

Interview with Jon M. Huntsman Jr.

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

AMBASSADOR JON M. HUNTSMAN, JR.

Interviewed by: Dr. Chung and Ruth Kurzbauer

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[Note: This transcript was not edited by Ambassador Huntsman.]

KURZBAUER: Good afternoon, it is February 25, 1994, and this is an oral history interview for the Department of State's diplomatic history archives with Ambassador Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. We are delighted that the Ambassador could take the time to meet with us today. The interviewers will be Dr. Chung, a specialist in U.S. diplomatic history at the University of Utah and Ruth Kurzbauer, a former Foreign Service officer with USIA.

Mr. Ambassador if you would just outline briefly for us and for any future listener or participant, what led you into interest in Asia, into government service and maybe just the broad biographical outlines of your own background up until now.

HUNTSMAN: My interest in international politics, international affairs, really was a result of living abroad. In high school I was sent over to Germany and spent a little time living and working in Germany right after high school, working as a shipping manager. I developed kind of a view that was a little larger than what one would develop simply living in a fairly isolated city in a sometimes isolated country. That really is what opened up my mind, first to the people of Germany and the culture of Germany and the language. I became enamored with all of them. Shortly thereafter, when I was 19 years old, I was sent as a

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missionary to Taiwan for a couple of years. Had I not been forced to go over there I don't think I would have had the opportunity or developed at a very young impressionable age a view of people in the Pacific rim, specially the Chinese, those who lived in Taiwan.

KURZBAUER: Recalling back to that period, did you have some prior stereotypes of Asians or Chinese or Chinese culture, and if so, were any of those changed by your two year residence?

HUNTSMAN: I hadn't been exposed to much that was Asian. My parents had been to Mainland China in the late 1970s. They had been some of the first people to the Mainland from the United States as part of a delegation. They came back with some very interesting stories. I, at that point in life, started to develop a very keen interest in Asia, specially China. I didn't know much about it. I knew it was a very mysterious part of the world, but I knew I wanted to learn more about it. So when I received an assignment to live over there for a couple of years, selfishly I wanted to go back to Germany because I was able to speak a little bit of German, I was familiar with the culture and the territory, but I was sent to just the opposite side of the world. I went to Taiwan with little knowledge of the language. We had an intensive language program, two months, so I was able to exchange pleasantries beforehand, but I found as soon as I got there even the pleasantries that I tried to articulate weren't necessarily understood by the local people. Many of them spoke Taiwanese.

I spent two years there teaching English and doing a lot of humanitarian things and in short learning the language, learning the culture and getting to understand the people. It was very much a function of how willing one was to get in and make it an exercise in self-education, more than anything else. I had to teach myself the language. I had to learn about the culture. There were no organized classes that helped us to understand what we were living within, the context of the Chinese experience. Taiwan is a very unique chapter within the whole book of China. I wish now that there would have been some sort of organized academic experience there where we would have been able to make better

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sense out of what we were doing on a day-to-day basis. We were really thrown into this difficult milieu and we all hoped to make some sense out of it. So the first objective was learning the language so we could get by. And that I worked extremely diligently on.

Through all of the things one does as a missionary, mostly humanitarian work, you can't help develop a fondness for the people and an appreciation for the culture and the history. I became so taken by the history of Taiwan, particularly as it went back to the Mainland and the revolution that took place in 1949. How did the people in Taiwan get to where they are? Why do they have the kind of government they do today? Why was Chiang Kai-shek such a revered person, at least in Taiwan? All of these things were questions I spent a lot of time investigating.

So during that two year period I learned a great deal about the Taiwan experience and the whole ethos of the Chinese world view. Following my return from that experience, during which I continued the study of the language, continued learning as much as I possibly could about not only Taiwan, but I tried to broaden it to Mainland China, and shortly thereafter the entire Pacific rim. I couldn't get enough of it. I took classes at the university.

KURZBAUER: When you returned, where did you go?

HUNTSMAN: I started here at the University of Utah and ended at the University of Pennsylvania where they have a very good Chinese language program. They also have a very good Asians Studies program. I took advantage of both.

During those years I also took some time out to work in the White House for President Reagan. I was the one who would organize his trips, his travels with him. For example, if he went outside of Washington to visit someone in California or New York, it always took a team of people to organize it...the security, the communications, the political aspects, the policy aspects. I was what you call an advance man who basically went out ahead of the President to help organize all these different facets of a Presidential trip. I was able to travel internationally with the President and to almost all 50 states with him. It was a

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great experience and a great education for a young man. I left the White House in late 1983 and was called back out of retirement in 1984 when the President went to China. I had many friends there, including the deputy chief of staff, Mike Deavers, who hired me. They knew of my fondness and affection for China. When they found out that the President was going to go against everything that he had said during his two or three years in office and actually visit Beijing, I guess it dawned on them that they could call their old friend, the advance man, who had some experience in that part of the world, who spoke the language. So I was called out of retirement to travel over to China. This was what we call a pre-advance...

KURZBAUER: This was in 1984?

HUNTSMAN: This was February, 1984. He actually made the trip in April and May of 1984.

Han Xu, who was later Chinese Ambassador here in the United States, then was the Vice Minister in the Foreign Ministry over North American Affairs, was our counterpart. We worked with him along with Ambassador Art Hummel, who had been over there I think for a year or two by then. He had previously been the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. He was a terrific, terrific diplomat.

There wasn't much in the way of a bilateral relationship back then since President Reagan had been such a hard liner on US/China policy. So this was a real chance to build a relationship from scratch between the two countries. So I went over there on the pre-advance, got to know a lot of new friends in China, helped to arrange all the aspects of what the President would do in China...take him out to the Great Wall, take him to the Forbidden City, meetings with Deng Xiaoping, meetings with Zhao Ziyang and meetings with Hu Yaobang. It was a terrific experience for me, at 23 or 24 years old or whatever it was at the time. I got to meet all of these people too. Dinner with Liu Shao-chi and Hu Yaobang and a lot of our favorites.

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I am trying to think of when Zhao Ziyang came here to the United States, because that was also an important part of my education. I was put in charge of his trip here to the United States. I think it was right before the President went to China, late 1983.

CHUNG: I am trying to think. I came here in May, 1984 and he had been here already.

HUNTSMAN: Yes, then it was late 1983, because he extended the invitation to President Reagan to make a reciprocal visit.

I was also taken out of retirement to help organize his trip, Zhao Ziyang's trip to California. So I spent some time with people in the State Department, the Protocol Officer, people in Zhao Ziyang's entourage and spent a couple of weeks in the Bay area organizing his visit there. And then I was with Zhao Ziyang when he went through his trip, from step to step, event to event. So when I went back to Beijing and got to see Zhao Ziyang for the second or third time it was like a reunion.

KURZBAUER: Did you play golf?

HUNTSMAN: No, he wasn't much into golf then, he was too busy with other things.

KURZBAUER: At the time you were working with the White House, you came to Beijing with an advance team and interacted with an embassy. At that time you probably didn't know that one day you would be an ambassador yourself. Do you have any recollection of your impressions of the embassy's external operation, or how federal agencies work with each other?

HUNTSMAN: The first thing that I was tasked to do when we got to Beijing...we went right to Art Hummel's home, the Residence of the ambassador...and we had in tow the head of the Secret Service detail, who were the people protecting the President; military people, who would be responsible for putting phones in all the rooms and out to the Great Wall where the President would travel...they had to put telephones out to the Great Wall not

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only for the President for national security reasons, but for the media who would have to phone in and file their stories right after the President went out there. I remember sitting in Art Hummel's living room with some of the other advance people and being put on the spot, having to stand up in front of all these people, including Art Hummel; his DCM, Chas Freeman; and Dick Hart, who was number three, the political counselor, and describing to these people...I was just a young man and having to describe for them what we hoped to accomplish over our week or two pre-advance. What we hoped to accomplish in terms of arranging the schedule for the President and then melding into that all the political implications of each visit. You should go here because there is a good political reason, or you should not go there because the political implications are ominous. Everything had to be weighed and evaluated very carefully.

But I remember sitting in Art Hummel's living room thinking, "That is what I want to do some day." From that point on my goal was to some day be able to serve in a capacity like that where you could make a real contribution to a relationship, important relationship, bilateral relationships. And Art Hummel was such a dynamic figure and such a pro in the field in China relations. He was born in China, the son of missionaries. He even fought with the revolutionaries during the late forties. He had a very rich history in recent history of China. He so impressed me during that visit that he really became a role model of sorts, almost idol, if you will. You have to set goals for yourself and I thought it was something completely out of reach, would never happen. But nonetheless, I thought that that would be something to which I should aspire. In a good way, not that it is going to bring you any more, but because it might put you in a position to effect change, to help people. To help people on the US side better understand China, and to help the people in China better understand those from the United States. To help ameliorate problems when they arise. I thought he was very good at it.

So that really was a baptism by fire, shall we say. Sitting in Art Hummel's living room, watching him in action, and having to stand before all these very dignified people from the embassy...all of whom were of great help and assistance in putting this whole trip together.

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They gave us anything we needed. I was so impressed by the level of professionalism, the quality people that this organization attracted, this embassy behind cameras, guards and gates. In this building sat some extremely talented people. I was absolutely struck by that. I had spent some time in the White House in a very rarefied atmosphere for a young man and was impressed by the people coming and going, but it wasn't until I got out into the field where I was extremely taken by the level of professionalism, the level of talent that existed in these embassy buildings. And I traveled with the President to South America, to Mexico and to Asia, and in each case I had the chance to interact with the ambassador and with the senior staff people and I was never let down. I always saw a consistent level of professionalism and it always struck me as being quite unusual that the United States could organize the State Department and within the State Department there was the Foreign Service organization which consistently put out a very, as they say in the business world, high quality product. A constant high quality product.

KURZBAUER: Did you notice or hear of any changes in the President's perception of China or his own thinking about the relationship as a result of the week in the country? Or did he still hold to a vision of China as a hard line country to be watched?

HUNTSMAN: The President had never been to China before that. He had been to Taipei and when you visit the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial it is a museum. There is a picture of Chiang Kai-shek with Governor Reagan. It hangs very prominently there. So he was always very much allied with the Taipei world view. He had always been very harsh. If you remember doing the campaign in 1980 when it came to how were we going to handle the relationship of Beijing, he would say, "Well, essentially I am not going to give them any credibility. I am going to help the people in Taipei because they came out of what we deeply believe in, democracy, civil rights." Even though the democracy and civil rights were far from the truth in the Taipei experience, he used to point out those difference in the 1980 campaign.

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But during his two or three years in office before going to Beijing he became educated. He began to understand the importance of that bilateral relationship that President Nixon and Henry Kissinger were instrumental in establishing. I think when he started taking a look at the world as President of the United States opposed to being governor of a state, he probably came to the conclusion that the United States couldn't go on without having a healthy relationship with Beijing from a commercial standpoint, economic and trade standpoint, political standpoint. And I think Reagan being an ideologue during the 1980 campaign became more pragmatist and I think developed a very healthy world view where it wasn't simply based on ideological lines but rather real politics.

He enjoyed his trip to Beijing a great deal. I think I was with him for each stop along the way in Beijing, Shenyang and Shanghai. It was a terrific education for him and throughout it all I think he developed a greater appreciation for the importance of that bilateral relationship.

KURZBAUER: And then your next stop?

HUNTSMAN: I came back to the family business. We were then involved in building a family business from the grass roots. It wasn't much back in those days. I was put in charge of international business and spent a lot of time traveling to various countries negotiating joint venture relationships, licensing technology, selling technology to third parties in different shapes and forms, sometimes with an equity relationship, sometimes without. But that only allowed me to build on the experiences I had had before and to be able to broaden my view of the Pacific rim. We started doing business in Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, India and I got to see more of the Pacific rim than simply Taiwan where I spent two years of my life, and Mainland China where I was able to travel with President Reagan a couple of time.

KURZBAUER: Last night I was talking to students in the International Management Careers class about service abroad and international managers, etc. Of course, I can

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only speak to my experience in the Foreign Service in Yugoslavia and Asia. But did you find both in your business career and also in your governmental and public service careers dealing with different countries, different country nationals, different projects, that negotiating styles varied considerably from place to place, or did you bring a certain continuity of approach that worked for you in all places?

HUNTSMAN: I noticed that we had to basically tailor our approach to every market everywhere, not just in the Pacific rim. We negotiated deals with now three countries in the CIS, former Soviet Union. Each is so unique in the way they respond to certain things, certain initiatives, certain proposals that we had to tailor even emotionally the way we approached each marketplace. You have to hold fast to certain aspects of what you are presenting because some things simply should not change from a negotiator's standpoint, but there are some things on which you can give and be flexible. The way in which you are flexible with various parties differs, and depends on how you perceive their response to various initiatives. Yes, we definitely tailored our approach quite individually.

KURZBAUER: Which is, I think, parallel to the way the Foreign Service officers and staff have to operate when you move from country to country. Certain core values and, in fact, indigenous personal approaches that are yours and don't change but there are other areas of flexibility.

HUNTSMAN: But after getting around to a number of countries in the world and establishing joint ventures and various licensing relationships, we ran across a group in Taiwan that became a significant partner in a project that we had negotiated with them. And I thought the best thing I could do with my life was to move back to Taiwan and spend a year there in the business world learning how business is done from their standpoint, competing against them, competing with them as a partner, not only in Taiwan but in third countries. So we packed our bags and moved to Taipei and lived there for a year working out a joint venture that was down south in Kaohsiung. We had an office in Taipei and I

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worked there and commuted down to Kaohsiung about every other week. And traveled not only throughout the entire country of Taiwan by car visiting customers and...

KURZBAUER: You were brave.

HUNTSMAN: Oh, listen, we could go into some interesting experiences here. ...but also in marketing the product in other countries, like Thailand, for example. Going into Hong Kong. Really being able to see the region, not from a political standpoint as I had with President Reagan, not from a humanitarian or religious standpoint, but from a business and economic standpoint. It was very much an educational experience in learning how business is done and how the whole view of business can be quite different from our own view of business. So it was tremendous educational experience, not only for me, but for my wife, Mary Kay, who had never lived outside the United States. We had two children at the time and they still have very fond memories of that experience in Taipei.

Following that we moved back here and I took another position, not in the international area, but over the international business efforts for what was then a growing and expanding company, doubling in size almost every year. I continued developing joint venture relationships and technology partnerships. Then came the election of 1988 and I was approached by some people about the possibility of working in the Bush Administration. I thought about leaving everything behind, which didn't strike me as being the right thing to do. We were established here, were building a family business. I was learning and developing a great deal within our own business context. And leaving all that behind and taking a job with government didn't strike me as being the most intelligent thing in the world doing at that point in life.

But we were called back for an interview with Secretary Mosbacher, then the Secretary of Commerce, right after Bush was elected, and he offered me a job. I came back here and thought about it and responded favorably that I would take the job, which I did. So in early

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1989, right after the election, I went back to Washington and started work as a Deputy Assistant Secretary for Commerce. I was 28 or 29, I guess.

KURZBAUER: And this was for the Asia Pacific region?

HUNTSMAN: This was first in the International Trade Administration where I was leading trade missions and doing trade promotion in general throughout the world. And in that position I chaired three or four working groups with the then Soviet Union. Working groups in gas and oil; working groups in consumer products; working groups in construction. I would chair them with a deputy minister from each ministry overseeing those various areas. So I would get over to Moscow about every third month and we would convene these working groups back in 1989 and early 1990. I would take with me a number of corporate representatives who were trying to break into the marketplace, either in consumer products, construction or gas and oil. It became a very productive thing. We would sit on one side of the table, with me in the middle, and on the other side would be my counterpart, the deputy minister, and appropriate people from the ministry. They would give us a little bit of information about a project in Siberia, or something down in the Caucasus, open up a little bit more about consumer spending patterns and this kind of thing. Information that we had no way of getting in the past. Then the corporate representatives on my side of the table would take this information and on their own try to establish relationships that might result in US exports into the Soviet Union, or joint cooperation where they might link up with a fledgling semi-private entity that wanted to build tractors, or something like that. So we had the working group up and running and I think it was quite successful. They even came over to the United States on a couple of occasions. I chaired them once in Houston and once in Washington.

And then a position came open within the Department, Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. I was asked by some people close to the Secretary if I would consider taking the job. Of course, it didn't take me long to conclude that that is where I ought to be, even though I so enjoyed doing the trade promotion and trade policy work

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that I was doing in the International Trade Administration. And after a couple of months the job came open, sure enough, and the Secretary called me up and asked if I would consider taking the job and I told him I would be happy taking the job and found myself in this second position after a year and a half in this other position.

I then became the Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Asian Pacific Region. It was not trade promotion, but rather trade policy where you would involve yourself in trade negotiations, and share a number of trade policy working groups within a multi agency context with the United States Trade Representative's office, Agriculture, Commerce, and State. We basically worked on eradicating trade barriers where they existed. Of course in the Asian and Pacific region there are innumerable trade barriers. Many of them in China. After the events of June, 1989, the United States really broke all high level contact and there was a very important group between the United States and China called the US/China Joint Committee on Commerce and Trade (JCCT we used to call it). The Secretary of Commerce usually would meet with the minister and together they would try to undo various problems that were caught up in various projects that the United States had ongoing...business projects, economic projects, intellectual property problems and market access problems, and this kind of thing. The group was set up to basically ameliorate those types of problems. With the Secretary unable to go, the responsibility fell to me to chair that group. So I would then go over. It was actually quite fortuitous because I got to lead the charge in the trade context. I would then meet with the vice minister, who changed a couple of times while I was in that position, and we would still have the group, although it wouldn't be chaired at the Secretary of Commerce/Ministerial level, it would be chaired two or three notches below. We continued having our meetings every four to six months and continued our best efforts in solving many of the problems that existed between the United States and China in a trade context. And that pulled me even closer to the relationship between the United States and China.

I also chaired a couple of groups that dealt with the United States and Korea, a similar type of organization where you would get together with the vice minister of trade or

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economic affairs and you would put out on the table your concerns. And they would put out on the table their concerns. Together we would try to ameliorate them. I chaired a group with Thailand and a number of the Pacific islands that don't amount to much in trade, but strategically some of them are quite important for reasons that I won't get into. I also was involved with Mongolia, interestingly enough. Secretary Baker went to Mongolia to formally to open relations with the government of Ulaanbaatar in 1989-90, when they decided they wanted to become an independent country away from the reach of the Soviet Union where they had been a satellite state since 1922. Well this meant that they had to cut all ties with the Soviet government, which was not good for Ulaanbaatar because they derived tremendous benefit from that relationship, like 90 percent of the money they needed to keep their country running, whether it was heating oil, or paper on which they would publish their newspapers, or commodities, consumer products, they all came from the Soviet Union. So this was a fairly daring thing for Mongolia to do. And Secretary Baker got over there and in sort of opening up relations promised them that the United States would create a trade working group that would be instrumental in getting some of our business people over to Mongolia to see if there weren't areas in which we could cooperate with Mongolians, and increasing trade between the two countries, and looking for economic opportunities in bringing the two countries closer together. So I was tapped by the State Department to chair that group. This was after Secretary Baker's trip. He had planned on staying for three days, but had to cut it down to one because the Persian Gulf War was just getting underway during that time. Right as he landed at Ulaanbaatar, I think the first shots were fired in the war over Kuwait.

So shortly thereafter I was sent to Ulaanbaatar and I took the train from Beijing all the way through the Gobi Desert up to the capital of Mongolia and met with Prime Minister Byambasuren as soon as I got there, it was a Sunday afternoon. I met with Joe Lake, our Ambassador, we had an embassy, I think, of two people and Joe, of course, was looking for something to do. There wasn't much going on in this little city of a million people. We went and called on the Prime Minister and talked about the working group, about bringing

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in trade missions, and establishing a Mongolian Chamber of Commerce in the United States, which we later did. We organized a couple of missions coming out of Beijing with American business representatives there so they didn't have to come all the way from the United States. We did the same thing with the chamber of commerce in Hong Kong which got some American business people together and took them to Ulaanbaatar. The Coke representative, etc. And some good things came from that. That was another part of my responsibility as head of the Asian Bureau at the Commerce Department. So during my time there, which was a little over a year, I was able to see first hand many of the markets of the Pacific rim from an economic and commercial standpoint.

CHUNG: That reminds me of something...I was back in China when I came here in 1984 when I was doing my graduate work, but I went back in 1987 so that when the Tiananmen Square incident took place I was there. I witnessed the drop of the trade and business connections between the United States and China. I think as an effect of that, of course it is very political, the United States investments or interest in China these days are still not up to the fever the United States had over China prior to 1987. I just wondered what is your view of the prospect, or what do you think would make the United States business people interested? Are they still worried about the stability of the government over there, or are they worried about the recurrence of another Tiananmen Square incident?

HUNTSMAN: First of all I think the level of interest today, as it has been the last year or so, is higher than at any point in recent history between the United States and China. I am talking about the level of commercial and economic interest in the Chinese marketplace. I know because I have been over there recently a couple of time working on a joint venture, and I will be there again next month. We are doing it jointly with Continental Grain Company out of New York, which has had 13 successful ventures in China. When you look at the average American venture in China before Tiananmen Square it was about \$3.5 million, after June, 1989, it went down to \$750, 000. So there was no doubt a dip in terms of overall confidence by US corporations. Our willingness to invest in a marketplace that may be politically unstable. But that has passed. There is a level of confidence now.

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It is cautious optimism, I guess I should say. People are optimistic that the marketplace will continue to remain open. That it will become more user friendly. That we will be able to do more in the Chinese market with Chinese partners without the bureaucracy standing in the way. Although there is some concern, of course, about where things will be after Deng passes on. The business community in the United States is clearly of the opinion that if someone like his successor is able to consolidate power, then that will be very good for bilateral trade and economic ties. It will be good for China. On the other hand, if there are some others who are from the opposing elements, then the door is going to start closing again. So I think as people continue reading about Deng's health...and that is always a good sign to the business community. The first thing that the Chairman of Continental Grain, one of the biggest companies in the world said—he was here for lunch just a couple of weeks ago reviewing our China project—was, “Well, we saw Deng Xiaoping on the news last night.” A confidence building measure. But people know that he is not going to be around that long and I think there are a number of folks holding off on investments until such time as they are able to make some sense out of what happens post-Deng Xiaoping.

CHUNG: I told you that I come from Shanghai and Shanghai is one of the latest opening areas in China. In the recent development of China, Shanghai is lagging behind when you think of the more developed areas like Kuangchou and Fujian. There is a big complaint in Shanghai that the United States is not as interested in investing in developing further relations, commercial or trade relations, with China...I think it is because Shanghai has been advertising as an area of foreign investment and we are not getting a lot from the United States. And that is why, I think, maybe, statistically speaking, as you said, if you look at the overall it is the highest, but that China or certain parts of China expects more from the United States.

HUNTSMAN: I am glad that your expectations are high and I hope we meet them. As it relates to Shanghai, there is a new economic zone, which is a great idea and there are American businesses which have invested there. There also are a lot more Japanese businesses that have invested there, although, I think the United States is still

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the largest investor in China. I think we have invested more in China than the Japanese. The Japanese traditionally have been willing to trade a lot, but not put down their money in joint ventures. But the United States has led the charge...I think we are number two after Hong Kong. I think it is \$11-12 billion by Hong Kong and some \$8-10 billion by the United States. But we have put down a lot of money in the Chinese marketplace and we have lots of very successful joint ventures. May I chronicle a history for you of joint ventures, some of which have been good, like the Otis elevator venture, and some that have been bad, like the Beijing Jeep venture. But the United States has always been in there fighting for better relationships in the business area. I am of the opinion that this will continue unless there is another significant sign that political instability or uncertainty will prevail in China.

KURZBAUER: If I can ask one question related to that, from your experience both in government earlier and then as one of the chief negotiators on our Asian economic policy side and then as a businessman, yourself, have you seen any change in the interior barriers and obstacles in the mainland China market? Has there from some progress from your point of view from the mid-80's when you were first exposed to the area and the mid-90s when you are now going back frequently? Or are we pretty much where we were in 1986-87?

HUNTSMAN: You are catching me on a bad day because we just heard that our venture is still hung up in China even though we have been moving along for a couple of months now. Clearly it is a lot easier to do business with China today than it was back in the 80's. And it is particularly to your advantage if you wish to do business in these special economic zones. That is why so many of the American business people, indeed people from all over the world, have gone to Kuangchou, gone to Hainan, to Fujian, and slowly, but increasingly to Shanghai because they have regional governments that are very user friendly, to use a business term. Business people can go into the policy makers and get decisions and answers to their questions. In Beijing it is very difficult. It is not easier working with Mofert, working with Sinopec, working with larger state run corporations, but it is a lot easier working with a provincial government. This is a double edged sword

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because I think when the people in Beijing see that the provinces are getting ahead and becoming flexible and opening to the West more than perhaps they should, you find that people lose their job. Like, for example, the governor of Guangdong province who was taken out of his position. He had a terrific reputation of being someone who worked with the business world extremely well and who was responsive. He understood what they were after. Now, I know there have been incidents of payoffs and bribes, and that kind of thing, it exists everywhere in the world, even here. And that may have been part of it, at least what may have offended Beijing. But you did have a person who understood exactly how to move that province ahead from an economic standpoint. And I think you have people...let me cite, as an example, the mayor of Shanghai, he had an open door policy. He would allow business people to come in and sit down and present projects to him. He would say, "Okay, here is how you can get it done. You need to see this person or that person and then come back and see me and we will talk again." Instead of having the door closed and you have to start downstairs and work your way up and if lucky you might be able to see him. He was very creative, very innovative.

CHUNG: Let's get _____ back to Shanghai, so that we can get more business.

HUNTSMAN: We need to get him to be head of the party in Beijing.

CHUNG: But as a Chinese, I would say let him climb even further so that it will benefit the whole country in terms of attracting intentional investment.

HUNTSMAN: He is very, very good. I have had a chance to meet him two or three times. He understands investment, trade, and what it takes to get the economy ahead. I am sure his concern today is inflation. He doesn't want to have happen to him what happened to Zhao Ziyang back in September, 1988 when inflation was getting almost to where it is today, 20 and beyond. Later he took the hit, he was blamed for the Tiananmen Square situation for supporting the wrong elements. But people fail to remember that it was late 1988, well before then, that he was being roundly criticized for the poor economic

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performance of China, namely the high inflation that scared a lot of people, partly in the city centers. Zhao Ziyang took responsibility for that. So I am sure right now he is hoping that he can do everything possible as head of the Bank of China, a position where he has a great deal of control over monetary policy. He is also the chief policy czar in terms of think up and implementing economic policies for growth, trade, etc. I am sure it is on his mind every morning when he wakes up...what is inflation going to do to me and am I going to be able to survive this. I hope he does.

CHUNG: Let's move on to the next step. How did you end up as Ambassador to Singapore?

HUNTSMAN: While I served as Deputy Assistant for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, I got to view again first hand the work of Ambassadors around the entire Pacific rim theater. I became friends with a good many of them, person-to-person relationship. Yet, I didn't think I would ever be doing that. I still held them in very high regard and thought that at some point in my life this is what I would like to do. This was where you could really make a contribution. I retired from the Commerce Department in August, 1991 because I had promised the family business that I would take two or three years in public service and then would be back. I was of the opinion that if you spent more time than that, you lose your effectiveness because you have to bring something to the job. You can't just take a job without anything to give. You have to bring something presumably from academia, business, the legal field, whatever your background is, and use that in public service in order to make a contribution, to make a difference.

So after two and a half years I signaled to the Secretary of Commerce that I was going to return, and I did go back to the family business. I was given a senior management responsibility which sent me in a number of directions...overseeing international operations, and other management operations as well. I still continued to travel throughout the Pacific rim and to Europe and to then Russia, where we had a venture in Moscow and one we were building in the Ukraine and also in India.

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It wasn't until early 1992 that I was contacted about possibly serving as ambassador. There were a couple of people who were kind of chiding me and teasing me about serving as ambassador to Armenia. We had done a lot of relief work and knew the people in Armenia well. My younger brothers have traveled there around 30 times now and will be there next week taking a plane load of milk, rice and beans to help feed some of the people who simply are starving to death during the winter months. We would travel to Armenia and meet with a lot of our friends who were in senior positions—the foreign minister, the prime minister, etc. I would get teased a lot about serving as ambassador. The United States had not recognized Armenia formally at that point and, of course, I wouldn't be qualified to serve in Armenia. I had no background other than helping the people with humanitarian projects.

Then the conversation sort of turned toward...people were kind of pushing this along in the Bush Administration taking the idea of serving as a ambassador fairly seriously. Our two senators became involved. They tried to talk me into thinking about serving in some capacity. I had served, of course, with some senior people in the Bush Administration so they knew me and I knew them. They were willing to kind of get in there and argue in favor of sending a young person out to the right size country. I thought that this was silly, I should be older, but if an opportunity presented itself, I would really think about it. It would have to be the right country. I would not leave to serve in any country just to serve. My whole purpose of serving would be to go somewhere where you could make a contribution because you understand the people and their history, or there is a large economic and commercial component to the relationship that you can help because of your experience.

Singapore was presented almost jokingly at first, I was being chided by people in the Bush Administration and some of our leaders here in State. And then the talk became fairly serious. I let them know that I would have an interest serving if it in fact were Singapore. I had been there before. We had a venture there ten years ago which was what first took me to Singapore, and I knew the culture. One step led to another and I was called

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back to interview along with about 15 other people for the job. I was called back by Sam Skinner, who at that point was the President's Chief of Staff. It was his practice to interview ambassadorial candidates. I was put on a list along with lots of other people to be interviewed. I didn't think anything would come of it, but I did go back. He called me into his office, I remember it very well. He looked at my resume and then at me and I was very intimidated thinking, "This is the President's Chief of Staff, what am I doing here? I should be out doing what I have been doing the last six months, building the family business." I didn't think the job would ever come to fruition. He said, "Well, I have a son about your age." Then we got to talking about it and he said, "What do you think you can contribute to a position like this?" We got to talking and we became friends and he took me to the White House mess and we had lunch together after the meeting. It wasn't planned, it just happened because we kind of hit it off well. So we had a chance to talk in some detail about lots of things.

I went from there to interview with a couple of other people in the White House. What I had going for me were some people on the National Security Council Staff who I had worked with. A guy, Doug Paul, who at the time ran the Asia Directorate—in fact I talked about taking a job with him after I left the Commerce Department, he wanted me to come interview. And Roger Porter, who was in charge of domestic policy in the White House, he was also a friend. People I had gotten to know during my years at the Commerce Department. So they were in there fighting for me. "Even though he is young, it might not be a bad idea. Singapore, after all, is a young country. There are lots of ministers there in their thirties and it has only been a country since 1965. After all he does speak Chinese and he has had some experience both politically and in the business world which would add immensely to the job because most of our relationship is based on trade and commerce."

That interview with the President Chief of Staff, did it, I am convinced because I got a call a week or two after that from the person who runs personnel in the White House saying, "The President is prepared to nominate you to become the Ambassador to Singapore." I

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couldn't believe what I was hearing. I didn't know the President that well. We had met. I knew people around him who could vouch for me and that was the extent of it. I was up against people who knew the President well. I was coming in really as an outsider even though I had worked in his Administration. I said that I would be delighted to accept if the President wants to nominate me. She said, "Well, the President is going to be putting forward the paperwork and we will be sending you tons of paper that you will have to start filling out for the next month of your life."

So I got all the forms that one needs to fill out before one becomes an official candidate for an ambassadorship. Security forms that go to the FBI for a background check; financial disclosure forms and lots of other things that really took two to three weeks to fill out. Mounts of paper. I sent it all back and thought that this was only the first step, there were still lots of steps ahead that might ruin it. They had to send to the government for Agreement, and the government of Singapore could always turn it down. The State Department has to send your resume to the host government to see if they want you in the first place and they can always refuse a person and request another candidate.

Well, there was something going for me there too because I had worked closely with a fellow named Tommy Koh, who was the Singapore Ambassador to the United States and before that the Ambassador to the UN. I had developed a surprisingly close friendship with him. As head of Asian affairs at Commerce and would go around and speak to groups including the ASEAN ambassadors and we would have dinners together. We developed a great relationship. He always patted me on the back and say, "You will do nice things some day," in kind of a joking way. He had by that time gone back to Singapore where he was the senior person in the Foreign Ministry responsible for this kind of thing. I am convinced, even though I have no way of verifying it, that my name came in he told his colleagues that he knew me, had worked with me and could vouch for me even though I was younger than my predecessor, who was almost 80 years old, a retired governor. We

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got word back relatively fast. It was a very fast turn around from the Singapore government saying, "Yes, we will accept him."

Then it was the function of completing the Senator confirmation process. I took a couple of weeks to prepare for that learning about the relationship between the United States and Singapore, questions they might ask about me—what is a young person like you sitting here in front of the Senate? Don't you have better things to do? So I made it a point to go around and meet every Senator who would see me on the Foreign Relations Committee—Republicans, Democrats, anybody. I got into see everybody with the exception of Paul Sarbanes, who would not see me. We later became very good friends, surprisingly. I went in to see Joe Biden, Alan Cranston, who was chairman of the Asian Pacific subcommittee, and a lot of others. As I told Senator Biden, "Please don't hold age against me. Look at experience. You were elected to the Senate when you were 30 years old. You couldn't possibly use age as an argument against me." And he said, "Absolutely not, I wouldn't think of doing that. I am going to base my vote on merit. I am going to look at your record and listen to what you say in the testimony that you give and the way that you answer questions and will make my vote based on that."

KURZBAUER: A question on the confirmation process. Did you find that a very partisan experience, or did you find transcendence of partisanship?

HUNTSMAN: I really didn't. This was during a very highly charged political season. Of the class of ten ambassadorial candidates—they put you through ambassadorial school in classes of maybe ten each—there were only three of us, as I recall, that made it through because the Senate was picking people off. People who were unqualified, people who had made huge donations to the President, things that were in violation of certain principles or practices. I had been told by certain Senate staffers that they were going to target me because of my age. That they were really going to grill me when I got out there on the table and sitting in front of the Senators. So I did my homework as best I could. I got around to meet all of them individually and sat down with them and spent 30 or 40 minutes

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together with them to let them at least sense that there was something beyond simply a young man sitting in front of them. There were a couple of Senators who wouldn't see me. It was their practice never to see any nominee before they actually sat before the committee. I was fearful that they were going to do their best to torpedo me during the committee hearings because there were a couple of people who had gone through the month before me who had been torpedoed. They had gone through the entire process, months of work, weeks of filling out papers, spending time in Washington going through all the training programs and then sitting before the Senate and being blown to pieces. And then out you go. So I was concerned. I was scared. But I was in a very feisty mood. I thought, "I am not going to just go down in flames, I am going to put up a fight if that is what they are going to do." I had studied everything, had called everybody who knew anything about Singapore. I had gone back and read all the testimonies of people who had failed Senate confirmation and succeeded Senate confirmation from Senator Sarbanes standpoint. I knew that he was the one I had to please because he was the one who was gunning for me. So I read all the transcripts of people he had berated in the past. He is very good at it. As I told him very recently, the Senate can't lose you because you are the only real screen in terms of sorting the good from the bad when it comes to the ambassadorial clearing process.

KURZBAUER: And not just on party lines.

HUNTSMAN: Not just on party lines. He doesn't do it on party lines. Of course he has certain party principles, but he wants good people out there, it doesn't matter whether they are Republican or Democrat. I studied everything and read all the right books. When I sat before him he started his questioning and started looking here and prying there trying to get me on certain things. I was able to answer all his questions to his satisfaction.

KURZBAUER: Did you point out that Lee Kuan Yew was no old man when he took over?

HUNTSMAN: I pointed that out. He was thirty years old when he was prime minister.

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KURZBAUER: In a difficult situation.

HUNTSMAN: In a very difficult situation.

KURZBAUER: Not to keep you too long, Mr. Ambassador, although we wish we could go on for hours, but a question about the relationship between a career staff and a politically appointed ambassador. Did you find that there were any difficulties brought about by your being a politically appointed ambassador? A little bit of wariness perhaps as to what you really knew about the country or the diplomatic process?

HUNTSMAN: That is a very good question and one that was always on my mind. There is always a little bit of a strain when you begin the relationship simply because, in my case, I wanted to make sure that the career people felt comfortable with me. I wanted them to understand where I was coming from as a person, not as a political person, but as somebody who would be working with them as a colleague. I remember back during the Commerce Department days of being thrown in and managing a bureau of 40-60 career people. I made it a point the very first day, even as a relatively young person, to let them know that I was a political appointment but not a political person. I was there to work with them and would have an open door policy and anyone who wanted to come in and talk to me, good or bad, had that right, even if they had to go over their superior to do it. I wanted to make sure that I was fair, equitable and wanted what was in their best interest. I wasn't going to pull any political stunts. And I got along fabulously with the career people.

Then when I went over to the State Department I was primed by a lot of the Republican people who would come up to me and say, "Watch the State Department people, they will trick you every time." Former ambassadors who said, "You will like serving as ambassador, but never trust the State Department people. At the end of the day you have to make your own decision, never rely on their input. Don't trust their judgment. They will tell you one thing and do another thing." Well, I had known the Foreign Service people better than that. I had been around them and had respected them and the work they had

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been able to do. I had seen them from many, many years back, from a very young age, and thought that this wasn't the Foreign Service that I knew.

So when I got out to Singapore, I gathered in all the senior staff people around a table about this size and let them know in very precise terms what my management philosophy would be, what I wanted to accomplish as ambassador, and to let them know exactly what I felt about Foreign Service officers and my respect for them. I wanted to be seen as one of them and not as a political person, but a career person. I came to the job really with the background like many of theirs. I had lived in the region, I had studied the language, I had studied the region and because I had come from the business world didn't really make me in my own opinion 100 percent political. I told them that I felt more career than political and please accept that. And I thought we would all get along fabulously well. And we did. I never had one person ever try to pull anything over on me. I never had one of them give me bum advice. I never had any of them pull the career/political kind of machinations. Never once was there any kind of tension because they felt I was a political person, because I didn't behave like a political person.

KURZBAUER: I can say personally that I have heard directly from your staff that they miss you too. I am speaking as a career FSO.

HUNTSMAN: Listen, they were terrific.

KURZBAUER: Two more questions if I may.

HUNTSMAN: Sure.

MS KURZBAUER: Another issue in the internal management of an embassy that has always interested me and from my own line officer experience, is the relationship, managing, working with Foreign Service support staff and the Foreign Service Nationals. Sometimes I have seen ambassadors who focus, of course, on the important relationships externally and also with their department heads, but there are other members of an

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embassy that work together to make it all happen. I wonder if you have any thoughts or experience there?

HUNTSMAN: We had a very talented embassy staff. We had a very talented group of Foreign Service officers who represented the State Department and a lot of other professionals who represented 14 other agencies. Beyond that we had 90 to 100 Foreign Service Nationals, who I thought really made a contribution. They were the unsung heroes of the embassy. When I first got there I told the senior staff that I was going to spend time walking around. It was my management philosophy at the Commerce Department, it was here, that I wanted to get around to know people and pat them on the back and tell them they were doing a good job or just learn a little about what they were doing. So my first day there I started on the first floor and looked into every office and met all the locals. Surprisingly it had been three years since they had met an ambassador. They hadn't seen an ambassador on their floor in years. I thought that this was terrific, we need to make them feel part of the embassy family. It took me a couple of days to meet all of them, but I did. I made sure that I had Foreign Service Nationals who were the designated spokespeople for the rest of the employees come into my office every now and again to articulate any concerns they had as a group. We also, for the first time ever, invited Foreign Service Nationals to join in on embassy events. I invited them to my home, just like the other professionals. They could bring their families and come over and spend some time at our house. We had interesting American performers, pop star performers, great singers, piano players, and I would bring them to the residence and invite everybody, not just the US employees, but the Foreign Service Nationals as well. And I think that went a long way in sort of redressing any friction that may have existed there before.

KURZBAUER: I saw that. I was fortunate to serve under Ambassador Hummel in China, Ambassador Lord and Ambassador Eagleburger, and they were all masters of that. And I think it was not only good management practice, but something genuine that came within

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them and conveyed itself to the staff, both American and Foreign Service Nationals, and did a lot to unite a mission in that way.

A final question, to perhaps turn it over to Dr. Chung, concerning the political or policy side, and then we will close.

CHUNG: I have been thinking about an overall question. We know that ambassadors play a very important role in influencing United States relations with other countries. So, having been an ambassador to a country, I wonder if you have any overall view about the kinds of qualities you think an ambassador should have and what kind of contributions ideally you think an ambassador should make to United States foreign policy?

HUNTSMAN: Qualities—I have seen so many different ambassadors over the years, many of them displaying different qualities. I think it is absolutely critical that an ambassador have an appreciation of the country in which they are serving. If it is a foreign language, you have to be able to speak it. I can't tell you how much that was appreciated in my own case when I would go out and make speeches in Chinese, and I would have interviews with local papers in Chinese. When I could speak to some of the local employees in Chinese they couldn't believe it. It just sort of made them feel that the United States had a representative who did more than sit in his office and shuffle papers. Somebody who had actually spent part of his or her life thinking about the culture, because whenever you learn a language you have to understand the cultural elements that go into making the language or speaking the language. So I think that is absolutely important.

After having watched some ambassadors in action, I am convinced that you have to be a manager. You have to manage people. That is part of the job. You have to get out of your office to let the mission feel that you are doing everything together as a family in a united way. That the people down the line are recognized for what it is they do, because I have seen in some cases that embassies can begin to fall apart and split if they don't feel that they are all being pulled in the same direction.

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And finally, I think that the ambassador needs to be, perhaps foremost, a spokesperson for the United States government. They need to be able to argue, either before a local group of students, or the prime minister of the country, what the United States stands for and what our policy objectives are. If you have an ambassador who is unable to do that, then you lose your effectiveness. The ambassador is at the end of the day a communicator and that is perhaps the most important job of all.

I mean, sure we can look at protecting American lives and doing all those things that on paper an ambassador is supposed to do, but if they can't pull the embassy together and make them feel what they are doing is productive and moving in a worthwhile direction, and articulating US policy to people within the country, either through the media or in bilateral meetings with important people in that country's government, then you will find that the representative is ineffectual. So I would narrow it down to those.

CHUNG: How about expected contributions that the ambassador should make to United States policy?

HUNTSMAN: The ambassador at the end of the day has to be able to signal to the decision makers in Washington what is happening on the ground. I mean, when the ambassador weighs in on a decision...decisions are always made at a lower level at an embassy. Some very important decisions are made at a lower level, but the ambassador at the end of the day needs to be able to weigh in with very important people in Washington and to be able to convince them that what he or she sees on the ground is important and should affect Washington's decision making. That should be the first contribution that is made because he or she is the principal US representative in that country. Therefore they have the responsibility to communicate back to the decision makers at the State Department or the Commerce Department, or the Department of Education, etc., what is happening on site and how that might affect US policy in Washington.

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Secondly, I think the contribution that needs to be made is one of presenting the United States as a desirable place. There are a lot of places around the world where people do not look at the United States as a desirable place. It is the objective of the US representative, at least one of them, to be able to stand up and leave a good impression with people. At the end of the day there will be lots of young people who will be influenced by what they see this person say on television or radio or in speeches in front of groups, that will make that young person think for the rest of their life that the United States is not a bad place. "I saw the representative one time long ago stand up in front of a group and say this or that and it influenced me. Because of that I decided to go to school in America." Or, "because of that I decided to do business with an American corporation." As opposed to the complete opposite where they see the representative and think, "Oh, that is dreadful, I want nothing to do with that country."

But if you think of the things that follow up to a good impression—students that are coming to the United States to be educated; a positive impression that that person will carry with him for the rest of his life based on one encounter. Based on simply seeing the ambassador on television for 15 or 20 seconds speaking in their local language they will have a positive impression, not of the ambassador, the ambassador is inconsequential, he or she is the country. You do not say, "There is ambassador so-and-so," but "that is the United States." That is the contribution that I think is most important.

KURZBAUER: Mr. Ambassador, we want to thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to share your thoughts with us. This is an interview that was recorded in Salt Lake City on February 25, 1994 with Ambassador Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., former US Ambassador to Singapore, and we hope we can interview him again after some other post in the future.

HUNTSMAN: It has been a joy and a delight.

KURZBAUER: Thank you.

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CHUNG: Thank you.

HUNTSMAN: Thank you.

End of interview