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

LAURIN B. ASKEW

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[This interview was not edited by Mr. Askew]

Q: Could you tell me where and when you were born?

ASKEW: I was born in 1922 in Clarksville, Tennessee. My father had been in the First World War briefly; long enough to meet a German girl whom he subsequently married in 1920 and brought over to Clarksville, Tennessee. This was not the ideal mixture, as you can imagine. I therefore, had some ties to Germany as a child I was taken for visits by mother.

Q: Where in Germany was she from?

ASKEW: In the Rhineland, actually on the Mosel River. She was born near Treia and that's where we often visited, as well as elsewhere, where her other brothers were. She lost a brother in that First World War and another one in the Second World War. Although it was a very apolitical family, they had a hard time skipping away from the Nazis as far as I could get it.

Q: When did you make your visits there?

ASKEW: Well, I think the first one was in 1924 and then I get vague. I do know I was there in 1930 because my German grandmother had advanced diabetes and was dying. The family closed around, including my mother to be on hand. I was then in Germany, having come back to the United States briefly, because my parents were in the process of a divorce. While this was going on we heard of my father's death, which was in 1933.

Q: What was your father's profession?

ASKEW: Banking. Small town banking.

Q: Where you in Germany in 1933?

ASKEW: Yes, in 1933 I was there.

Q: Because this would have been an interesting year, Hitler came into power then.

ASKEW: It was. I remember a long drive from the coast where we went across country in my uncle's car. It was during a German festival, sort of like Halloween with bon fires. Hitler made an hour-long oration that we got on the radio, which impressed members of the family a great deal. I could hardly understand anything, except that I remember it as an event, more with foreboding than anything else. The uncle involved was a very prosperous businessman who probably did not see much of a future in a Nazi regime for him. He was in the fruit and vegetable importing business of all things. We came back to the States briefly again, and I remember seeing the Chicago International Exhibition. Then back to Europe for four years. That's when I went to serious school in Europe. Not to a school in Germany because of the political situation but sort of on an opposite line. I went and took tutoring from a Catholic priest who had been a prominent member of the Catholic party, which I believe was called the Centrum in those days, and had taken refuge in Luxembourg. The family had a very close friend on the border with Luxembourg, on the Mosel, where I lived for about a year and a half while going to school across the river.

Q: This is a very impressionable time for you, just by your age, but also by what was happening. How was your family reacting and how were you reacting to the time during what was called the Hitlerzeit?

ASKEW: Well the family was just resisting. For example, the head of household of this country place where I was staying and going to school in Luxembourg, had been forced by a squad of Hitler brown shirts to take down the traditional German flag and put up the swastika. Little things like that, just mainly resistance wherever possible. I had a bunch of cousins over there with whom I had relatively little contact. The younger children my age, to the best of my knowledge, were not in the Hitler youth.

Q: It was hard not to be in the Hitler youth.

ASKEW: That's what I don't understand. They were enthusiastic. In their youth they went on long hikes, and they liked that so they also resisted. But is seems inexplicable at this day why they weren't in it. What may have been the case is that they were very soon in the army. I think at 18 they were both in the army, the two more or less my age. They were a little bit older. After Luxembourg I spent a year and a half in a boarding school in Belgium.

Q: I'd like go back to Luxembourg. What type of education where you getting with the private tutor?

ASKEW: Languages, mainly. He immediately put down the law that we would speak only Latin. I was to write all of my lessons in Latin. Fortunately, the head of the household, that I referred to before that was a long time friend of the family, I called him uncle; anyway, he still knew some Latin so he helped me out a little bit and we got along. My last six months with the priest were in Greek. He cared very little for science, or history, or stuff like that. He wanted me to learn the languages. I was going in to Belgium specifically to learn French and that's why he gave so much importance to Latin as a base for the French.

Q: I assume you were speaking German?

ASKEW: Pretty much German, yes. My mother and I spoke English, but of necessity I spoke German to everybody else.

Q: How old were you this period?

ASKEW: I was in my middle teens. I was there from twelve to sixteen. I left when I was sixteen and came back to the States.

Q: Where you given any difficulties by being an American citizen, or where you sort of overlooked by the authorities?

ASKEW: I wasn't given any great difficulty. I passed the border guards every morning on my bicycle, and they knew exactly where I was going. My last summer in Germany I started out in Brussels, where I was going to the American School by that time, to get back into the system a bit. I started out on the most pleasant summer of my life on a canoe trip from Brussels to Budapest. One of the teachers at the school managed to get a Canadian cedar rib canoe and three of us started out on the Murg, which is a miserable little river, and made our way to the Rhine and caught a ride on a Rhine barge going upriver. We stayed around on the Lake Constance for a while then hit the headwaters of the Danube, I've forgotten the name of the place, and started down river. Well this is where the one incident occurred. This was summertime, vacation also for the Germans. Many of them had been organized in true Norse fashion into rowing teams, paddling teams actually, in copies of Viking boats. So there would be about ten of them in these boats. First we meet them at night. We had both, at some distance apart, stopped and put up our campfire and had supper when one of them showed up and invited us over to the sing fest they were going to have. Well that went all right, I could speak German and one other fellow in the group could speak German so we got along. As a matter of fact, I knew some of the songs from my cousins. But the next day, when we put back to water, it developed into a race. Who challenged whom I don't know. But there were three of us in this canoe and ten of them in the barge that they had. The odds were obviously in favor of us; we had been paddling for weeks and weeks to where it was second nature to us to paddle. We beat the pants of them and their leadership had trouble keeping them in line when we were going to stop for lunch, so we volunteered just to continue on. We didn't see them again but it was an ugly moment

Q: I can imagine. Did you, yourself, have any feel about what was happening in Germany or was this just sort of, well; you're a teenage boy?

ASKEW: I was 12, 13. I can't say that I did. As I look back I must have said, "You stoop, you must have some view." I lived mainly in this rural environment where my uncle knew everybody and pretty much ran things until they brought the Hitler types in and started roughing things up a little bit. He was an old man; he had been wounded in WWI as a guard against mines on the railroad. He didn't see a mine and he got his foot blown off. So he was rather a nationalist. He certainly wasn't for Hitler; as a matter of fact he was a titled man.

Q: What about your mother, how was she reacting to this? Does she want to stay in Germany? I mean you'd come back for your Grandmother's death and stayed on, the divorce had happened, but was she getting you ready to go back to America?

ASKEW: Yes she was. She was desperately disappointed that she couldn't put me into what she knew of as a German gymnasium, which she thought was the best education I could get. There was no question about it.

Q: Why, because you were an American?

ASKEW: Yes, because I was an American, and because I'd get full of Hitler stuff. That was mainly it, and she didn't want that. So yes, she was grooming me to spend my last high school year in hometown Clarksville and then go on to college. Now there was a considerable problem on that score. The Americans that I had met, particularly the last year in Brussels, were mainly from the embassy. I liked that very much.

Q: So this is where you get your first feel for the Foreign Service.

ASKEW: Yes, I decided right then that I wanted to go into the diplomatic service. This was against my mother's wishes and my grandmother's wishes; my American grandmother in Clarksville. They had rigged things politically in Tennessee to where I was going to get an appointment to West Point. They said, "That's where you're going." Well, that sort of dissolved with the death of the fine senator who was going to give me that appointment to West Point. They came up with the possibility of an alternate appointment to Annapolis. I virtually ran away from home to Washington and registered at Georgetown. It worked out all right. Except that rather amusingly, having turned down West Point, and having not gotten into the Navy, along came the war and I went and registered and they said, "Well, what about the Navy?" So I spent three years in the Navy.

Q: When did you start at Georgetown?

ASKEW: '39.

Q: So this is of course, an important year. What did you get, about two years at Georgetown?

ASKEW: Two years at Georgetown. I went to night school at Georgetown, so I didn't get really two years but along came the war in '41. They took me into the Navy but put me back into a program called the V-7 Program. You stayed in college for two more years if you already had two years. That making two and two, and according to them, that's four years and you were graduated.

Q: So you were going to night school because of money? What were you doing?

ASKEW: I had great luck. I was raised a Catholic and it wasn't easy to get a job at that time in Washington. I was a little bit of a pariah with the family. I was pretty much on my own.

Q: They really were set on you going into the military? Was there any military background?

ASKEW: My father. But that was just a short time in the war. After the war, he organized a National Guard cavalry troop in our town. There were lots of military fellows all around, inspectors, that sort of thing. I remember I had two possibilities of getting a job. One I liked very much and I can't remember exactly what it was. The other one I didn't like and it was the public library. I remember going to church and praying hard. Within a few days, the job at the public library opened for me. Well I took it and stayed there for a year or so and finally went to the Library of Congress.

Q: Was the public library the one near Georgetown?

ASKEW: It was at New York and Seventh Avenue, sort of a Greek building in the center of things. It was the homeless shelter in wintertime and it smelled of what they called smoke, which was denatured alcohol and was the favorite drink of the patrons. What was lucky about it was that my first paycheck was a Treasury check. I went to the Library of Congress and it was still a Treasury check. I even went on to the Department of Commerce, which was then the old bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, and this is where I was trying to get my foot into the diplomatic idea, and I was still getting a federal check. So I had civil service for a time. When I finally, after the war, got into the State Department, I was able to use that to buy into the Foreign Service retirement system. Sheer luck.

Q: Tell me a bit about Georgetown. What were you taking? They had Father Walsh's School of Foreign Service. Were you involved with that?

ASKEW: I was in the School of Foreign Service. I attended many of Father Walsh's seminars after he came back from Nuremburg and was tremendously impressed, as everybody else was, with him. I was following a pretty classical curriculum. English, history, political science and a math of some sort, but I'm not sure because that changed as soon as I got in the Navy. They gave me the courses I was to take and they were all math. I never got a bit of history or anything else anymore. After they had considered my four years up, which were admittedly four years of night school, I was told to report to New York for the shipman's school.

Q: What was the spirit of Georgetown while you were there during the war years?

ASKEW: I hesitate to say much about the spirit of Georgetown because it was diverse. At that time, Georgetown in my view was the turf of the New England Irish and the New York Italians. They were in the college instead of one of the special schools. They were all beating on the recruiting offices trying to get into the Army or into the Air Force. That was why I went to begin with. It was very definitely pro-war. Very definite when they got their orders to march. No criticism of me that I remember even though I possibly still had an accent at that time; I don't ever remember any issue on that score. I probably lost it quickly.

Q: When you finished your four years, was there any attempt to give you a full degree?

ASKEW: No. As far the Navy was concerned, I filled out the requirement for four years of schooling so I was then a gentleman, and officer material. As far as Georgetown was concerned, I had filled out four semesters of night school. When I got back afterwards, I went back to school.

Q: I'd like to talk about what you did in the Navy.

ASKEW: Not much. I did my shipman's school at Columbia University in New York, which sent out, in a group of about fifty, newly minted ensigns to Australia. Having spent the passage across the Pacific, 28 days, in the 'tween decks just below the top deck of a converted merchant ship. The most searing heat I ever experienced because we were allowed out only in shifts. We arrived in Breven and I was assigned to what was then known as an attack cargo ship. It was part of the Seventh Fleet service. We transported entire Seabee battalions up and down the coast of New Guinea. We had fire power and we used it on several occasions of island hopping, and usually got out of there as fast as we possibly could.

When VJ Day came, we were in Sidney harbor. We had the radio watch for all the military vessels, including a recently arrived British carrier group, the first British seen in Australia as you can imagine. We got the word first and we blew the whistle and the town just blew into smithereens. Our people spent the night as shore patrol trying to save the Tommys from getting thoroughly thrashed. The Australians really took it out on them. But it wasn't ugly though, it was just that you deserved to get beat in the head and here it comes. We were loading down there, incidentally, for the invasion of Japan.

Q: So I take it, on your part there were no misgivings about should we have dropped the bomb or not?

ASKEW: Holy Christmas, no. It was just the opposite although I've had many arguments, including with Bob Delaney who is Miranda's first husband. I remember sitting after dinner in Lima arguing the case, and I almost lost control of myself, that my life had no doubt been saved by that bomb.

Q: It's a generational thing.

ASKEW: I realize, of course, it was a frightful slaughter of people and it must have been an enormously difficult decision to make, but we had heard what had happened on Okinawa, how hundreds and thousands of people had gone over those cliffs in suicide. No doubt it was a fine day.

Q: You were discharged when, in '45 or was it '46?

ASKEW: It was '46. I went back to work at the Department of Commerce. Having reestablished connection with a man who knew where I wanted to go and was helping me, I managed by '48 to have gotten an appointment in the Staff Corps.

Q: During this time you were working at Commerce and going to night school at Georgetown?

ASKEW: That's right. Things were chaotic because of the GI Bill and there were thousands of us descending on Georgetown waving our hands. Those of us who had been there before had preference and were assigned fast but still they got their records all mixed up. They gave me courses I wasn't prepared to take, econometrics, I remember. But they gave me a certificate of graduation in 1947.

Q: What were you doing at Commerce?

ASKEW: In the bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, it wasn't the Department of Commerce then. Actually they did a lot of back up work for commercial attaches and their offices abroad. Those commercial attaches were run by State, but we worked very closely with State. I got that appointment to Lima as Assistant Commercial Attachï¿½.

Q: How did you come into the Foreign Service?

ASKEW: Through the Department of Commerce and through an appointment, almost temporary, as a staff officer. I had six years in Lima. After I had been there about three years, I stood for exam. I took it, passed it, and passed the orals when the board came visiting through. The board, whenever made official, did a circular that went around that all officers that were in this, that, and the other status were now changed to this other thing. It was Class 5 and by graduation I was going to go into Class 4 as a Foreign Service Officer (FSO). Before I did, everybody that was in my status was a Class 4. It made me mad as hell.

Q: What was the feeling at the Department of Commerce for the State Department and what it was doing? Were they happy, unhappy?

ASKEW: I don't know that I can give a useful answer to that. The senior echelon of the Foreign Domestic Commerce would often visit the commercial attaches who were State Department officers. They would be taken care of by the commercial attaches, taken around and introduced, and wined and dined. It seems to go quite well. I don't remember any conflicts that arose. Of course I was straddling the thing. The guy who had helped me in, Ronald Smith, was very well regarded in Commerce, so that I had sort of a blessing there. I never did get much of a feel for the economics side of State. My second appointment was to Manila.

Q: Let's talk about when you went to Lima. You were in Lima six years, from when to when?

From '48 to '54.

Q: What was your impression of Lima when you arrived there in '48?

ASKEW: Delighted. I remember arriving there at night by plane to a magnificent sight. The port we flew directly over, Callao, and into the airport along the shoreline, had a beautiful arch. I was met very, very warmly by members of the embassy who made me feel at home. They had everything set up for me. A boarding house run by a British lady. The protocol went very, very well. We had as ambassador, the man who was ambassador to the Vatican during most of the war, Harold Titman. A fine man with a delightful wife. I think she was the one who had the money, at least there were often references of relations to the King ranch, for example, a huge ranch in Texas. Very nice people. The whole staff was to my mind, just great. I had no trouble at all fitting in. My immediate superior was one of finest men I've ever met in the service, Charlie Bridget. He had been, before the war, with the Bank of Canada in Cuba. During the depression that would have been, and the bank was taking over plantations, or floating them and taking on bankruptcies and so on. He was very much involved with that. Absolutely colloquial in Spanish. Knew how to deal with people face to face in a way that was almost magical. He was immediately liked and trusted by the Latinos. But he either didn't like to or he really didn't have the gift to write, so we got together on that. He'd tell me, or I'd been with him on a talk with Citibank, and he'd say, "Laurin, you write this up now," and this went on for years much to my good. Above us we had the economic counselor, who vetted anything that went too far astray.

Q: What was the political situation in Lima at this time?

ASKEW: This is classified as being naï¿½ve. I arrived at the beginning of a six-year stint, which was also the time when a successful military coup was mounted against what was a pretty weak and flabby civilian government. The coup was being lead from Arequipa, which is in southern Peru and is the traditional origin of the military coups. They took over the government with minimum bloodshed. This guy Odria, the head of the thing, who was nothing but a country bumpkin and didn't make any odds, ends of it. A military man all right. He arranged, and I don't know how this was arranged, whether through the embassy, although I think it was arranged through a bank or something like that, for a doctor Klein in New York, a well known financier, who was with the firm of Klein and Sachs, to send a group of advisors down to Lima attached to the Peruvian government. Nothing to do with us officially or otherwise. But of course friendly, and therefore receiving a lot of support from us. They spread out with his blessing into all the ministries and they began running the country. This was in '48. Korea was heating up badly then, we were at war in Korea.

Q: Well we started war in Korea in 1950.

ASKEW: Was that when it started? June 1950, all right. Well, by that time, this group of people and this one dictator had Peru ready to take full advantage of, particularly, raw material prices that went soaring for Korea and prospered enormously. But my opinions of Lima were of an absolutely wonderful climate, wonderful living conditions, with servants that we had not really experience before, either my wife or I.

Q: When had you gotten married?

ASKEW: We had gotten married as soon as she got to the States in '46.

Q: Where was she from?

ASKEW: Australia.

Q: So this is your war bride.

ASKEW: Yes, this was my war bride. Peculiarly enough, it was my grandmother who just embraced her even after having a pretty rough time with my father's war bride.

Q: So, continuing with your responsibilities?

ASKEW: Aside from that sort of political aspect, just generally trying to help representative of American firms get a feel for the country and what it was all about. I spent a lot of time with that and it was most enjoyable

Q: How about things like what later became ITT (International Telephone and Telegraph)? Communications people later this became a major problem with the Peruvians, but what about at this time, were they welcome then?

ASKEW: I don't remember. That doesn't come back to my memory. Petroleum, yes. Mining, yes. But not telecommunications.

Q: Were you going down into the equivalent of the market place and doing trade complaints and getting to know merchants?

ASKEW: Yes, particularly importers. It was very hard to persuade them that they had a complaint. We really didn't think that that was our job to do except that it gave Americans a bad name. There was a lot of that and we had a staff of about four or six Peruvians who did a lot of the footwork on that score.

Q: Was there any reflection of during the time you were there of the influence of Rockefeller and his bank and also his influence on government? Did that exert itself there or was that more to the North?

ASKEW: It wasn't obvious there. I don't know why, because I was aware of it. I had become aware of it while I was in the Commerce Department. It certainly hadn't taken hold in Peru. I suspect that may have been the fault of previous Peruvian governments that just didn't know how to cope with it.

Q: Were there student problems? In this time you had the trapping of Secretary of State Marshall and others in Bogotï¿½; big student riots and anti-Americanism. Did you run across any of that?

ASKEW: No. That may be due to my friend the dictator. He didn't go for that at all.

Q: Was there any uncomfortable feeling about having a dictator there or was this just considered the Peruvians business?

ASKEW: That's about it because you couldn't fault it. If there were going to be military dictators, this guy should be held up as a paragon. And yet, I don't recall much more in our connection. This may have been deliberate on the part of State and the ambassador to give Klein and his group absolute clean hands. One rather impressive thing that happened while we were there is Cardinal Spellman came down to make a visit.

Q: He was archbishop of New York?

ASKEW: Right. Odria put on the biggest feat for him of his whole time. I thought Spellman did a good job under the circumstances. The Odrian regime had its usual bad linen, although there wasn't a hell of a lot of it, there was always killing going on in Peru because of this frightful difference and lack of understanding between these people who were truly uncivilized, the Andean Indians, who would come down and participate in what for many years was a satisfactory arrangement. They'd come down and work in the plantations, cotton and sugar mainly, and make enough money in a few weeks before they got sick because of being too low. They were watched and taken care of, the plantation owners saw to that. Made enough money to go back and spend the rest of the year. It was what they called the Peruvian lung at that time.

Another visit was by the then-president's brother, Milton Eisenhower. Who made a trip and came and stayed in Peru and I like to think I had some little bit to do with persuading his party to spend two days in Cusco on their own, with only the mayor of Cusco coming and very quietly presenting his welcome, hoping they would be comfortable, that they could do anything they like to, and turned around and left.

Q: Cusco being where and what?

ASKEW: Cusco being the traditional center of the Inca empire. It's a city in the southern part of Peru in the high Andes. Everyone gets altitude sickness when they go there and get their britches scared off when the plane lands. It was in those days an airstrip that goes downhill and ends in a cliff. It's really something. It is also near the famous ruins of Machu Picchu, so some of them went there and some of them just stayed in the hotel and got over their sickness but it worked out well. The Peruvians received them with great dignity and respect.

Q: The Milton Eisenhower report was a major step for American relations when he came back and talked to his brother the President. It led him to accord more attention to Latin America. Just talk a little bit about getting into the Foreign Service. You took the written exam and then the oral exam?

ASKEW: Yes, a group came through, or had been appointment by senior officers in the area, I'd forgotten exactly how.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

ASKEW: No I don't. Except that I have to admit that the written exam, I recall that a little bit better, was very well done, so much of it being on just plain common sense rather then memory. I found if very fair and very well. I remember I had something to do with holding the exam in Manila some years later and there it had already been changed somewhat into two days or something.

Q: I think they changed it from three and half days to a day.

ASKEW: That was a disappointment because I wanted to go in the front door and had been snuck, sort of half way, into the back door but it didn't work.

Q: Did your work change at all when you were moved into the regular Foreign Service?

ASKEW: No. I definitely stayed on in the commercial office.

Q: Was there much intercourse between the political section and the economic and commercial sections in Lima at the embassy?

ASKEW: There was some. I suspect that we in the economic section thought they were a little bit snooty and that they didn't pay enough attention to basic economics that were really running the country. We certainly fraternized with them; our families knew each other and everything. As a matter of fact, they were rather good people as I recall. As usual, the consulate was under fire always. Too many people and too few to do the workload. Selfishly, I hoped I would never get into that and I never did. Not that I actively avoided it but I thought it was really very bad policy. It was the congress that delivered it. Directly from congress, so and so much for consular work. It was just awful. Later on in the big consulates, for example in Madrid, at a time when they had to take measures against terrorists attacks, it was like a penitentiary.

Q: You then went to Manila. When did you go to Manila?

ASKEW: '54.

Q: You were in Manila from when to when?

ASKEW: '54 to '56. Two years to the date.

Q: What were you doing in Manila?

ASKEW: I was assigned to the economic officer there. The chief of the economic section, who I suspect didn't know what the hell to do with me, he said, "We haven't gotten a good round up of the mineral situation in Manila so get to work on that." He told me about a fellow in USIA (United States Information Agency) who was a mineralogist and who was very knowledgeable on the mines in the Philippines so I made friends with him and every time he went out to visit a mine he'd drag me along with him. I don't think I learned much in the way of mining but I did start writing. I started making means to connect annual reports from the various mining companies. I struck up a peculiar correspondence with the only man in Washington who gave a damn whether I was there or not or what the hell I did while I was there. His name was Wong in the Department of Interior. One of his little jobs was to make a report on the status of the Philippine mining industry every year. Somebody told me he was there and that he was the one that was getting my reports. I wrote him a letter and said this is my first experience with it but that it was less boring getting a good job done than not and if there was anyway he'd care to head me, I'd be delighted to follow his suggestions. I got a very nice letter back from him. He pointed out that there were these places that he wished I'd fill in and that if I could do it by such-and such time he could get it into this years report. So we got off on a good foot. I later met him in Washington. Sure enough, he was a little Chinamen, in a tiny little cubbyhole in the Department of Interior and he was the one that was compiling this report every year.

Manila was very disappointing and embarrassing to me. I had been in the Philippines during the war; in Manila Bay I'd gone ashore. When I came back almost ten years later, just about every unpleasant aspect of American presence was smeared all over the place; Coca Cola, cigarettes. An attitude by the Filipinos that they were taken care of now and that they didn't need to do anything, whereas before they had been notably anxious for education and had gone to great lengths to give their children a decent education. I just couldn't wait to get away from there.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

ASKEW: Admiral Spruance.

Q: He was a great hero of Midway.

ASKEW: Yes, he was a fine man. As far as I could see from a very low spot, his heart wasn't in it. He accepted the honor of the president. He wasn't happy with the way things were going in Philippines, although, at that time we had Magsaysay, does that ring a bell to you?

Q: Oh yes, very much so, he was the one bright spot in the whole Philippine political spectrum in the last 15 years.

ASKEW: That's right. We undoubtedly were helping him by any means possible. Unfortunately, my family and I went back to the United States by boat via Japan and it was in Yokohama we heard of his death. Airplane crash. It really hit me hard personally. I had met him a few times and even chatted with him. He was a remarkable man. It was really the doom of the Philippines for anything coming within the near future. One thing that the Manila assignment permitted us to do was for my wife to take our three children by that time, two of them born in Lima, to meet their grandparents. Then we went back to Washington.

Q: One more questions about the Philippines and then we'll end this session. What about corruption? You were dealing with industry, what was your impression of Philippine society at both at the top and also at business.

ASKEW: I don't remember clearly. My best guess is that it was so thoroughly known throughout society that it was accepted and that you didn't talk about it.

Q: So you weren't sitting there saying, "If only they'd get rid of the corruption they'd have a better system?"

ASKEW: No. We didn't. There were problems with the Philippines, with the bases there; Clark base, Subic Bay and so on, that took up an awful lot of our relations with the Filipinos. I mean it was the big subject all the time. It was always there. This other sort of faded a little bit. It was know to be present. I think it was believed that the United States should not be involved in trying to do anything about it. That it would do the Filipinos more harm, it would galvanize opposition to us. We didn't want to disturb this base situation. We were not prepared to leave at that time. I had my first ulcer attack there.

Q: What about society? Did you find that high society engulfed the embassy so that they were sort of co-opted?

ASKEW: Yes. I was mortified by the excesses of high society at a time when poor people were still scrambling like mad. We were invited to these affairs. My wife became close to one of the main hostesses of Manila, who was a charming woman. It was rumored that she was the girlfriend of the American admiral at Subic Bay. She was a very admirable looking woman. They threw a party, gave it a theme and everybody had to dress accordingly. Then came the food on the table, tremendous platters of iced oysters flew in from Tokyo with the shells on another platter and in each shell a pearl. My wife didn't take it too seriously, she was young and enjoyed the party, they were splendid, but I could barely take it. It was so disgusting to me. It was a shame. We met her as late as about 15 years ago in the Jockey Club in Manila still charming and very fond of my wife. There were several groups like that that rode this thing out in high style.

Q: What about American business interest there?

ASKEW: They were all over. They had become very well reestablished by the time I got there in '52. The American business representatives, who were having a high 'ole time in the nightclubs and eateries and so on, didn't misbehave. Several of my fraternity brothers from Georgetown showed up there. The mining I never really got very close to. The business in general took care of itself. It knew how to do it and didn't need any help.

Q: I was thinking that it's getting late and we might stop at this point. Next time I'll get to Arizona. We'll pick this up, you'd gone back to Washington in 1954 and what were you doing?

ASKEW: I was in Intelligence and Research as it was called at that time. INR for a maybe a couple of years.

Q: What area were you working on?

ASKEW: In Southeast Asia. As a matter of fact, before I went back, I made a tour through Southeast Asia down into Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore preparing for the job.

Q: Well we'll talk about the tour and your impressions, because that will be very interesting, at that point. We'll pick it up then.

End of interview