can understand. Before the textile thing was finally settled, Nixon had a private meeting at one point with Foreign Minister Fukuda, who wanted to become Prime Minister, himself. I have it on quite decent authority that Nixon almost literally seized him by his lapels and said in effect, 'Listen, I want to put this in terms so that you can understand it. I owe these

people, I promised these people. Now you do something about it or else I will make it very uncomfortable for you.' This was a very private discussion and is not recorded. Actually it worked. As a matter of fact, it worked to our detriment, because the Japanese at that point did institute restraints. Then they offerea program of very low interest government loans to the effected small industries , mostly around Osaka. They stopped manufacturing certain kinds of textiles, or reduced their output, and took their money to start manufacturing a lot of components for electronics and devastated some other sector of the American market. Whereas the American economy, of course, was left with its relatively inefficient textile industry and that continues to this day.

When I first came on the Desk, Kissinger was still in the White House. We were asked to do a NISM on Japan.

Q: A NISM being a National Intelligence Security Memorandum.

ERICSON: It was an overall review of US policy toward Japan...its past, its present and its future. Phil Trezise, who was then the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, and I were the primary individuals involved in this for the Department. We finally finished it after six of eight months of struggle and frustration, only to realize that it really didn't amount to a hill of beans because Kissinger was just trying to keep us occupied with make work. It was a false indication of interest, I think. Perhaps they wanted it, but they didn't ever intend to do anything about it because they had their own ideas what they were going to do with respect to Japan.

But it is interesting, you can look at the books Kissinger and Nixon have written and I looked at one just last night—the biography of Kissinger by the Kalb brothers. And in a book that numbers 700 pages or so, Japan has five references in the index. Then when you look up each of those references you see that it is a generalized mention, like 'China and Japan would have to be dealt with also' or 'Japanese interests are considerable in this field and we would...' But there is nothing, not a page or even more than one sentence,

that is devoted to the problems of Japan. Now, this is what the Kalbs got in their research. But, if you look up Kissinger's own books, you get very much the same thing. You will get 10,000 pages on Israel, Egypt, Europe, the Soviets, the Vietnamese, the Chinese - but nothing substantive on Japan. And that is pretty much the way it was.

Q: Who was Mr. Japan at that time on the National Security Council?

ERICSON: There was none. Mr. Far East was John Holdridge, a career Foreign Service officer, he was the senior man on all Asian affairs. Holdridge was a Kissinger man as soon as he came into the office. He was not very sympathetic to any of our efforts, and in terms of getting our views before Kissinger, he reflected Kissinger's biases.. Anyway, he is a friend of mine. His father and mine were West Point classmates. But I didn't like this terribly well.

Kissinger used several...Dick Allen, for example. I was in Tokyo as political counselor when they first came into office. Allen would appear in Tokyo, he would be there but wouldn't appear, but would be talking on behalf of Kissinger to various Japanese and use CIA's telegraphic communications. He never checked in with the embassy, or talked with the ambassador. We did not know what was going on then. And I don't know to this day what was going on, I suspect it was textiles.

Kissinger took Dick Sneider into his office when he first formed the NSC staff. Sneider lasted about a year. Sneider was one of those he later accused of being a source of leaks and he tapped his telephone while Dick was still in Washington. As a matter of fact Dick arrived in Tokyo under something of a cloud because he had been tossed out of Kissinger's office. Sneider was also sort of blunt and willing to say things, which well may have displeased Dr. Kissinger.

He also had Herb Levin, who had a certain amount of experience in Japan but was basically a Chinese specialist, in a very junior position, but he got tossed out too. Levin had the terrible habit of telling people what he thought was true and he usually did it in a

way which didn't ingratiate himself very well with whomever he was speaking too, but he didn't last very long. So there really was no Japan expert during my period on the White House staff. There was no Japan expertise. There were people who were emissaries that dealt with Japan.

But we struggled with the NISM through the 1970-71 period in addition to the Okinawa business, so that kept us pretty damn busy.

Kissinger's writings on Japan are extremely skimpy. He dealt with the Japanese personally on a few occasions, usually with disastrous results. For example, I am getting a little ahead into the Nixon shock period, but, of course, one of his major shocks was the surprise visit to Peking, Ambassador Asakai's nightmare come true because he went to Peking with no advance notice to the Japanese. Alex Johnson, who was basically our guru on Japanese things during the whole period, always maintained very firmly the principle that whatever we do in matters involving major Japanese interests, we consult with the Japanese first. Now, consulting with the Japanese on things that we do means telling them what we are going to do. They rarely tried to influence our decision but they did want to know ahead of time, because given the great dependency of Japan on the United States, it meant everything to the Japanese ambassador, Prime Minister or Foreign Minister to be able to say, 'Yes, I knew about it before hand.' That is basically all they wanted. They didn't want a veto. But Kissinger and Nixon, of course, worked in just the opposite way. They must have feared that the Japanese might preempt them, especially the reopening of China, or leak their secret to the press. So, when important things like that came along, they were inclined to totally ignore Japan. As a matter of fact, this might be understandable given the kind of difficulties Nixon had with the Japanese on such things as textiles. And Kissinger in general...he just couldn't grasp the Japanese. He didn't like their way of operating and didn't like the kind of people they were. He didn't like their indirection and, I guess, felt that he could never trust them.

Q: In his book on the White House years he talks about the Italians in somewhat the same way. He said that the Italians have a collegial government. At that time they had the same government for 40 years, it was just the seats that would change. But the point was there wasn't a person with whom he could sit and talk. And I think both Nixon and Kissinger needed to have someone they could sit and talk to and cut deals with.

ERICSON: Absolutely right. And they were engaged in Japan for a long time, convinced that there was such a guy. This is why they made their mistake with Sato. They thought the Prime Minister was a natural - who else? There were people who could have told them who else, but that would have meant taking things to a different level and they wanted to deal from the summit.

Anyway, the opening of China was done without consultation with the Japanese or with anybody else.

Q: Was this opening to China in the East Asia Bureau sort of bounced about?

ERICSON: Oh, sure. There was a big tug of war in the East Asia Bureau. There were a lot of people in the Department, China specialists primarily, who thought that it was perfectly obvious that at some point we were going to have to deal with this enormous nation, which now seemed to be pretty cohesive. Taiwan didn't seem to be less significant, but the whole history of the Chinese representation in the UN struggle was symptomatic of this trend. There were a lot of people who thought we had better find some way of accommodating. We had to know about China, we had to have contact with it. It had also, obviously, other potential great advantages to the United States. Then there were the diehards who were defending the Chinese Nationalists and their right to govern, etc. But, we did think that Nixon, being a Republican, probably would not be the one to do it. We were dead wrong, of course, because the Republicans turned out to be better positioned to do it than any Democrat possibly could have been. There was still a lot of discussion about it, yes. In the

end, however, as far as I was concerned I was totally in the dark when the actual deed occurred..

Q: Can we talk from your perspective about the Nixon shokku. How you heard about the whole announcement of the Kissinger meeting and all, and also how we dealt with this re Japan.

ERICSON: Interestingly enough, one of the sections in our NISM dealt with Japan-China-US relations. I recall that we said very strongly that if steps are ever taken to normalize relations with Mainland China, Japan's interests would have to be carefully considered and we would have to consult with them in advance, inform them in advance of our plans, in order to avoid an intensely negative reaction which might well endanger our relations with Japan. This is one thing that makes me think the NISM was never read, or if it was read, it was ignored.

I learned about these things exactly the way the rest of the American public did. I learned about the devaluation of the dollar and the floating of the dollar exchange rate, which was the other Nixon shock, the same way and they came right on the heels of each other. They were twin shocks which figured heavily in the resignation of Prime Minister Sato, who was about a good a friend of the United States as we could hope to have in Japan, and who was in all other respects a very good prime minister for the Japanese as well. We were very unhappy to see Sato go. But he lost so much face because we failed to consult. What we did, of course, was to tell him at the very last minute, just before the announcement was made public. Ambassador Meyer treats this, I think, in his book. I forget how we did it. Was it a telephone call at the last minute? Something of that kind.

Q: Is this the devaluation?

ERICSON: No, the China opening.

Q: I thought there had been a move at foot to send Alex Johnson out there.

ERICSON: Yes, that was true until it was aborted. Alex Johnson, I think, in his own book says that he was alerted to go...he actually went out to San Clemente and was told they decided not to send him on to Japan because they were afraid of leaks. They were paranoid about leaks at the time and they didn't trust the Japanese.

Q: Was there reason not to trust the Japanese?

ERICSON: That is pretty hard to answer. If Japan's interests were deeply involved, it might be that they would prepare their public in some way for what was to come. So, there was some reason to believe it, but no more than any other country. But, after this business happened, the Japanese themselves began to mistrust Nixon and Kissinger deeply. We had other episodes where the Japanese did leak and just contributed to the spiral.

I am getting a head of things again, but there was an episode in 1973 at Thanksgiving time which illustrates these attitudes. Kissinger had been on one of his trips to Peking, where you recall he exulted in basking in the sunshine of great power and authority centered on just two or three people in a room and the whole world looking on. Bernard Gwertzman of the 'New York Times' had written a column saying that Peking is where Kissinger really feels at home, that it is with men like Zhou En-lai and the other Chinese leaders that he feels comfortable, able to really sit back and discuss the great problems of the cosmos and expand his horizons with his intellectual equals, whereas he can barely stand some other Asian leaders with whom he is forced to deal. And, of course, this was written on the airplane between Peking and Tokyo and was filled with quotes from a senior State Department official. Anyone reading it would know who that was...this was Henry himself talking, and he was probably unloading about the Japanese when he spoke about his preference for with the Chinese. Of course, Japanese aren't fools, and they read this column. The column was filed immediately from Tokyo and was in the newspapers the next day. Kissinger was still in Tokyo and met with the Japanese in the morning. I don't remember what the issue was. He had Jim Wickel - the Embassy's interpreter - for a change because he was on an official visit. There was an exchange of views between

Kissinger and the Japanese with which the Japanese were not really pleased. But after he departed, the Japanese briefed the press on what what Kissinger felt had been said in total confidence. It appeared in the Japanese press and the 'New York Times' and 'Time' magazine picked it up. The 'Times' ran an item which said that on Tuesday, 'Time' magazine will report that Kissinger and the Japanese had had this discussion and this dispute, etc. and the Japanese were reported to be very unhappy. The 'Times' did not say this, it said that 'Time' magazine was going to report the Japanese unhappiness.

Well, Kissinger got back to Washington and read all these things and became furious that the contents of confidential conversation were discussed in public before he had a chance to do a report. So he called the Japanese Ambassador in, it was Yasukawa, one of the Japan's least effective ambassadors, on Thanksgiving Day - and called me in too, to take notes. Kissinger read Yasukawa as blistering a diatribe as I have ever heard. He castigated Yasukawa in no uncertain terms and asked, 'Why the hell can't you people keep these matters confidential? Every time I go to Japan, somebody leaks like this. You treat me terribly. You can't be trusted.' I remember he pounded the table and said, 'I am going to turnover all our the dealings with Japan to Bob Ingersoll - he apparently can get along with you people and you people can get along with him, but you can't with me. You can tell your people back in Tokyo that I will never, never go back to Tokyo and be subjected to this kind of treatment.' Ingersoll was then the Deputy Secretary

It went on in that vein. I asked Yasukawa when I saw him some time later whether he ever reported Kissinger's remarks, and he said no. But it was a rather nasty dressing down. Kissinger also asked at one point if there had been a problem with the interpreter, had Wickel misinterpreted what he had to say? Yasukawa started to answer and at that point I intervened and said, 'Mr. Secretary, I would like to speak to you about that question after the meeting, if I might.' I did that to forestall Yasukawa's answer because I thought he might say some things that would make it very difficult for Jim in the future. The Japanese did not like Wickel as an interpreter. He was very precise, methodical, and careful. He could repeat whole conversations an hour and a half after they took place after reading

a few squiggles on his notepad. He could do it in Japanese and he could do it in English. His Japanese was very formal and stiff and old fashioned, but it was very precise and the Japanese didn't like this quality very well. And besides, he had been there for so long. Jim had been interpreting for years and years and knew where all the bodies were buried. The Japanese would prefer to deal with just their own interpreter and it was well known that the Japanese Foreign Office people didn't really want Wickel. I wanted to forestall this because Wickel was an enormously valuable asset to us.

Anyway, Kissinger rewarded my presumption with a dirty look and did not pursue the question. But when the meeting was over, Kissinger said to me, 'You take the ambassador downstairs and then you come back.' When I came back, he asked me what that was all about. I explained and he then said, 'Why do they treat me like they do? What is all this?' I told him frankly. I said, 'You probably have read Gwertzman's column. They are not fools; they know who is saying what on the airplane and who is being talked about.' I pointed out to him that his attitude towards them was apparent to the Japanese and they didn't respond to it very well. He did not like that at all and pursued other questions. He asked about Ambassador Ushiba, Yasukawa's predecessor. “Why was he always wanting to see me, he was all over me. He gave me weiner schnitzel, Austrian food, when I did go to lunch at his embassy. What the hell is this, I would like to see some Japanese food! What was he trying to do, butter me up or something?' I told him, 'Dr. Kissinger, the Japanese Ambassador to Washington has one perk that is absolutely solid and firm. He can select some of his own staff, but the one person he can pick as his chef. Ushiba was raised in the German stream of the Japanese Foreign Office. He has been stationed in Austria and Germany and loves German food and that is why he serves it. It has very little to do with you.'

Anyway, Kissinger was scarcely mollified; he didn't like that explanation very much either. We discussed other things of this nature, but they all revealed a total lack of understanding what Japan was all about and how they did things. I said, 'Ushiba was trying to see you all the time because it is the Japanese Ambassador's job to win American confidence

and to be able to keep his government informed on what we are likely to do that will embarrass them. Ushiba has a reputation of being able to do that but it was on his beat that the opening of Peking occurred and the devaluation, Nixon's two shocks, which were cataclysmic in Japan. And Ushiba was determined that this would never happen again as long as he was here.' He didn't last all that much longer. Ushiba had gone by that time, but Kissinger was worrying that old bone, asking why Ushiba had pestered him. Yashikawa didn't have the moxie to do the same, so he was much less of a problem to Kissinger.

Anyway, we did not hear much from Kissinger in the ordinary course of events.When Sato fell, he was replaced by Kakuei Tanaka. Sato was a very urbane and accomplished Japanese-style politician, sort of the old school. He had paid a lot of attention to foreign affairs along the way and he was good at it. He had a rather broad understanding of Japan's problems. He was replaced by what we would call a ward heeler. Tanaka came from a province up in the north and was a rough and tumble politician. He was into all kinds of financial finagling, as any Japanese faction leader has to be, but he had taken over a fairly good size faction and had built it up, basically by expanding his financial capabilities to provide for his cohorts. He had been able to succeed to the prime ministership by forming a coalition with another major Japanese factional leader, Masayoshi Ohira, who was first Tanaka's Foreign Minister and later became prime minister. Anyway, the two of them had the two largest factions after Sato's defeat, and mustered enough votes to get Tanaka elected as president of the party which carries the prime ministership with it.

Nixon and Kissinger originally didn't want to have anything to do with Tanaka. There was no interest. Tanaka sent out feelers for meetings and was rebuffed and then, I don't know exactly how it happened, but one day the White House simply said, 'We want to meet Tanaka.' Okay, so negotiations were put in train and the question of where to became an issue. Tanaka wanted to come to Washington. Nixon didn't want that. He was going to be out in San Clemente about then and he thought it would be nice to go on out to Hawaii. After a lot of palaver it was decided that Hawaii would do. Then Nixon wanted to hold it at

the Kuilima resort way up on the northern tip of Oahu and the Japanese, of course, wanted to have it down in Honolulu. Each had his own peculiar reason. Nixon because Del Webb owned Kuilima and it was a nice relaxed place with beach and beautiful golf course far from Honolulu. The Japanese wanted to be in Honolulu because a Tanaka friend owned a major hotel on Waikiki and they could block off the top three floors and have the kind of party they couldn't have in Tokyo. It was finally agreed that Tanaka would spend the first night in Hawaii and the next night in Kuilima and the last night in Honolulu, but that the meetings would all take place in Kuilima. So we started putting together a briefing book for Nixon and Kissinger about all our mutual problems and we saw this as a great opportunity to educate them. Of course, our agent had to be Bill Rogers, the Secretary of State.

Well, we got the thing together...Marshall Green went out for that meeting and Alex Johnson and Bob Ingersoll, the Ambassador in Tokyo and Kissinger. I took Steve Dawkins from the Desk. The Japanese fielded Tanaka, Ohira, Ushiba, Okawara, It was a pretty impressive gathering of people in many ways. Nixon and Kissinger had flown out to San Clemente earlier and Rogers and the State Department staff flew out later and were billeted at Newport Beach, a fair distance from Casa Pacifica, as Nixon called his residence. Symbolic. Green and I thought this flight would be a good time to brief Rogers, but he decided that he wanted to sleep all the way to California, which he did. The plane had a bunk bedroom. We thought we would get him that evening before he met with the President and his people the next day. That night the Olympic gymnastics were on TV and we all had to go to Rogers suite to watch Nadia Comenice. No briefing. Rogers wasn't expected at San Clemente until two o'clock, so we thought we surely we might brief Rogers that morning. But he wanted to play golf.. So we played golf. When he finally got on the airplane he had not been briefed at all and I don't think he had read his briefing book. We finally briefed him at breakfast the following morning after we had arrived in Kuilima.

It was later alleged that the most important thing that was discussed at this meeting, and to this day many Japanese believe it firmly, was the Lockheed Aircraft contract with Japan

that later became a political scandal. Anyway, that may or may not have taken place. I do not know. Lockheed was not, as I recall, one of the subjects covered in the briefing material. We were given to understand that Nixon wanted to meet Tanaka to size him up. This was not to be a meeting about issues. It was supposed to be a get acquainted meeting. And that is while they chose an informal place like Kuilima. But Kissinger and Nixon may have had a private agenda, and this might well explain why they insisted on opening by meeting in private with only Tanaka and Ushiba presenthought it important not only that we get a good look at Tanaka but that the American leaders get a good look at Japan and the way it functions. So I wrote a memorandum which we sent over to the White House and which I am sure Kissinger and Nixon never saw. It said in effect that appearances will be terribly, terribly important here.

How you handle the Japanese will determine the success of this meeting. Success depends on how well we show that we understand Japan and the way its power structure functions. I said that it was terribly important in this context that you treat Ohira as a virtual equal to Tanaka.. After all he and the prime minister have forged what is in effect a two man alliance and brought other people along to form this government. But they are both strictly politicians. Each of them has a major faction in the LDP, an independent power base, but neither could survive at this level without the other. The foreign minister expects to be the next prime minister. Tanaka, who is the prime minister now, depends greatly on this man for political support. Tanaka also will depend on him to handle foreign affairs, where Tanaka has no background. He has been an internal man all his life. He has devoted his whole career to domestic politics and he has never met with foreigners. He has had a man on his staff, who is usually unavailable, all the time he has been in the Diet to deal with foreigners and foreign problems. He is not on record really on any foreign policy issues, is pretty much an unknown quantity and probably doesn't want to do much in the foreign affairs field. He would much rather leave it to the foreign minister, and the Foreign Ministry professionals. I said that it was very important to avoid appearing to deal

solely with the prime minister because that will only offend Ohira, who should be included in any top-level conversations..

At Kuilima, when the meetings were called on the first day, Kissinger announced that it was the President's wish that Tanaka and Ushiba meet in a private session with the President and him - just the four of them. Ushiba was presumably included to balance Kissinger's own presence, and they may have felt that Ohira should chair the Japanese side of the secondary meeting as Rogers' counterpart , but there was never an explanation for this strange protocol. Kissinger added that Rogers and the foreign minister would preside over a meeting on separate issues in another room. This was really loony because it left Rogers and the foreign minister without a hell of a lot to say. There had been no preparation, no agenda, no clearance of topics with the Japanese for either meeting - it was all going to have to be ad hoc. We had a lot of things to talk about in the secondary meeting, but since neither Ohira nor Rogers were up to speed on any of them, Marshall Green, Ingersoll and Alex Johnson did most of the talking, and the Japanese listened a lot. But that whole day was like that, morning and afternoon. We never were told what had gone on in the senior meeting since Nixon and Kissinger were the only ones present on our side. Ohira came out of that day with smoke coming from his ears. He was deeply offended.

Nixon hosted dinner that evening around a large square table. He and Tanaka sat together on one side, and Rogers and the foreign minister were together on the opposite side, with Kissinger on Ohira's right at the corner of the table. There were four to a side, as I recall. I was around the corner with Okawara on my right. Ohira sat with his right shoulder away from Kissinger throughout most of the entire dinner and spoke hardly a word to him. Kissinger was left to either shout across the table or to talk to Okawara or me.

As the dinner progressed I became uncomfortable because Kissinger was obviously irritated by the Ohira's behavior. Finally I said to him, 'Mr. Secretary, do you know why he is doing this?” And he said in effect, “Why?” I said, “Because he is offended at having

been left out of the principal's meeting." (The Japanese were given no choice, they were told who would go.) "He is terribly offended. You have to remember that this man is an enormously important politician in Japan, as important as Tanaka. He expects to be the next prime minister and expects to handle foreign relations in this cabinet.. I wrote you a memo on this situation. Tanaka will rely on him for advice and Tanaka is probably in a quandary now, if you have been talking about anything important, because he his background is skimpy. The main point is that you have insulted...this man feels terribly insulted, is angry and is holding you responsible." He looked at Okawara, a very tall fellow with a prominent Adam's apple, and said, "Is that right?" And Okawara swallowed visibly and said, "Yes." So Kissinger lapsed into silence for a while and then conversation resumed. After dinner he went over to Ingersoll and said something to the effect that he would be doing something tomorrow which would probably make Ingersoll little uncomfortable, but he didn't explain what it was.

So the next day when the meetings convened, they convened in exactly the same way they had the previous day. The President, Kissinger, Tanaka and the Japanese Ambassador...Ohira was on the outside again. But ten minutes into our discussion, a messenger came from the other room to say that the President and the Prime Minister would like to invite the Foreign Minister and the Secretary of State to join them. And they did. This apparently was what Kissinger had in mind when he spoke to Ingersoll - that he would include the foreign minister in the next day's meeting. Not quite from the outset, but...and he had to compensate for that by including Bill Rogers too, which probably made him very uncomfortable. That left the rest of us sitting there to pass the time without even the nominal leadership of our secretary of state.

Kissinger was like that in dealing with Japan. He would not listen, he thought he knew what the score was and wanted to handle it his way.

Q: What you were supplying is the sort of thing that the American government pays for. They pay for expertise to help people. Nobody expects the National Security Council, the

President, to be up on how a government works so you pay somebody to tell you how to do this. They are suppose to be able to do quick studies and understand this and respond. This is really Kissinger in a way, because from what I gather Nixon, certainly as Vice President, knew his briefs and would take guidance well. He understood foreign affairs, was very interested in it and would say, "Okay, this is how you deal with these people," and would take guidance quite well.

ERICSON: I suspect as President he took guidance from Kissinger and Kissinger would take guidance from nobody.

Q: This is a real problem. Again and again this comes up with Kissinger who, when he really knew something he was splendid...

ERICSON: He was superb, yes.

Q: He thought he knew everything and he really didn't. It got him in trouble with the Shah, in Africa, in India, etc.

ERICSON: But it is strange, Stu, he was so gifted in so many ways that even though he was stomping all over the toes of the Japanese, they still knew what power is and respected the kind of intellect that had brought him to power. Even though they disliked him and didn't trust him, they still mightily respected him. The foreign minister's demonstration towards him was astounding to me, really, because it showed there was a real burning anger here and it could only be manifested in a silent way. As soon as he was invited in the next day he was somewhat mollified.

Q: But you were there to explain it.

ERICSON: Yes, if I hadn't been sitting there...Okawara knew what was going on but never would have raised it. If I had been running that meeting, as a matter of fact, and had been discussing something important, we probably should have started with Okawara. Had

Marshall Green, perhaps, talked with Okawara and let him put out his feelers, then the next day you could have announced something or not announced something. That is the way you deal with the Japanese. You don't get them off in a corner, first crack out of the box and try to get something out of them.

Q: Tanaka was a fairly big man, rather bluff wasn't he?

ERICSON: He was short and strongly built. His voice was bluff and rough cut.

Q: Do you think Nixon and Kissinger were looking for a man?

ERICSON: Oh, yes, and they would look at Tanaka and say, “Hey, if there ever was a likely guy this is it. This is a union boss, a strong character.” Yes, they would have looked at Tanaka and said that he was their kind of guy. They would have been wrong, although he was bluff and tougher-minded than most Japanese, but totally inexperienced in the field. He was a Japanese politician who realized what his own power structure was like, who would not have tried to act in the American way because he would have known it would have cost him dearly. They did agree to call each other Dick and Kakuei, because Nixon liked to create the illusion of having close personal relationships. But they were usually just for show and phoney, at least with Japanese.

Q: What was the problem you mentioned of the currency shock?

ERICSON: Well, we were running a major trade deficit with everybody at the time. We were having severe balance of payments difficulties. The dollar then was tied to the gold standard at about $33 to the ounce. The value of the dollar could not fluctuate, so we could not get the benefit of changing our exchange rates, and Nixon -with no warning - cut the dollar free. Of course, the Japanese were heavily dependent on the dollar. They didn't want to change the decision, although it wasn't to their advantage. They probably felt it would come about some time. They wanted to know ahead of time. Possibly because they wanted to make economic preparations of their own, but again, because the government

did not want to be embarrassed by not knowing in advance about a major decision affecting their vital interests by the only country in the world with which they had any really close ties. We never acknowledged the dependence of some of these countries on us, like Japan, in that particular period. This is the Japan of the 1970s, not the Japan of today. Korea is another such country. When America catches a cold, these countries get a real bad case of pneumonia.

Q: I have often had the feeling that the Japanese foreign ministry and its foreign service were very good economically in the country, but even today doesn't really have the outreach, the ability to deal with other countries very well. Is that right?

ERICSON: I think the economic people do very, very well. They certainly are extremely capable in terms of promoting Japanese economic interests wherever they go. The United States may be sort of an exceptional case, but the foreign ministry works in very close concert with the Finance Ministry, MITI and with the major Japanese private economic organizations to further Japanese economic interests.

Q: I really wasn't thinking about the economic side, more the political side. But I guess most everything abroad is economic.

ERICSON: A lot of it, yes. Much more so than in the United States, despite our current trade battle with Japan. A lot of their economic people go pretty far in the Foreign Ministry.

It is interesting, that during this period the Foreign Ministry was very much America-oriented. The best minds were usually in the Treaties Bureau, which has worldwide responsibilities and gets in the act on everything that is important. But the most effective operators for many, many years came out of the American Affairs Bureau. The people who were destined for very high office...you would see the succession.... went from head of the American Desk to Chief of North American Affairs to Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs to

Ambassador to the United States. That pattern held for many, many years. It doesn't hold any more.

Q: Did you find after the Nixon shock on the restitution of China and the currency devaluation that there was a major effort on the part of our Japan Desk to repair the damage?

ERICSON: We, of course, on the Desk and at the embassy...the embassy was not strongly led at the time either. Sneider was DCM and was very, very good. Bill Sherman was political counselor and was very, very good. But that kind of damage control can only come from the very top and Nixon and Kissinger really were not terribly interested in providing it. To answer your question, “Yes, the Desk tried.” We provided memos for the Secretary and the NSC staff. Made recommendations.

We did succeed during this period to in getting Nixon to make a significant gesture recognizing Japan's place in our scheme of things. We got him to fly to Anchorage to meet the Emperor, who was making the first trip abroad by any seated emperor, accompanied by the Empress. Hirohito had studied abroad as the Crown Prince, but no sitting Emperor of Japan had ever left the home islands in the history of the country. For this historic first occasion, it was decided that he would be sent to Europe to retrace his old activities as Crown Prince. We were told by the Japanese that they would like to refuel in Anchorage because they didn't have an aircraft that could fly non-stop to England. So it was arranged that he would go to Anchorage. We, on the Desk, (I think it was my idea) felt we should send somebody senior from the Government to Anchorage, where he would be putting the first imperial foot on foreign soil. Somebody suggested we try to get Nixon to do it. Marshall Green saw no problem in trying and we took it to Alex Johnson who said, “He will never do it.” But he put it to Kissinger, who surprisingly thought it was a great idea - maybe he was learning by this time - and he persuaded the President. So Nixon flew up to Anchorage and greeted the Emperor and had a discussion with him in the Commanding Officer's quarters at the airbase there, and after a couple of hours the Emperor and

Empress got back on the plane. His first overseas visit was with the President of the United States. And the Japanese media reflected pleasure and gratitude for the gesture.

We, on the Desk, did this kind of thing deliberately, although we didn't think the President would really do it. We thought somebody senior should do it because we thought we had to have this kind of recognition for the Japanese in that atmosphere.

Interestingly enough, the question arose who else was going to go on this mission. I forget who the senior State Department man on the trip was; it was not me. But we needed an interpreter for Pat Nixon so that she could speak to the Empress, because the President was meeting separately with the Emperor. We thought a female was necessary and preferably a Caucasian, not a Nisei. Bill Breer was a political officer on the desk at the time, and his wife had attended a Japanese high school on the outskirts of Tokyo and lived with a Japanese family for a couple of years and probably had as good Japanese as any Caucasian American. So we thought why not send Bill and Peggy Breer along? Peggy was scared stiff, of course, but agreed to take the assignment on. In the end they got up there and on the way in from the airport, the Empress and Pat were riding together, with Peggy and a lady in waiting sitting on jump seats. The lady in waiting was supposed to be the Empress's interpreter and said to Peggy something to the effect, “Hey, I can do French and German, but my English isn't very good.” So Peggy ended up being the interpreter both ways. Rather a unique situation. I tried to credit Bill with this on his efficiency report that year, making a brief mention that not only was he capable in his own right, but he had a wife who had done this extraordinary thing. Of course, Personnel made me omit it from the report because you are not supposed to make any remarks about wives.

Q: Who was this? Bill...

ERICSON: Bill Breer. He was later political counselor and DCM in Japan. He was the most recent DCM there. He is back now in policy planning.

Q: Did that meeting with Nixon play well in Japan?

ERICSON: Oh, yes. It had the desired effect. One of the problems was that the commanding general's quarters at the airbase were not all that resplendent. But it was done and much appreciated. That the President would fly all that way to meet the Emperor, well, that was seen as giving Japan its due. And it was done well. That was, I suppose, the major positive achievement. Well, aside from Okinawa.

Going back to the Okinawa reversion, this was in all respects... again I say that my hat is off to Alex Johnson for really shepherding this thing.... a major American diplomatic achievement. By being sensible about Okinawa, we cemented relations with Japan for a long, long time to come. Despite all the difficulties that the Nixon Administration was causing, the fact that we made a peaceful reversion of their territory did us untold good. It was a truly historic American foreign policy success, a major diplomatic coup, and an event of indescribable importance in Japan. My wife was then terribly ill so I couldn't go, but about three years ago, the summer of 1992, the Japanese held a 20th anniversary celebration of that event. They flew - first class, of course - to Japan all of the Americans that they could gather who played a significant role in that negotiation. They kept them there in Tokyo for a week and treated them to the finest hotels, meetings, plays, dinners, etc. They met with high Japanese officials and were written up extensively in Japanese newspapers. And in the United States both this event and the anniversary passed totally unnoticed, as had the reversion itself.

It was strange and I think we missed the boat here. The Japanese wanted to have the signing ceremony reflect the importance of reversion. Their idea was to hold simultaneous ceremonies in the two capitals. The Japanese Foreign Minister and the American Secretary of State would simultaneously sign copies of the treaty. That meant that the Japanese had to get the agreement ready early. They did the inscribing. The Foreign Minister signed one copy in advance and sent that copy and the unsigned copy to Washington. Rogers was to sign the second copy in advance so it could be taken

back to Tokyo. Thus when the time came Rogers would sign the one that the Foreign Minister had already signed and Aichi would sign the one that Rogers had already signed....simultaneously..... to the minute.

A very senior, self-important and terribly nervous Treaties Bureau official eventually arrived bearing the precious documents. I tried very hard to get time with Rogers so that he could sign in the presence of the appropriate American and Japanese witnesses and accept the copy Aichi had already signed, but had a hell of a time getting the appointment. Finally he agreed to see us on a Saturday morning. The Japanese appeared at the Department all decked out in suits and ties, very formal and stiff.. We went out to Rogers' house in Bethesda. There being no one to meet us, I rang the doorbell. Rogers' son answered the door, obviously surprised and puzzled to see this formal entourage. I said we were there to sign the agreement. He invited us in and went off to get his dad. We waited uncomfortably in a study for four or five minutes and then in came Rogers, in terry cloth bath robe and sandals, dripping water as he came. I can only imagine what the Japanese thought of this way of handling the occasion. We got the job done, but it was bizarre.

On the day of the official signing, the Japanese used NHK TV, the BBC of Japan, to broadcast the simultaneous ceremonies throughout Japan, using a split screen and a satellite relay. We did it up on the eight floor in the Ben Franklin area. (An aside, my wife and daughter, Charlotte, accompanied me to the ceremony...families were invited in order to get an audience for the TV cameras ...and they had the Benjamin Franklin room cleared of furniture except for two desks over in the far corner and several; rows of chairs for the other attendees. We arrived early and Charlotte, seeing this vast open expanse of thick carpet, was inspired to do cartwheels, flips and layovers the whole length of it. She may be the only child to ever have done a gymnastic routine in those austere surroundings.)

We lined up everybody that we could. We had Rogers, the Deputy Secretary and various other senior officials of the Department and the Japanese embassy. Everybody who we could lay hands on who had anything to do with it. In Japan the Foreign Ministry had all

their senior officials, all the American Embassy. The Prime Minister was also there and said a few words. But we couldn't get anybody from the White House to attend. Of course the telecast was viewed by everybody in Japan. It was given about two minutes or less on the 6 o'clock news in the US that night. That was a terrible mistake because really we had something to celebrate. The Japanese had more and made a big thing of it, but it is really illustrative, I think, of the disproportion in interest and dependency between these two countries.

Q: Were we able about that time to sort of stick it to the Soviets?

ERICSON: Well, of course, that was the underlying business in all of this. Yes, we didn't have to do that, the Japanese did it for us. Their press had many, many references to the fact that the Americans were giving Okinawa back freely...of course we didn't give it back freely, we charged them good for our infrastructure improvements, which was a source of resentment. The resentment at that was so deep .....incidentally, this payment was a first in world history. No country abandoning territory occupied by conquest has ever before been paid for the expenditures it incurred for improvements it made - mostly for the benefit of its own forces - during the period of occupation. But the Japanese agreed to pay, persuaded in part by our agreement to devote a percentage of the payments, around $13 million, to US-Japan educational and cultural exchanges. This money was subsequently appropriated to form part of the assets - the trust fund - of the Japan-US Friendship Commission, a Federal agency, and we also used what was left of the old GARIOA funds to furnish its yen endowment. The Okinawa money was available in dollars and the GARIOA funds were in blocked yen. All in all , Okinawa reversion was one of the things that I was most proud of having been associated with because I know what it meant to the relations between our two countries.

Q: On that money, was the precedent made on indemnity from the Boxer Rebellion? Did that come up? We took the money and put it into scholarships.

ERICSON: That was a useful precedent to use to obtain support from people like Jake Javits, for reversion and for the Commission as well. The fact that there was a precedent for using reparations payments for such purposes. That little Friendship Commission is still in operation, incidentally. It is unique, the only one of its kind , the only US government agencies devoted to cultural and educational exchanges with a single other country.

Another major event during my tenure on the Desk was the decision to home port naval units, notably an aircraft carrier, in Japan. I read Alex Johnson's book on this subject and he glosses over it pretty badly. The Navy was having budget problems and seeking ways to economize so as to be able to maintain x number of carriers in service.

Q: I was at the other end, I was in Athens.

ERICSON: You were on the Greek side, yes.

Q: We were opposed to that for political internal reasons. One of the reasons was...Admiral Zumwalt was in command at that time of Chief Naval Operations...the Navy had a big problem in maintaining its crews. The carriers would disappear over the horizon for something like six months and if they could home port it, it would mean the re-up rate would be better.

ERICSON: Yes, that is right. The families could accompany them and live at the home port.

Q: There were strictly naval reasons.

ERICSON: The budget was another. If you could home port a couple of carriers overseas, you could probably remain as effective with one or two fewer carriers.. What the Navy did was to inform the Department that they were going to home port two carriers overseas and that Greece and Japan had been chosen as the sites. Alex Johnson asked for a briefing and the Navy sent a three star admiral over with a whole retinue of people to brief those of

us in the Department who would be concerned with the political aspects of this decision. The Navy came prepared with a very detailed layout of what they planned to do vis-a-vis Greece, although later it didn't fly, and very little on plans for Japan.

Q: And the embassy sure as hell didn't want it because we knew it was major trouble.

ERICSON: Well, this was the first that anyone in the Department had officially heard anything about this proposal. In contrast with their thorough plan for Greece, the Navy appeared to me woefully unprepared to face the problems that would arise in Japan. They seemed to think they could just inform the Japanese at the appropriate time and go ahead and do it. The were apparently simply going to invoke what they felt were our rights under the Security Treaty. We had home ported ships in Japan before, but nothing like a carrier. Of course, the carrier we chose - the Saratoga - was large but not nuclear powered. But it was obvious that stationing such a formidable vessel in a Japanese port would raise a lot of questions on which both we and the Japanese Government would have to take a lot of heat. With what weapons is it equipped , how does it fight its battles? Are there nuclear weapons on board? How many additional personnel will this require to live on land and where will they be billeted? Does this mean additional base areas will be required , and will it delay return of facilities already earmarked for return? Into what crowded area will those noisy aircraft be deployed when the carrier is in port? It was perfectly obvious that putting a carrier there didn't just mean dropping an anchor in port. It meant moving hordes of people, many, many dependents requiring all kinds of services and space and housing, etc. They said this was all to be done in the context of the Navy's present holdings in Japan Well, the Navy's present holdings included areas that they had promised to return to Japanese control very soon, mostly housing areas of great value in the Yokohama area. There were all kinds of questions, but the major one, of course, was always nuclear weapons.

The Navy briefers were quite casual about it all, and I got rather agitated and said that it can't be done without consulting the Japanese from the word go. It was more than just

putting a carrier and a lot of families over there for our convenience. It introduces serious political problems with Japan. The whole prefecture of Kanagawa is going to scream about not getting back all the land areas with the housing that they had been promised and the specter of nuclear weapons was going to arise.

That brought up a matter of some delicacy, the one thing that I said had to be taken care of. As a matter of fact, that was the one useful outcome of the Kuilima meeting. Alex Johnson did reach an understanding in a private meeting with Ohira that both governments would conform to previous practices with respect to nuclear weapons. I was not present. I don't know if the foreign minister knew what he was talking about, but he found out later. It has always been our practice and policy never to confirm or to deny the presence of nuclear weapons anywhere, anytime. And when the question has arisen in Japan, we have maintained that we do not violate that section of the Security Treaty which bars the introduction of nuclear weapons into Japan. And successive Japanese Governments have always asserted their confidence in the United States on this subject..And both sides have limited themselves to that.. But when you are putting something like a front-line aircraft carrier into Yokosuka you have to have some assurance that, since its mere presence is going to raise this question, the Japanese Government will behave as they have in the past. .

But all that had to be done, I felt, and I raised hell at that meeting. I told the Vice Admiral that the Navy's non-plan would just just not do, that we had to do much more preparation with Japan. This does not adequately convey the atmosphere of that meeting but Admiral Zumwalt, then CNO, called Johnson afterwards to tell him that he should do something with that obstructionist son of a bitch he had working for him. Johnson called me up and said, “What the hell have you been up to?” I told him and said, “I am not being an obstructionist son of a bitch; I would like to see it fly. I think it has purpose and would serve our long range interests. But it has got to be done in such a manner that it doesn't damage us. That is all I am trying to do.”

In the end, Johnson did his thing and the Navy also did the necessary. We negotiated with the Japanese on the retention of the housing and all the rest of it and they crossed their fingers and took the carrier. It it was home ported. This was typical of the way the Department can be useful in situations like this, because without our intervention I think the Navy would have cheerfully gotten us into a hell of a lot of hot water.

We also had a lot of problems with naval submarines in Okinawa and in Yokosuka allegedly discharging, God help us, radioactive coolant into sacred Japanese waters. Of course these were totally false alarms, but the Japanese had little boats circling our visiting submarines, with scientists scooping up water for testing. There were headlines in the newspapers about the alleged presence of radioactive particles, something that was almost entirely undetectable. Admiral Rickover, of course, jumped up and down and said, “Never, never, it couldn't happen, they are doing it themselves!” It was sort of another episode like Ambassador Reischauer's hepatitis...the Japanese could never have admitted error on their part. But, anyway, those things blew over. They caused us problems but were handled reasonably well. The submarines after some difficulty continued to call at Japanese ports. We never sent a missile sub in, of course. These were hunter killer types that were nuclear powered, and the Japanese accepted that. The nuclear question has always been a matter of great sensitivity and I think it continues to be right down to this day.

Q: Were there any issues during this 1972-73 period dealing with what the Soviets were up to? Were we monitoring what the Soviets were doing?

ERICSON: The EC21 incident, that was North Korea. If there was, frankly I can't remember.

Q: Maybe we should stop now and pick up next time on South Korea.

ERICSON: I went from the Japan Desk to DCM in Seoul. Interestingly enough, I got my orders for Seoul one week after my unpleasant Thanksgiving Day 1973 conversation with Kissinger. We did not part cheerfully that day, but I think my transfer was just a coincidence..... I was overdue.

Q: What was the general feeling at the working level about Rogers? Was he thought not to account for much?

ERICSON: Yes, that was the feeling about Bill Rogers. The nicest man in the world. Pleasant, affable, agreeable, kindly. He was not unintelligent by any means. He had been Secretary for a year and a half before I arrived on the Desk and he left some time in 1972. Then Kissinger became Secretary of State. As long as I was there with Rogers it was perfectly apparent, at least as far as Japan was concerned, he was not in the loop. The tip off was...a man who would not even seek to be briefed until breakfast of the day the meeting started. Maybe he was not to be blamed. He probably knew that he would not be playing a significant role.

Q: What was Alex Johnson?

ERICSON: He was the Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

Q: So in a way as far as Japanese policy was concerned he was pretty much the top person.

ERICSON: Yes. Alex was enormously busy during that period, stretched very thin..

Q: Did you get a feeling about the relationship between Kissinger and Johnson?

ERICSON: Yes. Johnson and Kissinger did not see eye-to-eye on much of anything. Kissinger, I think, respected Johnson a great deal but didn't want any part of him. Johnson

saw too much of the big picture on everything and would have been too much of a brake on some of Kissinger's activities.

Q: In many ways he was the only rival in the government to Kissinger.

ERICSON: Well, yes, in terms of the State Department. He was Mr. State Department because...I was trying to think, Bob Ingersoll was the Deputy Secretary having been brought back from being Ambassador to Japan for the last year I was there. Who was Deputy Secretary before him? I can't think of the name.

Q: Nor can I.

ERICSON: He wasn't particularly involved with Japan. Well, anyway, Johnson was the senior Foreign Service Officer and we went through him, to him, on everything. And then he decided how to play a given problem between Rogers and Kissinger and the White House staff, if it was necessary to deal at that level.

Q: All right, then the next time we pick this up we will start with going to South Korea.

Q: Today is June 5, 1995. Dick, we are starting with Seoul. It was perfectly logical for you to go to Korea as Deputy Chief of Mission, but I would have thought even more so for you to go to Tokyo. How did that play?

ERICSON: Well, I had been on the Japan Desk for over three years, which was then the record for longevity on the Desk. I was looking for an overseas assignment and would have gone happily to either Tokyo or Seoul.

Q: What years are we talking about?

ERICSON: We are talking about 1973, when I was looking for an overseas assignment. I returned in 1970, the big job was the Okinawa Reversion, and that had been done and I was looking around. Tokyo simply was not open. Tom Shoesmith was the DCM and had

only been on the job for a year or so. Frankly, having recently been Political Counselor in both places, a lot of people find this hard to believe, I preferred Seoul. I found Seoul professionally a much more lively, much more interesting, more challenging kind of a place and frankly much easier to work in.

Q: I would think so. One, you are talking about a big stratified place, the other place you could freewheel.

ERICSON: That's exactly right. You could freewheel in Seoul and because of the American position in Korea, Koreans at all levels vied for American support, vied for the impression that they were close to the Americans and were perfectly willing to discuss some of the most intimate details of their political situation. For a political officer this was absolutely great. Tokyo, on the other hand, as you put it so well, was stratified, formal, very much a closed society in many ways and an enormous place with a huge variety of interests. The position of the United States in Tokyo was not anything like the way it was in Seoul. Besides, Seoul had a golf course right in the middle of the city, and other things of that kind.

Habib was the ambassador in Seoul at that point. He had had a very serious heart attack some months before, although he was apparently recovering quite well. I looked forward to the opportunity of working for him also. Ingersoll had returned and become Deputy Secretary in the Department. He was a businessman and a very fine ambassador. He had been replaced by another political appointee, Jim Hodgson, who simply did not appear to be as appealing a person to work with or for as Phil Habib.

Q: Former Secretary of Labor was he?

ERICSON: Yes, he had been Under Secretary of Labor, I think. He had been in a previous cabinet.

Q: So you went to Seoul when?

ERICSON: I received my orders shortly after my meeting with Kissinger on Thanksgiving Day, 1973, stayed home for Christmas and reached Seoul in late December. I knew Habib was going to be absent and that Frank Underhill, my predecessor, was under pressure to leave to take up his new job as ambassador to Malaysia. So I was told I had to get out there before the end of the calendar year. Underhill stayed for a week or two and then I became Charg# while Habib finished his home leave.

Q: We are talking now about early 1974. As you got out there two things: What was the political situation in South Korea as you saw it? And what were the American interests at that time?

ERICSON: It was complicated. The political situation in Seoul had changed from the time I had left in 1968. Park Chung Hee had made his decision to remain in power, which was still up in the air when I left in 1968, although there was a lot of speculation about it. In 1972 he had forcibly changed the 1963 constitution and replaced it with the Yushin constitution, which in effect gave him the right to run for reelection in perpetuity. And he had consolidated his position very considerably. In 1968 he was still playing factions within his own support group against each other - playing a kind of divide and conquer role between Kim Chong-pil and his supporters and members of his younger military group on the one hand and a motley collection of senior LDP politicians, retired military people, business types and North Koreans, a loose coalition held together primarily by their animosity toward KCP. Chong Il-kwon was thought to be on the fringes of that group. By 1974, Park had pretty much taken care of that internal rivalry, having consolidated his power to the point where he felt it was no longer necessary to put up a counterweight to any potentially threatening support group. As a matter of fact, he had taken on KCP as prime minister. He also wasn't worrying so much about the opposition. The NDP was under somewhat better control and he had found systems and ways of controlling the students and their demonstrating propensities.

He was at that time, I suppose, in about as strong control as he had ever been, but there were problems on the horizon. One of them was the withdrawal from Vietnam and what that meant to Korea. Another one was economic dislocations which weren't looming, they were actually present. The world wide petroleum crisis of the early '70s. Another one, of course, was a rather pervasive questioning of the American commitment to Korea because of the US withdrawal in Vietnam.

Economically the country seemed to have adjusted fairly well to the oil crisis, but it had obviously cost them dearly in terms of energy supplies since South Korea had no energy resources of any kind at all, other than imported petroleum. This inspired certain thoughts about nuclear power and all of its advantages and also set them off on a desperate search for oil resources of their own.

Q: Had American interests changed at all?

ERICSON: I think the administration was deeply concerned about maintaining our security position in Asia in the face of congressional and popular disillusionment with the whole Vietnam episode and American involvement overseas. This took the form of major threats to our assistance programs, for example, which affected Korea directly. But our problem was how to maintain American security interests in northeast Asia and the rather shaky US-Japan-Korea cooperative mode in the face of this kind of thing.

It was hard to convince Koreans that our security commitment remained as firm as ever after the Vietnam pull out, to which, incidentally, we made them a party. It cut rather more deeply in Korea than it did virtually in any other Asian country, because they had to withdraw their own forces, two divisions and a brigade, and it was not very pleasant for them to leave the field as they did.

Q: Could you talk a little about that because this is sort of lost in history—when they started to pull out and what happened?

ERICSON: Of course they started to pull in their horns after we told them to lighten up on their harsh tactics while I was in Seoul the first time. They went down there with the idea that they were going to kill communists and they would kill anybody else who stood in their way. Some of their tactics were a little extreme and, as I think I told you in the last interview, we at one time requested formally that they be less aggressive in ridding their territory of communists. And after that Vietnam developed into a considerable economic advantage for Korea...they kept on taking casualties, don't misunderstand me, they did their job but they were not taking anywhere like the casualties they did in the early days, nor were they giving anything like the number of casualties. They settled down to see how they could exploit , it seems to me, their presence in Vietnam. The overseas remittances, payment of their troops in Vietnam, were a significant part of Korean foreign exchange earnings. However, they also learned how to exploit their presence Vietnam by sending construction firms and civilian construction personnel down there. In the 1965-68 period, it was the individual who went down to work for Morrison-Knudsen who sent the money back to his family. They were not all that active in terms of corporate activity. But by 1973 Korean firms had appeared in Vietnam as contractors in their own name, employing exclusively Koreans and doing a fair amount of construction and maintenance work in Vietnam in support of the war effort and, of course, being paid by the United States to do so. They were a bargain, I think. The Koreans did excellent work and much more cheaply than most anyone else - including Americans - who could have done it.

So, by early 1974, foreign exchange earnings from the Vietnam operation had in large part offset some of the difficulties they had had from the oil crisis. Thus the loss of Vietnam was more than just a military and psychological defeat for ROK, it threatened also a major part of their overseas economic activities. But it didn't cause them to collapse because by that time their skills had been developed to the point where Koreans began to take construction jobs all through Asia and South Asia. And, in the next three or four years, we saw them cropping up all through the Arab world, for example, particularly in Saudi Arabia, where they earned a great deal more than they did from their South Vietnam operations.

Q: Now, you arrived beginning of 1974 just when South Vietnam was collapsing under attacks from North Vietnam.

ERICSON: We didn't pull out of Vietnam for another year.

Q: Oh, yes, 1975, April 1975.

ERICSON: But it was obvious that things were winding down because that whole period was devoted to the Vietnamization of the war and that involved...well, not until the very end did it involve us going to the Koreans and asking them to contribute equipment to the South Vietnamese army and air force to enable permit them - in theory -to - defend their country by themselves. We eventually did that. We asked ROK to give them a fair number of Northrop F-5s. We promised to compensate them, of course, by providing them with better fighters.

Q: Was this to sort of by-pass Congress?

ERICSON: Well, nothing could have been done without congressional approval, of course, but congress was very critical of everything we were doing in Vietnam, including the involvement of the Koreans in this kind of scheme. Congress was threatening not to continue the aid programs at their previous levels and this in turn threatened our ability to compensate the Koreans, making them antsy to release that equipment, although they did.

Q: When did the Koreans start pulling out their troops and how did that play? Was that during your time?

ERICSON: The main body of their forces left Vietnam before the great debacle, of course. By the time of the Vietnamese collapse, the Koreans were long gone. I honestly don't remember, Stu, exactly when the two divisions and the marine brigade were withdrawn. There were withdrawals all through that period. The Korean troop presence was being drawn down rather rapidly. There was still something of a Korean presence in April,

because the Koreans did send their two LSTs down at the time of the pull out from Saigon , in order to take back everything that remained of their effort in Vietnam, including personnel . They also took a fair number of Vietnamese on these LSTs on their final trip back to Seoul. They put them in a concentration camp because they didn't know what else to do with them. They made this humanitarian gesture and then suddenly realized they had taken some unassimilable people into their midst. They assumed the Vietnamese would all go to the United States, but it didn't appear that it was going to happen quite that easily.When a newsman asked one of these Vietnamese refugees how the trip back had gone, had they been treated well by the Koreans, he said, “Yes, but it was a little rough sleeping out on the deck all the time.” The reporter asked, “Why were you sleeping out on the deck, why didn't you sleep down in the hold?” “Well, it was full of cars and the Koreans didn't want us down there.” Apparently the Koreans loaded the holds with every modern vehicle they could lay their hands on and had brought them back to Korea for disbursement through whatever means the powers to be saw fit. They evidently treated their Vietnamese guests rather well, but didn't allow them to sleep in the cars.

That was sort of typical of the way the Koreans operated in the final days in Vietnam. They had turned into PX raiders. They were allowed to ship a certain amount of appliances home and Koreans in Vietnam were buying television sets and refrigerators, etc. through the PX that they would never use in Vietnam, but they were all sending them all home.

Anyway, they changed their reputation from an overly enthusiastic fighters to overly enthusiastic PX raiders. But this only reflected what Korean wives were doing back home..

Q: Did you get involved in explaining what was happening...we are talking about April 1975 when the whole thing collapsed there? How did that impact on our operations in Seoul?

ERICSON: Well, we didn't make a great deal of it. The Koreans knew what was going on, they were part of it. They had very close relationships with the American military and got a lot of information through American military channels. They were also working

frantically in Washington. It was a period of high activity on the part of the Korean embassy in Washington, with congressmen and the Department. So they didn't need much in the way of individual explanations from the embassy.

All I can remember about that period in 1975 was that there was a severe loss of confidence in the United States and a palpable change of the attitude of most Koreans towards the United States when that pullout was finally announced and the pictures of the helicopters taking off from the embassy became available in Korea .

Again, going back to the earlier period, they thought they knew how to fight in Vietnam and they saw the United States as choosing not to fight, the way the fighting had to be done in Asia against Asian communists. When we finally pulled out they began to wonder if they were to be next. That persisted throughout the rest of my tour in Korea. The Koreans constantly sought reassurance that the United States commitment to them was going to remain firm and even when it was given they didn't entirely believe it. They set about to ensure their own security as best they could.

Q: Habib really wasn't there much while you were there, was he?

ERICSON: Well, no. He left for the Department to become Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs in August and I will go into that a little bit later. In the period between January and August he was absent and I was Charg# a fair amount of the time. I forget what it was that took Phil away. He was, of course, on home leave at first and then in the spring, when we had a succession of significant congressional visits, he was away and I had the honor of escorting various congressmen up to the Blue House to hear President Park on the subject of US-Korean relations. But Phil did leave finally in August and was replaced by Sneider, who came in in September.

Q: Talk about the congressional and public perception of the Park Chung Hee government because wasn't this a time when there was an increasing criticism of the situation there?

ERICSON: Park took the first step in the series of actions that revived such criticism shortly after I became Charg#, brand new and wet behind the ears, in January, 1974. No sooner had Underhill departed when Kim Dong-jo called me in. He was then Foreign Minister, having just returned after a tour as Ambassador in Washington. He told me that within the next two days or so the president would institute emergency measures, which were provided for under the Yushin constitution. The emergency measures provision gave the president authority to proclaim a state of emergency and to take virtually any action, such as arresting people deemed a threat to the national security - for almost any cause - without warrants, holding them without trial and various other unpleasant things. Kim said that Park was very disturbed over the situation in Saigon and the loss of public support for Vietnam, at the unrest on college campuses, the anti-Park activism within the religious community, and the opposition's stridency and intransigence in the national assembly. The North Koreans, viewing these signs, were obviously ready to capitalize. The country was in greater danger than it had been for a long, long time and emergency measures under these situations were justified. He asked what the response of the United States government and the attitude of the American people might be towards such a move.

It was kind of a heavy load to place before a brand new Charg#. I told him that I would certainly transmit the information to Washington for any official comment our government might be disposed make, but speaking on a personal basis I felt that the reaction would be almost universally negative, that this would be seen by the opponents of Korea as unjustifiable, and that Korea's supporters in the US would have very little ammunition with which to deal with charges that the ROK government was guilty of oppression and violating human rights and that sort of thing. I said our response would probably be quite negative. Kim obviously expected exactly that.

My message went off to Washington. We did eventually express dismay to thethat they felt such a step was necessary and I believe we asked them to keep the emergency measures in effect for as short a period as possible. But they went their merry way. The president did

promulgate his emergency measures and he did take action under them. I don't recall if he did immediately, but they did begin arresting the most obviously dissidents under the guise of maintaining a strong defensive posture and preserving national unity in the face of a growing communist threat.

When Habib returned it was a fait accompli. He obviously expressed his views, as they would have expected, personally but not officially.

Q: Who were some of the public opponents that you might say the American public fixed on and how were they being treated?

ERICSON: Many of them had an affiliation with the Christian church and were the most vociferous opponents of the Park regime. Two men in particular come to mind. One was a well-known poet - Kim Chi-ha - who had committed the grave sin of publicly expressing his attitude toward Park and his government in no uncertain terms. He was promptly jailed for violations of the emergency measures and became a cause celebre in the US. He was going to be tried but his trial, it seems to me, hung fire for a long, long time. I don't remember the ending. Park's policy towards these things was to let the courts decide what the punishment was going to be and then to reduce it and make himself look a little better in the process. The courts, of course, were eager to please him; it seemed that if you were arrested and charged with something of this nature you were ipso facto guilty and the courts were going to find you so and give you a rather stiff sentence, which under these provisions could include death. But Park would always alter the sentence, reduce it, and the person involved generally would not serve anything like the amount of time he had originally been sentenced to. But this poet's trial hung fire for a long time and provided a lot of ammunition for the opposition elements to base their protests on. His case was always raised by Congressmen who came to visit at the time.

The other was Kim Tong-kil. There was this sister and brother team, very well known scholars. She - Kim Okay-kil - was the president of Ehwa University...

Q: Which was the equivalent of Smith, Vassar and Bryn Mawr all rolled into one.

ERICSON: At that time the largest women's college in the world in terms of student enrollment. It was a Methodist-affiliated school founded by American missionaries. Kim Tong-kil was professor of American studies or history at Yonsei, another church-affiliated university. He had the temerity to give a speech in which he referred sarcastically to Park's authoritarian ways of doing business and questioned the legitimacy of his rule. The speech had been given a lot of attention in the press because Kim was a very senior scholar, a class which enjoys very high status in Confucian societies like Korea. Kim was not an activist oppositionist member, really. But he has questioned the legitimacy of Park's claim to rule, something certain to raise Park's ire. Park would accept criticism of all kinds on any policy issue, but would not brook the slightest question on this subject. Kim's remarks were deemed punishable under the emergency measures. You could not criticize the president under the emergency measures. The emergency measures purported to say that you could not criticize the constitution, meaning the Yushin constitution, and you could not advocate the overthrow of the ROK government. But these were pretty broadly interpreted. If you were criticizing the president, you were advocating the overthrow of the government. Anyway, Kim was thrown in jail and given a sentence for something like 20 years. He was put into solitary confinement and not permitted any visitors. And his plight drew the attention of a lot of American scholars and visiting Congressmen.. Rather ironically it was probably Kim who probably provided Park with much of the information Park used in his attempts to persuade visiting American congressmen that what he was doing was right and necessary because the situation was akin to that faced by Lincoln during the Civil War. Kim was above all a Lincoln scholar and may well have educated Park about Lincoln's suspension of habeas corpus, and the arrests without warrants of American dissidents during that period. Park was very fond of throwing this at every American visitor who tried to persuade him to be less repressive.

So, there were these two famous people, but also many members of opposition groups - including religious groups - who were picked up, put in jail, detained for a period of time and then usually released fairly soon. But they did go to jail and the fact that they were in jail inspired protest demonstrations by their support groups..

Q: What was the embassy role in these cases?

ERICSON: Let me say one word about Sneider and the missionaries first. Richard Sneider arrived as ambassador in September, 1974, about a month after Habib had left. Sneider was very capable in many, many respects. He had a wider breadth of interest than Habib and he got into more aspects of embassy operation than Habib. But he came primed to be an active ambassador, and at his first meeting with the American missionaries, which they requested in order to present their views on the human rights violations of the Park regime, Sneider chose to deliver a lengthy exposition of his own thoughts on the importance of the ROK to the US, the security threats in northeast Asia and the difficulties inherent in operating in this kind of an atmosphere, etc. He emphasized his concern about human rights but said it all had to be balanced, etc. This didn't go over too well with the missionaries, who tended to be one dimensional in their thinking. The fact that Sneider left before they had time to deliver their own views also rankled. Sneider had another appointment and left after about an hour and a half, during which he did most of the talking. They felt cheated, and trivialized, and let it be known. It got back to the embassy very quickly that they were very unhappy and upset at this interview. So, the new administration in the embassy got off on the wrong foot with the American missionaries and it was something, as I recall, that we were really never able to overcome.

Anyway, you ask what the American embassy role was in mitigating the human rights problems. You have to remember that we had seventy five other major problems on our plate at the time, including the actual withdrawal from Vietnam and its aftermath. We also

had a horrendous problem for a while with a dangerous situation between Japan and Korea, which I will tell you about a little later.

We were not activists, did not officially press the Koreans. We did take every opportunity we could to tell every Korean that we could that we thought, that all Americans thought and the American press was certainly indicating, that what Park had done in promulgating the emergency measures and taking action under them, was excessive. Park was being overly controlling and was violating human rights. That in a democratic country or one that was working towards democracy, Americans did not expect this kind of thing to happen. This went against all of our values, all of our instincts, etc. And that it could not help but fail to influence attitudes in significant sectors of the American public, including the Congress, and the media, to develop anti-ROK government attitudes and that this in turn would impinge heavily on our material and psychological support for the Korean government in all of its doings. That it was a very negative thing and not in their interest to behave this way.

But did we go up and take Park by the lapels and say, “You can't do this kind of thing”? No.

Q: What were some of the major issues with Korea?

ERICSON: The major issue of 1974 was the ROK - Japan imbroglio. I never saw a great deal of playback from the American media on this and I have always meant to look up the newspapers of those days and see whether anybody paid any attention to it. I doubt they did. It was a bitter squabble between Japan and Korea and was a very complicated, convoluted kind of thing. There were no American correspondents stationed in Korea. Some of them came over during this period for brief visits, but I don't believe many of them reported it on a consistent basis.

It erupted over an attempt to assassinate Park, in which his wife was killed.. I think I told you in one of our earlier discussions that Park had a phobia about assassination. His fear

was an ever-present thing. And when you talk about the Park of these days you have to remember you are talking about Korea. There were people who had differing ideas and who expounded them and who made their impression on the American media, etc. But in Korea there was only one voice that counted - Park's. I often wondered how this little man - who probably stood no more than 5' 2” - in his lifters he was 5' 6” - physically tiny - how this wee man managed to...of course we short fellows all have our feelings about big tall fellows... how this little Asian Napoleon, if you will, managed to dominate the way that he did, and to maintain the discipline that he did and to gain the respect and awe and fear that he did from his countrymen. He did it by shear force of will, I guess, and by a willingness to use the control apparatus at his disposal with considerable force and promptitude. He made decisions and he didn't wait. If something went wrong, he corrected it and very quickly. People lived in fear and trembling of his displeasure, believe me. He was a tough bird to deal with.

Q: He made these periodic inspections of each department.

ERICSON: Yes. Somebody ought to do a really good study of Park someday because he really was a fascinating Asian leader. The American perception of him was of a character who spent 95 percent of his time running around the streets of Seoul beating up on dissidents, throwing them in jail, violating their human rights, and being very nasty in general. Many Koreans looked at him quit differently. They acknowledged that he was an autocratic little bastard and a very difficult man to deal with and not altogether pleasant. But few Koreans..... and it is interesting that in many discussions with American congressmen, even the most violent of his critics admitted the guy was clean, not crooked, was devoted to the improvement of the standards of living of his country and that he had accomplished miracles in this respect. And the fact of the matter is that Park spent about 95 percent of his time chasing economic and security development - primarily economic, however, because he thought that was the real basis of Korean security - and maybe 5 percent of his time chasing dissidents. But chasing the dissidents made the headlines and aroused the liberals in Congress.. The big economic headquarters of the

Korean government was right next to the embassy and during my day you would see the presidential guard and other presidential paraphernalia in the parking lot of that building two or three days a week. You knew that Park was in there, asking section chiefs what they were doing about some minor dam project way down in the Kyongsans. He had an intimate familiarity with practically every development project the government was doing.

Our AID director during the '60s - he was Park's economic mentor for a long time - would have an hour or two with Park every week during which Park would ask him how things work, what questions he should be asking, what answers he would likely get and what he should then ask. He always went two or three steps beyond what any other normal political leader would do. So people well down the line of the Korean government had as much right to fear the president's displeasure as his immediate cabinet members, because he was assiduous in pursuing his economic development program down to their level and personally. I think the astounding progress Korea made as a nation during his time - going from something in the 16th century to a modern industrial state in a couple of decades - is a tribute primarily to Park.

Park, as I say, did fear assassination inordinately. He also had a very strong anti-Japanese side. Part of this, I think, was his feeling that he had to be more anti-Japanese than most people because he had actually served the Japanese so well - as a teacher in their school system and later as an officer in the Japanese army. He also had gotten involved with two major problems with the Japanese. He was responsible - and was either condemned or praised for it - for forcing through the legislation in 1965 that normalized relations with Japan.. It took them 20 years following World War II to restore diplomatic relations. That happened in August, 1965, just as I arrived as political counselor. The streets were full of students throwing large bricks at the police, and claiming that the monetary reparations Japan would pay were totally inadequate compensation for all that Japan had done to Korea and its people during their occupation and besides Korea should live forever independent of the Japanese. They were very difficult riots to handle but Park put them down with some severity. But he always felt a responsibility for having served the

Japanese earlier and so he couldn't be pro-Japanese, he had to continue to demonstrate that he was on guard against the Japanese.

The other problem with the Japanese was in 1973, before my arrival. Kim Dae Jung, a major opposition leader, had been permitted to go to abroad.. He had gone to the United States, but he was in Japan when he made some inflammatory anti-Park speeches to local Koreans which the press picked up. I don't know if all the details of this episode have been made public or not, but it was common knowledge in Seoul that the ROK CIA seized Kim Dae Jung, spirited him out of Japan on a small boat, and deposited him apparently heavily sedated in his own front yard in Seoul. He woke the next morning to find himself surrounded by familiar sights, amazed at what had happened. He was kept under house arrest for a long, long time. This was, of course, a vicious affront to Japan's sovereign rights. You don't kidnap someone in Japan, especially if you are a Korean, and spirit him out of the country..

There is a great deal more to that story, including the role of the United States, which I guess somebody else will have to tell because I was not there and am not totally familiar with the details. But there was a rumor that American agencies had a hand in preventing the ROK CIA from dropping brother Kim over the side on their way home.

The Japanese, of course, demanded apologies or restitution or something. They were very hard on the Koreans. As a result of this the Koreans were forced to send Kim Chong-pil, the prime minister, to Japan with a letter addressed to the Japanese prime minister in which the Koreans in effect apologized for this affront to Japan's sovereignty. Whatever the letter said, it was galling to the Koreans and to KCP in particular to have to grovel this way, nor did it cause the Japanese to forgive and forget..

So, tensions with Japan were just below the surface on August 15, 1974, which to Koreans was the nineteen anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japan. At the centerpiece of the celebration, Park was to give the Liberation Day speech at the national theater, then

located on the back side of Nam San, the mountain in the center of Seoul. Security was always seemingly pretty tight around these events. Put a crowd of people in an enclosed space with the president and the ROK security people began to get kind of antsy. For this purpose, the Home Minister, a fellow by the name of Chong Song-chol, who I knew fairly well, and the chief of the presidential security guard, Park Chung-kyu, who I also knew reasonably well, were in charge of security arrangements. Park was a very interesting guy in many ways. He looked like an Oklahoma cowboy - broken-nosed, lean, sinewy, weather-beaten - obviously a tough character. But he had a strange soft side; he was a serious art collector and a really fine pianist. I once sat in his living room and listened to him play classical selections without reference to any score for about an hour. These two men were responsible for security and there was some dispute with the Seoul city police. The city police were disarmed. They were allowed to patrol the theater grounds but their weapons were taken from them. The speech was to be televised not only nationally but internationally. CBS had a television crew there and several other international news agencies were going to be taping the speech and presumably showing it in their home countries. The ambassador was invited.... Habib was within days of leaving, and already had his farewell appointment with Park when this business occurred.

A couple of days earlier a young man named Mun Se-kwan had arrived in Korea from Japan. Of Korean ancestry but a Japanese national under Japanese law, Mun had been born and raised in Osaka and spoke no Korean. And he was a member of the Chosen Soren, the League of Korean Residents, the primary front for North Korea in Japan, on whose behalf he had a mission — to assassinate Park. He had obtained a passport from the Japanese government under an assumed name, aided by a aid of a couple of Japanese nationals. From somewhere or other he had obtained a pistol, which later proved to have been stolen from the Osaka police department. He had sneaked it through customs, along with a lot of Korean won. He rented a suite in one of Seoul's best hotels and a car of the kind used by cabinet ministers and rich businessmen. He had the chauffeur drive him around Seoul on familiarization trips, acting like a tourist or a

businessman. And he paid the driver handsomely to bow obsequiously every time he got out of the car.

Anyway, just before the ceremony was to begin, Mun arrived at the theater in his impressive car with his pistol but no ticket. The driver bowed him out deferentially, and the security people accepted him for the influential Korean he appeared to be and didn't even challenge him. They let him right into the lobby of the building, where people milled around until asked to take their seats because the president was arriving a little early. He entered the theater at the rear of the crowd and found an empty seat in the middle of a row fairly far back in the theater.

The president made his speech from behind an armored lectern placed at the far left of the stage. On the stage was arrayed a large group of Korean dignitaries, including the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly, our friend Chong Il-kwon.Madame Yu, the president's wife, was sitting in the middle of this group in the front row, wearing a white dress that contrasted sharply with the sober suits of the men. Park Chung-kyu, the president's security chief, had a chair at the left end of the second row.

Mun remained seated until the president was several minutes into his speech. He then rose and moved toward the aisle, trying to free his pistol as he went. He managed...if you watch the CBS tape of this you can hear a pop as he tries to pull the pistol from his pocket and manages to shoot himself in the leg in the process. But he reached the aisle and began to shoot - wildly. On hearing the first pop or two, the President dove behind the lectern. We watched this tape several times because, except for the tragic outcome, it was kind of hysterical. Chong Il-kwon initially claimed that he had thrown himself on the president to save him. Well, the tape showed Chong rising off his chair, feet churning the air, and flopping on the floor nowhere near the president.

The tape shows Park Chung-kyu courageously racing toward the front of the stage, desperately trying to free his gun from its holster on his hip, which he fails to do until too

late. Anyway, the president wasn't a target anymore and everybody else was diving for the floor except Madame Park, who sat there rather bewildered. The tape shows the back of her head exploding. And no one moved to help her. The first bulletin said that she might live, but if you saw the tape you knew she had no chance.

The security people managed to seize Mun, but not before he had fired five or six shots. They arrested him, talked to him, and said that he confessed to it all - to being a Chosen Soren member, to having trained for this mission in North Korea, to having gone to North Korea on board a ship that went from Maizuru to Wonsan rather freely and that the pistol and Japanese passport had been obtained with the help of Japanese.

Well, they took Madame Park Yu away and Park, rather surprisingly, resumed his speech. She died at the hospital or before she arrived there. Park afterwards plunged into an emotional pit. He was reportedly grief stricken, not available for a long time to anybody. He drank a lot during this period. Madame Yu was his third wife but quite dear to him and had been a benign influence. Most people respected her mightily. She was a Catholic and stood for many values that most Koreans wanted Park to adopt. While she received rough treatment at his hands from time to time, she was obviously a good influence and personally she was extremely popular. Park did not go to her interment, but the TV cameras got a glimpse of him saying farewell as her cortege left the Blue House. She was interred on a hilltop in the National Cemetery, and her grave became something of a shrine, attracting large numbers of tourists every day. While Park was alive, foreign dignitaries visiting Seoul were expected to pay their respects at the site. .Park's emotions were intensified, of course, by the fact that she has died during a North Korean attempt to assassinate him and this time the attempt had originated in Japan. So Park's grief struck a cord in the Korean people as well.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry, upon hearing that of Mun's origins and actions, figured here comes trouble. So they immediately - and foolishly - tried a preemptive move by

issuing a statement that Japan could acknowledge no moral nor legal responsibility for this affair, or some words to that effect.

The atmosphere in Korea was a chaotic one. Everybody...this combination of Japan and North Korea, attempted assassination of the president, the fact that it was the president's wife who got killed, just set off all kinds of Koreans. Many of them...Chong Il-kwon, for example, said that if it were possible he would go up to Pyongyang and kill Kim Il Sung himself. And he wasn't alone. And there was special anger towards Japan. The Japanese statement inspired Lee Bum Suk, who was to be killed by North Koreans himself while on an official visit to Burma, but was Chief of Protocol at this point, to say “If Mao's wife had been killed under similar circumstance by a Chinese resident of Japan, the Japanese would have crawled on their belly from Tientsin to Peking to apologize and grovel in front of Mao. If an American president's wife had been killed by an American communist resident of Japan, the Japanese would have crawled from Seattle to Washington DC. But because we are so despised and looked down upon by the Japanese, they treat us this way. They say they have no responsibility. They demean us, they demean our president.” It brought out all the latent anti-Japanese feeling.

Q: Looking at this there appears to be some justification for this since the Japanese reaction to such events usually is that somebody resigns. It seemed odd at the very least.

ERICSON: It was odd . But again you have to remember that in Japan, during the occupation for example, whenever anything got stolen the Japanese assured you it was the Koreans who did it. The Japanese did despise Koreans. Of course, the Japanese had never had satisfaction for the Kim Tae-jung affair, at least in the way that they wanted. to. Kim Chong-pil had come there to deliver a letter, but grudgingly and weren't very happy at what it said, so they thought well, maybe the Japanese...Well, anyway, whatever the situation, the Japanese response unnecessarily aroused a hell of a lot of emotion in Korea. And their denial of any responsibility set Park off. He madit clear that he wanted the Japanese to do certain things with respect to this attack. These were in effect to admit

their responsibility, to acknowledge that the guy had obtained his pistol in Japan and that the pistol had belonged to the Japanese police, and that he had been given a passport by the Japanese government. Responsibility is a very important word in the Asian culture. It became the central issue in this whole affair. But Park had other things in mind as well. He wanted them to immediately investigate the extent of the involvement of Mun's Japanese helpers and to punish them, Not that they investigate and try but that they punish. He also demanded that they abolish the Chosen Soren. That they either abolish it or severely control it..... emasculate it a way that it could never again foment attempts at assassination or the overthrow of his government. And he passed his demands to the Japanese through Kim Dong Jo. Then he went incommunicado.

The story is...the shooting occurred on August 15. Habib was scheduled to leave on the 18th or 19th and had a farewell appointment with Park a day or two before he was due to leave. This was immediately canceled.. The question arose whether Habib should stay until the president became available again .. Habib thought he should. On the other hand he was anxious to get back to Washington, and Washington was anxious to have him get there. In the end he sent word that he regretted very much the necessity of departing before he could see his old friend again, but in essence he had to go. And he left. That left me as Charg#.

Park, as I say, went incommunicado for a while. And then sometime around August 27 or 28 he came to. At his first meeting with his senior advisors, he asked, as the story goes (I was fed a lot of information during this period by a lot of different people who were very worried), in a deceptively calm manner, how things were going with the Japanese. The reply was, in effect, “Well we have communicated your desires to them and are awaiting their reply.” He exploded - went right through the roof. He accused the Foreign Minister of everything from laziness to gross incompetence and asked, “Can't anyone do anything, do I have to do everything myself?” He then took the extraordinary measure summoning the Japanese ambassador, Ushiroku (a very nice fellow but not very assertive and not up to standing up to Park's wrath), saying he would deal with the business personally. Using Kim

Dong Jo as his interpreter, he gave Ushiroku what he may have thought was a list if clear-cut demands, although it does not appear that he had them in writing.

Q: I assumed Park spoke fluent Japanese.

ERICSON: Yes he did, but he refused to. He would never demean himself on an occasion like this. Now Kim Dong Jo was not the world's best interpreter, as a matter of fact he proved entirely inadequate in this particular interview. It was all done orally and Ushiroku took notes like mad but he could not understand it all. He went back and sent the message to Tokyo. The Japanese Economic Counselor, Hisahiko Okazaki, whom I knew well from my days on the Desk, called me the next morning and said, “Hey, this thing is going to be very, very difficult because the ambassador doesn't think he really understood everything the president was saying and isn't really sure what the hell it is that we are supposed to do. Kim Dong Jo was nervous and wasn't explaining himself very clearly. We may not have gotten all of it. What the hell are we going to do?” I said, “I don't know, friend. I will see what I can do to get things clarified for you.” However, about that time I was told by telephone we were to stay out of this business. Further instructions from Habib and Kissinger arrived saying that this was between Japan and Korea and we will use our good offices if that is absolutely necessary, but will volunteer absolutely nothing. In essence, we were warned to stay aloof .

It so happened that Park Kun, who was then DCM in the Korean Embassy in Washington and who had been the head of the American Affairs Bureau when I had been political counselor before, had come back to Korea right at that point looking for an ambassadorial assignment. He and I went out to play a round of golf the next day, a Saturday as I recall. I told him what Okazaki had told me, I think, that very morning. I told Park, “The president left the Japanese in something of a quandary here. They really don't know what was said because of Kim Dong Jo's interpreting.” After the golf game, Par Kun went up to the Blue House to pay his respects to the presidential secretary, Kim Chong-yom, from whom he expected help with his ambassadorial posting. He passed my message to Kim, who

promptly led him into the President's office. Several others were summoned and Park Kun was asked to repeat the message to the group. The president erupted again and climbed all over Kim Dong Jo and told him to repeat the demands, this time in writing. So Kim wrote out what he thought the president wanted, called Ushiroku in and gave it to him. Ushiroku duly conveyed it back to Japan.

The thing was settled on September 19, but between the end of August and the 19th of September I think I wrote more telegrams and reports of doings than I have ever written at any other time in my career... virtually daily there was some development or another. The problem centered on President Park. If you read the press accounts, I suppose you would conclude that this is a dispute between the Republic of Korea and Japan. Actually, it was a question of President Park, personally and individually, as a human being and as a man, how he could be satisfied. It had far less to do with his country really, except insofar as he was the country. People assume that there are all kinds of factors that bear on a nation's deliberations and decisions. In this case there really weren't; it was just Park and his anger and his grief, his feelings about Japan, what resided in the head of this one man. Nobody else could afford to have any emotions or do anything because they were all scared stiff of how Park might react.

Anyway, his demands centered around the question of an appropriate admission by the Japanese of responsibility, the destruction of the Chosen Soren, the arrest and prompt punishment of the instigators of this thing who were still back in Japan and the promises that the Japanese would see that such an event would never ever occur again. Well, all of these things were very difficult for the Japanese to do. Having once said they had no moral or legal responsibility, it was difficult for them to acknowledge any responsibility. They had laws controlling subversive agencies but they didn't implement them. They didn't think they could do anything about Chosen Soren without declaring war on the entire left wing in Japan, with a tremendous effect on Japanese internal politics. In terms of admitting responsibility they, of course, were not apologizing. They were never satisfied with what the Koreans had done on the Kim Dae Jung case. Even in a vacuum it would have been

terribly difficult for them to admit responsibility when they didn't really feel that they had any. Besides, the party offended was Korea, and all Japanese share special feeling of superiority toward Korea and Koreans.

Furthermore, when the thing broke out, the foreign minister was a guy named Kimura, who was not a terribly good administrator. He was a Diet member, of course. The Foreign Ministry was run by Togo, who was vice minister. Fumihiko Togo, a very good friend of the United States. Togo was absent for a while so his strong hand was not controlling in the early, early stages of this crisis. Anyway Prime Minister Tanaka, himself, fouled things up in an effort to do good. He thought it might help to defuse things if he came to Madame Yu's funeral, very early in the business. And so he came, which was an extraordinary gesture for a Japanese prime minister. Unfortunately, his call on Park went very badly. Apparently nobody told Tanaka, who was a very rough hewed character, how to behave in the presence of His Excellency, the President, who thought that as chief of state he out-ranked Prime Minister Tanaka regardless of the size of the country he represented. So Tanaka had a one hour meeting with Park in which he exacerbated Park's already inflamed emotions in a number of ways. He behaved in a manner Park thought insulting and improper. Park might have forgiven any other foreigner, but not a Japanese.So what were these heinous sins? First of all, Tanaka expressed regret and sympathy at the death of Madame Yu (he apparently got that right), but omitted the acknowledgment of responsibility that Park wanted. That was bad. And furthermore, he did such terrible things as fan himself in the exalted presence. You don't do that. He crossed his legs. You don't do that. He spoke through an interpreter, but Park understood the familiar forms of speech and address he used in Japanese. It was a truly grievous sin to address the president as if you were an equal. The president became furious. I was told about this later. I did what I could and said, “Look, fanning and sweating can at least be explained. Tanaka has a glandular problem and sweats profusely. The president hauls him up to the Blue House in the middle of August in a morning coat, full of soup and fish, heavy wool, no air conditioning, and Tanaka is soon running rivulets. Wouldn't it be natural to fan himself?” I

tried what I could to justify Tanaka's behavior, but I don't know whether it did any good with Park or any other Korean.

And then Tanaka made it worse by leaving immediately after the interview with Park. He did not call upon his counterpart Kim Chong-pil, nor did he attend the reception KCP gave that evening for all foreign attendees at the funeral. He just bugged on out and went back to Japan.

So in the face of Park's demand that the Japanese do these things, now a formal written demand, the Japanese then proposed a letter which was to be sent by Prime Minister Tanaka to the President or to Prime Minister Kim Chong-pil. They agreed to show a draft of the letter to the Koreans - who said they would not accept an unsatisfactory text - and that was another mistake because the Koreans found it totally unacceptable. It was cast in the usual foggy, elliptical, evasive Japanese way, seemingly with an eye more on Japanese domestic political concerns that Park's grievances. The next couple of weeks involved intensive negotiations between the Japanese and Koreans centering on the language of letter and how it was to be delivered. Each of them kept me informed every foot of the way .

Q: Was this because you were a Japanese expert and a Korean expert?

ERICSON: Let me save that answer for the very end.

We were told that we would not be involved as mediator and I was instructed on a number of occasions to make this clear to both parties and so was Embassy Tokyo, and Habib was doing the same with the respective embassies in Washington.

Every time things seemed to be moving along a little bit, something stupid would happen. For example, Kimura made a statement about half way through the negotiations in response to a question at a press conference, to the effect that the ROK government was not the only legitimate government, in his opinion, on the Korean peninsula. Of course,

the fact that the ROK had been declared so by the UN was the very basis of ROK national policy. They were, they thought, the only legitimate government. He later said something in the Diet to the effect that Japan did not believe there really was a serious threat to the ROKG from the North, thus taking another whack at a basic premise for Park's domestic and foreign policies, and arousing more animosity in Seoul..

Incidentally, during this period there were also demonstrations. The situation vis-a-vis the Japanese in Seoul was getting very dicey because there were anti-Japanese demonstrations almost daily...When I went up to the foreign ministry - the Japanese embassy was just up the street - I could see demonstrations in front of the Japanese embassy almost daily. There were threats against the lives of Japanese businessmen, all sorts of anti-Japanese agitation going on. In the middle of all this a Japanese businessman was found murdered - throat slit and blood everywhere in his apartment. I thought this might really do it, but the police promptly arrested his Korean mistress - he was apparently trying to dump her - and proclaimed it just a domestic dispute. At one point, after the Kimura statement, the ROK government really turned it loose. They organized a big demonstration which included a group of 20 or so people who broke - or were perhaps allowed to break - into the Japanese embassy, mostly the supply room, and wreaked havoc there, tearing everything up. They did not get at the ambassador's wine, which was locked behind a vault. They went up to the roof and lowered the Japanese flag. At some point a number of them cut the tips of their fingers off and in the blood that flowed wrote anti-Japanese slogans on the embassy walls.

This was supposed to be a spontaneous demonstration of Korean spirit and attitude towards the Japanese. Actually, it turned out that the bloody sloganeers were prisoners who had been released from jail for the purpose. They had been told their sentences would be commuted in exchange for that finger tip. Several took the bait. This, of course, didn't please the Japanese. The Koreans were mad at Kimura, the Japanese were outraged at the embassy demonstration and things got worse and worse.

Kim Dong Jo was Park's target for the Koreans inability to get their way in this and he caught increasing hell as time went on. He became increasingly a bowl of jelly. So at the end of things he tended to disappear, pleading exhaustion. I personally think he felt that the next time he faced Park he would probably be shot. Lho Shin-yong, who was the vice minister, took over for him, but Kim Chong-pil , the prime minister, stood to the side - or apparently didn't get involved directly in attempting to advise Park - until the last critical moment. At one point Ushiroku went back to Japan at the Korean's suggestion to try to straighten things out. He came back with very gloomy feelings about how things could go.

I forget the exact sequence of all of the events. Towards the very end , the ROKs let it be known that they were thinking of giving the Japanese an ultimatum. The exact nature of this ultimatum was never made clear, although they told me about some of the elements. As I recall, it was going to say that unless the Koreans were satisfied by a certain time, they would withdraw their ambassador from Japan and sever all relations with Japan except consular relations. There was a very clear threat that they would then expropriate all Japanese property and holdings and investments in Korea and live without Japan.

About this time I recall Finance Minister Nam Duk Woo, a very distinguished and capable man, called me into his office and, pointedly gazing at a spot on the ceiling, asked me what I thought of the possibility that Korea might take such steps. What would be the effect on Korea economically should they cut off all trade and financial ties with Japan? Wouldn't this encourage investors in the United States to fill the vacuum immediately? Wouldn't they see this as a great opportunity to come to Korea and exploit this marvelous economic opportunity?

I gave the answer which I think he expected. I said in effect that it would probably be a disaster for the Korean economy, not only for the present but for the future. Obviously good relations with Japan were vital to their future and god knows what would happen economically or any other way if this were to be implemented. As far as American investors and the United States government were concerned, we would be extremely

distressed at this threat to the entire American position in northeast Asia, which depended heavily on a security relationship, unspoken but nevertheless there, between Japan, Korea and the United States. The United States Government, under such circumstances, would face the problem of having to choose between two close allies and only our enemies would benefit. Furthermore, American investors would be scared out of their minds. If the Park government was capable of doing this to Japan, on whom the ROK relies so heavily, who was to guarantee the position of any private investors in the Republic. This is not a good idea.

He thanked me politely and I left his office. I don't know what he did with his information or whether there was a mike or monitor there. But I am sure he did this to elicit the kind of answers I gave him.

Towards the very end of things, the Japanese remained adamant about meeting Park's demands and the Koreans were coming to the point of issuing their ultimatum. I was called to the foreign ministry one afternoon and told that they had approved a plan of action. Unless they heard by 3:00 that afternoon that the Japanese would give them satisfaction, at 5:30 or 6:00 that evening the prime minister would release the terms of the ultimatum on national television. Although they did not give me the exact language, they showed me huge stacks of handouts ready to go. The Japanese ambassador also got this treatment, I might add. I had Clyde Hess, head of USIA, call the television stations and they acknowledged that time was reserved for an important presidential announcement that evening.

Japanese got in touch with me and allowed that they had had the same information. However, they had also had a phone call from Tokyo to the effect that new instructions were on the way, and to do nothing until they arrived.....not to respond to this thing until the new instructions had arrived. The Japanese conveyed this to the Koreans and the Koreans canceled the announcement and released the TV time..

Then the telephone began ringing. The Koreans were asking me,"Where the hell is the Japanese ambassador? We were told that he was expecting new instructions which were on the way. We haven't heard anything from him. The President is outraged. He may do anything." I kept saying, "I am not responsible for the whereabouts of Ambassador Ushiroku. I do not know where he is. I do not know what his instructions are. I can't offer you anything." Anyway, Lho's last call came at midnight. He was just beside himself. He said the Japanese were playing their duplicitous game again.

Okazaki came to see me the next morning at breakfast time. He said, "Gee, Dick, what are we going to do? The new instructions came but they offered only minimal, cosmetic changes. In effect they said stand pat." Ushiroku had decided that he couldn't deliver such a message. He was desperately trying to get it changed but couldn't give it to the Koreans as it stood, and so had decided to go into hiding.

I had just received that morning a message from Washington which indicated for the first time that Habib had landed on the Japanese with a strong suggestion that they be a little bit forthcoming in meeting the Korean position. This was the first time that Washington had ever leaned in the direction of the Koreans. It seemed to me that Habib's feeling from the beginning was that the Japanese had come a long way in offering to send a letter signed by the prime minister which, even though unsatisfactory, did touch on a lot of their demands. It covered their points, if not in ways entirely satisfactory to the Koreans. It meant a lot to the Japanese. Now, for the first time, he was suggesting that the Japanese move in the Korean direction. I said, "Hang on, let me get up there and see if this helps." I went back up to speak to the foreign minister and informed him of Habib's approach to the Japanese. He conveyed it apparently to President Park.

As I was leaving that meeting, and I did not report what follows here, the minister's ante room was swarming with newsmen. Bud Han, who was Kim Chong-pil's interpreter and contact man for foreigners, fell in beside me and said, "Go back to the embassy and come back around the other side in another car and I will meet you. The prime minister wants to

speak to you privately." I went back to the embassy, and changed cars and came back. This was kind of dangerous because the Koreans were trying very hard all along to entrap us into siding with them and I had been told to stay out of it. But I went to see KCP. He took from his pocket some papers - in English - Tanaka's proposed letter, a Korean re-draft and a suggested text of a statement by the senior Japanese envoy who was by that time expected to deliver it. He said, "You be the Japanese and I will be Mr. President and let's see what we can do by role acting." I said, "Look, I can't get involved. It's my job and career." He said, "No, no, this is between you and me. Please, we have to solve this thing." So I agreed.

We sat there for about an hour, working over the text. We looked at various alternatives. The letter from Tanaka, incidentally, which the Japanese had steadfastly maintained that they couldn't change, had already been signed by Tanaka some time earlier, because Tanaka was due to leave on September 12 for South America, so there was a deadline here. The Japanese were now even more adamant - they couldn't change the signed Prime Minister's letter. So the question really was how do you accept the letter but accomplish your purpose in another way. The idea had been proposed - but not yet agreed - that the letter might be delivered by a very senior and respected Japanese special envoy, and whether such an envoy would come or not had been a central part of their bilateral negotiations. . We agreed that if the envoy, in speaking to the president, could soften the terms of the letter while explaining their real intent , and if the spoken terms were satisfactory to Park, and then the two signed or initialed a memorandum of conversation, the latter would supersede the letter and Park could get out of the hole he had dug for himself. KCP was thinking that the distinguished representative should make the presentation to the President orally and say the right things. I suggested they make a memcon and sign it. We also dealt with some of the specifics, of course. KCP pleaded for permission to tell the president that our joint efforts had the backing of the US - or even my personal support. I refused.So I went back to the embassy and the next thing I knew Clyde Hess was in my office saying the Korean press was asking about an "American

plan." The Korean press had been told there was a plan but not to publish the fact. And as a matter of fact, one news agency did put out a note, but nobody picked it up. I told Clyde what happened. He and Don Gregg are the only two who really know the extent of my involvement in this aspect of the thing. Years later Don alluded to it, as a matter of fact, in the Senate hearing on his confirmation as Ambassador to Seoul..

I got a call then from Okazaki, who said, "Dick, Ushiroku has just returned from Kim Dong Jo's office. He has been given a piece of paper which Kim described as the mediator's plan. He says that President Park has approved it and this is it. There will be no deviation or we will take the actions we canceled last night and will do what we threatened to do." I sort of stumbled around and Okazaki said, "Don't worry about it ,Dick, this looks like it might work. It is not that bad. I know you don't want to be exposed. We will send it back to Tokyo and I think it will work."

To make this long story short, essentially that is what happened. The Japanese agreed to send former Foreign Minister Shiina, a very respected elder statesman in the Liberal Democratic Party who had close ties with Korea. He had been foreign minister at the time of the normalization of relations. He came on one of the shortest trips on record. He landed at Kimpo, went in to see the president, visited Madame Yuk's grave, and headed for Kimpo. He was back and forth to Japan within a matter of five or six hours I think. But he brought with him the signed letter from Prime Minister Tanaka and he spoke to the president about what the thing really meant. The question of responsibility was covered by the fact in both the letter and the conversation the Japanese Government regretted that the guy had had a Japanese passport obtained through fraudulent means and had used a revolver stolen from the Osaka police and by the admission in Japanese, that "Nihon seifu wa sore nari no sekinin o kanzuru" - I'll never forget those words -which mean 'to the extent that it exists, the Japanese government feels responsibility' for the incident. Well ,that is not very strong and you could interpret it anyway you want to, but there it was, the word responsibility. Other points were covered in similar evasive fashion in both the letter and the conversation. Concerning the Chosen Soren, the Japanese said they would

take urgent and strong measures to control efforts to overthrow the Korean government originating in Japan whether not or conducted by members of an organized group. And they expressed sincere condolences at the loss of the president's wife and his grief.

They never promised, incidentally, to try the Japanese involved and they would not extradite the one Korean who was involved an had been identified as a North Korean agent and Mun's case officer. The Koreans wanted him extradited, they wanted to try and put him to death, but the Japanese refused. I don't know in the end that they even tried him. They kept saying that they had no evidence except Mun's confession that he was involved. And they had no evidence against the Japanese who helped him get the passport except Mun's confession. In the end I don't think they did anything about any of these people, but they spoke in their presentation of strong efforts to bring these people to justice, etc. to the extent the law would allow.

Anyway, it was an evasive performance, but it also gave President Park, ...and part of the record was President Park's statements to Shiina in which he reiterated all of his feelings about the Japanese responses, etc. And Shiina, to his credit, accepted these with dignity and a certain amount of sympathy. He said that he understood the President's feelings were strong, etc. I was told that the President had emphasized in particular his feeling that the Japanese were responsible for the attempt on his life - and his wife's death - because of their failure to control Chosen Soren, particularly since the ROKG had formally requested strong action by the GOJ many months before this incident, a demarche to which the Japanese had never responded. But Shiina's visit served its purpose. Once Park had had his satisfaction, the crisis was defused and passions on both sides subsided.

Shiina came on the 19th. So the thing was pretty much settled by the time he Sneider arrived on the 19th, although he got very active immediately when he did arrive in the ultimate stages. So, it was settled as much as it could be settled. I think President Park's feelings about Japan were deeply reinforced by the incident, and the Japanese

unhappiness with Korea was certainly not dissipated by it, but at least President Park did not break off al relations and expropriate all Japanese property.

This thing took over a month and during that month Park's initial emotional temperature declined considerably. People were able to talk to him, and he did come back to a certain amount of reason about these things, so that when KCP made his move at the very end, Park was willing to give some ground. But it was still dicey - KCP showed a lot of guts and a great sense of timing.

The point I wanted to make at the very outset of this is that I did play a role in this as Charg#, on behalf of the United States-but largely without and to a degree contrary to instructions.. I was talked to freely by friends and contacts in all areas of Korean life and by the Japanese as well.....by Okazaki and Ushiroku. Ushiroku didn't see me much because he was a very cautious man, but he sent his messages by Okazaki who was a good friend of mine. But this kind of access happened because first of all I represented the United States and they were willing to accept me as such. Secondly, when I first came to Korea I was suspected of being pro-Japanese because I was a Japanese language specialist and had spent all of my career in Japan, except for those years I had been in Korea as an army officer. It took a little bit of doing to get over that, but once I did, I think they came to realize that I was an American, and that I wasn't pro-Japanese and wasn't necessarily pro-Korean. But that I was going to be interested in pursuing American interests and these involved both Japan and Korea. I had played it straight with them both through the years and both had some reason to trust me in what went on. Especially Kim Chong-pil at our critical meeting at the very end saying, “You be the Japanese, I won't be mad at you for it, but you know the Japanese.” He probably knew the Japanese better than I did, but he was willing to have me play that role. Okazaki was perfectly forthcoming in everything the Japanese did, said or thought.

I think this is a credit to the American Foreign Service and the way it should really operate. I think if you are going to be an area specialist , you should be an area specialist. You

can do a lot of things and accomplish a lot on the basis of long experience and exposure, many contacts, proof of trustworthiness, willingness to be evenhanded and unbiased pursuit of your country's interests and not those of other countries, etc. The idea of having a language and area specialist pays off. And I think in this particular case...I don't claim to be the major factor in the solution of this thing, but I certainly did play a role and I was able to play that role because both Koreans and the Japanese knew me and trusted me.

Togo back in Tokyo, for example, the vice foreign minister, was willing to have the Japanese Embassy do what it did because he was a very good friend of mine. He knew I wasn't going to betray their interests. And similarly with all the Koreans.

Q: This is the Ford Administration by this time.

ERICSON: This was 1974, it was Ford and Kissinger, yes.

Q: Kissinger was Secretary of State. I can understand the normal reaction of staying out of this thing, but really, American interests were vitally concerned. Our policy in both countries would suffer. In a way it worked out all right but essentially because you ignored your instructions. You happened to be the right man at the right place.

ERICSON: I took a chance.

Q: Can we talk a bit about your perception of this 'it is none of our business, we are out of this thing' from Washington?

ERICSON: I find it very difficult to explain. First of all I saw very little evidence of the hand of anybody above Habib. Ingersoll , who had been Ambassador to Japan, was still the Deputy Secretary...his hand was not apparent. . Kissinger's hand was not apparent . He probably left matters to Habib as the acknowledged expert, the brand new East Asian Assistant Secretary, and everything that we got it seemed to me involved actions or statements by Habib. It was kind of hard to separate the Japan Desk from the Korean

Desk, but I thought that the Japan Desk had more input in things in his earlier telegrams. It seemed to me that the bias was towards Japan coming out of Washington. Of course, I was sitting in the midst of this Korean mess and thought that nobody was understanding that it was Park, not Korea. You were dealing with a man, a guy who had just seen his wife's head blown off by people he mistrusted anyway and he was not being given the kind of satisfaction that his psyche required. I was trying to make this apparent to Washington. Eventually, Washington did lean on the Japanese. I privately was telling both sides...I told them this many, many times but never reported it...but to every Korean I tried to explain that they should have understood the political realities in Japan and that Park was asking for the moon in his demands for abolition of Chosen Soren and summary punishment of Mun's associates in Japan.. On the question of the letter, it had already been signed by the prime minister. The prime minister, if he was acting alone, if he was a Kissinger, say, could rip up the letter and say, “Okay, let's have a new one.” But in Japan , once the prime minister signs something it means that the whole damn cabinet has formally approved it. It has gone through a process of concurrences and arrived at this stage and in order to change even a word of it you have to reverse the whole damn process. They just can't do that. They can't do anything about the Chosen Soren, I was telling them, because that means declaring war on the entire left wing in Japan and the political situation is such that they cannot declare war. The Socialists would have loved to take on the government over this issue. They can't say these things publicly, it is just not achievable, you are asking for the moon. On the other hand I was telling the Japanese that they had better put a clamp on their public relations activities, stop treating the Koreans as inferior step children, take some real acknowledgment of the fact that you have a real problem here with a man who is going to be very, very destructive if he doesn't receive some kind of satisfaction. It is not the whole country you are dealing with, it is one man. You are Asians and you do understand the concept of responsibility, you do understand that people take responsibility. The Japanese said, “We can't acknowledge responsibility because then the home minister would have to resign, and the police chief of Osaka, everyone would have to resign.” Well, the Koreans would say, “Yes, why not?”

I can not understand why we delayed as long as we did or why our efforts were not stronger. But that is how Washington chose to play it and in the end things worked out. I have told a long story as best as I recall it ... and my memory is pretty vivid...but it may contain some inaccuracies. There is a full account of it back in the Department's archives... telegrams, airgrams, documents and the like.

Q: Richard Sneider came out as ambassador. You had him for your ambassador for about two years. Could you talk about how he operated? He was more of a Japanese hand and did not have the benefit you had of Korean service a couple of times before. You were a north Asia hand and he was a Japanese hand. How did you see him? What was his initial approach when he came and saw this huge mess that had just been kind of settled?

ERICSON: It was pretty well settled. All that remained in the last couple of days were refinements and we had no role in this. Exactly what Shiina would say. Incidentally, the Koreans never said during all this period what they were going to say. What Park did was to reiterate all his grievances - his whole attitude - and Shiina must have been pretty surprised by that but he took it very well. Shiina was a wise man. Sneider had some difficulties to overcome. One of them was that he was a Japan specialist... very closely associated with Japan his entire career. He had one little thing that was of interest to the Koreans, though, and that was during the Korean War when he was in INR he had gone to Pyongyang as part of a study group to analyze how the communists had imposed their regime and how it operated. They produced a rather interesting study on the North. He exploited this to a certain extent and the Koreans were interested that he had had that bit of background.

Sneider to me was a good manager. Much better than Habib in many respects. He had a very broad range of interests. He did like to get into all aspects of the embassy's operations. He convened weekly meetings of the country team. At each meeting he would have one officer explain in detail what it was he and his group were trying to accomplish, how others could be of assistance, etc. He included everybody in this. What was left of the

AID mission people were talking, the military were talking. It was an interesting exercise because people did have to come up...they had to make formal presentations, it wasn't just sitting around a table and yakking. People had to formally explain and justify themselves.

Were you there while this was going on?

Q: Yes, but it wasn't that formal by the time I got there.

ERICSON: Well, things do change. I often said that my major job as DCM in Seoul for the whole period I was there was as mediator between Sneider and Habib on one side and Stilwell on the other.

Q: We are talking about Richard D. Stilwell.

ERICSON: He had been a major commander in Vietnam and taken what he expected to be his retirement post at the Presidio when all of a sudden he ended up to his surprise as Commander in Chief, United Nations Command, and Commanding General, Eighth United States Army. Now CINCUNC occupies a rather odd place. He sees himself as being responsible to the UN as well as to the United States government, and if you get a man with a large ego in that job, he looks at the ambassador and says, “My authority is greater than his.” And worse, he has his own line of communications to the United States government via back channel messages to the Department of Defense and he makes very liberal use of them. All three of the gentlemen concerned were flaming egos, very sensitive, strong personalities and not ashamed to acknowledge their own capabilities. This inevitably led to clashes. Habib and Stilwell did not see eye-to-eye. Habib resented Stilwell because Stilwell had better relations with the presidential office and many senior Koreans, who were at that time often ex-military, than Habib ever had. Also Habib had been instrumental in forcing Park to live up to his promise to hold elections back in 1963, a humiliation for Park that he never forgot. So by the time Habib came there as ambassador, he found Stilwell playing golf with the president. Habib took up golf during this time He was told to take up some exercise after his heart attack, and he became a golf nut, although

he had always been vocally scornful of people on his staff who wasted their time chasing a ball around a cow pasture.. He used to take off quite frequently in the afternoons and play with the pro out at Yongsan golf course. He really became addicted, and was really unhappy because Park never asked him to play golf, although Park played fairly often with both senior American and Korean military. Sneider was in somewhat the same position. Park never asked him to play golf either.

Q: Did Sneider enjoy his golf?

ERICSON: He was an avid golfer, although he was a better tennis player, but I think he enjoyed golf more and played at every opportunity. We were all members of the Tuesday Morning Golf Club, a group Chong Il -kwon headed which brought together a select group of senior Koreans and Americans for nine holes of golf at Yongsan every Tuesday morning, except in the winter time when it was every Saturday morning. Except in the middle of summer, when we started later, our habit was to tee off at sunrise, which permitted nine holes, a leisurely breakfast, and arrival at the office on time. We found the golf courses a very good way in Korea at that time to associate and relax with senior and influential Koreans. But Park was very chary and he never invited any Americans except Stilwell and perhaps his top staff to play with him.

Anyway, Stilwell, whenever he had an advantage did not hesitate to rub it in a little bit and consequently his relations with the two ambassadors were not all that good. Stilwell liked me for reasons best known to him. It is popular in some Foreign Service circles - one might say politically correct today - to deride the military, find fault with it and all its inefficiencies. But I grew up in the army, and served in it for four years - including that 16 months in Korea . I felt it had treated me really pretty well and that I had some understanding of the problems the military face. I was always a more sympathetic ear to the military than either of my bosses. Furthermore, during most of this period, John Murphy, who was an Air Force Lt. General and a War College classmate of mine...Murphy was a golfing friend of mine and we had lunch together every Thursday or something

and would exchange notes back and forth and plot various ways that we could keep our superiors on better speaking terms. He was a very useful contact and our association was a plug for sending Foreign Service officers to the War College. Murphy, as deputy UN Commander, had no real function. Stilwell concentrated power in his own hands. He didn't give Murphy much to do, so he welcomed the opportunity to liaise with me at the embassy.

Anyway, Sneider got along reasonably well, but he and Stilwell always wary rivals for influence on the scene in Korea. And the same was true, by and large, with Habib. So, in such relations as were maintained between the embassy and the military to a certain extent I was the principal liaison. I saw more of Stilwell than Sneider or Habib and we got along to the extent of that when I left Korea, Stilwell gave me a UN Command honor guard ceremony, which I think up to that point was the only time the UN Command honor guard had ever been turned out with full colors and the band and all the works for a departing American civilian.

Q: That was quite impressive in Korea.

ERICSON: Yes, but I think the main reason Stilwell did it was to be able to make a speech to which Sneider could not reply. Sneider was in the stands and Stilwell made quite a speech about...I forget what exactly.... I was so nervous that I stood there trembling and almost fell off the little slab of concrete on which the honoree had to stand. If I know Stilwell, the speech contained elements that Sneider would have wanted to respond to had he the opportunity..

Anyway, Sneider was an active ambassador. He was gone a lot of the time and I can't remember why. I think in most respects Dick was a more effective operator than Habib. People question that... I know it is not a popular point of view. But I liked and respected Sneider. He was an old friend. Many of the Koreans came to know and respect him as well, and although he never quite got over his Japan designation, but it ceased to be a real problem.

Q: I thought we might stop here. I want to mention some of the things I would like to talk about the next time. One is how we perceived the threat from the North. China a factor. Sneider and the missionaries during that time. News media influence. The role of our CIA as well as their CIA. Relations with Congress including Park Tong So and Susie...

ERICSON: The whore who was the receptionist for the Speaker of the House.

Q: Also Korean students. And any events that happened during the Sneider time you were there.

ERICSON: Okay.

Q: Today is June 26, 1995. Well, Dick you heard where we were, would you like to start off with that?

ERICSON: I don't know where to begin. Maybe some general comments about how we perceived the threat from the north. This dates back in my experience to the '60s as well as during the '70s because the threat from the north has been a constant influence on everything we have ever done in Korea.

After the Koreans sent troops to Vietnam we were constantly leery of some action by North Korea to support of the North Vietnamese. During the '60s, of course, when I was there from 1965-68, the North Koreans mounted a large number of provocations and disturbances along the DMZ....the Blue House raid and the Pueblo incident and a series of other actions which never made much noise in the United States but which we were very much aware of, partly because we thought Park Chung Hee was unreliable and might have retaliated and engaged us in something more serious than we wanted to engage in. But that kind of thing didn't happen with much frequency or seriousness during the 1973-76 period, except for one really notable and still puzzling kind of development. The North Koreans always had a larger military force along the DMZ than the South Koreans. They were always better armed and backed by a more complete industrial base for military

purposes, anyway, than the South Koreans. The South Koreans were to a great degree dependent on us for materiel. Every time something untoward happened, of course, it resulted in a request or demand from the Koreans for more military assistance, more modern equipment, and please recognize our great contribution to Vietnam.

The thing that did happen during the 1973-76 period was very disturbing and still hasn't been adequately explained. This was the discovery that the North Koreans had dug tunnels under the DMZ, beginning in or behind their side of the DMZ and penetrating into South Korean territory. The first tunnel was found within the southern half of the DMZ by a South Korean patrol, which saw smoke coming out of the ground When they investigated, they found a rather narrow tunnel leading back toward North Korea. It was just below the surface and probably could not have supported more than one or two people - at least at its front end. There is no way of knowing what it was like on the North Korean side, of course. It was a rather crude affair but inspired General Stilwell and his people in the 8th Army to undertake an expensive and long term effort, using seismology and every other device known to science, including extensive drilling, too locate other tunnels. They located one other tunnel, much more sophisticated than the first.. It was wide enough to have supported five or six men abreast. It could have accommodated small hand-drawn carts as long as the load was low enough. It was deep enough to stand up in with a little head room. You could have moved light munitions, machine guns, light artillery, perhaps, machine guns, and a considerable amount of supplies through this thing.

This tunnel was also discovered within the DMZ, in a position concealed by the ground from North Korean observation. Immediately, of course, the South Koreans wanted to send the world into the DMZ to see this thing and which they interpreted, of course, as verification of North Korea's intention to attack. The supposition was that they would use these tunnels in the early stages of the attack. If the attack had succeeded and swept down toward Seoul, the tunnels would immediately become useless.. But they might have been very useful in the early stages of an attack to disrupt UN communications, to cut roads, blow up bridges, and generally wreak havoc at the immediate front. Or short of

an attack, they might be used to infiltrate raiders.The Koreans immediately wanted to send all the journalists and diplomats they could to see this thing, which caused a little contretemps with us, with me in particular, as I was charg#. The foreign minister called a meeting up in the capital building to which he invited the chiefs of mission and told them that they would be taken on an excursion to see this tunnel at such and such a time. I don't remember the exact time, but it was to happen very quickly. I had learned from General Stilwell, who was quite anxious to do this and have as much world press about it as possible, that the Koreans had not cleared this idea of an expedition with him and no one had considered the provisions of the Armistice Agreement with respect to happenings in the DMZ. Who has jurisdiction over the southern portion of the DMZ and what procedures you had to go through with the North before you could, under the terms of the agreement, introduce anything, including a human body, into the southern half of the DMZ. Yet the South Koreans were getting ready to send in a number of diplomats right away.

At that meeting I raised an objection and said first of all it wasn't South Korean territory, that the armistice agreement gave peculiar authority to the United Nations commander, himself, to rule on what UN Command troops, including Korean troops, did in the southern half of the DMZ; and secondly, that only designated personnel were cleared to enter the DMZ and before anyone other than those specified personnel could be introduced into the DMZ you had to get permission from the other side, the North Korean side of the Armistice Commission. I thought that that permission was not likely to be readily granted, so perhaps we could figure some other way around it. Perhaps notification of the North that we were going to do this would be sufficient, considering the gravity of their offense.

Nonetheless we made it a practice to conform to the Armistice Agreement and should certainly at least make a gesture in that direction this time before introducing a large number of diplomats who would certainly be followed by large numbers of newsmen. This wasn't a very popular point of view with the South Koreans nor, to tell the truth, with Dick Stilwell, but he agreed that something ought to be done. In the end we held up the visit of the diplomats until we could convene an emergency meeting of the Armistice

Commission and inform the North that we intended to expose their tunnel building by introducing diplomats to it and by eventually taking newsmen up. Incidentally, we did not ask for clearance for this. I recall drafting a joint Embassy-UNC message with Stilwell in which we informed State and Defense that we were going to do it. I cannot recall any reaction, except wonderment on the part of Stilwell's people, who had never known him to send messages of this nature jointly. (He was a bit of an insomniac and used the midnight hours to draft his own messages, frequently presenting his staff with a fait accompli that they could not amend)..In any event, this is what was done. Fortunately, as I say, you could protect this site within the DMZ fairly well because the North Koreans did not have a direct view of it and to the best of our knowledge didn't have any means of getting aerial views of it. We could put people up there in relative security and guard them reasonably well. It was felt that the chances of the North Koreans doing anything were dim and in the end that is what we worked out. The people did see the second tunnel and it did get a fair amount of publicity, I guess. Incidentally, this was an enormous engineering feat for North Korea, a country that claimed to be impoverished. They put a tremendous amount of resources into digging even these tunnels and it is very interesting that our overhead intelligence was unable to locate the northern entrance to these things. Whatever they dug out from inside that tunnel they dispersed and moved very effectively, because we never were able, as I recall, to pinpoint where they started them from. The first one, as I said, was rather a crude affair, but the second one was ventilated and lined and obviously meant for business. I suspect that the first one was just an experiment to see what could be done and the second was for real. How many other were there? Stilwell later contended that there were as many as five or six others that they just couldn't quite pinpoint. To this day, as far as we know...the South Koreans, of course, blocked off the second tunnel very quickly and rendered it, they thought, relatively useless. But to this day, there may still be four, five or six similar tunnels just lying there in wait.

That was the kind of thing that made the threat from the North kind of palpable. When you lived in Seoul, as you can remember, it was kind of a city under perpetual siege.

The memories of the Korean war and the armies sweeping back and forth across the city three times were very much alive, at least in the minds of the older Koreans. Of course, President Park justified every repressive political measure he took in the name of national security and this threat.. He couldn't fool around with political dissidents while he had a major threat from the North, and was fighting a war in Vietnam in response to what the world had done for Korea during the Korean War. He needed a clean deck here at home to handle his many problems and couldn't afford to give the political dissidents free rein to say and do what they wanted . Or so he always argued.

Q: What were you getting from your various sources about the likelihood of the North doing something? What would be the rationale for doing something like that?

ERICSON: It never did seem terribly rational to me and to most Americans, I guess, who served in Seoul, to believe that the North Koreans would attack. It is true that they had superior forces to the South - not to the rest of the world, and perhaps not to South Korea with the United States behind it, but one-on-one there was no doubt during both periods I was assigned to Seoul, on a purely military basis, the North probably could have successfully attacked the South. They certainly could have raised hell with Seoul if they had been so inclined. Park's pitch always mentioned the fact - which it was - that Seoul was within range of Scud missiles and long range artillery. The South, in my experience, many of the Southerners, although this feeling may have been dissipated by their experience in Vietnam with modern warfare and all the rest of it, but many of the Southerners had an irrational fear of the North. They tended to think of North Koreans as six or ten feet tall and capable of doing much more than they probably actually were capable of . We did know in numbers, types and amount of equipment that the North was very well supplied. But despite the fact that it had a better industrial base than the South, its capability of sustaining an attack against the South without massive support from the Soviet Union or China seemed dubious. As time went on, of course, the economy of the South was getting stronger and stronger and its own industrial base was improving greatly.

It was hard to see what political rationale they might have for the attack. Unification, of course, was always the overriding consideration, but would it have succeeded? What would the Northern leaders really, if they sat down coldly to calculate their prospects, what would they have concluded? Another point was, of course, an intelligence view that while the North Koreans had a lot of forces deployed in forward positions, they were largely defensive positions. Much of the deep tunneling and underground aircraft storage, etc. that the North prepared were far more useful in terms of defense than offense and they expended an enormous amount of their available resources preparing defensive positions, much more so than the South ever did, or we ever helped them do. So, I always thought that they were going to probe, to flex their muscles to show us they had things, but I never really thought that they would attack Unless, and here we get into the element that affected both sides, unless somebody or something caused them to act irrationally. The question arose, is the North capable of totally irrational acts? The answer to that is 'perhaps.' Kim Il-sung was thought to be in firm control, but he was an unknown quantity - and his action in attacking in 1950 could certainly be viewed as risky if not irrational. And it was thought that unification before he died was his overriding goal and that he was waiting only the opportunity to strike. And is the South capable of totally irrational acts? The answer to that one was also 'perhaps.' We knew Park Chung Hee a heck of a lot better than we knew Kim Il Sung. We knew that Park got pretty close to the edge from time to time. He was an emotional man capable of explosions in private and perhaps also in public. He drank heavily when under extreme stress.. He went on binges into mountain retreats - out of touch and control - and we were always fearful that during one of these he might well order something irrational. Would his orders have been carried out? If, for example, in his response to the Blue House raid he had ordered an attack on the North, would his troops have obeyed him? Probably. That event itself was considered so outrageous that it might have justified an attack.

I guess that about sums it up. The looming presence of the North' s concentrated power created tensions among people who lived in Seoul . As evidence of the validity of this,

they have taken in recent years I understand...it started in the '70s...really concrete steps to move everything that they can possibly - government agencies, the capitol, foreign embassies, the works - south of the Han and restricted development north and west of it. My son just came back from Seoul the other day and says really that most the city has grown enormously around Yongdungpo and other communities south of the Han. He had to work to get up into the area of the old capitol building. Because during the Korean War, when the North Koreans attacked and made such rapid progress, one of the first defensive measures the South took was to blow the bridges...they blew half the population of Seoul into the water in the process and left the other half stranded on the northern side of the river. They just don't want that to ever, ever happen again and it has been a fixation with them.

But, yes, people in Seoul did live under a certain amount of tension from this kind of thing, especially those who specialized in learning and talking about what the North Koreans were doing. I don't think the tunnels touched the average person, but people who were charged with doing something about the tunnels took them pretty seriously.

Q: How well did you feel you were served by the American CIA and we are talking about the time when you were deputy chief of mission there not previous to that?

ERICSON: We had excellent relations and cooperation, particularly with Don Gregg when he was station chief. The exchange of information, which was pretty tightly held, was better than adequate in giving an indication of what they were doing. There were things we didn't know, of course, and things that we didn't want to know. But we had no problems with Gregg. If he was asked, he would respond. He would volunteer. He was quite frankly the best station chief that I ever worked with anywhere in that sense.

Q: How about what we were getting on the Korean military? It was always likely that the successor to Park Chung Hee would come out of the general ranks of the military. We had our military there. Were you getting information about the Korean military?

ERICSON: Yes. It was interestingly enough more prevalent during the '60s than it was during the '70s in my experience. In the '60s, both the Embassy's political section and the station focused heavily on the military, particularly the group around Kim Chong-pil and his pre-military academy 8th class associates. The eighth class in the organization that preceded the establishment of the Korean West Point. This was a particularly good class, like the West Point class of 1915. It had a lot of very capable people and he was the leader. And, of course, KCP was known to have lofty ambitions - he's still trying to become president, I'm told - this time as a politician. KCP was a fascinating study. The best organized Korean I have ever seen. He was an organizational genius, very smooth. His greed for power and wealth, his ambition were almost his undoing. But he did organize the Korean CIA. He did organize the DRP, which was set up to support Park in his first election. He was probably the mastermind of Park's revolution. He was Park's nephew by marriage. A very, very clever man and Park's obvious rival. He certainly cultivated his ties to his old associates in the Army. We watched him and his group and President Park had people watching them all like hawks, because this was a very, very ambitious man with very ambitious people around him. So every movement, every assignment within the army of that group was watched by a lot of people in the South. We used to report on it fairly regularly and so did the station and the military.

There were other groups, too, that were watched carefully. For example, the group of army officers of North Korean origin - the Hamhung group - whose leader was Chong Il-kwon. By the 70's, however, attrition and the Vietnam War had disrupted these cliques and the emergence of professional military from the Korean military Academy had changed the character of the army. I thought then that the army was an important power base for any politician, but that it was growing increasingly unlikely that it would be the source of a revolt or coup against Park..

To digress, one of the most interesting things that Park did to make his economic revolution effective was to place retired military commanders in positions of influence

in private companies. He saw to it that these people didn't just go off and play golf, etc. These people retired young - there was a rigid up or out policy in the South Korean army and these guys retired when their time came. But they were pretty well taken care of and the more capable ones usually ended up in influential positions in Korean business or trade organizations or national unions, etc. They were put carefully with considerable forethought in places where they could do the most good. Somebody ought to do a really good study of this because it is one of the most successful of Park's efforts. When he assumed power, the military was the only large-scale organization in the country, the only one that dealt with large amounts of equipment, large numbers of personnel, personnel and procurement systems, budgeting, etc. The only organization that gave anybody top-level executive experience. So the military gave Korean businesses a large number of capable executives that they might not otherwise have had. Secondly, it kept the military reasonably content. They knew they weren't being just cast aside. And, it kept them supportive. Eventually, of course, the business organizations, industrial concerns, began getting their people elsewhere. They began training them themselves, sending them abroad for education, etc. and I suppose the military contributes very little today to this kind of thing. But in the '60s particularly, and perhaps to a lesser degree in the '70s, very large number of capable Korean business leaders and other organizations' leaders came right out of the military.I think such a policy would be viewed with suspicion in this country. But it worked there because there was no other organization...the universities were not turning out the kind of people that were necessary, there was no other training ground.

Q: Now, when you say you kept an eye on the generals, how did you do that?

ERICSON: Well, CIA has its methods which involve using human intelligence. You persuade somebody to report. You recruit people inside the system to keep an eye on them for you. Such a luxury is not afforded the Foreign Service, of course, so we made friends with them. We were much less effective in this than the CIA. Usually the people we were contacting were people who were not on active duty.

Q: Did you find our military was responsive to the fact that we did have a concern about this?

ERICSON: The military consists of some time people, on the scene for two year tours. The chances of them getting into something in depth are fairly dim. About as dim as ours, if you will, although we tended to have slightly longer terms. The military did employ some people who had been there for a long time. They had on their staff Jim Hausman, a remarkable man - a civilian - who had been there since his days as a Lt. Colonel in JUSMAAG before the Korean War. He was a walking encyclopedia of developments within Korean military headquarters and he knew all the key players from way back. He had fought with them, he had been an infantry officer and had been around staffs during the Korean war. He had come across many of the senior people when he was a young officer, as were they, and was good on chores of this kind.

Incidentally, for all the surveillance of potential leaders of uprisings from the military against Park, we never really found any evidence that any of them were bent on doing that. Park's control was pretty pervasive. If, for example, some military leader began to acquire a reputation and a following of his own from exploits in Vietnam, his next assignment would likely be as ambassador to Greece. That actually happened.

Q:What was the evaluation of the Koreans as a fighting force?

ERICSON: Whose evaluation, mine?

Q: Yes.

ERICSON: They got a bad reputation - a bum rap, I think - during the Korean War. There are any number of well-publicized accounts of Korean units that collapsed, withdrew, bugged out, faltered, exposed flanks of an allied unit. When you consider they were in no way prepared for the attack and that most of the Korean soldiers who fought during the war had very little training and totally inadequate equipment and their commanders

had had no combat experience, etc., I think you can understand...even so they fought extremely well on many occasions and took an enormous number of casualties, and did not as a nation collapse, which they might well have done. Of course, I have the Ericson theory of the relative effectiveness of the Asian fighting man, which is that it varies in direct proportion to a combination of the distance from the equator and the height above sea level. The further north they live, the better they are and the higher in altitude they live, the better they are. If you applied the Ericson theory here it would make the North Koreans better fighters than the South Koreans. The North did have a number of very, very good fighters. Those guys who came down on the Blue House raid, for example, were extremely well disciplined and there was a good planning effort, but when they were discovered they apparently fell apart.

As to the capabilities of the South at the time I was there, they had obviously improved enormously over their experience during the Korean War. They showed in Vietnam, against not much opposition, that they were capable of being cruel, efficient and devastating in the area they were assigned to. They certainly pacified their areas in a very thorough and prompt manner.

As to the DMZ, itself, I think we have only the testimony of the Blue House raiders to tell us what North Koreans thought of the South and its troops, because the Blue House raider who was captured and did tell us everything said that they had deliberately come through the American 2nd division because they knew they could get through the Americans but not through the South Koreans. This is testimony only on how they felt about guard duty effectiveness, it doesn't say how they would do in actual combat. Nonetheless, it does say a good deal. I personally think that certainly the best of the South Korean units were very effective and a quite capable fighting force - and probably the best led troops in Asia. They had a good military training based on West Point and many of their officers had been to advanced schools in the United States. They took training and discipline very seriously, although Chong Il-kwon , who had a sense of humor, always said his major accomplishment in the US was to acquire more speeding tickets from the MPs at Fort

Leavenworth than anybody who ever attended the Command and General Staff School. I had a great deal of respect for them. I visited a lot of South Korean military units and always found a very firm discipline, a lot of spit and polish, which may not say much for combat but did show the Korean commanders were working at what they were told to work at. I think that in Korea they would have been a very effective fighting force, and to be honest, in the 70's in Korea I think a good South Korean regiment probably would have been more effective than its American counterpart because its American counterpart was always under manned and frankly was not getting the best troops or equipment we had to offer. The best were going to Vietnam.

Q: Moving to another group, again during this 1973-76 time, how did you view the Korean students? There was always the spring demonstration or threat thereof.

ERICSON: Well, ever since the student uprising against the Japanese in the spring of 1913, spring was always the tense period and particularly about April 30, the anniversary of the student uprising against Syngman Rhee. Every year you expected them to do something. Park, however, devised a fairly effective system of controlling them, it seemed to me. When his intelligence, and he did have intelligence at work among the students, brought him news that students were beginning to foment something, he would warn the presidents of the universities and tell them to take action. If they fell short, the police would arrest a few student leaders as a warning and to weaken the movement.. If that still didn't work, Park would close the schools. This was particularly true in the '60s. I don't recall if he pulled this stunt in the '70s or not. We didn't have many serious student demonstrations during the period I was there. But during the '60s we did have this kind of thing and closing the schools almost always had the desired effect. Korean students do not live on campus, they come from all over the place. So if you close the schools and bar entrance to the campus you deprive them of their meeting places and assembly areas. . It is very rare that anything spontaneously rises out of the ground, you have to gather people. And if that failed, he turned the riot police loose with their batons and tear gas. By taking these various steps one at a time he managed during the '60s to keep the students

under pretty fair control. I think Park felt that he could be harsh with college students -the public might feel that they should know better, and the police and military, largely drawn from lower classes, were not sympathetic to college boys. But Park wanted at all costs to prevent younger students - high school kids - from joining their elders. He must have vividly recalled that when this happened during the rioting that toppled Syngman Rhee, the army refused to move against the kids. The demonstrations in the '70s never achieved the strength of that uprising, nor even the demonstrations protesting the agreement with Japan in 1965, which was probably the worst one that Park faced. But they did close schools from time to time and they did take casualties.

Park used one extreme that the students always bore in mind. He tore up Koryo University during one of these uprisings in the 1960s (this was before he devised the tactic of closing the schools). Hearing that students had barricaded the main gate, the police came in a convoy of 15 or 16 trucks and drove up the street outside the walls of the university and then turned around and came back. Somebody - possibly a provocateur - threw a stone at the lead truck and broke the windshield, upon which the whole convoy stopped. Out came the riot squad in full gear with gas masks on, throwing tear gas grenades as they came. They swept across the campus and beat the hell out of anybody in their path and tore up classrooms and generally raised holy hell, injuring a number of students - many quite innocent - but didn't kill anybody. The government put out the story that a peaceful convoy of riot police had been attacked by the students and had acted in retaliation. Well, it was a couple of stones versus virtual destruction of the campus. It gave the students and faculty of every university something to think about. That was the kind of measure that Park was willing to take to avoid the risk of facing something like Syngman Rhee did.

In the '60s it was a campus by campus sort of thing. There was no inter-campus organization of any kind and as a matter of fact I don't think the students ever achieved the kind of inter-campus organization that would have been useful. You were always looking at Seoul National and Koryo as having the best kids and the main centers of possible

difficulty. This is largely why they closed Seoul National's old campus in the city and moved it to the other side of the river, where I gather it is now.

Q: Yes.

ERICSON: But it was to keep the students out of the downtown area and keep them at a distance in a place where they could keep them under control. With their history, Korean students feel almost obliged to agitate in the spring, it was incumbent on them or else they couldn't be called students. That was the students' raison d'etre to go out and raise hell and protest in the spring time. But, I don't think they were ever a serious threat to Park and the stability of his government.

Q: Moving again to another element again during this '70s period, how about the American missionaries. How did we deal with them and how did Sneider get along with them.

ERICSON: I think I told you last time that Sneider started out by lecturing tog the missionaries at their first meeting rather than listening to them and I don't think he ever quite overcame that. Christians and their American missionaries - some but not all - some of the Catholics and the old Protestant groups, but generally not the evangelical sects - were involved in Korean politics because of one of the roles the church played during the Japanese occupation. The churches were the one place where gatherings were tolerated. So, to a certain extent, the Koreans used the Christian churches as a front for some of their own political activities and the tie between the two became more or less solidified. The missionaries at that time were involved to a degree and this carried over. .

The missionaries, bound by conscience, were genuinely concerned about the human rights and dictatorial aspects of of the repressive measures that Park took and supported the reaction of their congregations.. When Park actually implemented these measures and arrested church members. the missionaries felt impelled by conscience and outrage to take some kind of action. They didn't get involved directly, except on a few occasions that I can remember, but many of them were certainly willing to let their churches be used as

bases of operation and to protest, at least to us and certainly to their churches and political representatives at home, when some member of their congregation fell afoul of the law. They also from time to time spoke to Korean authorities although they largely got a pretty deaf ear there.

On occasion, however, the missionaries actually fomented and led Korean demonstrations against Park. There was one protest leader - a church member - was arrested with his group and died in prison, apparently of police brutality. A well-known Marymount missionary, a Catholic priest, led demonstrations around the jail by the parishioners when his body was received. Then one day from our offices in the embassy we saw a couple of buses pull up. A large number of women - only one man, our Marymount friend - descended and raced into the embassy parking lot, where they produced signs and began parading around. We were negotiating with this priest and one or two of the more prominent protestors about coming up to speak to the ambassador when the riot police descended - uninvited - on this group. The women were not being destructive, although they were trying to bar people from going into the embassy. But the police were in full riot regalia.

Q: They sort of looked like samurai soldiers.

ERICSON: They came into the parking lot and began whaling away at these women and hauling them into the bus to take them down to police headquarters to be charged. Well, I was on the telephone to the foreign ministry immediately to protest this unsolicited incursion on diplomatic property. I was told they were in violation of Korean law which prohibited demonstrations within a hundred yards of embassy buildings, or some such thing. I was retorting that the police had no right to enter embassy property without... While we were having an argument the police were rounding up all the demonstrators but one and that was our friend the priest. The police would not arrest him and would not put him in the bus with the women, despite the fact that he wanted to be arrested and wanted to be put in the bus and taken to the police station and perhaps even put into jail. As the police

van drove away we were treated to the ludicrous sight of a Catholic priest - dark suit, collar and all - chasing after them, furious because he hadn't been taken in too.

Things like that that bugged us a little bit. However justified the cause, he was making life difficult for us. But I suppose that was his intention. Incidentally, he did take a taxi to police headquarters and there demanded to be arrested and jailed with his lady cohorts, but the police still refused.

Q: One of the things that used to bother me when I was there was that Americans, well meaning and all, would come over and sponsor minor protests and get Koreans into trouble but they would be sort of expelled or just told to go on their way.

ERICSON: Yes, it didn't make you very happy with your countrymen. Another thing, of course, that the missionaries were quite prominent in complaining to the press and people in the United States about Park's repressive measures and in the process, I think, to a certain extent exaggerating what was going on. God knows it was bad enough. The emergency measures were certainly undemocratic and were certainly employed in many cases without real justification. Nonetheless, this country was in a unique position of its own. I personally thought that a strong central government was necessary and that it could not afford a hell of a lot dissidence, which the North Koreans were always ready to capitalize upon if they could.

The missionaries kept in touch with the media and the Congress and periodically called in at the embassy. As I recall, Sneider always gave them adequate time. I don't think they ever established a real good dialogue. We had an officer in the embassy whose responsibility was to maintain liaison with the missionaries. We always had a political officer to do that, so their representations to the embassy might have been less frequent than they could have been otherwise. The missionaries, of course, were agitating about one aspect of life in Korea - it never seemed to occur to them to acknowledge the many freedoms that did exist - to say nothing of the government's tolerance of their own

presence and activities. The embassy is in a much different position. It may feel strongly about their cause, but it also had seventeen other fish to fry and you do have to balance one thing against another.

These reports the press and media sent to the US were effective with Congress. During the '70s, frankly, one of our major problems was the care and feeding of the United States Congress' more liberal members, who came in a seemingly endless stream to investigate political oppression and human rights violations and to determine whether the United States should support a government that resorted to such measures. The Korean government always received them quite well. Park Chun Hee during that period, and during the previous period also... Park was very concerned about his reputation in the United States. I think one of his major ambitions was to be received in Washington in parity with the President of the United States on a state visit and all that went with it. He really hungered for that kind of thing and it was said at one point he offered $25,000 to the magazine to appear on Time's cover. He would have given anything to get recognized and received in Washington on a par with the President of the United States. It would have been the capstone of his career. He never got it, of course.

When I left in 1968 I wrote a long final report of my experiences and feelings about Korea, which never saw the light of day because Bill Porter and George Newman refused to send it. They said it was too critical of Park and his activities. I was pretty low on Park at the time, as a matter of fact. The concern at that point was whether Park was going to amend his own 1963 constitution to permit him to serve more than two terms as president and thus enable him to remain in office beyond in 1971. I included in this tour d'horizon a prescription for persuading him not to. I certainly defended everything that he had done economically, etc. for I had considerable admiration for the man. But I thought he was going to overstay his time and that the best way to prevent...I thought he was going to be provoked into doing it by the opposition which really behaved very badly all during this period. I said that way to get rid of Park or to get Park decently retired, was to invite him to Washington - give him the presidential visit that he so desired - with all the perks

and trappings. Not only that, but let him address a joint session of Congress, the ultimate honor the United States can bestow on an ally and friend. It has been done a number of times since then. The kicker should be that the President of the United States should accompany him to Congress and should introduce him, and in doing so should recount Park's achievements, his loyalty in Vietnam, and all that he had done for his country and say, “When he steps down in 1972, as I know he will, he will enter Korean history as one of its greatest presidents”...or words to that effect. Put him before Congress and the world as somebody we want and expect to step down and he might well have done it. But, instead, of course, he stayed on, passed a new constitution and was finally assassinated 1979 by one of his own people. This was certainly one of the more outstanding cases in the world of a politician who stayed beyond his time.

Anyway, we did have a large number of congressional visitors and Park did receive every single congressional visitor during both of my tours with one exception. They always came with complaints veiled warnings and threats, and Park usually responded quite patiently by trying to explain to these people the peculiar position Korea found itself in ..... how memories of the Korean War were very much alive in the minds of all Koreans, and the additional strains and tensions with the North attendant on Korea's participation at our request in the Vietnam struggle, to which they had rotated by that time several hundred thousand young Korean men and had taken their share of casualties. He always expressed his feelings about what President Lincoln had done during the Civil War in suspending habeas corpus and arresting large numbers of people without trial. Park used to say, “I think of myself somewhat like Lincoln, sitting across the Potomac from Robert E. Lee and saying 'Gee, I can't afford to have the streets of Washington running with dissident civilians. I have a war to fight.'” He considered himself still at war with North Korea and technically he was. The Armistice Agreement was only an armistice; it was not a peace treaty.

Anyway, Park did treat a long procession of visitors quite well. I remember one that was led by Congressman Wolfe from New York, chairman of the Far East subcommittee

of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Steve Solarz was in that group and the present chairman, Benjamin Gilman. There were ten or eleven Congressmen on that “familiarization trip to Asia,” (I still think they should have re-named the Washington basketball team the Washington Junketeers - the Foreign Service would have loved it) and Korea was obviously their major stop. Park, who had just bought Queen Elizabeth's personal plane, was on vacation down in Chinhae. I was Charg# again for some peculiar reason. Park sent the airplane up to Seoul and flew the whole schmear down to Chinhae. He came to the base from his island retreat to meet with them. He entertained them at lunch, had a long private meeting with Wolfe, and then sat around and answered their questions. He got bombarded, of course, by Solarz in particular and other liberal congressmen about his policies and he answered them all quite openly and frankly acknowledged that he had to be tough on his people. At one of these meetings he said that when Korea's per capita annual gross national income reached $1000, then he thought he could see fit to lift the measures and give full freedom and democracy. Well, it later passed that ceiling rather rapidly without any lifting of repressive measures. But he was thinking about this kind of thing, obviously.

The missionaries had only peripherally to do with the Congressional flow. They undoubtedly inspired many of the questions from congressmen who came, but the congressmen, of course, had their own constituencies and own agendas and many of them felt exactly as the missionaries did. That was one of the problems with Congressmen during that period, of course, and many of those who came to Korea were violently biased against the Park government and what was going one, and came largely to seek confirmation of their views. I have in mind in particular a visit by Don Fraser, a Congressman from Minnesota and later mayor of Minneapolis. He was probably the leading liberal and human rights activist then in the Congress. His wife was a well known liberal activist also. Fraser came out, when I was Charg# again. His visit was not typical, but perhaps an extreme example of Congressional attitudes of the period. Somebody in the Seoul missionary group had written to the United States to say that Park was

torturing people who were arrested under the emergency measures, that some of them had suffered terribly at his hands. This aroused considerable sentiment in Congress and Fraser had come out to investigate. He asked for an appointment with Park and implied that he wouldn't come unless he got one. That request hung fire all during the preparation for this visit. Park never did say that he would give him an appointment and in the end did not. He was so angry that Fraser became the only Congressman Park ever refused to see. Fraser wired out ahead and said that he wanted...he was going to arrive on a Sunday...and asked that arrangements be made for him to see Kim Dae Jung privately and to talk immediately to a list of distinguished dissident leaders. He also asked to see Kim Chi-ha, the poet who was in jail for having slandered the president and who, it was rumored, would receive the death sentence. This one really teed Park off - he couldn't believe the effrontery of Fraser's request to see both him and a man who was in prison accused of treason..I scheduled the Kim Tae-chung interview for the afternoon at my house (that must have pleased Park too) and a dinner party also at my house for the larger group. Included were Chong Il-hyong, who had been prime minister under the Chang Myon government after the downfall of Syngman Rhee, and his wife, a distinguished lady lawyer who had founded and still ran the Korean Legal Society for people who couldn't afford legal representation in Korean courts. It included to the two famous educator Kims, Okay-kil who was president of Ehwa University, and her brother Tong-kil, the distinguished professor from Yonsei University, both Methodist-affiliated. And it included members of the opposition political party, political leaders. There were about eight, I think, and despite Fraser's leading questions none was willing to express a view in front of the others.. Not surprising. None that is except Kim Tong -kil. I think that this man had been responsible for Park's education on Lincoln, on whom he was Korea's leading authority. A very impressive looking man who, incidentally, sang like an angel at parties. He was large for a Korean with a great leonine head and a backswept mane of gray hair. A Korean lion, as Churchill was a bulldog..

Fraser was accompanied by Bill Richardson, who was then a staffer but now the Congressman from New Mexico and very active in foreign affairs, having done a number of recent hostage negotiations. Also a man by the name of Sausman, a staffer, and Bob Boettcher, a former Foreign Service officer. I will never forget that party of four. They came out frankly looking to interview people who had been tortured. But that first night Fraser tried very hard to get this group of dissident leaders, so-called, to say things condemning the Park government - and to tell him about people being tortured in ROK jails. He was looking for confirmation of his biases. It went on and on. Of course, this was bad tactics in the first place because you don't get people like that to talk in front of each other. It was hard enough to get them to talk at all, if you were an American diplomat or congressman, but getting them to talk as a group is practically impossible. But he was laboriously trying to lead them to that point when Kim Tong-kil finally said, “ Stop!”and then gave what was perhaps the best summary of the Korean point of view toward Park and the whole situation that I have ever heard.It wasn't what Fraser had come to hear. I should add that Fraser wanted to see Kim Tong-kil because he had been imprisoned by Park for making derogatory remarks about the president in a speech. It was not a violent denunciation of Park, but it mocked the president and questioned whether someone who was so stupid as to impose such oppression - or to permit his minions to behave so harshly - was fit to rule. There were always people under Park who, in trying to curry favor, did things he things he might not have done himself, Anyway, Park promptly had him sentenced to eight years in jail in solitary confinement. That had been about a year earlier. He had spent the first six months in solitary confinement and then gone into jail for elite prisoners for another six months and had just been released. So this man was a prime candidate for the Congressman's approach.

But he stopped the Congressman said, as best I can recall, “Mr. Fraser, you are asking too much of us We Koreans badly want democracy and full human rights like you have in America. Those of us who know democracy want it very badly indeed. And we will work hard to achieve it. But what you must realize, Mr. Fraser, is that there isn't a democratic

institution in this country. Aside from the national assembly there are no elective offices . So we Koreans have no experience with democracy. We don't know how to handle it. We don't even really know what it is.. It will probably take us a hundred years, to develop the kind of democratic society that you would be proud of, that you would want us to have. We will try. But it is going to take a very, very long time." He went on to say, "Don't come here assuming that we do not feel the threat from the North. All of us that are of an age remember the devastation of the war. Many of us had families that were wiped out. We saw the city in ruins three times and we know that these same people who did that are just 30 miles from here. We do feel the threat from the North and we do believe the president is justified in invoking that threat as a means of controlling the population." He said, "Most Koreans deep down agree we are much too much a fractious society at this stage to have anything but a fairly strong central government. Now we don't condone what Park has done. What Park did to me was not just.. I should never have been sent to jail. I did not commit any crime. Jail was no picnic. Six months of solitary confinement can be devastating. But I came to know myself better in those six months and when I was put into the general prison I was in a cell with five or six others, several of whom happened to be my students. I was given the usual privileges of a prisoner. My family visited me, fed me, brought me study materials. I was allowed to teach while in prison. It was not a country club and a terrible experience, but I was not tortured. I know no one who has been tortured. It is quite probable, knowing my people and my president, that there have been people who have been tortured, but I have no personal knowledge of any of them.You Americans may ask what you should do to promote democracy here. The worst thing you can do is attempt to impose your own solutions on us, because you don't understand anything about this society and its people. And if you impose, it will fail. When it fails, you will have to come up with another solution and it too will probably fail. You will never get out of here. What America should do is to let us solve our own problems in our own way. There has to be a Korean solution. You should just continue to provide the shield, against the threat that menaces us, as you have so nobly and so well over the past years, so that these changes can take place. But it will take a long time."

The report of the Fraser mission does not contain word one of this statement. The dinner is not even mentioned. That group chased all over Seoul looking for people who had been tortured. The opposition party gave them a dinner the next night and they were an hour and a half late because all four of them had been chasing down some lead to a tortured prisoner - with whom they had failed to link up. One of the reasons they didn't find what they were looking for is that anybody who might have spoken about the use of torture, or had been tortured, was on a long bus ride through the country. The ROKG had rounded them up and taken them out of town, which doesn't make you feel very good about the Koreans, but nonetheless you have to admit it was a fairly clever operation.

Anyway, Fraser returned home to write a report of his mission denouncing Park and all his work, but said not a word about Kim's statement. Incidentally, Kim's statement also included a long reference to Park, himself, saying in effect that while he found Park a despicable person in many ways, he could understand why he acted the way he did, and he confessed to grudging admiration for him. He said that to date Park has done more for his country than any other Korean who ever lived, which is a fairly nice thing for an oppositionist to say about a man he allegedly hated. I think that was probably true of Park up to that time. For all his failings, he certainly concentrated on the economic development of Korea and succeeded amazingly — to a degree that nobody has ever carefully examined to this day. But take a look. When I came there in 1965, they couldn't even build a steel hull fishing boat, they couldn't build much of anything. The per capita income was around $50 a year. The country was still mired in the early colonial period. Today, the United States has a severe balance of trade deficit with the ROK, a country that makes a lot of very good industrial products. So, you know somebody did something right somewhere along the way, and I think for the first 20 years it was Park.

Q: Well, let's look at the other side of Congress. All of us were very much aware that some Congressmen were involved in personal aggrandizement or what have you and getting on very comfortably with the Koreans.

ERICSON: There are all kinds of stories about Korean efforts to persuade Congressmen and other influential Americans to see things their way. There are a lot of stories about Kim Dong Jo when he was ambassador to the United States having been literally a bag man who carried large sums of money up to the Hill to distribute. Carl Albert, when he was Speaker of the House, had in his front office as receptionist a Korean woman whom all of the Koreans believed and said was an employee of Tong-son Park and Tong-son, himself, was controlled by the ROK CIA. Now, you can believe that as you wish or not. The lady, herself, was a pain in the butt to official Americans in Korea, because whenever she came, and she did accompany several Congressional delegations, she adopted the role of super hostess and interfered by providing extra entertainment for the delegation.

Q: You are talking about girls.

ERICSON: Yes. I can remember one occasion, again I was Charg#, when a very large group of Congressmen came...this might have been the Wolfe/Solarz group, but I am not sure...anyway, they were a large group, so large that we had to hold our dinner party in the garden of the house that the ambassador was temporarily using. My wife worked very hard in somebody else's house to put this affair on and it was going quite nicely. It was just about to reach the breakup point when this lady appeared, uninvited, wearing a two piece dress which exposed her midriff (the Korean women - all in modest Korean dress — were shocked). In a loud voice, she invited the entire CODEL, to come with her up to the big Kisaeng house way up on the top of the hill on the northern side of the city. I went along with them to see what would happen. It was a full blown Kisaeng party - music, girls, dancing, scotch, food .The Congressional wives were along, which was seldom the case. This was her idea of how to win friends for her country, I guess, and her guests had a great time. But all this had to be funded from somewhere. A party at a place like that for 45 people is a mighty expensive affair.

Q: We are talking about $200 or $300 per person.

ERICSON: Probably at that time let's say $200 a head, which would be $8-10,000 a party. Somebody had to approve a voucher on that one.

Then there were the activities of Tong-son Park. Park was a shadowy businessman who ran several good size companies in Korea, and was also operating in the United States. He lived in Washington for much of the time. He owned the Georgetown Inn where he entertained Congressmen constantly. He always had a great deal of money available for entertainment. He was regarded in Korea by the righteous as a slippery and unreliable character, indeed. I am sure that he was a ROK CIA operative. Anyway, he always appeared in Korea when certain Congressmen came. There were organizations in Korea that went by names like Pan Pacific Friendship Society, which were fronts for the ROK Government and its agencies. These invited fairly substantial groups of Americans and Congressmen to come to Korea to see what things were really like. They got the Cook's tour of the better things available. A number of Congressmen came such auspices. To be cynical about it, it looked like the Koreans were buying either the useless or the converted. . They were always conservative Congressmen of one stripe or another who probably would have supported the Republic anyway, but came and enjoyed a few days in a nice hotel and a nice tour of the countryside and winning visit to the race track. They inevitably collected their counterpart funds. They always had official orders from Congress and were therefore eligible. I always had our disbursing officer put a little note in each counterpart fund envelope saying this money was for their legitimate travel expenses while in Korea, which included their room and board, taxis, etc. and would they please return any part that was left over because the next one along could use it. We never got a single won back, but it was kind of fun to put the note in.

When I arrived in Korea, Phil Habib had already issued his famous order that any Embassy officer seen consorting with Tong-son Park or any member of his organization would be on the airplane back to the United States within 24 hours. There were a number of Congressmen who behaved under Park's aegis in a manner that left you far from

proud of them as representatives of the great American public. I will name one name in particular, Otto Passman, who was Mr. Surplus Rice Sales at the time. Park always was on hand to meet him at the airport. We would always have an embassy control officer out there and Passman would take his little information sheet and envelope of counterpart and then disappear to link up with Park. Park made all his arrangements, including hotel suites. He alone among all Congressmen wouldn't take the ambassador or charg# on his official visits. Nobody saw what he did in Korea, but his behavior made for some juicy gossip. Once I had to go to his hotel room about an hour after he arrived and the suite was already populated with the employees of the host agency who were there to entertain him, to put it kindly. Passman's behavior was the worst of any Congressman. I don't know how far Tong-son Park's influence went with him or his munificence to him, but certainly it was substantial.

There was another interesting episode of this kind. Park Chung Hee, in an attempt to imitate the American presidency, liked to hold prayer breakfasts which was the vogue among American presidents in those days. Once a year they would have a big national prayer breakfast and convene all sorts of leaders from one place or another. Park would have gone if he had been invited to one in the United States. He always sent a representative to the American President's breakfast, and in this particular instance the American President sent a representative from the White House Staff to Park's prayer breakfast. I don't remember this fellow's name, but he was an insignificant sort of Special Assistant to the President — very low on the White totem pole. But the Koreans greeted him like a long lost brother, he came from the right address and they were going to treat him accordingly so he would go back and give a good report. This was before Madame Yuk's assassination, so it must have been in the spring of 1974. His official host was Park Chung-kyu, the president's bodyguard. He was given the most elaborate treatment. He was given a picnic that my wife and I were invited to. Habib must have been out of town again because I have pictures of the picnic but no pictures of him. Anyway, the so-called picnic involved going out to the rifle range run by the Korean Rifle Association under the

ROK CIA's aegis. It was a very elaborate place. We arrived to find that a fishing pond was the first stop. There were chairs and hooks already baited and poles sitting in rests just waiting for you to pick up the pole and wind the fish in. Then we had a rifle match.. All the guests shot at targets. I forget what else we did but everyone was very much dressed up. We went to dinner expecting a picnic, but found ourselves sitting out in the open under a huge canopy with long tables gleaming with the Chosun Hotel's best silverware and china. The Chosun's A menu was supposed to have been served to us there, but it was too cold for that. The Koreans improvised very neatly. A couple of tons of firewood appeared from nowhere, the chairs were taken from the table and arranged around several roaring bonfires. We all sat around on folding chairs with four wine glasses on the ground beside each of us, being served the same meal we would have had if we had stayed to freeze at the other table. And we probably had a better time.

Anyway, this emissary from the White House was supposed to leave by plane at noon on Sunday. At about 12:30 I was shooting basketballs with my son Bill on a little court we had set up in Compound 1 when the our guest's young control officer came storming into the compound all agitated and excited. He handed me an envelope and said Mr. So-and-so got this from the Koreans... I said, “Wait a minute, calm down, what happened exactly?” He said, “Well, just before we left the hotel to go to the airport - we had plenty of time - we had a telephone call from the Blue House asking us to go to the golf course on the way to the airport [it was not on the way to the airport] because somebody very important wanted to speak to our guest. So we went and the president and his party were out on the course. Park Chung-kyu came to the clubhouse, said something to my guest privately and handed him this envelope. He put it in his coat pocket and said nothing all the way to the airport. When he was just about to go through the gate he handed me this envelope and said, “I think you ought to give this back.” I thought I should bring it to you, so here it is.” I tore open a corner and looked inside. A lot of hundred dollar bills. There were so many that the envelope clearly defined the stack and you could tell it had to be American currency. I looked at it and said, “There has got to be $5,000 here.” He said, “What do you want me

to do with it?" I said, "Put it into the Marines' safe and we will give it to the ambassador in the morning." Habib must have been in Seoul at the time; he just didn't go to the picnic, I guess.

The next morning we gave it to Habib, who in characteristic Habib fashion tore the envelop wide open, took the money out and counted $10,000 in crisp green new American bills. I do not know what Park Chung-kyu said when he handed over the money, but our guest obviously thought long and hard about retaining it and in the end did not. Habib left the office later that day with money in hand to see his friend Park Chung Hee. Habib later told me that he had told Park to put it where it would do the most good. He was furious they had tried this stunt. But that kind of thing I suppose amounts to bribery, but not for anything specific. They were bribing people for goodwill. In the case of the Congressmen it was hoped that they would all vote favorably on military assistance or other legislation pertaining to Korea, but that was never specified.

Q: This was somewhat of a Korean custom. There was a lot of money floating around, not just with Americans but with each other too.

ERICSON: I should say that one time during early 1968 the Department got disturbed about corruption in Korea. They sent a message out asking for an assessment of the extent to which corruption was undermining economic development and our aid efforts. What role did corruption play in Korean society and how pervasive and debilitating was it? I don't think we ever answered that, at least I didn't, but I was thinking about doing it myself at one point. I was standing in my office looking down on the street and I saw a cop standing in the street in front of the old Bando Hotel, at that time the number one hotel, to enforce the no U turn regulation. Taxi drivers would find it convenient to deliver somebody to the Bando and then make a U turn and get on back towards the railroad station or some place else where they could pick up a fare. That would cause congestion in front of the Bando. So the police put up a sign saying no U turns and had stationed a cop there to

enforce it. But here was a taxi making a U turn right in front of the Bando and right in front of the cop. I thought here is where it starts. You could start anywhere, but let's start here.

This taxi driver can make the turn because he had paid the cop to overlook it. That is corruption, but it helps both of them. He works more efficiently because of it. Now the cop has taken this money but he has paid off the sergeant so he can have this position where he can get this kind of payoff. He needs this payoff because he can't live on his pay, so he pays the sergeant a little something in gratitude for the Bando assignment which makes it possible to support his family. The the sergeant needs this payoff because he wants to ensure that his kid does as well as possible in school, and so he takes a little graft from the cop in order to show proper gratitude to his son's teacher for special attention and a seat in the front row of the class. The teacher in the class has paid to get in the class so that she can get this better group of pupils and get a little extra from their parents. It starts out like that from any thread in Korea's social fabric. Wherever you start you can work your way around to people high and low, all around the fabric. . It's pervasive, all over the place. It's part of life. Koreans pay for favors or advantage. They do it in ways that we would consider to be corrupt. By our standards it is corrupt. Is it corruption by theirs? At a certain point it becomes corruption to them, but they are the ones who are able to judge where that point is.

The ROK CIA, for example, never got appropriations adequate to its responsibilities. It had to get its money elsewhere. Part of its great organizational talent was devoted to extorting funds from people to provide, and for the ROK CIA, in particular, dollar funds. The ROK CIA, for example, got a kickback from Korean participants in most of the dollar operations concluded in the Republic of Korea. They got it from operations involving foreigners. For example, they controlled and allocated bids among the firms that packed up all the household goods for the US military and to a certain extent the embassy as well. The guy who sold that picture to my wife, Sammy Lee, got ambitious and rather than just running his antique business, he went into the furniture packing business. He won an embassy contract and was a damn good packer. He refused to kick back to the CIA, was jailed on

some phoney charge and put out of business. He is not in business today. The ROK CIA got most of its funds from such extortion activities.

When the Japanese began to implement their reparations program to Korea in the '60s, the process involved Koreans submitting projects to the government and the government deciding whether the projects would be approved and and funded, approved. But the ROK CIA always collected its percentage off each one of these allocations. It never appeared on the books, but that is the way it operated.

Q: Now, talking about the '70s, you have young political and economic officers reporting on the scene. You have talked about two things that sort of set off bells, annoyance, anger, etc. particularly with junior officers who haven't been around, corruption of an oppressive government. Did you find that there was a difference between say the older officers and the younger officers who were coming up and dealing with this? Was this as the DCM and reflected through the ambassador a problem?

ERICSON: I have dim recollections of there being some difficulties with highly indignant junior political and economic officers. I can't recall who, what and specifically why. There were a number of junior officers who objected, and rightfully so, very sincerely to the harshness with which Park treated his people. There were one or two Catholics on the staff, for example, who in particular thought he was too tough on the Bishop when that worthy got politically active. He was never arrested or anything, but his movements were watched and his visitors were noted and restricted and the like.. But nothing that ever approached a revolution of our own within the embassy, no.

How did I feel about it? After you have been in Korea for a while you begin to get some understanding...you develop not a tolerance for it, but an understanding that corruption and harshness, that this is a tough society that lives under hard conditions and it developed certain attitudes that aren't the same as ours.

Q: I saw where it had been during the war because I served there during the war. I also saw it come out of Vietnam. I had seen other countries...I had lived five years in Yugoslavia, a communist country. I saw real progress in Korea up and down the line including the farmers which weren't milking the countryside.

ERICSON: Park was very much concerned as a matter of fact about the welfare of the farmer. He had sense enough to realize that one of the strongest elements supporting him was the sturdy yeoman out there in the countryside, so he made sure they had their share of the benefits. Everything didn't go to the cities, the industrial workers, the industrial side of the economy. Being from rural areas himself, I think he paid more attention to that than people might have expected. There wasn't a lot of farm unrest. The farm income increased just as rapidly as urban. As a matter of fact we used to argue that income distribution between rural and urban Korea was about as equitable as it is anywhere in the world.

But, in the '70s, there were all kinds of people telling Park his policies were stupid or ill-advised. It would arouse his curiosity and he would like to do better. If you ever questioned in any way, manner or form, his right to rule, then you were committing crimes and you were going to go to jail. Now this isn't the way Americans think a government should work, and God knows it isn't. But it was a fact of life...it wasn't because Park couldn't accept criticism, because he could - of anything except his right to rule and the way he ruled. Then he would react violently. And God help the close associate who turned on him in any manner or form. Did you know SK Kim?

Q: No, I didn't.

ERICSON: He was a very good friend of mine. He was the first Korean who really came after me when I arrived as political counselor. We played a lot of golf over the years. SK was described by the president of Gulf Oil Company as the toughest son-of-a-bitch that he ever had to negotiate with. His function in life was as bagman for the Democratic Republican Party. He was designated to collect , manage - and later to generate - the

funds with which the party was run. For example, when Park ordered the construction of a super highway from Pusan to Seoul, most of us laughed. What would run on that highway? At that time there wasn't the type of internal commerce to require such a road and it was going to be enormously expensive to build a concrete autobahn from Pusan to Seoul in a mountainous country which had practically no experience in building roads of any kind. All of a sudden one morning you were going to wake up and be able to drive from Pusan to Seoul in three or four hours? Ridiculous.

Well, SK happened to be a manufacturer of cement. He made cement for roads and he made cement for building tiles. It was also about this time that Park decreed that the old thatched roof was to disappear from the countryside and be replaced by cement tiles. Both of these projects fit very neatly into Korean directed consumption, or if you want to call it corruption, you can. But it turned out the concrete for that road was to be supplied exclusively almost by SK's huge new cement plant which he had just obtained permission to build with a heavy loan from the government. A fair amount of the proceeds...this was not to enrich SK and his friends who owned the company. The profits from this operation, and from the tiles for the roofs of the farmers, were to flow into the coffers of the Democratic Republic Party, which, as you can guess, was a very expensive proposition and required a hell of a lot of money. The road was built, incidentally, and I had the privilege to drive it before I left. I was amazed. My driver drove from Pusan to Seoul at 70 miles an hour. Anyone who had driven in Korea before would understand that this was a real miracle. Interestingly enough, I counted them and trucks on that road outnumbered cars about three to one. The road engendered trade in this case and the tiles are a great improvement over thatch, so social purpose, support of the party, stimulation of trade and industry, SK's operation accomplished many, many objectives. But it was a corrupt operation by our standards.

Q: How much were you promoting American commercial products?

ERICSON: At that point without any promotion at all we had a balance of payments surplus. In my day, as I recall it was not a difficulty. Koreans were buying large American products. Nuclear power stations, road building equipment and all that sort of thing was by and large going to be American. We didn't have to push anything there really very hard. They weren't making anything. They had just started making consumer products that were of real interest to the Americans. Our problem was to encourage American companies to invest in Korea. Remember they established an applied science center in Seoul during the '70s which was supposed to design and make available for manufacture products requiring some technological input. I have a pair of binoculars in the family room which I purchased from this organization which were experimental, and man, they are rotten binoculars. They gave me a 35mm camera which was really pretty sad compared to what the Japanese were doing at the time, to say nothing of the Germans. But they were interested in starting to develop that sort of thing and they were promoting it from the government side. They were just beginning to design and produce calculator and simple electronic stuff. American agricultural products came in in very large volume and all kinds of industrial building equipment and machinery. So we didn't have to push American products.

Q: To go back to the question about whether there were any strong feelings on the part of junior reporting officers.

ERICSON: Yes, you jogged my memory a little on that subject. We did have, partly because of the exposure to Congressmen and their feelings, a number of junior officers who had misgivings about our support for the Park government. This is a misnomer too. We didn't support Park in his struggles versus the opposition, we always insisted on meeting with the opposition. When I left Korea, for example, in 1976 I got a letter from Kim Dae Jung's wife, he was then in jail. When she told him I was leaving, he wanted her to write to me and thank me on his behalf for the courtesies that I had shown and the understanding and opportunities that I had provided for him to meet sympathetic Americans. It seemed that whenever I was Charg#, we would have a Congressman who

wanted to talk to Kim Dae Jung and I usually did that by having Kim come to the house for lunch. He came to my three or four times. He was not in that group during the Fraser mission, but he would come and talk privately to the Congressmen. We couldn't go to his house because it was always surrounded by government agents who discouraged visitors. But he could come to my house. The embassy always maintained its right to see and speak to opposition leaders whenever it wanted to. Park didn't like this and made that clear on a number of occasions - not directly, through his advisors. However, he knew it was the price of doing business so he let it occur.But some of the junior people were upset, I recall, during that period after Sneider arrived when missionary agitation was at its height and Park's repressive measures were raising objections in the United States. They became somewhat restless. So Sneider started to convoke a regular (I don't remember how regular) discussion with the junior officers of the embassy from which the senior officers were excluded. I thought it was a rather good thing. I did attend a couple of them, but embassy section chiefs were excluded. Sneider spoke directly to his junior staff. As opposed to Habib who always managed to reserve some part of the embassy activities for himself, Dick was usually quite open with these people and this activity did a lot, I think, to allay some of their unhappiness. But, we never had anybody protest by asking for a transfer or threatening to resign, or anything like that.

Q: Was this at the time that Don Ranard, a critic of the Park government, was the Desk Officer?

ERICSON: He was the Desk Officer in Washington during a good part of this period and has been an outspoken critic of Park. He wrote fairly extensively and joined various human rights organizations - all anti-Park - after he left the Department. He was not in favor of North Korea taking over, but he was very unhappy with the domestic situation. Don had been in Korea, but it was well before my period in the '60s. He may have been back between my two times, but he wasn't there while I was there. But, he was a vociferous critic and I think encouraged to a certain degree some of the Congressional criticism.

Q: But he was the Desk Officer while you were in Korea?

ERICSON: He was the Desk Officer for a good part of the time in the '70s, yes.

Q: Did that get reflected in tension between the Desk and the embassy?

ERICSON: Well, if so, his views would have been brought to bear not so much on the embassy perhaps as on the Department and I was never aware that he ever carried the day on this kind of thing. I am sure there were a lot of discussions about it, but the Department would have put it all in overall context and come down on the side of, 'well these are the people we must work with and in many ways they are not doing all that badly.' Habib, of course, was the Assistant Secretary in EA and would not have been swayed by anyone else's views on Park or Korea.

Q: Was there anything else we should cover here?

ERICSON: One thing I should perhaps mention, although not in any great detail, is the Korean nuclear effort and its energy problems. Park, during the '70s, of course, because of the worldwide petroleum shortage, woke up to the fact that he was at the mercy of foreign energy suppliers. Korea, had no domestic sources of energy. No hydroelectric power to speak of. Remember when the Japanese occupied Korea they put most of the industrial development in the north because the north had hydroelectric power and the south did not. There was some low grade coal in the south but no petroleum. Park, as a matter of fact, instituted a desperate search, quite expensive, for a domestic oil field. He was determined to find oil somewhere in the Republic of Korea. They spent a lot of money looking for oil and one of the features of his talks with Congressmen was to reach into his desk drawer ...he would get up from the conference area in his office and open the desk drawer and come out with a bottle of some odious-looking stuff that he claimed had been mined from the ground in the south of Korea. He hired a number of American firms to come over and explore, in the straits of Tsushima even. But he wasted all his money, of course, he

never did find anything. But he was aware very keenly that he was at the mercy of foreign suppliers and since these were pretty capricious fellows, Koreans to d something about providing a domestic base for electric power. So he turned to nuclear power and pursued it quite diligently. Then, of course, he got the bright idea that there are other things that you can do with nuclear fuel. Maybe you can refine it a little bit into weapons grade stuff. I mentioned that they had developed this scientific community near Seoul and all of a sudden we found ourselves faced with the proposition that they were going to build a big science city. Now, I don't know if they ever went through with this science city concept, but it became apparent that its purpose was not solely to develop technological products for domestic manufacture but to do nuclear research of one kind and another. And there then ensued an effort — because of the nature of the equipment that they were seeking to buy and that sort of thing — to persuade them not to go the weapons route. It was successful. I won't say any more about that, but they were headed that way.

Originally Park was just desperately concerned, I think, about the question of his vulnerability to foreign sources of energy. He had none of his own and he was developing a tremendous industry which consumes a lot of power. Anyway, I think it should be flagged that the Koreans once had this ambition and were dissuaded.

Q: You left there in 1976.

ERICSON: Yes. George Vest, who was then Director of Political Military Affairs, made a visit to Korea...

I would like to relate one episode before I left which was rather interesting, a personal kind of thing. For years and years and years the Ambassador of the United States had lived in a building that was probably built around 1880, the so-called Old Residence. Our first minister there complained to Washington that it was a “miserable hovel” with beams so low he couldn't keep his hat on inside the house. The Department allegedly responded that gentlemen didn't wear hats in the house and obviously did not accept his description

of it as a “miserable hovel” because they didn't do a hell of a lot about it for many, many years. Everybody who ever walked into that building at first said, “My God, this is not suitable as the residence of the American Ambassador,” even though it had its own lovely compound, swimming pool and tennis court. People said that this old building was not adequate. But, as you stayed there, it grew and grew on you so actually you liked it. I don't know of any other building that inspired as much affection as that old building did. When you talked to the Browns about it, it was a homey, comfortable place with lots of character and charm. It was very Korean with huge exposed black beams against white plaster walls and that kind of thing. It only had two bedrooms and, as a matter of fact, during one of Hubert Humphrey's trips, he had stayed in the Ambassador's bedroom and the next day Mrs. Brown noticed that the ceiling seemed to be bulging in ways that it hadn't before. She called the army. They sent over an engineer who went into the bedroom and took her by the elbow and said, “Mrs. Brown, let us move out of this room as gently and quietly as we can.” When he got her outside he said, “Lady there are umpteen tons of tile, cement, and wood on top of you and that whole thing is about to fall on your head.” And the Vice President of the United States had just slept there.

Anyway, that a serious indication of dry rot in the building and it had spread by the time Habib got there...Habib was a fierce defender of the old building and he would not hear of anybody replacing it. But they found some more dry rot across the front of it in the main entertainment area and got to exploring how extensive it was and the more they explored the more they uncovered and they finally said, “Look, we can't fix what we have done in the exploration process for fear of having the whole thing tumble down.” The Korean style of building, of course, puts an enormous weight in the roof because it is made of cement tiles underlaid with thick plaster and held up by huge, huge beams. If the beams start to go it begins to get kind of dicey.

Anyway, they hired a Korean artist, a man famous for his tiger paintings among other things, to design a new building in the Korean style which was going to be the last building ever built in the Yi dynasty tradition - certainly of that scope. After they approved the

design they discovered that they couldn't obtain the basic construction material - wood for the supporting beams - in Korea because they no longer had any trees big enough.. Some of those beams were enormous things and they all had to be imported from our West Coast.

To make a long story short, during Habib's tour they tore down the old building and started on the new one, which is why I never lived in the DCM's house. The ambassador took that over for the whole period I was there in the '70s. The building was finished about ten days before I left Korea in 1976 and the Sneiders had just moved in.. Sneider was still eager to cultivate personal ties with Park and we sent word through people around him, to the effect that we would like to show him this extraordinary Korean style residence. The exterior of the building didn't appeal to me, I thought it was top-heavy and did not meld gracefully into the landscape like the old one. But inside it was really marvelous. It features a central courtyard - it is built like a hollow square - and in the open center center is a water course copied from the one in the royal palace at Kyongju. The king used to sit at the head of the course with his courtiers arrayed along its banks and would float little cups of rice win to the one who recited the best poem or whatever it was. I don't think we will ever appropriate that much money for a building ever again. It was fearsomely expensive , but I think probably in the end well worth it.

Anyway this was the drawing card that was going to get Park into the Ambassador's Residence. He had never been in an ambassador's residence.

A couple of days before I left he sent word that he would be pleased to come by for 15 minutes and look at the building. The Sneiders and the Ericsons were in attendance. The president showed up at about 4:00pm with his interpreter, his daughter and a bunch of bodyguards. There was a farewell party for Betty and me that night for which we had to leave by about 5:30. But he was going to be there only fifteen minutes. In the end he stayed so long that Lea Sneider was beginning to think she should invite him to dinner, but she had little on hand other than than drinks and snacks. He was gracious, relaxed, talked

about all kinds of things, about his early experiences with the Japanese, about his feelings about the assassination of his wife, all kinds of things that Park had never, never opened himself to before. And he spent a good twenty minutes...we were having trouble getting the water course to run properly...straddling that stream giving us tips on improvements to make the water run properly.

When he left, he made a singular gesture toward me. Now some people say you shouldn't accept friendly gestures from tyrants like Park, that is out of line. But he got into his car and it went ahead about 15 feet and stopped. He got back out and came up to the steps where we were and said to me, “You come back.” He then got back into his car and drove away. Well, I didn't ever go back, but I was pleased at the touch..

Sneider, of course, was delighted with the fact that his was the only Ambassadorial residence the president had ever visited. I don't know if this continued or not. I have never talked to Dick to find out whether he ever played golf with the president or achieved any of his other ambitions. I kind of doubt it because Park was set in his habits of dealing primarily with the military.

Also on departure, General Stilwell gave me a United Nations honor guard parade, which was quite something. Up to that time and perhaps never since had such a parade been performed to honor an American civilian who served in Seoul. I still think the reason he gave it was not so much to honor me, but to get Sneider into the stands so he could make a speech to which the ambassador would have no right of rejoinder. But it was kind of nice. I was so nervous standing on a little concrete podium all by myself while Stilwell gave his speech that I got to shaking so badly I almost fell off the concrete.

Anyway, we left Korea in the summer of 1976 to come back to Washington. George Vest, as I said, who was the Director of the Bureau of Political Military Affairs, had come to Seoul from Japan ostensibly to see Korea but really to take a look at me and see if he wanted me as his deputy. He decided he did and offered me the job. Since our kids were

all starting in college, and for various other reasons , I decided that I would leave the sanctity of the East Asia Bureau and venture out into another part of the Department of State.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point.

ERICSON: Okay.

Q: Today is July 10, 1995. Dick you wanted to add something here about Okinawa because of recent events.

ERICSON: Yes, involving China and its apparent interest these days in expanding somewhat outward and asserting old claims, as evidenced by what is going on down in the Spratly Islands area. This involves the Okinawa reversion negotiations and the Japanese awareness of the potential sensitivity of this kind of territorial problem and what they insisted on in order to protect such rights as they were asserting. There is a group of islands between the Chinese mainland and Okinawa called the Senkakus. They were administered by the US military occupation as part of Okinawa and were returned to Japan as part of the Okinawa reversion operation. However, back when the Japanese established hegemony over Taiwan, the Senkakus came along with Taiwan.. At some later date, the Japanese transferred authority over the Senkakus from Taiwan to Okinawa. So, at least during World War II, the islands were administered from Okinawa. When we took Okinawa, we took the Senkakus and when we reverted Okinawa we reverted the Senkakus as part of Okinawa.

During the reversion negotiations, the Japanese made a great point of specifying specifying the meets and bounds of the territories we would be reverting - the precise latitude and longitude of teach marker on the map. The area is somewhat misshapen by the fact that it includes the Senkakus and that they were particularly adamant that it would include the Senkakus. They tried to get us to make statements in the reversion documents to the effect that the Senkakus had been traditionally administered from

Okinawa and were an integral part of Okinawa. This didn't mean a great deal to us at the time. It reflected fairly accurately the facts as they were, so we did agree to the area the Japanese requested and they did take back the Senkakus along with Okinawa.

Now the Chinese - neither mainland or Taiwanese - did not declare themselves at this point, but remember that most of these negotiations were going on during the oil crisis, the fact that the Senkakus sit on the continental shelf of China and that there is a very deep ocean trench that separates all of the Ryukyu archipelago from the Senkakus. The existence of this geological fact kind illustrates that the Senkakus really are different from the rest of Okinawa and they were a part of Chinese territory at one time. While the Chinese have remained silent on the issue, I think there are the seeds here for some future dispute because it is known that there is oil on the shelf. The oil has not been explored or looked into, but here are the seeds of some future strains between Japan and China should there be another oil crisis, should the Chinese become desperate for petroleum resources, should there be a rich discovery or should any one of a number of things happen. The Senkakus themselves are largely uninhabited. They are used as shelters from time to time by fishermen, probably by Chinese as well as Okinawans because they are very isolated.. But it is interesting that the Japanese are administering these islands to which the Chinese certainly have as good a claim as they have to some of the other territories they are asserting the right to control.

Q: Was there anybody on our delegation or in INR saying that this may be a problem but a Chinese-Japanese problem and not outs?

ERICSON: As I recall the subject was idly discussed in the Department, but the consensus emerged fairly clearly that these islands at the time we took them were taken from the Japanese who had been administrating them from Okinawa. When the Chinese reasserted their claim to Taiwan under Chiang Kai-shek, they did not reassert their claim to the Senkakus. They made no big issue of it. Since the Chinese weren't saying anything about reverting these things to Japan, we went along with the facts as they existed when we took

over Okinawa, which was that the Senkakus were administered from Okinawa and should be part of the reverted territory.

Not much has been heard of it since but it is one of those things that lie sleeping and, of course, between nations territorial claims are probably the most acrimonious subjects of debate of all.

Q: Oh yes, and they keep coming up.

ERICSON: Yes, there is an island between Korea and Japan, Takeshima to the Japanese, Tokto to the Koreans and the Liancourt Rocks to us.. Whenever Japan/Korean relations heat up, you can tell that they are getting really hot when the Japanese start reasserting their claim to Takeshima . The island will not support human habitation. It is very difficult to land on and quite small. But in this day and age when territorial seas and fishing rights are calculated by distances from territorial positions, such spots in the oceans can become very important. In the old days in Korea, in Syngman Rhee's day and afterwards, the Koreans actually occupied this island with a squad of marines and the Japanese used to go by once in a while and blast the characters for “Nihon” in the rocks with machine guns just to show how they felt about it.. This kind of incident didn't get much international publicity, but I have heard of this at least twice back in the '50s and '60s.

Q: Okay, let's move back to 1976 and you come to Political Military under the tutelage of George Vest. How was it when you got there and what developed?

ERICSON: When I got there it was one of the most pleasant office situations I have ever known in the State Department. George Vest was an extraordinary character. I think basically he is one of the happiest and well adjusted people I have ever known. He had a marvelous sense of humor and was a very intelligent man. He had a superb way of handling people, at least he handled me superbly.

Q: That is my impression too.

ERICSON: He had a great reputation. He had been Kissinger's spokesman, of course, until he got into some kind of difficulty with Henry.

Q: By his account I think he just couldn't tolerate working for Henry because he is a fairly straightforward person.

ERICSON: Yes. He used to say that Kissinger treated him like a Pennsylvania farmer treated his mushrooms - kept him in the dark and every once in a while came in and threw horse shit all over him. He was full of quips like that. He had one that said the coat and tie do all the work but the Vest gets all the gravy.

He inspired a great deal of loyalty and a willingness to work because the atmosphere was very pleasant. This was a very intelligent, diligent, perceptive man, who had his way of bringing out the best in his people. So I looked forward to maybe four years of a rewarding kind of experience.

Q: What were you supposed to be doing?

ERICSON: I was brought in to be one of two Deputy Directors. Jim Goodby, a close personal friend of Vest's, was already there as the other. He had had a great deal of experience in PM and, of course, I was a raw novice. PM's principal job at that time was to be the State Department's right arm on the nuclear disarmament talks, the SALT Treaties negotiations. Goodby was steeped in that and I knew less than nothing about it. George explained to me from the very outset that he wanted me to run the other half of PM's operation, which was the conventional arms transfer program, the provision of military equipment to other countries. He didn't want to be bothered with any of that. He wanted to concentrate on the SALT Talks and nuclear weapons questions and to be bothered as little as possible with anything to do with conventional arms transfers. Goodby would be his deputy for the nuclear side.

So he didn't care if I knew anything about the nuclear thing or not. I could get involved to the extent that I wanted to, but he was not going to rely on me because Goodby was well-versed in that field. Because the nuclear problems engaged the Secretary's attention much more frequently than the conventional arms side, if there had to be a title of principal deputy he felt it should go to Goodby. But I ranked Goodby and, of course, in a hierarchal situation like that things get a little uncomfortable. But I met Jim and we got along very well. It was Jim, I think, who suggested the compromise on this situation...I got the big office and he got the title. Anyway, we worked very well together, I think, the three of us at the top of PM for the brief period we were there together.

George turned over the transfer program to me and I went through the budget cycle with very little assistance from him but with a great deal from below. where Steve Winship headed the division in the bureau which handled the Military Assistance Program grant program and the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) loan program. Steve had been on the job for some time and was very knowledgeable and we got along very well. He was a great help in getting me through that first budget and allocation cycle.

There was another program for which I had nominal responsibility - thMunitions Control Division which was headed by Robbie Robinson. He was a retired Army colonel who had worked on these problems in Defense for many years as a civilian after his retirement, had been a Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense at one point and came over to State to run the Munitions Control Division. This program involved control primarily over private sales abroad of munitions by US principals.. The Division was based over in Arlington so we very seldom saw them. Robbie came over for our staff meetings, but we seldom saw his people unless we went over there deliberately to see them. So they were sort of out sight, out of mind, and besides Robbie knew a great deal more about that business than anybody in the world ever would and he continued to do so. So I worked primarily with Winship and his people on the MAP and FMS Programs.

Then, along came the election that fall., I hadn't been there more than a few months when we had a presidential election and Ford was beaten by Carter and that turned the world of PM upside down.

Q: Before we get to that, looking at American efforts around the world, I would like to just catch what our attitude was at that time towards arms sales. It has always struck me as basically being a destabilizing thing of trying to push more arms into places for all sorts of reasons.

ERICSON: There was push, of course. The whole history of Northrop Aviation, for example, is probably one of push because they were not terribly successful in going for Air Force contracts with their various fighter aircraft and so they developed fighters of lesser capability for other countries and then lobbied hard to get the money by the Congress so that the could make the sale under a grant or loan program.. That is just one example, of course, there are many American companies who were developing military items which they tried very hard to sell overseas. But there was a lot of pull too, don't misunderstand. With your experience in Korea, for example, you would recognize that the major aspect of our relationship with Korea was defense and the Koreans looked upon us as their defender. This didn't mean in the halls of the UN alone, it meant along the DMZ and in the whole military sense. And this was true with respect to a lot of countries. If, for example, we were negotiating with a country for an expanded relationship, or we had made a new friend or what have you, the first thing the leader of that country, no matter who he might be, would say was, “Hey, I have this neighbor. This neighbor has Soviet equipment. He threatens me. Now that we are buddies, you must help me to defend myself. I want.....” The idealists are always surprised to discover that governments anywhere place a high priority on fulfilling their obligation to defend their people and their territory. Americans are fortunate - we are bounded by two oceans and two peaceful neighbors and we are a very powerful nation Even so, we are not spared this impulse for self-defense, as the size of our defense budget illustrates. You could repeat this through Africa, and Asia, Latin America,

wherever you looked you had something of that kind. So there was an awful lot of pull for military equipment from the governments with which we had good relations.

Within the United States and the State Department at that time, it was evident that the MAP or grant program had long since passed its peak and many thought it should be eliminated as soon as possible. It was a post-war, early cold war phenomenon and by now things had settled down to the point where the major problems had been fairly well taken care of and it had outlived its usefulness. It was becoming too much of a strain and unpopular with the American public, and particularly with their representatives in Congress who...a politician risks nothing by criticizing an overseas program that is not going to hurt any of his constituents, unless he happens to come from a district where a particular military item is made and would be faced with some loss of jobs if we stopped giving away that particular item. Anyway, politicians are very difficult to handle on military assistance programs, because they are so vulnerable to attack.

Anyhow the MAP program was pretty much in decline. There were still some countries getting MAP. I can't remember how many there were or where they were, but Turkey, for example, was one. Greece, as its counterpart, of course, was another. The MAP component in Korea was declining very, very rapidly because they were proving economically capable of financing a greater proportion of the military equipment they acquired from us from their own resources. It was quite obvious that if we didn't cut it down severely, Congress would eliminate the MAP program within a few years.

The Foreign Military Sales program on the other hand, under which Congress authorizes and appropriates funds to be lent by the Defense Department to other countries for the procurement through Defense of specified military equipment ....the equipment was provided permanently, but the financial aspects were to be considered loans and signed as such by other countries. That program had been proliferating and was certainly a major area of dispute between the Administration and the Congress because of its size, complexity and the way that some of the activities seemed to imply support for

undemocratic regimes or human rights violators, or just one side of a regional rivalry over the other. Congress, believe it or not, does have foreign constituencies. You learn that very quickly.... for example, when you get involved in a situation of Greek versus Turk or Israeli versus virtually any Arab you want to mention, or this country in Africa versus that one, or Pakistan versus India. It was disputes of this kind that provided most of the entertainment and strain for me during the next couple of years.

Q: Let's take the most obvious one, Israel. I would think it would be almost a given that you would say, "Whatever Israel wants we are not going to fight it because it is too much of a political hassle because Congress will get into it." What was the feeling when you arrived there?

ERICSON: You stated it pretty accurately. Of course Israel had been through its wars. It had fought two wars with various Arab entities a couple of earlier decades. The United States has a passionate interest in preserving the only democratic country in that part of the world and it is beset by enemies. It is a very small country and does devote an enormous amount of its resources to defense and expects the United States to finance and provide a great deal of its military equipment, and it did. There were two countries on military sales issues that were largely exempt from any Congressional restrictions that might apply. One was Israel and the other was Greece, both of which had extremely effective domestic lobbies, well organized and vocal and able to press any number of buttons in Congress to get positive response on their behalf. And no Congressman ever had to be told about the voting power of the Jewish or Greek elements in his own constituency. So these two were sort of sacrosanct...in treating with Israel more than Greece, of course, but the Greek lobby in the United States is surprisingly effective given its size, much smaller than the Israeli lobby but nonetheless very well positioned and effective. Congress in treating with Israel, of course, and in approving everything that was proposed for Israel, left itself open to efforts by others to receive something similar in the way of good treatment, not to be constantly criticized. In other words it raised Congress' awareness of the importance of this kind of issue to other countries and probably led

them to accede to more on behalf of other countries than would other wise have been the case. In the sense, sometimes those of us who had to support claims from other countries were happy to have the Israeli situation to point to. On the other hand , it became a little galling when some of the Israeli demands became excessive to realize they were going to be approved because no one in the administration wanted to irritate the Israeli and no Congressman wanted to risk losing support from a strong element in his own constituency.

For example, Israel's efforts to get support from us to develop their own tank, their own fighter aircraft, etc. It doesn't make much sense for a country that dependable market other than its own forces to go into the development of highly sophisticated, terribly expensive weapons. The desire for self-sufficiency is all very well, they can't have self-sufficiency in these things because they cannot begin to provide, for example, in the aircraft, the electronics, the armament, the engines. Take any part of a fighter aircraft and Israel cannot economically justify putting it together. Their best recourse is to buy it from other sources or have it provided from other sources. It is wasteful to assist projects like this, but we did.

Q: Was it a given that you would give all to Israel?

ERICSON: Well, Israel, of course, had an enormous so-called purchasing mission in the United States quartered in New York but very active in Congress, in Washington and throughout the country for that matter. People were very well informed usually as to what it was Israel wanted. In most countries the process of developing military assistance programs was for the other country to get a political feeling that we would be willing to provide...this was exemplified, of course, usually by the presence of a MAAG mission in country. Their military would work with our MAAG people in the development of their needs for the coming fiscal year, usually as a component of a longer-range plan, which all had to be tied into the coming budget cycle, of course. Then the MAAG would submit it to Defense and Defense would vet the requirements with an overall view of the situation in that area and the country's particular needs, approve it or not and send it to State. State

would then vet it from the political point of view. We would put the whole worldwide thing together within the limits of the Presidential budget request and it would get a generalized okay at that stage. Congress and the White House usually were not aware of what the demands were going to be, unless there was something really important coming up, until the worldwide program had been submitted to them. In Israel's case, Congress knew very well from the very beginning what it was Israel was going to be asking for, prepared for it and was prepared to favor it. There was another thing about the Israeli program. After grant aid to Israel had been pretty well phased out, and this had happened about this time...we practiced what I thought was a bit of sophistry with respect to the Israeli program. We were saying that grant aid was phased down or out and that Israel was on the Foreign Military Sales program. In other words it would borrow the money from the Defense Department to pay for these things and it would pay that money back. Well, there were loopholes in the Arms Export Control laws which permitted the administration to vary both interest rates and repayment grace periods from country to country. Basically the interest rate on a Foreign Military Sales loan was the going Treasury rate as of the day of signature. Israeli', however, always got a preferential interest rate. Such that, given inflation and so forth the amount of money that Israel was going to have to repay when the loans became due was a little more expensive than an outright grant but not a lot.

There was also the matter of grace periods. Countries receiving loans under the FMS program were eligible for a grace period before they had to begin repayment. If you look at Israel's loans, the grace period was ten years at a minimum usually and sometimes a good deal longer. The original intent was for a couple of years of grace , but not anything like ten or more years. The loans to Israel were very generous with respect to both interest rates and grace periods. They were probably justified, and I personally would have supported the terms. But no one ever admitted or questioned the comparative generosity of the terms, either in the administration or the Congress. The question was simply never raised and the reason for this silence was political.. Israel was getting very close to grant terms when that program was phasing out.

Q.As you took over this office, were there any areas that caused you concern that maybe we were pumping too much in or was the military unhappy at what was going to a place or trying to push more for any area?

ERICSON: I don't know how they felt about places like Israel, or the tensions between Greece and Turkey. The military, of course, at some point gets compartmentalized. The military attitude towards these programs begins with their MAAG on the spot and goes back through the Defense Department involving the various armed services but concentrating in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, where the administrations political attitudes begin to be strongly reflected. In the military, as in the Foreign Service, you get people who, when they are stationed in Saudi Arabia, for example, and they want something, become involved in developing the request. By and large they are pretty sympathetic to their hosts from the beginning and end up as pretty strong advocates. So you would have that situation with the military, the Pentagon. And, of course, the Pentagon has its own agenda. They don't mind seeing the production lines busy on many types of weaponry because it helps them with their own procurement, replacement and parts costs. Anyway, there are a lot of angles that enter into this.

But you asked if I recall any instance when the military was unhappy because we were putting too much in? No, I don't recall any such situation. It was usually the opposite .....and the same was true of our embassies and regional bureau people.

Q: Were there any places that we were putting in that you, as a Foreign Service officer and analyzing the political situation thought that things were getting a bit excessive here and there?

ERICSON: Well, one of the situation that jumps out immediately, of course, is Saudi Arabia. Now, we had a very confused agenda with regard to Saudi Arabia indeed, because every time you twitched in the direction of Saudi Arabia you had the Israeli lobby up in arms opposing anything you were trying to do. This always seemed a little irrational

to me because it never has really been shown that the Saudis had ever really actively participated in the disputes between the Arabs and the Israelis, not in the military sense. They gave political support to their Arab colleagues and they may have helped some financially in some ways, but there was never a suspicion of the use of Saudi forces militarily to support action towards Israel. The defense people in Saudi Arabia were quite careful to make sure, and it was a principle that was pretty strictly adhered to, that the Saudis were not provided anything that could be used directly against Israel from Saudi territory. Obviously if you could transport a tank to the Jordan border, why you could use it against Israel, but you would have to have the means of getting the tank there in the first place. But the aircraft and such missiles they wanted were almost entirely defensive in character. They were never given bombers, for example, with the range to get to Israel, or even fighters with a ground delivery capability. So it always seemed to me that we never had a rational debate in the Congress over Saudi procurement - the real merits of any Saudi request were always obscured by concern that Israel might be affected. This was politically a very popular attitude.Nonetheless, the Saudi appetite, they had a lot of money in those days with the oil money pouring in and they embarked on an enormous modernization and expansion program. Not just in the military sense but in the economically and socially as well. They were rebuilding entire cities. Our Koreans friends, incidentally, based on their Vietnam experience in engineering, were a major beneficiary of the Saudi activity. They were all over Saudi Arabia, contracting to build airfields, harbors, whole new cities to house their military complex. But it seemed to me personally that Saudi Arabia was biting off so much more than it could chew of every part of the meal. They didn't have the human resources to absorb all this. I think that in the end it has been proven that they really hadn't - just as it has been proven that Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations have real enemies other than Israel. But, nonetheless, Saudi Arabia was of enormous importance to the United States at this time because its petroleum resources gave it power to threaten the industrial economies of the world. So we did what we could to keep the program as well contained, sensible as possible, but we did accede to some Saudi demands which I think were beyond what they really needed.

Q: How about Iran?

ERICSON: We, of course, were very generous to the Shah and had been. The Iran program was one of the very largest in the world and it was an FMS sales - cash sales, not loan or grant - program. The human rightists hadn't gotten terribly active about Iran, they were the ones who provided most of the opposition to arms transfer programs in the United States, and our relations with the Shah were very, very good. But I cannot place in time exactly when the Iran situation turned really sour and affected our position in that part of the world.

Q: When were you in PM?

ERICSON: I was in PM from 1976 to 1978.

Q: The Iranian thing was turning sour just about the time you left, I think.

ERICSON: As I recall the Shah was still getting reasonably good reviews when I left. I remember the hostage situation was during the Carter Administration, that was 1979. So it was still a very large program and not one that was causing a great deal of political opposition in the United States.

Q: We will move back to the personal side. Carter was elected in November, 1976. What developed then?

ERICSON: The Republican Administration by and large had been sort of pro foreign assistance, at least in the military sense. . Kissinger as Secretary of State did see a need for helping our friends and allies to further their security interests, etc. So the attitude was by and large positive on the military aid programs during that period. When Carter came in, he came in running against virtually everything the Republicans had been doing and against Washington and bureaucracy itself, as we all recall...I think one of the major points of his platform was to run against Washington...At least in PM this attitude was

very faithfully reflected when the Carter Administration took over.The conventional arms transfer program was one that the Carter Administration felt it was much too large and had gotten out of control. Also, there seemed to be a feeling that weapons transfers were inherently immoral - evil in themselves. For policy reasons in which there was included a high moral content, the sale of all weapons of destruction by the United States would be limited, would be decreased to absolute proven necessity and they were going to be very aggressive about it. Of course, they were going to undertake this with people who had as little experience as possible previously with the direction of the programs in PM and the Department as a whole. They also introduced a very strong human rights aspect into American foreign relations and in many respects this came down to an equation that if you had good human rights situation in the country, why the chances of you getting military assistance were very, very good, and if the human rights situation were adjudged bad, why this would have a strong influence and might well prevent the approval of your program. .

The way the thing lined up, the President, himself, sought the high moral ground. I don't think he knew specifically what it was he wanted to do. He inclined to get himself deeply into the minutiae of the foreign military and assistance programs, sometimes by procrastinating, sometimes by changing his mind and being inconstant ,making it seem a little confusing. His National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, was inclined to favor the use of military assistance programs as a tool of foreign policy. He didn't faithfully follow Carter, it seems to me, in this respect all the way. His principal assistant, however, on global aspects of military sales and the overall policy making, was Jessica Matthews, or she had the job. Now, Jessica Matthews at this time was Jessica Tutman, the daughter of historian Barbara Tutman, and was a recent Ph.D. recipient in some arcane scientific field. I think her dissertation had to do with mold. She had worked in the Carter campaign and was a very, very bright young woman. But she was abysmally lacking in any kind of experience of how Washington works and was quite naive where armament was concerned.

As a matter of fact, she is one person about whom I have completely changed mind. I thought she was something of a menace when she was working in the White House because of her inexperience and her focus on some of the moral aspects as opposed to our broader interests... But I have changed my mind. I think she is one of the most readable columnists going and today agree with her more often than not. But she handled the initial White House review of everything PM did in the conventional arms field and I didn't think she at that point was particularly helpful.

Then on our side, Vance was a sensible man, I thought. A man of considerable good will and intelligence. He didn't have any major axe to grind. He brought more of an intelligent assessment to things than he did strong biases and I always found him fair minded and quite helpful. Warren Christopher was his deputy, of course, and did not figure prominently in any of our activities. Under him as the Under Secretary for International Security and Oceanic and God knows what else, was Lucy Wilson Benson from Massachusetts, who had been very prominent in the League of Women Voters, in Massachusetts political activities and a very close friend and ally of Tip O'Neill, to whom she owed this appointment. I have a strong history, I think, of being rather skeptical of women's activities in foreign policy and military programs, and probably deservedly so, but I liked Lucy and I admired and respected her. She had an incapacitated husband up in Amherst, Massachusetts. She flew up every Friday afternoon, took care of him over the weekend, flew back on Monday morning and was in the office by mid morning and ready to put in more than a full week of work. In other words, she had a strong personal burden all the time she was there. But Lucy was very sensible. She acknowledged that her experience was limited and set about to learn. It was flattering, of course, as she leaned on me, who probably knew not a great deal more than she did about the history and what not of all these programs.

The fact that I liked Lucy and found her good to work with made it difficult in some respects, because Lucy began to look to me directly for things and that didn't help her

relations with Leslie Gelb - or mine. Gelb had been the New York Times defense reporter and had written a good deal about foreign military assistance programs, and had been very active in Democratic Party affairs. He replaced Vest as Director of the Bureau of Political Military Affairs. He was immediately subordinate to Lucy and Benson and immediately superior to me.

Gelb came in with a very, very different attitude. Lucy was willing to take a look at things and to proceed cautiously, possibly because she felt she didn't know as much as she should about the programs that she was supposed to supervise. Les came in with a very clear agenda. He knew what President Carter's Administration wanted, or he thought he did. He knew what he wanted to do, for which he got backing from the White House. And that was to come up with a written program for reducing foreign military sales and grants an agenda that committed us target dates and levels, reductions by stated amounts and percentages, etc. He set about to accomplish this with a great deal of single mindedness. He also brought with him virtually an entire new staff for PM. I was retained as the token Foreign Service officer in the front office and even given the title of principal deputy, but Les's intimates were all people he had brought in, and I do not count myself among Les's intimates. He was very careful to give me my due, but his intimates were the people he brought with him who were at least then all non-Foreign Service people from the outside. These political appointees extended down into the deputy office director level in many cases. He brought Reggie Bartholomew, for example, and Jerry Cahan, and Arnie Canter, Priscilla Clapp, people whom he knew and worked with before at various places and who, I might add, were very bright. Arnie Canter was a particularly delightful guy to work with, wise and amusing. He had been a professor at Michigan State, I believe. Les did not bring in anybody of this ilk to work on the conventional arms transfers, my side of things. All of them - Cahan, Bartholomew, Canter, Clapp...well Priscilla was to keep an eye on me, what I was doing I think. She was his special assistant and I think that one of her main functions was to check with me regularly to make sure that Les knew .. But these other people were working on the nuclear programs and particularly on the SALT

negotiations and that was Gelb's main concern because it was a definite objective of the Carter Administration to get that treaty done and signed. It was going to be one of the crown jewels in the Administration's program. And they did accomplish this.But Les was a very energetic operative and his method of personnel administration was so totally different from Vest's as to be shocking. Vest inspired people, Gelb goaded them. But not his own people. Les had an inborn distrust of the bureaucracy, which is not exactly a strange thing for someone in his position, but he had kind of a chip on his shoulder about the bureaucracy. His idea of the best way to inspire this bunch of underachievers was to boot them in the rear daily and hard. And he frequently called on me to do that kind of thing...”kick ass” as he defined it. He liked to get things done fast and he wanted them done very much his way. And he was not adverse to showing scorn or distaste in front of others. He deprived me of Steve Winship, on whose advice I was still relying upon very heavily, by a vicious and unexpected criticism at a staff meeting of something Winship had done on some minor issue. Winship promptly retired.. I think Winship had seen that his career had gone about as far as it was going to go anyway. He was a division director in the bureau and wasn't going to go any higher - his career certainly wasn't likely to prosper under Gelb. But he was a very capable guy with a lot of experience. He quit and Gelb's treatment of him was the direct cause .

Anyway, I replaced him with Tony Kochanek, Winship's deputy, an economist and a very serious, concerned kind of person. Gelb never put the kind of pressure on Kochanek as he did on Winship and Kochanek was that division director for the rest of my stay in PM.

As I say, I was the token Foreign Service officer in the front office and I suspect that as time when on Les would have been just as happy if I hadn't been there. We got along reasonably well, but at the end of the third budget cycle for me I had had all that I wanted of PM.

Q: Had you noticed any real shift in our arms dealings which you were responsible for?

ERICSON: Oh, yes. We worked very hard in the early days of the Carter Administration to spell out a method which would call for the elimination of the MAP program and a severe reduction in the Foreign Military Sales program. The Carter Administration tried very, very hard to do this and one area where its foreign policy idealism was brought to bear on arms transfers was in the human rights area. Pat Derian and her people were brought into the Human Rights Bureau and they got into the act when the budget for the FMS program was being considered, when individual requests under that program were being considered. Human Rights sat at the table. Human Rights had one of the first and strongest voices and human rights was much more a controlling factor under the Carter Administration than it was under the Ford Administration. In many respects, I thought, to an excessive degree. More attention was given to the human rights aspects of things in many cases than the situation called for. The human rightists would have cut off all assistance to Korea during this period because Park was still being Park and arresting people on political things. There were allegations of torture and the like and the human rights people looked to Korea as one place where could really make a difference. They were mistaken, I think, if they thought they were going to change Park, but they could and did to a certain extent effect our programs. It certainly slowed things up terribly. Whether it actually resulted in reduction in transfers to Korea or not, I don't even remember. But certainly we had much, much more difficulty in getting things through.

Another thing, of course, was the Congress. Congress leaped on the idea that Carter could reduce the FMS program and held him to account for it, or attempted to. Even his Democratic supporters in the Congress were eager to apply his policy of reduction to everything that came up and to reflect a very strong human rights content in every decision they made. And going up to testify before Congress in support of the overall budget or any individual program was always an adventure. It was really great fun to go up to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, for example, and testify before the likes of Hubert Humphrey and Jake Javits, men of great stature and intelligence and knowledge. And Javits was always fair, but exacting and tough and not reluctant to bring the full weight of the Senate

on some executive branch testifier.. And to go up to the House in front of John Anderson, for example, or Lee Hamilton, or Solarz, people who knew or were active on foreign affairs programs. But some Congressmen wanted to see human rights principles reflected in what we did, and most all the other biases that go into American politics, including efforts of the Israeli lobby. It was always fun to talk about an Arab program in front of some members of Congress who never revealed where where they were coming from but gave you the feeling that they were really talking for the record. Frequently they would vote for the proposal, but in the hearings they wanted any press accounts and the record to show how staunchly they had looked out for Israel's interests. They may have thought the proposal sensible, but they were going to speak for the political record..

Q: Then you left. Did you just say, “Get me out of here?”

ERICSON: Les had a serious eye problem during this period.

Incidentally I might add one thing. It has often been said that the Carter Administration had a great deal of difficulty with interdepartmental relations and with the National Security Council. From where I sat relations with the Pentagon, in particular, were not difficult. We had lunch every two weeks with people in ISA...Les and I and Reggie and sometimes Jerry Cahan would go over to the Pentagon.... we always went to the Pentagon because State has no facilities for this kind of lunch at all whereas there were private dining rooms or room service for such meetings at the Pentagon. I have been trying to remember the name of the Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs. Anyway, Walt Slocum was his deputy, and he now has that job, and then there was Lesley (Inaudible) who was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. Anyway the six of us, sometimes seven or eight, would sit around and the discussion was almost entirely SALT. We very seldom got involved with conventional arms program. They all came out of the same political background. They were brothers under the skin, sharing common views and evidence of discord were only, I think, manifested when it came to who was going to take the lead on something. Les was a hard driver and so was his opposite number. But as far as policy

was concern there was very little discord at that level between Defense and State. As a matter of fact it was the best kind of cooperative arrangement I ever saw between Defense and State in my experience with the Department.

Anyway, Les had a serious eye problem during that time and he wanted to get out of the job. He never said this in so many words, but I think he was ready after three years, he was preparing to go. I had hoped, quite frankly, to be made ambassador to Korea. One has one's illusions and aspirations and I had thought since I had served three tours in Korea and made certain contributions and if I was going to get an embassy anywhere at any time, it was going to have to be EA and I certainly wasn't going to get Japan, which was my specialty. At some point along in this I was the Department's candidate for Singapore and I would have found that extremely strange because I regarded that as Chinese specialist territory or at least Southeast Asian specialist territory. My name was sent over. The White House said they were not considering any Foreign Service officers and had already picked their guy, the sitting governor of South Dakota. He was the man who asked if there had been a war in Korea at one of his public appearances.

Q: He was Ambassador X, or something like that. There was an article in the Foreign Service Journal about him which talked about his being a real dolt in foreign affairs.

ERICSON: The man was totally uneducated and apparently uneducable in foreign affairs. He committed some real boners right from the beginning in addition to making some egregious errors at his hearing. He flew his six sons to Singapore at a time when the Department was cutting down on all kinds of air travel. He flew both ways first class at the Department's expense.....to attend his presentation of credentials. His DCM, who was a classmate of mine, wrote the article in the Foreign Service Journal. Needless to say he never got an embassy. He was exposed on this and I think he retired as a consequence, but he did write a very courageous article about this ambassador, the main theme being why appoint politicos to a job for which they are totally unsuited.

Anyway, I had seen that episode. Also Dick Holbrooke was Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs. Holbrooke always reminded me of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar's comment to beware of yon Cassius who had a lean and hungry look. He had a tremendous ego and overwhelming ambition, which apparently hasn't abated at all. He and I did not see eye-to-eye. We went to a dinner at one point given by the Thai Ambassador. Thailand had a significant FMS at that time and the Thai Ambassador was apparently trying to spread a little goodwill. Anyway, he invited me and then he invited Holbrooke and three or four of his staff, nobody from my group came along. Holbrooke looked around the room and said, “I can understand why all of us are here except this cold warrior Ericson,” in a rather sneering and deprecating tone. I told him I wasn't a cold warrior, just a cool one. That was rather indicative of our relationship and realized I was never going to get anything out of the Bureau of East Asian Affairs as long as Holbrooke was there. I gave his Bureau some difficult times on some of the programs but for what I thought were very good policy reasons. He obviously had no liking for me and it was reciprocated on my part so I knew I had no shot for a job in East Asia as long as he was there.

So, I let people know that I was ready for a change. I had been through three budget cycles, had testified and taken my lumps from the likes of Wayne Hayes and various other people...we had to take these programs before appropriations and authorization committees in both Houses and defending some of these large individual sales was a rough, rough business. Anyway, I was tired of it and thought that if I was ever to get an ambassadorship the time had come, as I was getting along in years. So I conferred with my good friend Bill Galloway who had served with me in Roger Jones's front office many years before and who was then the eminence gris of the personnel system. He was special assistant to the Under Secretary for Administration with particular responsibility for personnel, including senior officer appointments. I went to Bill and said, “Bill, I think I am ready to leave. I have been here through three budget cycles and that is enough. Les and I aren't getting along any better than we should. How do I get out?” Bill said, “That's easy. We just get people familiar with the idea that you are ready to move on and we do that

by putting you on lists for various embassies as they become available. People gradually get used to the idea that the right opportunity will come along." I said, "All right, how do we do that?" He said, "We'll start today. The next one up is Iceland. The White House doesn't have a suggestion of its own, but it turned down our last list. So I will put you on the next list that goes over." "I don't want to go to Iceland," I said. "You are not going to go to Iceland. This is part of a familiarization process." So, I said, "All right." Then he called me back a couple of days later and said, "You are going to Iceland." I said, "What do you mean I am going to Iceland. I don't want to go to Iceland." He said, "Well at this point you don't back out, Foreign Service officers don't refuse nominations of this kind without very, very good reason. The President has said he wants you to go to Iceland." Of course the President hadn't said any such thing. Head hunters in the White House had said, "Yes, okay."

Q: I'm sure your name had something to do with it. If you don't have anyone else in mind you see "Ericson" and think great name for Iceland.

ERICSON: Well, as a matter of fact I am racially absolutely in tune with the Icelandic population because I am Norwegian and Irish and the Icelanders are 65 percent Norwegian and 35 percent Irish by extraction. That probably did have something to do with it.

I found I couldn't get out of it. Holbrooke sent an emissary to me about this time to offer me Port Moresby. I reacted as you might have expected. I have no doubt he already knew I was going to Iceland. I thought that was kind of amusing.

Q: How did Iceland sit with the family?

ERICSON: By that time there was only one child who would go with us, out of five. The others were either in or out of college and those in college were going to be able to come for vacation, so it was going to be a great adventure for them. My wife was very unhappy about it. Betty had had her fill of life overseas in Korea, I think, our last overseas tour

and she wasn't very happy, but she was a good sport and aware it was probably the culmination of my career and was willing to go along. The one child who was going with us, Charlotte, was very unhappy at the prospect of missing out on her junior and senior year here—the usual Foreign Service child's problem. They were not overjoyed, no. We knew nothing about the place, of course, and just the sound of it was somewhat daunting, terribly isolated and that sort of thing. And in truth, that is pretty much the way it turned out. It was isolated.

I said I would go, consoling myself with the thought that after all Iceland is a European NATO capital. So I went through my hearings, which consisted of...I can give you the whole thing verbatim right now. There were only two Senators present. One of them asked what my background was briefly and I told him briefly. He said, “Have you ever been to Iceland, Mr. Ericson?” And I said, “No sir.” He said, “Oh, hell, you are a professional - I'll vote for you.” There was no objection from any member of the committee and I went to Iceland.

There was another FSO at that session - a specialist in European affairs - who was approved in similar fashion for an African country. The New Yorker magazine wrote that the State Department had sent over two interesting nominations... a European specialist to go some place in the wilds of Africa and a Japan specialist to go to Iceland...this is remarkable personnel policy. Other than that we didn't make any headlines with this nomination and the Senate hearings were perfunctory and we went on to Iceland.

Q: In getting ready to go to Iceland, did you set yourself up an agenda after talking to the Desk that these were the things I should do?

ERICSON: Not really. I called on the Icelandic Ambassador. Iceland is a country of 125,000 people and its interests internationally are about in proportion to its population. I did read up on the history and present politics of Iceland. I visited the significant investment that Iceland has in this country, a fish processing plant down in Salisbury on

the Eastern Shore. Betty and I went over there and ate more varieties of fried fish than any human being should have to endure in one day. We learned a lot about how frozen fish is processed in the United States for distribution to hospitals, schools, Arthur Treacher's and other fast food places of that kind. It is a fascinating process indeed. But then when you have to sample every type, you can come out with a very greasy feeling. But the major export of Iceland to the United States has been frozen fish - primarily cod.. They freeze it in Iceland, compressing seven or eight fish into a single frozen block, and then they ship it to two plants in the United States, one near Boston and the one down here near Salisbury, where the blocks are cut by band saws into the desired shapes. If they want flakes for fishcakes, they take the saw dust, so to speak, from cutting the blocks. If you want a fish fillet, why they cut it into a vague fish form.. If you want fish balls they cut it differently. And on and on and on. Basically what you are getting is a segment of compressed fish which may include parts from three or four different fish. The process is kind of interesting though. The stuff is breaded, if it is going to be breaded, and fried and refrozen all in the space of 30 seconds. It is not terribly appetizing, however. Anyway, Charlotte rounded out our education on the Icelandic fish processing business by working one summer in a freezing plant in Reykjavik, where she picked worms out of cod. Our family doesn't eat cod any more..

Q: When did you serve in Iceland?

ERICSON: I got to Iceland in the middle of November, 1978 and I left in August, 1981.

You asked about preparing myself. I got what material there was to read, spoke to the Pentagon people. There was one job to be done in Iceland and that was to keep Iceland in NATO and thus to insure the continued availability to NATO and the United States of the air base at Keflavik. Keflavik, the Pentagon people assured me, was one of the five or six most indispensable bases worldwide and we had to keep it. Without it some of our major functions just could not be performed. In time of war, of course, we had to have Iceland to help control the North Atlantic. In peace time it had an indispensable function, the

surveillance of Soviet submarines. They could not get out into the North Atlantic without passing through either the Denmark Strait or the UK/Iceland gap. The commander who sat in Soviet Headquarters on the Kola Peninsuldirected the most powerful fighting force in the world at that time. He had all kinds of air forces at his disposal and virtually the entire Soviet naval capability. Most of that was in submarines of all sorts, including nuclear missile and hunter-killer types. North of Iceland, the sea. Sound carries best in deep water, But in the Iceland/UK gap there is very shallow water and a sub is forced to come close to the surface in order to get through the gap. If you know it is coming you can plot its speed and have a pretty good idea of its course. Then, you can pick it up with the kind of sensors that aircraft - anti-submarine P-3's - are equipped with and destroy it..

Q: The P-3 was an Orion aircraft or something.

ERICSON: Yes, made by Lockheed. It early versions had a dismal record as a commercial airplane but I would rather fly in a P-3 than practically anything. It is virtually indestructible. It is a marvelous airplane and has lasted a long time.

At this time the Soviets did not have intercontinental missiles that could be launched by submarines. After I left Iceland the Soviets got them and now their missile subs need not come through the gap. But in order to threaten the United States in the 70's a Soviet boomer had to go down into the North Atlantic. This bottle neck - the gap -was of vast importance to NATO and if we lost use of the Iceland side of it, we would be very, very hard put to keep track of Soviet subs. It couldn't be done from Scotland or anyplace else that was available.

One of my predecessors, the son of the founder of a company that specialized in the manufacture of globes , was appointed as ambassador to Iceland somewhere in the middle '50s. He was wealthy man and was surprised when he and his wife learned they were supposed to live in Iceland. His wife, as a matter of fact, is said to have been absent most of the time. He did stay, though, and left behind two things. One was a fountain in

the Tjorn - the big pond that sits in the center of Reykjavik and is a haven for all of the world's species of arctic water fowl. A marvelous place. He gave the fountain to the city of Reykjavik over the violent objection of the communists, but while I was there it was broken and they were screaming that the government should repair the damn thing so that the people could enjoy the beauties of it. He also left behind for the office an enormous globe, four feet in diameter in a huge walnut stand. It was lighted from the interior - a marvelous thing. It was helpful to me whenever I had to brief a newspaperman or Congressional delegation because it was large enough that you could turn it so that the Kola Peninsula up in the Murmansk area faced the person being briefed. You tell him that this was the way you would look at the world if you were the commander of these Russian forces. When you look out from your headquarters, down into the north Atlantic, which is your area of operations, what do you see? Well, you see nothing but water past the North Cape of Norway and then you see the gaps between the UK and Iceland and Iceland and Greenland. Iceland smack in the middle. Your forces, whether air, surface or submarine, have to penetrate those gaps in order to operate in the North Atlantic.. That is why we are here. These little briefings were generally inspired by a visitor saying, “Why the hell are we here in this god forgotten place anyway?” This briefing, using the globe, was very effective in answering the question.

In 1976, the Icelanders had gotten into great difficulty with other fishing nations over the question of fishing rights. Now the Icelanders were never sea-going people. Once the Vikings got there and once the wood disappeared and they couldn't make new boats, the Icelanders became an isolated people,.tied to their land. This is reflected in their attitude of really total insularity. And their distrust of foreigners. Historically, they didn't travel much and were only occasionally visited by foreigners other than Danes, who administered the island for about eight hundred years.. And they came to believe that every foreign ship that came over the horizon was bound on exploiting them in some way. And with good reason. They are the most insular people that you could imagine. I used to remark on how much the Icelanders resemble the Japanese in terms of feeling special as a people

- their attitude towards their unique language, their culture, their suspicion of foreigners, their racism. All of these things the Icelanders have in spades, where the Japanese may have them in clubs or diamonds. .But back to fish. In the '60s and '70s, there were two major disputes with the British over fishing rights - known in that part of the world as the Cod Wars . The Icelanders, after centuries of not venturing much beyond the reach of a row boat, had in post-World War II suddenly become interested in exporting fish. They had exported fish for many centuries, but all only air dried or salted cod taken just off-shore. Once they developed the freezing technique, they suddenly became able to export to the world. With the North Atlantic teeming with cod, here was a bonanza. Fish exports basically made the Icelandic economy . It always amazes Americans to find out that the Icelanders passed our per capital gross national income a long time ago and in their way are quite a wealthy little country.

In order to ensure access to this great wealth, they began vociferously to extend their claims to fishing rights offshore. First a 3 mile limit, then it jumped to 6, 12, 50 and then to 200 miles. Each stage brought them into conflict with...of course the rest of the world was also moving in these directions for much the same reasons...but at each stage they came into conflict with the British and the Belgians, the Germans, Norwegians, all of the other fishing countries in that area. But particularly with the British. They fought a couple of what they call the Cod Wars in which Iceland's three or four little coast guard vessels behaved with such skill, courage and daring as to drive the British Navy nuts. The British Navy was sent up there to protect their fishing fleet from being arrested and towed into port by the Icelandic coast guard and the Icelandic coast guard would have none of that. There were any number of incidents on record where little Icelandic vessels would ram British destroyers and made them look very bad. The British couldn't retaliate and their crews resented the fact that every night the Icelanders could go home and sleep with their wives, while they were left tossing around on the turbulent North Sea.

Around 1975-76 the Icelanders went all the way to 200 miles. The irate British refused to recognize this claim and their fishing ships remained active in the area. The Icelanders,

claimed that the British presence was illegal and a threat to their survival. Tempers ran high in Reykjavik and one evening the Icelanders staged a demonstration before the British Embassy....the only time when physical damage has ever been done to a foreign embassy in Reykjavik. They threw stones at the windows of the ambassador's residence. The ambassador happened to be the same Gilchrist who was ambassador to Indonesia when Sukarno's people sacked the British Embassy there.At this point they attempted to invoke the US-Iceland Defense Agreement - against the UK, a fellow NATO member. They asked the US to force the British to withdraw their naval units and their fishing boats from Iceland's 200 mile fishing zone. We demurred, suggesting they negotiate their differences. Whatever we did or said, it it turned their wrath on us. Their coalition government of the time was headed by their Progressive Party, which had always opposed the presence of US forces in Iceland and even Iceland's NATO membership. Iceland was not a charter member of NATO but was persuaded to join after Russia's moves against Czechoslovakia and the Berlin airlift had convinced them that the Soviets really were bloody - minded. We, of course, were instrumental in bringing them in, so they believed they had a special relationship with us within NATO, witness the bilateral Defense Agreement we had negotiated with them to permit us to station troops on their soil and to guarantee their security. They saw us as their guardian and upholder of their rights. So our inability to enter their fray with the British made them question the utility of NATO membership and especially the Defense Agreement. They invoked the termination clause of the Defense Agreement, which said the agreement could be abrogated and American forces removed at the request of either party on one year's notice. They actually informed us that the clock was ticking and we were to evacuate the base within one year. This caused us considerable pain and anguish.

In the meantime the government fell, partly because of the cod war, partly because of the strain on relations with the United States, and a new government was formed led by the conservative Independent Party, which agreed that the forces could stay, that the clock would stop ticking. In turn, we agreed to provide pay for certain economic projects only

vaguely related to defense. These were to prove very, very, costly. Not in terms of some of the large programs we had elsewhere in the world, but in proportion to Iceland's economy and population they were astronomically expensive. They were related to improvements at the airfield and to heating all the towns on the entire peninsula around Keflavik from a geothermal source. We wanted to heat the base that way, because heating our facilities by individual oil burners and stoves, which is what we had been doing since the first American forces arrived in 1940, was inefficient and costly. They said, “Okay, you can heat the base but you also have to heat all the towns. You must finance it and we will run it.” They also demanded that we pay for a new passenger terminal for civilian operations at the airfield, which was shared by US Navy and Air Force units with Icelandic Airlines and such other civilian carriers as occasionally used it - it was Iceland's international gateway. The terminal they were using was a rickety old wooden building. It was totally inadequate, but their idea of a new one was definitely on the luxurious side and we would have to pay dearly to build it. We also wanted to build a new NATO oil storage facility in the base area, and they extracted a considerable price for that.

Anyway, we the fact that we had once been told to get out - and the high cost of having the order rescinded - brought the sober realization that our position there was not as firm as we had believed. I was told that my job as ambassador to Iceland was to see that conditions did not arise again under which Iceland would leave NATO or invite us to leave Iceland.. As it turned out such a condition almost arose.

That gave me something to look out for, in what was otherwise a very small community where not too many things of excitement happened.

Q: Just a little bit about the size of the embassy and how you dealt with the foreign ministry and then on to developments.

ERICSON: The embassy too was small. It had a DCM, one political officer, on economic officer, one administrative officer, one consular officer, three or four secretaries, a USIA

mission with two officers, about fifteen Icelandic employees, and that was just about it. There was no CIA presence in Iceland and as a matter of fact the base had only a rudimentary intelligence operation. They had a huge intelligence operation, of course, vis-a-vis Soviet submarine and aircraft operations. In terms of work we were probably over-staffed, as 125,000 people do not generate that much economic, consular or even political activity. For example, on the economic side, the question of Icelanders wanting to carry cargo for the base in Icelandic ships arose. They had developed a small fleet of reefers and a dry cargo vessel or two to carry primarily frozen fish to their processing plants in the United States and that was virtually their merchant marine. They had excess capacity both ways and they wanted to carry goods for the base, largely household goods for personnel coming and going. Of course the military resisted, quite properly, because US law requires that government-fund cargo be carried in American bottoms wherever available, and there was an occasional American freighter willing to divert from some European run to put in at Reykjavik..Even on the economic side, such was the stuff of life.....little efforts of the Icelanders to improve their economic position vis-a-vis the United States at the expense of the military, basically. In this case their demands would have made sense if their freight rates had been competitive, but they weren't.

My contacts with the foreign ministry were very close. They had a very small ministry of foreign affairs, probably no more than 10 or 12 officers covering the entire world. I always envied the roving ambassador who was accredited to every country east of Suez that they had relations with. He took a lengthy trip twice each year, touching base with all those posts with his wife along as his secretary. Iceland had close relations with the Nordic countries, of course, and tended in foreign affairs to identify with the Nordics, who have their own Nordic Council and cooperate very closely in international affairs, coordinating policy and if possible developing a common policy. Iceland could almost always be counted on follow suit with their Nordic cousins.... . and even to hide behind this relationship when we wanted them to do something they were inclined to resist. They hid behind the collective Nordic policy when they refused to agree to our request that

they boycott the Moscow Olympic games in 1980. They went and I got a few Olympic souvenirs from their participants - but a cold shoulder from the government. They also had relations with most of the major European countries. And they had very definite relations with China and the Soviet Union.The two largest embassies in Reykjavik, as a matter of fact, were first the Soviets and second the Chinese. The American embassy was a poor and quite distant third. There was a French ambassador, who was very pleasant, but who didn't have very much to do at all. We had a British ambassador who told me when I arrived, “Dick there are no stars here in Reykjavik.” speaking of his associated in the diplomatic community. He was right. Norway had an ambassador who had been Minister of Labor at home until falling out of favor. She was a very intense woman, very active in the cultural field. Given the standard of Icelandic art - every other citizen was a painter or collector it seemed - her work in bringing French impressionists to Reykjavik from the Sonja Henie collection in Oslo was by far the outstanding cultural event of my tour. . And then there was the Dane, the Dean of the Corps..He was married to a woman with far left political inclinations, an American citizen from Chicago. He had been ambassador to Peking , accredited also to Hanoi, and was in Hanoi when the bombings occurred. He lost no opportunity publicly to recount the horrors of what he called indiscriminate American bombing of hospitals, churches, schools and other non-military targets in Hanoi, especially when I was present or within hearing. I found him to be a very painful associate. His wife came in one time, she was a scientist of some sort and about to give a lecture in New York which required use of a lot of glass slides. For some reason they had to get to the States beforehand and she asked me, as a favor to a fellow American and a diplomatic courtesy, to send them by pouch to ensure their safe arrival. I refused.

In other words, even US friends among the diplomatic corps were not terribly interesting or even such good friends. Except for the second Brit - six feet six of ebullient Scotsman. He arrived about three months before I left. I wish he had been there all the time. I educated him on Iceland and he educated me on the more obscure and I hope unpublished works of Robert Burns - the real Robert Burns , he said, the one known to every Scottish schoolboy.

His lectures were by far the more titillating..My bloc colleagues were a mixed bag. I have a hilarious story about my mandatory courtesy call on the Soviet, but I can't tell it here. Afterwards I saw him only at functions that included the entire corps. When we recognized China, the first person I saw the following morning was the Chinese Ambassador, who came to call on me. He was all over me, obviously under orders to really get close. He made every social effort you can imagine and we were hard put to reciprocate. And we did not, by any means; his dinners were stupendous. These two embassies had huge staffs. The Soviets had a good deal of trade with Iceland. They had 34 or 35 people accredited, and we never did figure out exactly what they all did, but they never relied on the Icelanders for anything. Not automotive repairs, not roof fixing, not boiler maintenance, not cutting grass. Everything was done inside the walls of their embassy. They did, of course, conduct intelligence activities against the base which we had good reason to see and know about. I hope they enjoyed themselves, I don't think they ever got anything of real value The Chinese operated in similar fashion, but on a smaller scale. Their main purpose appeared to be watching the Soviets and taking in each others laundry. The Chinese ambassador was the most ardent supporter in town of Icelandic membership in NATO, to the irritation of the Soviet, and his mission in Reykjavik may have been the same as mine - to keep Iceland in NATO. But his major cultural event was a flop. They took over a large hall for an exhibit of many huge and lurid paintings, mostly industrial or patriotic themes in the style of social realism. I asked the curator how the one attractive traditional landscape - mountains and rivers in the mist - had qualified politically for inclusion, and he showed me that high up on a road on the side of one mountain was a tiny guard post manned by miniature guards in the uniform of the peoples army. The most attractive couple of them all were the Poles, who departed sadly to a dismal retirement in Warsaw in the middle of my tour. Intelligent and friendly, they clearly showed that their hearts were in the West.As far as the Foreign Ministry was concerned, I dealt primarily with the Permanent Under Secretary of the Foreign Office who became a very close friend. His name was Hordur Helgasson. Born and raised in a remote area of Northwest Iceland, he had been at Duke during World War II and when the war was over had married a girl he

had met there and transported this southern belle to Iceland where she had pined for the South ever after. But they were great people.

There were two Foreign Ministers during my period there, one from the Social Democrats and one from the Progressive Party. All Icelandic governments are coalitions, because there are always four -or five or six - parties represented in the Althing and no one of them can ever muster more than a plurality. So traditionally governments are formed by the two or three who can form a majority, although this means that policies tend to be lukewarm and the coalition itself is seldom stable. When the coalition was headed by the Independent party, Americans could breath more easily because this meant that the leadership, including the foreign minister even though he would probably be from the number two party in the coalition, would be as friendly to American interests as you could get. However, when the Progressive Party headed the coalition there was a chance that the cabinet would include one or more communists. Herder swore up and down that unfriendly members of the government, no matter what their position, had access to sensitive NATO or US-Icelandic communications. Still one had to wonder - those bloc embassies were huge.

The Defense Division of the Foreign Ministry - strange for a country with no military forces - was directed by Helgi Agustsson - who ran the Icelandic side of the joint Defense Council and dealt with the base officials on day to day matters. A great guy and a superb salmon fisherman. In conducting our defense relations I was very fortunate in that during the entire period I was there Rear Admiral Richard Martini commanded the base and his attitude...I had seen in Korea a great deal of difficulty between the embassy and the military commander who thought they were something more than military commanders. In Iceland this did not happen. Martini's attitude, expressed to me when I first arrived was, “Hey Dick, I am new to this kind of thing.. I'm a P-3 jockey. My interest in life is maintaining this base and its effectiveness and keeping my relationship with the government good. But the political aspects of everything that goes on here are your business. We'll handle everything we can at the Defense Council level. If we can't settle something there and it

has to go to the political level, its your baby. We come to you” We had a very fine working relationship and became good friends. His staff was good and cooperative, too, as a consequence of this attitude.

So, the days passed. The fact that we were a NATO embassy put us on the NATO loop for important messages and I waited eagerly the coming of the Herald Tribune with the afternoon mail so I could do the crossword puzzle. And what with reading traffic and taking care of such business as there was, it wasn't all that dull a place for me. But for my officers it must have been very deadly. And it was deadly for Betty too and miserable for Charlotte.

Q: You said there was one problem that came up when you were there.

ERICSON: Yes. The one big problem that arose during my tenure was when we came very close to an interruption, not in relations necessarily, but a serious questioning by the government about the defense relationship. It arose over incidents in Japan, interestingly enough, and how they were reflected by reports of certain defense analysis organizations in the United States. The Japanese crisis was one of those recurring things over whether there were nuclear weapons on board American ships which periodically cause Japanese demonstrators to hit the streets.. And whenever that happened in Japan, it was reflected - faintly - in Iceland because the Icelanders are very pacifistic people. They are totally unarmed. The coast guard possesses the only four or five guns that belong to the Icelandic government. The police are not armed . Nobody carries fire arms. They don't even have hunting weapons in Iceland because there is nothing to hunt. These are an intensely pacifistic people and are restless within NATO because their membership puts alien troops on their soil and exposes them - even as it protects them - to the risk of involvement in war. They recognize the economic and political benefits of this relationship, and reluctantly accept its defense premises But this is a country that was administered by aliens - the Danes for eight hundred years and has been occupied by alien troops - us and the British almost continuously since 1940. In that year, the British sent forces to prevent German-occupied Denmark from helping the Germans to establish themselves in

Iceland and US troops - led by the aforementioned General Bonesteel - relieved the British in 1941, before our entry into World War II. During the war we had more young men in Iceland than there were young Icelandic men and that had a very interesting affect on their attitude towards us. Young men seek recreation usually with young ladies. And this race-conscious people with their homogeneous make up were - and remain - very leery of the blacks among our forces.

Anyway we have a pacifistic, anti-military nation here and one that is particularly sensitive to nuclear things. Why, I don't know because they have never been exposed to anything nuclear, but their general pacifism gets magnified when it comes to nuclear weapons. Anyway, anti-nuclear demonstrations in Japan are reported in the press, and Iceland's one correspondent in the US picks up an “analysis” from the think tank run by Admiral La Roche...

Q: He was a retired admiral who took a more progressive view of military matters.

ERICSON: Yes, a retired Rear Admiral who had had high level access intelligence material, where he developed a severe case of nuclear allergy...and left the service to campaign for abolition of all nuclear weapons. His attitude was doubtless sincere but his methods were underhand..

Anyway, when this nuclear fuss erupted in Japan, his organization published and distributed a list of US bases worldwide where nuclear weapons just must be stored, allegedly based on the kinds of delivery systems known to be at or near such bases and the nature of their missions. And site number three was Keflavik, cited because of its anti-nuclear submarine mission and the presence of P-3's which are capable, of delivering nuclear anti-submarine weapons. The analysis argued that because the P-3's mission would almost certainly require the use of nuclear weapons, there had to be nuclear weapons on the base because there wouldn't be time to deliver them after the outbreak of hostilities.. Ergo, there are nuclear weapons at the base.

The Icelandic correspondent in Washington, who is a stringer, sent this report I and, as allegations of their kind usually do, it huge newspaper publicity in Iceland. And it inspired the first demonstration against a friendly embassy since the cod war when hundreds of people assembled. Well, we had people marching by too. Two or three hundred people, some of them women with baby carriages and with toddlers in hand. It was a sort of sad parade but they were protesting American nuclear policy and the stationing of weapons at the base. The foreign minister at the time was Olafur Johansson, President of the Progressive Party, the socialist- leaning party. Basically a good guy to work with within the limitations of his party's policies and no fool... But he was responsive to his constituency and he called me in and said in effect that things were so difficult and that pressure from within his party and from the public was threatening the life of the government that unless I could authorize him to tell the Icelanders publicly that we had assured him there were no weapons at the base..... Well, you know...

Q: You are an old Japan hand so you knew.

ERICSON: I rejoined,"Well, I am sorry Mr. Minister but I do not have the authority to do that. As you know the policy of the United States government is and always will be neither to acknowledge or deny the existence of nuclear weapons anywhere on American bases. The reason for that is surely obvious: that to do so in one instance means we have to do it in every instance. There can be no exceptions for the sake of all." I said, "May I do remind you, Mr. Minister, that the base is a joint use base and you control the access to that base. Your police guard the perimeter, your police control everything that comes in and out of the place on the ground. Your people have free access to the base. .There is that one ammunition dump and if you look at that ammunition dump you would realize that it is just that, an ammunition dump. But I cannot say whether or not there are nuclear weapons on the base." "Oh, you must, you must." He said he could not accept a turndown from me and demanded that I get authority from Washington. So, I went to Washington and

Washington came back and said that they must stand by their policy. I relayed this to the foreign minister and he said, “That is not satisfactory.”

Meanwhile the demonstrations had gotten a little bit worse and one night the embassy suffered a rocket attack. We were attacked by rockets fired by Icelanders. In the middle of the night, two of them climbed up on the flat tarpaper roof of the garage across the street from the residence. They carried with them two skyrockets and a large cardboard box, in one end of which about halfway up they had cut two three-inch holes, so that when the rockets were inserted nose up in the holes, the rear end of the rockets would hit the garage roof. They put these things in position, aimed them at the residence, across the street, lit the fuses and scrammed. The rockets, of course, went “wham” across the street and hit the residence wall, then fell to the sidewalk, burned and sputtered out.

The marine guard who was on duty that night saw the rockets cross the street. By the time he got to the door and found out what it was, he saw that the garage and saw that the garage was on fire because the exhaust from the rockets had ignited the tar paper roof. So he called the fire department and other marines - their house was in the chancery-residence compound - helped put out the fire. Anyway, that is the first time an American embassy has ever been rocketed from such close range. An example of what life was really like in Iceland!

Olafur - in Iceland your are called by your first name, not your patronymic - said the Department's response was not satisfactory. Iceland was a special case . We should be able to give him assurances .He could not understand why we couldn't .. The State Department actually authorized me, as they had a predecessor years before, to brief the Foreign Minister on the facts of the situation but only in absolute confidence with ironclad assurances that he would divulge the information to no one.. literally to no one, Olafur could not accept this condition and he was mad —after all that Iceland had done for the United States in providing this land and submitting itself to this occupation for all these many years. He wanted to speak personally to the Secretary of State. So I arranged

in another exchange of immediates to have him speak to Secretary Muskie at a NATO meeting in Turkey scheduled for the upcoming week.This took some doing. Muskie really didn't want to meet with this guy on this subject and asked for a corridor chat.. So, it was arranged that they would meet in the corridor for a little chat and Olafur would have his chance to state his piece and get the word directly from the Secretary. The Secretary was well briefed on everything involved and he met Olafur in the corridor and they had their little chat. Instead of following the script, though, Muskie chose to say, “I will think about it.” This, of course, inspired hope in Olafur's heart. The Secretary said, “I will let you know before I leave here.” What he had planned to do I don't know, but in the end he sent George Vest, then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs, to tell Olafur that our policy was immutable and to regret that we could not accede to his request.

Knowing Vest, I am sure he put it in the very best way possible. But Olafur just blew his stack, not so much because the answer was no, because he after all had had hiday in court, but to raise his hopes and then send a messenger to dash them - too much! The smaller a country is the greater its pride and sensitivity to slights. Here you had a man who was the head of a minority party who felt that he was running against his party's interests in conducting this relationship with us, and he felt really slighted, demeaned insulted.. Anyway, he came back with steam almost literally coming out of his ears and there was serious talk that since the United States was unable to help the Icelandic government do what was necessary to calm the unrest, then the United States should be told to pack up and go. The talk got to be pretty serious.

The other negotiations about the terminal and other places...their demands financially were exorbitant. They wanted to build a palace. Their labor costs were just out of this world and they wanted to do it all on overtime. Everything was at a standstill and the situation looked pretty black..

I cabled Washington that we now had an even worse problem with a major Icelandic politician and that we had a critical job of feather soothing to do. I said I didn't know how

to do it except on a personal basis from high levels in the United States government. We had to get Olafur down to Washington and get him a very high level massage to calm him down..

It so happened that a United Nations meeting was about to convene and I strongly recommended the treatment start there...Washington came through in great style, and I credit Vest and Dennis Goodman, our junior but very capable desk officer, plus the Defense Department and CINCLANT, who had quickly developed a proper concern about the fate of Keflavik. The Department suggested he meet Muskie in New York in a formal setting to discuss Olafur's problem and he get his explanation from Muskie. Then we fly him to Washington in a special mission aircraft. He has a meeting with the Vice President, who had visited Iceland, and ..this is a foreign minister, mind you, of a country of 125,000 people. He gets the Presidential box at the Kennedy Center for a performance in the evening, and the next morning he calls on the Secretary of Defense, who entertains him at lunch. Then CINCLANT takes him to Norfolk on a naval aircraft for an honor guard ceremony and a tour of the base, followed by dinner on board the Admiral's barge while cruising the harbor . And then by naval aircraft back to New York and reality.

That is what we did in effect and it was all superlative, except for his meeting with Muskie. Really nothing much was said or settled and he came out still feeling a little unhappy, but Vice President Mondale received us the next morning in Washington and made the gesture that turned everything around... President Carter was supposed to be out on a political campaign trip, this was in the middle of 1980, I guess, so Mondale was going to receive Olafur. The President wouldn't have received the foreign minister anyway, I don't believe. But Mondale had us over to his office and we were five or six in our party including Olafur, Icelandic Ambassador, Johanesson, Hordur Helgasson me, and several others I can't remember. . During the conversation, which was going very well, Mondale stood up and said, “Just a minute I have to go do something.” He left the office and came back in a few moments and said, “Come with me,” and we all traipsed down through the Rose Garden into the Oval Office and there was the President of the United States with

photographers at the ready. Jimmy Carter shook hands with Olafur and it made the front page of all the newspapers in Iceland the next day. The glow on Olafur's face was blinding.

I might say, that in introducing us to Carter, Mondale put on a real tour de force. He had been to Reykjavik and had met me and Olafur and the Icelandic Ambassador, but not the other people in this group. But he accompanied each introduction to the President with some personal remarks.. He pronounced every name properly - no mean feat - Hordur is pronounced herther - and showed an intimate knowledge of everyone. For instance, when he introduced me he said, “Here is Dick Ericson. He is a good Norwegian like me from Minnesota, yet. He has been our ambassador there for two years and he and his wife get along very well with the Icelandic people and have a great liking and affection for them.” He told who Olaf was, what his party was and stood for, how difficult it must be for him to be foreign minister and to support our base presence when his party was opposed. He did an absolutely masterly job which must have impressed Olaf greatly.

We had a good evening at the Kennedy Center, although I had a hell of a time getting into the locked refrigerator. We went on to Norfolk and here I was worried because I knew they were going to have an honor guard as we got off the airplane and I didn't know how this little pacifist - he looked a little like Khrushchev, incidentally, being short, round and ruddy, with Khrushchev's sense of style in clothing - would react to a display of military pomp.. Well, it went beautifully. At the bottom of the steps he was greeted by CINCLANT himself who, assisted by two of the most attractive female naval officers I have ever seen, led him to a waiting jeep with a stand and hold bar in the back. This little civilian, flapping pants and all, and the tall admiral in full regalia inspected what seemed like 10,000 naval personal assembled there for the ceremony. . They gave him the gun salute as befitting foreign minister. He was helped out of the jeep by these two pretty women who accompanied him from then on as his official aides. The rest of us sort of dragged along behind. I have never seen anybody so buttered up in all my life. And then, of course, there was a trip through a fantasy world on the boat that night. It was all very, very successful. Olaf felt like he had been treated as befitting the foreign minister of a NATO European

country and he went back to New York and then on to Iceland. And that was the last we heard from him about nuclear weapons on the base.

He was never told that there were no nuclear weapons on the base, which is what he wanted to be told. He went back and made a statement the exact nature of which I don't remember but he said something to the effect that we have nothing to worry about there is no cause to be concerned here, we are in control. And that is the way it ended.

That was the major event of my tenure in Iceland. We had occasional visitors, not very many. Rarely a newspaperman. Mondale did visit us, a totally disastrous visit from my point of view, although he seemed to enjoy it. Mondale had his own agenda. He wanted to get back to Norway - it was the time of “Roots.” He wanted to see the town of Mundahl from which his people had sprung and was apparently his family's original name. Officially it was billed as a Nordic swing, but Mondale's real objective was to visit Mundahl. Somewhere in the archives there is an exchange of telegrams in which Washington asks Oslo if the citizens of Mundahl would resent it if this large party - I recall it was a full airplane of 50 or 60 people - monopolized what must be all available hotel rooms in the place at the Easter season. Oslo replies to the effect that Mrs. Olson had two rooms in her boarding house, but beyond that there are no accommodations. In the end they had to put up people in ships provided for the occasion and a few of them in other little townships.

The proposal was that they make this Nordic swing during the Easter recess in the United States. This is rather typical of the way Americans plan overseas visits - to ignore what goes on in the countries receiving them. Their first stop, of course, was going to be Iceland and Easter in Iceland is celebrated much more widely than Christmas. Easter is the time when the weather and light situations have improved to the point that Icelanders can finally stir out of town. So the whole country shuts down for the Easter weekend, which officially lasts four days. During this holiday, there is no activity in Iceland of any kind. Easter week is sacrosanct. There are no newspapers published. The TV doesn't broadcast. Stores are closed. The government goes on leave. There was nothing, the place just shut down..

Everybody went out into the country for their first expedition to their country homes and that sort of thing, or they just took things easy.

I tried to point out to the planners back home that this is the worst possible time for the the Vice President to come. The government's ministers were probably among those planning to hop over to some sunny isle in the Mediterranean and get some sun shine, or go out to the countryside. This is just not the time to do it. I said that there was another little problem and that is if you do come and they do have to provide the security, entertainment and all, you are going to eat up three quarters of their representation budget for the year. And this is serious.

Well, it went unheeded and the party came at Easter. Mondale remarked to me that he was so disappointed at the total lack of interest in the terminal , on the way to the Saga Hotel and in the hotel lobby. There was no vice presidential attention. I explained to him again, apparently it hadn't gotten through to him, what Easter weekend meant. In the end it did cost three quarters of the Icelandic government's representational budget and emergency budget for that year to provide the police escorts and security and the entertainment they did for Mondale and his party. They had to pay double and triple overtime because of the holiday. Other than that, he was a great guest.

Q: He's a very nice man.

ERICSON: Yes, he is a very nice man. His wife was fine. She, of course, is deeply interested in art and has written a book called “Art in Politics” of which she gave an inscribed copy to Betty. Betty took her all around looking for a noteworthy Icelandic artist. Everybody in Iceland is either an artist or poet or something like that because the long winter nights are conducive to poetry and paintings. I have been invited to galleries owned by artists to come in and see their 448 latest paintings. Iceland is a determined cultural center. They will have everything that any European capital has. They have a ballet and the chorus is clumsy. They have a symphony orchestra and Askenazyi, who married

an Icelander, spent several seasons up there, as I was told, trying to make something of it and finally said, “I am never coming back to Iceland.” They have libraries, theaters, museums, etc. But they don't have the talent pool, and so the quality of whatever they do is not what you might hope for..

Anyway, Mrs. Mondale enjoyed herself for two days looking at Icelandic art. As far as they were concerned it was a successful trip and they were welcomed warmly by a lot of officials who made themselves available, but not by as much of the public as would have turned out if it had been any time but Easter. Since then, of course, we have held presidential summit meetings in Iceland. I don't know what kind of strains the Icelandic government was under that time.

Q: This was when Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev met in Reykjavik.

ERICSON: That Mondale visit was the major operation of that type that occurred while I was there. We did have some visits by various Senators. Senator Baker of Tennessee (R) was one of them. Whenever he went to Europe, he had the plane refuel in Iceland no matter how far out of the way it might be. He came by three times while I was there. He was a photographer. He always got off the airplane with one or two cameras around his neck and, of course, Iceland is a tremendous photographic territory. Senator Tower came with him twice on these things. Senator Hirakawa from California..... who interestingly enough was probably the most knowledgeable senator about Iceland because he had been raised in Winnipeg, his parents were Canadian Nisei, which is where many of the Icelanders who migrated went. He lived in the same area of the city they did and knew many of their leaders.

Q: He was a linguist who got involved with the Icelandic tongue.

ERICSON: He had written a very famous text on linguistics that he wanted to get translated into Icelandic. He was looking for Icelandic financing to do it, but never found it.

In terms of knowledge he knew about Iceland and the Icelanders because he had read the sagas, talked to Icelanders and grown up with them.

Other than that, we aroused very little public interest in the United States during the whole period I was there.

Politically, there was one interesting development while I was there. The government headed by the Independent Party was defeated in an election and a coalition headed by what we regarded as leftist elements took over. But that proved manageable. One of the things about Iceland is that it has proportional representation system.. There are two elements in the voting for the Althing.. One is for candidates in ones individual district and the other for candidates in a national constituency. Thus the Althing, which is the oldest continuing sitting parliament in the world, contains a very broad spectrum of representatives and virtually any political party that can qualify can get some representation. But it also means political parties proliferate and no one party will probably ever garner a majority and the right to form a government by itself. There always has to be a coalition. Whoever leads the coalition always has a brake on him of some kind from some group that can break away if it is unhappy with the policy, which tends to push things always towards the middle. Maybe that is good - I don't know.

The most interesting political development that occurred while I was there was the election of a woman president. The president when I arrived was an archeologist, sort of a frustrating profession in Iceland because there is little to study. There was no one before the Vikings and they constructed virtually everything of wood. and the traces are long gone. But apparently there was some archeological work to make him one of the country's most distinguished citizens before he became president. He served as president for a couple of years and then the election for his replacement came up. For an American this is a strange process to observe because the Icelanders are much more low key about this kind of thing. The presidency is a ceremonial post, by and large. He or she is the embodiment of the spirit of the Icelandic people. The president is the only Icelandic

citizen who has any servants, which sort of sets him or her apart, and lives in a very large house out on a point on the other side of the bay from Reykjavik, which makes for sort of conspicuous living, if somewhat isolated.

Candidates for the election were announced. They were four or five well-known, relatively distinguished, fairly dull Icelandic male citizens. Some fellow on a fishing boat wrote to a lady named Vigdis Finnbogadottir, director of the largest private theater in Iceland. Vigdis was a very handsome blonde, probably at that time around 45 years old. She had been a television instructor of French. Her father was professor of mathematics at the University of Iceland. A distinguished woman in many respects, a good actress and quite attractive. She had had quite a notorious love affair with a man of Icelandic descent named Magnus Magnusson, who was the BBCs authority on all things Nordic. He used to fly back and forth from Iceland from time to time. Anyway, Vigdis had married, had a child and divorced, but she was theatrical Iceland in many senses of the word .The man on the fishing boat got an inspiration one day after he had looked at the male candidates, I guess, and wrote to her and said, “Why don't you run? You could beat these guys. I dare you.” She had been to our house a number of times and we knew her fairly well. She said, “I took the dare and entered the campaign.”

Well, the presidential campaign in Iceland is small coffee parties. Candidates do not represent parties, they are just individuals. Then there is the television campaign. Television reaches most of Iceland,. but there are severe restrictions on campaign appearances. There is one television appearance per candidate. Of course, it is national television without commercials, so this can be controlled. Not only is there only one appearance per candidate, they all appear together seated behind a table and are asked questions in turn by a group of two or three newspaper reporters. I watched it on television, of course. That evening the men were all dressed in grey suits with dark ties. and looking very sober and then there was this vivid blonde dressed in white. Every time one of the others was asked a question, Vigdis would examine her fingers or pull at her earlobe or toss her hair. She did a marvelous job of stealing the scene with little pieces

of acting technique. Of course she stood out anyway - she could have sat there like a mummy and she would have stood out. And she made sense when she talked. So, lo and behold, we woke up and found most of the women in Iceland had voted for Vigdis and certainly a good part of the men, because she won a very large victory. She has been President of Iceland ever since. This interestingly enough makes her the first popularly elected woman chief of state in history. There is no other woman who has been elected by the population in a direct election to be the chief of state. There have been female prime ministers, but they were either heads of government and not chiefs of state, and elected by parties or legislatures, not by the public directly..

Anyway, Vigdis is still the president of Iceland and some time after my departure the women of Iceland formed their own Women's Party, which may also be unique in the history of parliaments. I am told it is now the party the holds the casting votes when governments are formed.

Incidentally, I took Tony Kochanek there as my DCM. This meant if I wanted to work, I could and if I didn't want to work, Tony was certainly capable of doing it. I had a DCM in whom I had considerable faith and trust.

As time went on some things got a little bit wearing, particularly on my family. We arrived in November. Charlotte said she never saw the road to the base at Keflavik until March because she would get up in the pitch dark and leave at 7:00 in the morning on a school bus that took three or four embassy kids out to the base school 28 miles away and it was again pitch dark by the time school let out in the afternoon. She graduated from the high school there and was only too glad to come back to the United States to college for the third year. It was a small school and not the best. There is no American community in Iceland, incidentally. There are a few Americans who are married to Icelanders, who do not transplant very easily. There is no American business community. There is no missionary community. We had an occasional Mormon missionary come on their two year missions. But other than that there is no American presence other than the embassy in

town. There is the base, of course. But there are very severe restrictions on what can be taken off and Reykjavik has few temptations - for one thing entertainment is very expensive. The Icelanders would isolate it totally if they could because they do not want American goods made available. They don't want too much contact with Americans. There is the racial problem. So the restrictions put on the base, and Icelanders do control entry and egress, is largely in the form of what kind of things you can take on and off, particularly off. The base people for example cannot take food off the base. You can't go off into the lava fields and have a picnic unless you have taken a bite out of your hamburger or opened your coke before you leave. Petty little things like that. Military people coming off the base are subject to search by the guards at the entrance. So, by and large, they confine themselves to the base and the base is a very, very sad place indeed.

One thing that gets to people is the light situation. After passed a couple of years in the latitudes, you sit back and realize it isn't one long winter night or one long summer day. It is a constantly changing situation where the days grow shorter, shorter and shorter and rather rapidly until you have pitch dark except for three or four hours of kind of a murky dusk, when the sun if it can be said to rise, just barely comes above the horizon and sort of skitters around it for a while and then goes down. Then it steadily changes until you have twenty hours of daylight and four hours of a kind of twilight. But when you are going through it you think, “Gee, I am in the middle of this bloody tunnel and when is it ever going to get light again?” Or you say, “When the hell is it ever going to get dark again so I can get some sleep?” Either way it is not conducive to sleeping because when it is dark, you stay up too long because there doesn't seem to be any night, it is always night. And in the summertime for the same reason you stay up late because it is light and there is really nothing but the clock to mark the beginning of night.This light and dark situation can effect some people rather adversely. And Betty, my wife, got so it bugged her terribly.

The Icelanders are warm and friendly enough, but they are an insular people and have spent their whole history with their elbows out in the knowledge that any foreigner coming

over the horizon has come to do them in the eye. They are very slow to accept foreigners and mistrust most of them. They do like Americans best of all and if that is the case then they really don't have much love for anybody else. The Norwegians, of course, they look to as their source of their culture and for that reason their attitude towards Norwegians is relatively friendly. The Danes were their masters for 800 years and they do not like the Danes. The Brits are an economic threat and they are not very happy about them. They really don't like anybody terribly, except for Icelanders. I have seen a member of a distinguished Reykjavik family, one of the few people who keeps a family name, arguing with some other Icelander at a dinner party, and the other Icelander is pounding the table and saying “You damned Germans!” There is nothing German, except his distant origins, about this guy - his family has been Icelandic for 400 years, but it illustrates this insular, xenophobic streak.

Q: So, you left there....?

ERICSON: Well, I retired in 1980. There were certain financial advantages to my doing it at that time. But they asked me to stay on for a year as a political appointee. Betty had said also that she would make just one more move, she had had it with the Foreign Service. One of the problems for her was that she had to do almost everything herself in terms of representation.

Q: We left at a certain point, I think you reach...

ERICSON: We had worked with a number of senior wives who, to say the least, were among the more difficult — Wahwee MacArthur, Pat Johnson, Alice Meyer, Eleanor Porter. Some of these made things difficult by their presence and there were a few others their lack of interest,. Whatever it was, Betty always seemed to think she got more than her share, but she always pitched in and did what she thought was expected of a good Foreign Service wife. But when we got to Iceland there was nobody there to help her. Tony didn't bring his wife. We had one wife that we wished we hadn't had and the others were

just not that interested, and a couple of the officers were bachelors. So, here she was faced with the burden of running the residence with a minimum of help. Icelanders don't do household work, so we had a Danish woman married to an Icelander as our housekeeper, who browbeat her daughter into helping her half time. That was the residence staff. Betty made a mistake perhaps in firing the cook right away, an English woman who drank too much, and we were never able to replace her. Now, we could have brought somebody from the United States in theory, but we looked around and saw people doing that from other countries and it never worked. They all lost them after six or eight months. So, we never made the effort.

What you did in Iceland to entertain, was to engage the troop of Danish women, most of whom had married Icelanders, who were willing to do this kind of work. We called them the Danish Mafia. Whenever an embassy party or official government party was given, the doyen of this group and her ten or twelve cohorts put it all together, served it and cleaned up - literally and figuratively. They were expensive. When you went to the French embassy for cocktails on Tuesday, there were the Danish Mafia. If you went to the British embassy on Friday, there were the Danish Mafia. You went to the president's house for dinner and there were the Danish Mafia. So we passed them from one to another. The fact that the Icelanders wouldn't permit the importation of any foreign meats or vegetables, made it very difficult for others to entertain. We had the commissary stuff, so of course we were fortunate.. The other embassies were hard put to serve anything special unless they had it shipped by diplomatic pouch. You couldn't go to the market, for example, and buy a turkey or a ham. You could buy mutton, you could buy lamb, you could buy fish.

Anyway, Betty was very unhappy with this situation and she was essentially lonely, because although she had some Icelandic friends, that never works out terribly well and there were no American women around except at the base. She and Mrs. Martini were very good friends but they lived 30 miles apart. She said to me, “I will make one more move with you Richard and that is back to Washington, DC After that if you want to go

somewhere, you may, but I am not coming with you." She also missed the kids being that far away.

So I resigned from the Foreign Service in 1980 but stayed on as a political appointee. They said I could stay until November, which was when the lease on this house expired. In the event, my successor got into difficulties at his assignment which necessitated a quick posting for him. They decided to bounce me, since I was so vulnerable, being a political appointee and obviously intending to leave the service, so in August, 1981, three months ahead of time, we left Reykjavik and the Foreign Service..

Q: Well, Dick, it has been a long journey. I really enjoyed it.

End of interview