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

Foreign Affairs Series

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. McLean]

Q: Today is the 11th of January 1999. This is an interview with J. Phillip McLean. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Phil, begin at the beginning. Can you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

McLEAN: Sure, I'm from Seattle, Washington. I was born in 1938. My family was from West Seattle, which is a part of Seattle. I went to Seattle University, a Jesuit school in Seattle. I had gone to a Jesuit high school and a Jesuit university. I had attended for a little bit of time in both high school and college a Catholic seminary, St. Edward's Seminary. I guess my biggest work experience prior to coming into the Foreign Service was I had worked in a law firm, Broker, Broker and Gates, as a clerk.

Q: Now we go back. Tell me something about your mother and father and your family.

McLEAN: Well, my mother and father were working class people. My father was a butcher and worked in Seattle, had his own shops for some time and worked in Pike Street Market in the middle of town. My mother, I guess in the fifties sometime she began to work at Boeing as a clerk. She was, of course, one of the women who went to work during World War II. We lived in an area close to the city so both did work and could work.

Q: What about brothers, sisters?

McLEAN: I have an older sister, five years older than myself, Beverly. She's married, married well. She lives, she and her husband, at Crossford in the Commonwealth of Auburn and own GM (General Motors) dealerships. I have younger brothers and sisters: a brother ten years younger, Dan, who's a member of the new generation of, shall we say, the 60's generation; and my younger sister has something of the same type of lifestyle. She lives in Bremerton.

Q: From where you went to school, I have to make the assumption that your family is Catholic.

McLEAN: Yes, my father was Catholic, and my mother was Catholic late in life. She finally gave in to the dominant culture. But they weren't strong Catholics. I came from a very strong Protestant area of Seattle. I lived literally in the shadow of a combination Congregationalist Church/YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), and perhaps that made me the difficult person I can be, by choosing that I was going to be the Catholic among the Protestants.

Q: Tell me about school. You went to elementary school: again, it was a Catholic school?

McLEAN: Mostly Catholic. I went to both public and Catholic schools in the area, Holy Family and the Rosary Schools. I lived in this community that was very strongly church centered. I was then going, at least part of the time, to the local public school as well.

Q: Particularly in elementary and middle school, any subjects that particularly got you?

McLEAN: Well, it's hard to know why. Sometimes I think: How did this happen? But I was interested in history and politics since, I think, I was eight years old. Religion was the other thing. I can always remember my good Protestant grandmother telling me, "Phillip, you should not talk about religion and politics," and I could not have been more than ten years old and thinking to myself what else is there to talk about, which seems a little strange now when I look at my own grandchildren.

Q: Well, what was the dominant political thought?

McLEAN: My father was a very strong labor union Democrat who believed that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had saved the world. My grandfather, his father, was the Democratic precinct man of the area where they grew up. We didn't grow up in an area of political bosses, and it did give him a certain social position. He was a carpenter, but his role as the Democratic leader of the precinct gave him a certain social prestige.

Q: I'm just curious, because I'm exactly ten years older than you are. I found that the Catholics went with Catholics and Protestants went with Protestants. Was that going at your time or not?

McLEAN: I'd say to some degree, but, you know, Seattle-I don't know if you know the West Coast well or if you're from that area-but by the time that the United States gets to the West Coast, the mixture of cultures is such that you don't really have a strong feeling of difference that I sometimes find in cities like Boston or New York. No, it isn't that type of a division. On the other hand, certainly, sure, we were very much encouraged in the 50's that we were supposed to marry Catholic girls, and I did. But I dated other girls, and with my mother being of Protestant background, it wasn't totally banned by any means, and in fact I would say half of my friends married outside the church.

Q: Did you run across the proverbial nuns who rapped your knuckles and did that sort of thing?

McLEAN: Actually of the two Catholic schools I went to, one was the traditional type, and the others were a modernizing, new group, and it's interesting to note that the second group is the one that has survived. The modernizers have survived and are doing very well, whereas the other one has disappeared because they didn't get recruits.

Q: Well, how did you find, though, coming up in a sort of dual system? Did it give you, would you say, a good, strong education?

McLEAN: Oh, yes, I don't think there's any doubt. What the Catholic schools lacked was resources at that time, but what they had was discipline, so we got more of a dedicated sense, a sense of a direction, from the Catholic schools. On the other hand, it was very key, particularly when I talk about the history interest, that was certainly developed when I was in the public schools. I was a star pupil in the fourth, fifth and sixth grades.

Q: Do you recall-this is a bit of social history, but just to get a feel for the people that eventually will read this-any authors or books that particularly grabbed you early on, history or novels or anything else?

McLEAN: That's a good question. You're asking many of the same questions that were asked on my Foreign Service exam.

Q: I used to do this a long time ago.

McLEAN: I remember that in the Foreign Service examination, because I had this heavy Catholic background, they used as their particular method of tripping you up, which seemed to be one of the things you did in the Foreign Service examination at that time, to focus on my Catholicism and say how could I be a Catholic and be a good, loyal American. I had worked the year before then on the Kennedy campaign as a spokesman, and, in fact, I had treated that issue, so I was prepared for it. But they got the thing off by asking the question you just asked, "What books have you read? I just kept saying, "I haven't read this book and that book." They said was it because I was Catholic.

Q: I wasn't really after that. I'm looking for almost earlier on some books that may have been influential in sort of sparking interest in history or that you found?

McLEAN: I can't remember actually books outside of the classroom. I can remember things like: Walter Cronkite had a program, a radio program, in those days called "You Are There" which was a story, you know, which recounted history and things of this nature, but I was not a great reader. I'm rather dyslexic. I do read, but I was not one that read deeply.

Q: At high school was there politics? Did you get involved in politics at the time?

McLEAN: Not in high school. I knew I was a Democrat, because when I was ten years old or nine years old, I had gone out with my grandfather and delivered political materials, but in high school I don't think that I had a political sense at all. It was in the middle of the Eisenhower years. In college, university, a Jesuit priest came to me and asked me why I was taking political science. If I take political science, then I should do some things that were involved with it, and he steered me towards the Young Democrats. I became an activist and a leader in the Young Democrats.

Q: This was Seattle University?

McLEAN: Seattle University.

Q: It was a Jesuit...

McLEAN: It's Jesuit.

Q: Jesuit university. How'd you find the Jesuit training?

McLEAN: Well Jesuit training is strongest in the high school level. That's when they really get you and give you a point of view, and I would say it was a very strong, for the day, very strong. University was somewhat less, because among other things you didn't have the Jesuits teaching you so much. It was very much a university of that time: students, townies, people who were working, as I was, through college. It was a more expensive university than the University of Washington, so people generally had to do that.

Q: You were at the university from when to when about?

McLEAN: Well, I started university after high school, which would be in the fall of 1956, but I did that in the seminary. I went to the seminary at that particular time for a semester, and then I dropped out of the university. I returned for a couple of quarters there. They have a quarter system there. In 1957 I dropped out of school again and finally returned in 1958 and finished up in 1961, just a year behind where I would have if I had gone four years.

Q: The seminary, was this directed towards being a priest?

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: Had you felt a calling?

McLEAN: I guess I did. I came out of grade school. The nuns pushed me in that direction. I dropped out after the first year of that and finished at Jesuit high school, and then as I ended high school I didn't have any direction where I was going. I felt a lot of idealism, so seminary seemed the place to go. I can remember reading one book that said that you can find your vocation anywhere, and I said I'd better find myself a vocation somewhere else. That sense of idealism was built into my thinking at that time and through others.

Q: How about the world abroad, which was going to be where you were going to end up, and diplomacy? Did the international world intrude much in your reading, your thoughts, or people around you?

McLEAN: No, not really. That's what's extraordinary. But I did this. My international travel before I entered the Foreign Service was to go see cousins in Vancouver, British Columbia, across the border. I had never been in an airplane before. My own sense is that I was really a product of what could be called affirmative action. They were seeking out people with less international backgrounds at that time.

Q: You were at the university in 1960 and all. Could you talk a bit about the Kennedy campaign, because the Kennedy campaign was sort of an almost seminal thing for many people who came in the Foreign Service, a sense of working for the government is a good thing, we had a mission and all that. Is that true?

McLEAN: Oh, yes, very much so. The Jesuits identified me to be helpful. I was already married. I was working. They made it easy for me to reach beyond that and become active. I can recall in the fall of 1959 going to the first meeting of the Young Democrats and there were only seven people or so, because politics was not a very interesting thing in the 1950s. I can really draw that line, at least at that campus. Another guy was elected president, and then we adjourned again and I was elected executive director, and for the next two years I was very, very active in that particular activity. By the time I left we had 250 members and our own newspaper, because political life had just burgeoned, had just become what everyone was doing. In the Kennedy case, though, specifically, in January of 1960, I went to the Young Democrats convention. I was appointed to be the sergeant of arms at the convention, and at that particular point a man by the name of John Salter, who was the administrative assistant to Henry "Scoop" Jackson, came up to me and he said he knew I was from a Catholic school and therefore I must be for Kennedy and therefore would I work for him. They were going to stage a political convention inside the Young Democrats convention, and he wanted me to lead that. Frankly I was a little insulted, because I didn't think that just because I was from a Catholic university I would necessarily be for Kennedy. In fact, I didn't know much about John Kennedy. I read Profiles of Courage, and I did respect that, but to tell you the truth, I thought that I leaned a little farther to the left at that time, Humphrey or Stevenson, but on the other hand I was very complimented by this man, so I led it, and we won, we won the thing. So I established myself then as one of the young people involved in the Kennedy campaign, and I became a speaker. I was involved with people like Senator Brock Adams, and many political leaders in the state, that continued on through the campaign. I did everything precinct by precinct, voter registration. I worked on various levels of the campaign, Congressional, gubernatorial, but mostly on the Kennedy campaign itself. I spoke at the University of Washington at a very controversial meeting that took place.

Q: How was it controversial?

McLEAN: It was controversial because it was sponsored by what was considered to be a left wing club, the Anvil Club, and they asked for representatives of all the Democratic candidates. I was called up by the Kennedy headquarters and asked to go out and be their representative at this thing. Well, it turned out that I was all but the most right wing candidate there was, because they went off to various left wing parties, the Cross Kent parties. But it was controversial at that time. We were still suffering a little bit of the end of McCarthyism. It was one of my first newspaper interviews with the Daily Washingtonian as to identify myself with the campaign. But on September 6, 1960, Kennedy came to town. I was one of the drivers in the campaign. I remember driving Ted Sorenson into town and later that evening I was the driver of the pool car with Kennedy's press secretary.

Q: Pierre Salinger.

McLEAN: Pierre Salinger, proclaiming me the best caravan driver on the West Coast. I don't think I've ever had a higher accolade. That night they invited me to go on down the West Coast, but I had a premonition that maybe I shouldn't do that, and that night my wife was in labor, so my daughter was born instead. That's why I always remember the date.

Q: There is a sense of priority that separated you. If you had been a true Kennedy, you would have gone.

McLEAN: So my activities in the campaign softened at that point, and that was also in order to study for the Foreign Service examination.

Q: You got married really quite early.

McLEAN: I was very much a product of the 1950s when young love, that type of thing. I came out of the seminary at one point, and six months later I was dating this girl, and a year later we got married, so I was not quite 20 years old when we were married. She was a lovely lady. Her family was probably the first Hispanics in the neighborhood. Now the Catholic Church has a weekly mass in Spanish, but at that time she was one of the first. Her father was an engineer at Boeing. As I say, it took two years before we had a child, but we had the child.

Q: Marrying a Hispanic, did this bring you into anything about the Spanish or Spanish culture?

McLEAN: Well, it did tangentially, and as I discovered only later, it actually caused some strain in our marriage when I entered the Foreign Service, because the Foreign Service identified me as someone who certainly should go to Latin America because my wife's name was Espinosa, but in fact she was of a family that was actually trying to flee their background. They had come from the Hispanics in New Mexico and Colorado, and her family was trying to move away from that. The Foreign Service in its wisdom sent me back to the era of Diaz, which they were trying to getting away from.

Q: When did you take the Foreign Service exam?

McLEAN: I took the Foreign Service examination in December of 1960.

Q: Before I get to that, what about jobs that you have held. You mentioned various types of jobs. What kind of work were you doing then to get you through the university?

McLEAN: Well, I think I did a rather wide number of things. When I left the seminary, I went to work at Boeing as an apprentice mechanic for three months. Sometimes I like to show off by saying I'm a former deputy assistant secretary and Boeing mechanic. And I sold shoes, and eventually I went to work at Boeing again but in the engineering department in delivery services, being sort of a gopher for the missile division, running around town doing various odd jobs. And then before I was married, a professor at the university, Lacuna, recommended me for a job at a distinguished law firm in Seattle called Boga, Boga & Gates, and that's where I worked for the last two years I was in college.

Q: What were you doing there?

McLEAN: Again it was sort of a gopher job. It was called a clerk. There were two of us, and we'd one week be the outside person and the other week the inside person. The outside person would serve documents at different law firms around town, file documents at the courthouse, and eventually I would start doing some research on unimportant cases or going to the central library, the public library, and getting out articles and things for the partners. The inside person would take care of the library and perhaps do some work inside as well.

Q: Did law attract you at all?

McLEAN: It did very much attract me, but since I was married already and since the prospect of going to school for three more years didn't attract me very much since we already had a child, that was a question in fact, and the Foreign Service helped resolve that.

Q: How did the Foreign Service come over the horizon?

McLEAN: I've told this story so often it almost sounds like a joke, but in fact it is true. I was taking political science and history because I liked political science and history, but being married, people kept asking me, "Why aren't you doing something much more practical, like taking business or doing something of this nature?" I would mention law, and they would moan, the family would moan, about three more years and kidding how am I going to do this. I would talk about teaching, and my wife didn't really like the idea of a teaching job and didn't think it would pay very much over time. And then I wanted to talk about the Foreign Service, and that would shut people up, because they didn't know what the Foreign Service was. Before it would shut them up, they would start asking what is the Foreign Service, and that would end the conversation. I was trying to explain why I was taking these crazy courses I was taking. Eventually I did take the examination and, God knows, I passed it.

Q: Was there any teacher who was sort of saying, "Why don't you try...," because usually there has to be something. Foreign Service just doesn't....

McLEAN: No, I had two Jesuits who focused on me, God knows why, as friends. One was a teacher of theology and inspired me with a lot of enthusiasm, but the other had just arrived at campus from Georgetown. He just got his doctorate at Georgetown University, Frank Costello, and he was the one that pointed me saying that I should do things that were related to my major if I wanted to do that. Among the possibilities in the future, we talked about the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, of course, coming out of Georgetown, where Father Healey had had his School of Foreign Service and all, I mean this was something that obviously had...

McLEAN: Georgetown School of Foreign Service was too much of a professional school, and he believed very much in the Jesuit idea of a liberal education.

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam in....

McLEAN: December of 1960.Q: Do you remember the oral exam? Can you remember any of the questions that were asked?

McLEAN: Yes, the oral examination took place in June of 1961. You took the written examination. You got the results in January/February. You'd get a memo, a couple of memos, asking why do I want to be in the Foreign Service, and for a biography, and then finally you were called to an oral exam. I think at that time they were just beginning to give these exams out in the country. So they called me to the exam in June. The type of examination questions were general factual questions in trying to see how your mind developed. I can remember them asking things like, "Can you tell us how the United States took on its present geographic dimensions?" I would have to take off on that. I remember them asking me to name the independent parts of Africa, or maybe it was the other way around, asking the parts of Africa that weren't yet independent.

Q: And that, of course, was a turning point.

McLEAN: That's right. I remember particularly one of the members of the board picked up on the fact I had met the head of the Democratic Party of Uganda. I'm sorry that the religion question keeps coming up, but it was relevant because he'd come to my university because some Ugandan nuns were there. Apparently the Democratic Party was aligned with the Catholic Church. I can remember asking the man what was the future of Christianity in Africa. He answered that it was very good because Christianity focused more on education than the Muslims who were in fact spreading through Africa. He felt that their methods of education would follow Christianity's more European style of education. And I repeated that conversation, and I think that was probably the key to getting through the examination, because I think I was in effect asked to do the type of classic things that you do in the Foreign Service: listen and ask questions and then be able to report it back, and to do so with some objectivity. I remember expressing some skepticism and recognizing that this man had a personal interest in telling me these things, and I tried to make that clear. And then the final part of the examination, as you recall, was asking about different books I had not read, like Forever Amber and was this because I was a Catholic. As I say, that came up pretty easily at that particular time, because I had worked on the Kennedy campaign as one of their spokesmen. I was sent out to Protestant groups to tell them why Catholics could be President.

Q: While you were doing this, had you and your wife begun to look at what it meant to be a Foreign Service officer? Were you able to tap into anything out there?

McLEAN: Boy, I'll tell you, this was a jump into the darkness. No, I had never met anyone who had been in the Foreign Service. Most of the people I knew who had ever traveled abroad had traveled more in the military than any other form. So, no, coming into the Foreign Service was very new. My wife, had encouraged me, but once it came up she became very nervous. She certainly began to have the feeling that this was something she wouldn't want. She did not have a college education, and she was not academically oriented.

Q: I think often the diplomatic world seems pretty terrifying. It's always been billed as being a very social and intellectual elite, which it really isn't, but there are pretensions there.

McLEAN: She in fact was quite good at many of the things required by the Foreign Service, and I was confident on my part that she would do very well, and in fact in many ways she did very well. She was a great organizer. She was a great club woman. She was at least what was being asked of spouses in the Foreign Service at that time. In fact, she was very good at it. She had good skills in lots and lots of ways and she was a very social person, so I was confident she was going to be a success, and she was a success in many respects.

Q: When did you come in?

McLEAN: I came in in January of 1962. It was about a year and three weeks after I had taken the original examination.

Q: You took the basic officer's course, the A100 course. Can you sort of characterize what the people were like and all?

McLEAN: Well, the Foreign Service course was probably the biggest culture shock I ever felt in my entire life. I was coming to the East Coast for the first time. I met people with different accents and different backgrounds, not that it was unexpected, but the reality of it was quite new. It also gave you a big charge. Here I was going on and doing something quite new. We had a wonderful group of the people, but they did come from all sorts of backgrounds. I remember Frank Wisner, one of my classmates, spoke with a wonderful British accent. How can we talk about secrets from this guy? I didn't know who Frank Wisner was. I remember talking about accents with a guy that I made friends with, and he pointed out to me that I had an accent too, that I said "ruf" instead of "roof" and things of that nature.

Q: Do you feel there was any continued carry-over of the spirit...? I hate to over-emphasize Kennedy, but he did represent a time and was articulating something, I think.

McLEAN: Great question. No question about it. I think all of us felt that we were coming onto the New Frontier, even though we'd come through this exam rather than political appointees, but there was a sense of dedication. I can remember at one point that I was flying out here from the West Coast and among the passengers with me was a young man who I had known as being a Democrat. He was going out to be in the first, the very first Peace Corps group, and I was going out to the Foreign Service, and I thought these were two things that are very similar. They both were special. I thought he was doing something which was practical, and I was going to change the world from the bottom up, just like we had in the political arena. We worked for Kennedy from the precinct to the district to the state. I thought I was doing the same sort of work, practical, getting out and doing things, and in fact the sort of idealism that in my case had come from my Catholic experience that you light a candle, instead of cursing the darkness-remember that? To me all this was a part of the whole....

Q: Did you get any feel from the Foreign Service culture and all that while you were...?

McLEAN: I think the basic course was a very good course, and I think we were given a good chance to get around to each and every agency and activities that would give us the sense of what we were up to. In my eyes it was a good contrast from the education I had had. It was trying to get you to be sensitive to other cultures and to adapt to them.

Q: Before you went, did you have any idea where you wanted to go, and how did it work out about your assignment?

McLEAN: I had had a little bit of French in college, and I thought, well, that's what I should follow up. I was trying to avoid going to Africa because of my small child, and my wife was already very set, so I was hoping to go to the Middle East, somewhere like Lebanon or Northern Africa, somewhere of this nature. There was a personnel officer who noticed my wife's name was Espinosa and decided that I should go off to Latin America, so I was first told I was going to go to Guatemala, which made some sense with Spanish, but they had me sent off to Brasilia. Frankly I don't think that probably anything of this had to do with anything else. It was where they needed me at the time, and I had no strong background that argued one place over another.

Q: Did you take Portuguese?

McLEAN: I took Portuguese; it was three to four months of Portuguese. I certainly didn't arrive speaking Portuguese.

Q: Where did you go when you came out? Did you go right to Brasilia?

McLEAN: I went right to Brasilia.

Q: You were there from when?

McLEAN: September of 1962 to September of 1964.

Q: What were you getting sort of in corridor talk and all about going to Brazil?

McLEAN: Not an awful lot. Not many people knew about Brazil to any great degree, certainly not about Brasilia, because Brasilia had just been opened. They had a program, and they still do, at the Foreign Service lounge where you could look up people who had recently come back from that place and interview them so you could get a sense of what it was like. In fact, my wife, who, as I said, say, was sort of timid about this whole process, went down and the ladies there helped. Their first reaction was, "Nobody's ever come back from there." She was very upset by that, as if we'd never come back from there. Actually I saw pictures of Brasilia. It was horrible. It was during the rainy season and there was red mud everywhere. At that point, just before I got into the program, they had moved the Portuguese language school to Rio. They didn't have the money in the budget to send us to Rio. I think it was actually that they didn't have money in the budget to have us stay in Rio collecting per diem. So they kept us in Washington, and they tried to invent a short Portuguese language program, and it wasn't terribly successful. In fact, it was the least good language program we had. For three or four months we just sat there trying to talk Portuguese with these teachers who were not prepared.

Q: Did you go straight to Brasilia, or did you get indoctrinated or briefed in Rio before you went there?

McLEAN: No, I didn't get to Rio for some time. Here I was. I had two months of the basic course and in a jumbled way got a month's worth of consular law, then got Portuguese, then an area course, a very short area course, a course that was led by Warren Robbins, sort of a general anthropology course. In December we went up to Seattle for a week, then to Brazil. I didn't get to Rio for three or four months.

Q: What was Brasilia like when you arrived? What were your impressions?

McLEAN: Well, it was really weird. It was a strange place. I can remember as we flew in at night, we flew over this city with all these lights, but then as you got close and looked down, they had streetlights on but there was nothing on the blocks, under the streetlights. There was nothing filling up the blocks between the streets. The streets were laid out. And Brasilia has a very strange arrangement. The embassy was one of the few modern, elegant buildings that they put in place as the era of construction came. There was a movie called "That Man from Rio" which was done in Brasilia at that time. If you see that movie, it's full of dust. They had built some buildings, but most of the construction had ultimately come to a stop as the economic chaos in the country just wrecked the country fiscally. It was not a great place to begin to know Brazil, and maybe not even a great place to begin a Foreign Service career, because it was such an isolated and unusually different place. But eventually it came around. One thing we had was a very talented group of officers there.

Q: Could you talk about it: I mean, in the first place what you were doing and then, because this was an interesting time, could you talk about the officers and how it was sort of a divided mission at that point?

McLEAN: That's correct, it was. The embassy was in Rio, of course, with the ambassador, and the theory was that the Political Section was in Brasilia, but soon after I got there, the man who had headed the Political Section, Phil Rain, departed, and they tried to bring in a Soviet specialist to come and be the head of the Political Section. Well, that was a strange idea, and they tended to do that at that time, bring in Soviet specialists, because they were quite sure Brazil was going communist, and so we had a series of Eastern European specialists. I called John Keppel from Brasilia. He knew Portuguese and didn't know the ambassador.

Q: The ambassador being...?

McLEAN: Gordon.

Q: Lincoln Gordon, yes.

McLEAN: Very soon it became evident that John Keppel was going to stay in Rio, close to the ambassador, close to the country team, not take himself out to Brasilia, so the place was left without leadership four or five months, which was not good for any officer. Eventually we got Bob Dean, very experienced in Brazil and a great linguist, who came and took over and gave the place some direction and spirit. He was one of the brightest Foreign Service officers I've known. We had a small USAID (United States Agency for International Development) office. A public safety AID program was going on there, which was a little strange. We can talk about that too, but that was a strange operation. But the basic thing, Brazil was falling apart. On the night that I arrived in Brazil-my wife arrived in the middle of the night-the Congress had agreed on the change of the Constitution, but the way they did it was unconstitutional. I remember it was throwing me off a little bit, because in very realistic American terms they had agreed to change the Constitution through a referendum with a simple majority of the Congress. They agreed on doing a referendum that would change the Constitution and would be a way of moving the country from a parliamentary system to a presidential system which was supposed to resolve some crisis that was going on. But it didn't stop the crisis, because the government was quite weak in terms of its control but was looking for more power. So it became a crisis in institutions. We were in a clearer position to know the country, because we knew journalists who understood what was going on in the country, and what the other institutions were doing. By being in Brasilia we got to know people perhaps more intimately than our embassy did. I can now remember that I as a very junior officer could invite senators and subministers to my apartment, and they would accept, because at that time at various points there were one or two restaurants in the whole city, so just to go out to do something helped break the boredom. So in some ways it was a good place.

Q: You were what, the consular officer or sort of a mixture?

McLEAN: At that time you were supposed to rotate through sections. When I first got there, they put me in the political section and I worked with them about three or four months. I was in the political section, but I was also the consular officer. In fact, at one point I was moved into the administrative section and I was the acting general services assistant, and then even for a short time, two or three months, I was the administrative officer. But this is a post of about 24 Americans, so it wasn't a big operation.

Q: I've heard particularly in those days that work stopped as far as the Brazilians were concerned on Friday or something, and everybody took off for Rio.

McLEAN: We had about three active days a week when Congress was in session, from Tuesday to Thursday, but Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday were lost days in terms of talking to anybody important, because everyone was out of town. And there was even a month or so in which Congress was out of session, so time was really down, and much of the activity was going on in Sao Paulo and Rio. We did all of our reporting in that period out of newspapers, and that was unfortunate. There was, I think, something wrong with the way we were structured.

Q: The major ministries and all got moved out there?

McLEAN: Most of the administration went out there. They had token representation. The foreign ministry, I think, had three or four people, and their main job was to build the building into which the Foreign Minister, would move. They had to get one guy who was attached to the Protocol Office of the Presidency, but otherwise there wasn't much of a function of government. The Congress was the important one.

Q: What about connections to the embassy? Did Lincoln Gordon come out often?

McLEAN: Gordon came about once a month. There was an apartment there for him to be in, and he'd have a very intense schedule, and then leave. By the time Dean arrived, he listened to my Portuguese and said, "That's terrible." He said, "I want you to go out. You are now the consular officer for the state of Goya," this huge state that surrounds Brasilia, "and maybe you can talk to them." When I suggested my wife come with me, he said, "No, leave her here." He had the precise desire to get me out into the countryside speaking Portuguese so that it would improve very rapidly. I would make three- or four-day trips out, and each time I did I came back my Portuguese got better. That, of course, made my effectiveness in the new job and political work increase greatly. And then as we moved towards the revolution on the 31st of March of 1964, it became much more important. And then after the revolution, it became even more important, because the government did have more of a presence in Brasilia and everyone was needed and everyone was used. So for the last six months I was in Brasilia, it was a more effective time there.

Q: Let's talk about the revolution. Was it one that one was seeing coming? How did you see it from your perspective?

McLEAN: From our perspective, of course, Brasilia was at the edge of Brazil, Brazilian civilization, and we saw that the chaos was just intense. Things just stopped working. The streets were not being cleaned and nothing worked. You ran out of sugar and coffee in Brazil, the products that Brazil produces. If you didn't have sugar and coffee, you had a sort of molasses for sugar, and coffee just didn't exist, and so it was a very difficult time for the country. You just had the sense that nothing was coming together. So, yes, there was a very strong sense of chaos and something was foreboding. Goulart and his forces were trying to stir things up on the populace side and trying to gather political support.

Q: Goulart being...

McLEAN: The President.

Q: the President and coming from what, more or less...

McLEAN: He came from the left of the Getulio Vargas' political system that had been set up in the '40s and early '50s. He himself was not a laboring man, but he was a product of these people who had worked through the labor movement, through the Labor Ministry, and created a leftist force on that side. And so Goulart was trying to force a crisis in which he could get extraordinary powers. You can understand how difficult it was to run the country at that particular point. I do remember Harry Winer, a very bright, insightful person, turning to me one day and saying, "Could it be, Phil, that maybe the crisis that is coming is not one of Brazil falling to communism but of Brazil falling to fascism?" Let me say two things that happened early in my time. One is just after I got out there, an advance party for President Kennedy's visit came to town. My job was to take Bobby Kennedy's secretary around. The advance party came. It was very exciting, doing papers and, of course, planning his visit.

Q: This is for Bobby Kennedy?

McLEAN: No, this was first for John Kennedy. What happened was in October the Cuban Missile Crisis took place. We happened to be the target of a visit by a very large Congressional delegation at that point headed by Strom Thurmond and Henry Talmadge. There were some funny stories about that, but the basic story is that Kennedy didn't come because of the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was scheduled to come, I think, a week after the Crisis took place, so he canceled the trip. Then Bobby Kennedy came in November or early December, and, of course, he comes and we gave him a very big party. The idea was to try to duplicate the original schedule of the President Kennedy visit. Bobby Kennedy's visit was to try to save Brazil from falling into communism. That was at least the message that we were hearing. I don't think there's a lot of evidence that the country was going towards communism, because the left was seen to be very weak in terms of the country. But what was clear was the country was going towards chaos, and one could have argued that anybody could take advantage of the chaos.

Q: How did the Bobby Kennedy visit go?

McLEAN: Well, I was not on that level really... I wasn't a participant in any of the meetings themselves, It didn't resolve anything. I think typically with minorities he gave commitments, he gave assurances, but in fact nothing really happened. He was living in his own world. I don't think he really felt the pressure of the United States to do anything.

Q: Did Goulart spend much time in Brasilia?

McLEAN: Actually he was there a good time. I can remember on Thanksgiving Day that we were suddenly invited over to a benediction, because Brazilians celebrated Thanksgiving as a time for celebration, not in our typical way. I think it's something they picked up from World War II when our forces were there. I can remember being at this benediction, and people were kind to the American embassy people.

Q: What about the military? Were there many military in Brazil?

McLEAN: There was not a large delegation, but there was a military presence and we certainly did have contact with them. There was like a presidential brigade, but Brasilia was really, and still is, but at that time particularly, way out in nowhere. It wasn't in the middle of the jungle; it was in the middle of a flat, high plain. It was very isolated.

Q: The military contacts then would probably be made between us from Rio and Sao Paulo?

McLEAN: Our military mission was in Sao Paulo, and there was a particularly effective military attachï¿½, Colonel Walters.

Q: Norman Walters.

McLEAN: He knew many of the generations of leadership that reached the top.

Q: Well, I take it then, at least early on when you arrived, you weren't waiting for the military shoe to drop. It was more almost a communist shoe.

McLEAN: There was much more of a focus on the communist left and what the left would do, and that's what our focus was on and our attention. There weren't any of them in our group. We didn't have a lot of contact with the military, so we didn't feel that. We had contacts that were in the Congress with pretty much the full panoply from right to left, and that was the same thing with the journalists. I can remember Duke Ryan introducing me at USIS (United States Information Service), introducing me to a leftist journalist whom I got to know. I guess I particularly got to know him after the revolution, and friendly Americans became a much more interesting thing to them after the revolution, but even before that. The Brazilian left wasn't really interested in the State Department.

Q: I was wondering: What was the Brazilian left like? Was it a strong sort of communist-type left, Marxist left?

McLEAN: There was such a thing, but you didn't feel it in the Congress. Most of the left was highly nationalistic. Clearly they had a sense that the state would have a major role, but in many ways they weren't Marxist as they were nationalists. I can remember one of the people that we knew, Darceo Vermetto, who was the head of the president's civil household. He was a distinguished professor, an anthropologist, very leftist in reputation, very extreme sometimes in his statements, and yet when you listened to what he was actually saying, he was not saying anything that was particularly shocking. In fact, I always noted one of the lines he gave us was explaining to us why the Brazilian educational system worked. The reason why it worked was they gave education, free education, at the elementary level and not at the university level. At the college, obviously the high school level, you had to pay in most cases to go, and that weeded most everyone out. I thought that was an extraordinary elitist point of view. Strange enough, I returned to Brazil only once in the immediate subsequent years and ten years later, and I can remember talking with a military government official, and he gave me exactly the same line, so I can remember thinking, well, that's a Brazilian point of view; it's not a right/left point of view; it's a Brazilian thing that's very elitist.

Q: Was there a university in Brasilia at that time?

McLEAN: It was just getting started.

Q: So the student class was not a factor?

McLEAN: Not much of a factor, and I must say, we tried to have some contact with them, but it was just really getting started out there. Like most things in Brasilia, the city was half-built buildings, and in the university campus they had just some half-built buildings.

Q: How did the revolution hurt you? It was a coup essentially.

McLEAN: It was a coup. We got advance word about 24 hours ahead of time from Herbert Levy, who was a senator of representative, I can't remember which, from Sao Paulo. He through marriage was related to Bob Dean, and he was one of our better contacts. He tipped us off. But we heard the troops were moving, and then, of course, that night in fact the U.S. National War College was supposed to come through. Dean, in his usual imaginative way, planned to hold one big benefit, and then split them up into small groups. Some of them were supposed to come to my house, and the young diplomats from Intematachea were supposed to come to my house. What happened, as this thing begins to start, the National War College flies over and doesn't come to Brazil. That night we sat in the embassy listening to different reports. Congress was going into session but was locked. I got into the Congress because the doorman saw me and recognized me. I had always taken him coffee and practiced my Portuguese with him when he came over, so we had a good, friendly relationship and he let me in. So I was the American inside the Congress that night when the presidency was declared vacant. That was part of the recognition. We very rapidly recognized the government, and in part that was because that night we had been able to report the circumstances under which the leadership of the Congress had taken over the government. An important part of it was to communicate that to Washington and to the Op (Operations) Center.

Q: Well, Phil, in a way it wasn't the tanks in the streets. I mean it was Congress saying enough is enough.

McLEAN: Well, it was tanks in the streets in other parts of the country. It had begun by troop movements in different parts of the country. So it was almost like a chess game, moving around. I don't think anybody was shot in that whole process. It was just a moving around of troops. What happened eventually was that Goulart that night decided to fly to his home state, Congress took advantage of that to say that he had left the Presidency without the Congress' permission as the Constitution required. I'd have to say, that isn't what the Constitution says; the Constitution says if he leaves the country, if the President leaves the country. They used that provision to justify declaring the Presidency vacant and turning over the Presidency to the President of the Congress.

Q: Was there much debate, what you were watching...?

McLEAN: The night it was taking place, the Congress, Vonsele himself and Monomaraji, the president of the Senate, and the other leaders that I recognized stood on the high mesa, the high tribunal in front of the Congress, and they shouted this out over the shouts of the largest majorities certainly of the people on the floor of the Congress but also the people in the gallery that managed to get in, including the young diplomats who had been my guests that night. They were all furious that this was happening. But they declared that they had this power as the leadership of Congress to make this decision by vote. So there was a number of things. I was able to check that, call the embassy, and get that storm over.

Q: While Congress was taking this stand, or at least elements within Congress, this being the rightist, I guess...

McLEAN: Well, I think a right or left... They were not leftist.

Q: I mean there weren't armed guards standing around saying this is what you do and all?

McLEAN: This was the unarmed guards. God knows what they overheard. History would have to say directly what they all were hearing, whether they were being threatened or something of this nature. But it wasn't obvious on the streets. The chaos in the country was really extraordinary. Some months before, many months before, we woke up to machine gun firing, and it was the sergeants rebelling, trying to take over because they hadn't been paid. It was that type of atmosphere.

Q: What were you getting from your colleagues about why there was chaos?

McLEAN: I'll have to put my mind back into that particular time. I think people had focused in that Brazil was going through a very strong modernization crisis and the system that had been set up by Goulart was breaking down. There were pressures in all directions, but the basic thing was that Goulart and his people were attempting to govern but without a strong plan, without strong public support. Then you had an economic crisis that was going on. That was undermining the country. It was a very difficult situation. For Gordon it had to be difficult, because he didn't have good people, interlocutors, people he could talk to in the country. My recollection is that Gordon had a very hard time in talking with responsible figures in government, perhaps because they weren't responsible, no one taking responsibility or making decisions.

Q: Well, we were mentioning an attempt. Gordon had come out of the Marshall Plan in Europe and all, and still he was around, the Brookings Institute. But he was particularly there to sort of help with AID, the Alliance for Progress and all that. I mean, that's why he was there. What was our feeling about our AID effort?

McLEAN: There was enormous frustration, because here's Brazil, which one-third population, probably more than one-third of the land mass of what is Latin America, and it wasn't working. You had a theory that the United States had propounded, but in reaction to demands from progressive people in Latin America, Kubichek being one, Fray and others had made these demands. So the United States began to pay attention to it after Castro came along. It tended to be a policy that would favor center-left governments throughout Latin America. But in the Brazil case, it didn't work. It ran up against people who ran off in a radical direction who nationalized the telephone companies and caused the major investment problems. In terms of other parts of the country, conditions were not there to make a major change. There were no institutions in place to try to deal with a major AID program. Gordon came in and found it immensely frustrating and designed a policy that he called trying to identify islands of sanity in this process, and he began to go through and identify who he could work with generally. We tried at one point to do balance-of-payments but that didn't work. Again, Brazil couldn't live up to any commitments.

Q: How did things develop after... The coup happened, or the take-over happened, when?

McLEAN: It took place the night of March 31st, April first my recollection.

Q: '63?

McLEAN: '64. So for the next six months that I was there, it became a period when suddenly the dam broke to do anything and everything. For instance, when you had something like USIA, your travel program would be given each year with a certain number of positions, opportunities, for people from Congress to travel. We didn't say anything in the previous years, but suddenly we had lots and lots, very large numbers of Congress people from the United States who were suddenly looking around for projects and finding projects that we could fund. On the AID side, we were working with Congress. Congress had decided that there should be profits remittance type tax. Working with Congress we lobbied rather shamelessly and openly with Congress to get that turned around.

Q: Well, I take it then from your perspective this was beginning to be more a functioning government rather than sort of a military take-over where you ended up with a major general sitting at the head of each department, who really was not very responsive.

McLEAN: Well, I would say that was one of the things. I was still quite young; I needn't worry, but to me it was stunning to have watched. I arrived in Brazil when things were becoming chaotic and more and more chaotic, so that's what I had seen. The Foreign Service Institute had told me to be highly sensitive to the local society and culture and don't be judgmental, but I must say, it was very, very chaotic and getting more so and then suddenly overnight people are picking up brooms and cleaning the streets and buses were running, and all this chaos rather visibly changed overnight. In Brasilia, and I think to some degree the rest of the country, but certainly in Brasilia things began to happen. So, yes, it was not a simply military take-over. They had, for the most part, civilian ministers. They said they were going to support, that they were democratic. In our heart of hearts, I think we all wanted to be believe it was democratic. Some of the justification I had given them to use that night was used, and they were saying that the new President, first Mazzilli, who was the head of the Congress, which was the Constitutional succession, and within a month's time the Congress had, as the Constitution provided, elected a military man but a man of some kind and goodly reputation, Castelo Branco. He was well known to Walters and a very good close friend. There's a story that Walters was so close that he was actually plotting with him. I had some new evidence of that particular thing. I don't know that that's true. What I do know is true is that the morning of the inauguration Walters... Later on, I remember, I was in my consular office, which was just off the entrance to the embassy, and my secretary for the consular work was the receptionist. She had little enough to do, but she was a very dramatic lady, and I remember her answering the telephone and she says, "No, Colonel Walters is not up and around yet, but can I take a message?" And I remember her screaming, "Oh, Mr. President!" I thought they're calling to invite Walters over to have breakfast that morning, and I reminded Walters of that recently, about that conversation. As I say, as the people in the Congress, more conservative people in the Congress, took over part of the government.

Q: Well, did the pace of the-I don't know what you'd call it. Was it called an embassy where you were?

McLEAN: It was called an embassy office.

Q: Did it pick up?

McLEAN: Oh, yes. From that period on, we were very oriented, very busy. I know myself, somewhere in that period I began to travel to Rio every six weeks or so, and carried the pouch down. We would start the weekly reports, and I would carry them down to Rio. Even in Rio we were there to work, and we were much more busy. There was enormous appetite for written reports. As I say, when I traveled, I traveled with a frontier team with the Minister of Agriculture. So it was a very active, exciting period.

Q: Did Dean stay there throughout the whole time you were there?

McLEAN: As I say, he arrived six or nine months after I was there, and he stayed for the rest of my time, and he stayed on for a period beyond that. He was really a first-class officer.

Q: By the time you left in September 1964, what was Brasilia like by that time? Was it changing?

McLEAN: By that time the city physically hadn't changed, but the sense of tempo, sense of work was much greater. There were stupid things like the water in the swimming pool at the yacht club had not even changed. It was these things that popped up in our daily life that had changed. So it really had turned around in that sense.

Q: Well, I'd like to stop at a particular point of interest. I think it's a good time to stop here, but we'll pick it up the next time when in September of '64 you left Brasilia. Where did you go?

McLEAN: I went to Edinburgh, Scotland.

Q: Wow, what a change!

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: Today is the 25th of January 1999. Phil, so you're off to where, Edinburgh?

McLEAN: That's right. After all the sun and brightness of Brasilia, we found ourselves in the middle of winter in Edinburgh: quite a physical and psychological change.

Q: You were there from what, 1960?

McLEAN: From November of 1964 to November of 1966.

Q: November must have been a nice time, a good introduction to Edinburgh, wasn't it?

McLEAN: Nothing happened in Edinburgh in November. It was so dark and depressed, and very few visitors, though I do remember we right away had some cases of students going a little nutty, one believing he was Jesus Christ. He would only get over that delusion when it brightened up a little bit, and then as soon as it got dark again he was back in the asylum. But the consulate at that time was basically a visa operation, and there were no visas to give at that point. But in February it just picked up amazingly, and we worked very hard.

Q: Well, I'm wondering. I'm an ex-counselor officer myself. With the visa business, what was the problem there? I would have thought a good stamp could get a visa at will.

McLEAN: Well, not if there was a problem. It was actually very much of a pro forma type of operation. I gave, I think, 10,000 visas the first year. In those days we actually signed them individually. And I gave 24,000 in the second year, because they closed Glasgow. My signature was totally different from before and after that period, much stronger, but I think I refused three. But it was that plus lots of notaries and notarizations. We did a lot of work for the distilleries. The MacKinnon's were beginning to send Drambuie to the United States for the first time and had to register one state at a time, and we did all the paperwork on that. It wasn't a busy place really. When I got there, there were only two persons.

Q: Who was the consul general?

McLEAN: The consul general when I first got there was Elias McQuaid, a person who came in through the Wriston Program. He had been a speech writer for Dulles. He went back. He was also a press attachï¿½ in Paris after the war, but his family is related to the Manchester Union Leader of New Hampshire, and he'd been an award-winning journalist up there, interesting man. And then it was Paul Du Vivier the second year I was. Paul was someone who had long experience in Europe, and he'd been interned. I think he was one of the few people who actually was interned by the Germans, because he was the vice consul left in Marseilles.

Q: I have an interview with Paul.

McLEAN: Oh, you do? God bless his soul.

Q: Yes. Well, did you find yourself involved in the political life up there?

McLEAN: That's an interesting point, because at that time we were not coned professionally as we came into the Foreign Service, and here I had a consular assignment and something I wanted to do and do well, but I knew if I was going to go in a certain career direction I should try to develop my skills in other areas and in the political area, which was my main interest, so I in that period went out and tried to do some political work. And I guess I went out and I was one at that particular period that rediscovered the Scottish Nationalist Party. I imagine that the people back in Washington who were reading the stuff I did thought that I'd gone a little bit nutty out there because my name was McLean, a Scottish name, but, no, I did in fact find this party that was not getting a lot of attention in the country at that time, had no representation at any important level in Britain or in Scotland even, but I tapped into what became identified as a very strong feeling and a movement that had a lot of momentum. Shortly after I left Scotland, they elected their first people in certainly a generation or two to the parliament, and they've been represented ever since. Many of those people that I got to know at that time did rise to some prominence in the Scottish Nationalist Party. One of the more interesting things I did was I developed a contact with a man who had been the head of the Scottish courts, Lord Sabrandin, and he gave me some very surprising sense of how Scots really feel about independence. Not that he was advocating it himself, but he was expressing the very strongly held point of view that turned out later. Within the decade, I remember, there was a Clint Brandon Commission, which he was the head of, and if anybody had looked up in the biographic files, they would have found one of my memos that pretty much traced out what he believed.

Q: The thing that really seemed to give the spirit to the Scottish Nationalist Movement was the discovery of oil in the North Sea, wasn't it? I mean the sentiment might have been there, but there was almost no economic basis for doing it on their own.

McLEAN: I don't think that's right, and I think quite the contrary. Maybe oil in fact distracted them. There was a very strong movement ahead of time, and there was a sense among Scots already at that time, before oil because this was 1964-1966 and they were only doing some minor work in the North Sea at that point. They would cite statistics at that time that Scotland exported more and was contributing more to the economy of Britain per capita than the English were.

Q: Did you have any feel for the labor movement? I know for much of this period, up certainly through most of the '70s and all, the labor movement was looked upon by many in the United States as being the thing that was holding Britain back. I mean strikes and us versus them and all. How did we look at it?

McLEAN: That was something I noticed perhaps not so much in the labor union contacts, because I did not in fact do labor reporting at that time in my career. I didn't go out and make contact with them, but what I did find was this enormous psychological depression that the Scots felt, and maybe Brits felt in general at that time, that their country wasn't going anywhere, that things were stopped, that there was very little real initiative going. There was a little bit of the technology industry just getting started. I had some contact with them. I did some export control checks. But generally Scots would talk about immigrating out. One of the things I did when I was there was I did a lot of speechmaking. About every two weeks I'd go out and give my speech. I remember going to a high school in a semi-rural area, and the principal, in order to get control of the group I was speaking to, was saying, "Now listen, a good third of you will be immigrating to the United States, so please pay attention to this man," which I though was very depressing. It was not the view that I was taking. Scotland at that time was full of this public housing. I was told that 97 percent of all the housing built after World War II was public housing. Most of it were just tall, depressing housing parks that didn't give much stimulus to anyone. So it was a down period for Britain in that sense, and Britain had also turned away from the European Community. There was a lot of nostalgia for the glory days of empire, but there wasn't a new focus on where Britain was going. At one of the groups I spoke to, I remember one time they asked me rather aggressively did I not think that blood was thicker than water and that, therefore, Britain should be part of the United States rather than part of Europe. It was that type of sentiment that they didn't let go.

Q: How did you answer that?

McLEAN: Well, I think, playing off my Scottish heritage, I said, no, I didn't think so, that wasn't practical, because in fact I frankly recognized that Britain was more European in its traditionalism than they would be in the United States. But it was an interesting period. You mentioned the sense of us against them, and...

Q: Talking about the class system.

McLEAN: It wasn't just the unions, it was right across the board. That for me was a little bit hard. I had come up from, as I mentioned before, a labor union family, a family that was moving ahead, as we thought, and that was a big difference. With the Scots, many of them did not think of moving ahead. They wanted more security in their particular situation.

Q: This is Tape 2 Side 1 with Phil McLean. Phil, if I recall, more from my movie memory and from my kids and all, '64 to '66, was this the beginning of the time when at least there was this.... Britain was swinging and the Beatles were beginning to come on the scene and there was a lot of mod stuff coming out of London, Mary Quaint fashions and all that. One, is my timing right? and two, was there any reflection of that up in Edinburgh?

McLEAN: It was the time. When I lived in Scotland and then went down to London-and I didn't know London well before then-I was stunned. In fact, I became a little bit of a Scottish Nationalist myself, because you would see that at least the London area was richer. Once I was invited down to go to Ditchley Park outside of Oxford, and we went down to London and drove back up, and even in the countryside you could see a richer, more prosperous area than you did in Scotland. You didn't get much of that flavor in Edinburgh itself. Edinburgh, of course, is a university city, and of course I went over to St. Andrews, but, no, Scotland was a little bit more uptight and less modern. To the degree that there was a class system, it seemed like you could feel it more in Scotland than you could in the south, and it was certainly not.... Well, you take something like rock music. There was very little rock music on the radio stations. There was a poor old Radio Scotland on a bouncing ship out in the middle of the North Sea that you could hear sometimes at night, but it was comical because you could actually hear the crashing of the vibrations going on inside the ship that was bumping up and down. Those were illegal pirate radio stations, but the three radio stations you could hear in Scotland, during the day anyway, carried very limited amounts and often not the Beatles. I'm sure that my colleagues in the States heard more Beatles music than I did up in Scotland. So, it was being set upon. I can remember one time driving home for lunch and coming back, and the three radio stations, all three, in the middle of the day had programs that were nostalgic about Empire, and it was an enormously boring situation that that's what they wanted to talk about. Some lady was recalling her days in Africa, and another somebody was in India, and something about the Queen. It just was a strange, somewhat quaint atmosphere obviously. I was invited to the Queen's garden party, and got all dressed up. At that time I rented morning attire so often that I could have actually purchased it at a profit. But obviously on the other side of it there were a lot of really wonderful things, fun things about it, because Edinburgh, being a fairly small town, did have an extraordinarily rich cultural life. What we did feel was this enormous enthusiasm around the time of the festival, and it was a great learning experience for me, the opera and the music, the theater. For several weeks Edinburgh became a center of European culture, but not so much the swinging culture. There was something called the fringe of the festival, and there was the Travis Theater, which were rather advanced and modern, but it wasn't such an atmospheric impact on the city.

Q: What about the universities? The University of Edinburgh is one of the oldest in the world. Did that play much of a life, or was it sort of off to one side?

McLEAN: No, it was central. It was a very important institution, not only the university but the institutions around the university, the colleges, the professional colleges. I got into it a bit. At one point-it seems amazing to me now that I did-I accepted an invitation to speak at the Edinburgh Union, the great debating institution of British universities, and I accepted the invitation on the proposition that apparently had been put forth by George Bernard Shaw that the United States is the only country that had gone from a state of barbarism to a state of decadence without the intervening stage of civilization. We won the debate, but I think because of the friendliness of the people. It was quite interesting, but that was one of the wonderful aspects of the university. Of course, the university wasn't only just the liberal sciences; it was also a religious university, and many of the American students who were there were studying, doing religious studies, both there and at St. Andrews.

Q: What about medical?

McLEAN: There was a medical school, and one of the interesting things that occurred to me there was that it had become an issue about people going through British schooling, getting a medical education, and then emigrating to the United States. Every year there was administered in the town something called an ECFMG, Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates, and that had become a big issue, such that at the last minute the university, which had been administering it, was used to administering it, dropped it on us, and I administered that in a very stormy situation. The press was outside badgering the students as they went in, the examinees, and I gave the examination, and all went well except the English part of the examination where the English and Scottish exam takers couldn't understand my accent. The colonials all accepted it. But it was a real issue, because it appeared in the officer's letter and there was press attention.

Q: How'd you find the press? One thinks of the British press as terribly sensational, much more so than the American press. Was that just the London manifestation, or what about where you were?

McLEAN: One thing that's amazing is how many newspapers they had for the population. It indicates they actually read. The Scotsman was an enormously wonderful paper to read. Of course, all the papers from London came up. Other than The Scotsman and Glasgow Herald, the papers dropped off in quality rather sharply, but they were controversial and it's clear that they were part of what people talked about. They were somewhat conservative. I mean they were conservative in presentation not in political line.

Q: We were going through a real earth-shaking or revolutionary change in the United States with civil rights at this time, right in the middle of it really. How did that play as far as being the American representatives there?

McLEAN: Well, there was just an assumption that this was those terrible Americans. They're just racist. To me it was an extraordinary point of view, because I didn't think we were that. In these speeches that I gave around the country, around the consular district, I often talked on that subject, not that I knew the American Southland a great deal but I used the material was given to me by USIA, and in the end it seemed to work out. I remember one young couple, American couple I had known at the university. They were there on Marshall scholarships, and they were from the Deep South, and it was so strange that some of my Scottish friends would talk down about the American South, and yet when they met these people, they felt they were more like them perhaps than I was, because there was a certain formality about Southern living that fit well with a Scot's view of how you should conduct yourself socially. But it was an issue. The other issue, of course, was beginning to grow at that time with Vietnam, and I was directed by my consul general that I should stay away from that subject. I think I only gave one presentation on that subject and then was steered away from it, because they didn't want controversy. We had some violence against the consulate, a window broken in. It was clearly an anti-Vietnam sense of what was behind it. And it was a good time to get out and explain ourselves and try to be showing who we are. I, of course, thought this was very strange, that they would be accusing us of racism when around me I thought the Scots, part of their social conservatism was that they were not very open to other races and other groups. I remember I went to court once because an American citizen had been arrested and was to be tried, and I watched the other cases that were on the docket that day, and I was stunned by the fact that they were in some cases Indians or Pakistanis who were being accused of things that just on the face of it didn't sound to me like they were getting a very clear, open hearing. I don't want to be too strong against my Scots, but as I say, it was a socially conservative place.

Q: I would think that this getting out and talking, it was a certain amount of training by fire in a way, isn't it? I mean just by having to get out and articulate and all really what you're about and done in a fairly good place. I mean same language, different accent and all, and also people who would be polite to a point but challenging to a point.

McLEAN: It was a terrific experience. I had done public speaking before, working in politics in college, but this was my first opportunity to get out and defend the United States through thick and thin, and how you put an intellectually honest argument on something. I wasn't comfortable necessarily with Vietnam or what was going on in the South, but I learned to describe it in a way that was consistent with American interests and yet faithful to my own beliefs on things, and that was good for me.

Q: Well, in 1966 whither?

McLEAN: In 1966 I went to INR to an office called External Research.

Q: INR being the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State.

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: You were there when? It would be about 1967 to...

McLEAN: Well, I was just there a short time. It wasn't a good experience, my first chance back in the bureaucracy in Washington. The office was a fairly low-prestige operation. It had been set, or at least my unit of the office had been set up, following a big scandal in Latin America, the discovery of something called Operation Camelot, and they set up an office and they staffed it very quickly with seven people, seven lower-level officer positions. They had, I think, one secretary who didn't know how to type, and there we were stuck to do in effect a censoring job on all social science research that was to be done in the U.S. government.

Q: Oh my God. In the first place, would you explain the background.

McLEAN: Well, the background of Operation Camelot was an effort by a contractor of the Department of Army to try to identify the groups of insurgency in the Third World countries. It started as an intellectual offshoot of an office that did something called the Army Area Handbooks, and this operation probably was innocent enough in its purpose, but when seen from abroad it looked like, rather than trying to find the roots, we were trying to find the roots and snuff them out, so it was seen as a great political interference. The reaction to that by the White House and State Department was to set up this office to do this review, but I don't think it was very well thought through. In particular, the very people who had driven the investigation of this thing and the setting up of the office had a contradiction in their own mind that they tended to be liberals, political liberals, who really wanted to control what sinister forces like the Army and others might be doing, but that in fact they were also liberals in the sense they certainly didn't want to censor academic or free thinking and investigation. So I think it was a classic case of an office that had a contradictory purpose, and I don't think anybody who was involved in it were very satisfied with it in the end, and I think it just generally died out over a period of time after putting a lot of effort into it, but it was not a great place to begin. It was physically on the eighth floor of the old part of the State Department, which is rather dark and traditional, and it, as I say, was not a great place to be.

Q: Who was your leader?

McLEAN: My immediate leader was Peel Buliasi, who was an INR career employee, a very fine mind, but I think he was emblemic of the office as being someone with a contradiction, not quite sure what we were doing. He didn't give us a lot, or at least I didn't get from him a lot, of leadership. And Dan Fendrick, now bless his soul, was a very fine gentleman, but again there was this contradiction of purpose in the office. The most interesting thing I did in the office, I was involved in China. It was strange enough. When they had me come in the office, they made me the Asia specialist. Of course, I knew nothing about Asia.

Q: Well, you were putting your Brazilian and then British qualities to work on China.

McLEAN: Exactly.

Q: Well, you came from Seattle, so...

McLEAN: It was part of my education, there's no question about it. And in fact I did dive in and tried to read like crazy. I had never had a course in international relations as such, and in that period, perhaps out of boredom but also out of the challenge of trying to get up my background, I took the major international relations text of the period and outlined it in detail just to bring us up to date, and I studied a lot about China. As I say, one of the interesting things I did on the thing was that we had something called the Foreign Area Research Committee, and they were for various areas, and I was the secretary for the China Committee, which brought in scholars to start thinking about China. At that particular phase of the game, that was extraordinarily interesting, and I think I got good marks for doing that. But I got most buried in the Vietnam/Thailand problem, as I made an error that maybe I would make again in my career, which was taking lots of little small problems and seeing at least in my own mind that there was a common thread that ran through them and then casting it as a big problem for resolution. Of course, once it's a big problem, it probably can never be resolved. The problem was Vietnam and Thailand, what the role of research organizations like the Advanced Research Projects Agency would be doing in a place like Vietnam, which really was in war area and it was probably impossible and maybe not appropriate for the State Department to try to sit on top of that type of research. As I say, I remember doing one draft telegram, and, of course, my surprise was within a few weeks my telegram, almost word for word in some ways, appeared in the Washington Post. Somebody had leaked it obviously, who was opposing what the Pentagon was doing in general, but it didn't help resolve the issue. So what happened was I very quickly began to look for other things to do. I left the office after eight months.

Q: I would have thought that particularly a place like Vietnam-we were just getting into it with both feet about this time, we were really inserting combat troops at about this point-that being Americans and particularly at that period, we would have had study group after group after groups studying the hell out of every aspect, sociological, anthropological, economic, military and all that. Was your group there to monitor these things and find out what they were doing? I would think this would almost be off to one side.

McLEAN: We were off to one side, and what the research was doing was really obviously quite key to what was going on. But no one was really well informed. I remember my intellectual background going into it was from the Foreign Service Institute. When I had come into the Foreign Service, we happened to be in our training at the time that the first counter-insurgency courses being done by Kenneth Landen, and so we got all the speakers that were going into that course and we learned all of these things that were being taught in this doctrine. Of course, much of the research was along those lines, but what was strange was that I discovered that when you really got to talk to military people, they said, "We're not having a counter-insurgency war; we're having a war." So this type of thing was irrelevant, and people were just spending money. No, it was for most of this period a difficult period of getting hold of it, and clearly we were not in a particular place to have much influence, nor did we have a very clear idea of what we were trying to accomplish.

Q: With INR at this time, was there much in the way a depth of knowledge about the area to draw on for you?

McLEAN: Not from where we were, because we were in external research. We weren't in the actual area offices, and that was one of the weaknesses of our play. We obviously got some of the reporting, but we weren't area experts as such. There may be some exceptions to that. Ralph Cortada, who was in my group as my desk mate, was a Latin American specialist, but he too had problems in that office, which is rather a shame because Ralph had come in under a special program bringing minorities into the State Department, and his time in that office really hurt his chances for entering the Foreign Service. He has told me he felt it was a blow to him. He went on to be president of several community colleges around the country, so he was a person of great quality, but that particular office didn't do well by people.

Q: Well, you fished around to get out. Where did you go?

McLEAN: Well, I fished around and tried to find where I had some friends, and I had friends in the Latin American bureau, and it just turned out that somebody was transferring out of the regional office or the regional unit that did editing for the Bureau. I went down and did some interviews and transferred there in November of 1967.

Q: 1967 or 1968?

McLEAN: 1967. I was just nine months in, because I really had not reported to INR until January of 1967, and by November of 1967 I left.

Q: So you were in ARA from 1967 to when?

McLEAN: To June or July of 1969.

Q: What were you doing in Latin American Affairs?

McLEAN: I had several jobs. The first job I went into, as I say, was an editing job. At that time they didn't have a regional office as such, so they had a small unit of three people who basically did the job of pulling paperwork together for the Bureau. There are larger offices that now do that type of thing, but at that time it was a small unit. We were considered staff assistants to the assistant secretary. I was given the additional job, and I was told it was to be 50 percent of my time, to serve as the liaison with the Sea-Level Canal Commission which was then studying routes for building a new canal somewhere in the Americas' isthmus. It seemed to really belong more to the Panama office, but they wanted to assert the fact that we had not chosen where we were going to build this canal and maybe we would build it in Nicaragua or Colombia or some other place, so they put it as a regional responsibility. In this capacity I worked for Bob Sayre, Robert Sayre, who was the principal deputy assistant secretary, and he was in fact a member of the Commission, so I was his staff person for relations with that group. In that capacity I wrote the draft report for the foreign policy part of the Commission report. The member of the Commission who oversaw my work was Milton Eisenhower, who was extraordinarily kind and helpful. I remember why I learned, despite my Democratic roots, to love the Eisenhowers. There were two critical points in this work where Eisenhower proclaimed that my work was the best that had ever been done on this-this type of exaggeration, which was wonderful.

Q: Oh, yes.

McLEAN: It bucked me up and made me feel, really recognize, what a positive people these folks are.

Q: I'm not familiar. I just know we were talking about a sea-level canal without locks and all that. How did you feel at the time? Was this in a way to try to get the Panamanians to get off nationalizing the canal, or was this serious? What was your impression?

McLEAN: I think it was a serious attempt to do something about the canal. There were many beliefs that I don't think have really worked out in practice, but at that time there was a belief that you had to build a bigger canal, that you had to build a canal that would take very large commodity ships, large tankers and large super ships that would move ores and other things, and the belief that it should be built somewhere in the isthmus, and it wasn't necessarily true that it would be Panama. No, I think it started as a true belief. It began in 1964 when there were riots in Panama and there was a belief, well, the problem with these riots is that there are too many Americans there, so if we had a sea-level canal, we wouldn't need so many Americans and this would be more like a strait through which things would pass and you would reduce the number of Americans, reduce the frictions that have taken place through the years. It's an interesting idea because it is trying to find technology to answer a political problem, which I think from my experience doesn't usually work. We can talk about that in more detail, but in the end we found that the canal that existed at that time was a pretty good operation; and though the Commission, after I left this work, recommended that we build a new canal, they in fact outlined something that was going to be so expensive that nobody would touch it. One of the key decisions on this was that you couldn't use nuclear explosions.

Q: Yes, I remember nuclear explosions earlier on was beginning. This was one of the things.

McLEAN: And I got involved in discussions about the nuclear side of things. I remember I had to get a Q clearance so that I could know all of these things, but in the end what they found was that nuclear explosions leave such an enormous impact into the geology that you can't keep the sides of a canal stable. It keeps flowing back into the pits. You've actually just pulverized the geological structure so that building a canal becomes more difficult. So after a series of experimentations and nuclear explosions in the U.S., they really basically abandoned that idea. There were other problems such as the political effect throughout the world if we used this.

Q: And also, how about radiation?

McLEAN: Well, radiation was a problem, but the people at the time, the specialists, kept saying they could contain that. Though I had my doubts, in fact they were doing it with parallel work on something called gas bucketing, which was a study of how you would use different explosives to free up gas in old gas fields. Of course, what they found at the end is that they did get more gas and it was radioactive, surprise.

Q: The Chinese were playing with this too, I think, or maybe later on.

McLEAN: I really don't remember that, but it was an enthusiasm at the time. They talked about building harbors in Australia and other activities, but in the end really nothing came of it.

Q: One looks at the map and you see that big lake in Nicaragua. Did that come up at all?

McLEAN: Yes, it did come up, and perhaps I can claim some credit for getting rid of a problem between ourselves and Nicaragua, which was the Brian Chamorro Treaty. The Brian Chamorro Treaty had been negotiated in the era when we believed that we might want to someday build a Nicaragua canal. There I was able to use my contacts with the Canal Commission to gain some understanding of the profile of excavation that would have to take place for a sea-level canal through Nicaragua, and it showed that it really would not be favorable even though, I believe, the lowest point in the isthmus is Nicaragua. In fact, what happens is, though, the land goes up more quickly on one side and it stays high across to the other ocean through a broad base of it. Actually the amount of land that would have to be lifted out of it would be very high. So it was quite clear early on in the Commission study that we would never build a sea-level canal in Nicaragua. That doesn't mean that someday some way they might come up with another locks canal, but a lock canal exists already, and it exists in a narrower part of the isthmus. So it is probably very likely that no canal will ever be built. With that information, it turned out Regina Eltz, who was one of the three of us that worked in this small unit, I asked her to help me edit my work on this, and she was very helpful in moving chapters around, but in doing this, she learned herself about it, and she was then being transferred down to be the Nicaragua desk officer. I believe it's correct that she became the source of the force pushing to get rid of the Brian Chamorro Treaty. So that was a small contribution.

Q: I vaguely recall in my history that when we were talking about-this is 1900 or something like that-about where we would put the canal, the proponents of Panama were distributing stamps to our Congress showing Nicaragua and put out some stamps with a bunch of volcanoes going off and saying, "See, do you want to put a canal in a volcanic area?"

McLEAN: Well, I think that's all true. In the end recently we had a horrific earthquake in 1972/73-maybe it was the latter part of 1972-but a horrific earthquake which would have had a great effect on the locks. But like in all things, I think the politics were more driving that situation than anything else. In the end Panama became the winner, because it was the shortest distance. Even though it has a high peak in the middle, it's got, as the Panamanians say, a narrow waist.

Q: Did the politics in the area when you were doing this, around '67ish, '68ish, did the politics of Somoza come up at all?

McLEAN: Only indirectly in the sense that the chairman of the group called the Maritime Committee of the House was close to the Somoza that was governing at the time, and that caused some confusion because he seemed to be really pushing this Nicaragua connection in one way or another, not to any particular end. Nicaragua wasn't a very big factor, as I say, getting rid of it. But the politics were very important in terms of the importance people put on the canal. It often struck me, and in fact I put in my draft of the study, that the things you learn when your in the fifth grade just stick with you, and all Americans learn certain beliefs about Panama that are just deeply embedded in our consciousness. As President Reagan would later say in a campaign, we took it, we built it, it's ours, we're going to keep it, and that's a very strong American point of view. I think one of the few small things that I accomplished when doing this study was to get the Pentagon to stop referring to the canal as a vital link. Vital implies that you might be willing to lose lives to keep it, and in fact what I tried to show was that the canal was important, and I still believe it's an enormously important public works facility and should be available to all mankind, but it is a marginal benefit for the United States. It's no longer vital in the sense it's the only way to get from here to there. You can get from here to there lots of different ways. We already saw containerization, we saw the possibilities of pipelines, we saw other things that could do the work of the canal, perhaps at higher cost. The structural steel that is in the World Trade Center in New York was made in my hometown of Seattle. Now that's possible because of the Panama Canal, but if there were no Panama Canal, it would be made somewhere else nearby. It would still be made, maybe at marginally heavier cost and it certainly wouldn't be good for my hometown of Seattle, so the Canal's important but it's not vital, and that was the important thing to get across. In fact, we did stop referring to it as a vital link.

Q: Was there sort of a feeling that-you were new to this when you arrived-among at least the people whom you were dealing with in the State Department, eventually Panama's going to have to run this thing, we can't hang onto this forever?

McLEAN: I don't think that was our strong feeling at that time by anyone and maybe even myself. I remember one of the big arguments was whether we were going to go for a treaty that would never expire or one that would expire in 2040 or 2020, and I was among the people, of course, that said the year 2000 sounds like a good year and that's way, way far off. I say that this day in 1999. Of course, I learned a great deal, and I'll get into it when we get to Panama, but that wasn't what was driving it. What was driving us was to get rid of this Panama problem that had come up, find a way to deal with it, and a sea-level canal at this point when I'm looking at it was what was important.

Q: Well, then you did other things too when you were in the area?

McLEAN: Yes, I did other things. We were the ones who did the putting papers together, staffed out papers for the offices to do, and ran them up to the assistant secretary, to the secretary. We did the Congressional testimony for the Secretary. Whenever a position paper on something going on in Latin America, we either did it or had it staffed and edited it. I might mention a couple things that came up. One was Brazil, and the other would be Guatemala. In the Brazil case, because I had had experience in Brazil, I became the person who looked after things there, and I can remember so well that pressures were building up in Brazil in 1968, but I can remember one night working on a paper about student rioting in Rio de Janeiro as we were sensing that Brazil was on the verge of something and at the same time someone calling me across to the other corner of the building saying, "Look, look out," and their look out was Washington burning. I remember this put things in perspective.

Q: This is after the Martin King...

McLEAN: This was Martin Luther King, and we could see this. From our point of view the smoke was coming up really over the White House, so it was a rather dramatic night. After that particular set of very alarming cables from Brazil, I kept after the desk to say let's get at this, let's define this question a little bit more carefully, because something's going on in Brazil and our policy there. Where I was was a good place for a junior officer to ask questions, and in fact I think I sent down to the desk a series of pointed questions. I was told then by the desk, "Don't worry about it. We have communicated to Frank Carlucci, who was then political counselor in Rio, to please keep a lid on all this terrible reporting. You're scaring people too much." In my own mind, at least as seen from a small corner of things, that was really unfortunate, because the pressures then began to build up, and I don't think we were getting the reporting for the next six months that would have put this in perspective and dramatized it in the way that it needed to be, because we were pouring enormous resources into Brazil at that time and the political basis of it needed to be questioned.

Q: What was your feeling about why the desk was trying to not smother but smooth over things?

McLEAN: I'm not making accusations against individual people, but it seems to me a natural human tendency of those who are involved trying to sustain these programs and to continually try to justify the programs that the embassy and others wanted, that they were terribly afraid that the support for this within the bureaucracy and Congress and the American people would die off, so they were quite naturally trying to put a damper on what might be alarming reporting. But again, perhaps maybe because I had some peripheral experience with the Vietnam experience through the INR, I had seen how these pressures to do programs sometimes cloud the vision of those who are looking at the problem or standing back and saying, "What are we trying to accomplish with these programs?" This was a perception that I had, and the example I gave was exactly how, specifically how, I saw them. I remember at the end of the story, a particular period in that story was in December of 1968 the Brazilian military suddenly declared an auto addicional, additional declared act, from the executive, which severely constrained the political process again, constrained it more than '64, and did so in a way that totally caused us no longer to be able to say, as we had been saying up to that point, that this was really a democratic process with some elements of the military in it, to be one that was clear that this was a straightforward military dictatorship. I can recall the heat of the morning after this happened when people were raging against the military for having done this, and yet, I have to tell you, within a week people began to justify and were finding other reasons to justify our program, which up to that time had been justified on trying to build a truer democracy in Brazil. This I do not think would ever happen later, but at that time it was interesting to see how the mind of man can curve to circumstance.

Q: You're also pointing to something that is sort of not only man but almost bureaucratic behavior really, that what we're doing is something we'll continue to do. Particularly in a bureaucracy it's very difficult for people to say, okay, let's stop.

McLEAN: That's right, and it's also difficult to continuously say, "How does this fit with everything else that I'm trying to accomplish?" Clearly at that time we were not... The United States was a poor democracy, but democracy was not quite such a center of our thinking as it would later become. We were trying to justify what we were doing in Brazil by the democratic ideals, but we also had developed ideals, and I think we were somewhat taken by the Latin, particularly the Brazilian, view that what was important was development. After you've got a country developing, then democracy would come along with it. Brazil, of course, was developing its national security doctrine, which would later become important to them, and the National War College was developing these ideas. I don't think we were quick enough to pick up that we were looking at something that was fundamentally anti-democratic, and for America's own interests, which should be... We should have been trying to put the weight of our programs more in the direction of getting a political goal. [end of Tape 2 Side A]

Q: What about the "Communist menace" there? Was this used dealing with Brazil as sort of the justification or excuse for a lot of things?

McLEAN: It was, but I think it's a little revisionist history to say that everyday we were thinking of communism as the biggest danger. The big issue before people's minds was how do you get this country developing-this was a third of Latin America-and how to get it away from the poverty. That was a major justification, and I don't think that everyday we would say communism was going quickly, because it would have been unrealistic. Communism was not a big factor at that particular time. We could argue in some ways that this military dictatorship was in fact trying to push things more in that direction. I don't think I mentioned earlier that one of the journalists that I had met during my time in Brazil who was on the left went farther to the left and becomes a guerilla and later on is a prisoner as exchange for our ambassador back in 1969. So, I think, the United States identifying itself with this repressiveness did have the opposite effect on some people's ideology. Communism clearly was an issue, but I don't think it certainly was the only issue. We were worried about the kidnapping. At this particular point-I'm talking about 1968, early 1969-terrorism was not the biggest issue.

Q: Were there any other issues you were working on while you were doing this particular part of INR?

McLEAN: Let me just mention Guatemala as an example of some of the work we did in, I believe, March of 1968. We were doing papers, and one of our functions was to do the weekly contribution to something that was then called "Current Foreign Relations," which was a document that was put out around the Department, and the desk officer brought us a piece about the assassination of some U.S. military officers who had been riding in a car and an assassin came along and riddled the car with bullets. He wrote about it, and again it was our function, Regina Eltz's and mine, to sit and in talking with them try to parse what he was trying to say in this report, because it had to be short and brief; and in the end what he did, what we did together, was publish something that talked about the growth of violence in the country, not just on the left but also of something that was called the white hand. Today you call it paramilitaries or right-wing guerrillas or government-backed right-wing guerrillas, but at that time these were new concepts, and in the report we just dealt with the two issues. Well, that caused an explosion from our embassy. The embassy wrote in. They somehow thought that these reports were done by the intelligence part of Washington, but in fact that was just done by the desk officer, and we kept our heads and didn't get into much of a debate about it. The embassy clearly wanted not to be discussing this other part of the issue, which was the part that there were left-wing guerrillas and that there was also violence being generated on the right and perhaps by the government as well. The story goes on that in June of that year my friend Ralph Cortada, who had left INR/XR and had gone down to the Latin American part of things, did a rather simple report. It was a simple analysis that simply said, "What causes violence against American institutions in Latin America?" He tried to do an academic correlation, population size, per capita income, etc. He did this all up on a chart, and the only correlation he could find was that violence in the country correlates perfectly with violence against Americans. It seems like a simple idea. Again, Embassy Guatemala blew up. They were very unhappy with our analysis, because they thought-it wasn't our analysis, it was INR's analysis-that INR was trying to criticize our policy in some ways, and that was an enormously surprising reaction. A letter came in from Ambassador Mein to the assistant secretary making this complaint and then asking us that we go to INR. In that capacity I went to Ralph and I got the background on how we did it and the rest of it, and I had to say I didn't think Ralph Cortada was trying to do anything about Guatemala policy and in fact the paper was written about the whole area. It wasn't aimed at them. Knowing Ralph, I knew that he was not terrifically ideological in any way. But I did feel sad about it, because I had known Ambassador Mein. He was my first DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission).

Q: This was Gordon?

McLEAN: John Gordon Mein. But there it was, and I remember seeing him. Just after that there was a major interagency group meeting that I attended probably as a notetaker, and I saw him at that time. He's a wonderful, good person. The sad ending of this phase of the story, though, is that in August, late August of that year, I went in to temporarily fill in as the staff assistant to the assistant secretary, and the assistant secretary left that day in fact to go down to Ecuador, and I got the call from the watch and was plugged into talking to the DCM in Guatemala saying that the ambassador was dead, he had been assassinated that afternoon. It was an enormously sad moment, but as you can tell, my own conclusion is that, once again, we hadn't stepped back and looked closely enough at the full implications of what we were doing in Guatemala. The sadness of it, of course, was I was involved, deeply involved, in doing the arrangements for transporting him back to the States. I think it was one of the first times, if not the first time, that the Presidential aircraft went down and picked up an ambassador's body and took off with it to bring him back to the States with his family. The day after as I walked into the Department, a friend said, "Shouldn't we have the flag flying at half mast?" I tell you it took me the better part of the day getting lawyers and others to agreement that we could fly the flag at half mast. Now sadly that's a regular thing that is now done, but it had not been done up to that point, that in fact a department has the ability to make that decision on its own, and arranging the meeting and the funeral, and, as I said, sadly I did many of the condolences whether it was from the Secretary, from the American Foreign Service Association, etc., and we worked long hours. It happened to be the week of the Chicago Democratic Convention, so it was a very difficult time. We'd work all day long.

Q: This was a particular convention in Chicago? This is riots...

McLEAN: This is riots and the rest of it. So we were dealing with these very emotional and very deeply troubling events in Guatemala, and you'd come home and turn on the television set to have a late dinner or early breakfast, and there you'd have the Chicago thing going on.

Q: Well, Guatemala actually is a very violent place, isn't it? I mean people settle things with guns. Isn't that...

McLEAN: I suppose. Since I've never served in Guatemala, I don't want to analyze too much of what was going on. What I do know is, looking back at it, U.S. policy wasn't taking this into account enough in terms of what our interests are, as seems to have come out in recent years, that we ourselves have gotten ourselves too tainted by this thing. I think there is a way to be true to what you're trying to accomplish without compromising yourself and becoming part of the problem. My suspicions are that in the Guatemala case we in fact were part of the problem. Again, good people were doing it, but in fact I think that they were making some mistakes.

Q: Then you moved in ARA to something different?

McLEAN: Then I moved, just before the transition in December of 1968, from being in effect a back office staff assistant to be a front office staff assistant, to be somewhat outside the door of the assistant secretary. But, of course, the assistant secretary had left and Ambassador Vaky, Pete Vaky, became the Acting Assistant Secretary, and he was Acting Assistant Secretary through the transition, so it was one of the great interesting periods of my education. Sometimes I feel that my life in the State Department was a continual education.

Q: This is what we're good at, I guess, absorbing information. Tell me about, in the first place, about Pete Vaky and then about the transition, because this would have been from the Johnson Democratic Administration to the Nixon Republican Administration.

McLEAN: That's right. It was a great change. Pete Vaky had come to the job from... Just previously he had been part of the policy planning staff. He was known because he had done an important study on Cuba, so he came to people's attention. He had been the deputy chief of mission in Guatemala before this. That's why for him the death of Ambassador Mein was especially traumatic. He was a very admirable guy, a very idea-oriented person. I had met him before, but he took over the job in about September and so had been in it for several months as the deputy assistant secretary, and when the deputy assistant secretary, left, Pete stepped into his seat and for three or four months was the person who ran the bureau. He later found out, in January, that in fact he had already been selected to go over to the White House to be the Latin American chief, so he was in an awkward position because he was holding onto the bureau and keeping the bureau going at the same time he was supposedly working for Henry Kissinger as advisor. I guess it's no secret now that in those days staff assistants regularly listened on the telephone to people. I don't want to be revealing any...

Q: No, no, no.

McLEAN: At that time it really actually worked all right, because it allowed a staff assistant not to have to take orders. When the boss had something to be done, he didn't walk out and tell you, "Go do this"; you just went out and did it. But it also gave you enormous opportunity to listen in on history being made. I would be listening to Vaky talking with Kissinger or talking with William Rogers or talking with others, so I had a terrific sense of the changing of the guard as these went from one government to another. First, I would say that in the Johnson Administration what was fascinating was watching power dissolve. I came to experience that personally later, but at that particular point in the game you'd watch how the President of the United States or the departments of the government begin losing control of things. I can remember a couple issues that came up in the last days of the administration. The Secretary of the Interior, Udall, made a deal with Occidental Petroleum to set up a refinery in Puerto Rico, and his agreement was totally contrary to something President Johnson had promised the Venezuelans. Suddenly we had to work to try to get this overturned to try to keep policy consistent across the administrations. And there were other problems. Suddenly departments started doing their own thing without regard to the White House, and it was a real scramble, and President Johnson, being President Johnson, reacting rather dramatically as this chaos began to spread. When the new administration came in, we started having contacts, of course, obviously before then and doing books for it. Perhaps one of the interesting things that we saw was just in the first days of the new administration, the first day in fact. The first day after the inauguration, President Nixon had decided apparently to ceremoniously show his interest in Latin America by calling in Galo Plaza, who was the Secretary General of the OAS at that time, the Organization of American States. I remember we got a call mid-morning saying, "Do you think that would be possible?" and we said, yes, we thought it would be possible, and they called back five minutes later and said, "We want that to happen now," and then we got a call a few minutes after that, "We want it to happen in an hour or an hour and a half." So we set up this meeting and got Galo Plaza to come in from his home in Potomac, and Kissinger and Vaky and Plaza and Nixon met together that day, which was a nice gesture. Who actually was behind all this and what was going on is not totally clear to me, because I was the traffic cop for someone who was helping move this thing but not somebody who was there ahead of time. One of the strange things that came out of it, according to the report that I saw-and I saw this both in the memorandum of conversation but also in the New York Times (it got leaked, it was a very secret conversation that got leaked, much to our great discomfort, because only a few of us had seen the memorandum of conversation)-what apparently had happened is Nixon asked Galo Plaza, "What could I do as a gesture to get my relations with Latin America off to a good start?" and Galo Plaza says, "You could send an envoy to Latin American, and that could be my friend Nelson Rockefeller." So at that moment was launched the infamous Rockefeller trips around Latin America. In fact, let me just be clear that maybe in fact it was Nixon who said, "How about a trip around, and who should do it?" but the point is that Galo Plaza suggested Nelson Rockefeller. Our sense was that this was not a greatly pleasing suggestion to President Nixon, but it fact he was put in that position and not being able to back off from that. So then we thereafter were going to have the Rockefeller trips around Latin America. The other big thing was that the Kennedy/Johnson Administration, the Kennedy Administration, had had such a powerful ideological policy under the Alliance for Progress that when the new folks came in, they didn't have that particular thing, but what they did know was that they didn't like the words 'Alliance for Progress' and it became very hard for the bureaucracy to turn the boat around and stop talking about Alliance for Progress and start talking about something else. Kissinger's solution to this was to ask the community led by the State Department, bureaucratic community led by the State Department, to do some studies, national security study memorandums, and for some many weeks the Department was totally involved in trying to produce this paperwork to create a new policy. There were those who could not stop talking about the Alliance for Progress, and the public affairs guy from the Bureau was moved out because he just couldn't stop talking about it. But a new, different policy began to take shape, formed somewhat by a crisis that was looming, and that was that in, I believe, November of the previous year the Peruvian military had overthrown the Belaunde government and had nationalized the International Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Exxon. Under the Hickenlooper Amendment, the U.S. government had six months to get this thing resolved, where the clock was ticking and we were heading towards that date, so there was a crisis really building up at that point and we had to get a decision made, when the administration was totally new, as to what we were going to do about this matter.

Q: I would take it that the Latin American Bureau was not as heavily hit, because Pete Vaky moved over to the NSC (National Security Council) and all, but you talk about these national-what were the papers?

McLEAN: National Security study memoranda, as I recall. They get renamed every administration.

Q: One of the things that's mentioned about the Kissinger period is that supposedly these papers were launched. Maybe something might come out of it, but the main thing was to tie up the State Department while Kissinger could grab control over the reins of power of foreign affairs.

McLEAN: Well, I supposed that was one of his motives. In fact, maybe he says that.

Q: He may have said that.

McLEAN: He actually says that in his book or one of his books, because, as we all know, he had a very strong consciousness from an early age that bureaucracies make it difficult for policymakers to make policy. But however it was seen from there, from the State Department, from the Inter-American Affairs Bureau, he was taken rather seriously. At that time you have to remember that the Bureau was a combined bureau. It was combined with State and AID.

Q: And it did not include Canada.

McLEAN: It did not include Canada at the time, but almost every officer, every country office, was a mixture of State and AID employees, so the bureau had very strongly moved towards this development point of view. That's why I say communism wasn't the only driving force. It was really a bureau set out to develop Latin America. So the people took this very seriously and produced lots of strong, very analytical papers that were sent along. I don't know what was ever done with it, but it probably did cause the bureau to start moving on and getting the bureaucrats themselves to think differently. When I say bureaucrats, I mean us. There had been some interesting ideas. Nixon had expressed in the campaign that he wanted policy towards Latin America trained on AID, and so we trotted out some ideas. In fact, even in the transition papers we trotted out some ideas about how you might have a trade policy that favored Latin America. Of course, that came into conflict with most-favored-nation thinking and our GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) commitments, and that was set aside, but we worked out some policies that began to reflect a different point of view, a different language. One of the things that occurred along this line later was that the Latins themselves decided that they were going to confront the United States with the need for a new policy. They too wanted to stress AID, and the foreign ministers met in Viï¿½a del Mar. This was probably as late as April. I remember then again it was one of those times that I thought that I made a contribution, because the tendency was to say let's forget about these Latin foreign ministers and let them go away because we're not interested in this, and I remember that there was a frustration in the Bureau but people weren't articulate. I remember typically getting papers at six o'clock at night, supposedly go to the White House and asking for an appointment for these foreign ministers, and I can remember sitting down for the next three hours and redoing the memo and the package, redoing the memo from the acting assistant secretary, his assistant secretary, Charlie Meyer at that time, to the secretary, and from the secretary to the President, and in very dramatic terms saying this is something that's got to be done. And it was done. The President did receive them for good or ill. Out of it came a mechanism for dealing with trade complaints. I don't think it was very significant, but it did depressurize the mood by the Latins at that time to confront the United States. That was part of the changing view. I would say-and I knew that as I went through my career-how different it is to be in the bureaucracy trying to push things or move new ideas and how free it is to be in a position where you can actually shape policy somewhat above the bureaucracy or at a certain level. I remember how much smarter I felt every day, because what happened in this period after I became staff assistant was I became special assistant-I was the chief aide to the assistant secretary-I suddenly felt enormously intelligent because I was well informed, I was in the right position to know everything that was going on, and I'm sure I was arrogant, as all people in those positions are. But I always remembered that. I did have some self reflection and say, "Why was it so difficult to get things written and to do things before, and now when you're in this position suddenly words come flowing out?" and it's because you have a different perspective. You have the perspective of the policymakers. You can just put it into words and get it done. So it was a good, productive period.

Q: Did you have any feeling at this transitional time of power moving from the State Department to the NSC? In a way, Latin America always was not very high on Henry Kissinger's list or Nixon's list really, and it was maybe not that business as usual but at least there wasn't the take-over that happened in... Africa may have had the same thing, but European and Asian, not even Middle Eastern, but those two were the main ones at that point.

McLEAN: Sure. Over time, of course, it was going to get worse. In the day of the Johnson Administration, the decision-making mechanisms had been changed in a way that potentially strengthened the State Department. I think it's accurate to say it was really only the Latin American Bureau that fully implemented the program or system called inter-regional groups, and the idea there was for the principal agencies, only the principal agencies, to sit down and run policy for each of the areas, and that was the assistant secretary of state, the regional person in the Pentagon, the person in the CIA, person from the NSC, and USIA, AID, and then, if it dealt with some other particular interest, an equivalent person from another agency, and that body was supposed to make decisions. In the small office I was in before becoming front office staff assistant, we did the work for those meetings, and they actually took place and they actually worked. We had country papers that were done every year that were designed to be the resource-allocating mechanism for all agencies. They were called country analysis and strategy papers, and you were trying to define those to make those a central way of getting agencies to give their resources to the foreign policy in one particular country or another, and we were beginning to refine that so that we would actually do it perhaps on a hemisphere-wide basis. I don't think any other bureau in the State Department picked up the authority that was in Johnson's memorandum on this and tried to use it. They key part of this was that decisions where there was no objection of the principal agencies became the decisions, became the policy of the U.S. government, and only if there was an objection was it brought to a higher level or eventually to the White House. The first thing that Kissinger did was to change that, that no decisions would ever be made at that level. Immediately, of course, the system changed completely and it became much more just discussion forums rather than decision-making forums, and that seems to me, at least from my American perspective, we could deeply weaken the leadership of the Bureau around Washington on Latin American issues. So that was one thing. Of course, the other thing is, as you suggest, from conversations I overheard with Kissinger, it was quite clear there were two things he was not comfortable with, and one was Latin America. He was always expressing surprise at different things that had been agreed on that. And the other was economic matters. That wasn't something that drove him. He immediately changed any economic discussion into a political discussion.

Q: You moved on to become what, the special assistant?

McLEAN: I became the special assistant at that time. The job, I think, in the Department now is called executive assistant. At that time I was the senior aide in the assistant secretary's office. As I say, Pete Vaky was there for several months, I think from December through January of the Johnson period, and then in February or the beginning of March an assistant secretary had been appointed but wasn't confirmed until later than month.

Q: Who was that?

McLEAN: That was Charles Meyer, Charlie Meyer. Charlie was, is, someone with a great background in Sears, Roebuck & Company. He was married to the great personality of Sears Roebuck's General Woods' niece, and he at a young age had gone out and started Sears Roebuck stores around Latin America. He had enormous fluency in Spanish and he was just one of the most friendly people in the world. He must be, because I had never seen a person with so many friends, throughout Latin America, throughout the various places where he had been as vice president of Sears and that included Philadelphia. He came from Philadelphia. Before that he had been in Texas, probably a Dallas store, and at one point he had been the vice president for international relations with Sears-a very interesting person.

Q: I would have thought that, coming from that background, he would have found himself... In a way it would have put a lot of weight on you to tell him how to operate within the bureaucracy, particularly when you had somebody such as Henry Kissinger who was sort of undercutting the State Department. Did you feel that at all?

McLEAN: Well, I did, because he was clearly new, though by that time, by the latter part of the time that he gets there and he appoints a new deputy assistant secretary, by the time the deputy assistant secretary comes in, John Crimmins, to take his place, he did have that strong advice from the career service. But I certainly played a role. He just was very perplexed by the way the State Department ran. Problems would be brought to him, and he would turn around and send them down into the bureaucracy. He'd say, "Get the Brazil desk to look at this." And it was a great frustration to him that, if he did that at ten, by five o'clock in the afternoon there was a decision made and a memorandum back on his desk again still asking him to make the decision, because the Assistant Secretary was the level where so many of these sensitive decisions had to be made. He was used more to an atmosphere where managers set goals and the decisions on how to implement them got done on the operating level. But in the State Department they kept popping back up. The long hours was also surprising to him. I remember-I think he was kidding, but I'm not sure-that he had lost 12 pounds since I took over scheduling him, because I had one schedule after another going, and he was being scheduled every half hour. In retrospect, I probably overdid it. But there were enormous pressures. I'm sure I was turning down four-fifths of the requests that came our way. But I guess that was the main problem, was his schedule, which he found very difficult. He also, like lots, was suspicious of the Department. He came under pressure to break up the bureau and give AID back its Western Hemisphere section. The new head of AID really wanted it back. In the end we took a survey of both the AID and the State people and found that they very overwhelmingly wanted to keep the arrangement, because they thought it was useful to them. Surprisingly the State people had gotten very used to having their hands on the pocketbook more, having AID resources more directly at hand. The joint arrangement continued for a good long time, and for another eight years more I had this back-to-back arrangement. He was a very business-minded person in other ways. I remember when it came to the final decisions on the IPC matter, at a very intense meeting trying to make a decision on it...

Q: This was in Peru?

McLEAN: This was in Peru. He turned to me-I was sitting behind him as all good aides do-and he said, "Call the international-I forget his name-the international vice president of Sears and get me the sales figures for the Lima store for the last six months." I can remember thinking what in the heck does this have to do with this. But I did it. He obviously got some comfort, some sense of what was really going on in the country, and he was particularly moved by the fact that the U.S. business community in Peru and in Latin America very strongly did not want to impose sanctions against Peru, because they felt that it would result in nationalism and would hurt their business interests. In the end the decision was basically not to make a decision but to put it off for a time. It wasn't resolved for many years after that. But Charlie got into the bureaucracy and, in fact, he said right at the beginning one of the things he wanted to do was stay for a long time, and he did that. He set the record as the longest service assistant secretary of state, so I got him off to a good start.

Q: You mentioned the Rockefeller trip, and you said, "the infamous Rockefeller trip." I've had other reflections of the Rockefeller trip by people who were in post where he arrived-particularly he, but not only he, but his staff arrived-and I wonder if you could tell how you all viewed it from your perspective.

McLEAN: Well, from our perspective, it seemed to sort of spin out of, not necessarily spin out of control, spin out of any sense of proportion. Very early on, Pete Vaky, who was still in his acting capacity, met with him. In fact, I think he got in a limousine with him and went to the airport, and that was the extent of his chance to get across to him. He was basically trying to say, "Keep it modest, keep it in proportion. Go down and have intimate contacts with these folks. That's really what they really need and really want. Otherwise you're going to get a very strong reaction, negative reaction." I remember Pete telling me that Rockefeller was just enormously optimistic that anything he took on he could do and he would do, and we shouldn't worry about it. He had learned from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to take the initiative and be positive, and that was the view we should take. So we shut up and watched things happen. What happened is, it's my understanding that the trips cost about a billion and a half dollars, which was a lot more money than it is, a fair amount of money at that time. This is strictly out of my memory, and I don't know, maybe I've got this wrong by a zero or two. But the money was split up, was paid for one-third by the State Department toward Rockefeller's expenses, one-third by AID and I can never remember how we justified having AID, and one-third by Rockefeller himself, and Rockefeller paid for the press coverage. He then assembled a very large group of people, 15-20 people, who would go on these trips, and they would make several trips at a time. They would hit several countries and then come back and report, and then go back, and they did that and they went from place to place, but as they got going more and more, the press was very bad, and that just stirred more confrontations and more difficulties, in part because they tended to just drop in on embassies, and Rockefeller just had the sense that the embassy had to step aside and let them take over. Many of the embassies had a hard time doing that. In a place like Panama, where the embassy was so used to digging in its heels and fighting bureaucratically against the military, various parts of the military, and Canal Zone government, the ambassador was almost literally pushed aside and in fact left the post early because Rockefeller made it known he didn't like it, didn't like what went on. The ambassador was saved by the system and was sent out to another country. But, as I say, they would come in with such demands. They finally met their match in Bolivia, where the embassy would not allow them to go into the city. If you know Bolivia, the airport is up on a high plateau, alto plano, but to go into the city you had to go down a narrow road, and the embassy saw no way in security terms that they could make that happen, and it became very bitter, very difficult. The ambassador, a man by the name of Raoul Castro, and his staff were in very bad condition with the Rockefeller people, because the Rockefeller people were so insistent that something different had to take place. In the end the whole visit took place at the airport. I don't know why, in retrospect, they couldn't have gone to some other place like Cochabamba or Santa Cruz, but that was the way it was. I'm sure there and other places caused great anxiety and in some cases career damage. In a very few, very, very few cases, it did cause some people to get promoted, because they did it right or did it in an acceptable way to them. But what was happening on this, this press presence was another lesson that I learned at that time. When you have a lot of press with you, you'd better darn well have news, because otherwise they're going to report something. I can recall the case when they went to Quito, the capital of Ecuador, and they had some very uneventful meetings and nothing particular happened, but down in Guayaquil there was rioting. It was a long way away, and the rioting had nothing to do with their visit whatsoever, but, of course, the U.S. press reported the rioting in Guayaquil as if it were related to Rockefeller's trip, and it made an enormously bad impression both in the United States but also in Latin America, meaning that each stop on the trip got a little worse than the one before because it was getting a bad reputation. They had a reputation of going and talking rather than listening. Again, I would hear the debriefings that Rockefeller would make to Meyers over the telephone, and I would take the notes, and I would get them around to people so that they would know what was going on, but, I must say, it was all pretty light stuff at that point. They eventually, long afterwards, produced a report, which I don't think was one of the great reports. By that time he was over at the White House, and I think he did his best to make it a better report, but policy got caught up in the sense that, if you want development, maybe the way to do it is to have authoritarian states to do it. I'd have to go back and read it, but I think that to a degree is reflected in the Rockefeller report, in effect giving blessings to these military developmentists, governments led by military with the goal of bring development to the countries.

Q: Somewhat foreshadowing Jean Kirkpatrick in the Reagan Administration.

McLEAN: Well, of course, by that time it was a little bit different. That didn't have the development... [end of Tape 2 Side B]

Q: This is Tape 3 Side 1 with Phil McLean.

McLEAN: So in effect blending this previous emphasis on development with a newer, perhaps more real politique view of things, you came up with this idea that military governments dedicated to helping the poor could be good things.

Q: These special people coming out to Latin America particularly-one thinks of the Milton Eisenhower trip under the Eisenhower Administration, and then Adlai Stevenson went out, I think, was it under Johnson?

McLEAN: Kennedy.

Q: Kennedy, so it was sort of done. It's almost as though we give a high-power, high-profile trip to an area that we're not going to pay a hell of a lot of attention to anyway.

McLEAN: Well, I think there is some sense. Maybe it's an old-fashioned concept in our relations with Latin America, but the sense in Latin America with our U.S./Latin American relationships is that, to the degree that you have developed personal contacts, that's a good thing and we should do that. So that's a natural way that you tended to go with Eisenhower traveling around. Kennedy sent out Adlai Stevenson, but he also sent out Burley, and Johnson himself goes out and makes a couple of major trips. Maybe Johnson's the beginning of when the sense of scale gets lost, with huge trips and American airplanes coming in. In the Rockefeller case it's not that the attention wasn't good, but again the scale was way off the ground. Two airplanes would come in together, and you would have 15 or 20 people going out and meeting. They would break up into groups and meet with different parts of the society and get an instant analysis of what was going on. So I think that some of what was going on was a sense of being overwhelmed by these folks, but it happened and I don't think it left any permanent scars.

Q: When one talks about Latin America, one always ends up going from Central America down. What about Mexico? Did Mexico come up? It's really our major concern, but it seems to be treated almost as something outside the Latin American sphere as sort of on its own.

McLEAN: I think at this point that was really very true. We didn't have a formal AID program with Mexico, and we didn't have a large military presence, so the major actors, major agencies, working on Latin America didn't have a large presence in Latin America. The exception, of course, is the CIA, which did have a presence and did have a role, probably in some ways a more significant role than it had in some other countries. But in the agency discussions, it did not become a big issue, which seems strange from this point of view, because so many things were going on. There was lots of economic activity going on. There were lots of consular activities, important things, going on, but it wouldn't rise up and become a major issue, as I say, in part because the agencies that dealt with Latin America weren't in fact pushing it.

Q: Each agency almost had its own thing. I mean, for example, from what I understand-I've never served there-you have their foreign affairs establishment which essentially has a sort of an anti-American policy where you have the CIA and their intelligence operation getting along very nicely, thank you, and the FBI and other groups. They all kind of do their thing, and it's almost without anybody really controlling it or really caring to control it because it works.

McLEAN: No, I think that's right. It was certainly true in the Inter-American Bureau that it was a strange disconnect. There was even a disconnect in the budget of the Inter-American Bureau, the ARA Bureau. We had an enormous rise in our budget. When I took a look at it, what happened? Oh, we were given money to build a dam, to build irrigation systems, all on the Mexican border, but it was in effect domestic money. It wasn't from the foreign policy account or the foreign relations account. The State Department had a man who was working on building irrigation systems all along the border, and yet he was almost not related to the rest of us. That was very true throughout this particular period. Later on Mexico becomes much more central, certainly by the time you get to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and things, but even before NAFTA you begin to sense something's going on on our border that we're going to have to pull together. But only in the days of the interagency regional groups did you have this sense of pulling together policies from all agencies and the discipline of the ambassador and the Bureau and the State Department. It was the only time I ever saw that really come together in the same way. The chaos of Washington trying to stay on top of what other agencies are doing in various countries, I think, was greater before that, and it certainly was true in recent years that the State Department always has to play catch-up and doesn't have quite the power that it did in the days when it was much more on top of budgets and things. But Mexico was one that always escaped that control or that discipline, and the embassies I don't think ever really had, from my observation, full knowledge of what was going on by the U.S. Government in their countries.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss on this particular period?

McLEAN: I think not. I think that my period there was a very intensive period, serving in a special system like that. I used it to get out and go out to university, and that's what we can talk about, to study Latin American studies.

Q: Doesn't this sort of thing have quite an impact on the family, a job like this?

McLEAN: It was obviously a difficult time, but as soon as I knew that I was moving into this type of area, I remember I moved from the suburbs closer in to Washington. I moved into an area just above Georgetown, Glover Park, and discovered that, since I didn't have to pay income tax, local tax inside the District, I could barely afford to do that. So it was a good thing, but obviously the glories of working long hours or too long hours, for one thing it becomes a bad habit, and it grew in a period when I really needed to as part of the job, but then maybe that habit lasted later and the fact that the marriage of that day only survived 29 years but didn't go longer.

Q: Well, in 1969 you left.

McLEAN: In 1969 I left Washington.

Q: And where did you go? We'll end at this point.

McLEAN: I went out to Bloomington, Indiana, to study for a master's degree in Latin American studies.

Q: All right, well, we'll pick it up then.

Q: It's the 29th of January 1999. Phil, Bloomington, Latin American studies: I always think of the University of Indiana as being a specialty in Slavic studies. Can you tell me about why you went there for Latin American studies and then something about what you were looking at? This would be 1969 to 1970?

McLEAN: That's correct, 1969 to 1970. Actually Indiana turned out a wonderful accident. I had been thinking of other schools. I was thinking of Wisconsin, because at that time Wisconsin specialized in Brazil studies and my one background overseas in Latin America was in Brazil. I put in for that and wasn't selected for the Wisconsin program. I thought of Texas, but as it turned out, someone said to me that a former investigator or researcher in INR had gone back to academia and gone to Indiana and was very much promoting the school, so I got in contact with him and he made the arrangements. I had really been looking for a school in the Midwest. I wanted to know that part of the country that I was always flying over from Seattle to Washington and back again, but I really didn't know the Midwest, so I was looking for a school somewhere in that vast middle of our country. It turned out to be a fantastic place. Indiana at that particular time was in fact known best for its Slavic studies. It was also known for its Southeast Asia studies, but in fact they were trying to build up a more global specialization area studies. They had gotten money from the Ford Foundation to build up area centers, and so Indiana at that particular time also turned out to be a great center for Latin American studies. The Hispanic American Historical Review was being published there at that time, and they had a good group of professors particularly strong on the history side. In fact, I would say that was every bit of their strength, though they had some others. David Burks, who was the professor who encouraged me to come there and brought me there and oversaw my studies, was a Cuban specialist. He gave, I think, probably one of the most popular courses in the history department on Cuba. Bob Quirk, Robert Quirk, was a Mexicanist. He was the editor of the Hispanic American Historical Review, and there were others who were working with him on that. And Jim Scovy, who was an enormously talented professor, was an expert on Argentina. In addition to that, the Latin American studies group was headed by Paul Dowdy, who was an anthropologist, whom I took a course from and who stimulated my interest in the Andean area. He was a great Andean specialist in academia. So with that I did about 50 percent of my studies in history, but I also took economics and political studies and at least one course in anthropology.

Q: Why had you chosen Latin American studies? Was this something you felt you really wanted to go most of your career to, or how did you feel at the time?

McLEAN: I had just come out of being in a very intense experience in the Latin American bureau in State, and I was very excited about these issues. I knew what I didn't want. I knew I didn't want to go to Asia at that particular time and be sucked up into Vietnam, which I didn't really care for; and Europe was a hard nut to crack, and it's a little harder to see a career going forward there. Africa wasn't my great interest. So Latin America did excite me, and I was interested in that particular thing. There was another factor too. I had come into the Foreign Service almost directly out of university, so I was looking to get myself a master's degree. In fact, one of the schools I turned down in this program was New Mexico. New Mexico had a good program, but you couldn't get this master's in a year's time. So I wanted to get a master's degree, and I wanted to round out my studies and give myself some confidence. It turns out in my career I spent-it probably says something about me and I'm not quite sure what-I spent a very large part of my years in the Foreign Service in education. I think ten percent of my time in the Foreign Service was in one way or another in educational programs.

Q: You mentioned Vietnam. 1969 to 1970 is something that people who went to Wisconsin or the University of California or Columbia or something were really caught up in the Vietnam protest. How was that playing, and did you get involved at all?

McLEAN: Well, it was very much playing, and it was a bit of a shock for me, because I had left university on this great wave of optimism and idealism of the Kennedy period. I had worked in the Kennedy campaign. I felt we were going to change the world from bottom up but very much inside the system. I had worked in politics from the precinct level to the state level and thought this was the way we were going to change the world. When I got to Indiana, I discovered that there was talk of revolution. At that time, in fact, it later turns out half of what was later the Symbionese Liberation Front was on campus at that particular time. There were big campus demonstrations. The Chicago trials were going on, and they would come down and have mass meetings, and I would go out not to participate so much as to count how many people. I used my counting talents that you use in the Foreign Service of how many are in the crowd. The one time I was involved directly was after Kent State, which was a stunning blow...

Q: You might explain what Kent State was.

McLEAN: Kent State...

Q: In Ohio.

McLEAN: In Ohio and not so far away obviously from Indiana. There were protests and some young people were killed in the process.

Q: The National Guard had been called out, and it got out of control.

McLEAN: And the whole thing had really collapsed. It had come just after President Nixon was seen on television calling students bums and all of these things. I, of course, had been trying to use some of my time to get together with the students, get to know them, and convince them that life in government was a good thing and this is a good way to channel your optimism and idealism. But there was great suspicion, of course. I was thought to be, I must be, a member of the CIA. It was those types of things you had to deal with. But I remember the day after the Kent State thing I was up at the library, and I knew that turmoil was going on in the campus, and I was, in fact, waylaid by some of these students whom I'd been talking to, and they really insisted to talk deeply with me, so we went back to my house and had a deep conversation. I tried to direct them, but the next thing I knew, there I was. I too was seated on the steps, feeling a little guilty about it because it was during Washington working hours. I was also making a statement. That's probably the height of my radicalism, and from then on I'd become a conservative old fogy, but at that point I was feeling that that was something that was pretty oracle, and a sense of the world coming apart was a very strong feeling. It was a great place to be, and it was a great place to check in on America after having been out of university for eight or nine years.

Q: What about sort of the philosophical roots of people who were studying Latin America from the American university point of view? I can't remember, was liberation theology part of the dogma at the time?

McLEAN: Not really. Many of those things were obviously ideas that had been going around. In fact, I recall, way back when I was in Brasilia, one of the reports that I did which got a lot of praise was a study of Catholic radicalism. At that time there were many of these terms that would become common to liberation theology like evangelization, this idea of awakening. First it began as a teaching tool. A way to awake poor people's desire to study was to get them riled up, and point out the difference between a small house and big house and use that vocabulary to make people want to be literate. But by the time I would say it had not really fully formed. I remember Ivan Ilyich came to campus at that time. He was one of the promoters of these ideas, and there was a great excitement already among the students, and when they saw him and participated in this, but I don't think it fully formed. A doctrine certainly had not yet arrived at least on the campuses.

Q: Someone I interviewed-I think it was at Stanford-was saying that there was a lot more excitement about these ideas like liberation theology and all on the American campuses and a lot of it was generated there as opposed to down in some of the areas of Latin America.

McLEAN: I'm not sure I would agree with that, because many of these ideas did begin, as I say. I'm trying to recall the name of the man who thought the first ideas in Brazil. But it goes Ivan Ilyich, who had some American links, though I think he was very much European oriented, and he was famous because he had established a school's language in culture study schools, first at Cuernavaca in Mexico and then in Catropolis in Brazil, and he tried to instill priests and missionaries with these ideas. But that sort of thinking also came out of Latin America. What happens is, of course, it gets stuck in certain parts of Latin America, and in other parts of Latin America it doesn't exist. But it was interesting because there was something going on inside the United States and things were spinning out of control to a degree. I recall at the end of the period that I was getting ready for exams, I got a request from here at the Foreign Service Institute. They said that Under-Secretary Richardson, the late Richardson, had said, "I wonder what's going on out there," and then he remembered that the Foreign Service in one way or another had lots of people out of campus so that he might go and look for. The result of this request was that all of us submit an analysis of what we saw going on and try to interpret what was happening. I remember I delivered mine as I came into Washington, and a person put it together in a report, a rather interesting report of what he distilled from it. My own sense was they were looking for ideas. Does this mean that Marxism and radicalism was finding its roots in the United States? And I would remind you, no, it's more like a radical view of Walt Disney. There was a certain innocence about it. People didn't feel that the world was working the way that they had been grown to believe that it would. There was an outburst of that, and then the other point was that the campuses were just choked with people, both because the baby boom was hitting the campuses and, two, because people were escaping the draft, and as a consequence the university itself was breaking down, its administrative ability to deal with them, and that further contributed to the alienation of the students. Of course, it was a good deal for me. I was in very good shape.

Q: What about campus Marxism? You alluded to it just now, but was it fairly prevalent and did it seem to have any real roots, or was this just instructors having fun being different?

McLEAN: No, I didn't find it did have real roots. As I say, there was a course on Marxism, which I almost took but I was rather busy doing other things so I decided not to, and I understand it was very popular and it was trying to review Marxism and the basis of it, and so you heard some of the students talking in those terms but very rarely. It was not deep-seated radicalism in that sense; it was more they were just disaffected from the society as it was and the Vietnam War was making people angry. What I was stunned by, of course, was that they began to look for enemies in our history, and one of the first ones that they identified was John Kennedy. Of course, for me he was a hero, a martyred hero, and kids had already begun to believe that the Vietnam War was really basically due to him and not to anyone else. But, no, I found the radicalism to be confusing and confused but not sinister.

Q: I've never dealt with Latin America, but I would think it would almost break into three parts. One would be Brazil, and then the other would be all the rest except for Mexico, and Mexico always seems that it doesn't seem to march to the same drum that anyone else does. Was that at all reflected?

McLEAN: Well, I think it was reflected to the degree that they didn't have a Brazil program, and personally that turned out to be very helpful, because I came speaking Portuguese and not Spanish, and much of the material were Spanish. What I did have as my next door neighbor was, in fact, probably the most prominent Brazilianist on campus, although he was in the language course. Developed a close friendship with him and his wife, and his house was a hangout for Brazilian students who were coming there and people who were traveling through. I met many Brazilian politicians who were coming through at that time. It was the year that our ambassador was kidnapped.

Q: Burke Elbrick.

McLEAN: So I met the man who had set off that final stage of radicalism that finally turned the military into taking control of the government quite directly. He was a humorist, as many Brazilian politicians are. He told all Brazilian girls to stop dating military people as a way to get the military to get back in their barracks. No, Brazil was not a strong center there. Then there was, as I say, the rest. Mexico in Indiana did have this presence because Robert Quirk and one other professor were very strong as Mexicanists. In fact, one of the courses I took there was a colloquium on the beginnings of Mexico up to the independence movement, and it did me in good stead later on because I wouldn't have known that part of the history of Latin America, which is really important for an American to know, without Quirk's tutor.

Q: From your contacts with Brazilian students and all, how did the kidnapping of Ambassador Elbrick play with them at that time?

McLEAN: Well, I think there was a sense of excitement. Oh, this was the revolution. But again, you wouldn't say it was really serious stuff. These kids wouldn't express violence that they wanted this to happen, but they were very excited about the fact that this particular event was taking place and it showed that forces of revolution on a theoretical basis were moving head. So it created excitement but certainly not a reaction.

Q: Did you know where you were going when you were taking this course?

McLEAN: No, I did not know where I was going. A man whom I had helped get into the Department when I was holding this lofty position as special assistant in the Latin American Bureau-I guess he was a Democratic political appointee whom I had helped move into the Department and ended up being my personnel officer-I called him, I remember, finally in January when I hadn't heard anything from the Department all this time, and he asked what was my name again, McLean. He couldn't quite remember who I was. They wanted to send me to Brazil, and I resisted that. For one thing they wanted to send me to the political section in Rio de Janeiro, and I just had the sense that no sooner would I get to Rio de Janeiro than I would be back in Brasilia again, and I had done that. But the other thing was I wanted to develop my Spanish language ability, which I felt, if you're going to have a career in Latin America, you've got to know Spanish. Then I waited and waited and waited, and eventually was assigned to Panama. At that point I frankly didn't want to go to Panama either, because Panama had this reputation of being a very Americanized place. It might be very, in fact, difficult to learn Spanish, but I was told that Ambassador Sayre, the ambassador there who had been my boss when he was deputy assistant secretary, wanted me specifically, because I had worked for him on the sea-level canal matters and, therefore, he wanted me, and so I took that as a compliment and accepted the assignment.

Q: So you went to Panama, and you were in Panama from 1970 to when?

McLEAN: 1970 to 1973.

Q: What was the situation in Panama when you arrived?

McLEAN: Well, in Panama a period of great tension had broken out in the early '60s when Panamanians perceived that a treaty that we had negotiated in 1958 was not being lived up to, and therefore there were riots in 1964, and then the Johnson Administration put in place a series of policies, which tended to cool things off. Among them was a study of building a sea-level canal and some other measures, and they also said they would renegotiate the treaties, but by the time I got there in 1970, that had just refallen into a sort of vacuum. The Nixon Administration wasn't particularly interested in following up on the Johnson Administration's initiative in that regard. In the meantime also, in 1968 the National Guard, a sort of super police force, had taken over the government, and a man name Torrijos, a charismatic figure, was leading the government, so a period of confrontation built up during the period I was there, from 1970 to 1973.

Q: Your job was what?

McLEAN: I was in the political section. I had gone there with the specific guarantee that I would not be the labor officer. I was afraid the labor officer was going to involve me very strongly in Panama Canal affairs. I had, in fact, worked for a man briefly in the Department who had had that job; and, one, he didn't speak Spanish after he left, and, two, he described a situation which didn't seem to be terrifically attractive as a job, meaning that the embassy was treated as sort of a second-class operation against the Canal authorities who had the power. Well, when I got there, I looked around and I kept looking for the labor officer, and they kept delivering me the material, that labor packet from the Department of Labor, and I said, "Are you guys telling me that I'm the labor officer?" and they said, "Oh, yes, you're the labor officer." I said, "Are you saying this is important?" and they said, "Oh, yes, this is very important." I said, "Really?" They said, "No, no, very important that you do it." So I started working the labor account, and I spent for the first year about 50 percent of my time. It turned out to be a terrific deal, because, one, although I did some things with the canal unions, what I basically did was get out into the countryside. It was a vehicle for me to do that and also to then deal with people who did not speak English, and my Spanish came in rather quickly. Two, the AID Director wisely gave me a lot of responsibilities. I became actually their contract officer for the AFILD-I forget what AFILD stands for, but it was the AFL-CIO's union promotion program, and I became AID's contact with them. I also had other labor-related contracts inside of AID. It turned out to be a terrific opportunity to work on my own and start producing a lot of reporting that nobody had looked at in some years. Of course, one of the odd things in a place like Panama where there are so many agencies of the United States government is that, as soon as you do something interesting, suddenly everyone else wants to get into the show. I found that almost humorous, that whereas nobody had reported on labor before I was there or had given it sort of a hum-drum treatment, suddenly it became a very important thing and everybody had been stimulated by these reports that I was writing as I got to know people and did the writing about what was going on in the farther corners of the country in the labor movement.

Q: How did the indigenous labor movement work with the-it wasn't the National Guard...

McLEAN: It was the National Guard.

Q: National Guard. You would think it would tend to squash labor. Military and labor usually go in different directions.

McLEAN: They would except that Torrijos is a very populist type of person, and I understand that some years later there became conflicts between them, but at that time he was trying to promote these types of activities, perhaps as a way to find institutions and levers that he could use against the United States. So he basically was supportive of labor in general. The type of activity I was involved with had not gotten so great that it threatened him at that point. In fact, I would say we got some things going that maybe later made them uncomfortable, maybe not Torrijos as much as his successor, Noriega. When I got there, I think there were nine labor unions, and by the time I left there were 25, after the so-called free democratic labor. As I say, those tended to be pro-American, and they were good unions. I can remember one time selecting a union leader to go to the States for one of these trips, and the ambassador saw him off. Well, he no sooner came back than he led a strike of the cement workers. I remember the ambassador calling me in and saying, "What's going on up at the cement plant? Who are these radicals?" I said, "Well, they're not radicals, Mr. Ambassador. Remember, here's a picture of you seeing this guy off." I had come from sort of a labor union family myself, so I was very pleased to be out there stirring up some of these problems. There was also a major change that our AID activities put in place-not put in place, we counseled and moved them in a direction. I shouldn't say put in place, because it certainly wasn't forced by us, but we certainly showed them that a bargaining type of labor regime was better than one that was paternalistically handed down by the state, which is the more common model throughout Latin America. After a year and a half or two years of negotiation, this was adopted by the government. If I'm not mistaken, it still is largely the model that is used in Panama, which is very helpful in terms of relating with the United States, which has quite a different flavor contracting way of operation. But I think we should take some credit, I would take some credit for my work with the labor law commission that was taking place during that time.

Q: I would have thought that, Panama being so much concerned with the United States, you would have been tripping over AFL-CIO representatives and all that.

McLEAN: No, not really. The man that I dealt with-there were two people I dealt with-of AFILD did come out of the labor movement to some degree. One of them, Pecky Sweater, was one of the great personalities that I have ever met in my life. He was a Basque-correction, an Elysian-who had come to the United States in the Franco period as an exile, worked with the AFL-CIO, was an interpreter for George Meaney all those years, and then went into this AFILD work. He was a wonderful personality. He very much wanted to pull me in. In fact, I would say some of my Spanish language. He used to take me after courses off in the interior and then very dramatically introduce me and say I would be giving a speech. Of course, I was stuttering away in my Spanish, but it was a great learning tool. His successor was a somewhat more conventional person but a very effective guy. As I say, I think we did some very fine work getting the unions involved in community development programs, which helped attract membership. There were on the edges of these things some people you couldn't deal with very easily, like the banana workers on the Pacific side who had a leftist tradition. But, by and large, we were out helping organize people throughout the country. In the Canal Zone itself there were AFL-CIO unions, and a few of them had dual memberships. That is, they were both Panamanian unions and they were U.S. unions. During my time there, there was a dispute between the American union and its local, and in that case I played a role in trying to conciliate an agreement that would calm the American union and also bring the Panamanian union, which was made up basically of Caribbean workers, English-speaking Caribbean workers, but bring them into a world where there wouldn't be in effect a jurisdiction strike inside the Zone, and that was what we were trying to avoid.

Q: I would have thought that in the political section at a certain point your colleagues in the political section would say, "Hey, you're stirring these guys up and causing problems here."

McLEAN: Well, not really. As I said, I think I had started something that people found a lot of fun and had a lot of interest. Working with AID it also involved the political section in some of the things that other parts of the embassy were doing. The AID director was a wonderful personality, Alec Herfner. Eventually what happened is that the ambassador had some difficulty relating with Torrijos, who was a whoring, drinking type of individual. The ambassador was and is a very straight and formal person. He basically gave the go-ahead for the AID director to develop a personal relationship with Torrijos, and I think it was a wise move, because Torrijos wasn't easy to get to know. But through my relationship with the AID director, it happened that I was brought along on these trips that he would make with Torrijos, but the AID director then would debrief me on what was being said in our political reporting, which was a big help, and he also then in turn introduced me to people around Torrijos, whom I was able to develop as contacts. So little by little after the first year, though I was still doing as much labor work as I did the first, as it turns out I spent less and less of my entire time when I started developing other contacts in other areas of activity. By the end I often note that the last weeks I was in Panama I was being given farewell parties by the unions and at the Union Club, the exclusive Union Club, because I had gotten to know a range of personalities across the board.

Q: What about sort of the other hat you were wearing as just a general political officer? What about parties in this period of time?

McLEAN: The parties were basically dead. I remember the son of one of the perennial political candidates telling me he didn't expect to have a political life in his lifetime. He could not because politics was going to be dead. It turned out that not be the case, and I understand he's back in politics now. But nonetheless, towards the end I began to develop contacts with the liberal party and some of these other parties which really didn't have an official role. Torrijos tried to reinvent the political life of the country. He wanted to take it out of the hands of the Panama City elites and develop something of a popular structure. As a consequence he decided he would establish parliament that would not be based on a normal system of election but would be one that would be chosen by neighborhoods. The neighborhood would choose a representative, a higher representative, and finally get to a level where they'd get to parliament. Well, this, of course, was phony democracy, but in order to try to understand this and understand what he was trying to do, in this particular case I got hold of the head of the electoral tribunal, which everyone thought must be a totally dead institution. It turned out actually was continuing to issue cedulas, these electoral cards which could be used for identity, and it was very important. The head of this office was the brother of the head of intelligence for the National Guard. His name was Noriega. So this gentleman, a very fat, jolly type of individual, would see me, sometimes with great difficulty, but I kept after him because he was always willing to tell me things. He would always tell me stories of what was going on inside the government, and eventually we had a series of lunches in which I kept saying that it couldn't be possible that the government was really demanding the type of things that he was talking about. The United States was never going to accept that, and they couldn't possibly be wanting to open negotiations with this on the basis of these very extreme positions. We went back and forth, and finally after one lunch that afternoon a messenger came with an envelope, and I picked it up and read it and I was just stunned, because it was the position of the Panamanian government. Nine months later when they laid that very same position with very small changes on it, it was the exact same position that was given to me. I like to tease other parts of the U.S. government that the real way to get secret information is to take people out to lunch and give them books and other such goods. He was a sad individual in the end, but at that particular time he was very helpful to me personally.

Q: At that time what were you getting from the ambassador and from the rest of the people involved with the political life within the embassy about Torrijos?

McLEAN: There was a great argument at the time, trying to parse out who is this individual, what's going on, is he an extreme leftist or is he a strong nationalist. There were many parts of the U.S. government that were quite concerned and thought that he was a communist tool. We'd have arguments. He'd give a speech. I remember once in Portamoyas in which he used a word in which he said, "I am a," and the next word was "I am a military leader" or "I am a Castro-ite leader," "castritay castrensay." I had to go over and sit with the FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Services) operation over in the Canal Zone to try to listen to this word to see if we could identify what he was saying about himself. Torrijos in fact did open up relations, rather quietly at first, with Cuba, and that was causing a lot of suspicion. I had interviewed them a half a dozen times, usually with my boss, with the Los Angeles Times representative, Frank Kent, and a local stringer who used to set up their meetings. And then for a long period I was in charge of the section, and they came in to see me one time and the man from the Times started by asking questions about the Cuba connection, and I frankly gave him things, nothing that was secret but things that he could have known if he talked to enough people, about these openings, the plane flights that were taking place and contacts. The reporter asked me, "Isn't the embassy terribly concerned about these things?" and I said, "I don't want to use this interview as a way to put that message out." He said, "Well, you are watching it closely?" I said, "Yes, of course, we're watching it closely, as you know." Therefore, he then published a couple days later a story which said the embassy is watching this with increasing watchfulness if not concern, turning what I had said. He wanted to get a quote, and so he did. Of course, that didn't make the ambassador very happy that that got out, but that was a mild thing, except that at that interview as they were leaving, they asked to learn about our new ambassador, U.S. ambassador, who had been nominated. He was a 72-year-old Congressman who was retiring, and the guy asked me about him, and I very strongly said, "Listen, we're entering into a period with Canal negotiations, and it's very important that the President have the man he wants here and someone he can talk to." He asked me for the guy's bio out of the Congressional Directory, and I gave it to him. Of course, right after that first story which I admitted I was the source of, out comes another story which talks about people in the embassy being very upset by this appointment. Of course, that caused our career ambassador great pain and difficulty. Luckily the local stringer who had been arranging this thing found out about this through my secretary, and he came in, unbeknownst to me, and talked to the ambassador and made it clear to the ambassador that I was not the source of that story or that particular comment. But what it taught me very strongly was never have an interview by yourself; always have at least one other from the embassy present whenever it happens.

Q: Did negotiations start while you were there?

McLEAN: They did start. The President nominated a new negotiator, and I at various times was his aide when he would come down.

Q: Who was that?

McLEAN: I'm trying to think of his name. He was Director of Education in my state of Washington. He was the nephew of a famous Republican Senator. It will come to me maybe when we do the written parts. I remember that he was very fluent in Spanish because he had worked in business in Latin America with Lone Star Cement. One night I was waiting in his hotel room as he was getting ready to go out to some event that I was taking him to. I got a call from some prostitutes, and they said, "The President said that he wanted us to come up," and the poor old ambassador was deeply embarrassed because he had been joking with Jimmy Lakas, the figurehead president, and, Panamanians being Panamanians, if you said you wanted to do this sort of thing, they were going to take care of it. I said, "I hope, Mr. Ambassador, I did the right thing when I sent they away." But the negotiations were starting, and that was building up the move. At one point Torrijos called in 150,000 people into the plaza, the Mayo Plaza in the middle of Panama. Everything we did was also being disputed by another agency of the U.S. government, particularly the Intelligence Agency, and we were afraid they were going to try to minimize this thing, but correctly we thought it was going to be very large. So my friend kind of lately got the idea of going to the library and getting pictures of previous demonstrations and counting numbers and working out what that size was with some accuracy from aerial photos. Then we would figure out very quickly, because we would see how the crowd was stacked up. It turned out to be nobody disputed our figure of 150,000. As it turned out, he and I had agreed to take one another's place, and I think I lost the flip of the coin and was the one that was supposed to go before the speeches were given. I would actually be there at the time they were supposed to begin, but we knew they never would begin on time, so I was in the middle of this thing when suddenly Torrijos did the impossible and actually began his speeches on time, so I was in the midst of this 150,000 people shouting anti-American slogans and waving machetes, and it was quite an event. I was hoping my hair was a little darker color at that particular point, since I stood out as a towhead in this crowd. Then as it broke up, I went over to the Canal Zone, because my friend and I were exchanging places in the governor's office. The governor had wanted somebody from the embassy for his office, and it was spooky, because as soon as you stepped across the Canal Zone border, it was like a neutron bomb had gone off. It was just totally empty. The houses were empty along the Canal Zone quarter, and the hotels and other buildings were empty. Eventually I was stopped by a lone police car that came up, which was good because in that heat I was given a ride up to the governor's office. There was a tremendous crisis atmosphere inside the Zone as they were watching over the development of this huge crowd. But that was part of the atmosphere of that time and what was going on. There was a big debate going on throughout the government, U.S. government, as to what we should be doing with these people in these negotiations. In the embassy my friend Blakely and others eventually convinced the ambassador of a position that basically said what we should offer are partial solutions, to try to deal with the most concrete specific things that the Panamanians were asking for and set aside the larger question, because we had this treaty that gave us rights in perpetuity and we should stick with that, because we would never be able to get the U.S. Congress to agree to a position that actually gave up our fundamental rights for the Canal. Well, I took the other position. I took the position that I thought I really knew a lot of Panamanians, I knew the country, I spent two-thirds of the representation budget of that embassy, I thought that I had a better contact as to what was happening, a little arrogant on my part perhaps. I was reading a book called The Cold War's History by Lewis Hall, and I came across an argument in the middle of that book about why, even if you have overwhelming power, you in fact are limited, and I adapted that in a piece that I did towards the end of my time in Panama. As it turned out, we didn't have dissent channel in those days, and the ambassador said he sort of agreed with what I was saying but he didn't send it on. But when I left Panama, I circulated it in my memo. That particular argument was an argument about eventually things like this require an assent. You can impose your will if you want to put enough. If you want to put the 82nd Airborne in to keep the Panama Canal Zone, you could probably do it, you certainly could do it, but that's at a very high cost for the benefit, which has always been my idea about the Canal as being something useful but not vital. So that was one of those times in my life when I read that. I was in my next post when Ellsworth Bunker, who had been appointed as the new treaty negotiator, when he set down for the first time the principles that were going to be used. In effect he did it in a speech in my hometown of Seattle. He basically used my argument. One way or another it filtered up through the system. Just as I was leaving, in the last two months I was leaving, the Panamanians got a very unusual meeting of the United Nations Security Council in Panama, and that was a great event, but it also showed the confrontation of the world and the United States on this Canal issue. I guess maybe one other thing I might mention from that period: After I was in Panama just a short while, I was asked to do a study of human rights violations by the government, and I discovered that to write something like that you need lots of very concrete information. I gathered it up around different agencies and got a lot of credit for having done it, because there it was really the only study of human rights violations that had been done at that time. So I started doing another one on corruption, because that was another question: Can you deal with these people because they are so corrupt? So I started putting together pieces of paper on that, and the last months I was there I wrote a piece on corruption in Panama and I called it "The Political Function of Corruption" because I tried to show how corruption was part of the way the government governed, and I tried to divide it into certain categorizations. I had never seen a study on corruption like that before, but I have since, and, as I say, it was one of those things I was proud of, and through the years I pulled it out of the files and sent it to people as an example of the type of analysis that, again, you can do without any special means. You can do it by just gathering the facts and putting them together. But life was good in Panama; in other ways it was a good life.

Q: What about dealing with the Canal Zone people? I'm told, particularly at that time, it was a completely different world, almost a hostile one to the embassy.

McLEAN: Yes, the embassy was, as I say, considered to be almost sort of the enemy, because we were out there in Panama, and there was always a struggle between the ambassador for position to be recognized in the U.S. government and the other two authorities inside the Zone, but they too fought within themselves. One was the governor, as he was called, and he was always a two-star general from the Corps of Engineers, but the other factor was there was a four-star commander-in-chief of the Southern Command, and they would play games with one another. I remember one, Sink, always insisted on calling the Governor "General," which was his way of putting him down a notch because he wouldn't call him Governor. To give an example of some of what was happening, there was a dissident colonel of the National Guard who had threatened to kill Torrijos and then he disappeared, and the Panamanians were absolutely certain that he was hiding inside the Canal Zone with Panamanians who lived in the Canal Zone, people who were related to Panamanian police. They kept telling us that, and we kept sending over notes over to the Canal Zone, and they'd say, "No, he's not here. The information they have given you is wrong." So one day I was there in the political section by myself, and the ambassador walks in and says, "Come with me." We get in his limousine and speed off, and after a bit of silence, I say, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, where are we going?" He said, "We're going to Torrijos' headquarters." I said, "Do you know what the subject is?" and he said, "No." So we walked in the door of his office and, like typical Panamanian offices, it was totally closed, no light in it, with two noisy air conditioners going. We walked in the door, and there were seated Torrijos and Noriega and the other deputy of Torrijos, Bud Eddes, and then there was a whole bunch of people whom I recognized a little bit but I didn't recognize very much, seven or eight of them, the types of people that you'd see at cocktail parties all the time over in the Canal Zone. Well, it turned out each of them was a regular intelligence liaison with the Panamanian government. What had happened was Torrijos in the early morning had called each of them in as a group, which is very interesting about how Torrijos and his people thought about the U.S. government. They thought the real power in the government was the intelligence services. That's how they saw the world. What he had done is he had asked them. He said they knew at that moment where this dissident National Guard man was but they said, "We're intelligence, we can't do it." So he called in the ambassador. Well, of course, the ambassador had to say, "I too have no power inside the Canal Zone." Then things worked out that the ambassador agreed that he would go immediately to the governor's office without making a call, would just go up and show up at his office. Meanwhile, McLean and Colonel Peredes would go over to the Canal police station and muster up the force to go out and arrest this guy. Well, I agreed, of course, anything the ambassador said, I was going to do, and off we go. The only problem was I had never really fully focused on where the police station was inside the Zone. It was really a different world over there. My children went to school over there and certain of us were invited to social things, but I really didn't know the Zone. We showed up and were given bad treatment by the desk office there until finally the call came in from the governor saying that we should get a force going, and we went out and arrested this guy. There was quite a lot of evidence that in fact the police were involved in trying to hide him that even I could see with my eyes. I remember at one point I called in the ambassador to tell him what was going on, and the ambassador said, "Your job's done. Get out of there," and I went back to the embassy. The Zone and the embassy always did have this tension.

Q: Having a dissident arrested who on the face of it would sound like he was having asylum on American territory sounds like something above and beyond our duty, in fact a very tricky political thing.

McLEAN: It wasn't asylum in the sense it was really hiding, because he was clearly using the Zone to plot against the government, so it certainly was inappropriate that that be going on, but it showed how difficult it was to get the different parts of the U.S. government to work together. In 1958 we had agreed in this treaty we were going to allow Panamanians to participate more in the commerce in the Canal Zone. Well, immediately we began finding exceptions, particularly military. Anything that had to do with the military, we wouldn't let them in on. We told them that we were negotiating, and we told them that we would negotiate with the idea of having an end date to our presence in the Canal, but then we started building a huge shopping center complex totally without Panamanian participation. So there was a lot going on, and it was difficult, I'm sure, for the ambassador to try to get a hold of this. The basic point was that, I think, this is part of the history of Panama. The United States was given such power at the time of the 1903 treaty that we almost really didn't have to negotiate with the Panamanians. It wasn't until President Carter finally tipped the balance the other way that we finally discovered we had to negotiate, we had to deal with these folks, we could not just treat ourselves as a sovereign that didn't have to deal with them at that time.

Q: Was the general feeling, talking about your feeling and maybe the people around you at the embassy, that, one-I think you've talked about it before-the great strategic value of the Canal was diminishing, and two, how'd you feel about the running of the Canal with all these American employees? This was one of the major reasons that these Panamanians couldn't run the Canal; we had to do it ourselves.

McLEAN: There was in the Canal Zone itself a belief that they were in the right, that no one else could take care of the Canal the way they could, that, sure, you can bring in Panamanian participation but it should be very slow and only for people who are fully qualified for taking over these things, and certainly we would never turn it over to be under Panamanian political whims. It had to be something the United States always had the upper hand on. One of the strange things that happened: After the Security Council meeting, the people inside the Zone themselves began to get very upset, holding meetings and things. Strangely enough, the ambassador sent me over to talk to them. In living memory no one had ever gone from the embassy to go into the Zone and actually give speeches. I did that, and it turned out to be a great success, not because of myself but it opened up a communication with the level of people, the Americans inside the Zone, that had not existed before. All I did was nothing more than explain what the U.S. position was in some detail.

Q: What about social life with the Canal Zone people, even what your children were getting, and all that? I'm told these were sort of the last of the great plantation owners, at least in attitude.

McLEAN: There was racism, racism more than in just black-white terms, but there was also racism in terms of anyone who was Panamanian was, in many people's eyes, considered to be looked down upon. On the other hand, it did get confused. There were people over in the Zone who had intermarried into Panamanian families, so on the face of it there was this sharp difference. In other respects there were things that were blending together. The spokesman for the Canal Zone was in fact married into a Panamanian family, but he always acted as if he were a great imperialist. I'll give you an example. At one point I decided I would take labor union leaders who knew nothing about the Canal-many of these people had never visited the locks of the Canal-and I said, "Well, let's arrange something," so I talked to this man, Al Baldwin's office, and set up a little tour, like they give to lots of people, for these labor unions. Well, what happened was, after it was all set up, Baldwin himself discovered that we were doing this, and so he decided to co-opt it. He rented the best van in the country to be with us. He threw in cases of liquor. I always remember the sad thing after we had this trip, all these labor leaders going home drunk and yet ashamed that they had in effect been pulled into the world of the Zone and treated in a way that they felt they had lost their dignity. They were smashed, and they had had a great old time dancing to the best band in the country.

Q: What about Sayre? Was Sayre there the whole time you were there?

McLEAN: He was there the whole time I was. He was there when I arrived, and he remained after I left, because this ambassador who was nominated because of the press difficulty had a heart attack and died.

Q: Oh, that's sad.

McLEAN: That was a very sad thing. So then Sayre stayed on for a time longer.

Q: Did you feel he had an idea where things were going?

McLEAN: Bob Sayre is a person of great policy ability. In some ways he was probably one of the most effective ambassadors in dealing with the Canal Zone, because he knew how to deal with interagency pressures and conflicts and all these things. As I say, I thought, at least in the period I'm talking about towards the end, that he was really one who came down on the side that we could not talk about sovereignty and giving it up. Maybe that was just smart in a sense, that if you led that issue as ambassador, you would have been struck down and your effectiveness would be curbed. He, of course, didn't have a lot of contact-how would I put it?-with people outside of the official circle. In fact, when I first got there, our contacts with the government was very limited. It only opened up little by little, because we were still objecting to the fact that the National Guard had taken command. So in that sense he was limited, and one of the things I was able to do in the time there was to open up to a larger variety of people. I used to have very large parties, and he was there, and I would invite a different type of person. It was grander and more beautiful. He and Mrs. Sayre were wonderful entertainers, but they didn't tend to get the type of people that I had contact with.

Q: What about our American military? They had the School of the Americas there and all that, and again this is a whole different power. How did we relate there?

McLEAN: Well, the embassy obviously had relations all the time with them. They were always good to us, if we wanted a helicopter ride around the Canal. I flew the different sea-level routes, since I had done the study or been involved in the study of other routes, on their helicopters. But they have so many more resources than you do, and yet they were there inside the Zone, and they saw life outside as somewhat scary. I can remember being with my family and stopped at a wayside, on-the-road, modest restaurant, and a young American couple-you could tell by their haircuts that he was military-came running out saying, "Is it safe to be here? Is it all right to sit down?" It was just a sense that you were in a very dangerous place. I talked to many of the people who lived right across the street from Panama and would never go inside the city, which was a great loss. They too would tend to want to play their own political games. They too would want to get involved in the politics whenever they could through their military contacts. They had military intelligence units. I don't think any country has ever been so well covered by U.S. agencies and so little understood.

Q: What about Congress?

McLEAN: Congress came through from time to time. Obviously in these times I imagine they came only into the Zone and never came to the embassy. We got involved with Congress a lot in drugs, because drugs was beginning to be a matter of interest during this period. Torrijos' brother, whom I had met through Noriega's brother, was implicated in a major heroin smuggling operation, and so Congress was suddenly coming to visit us. That was my first involvement with drugs, which is part of the rest of the story. I wrote the first drug implementation plan for the embassy, and I remember making it totally out of my head, not knowing anything about drugs and trying to imagine what we might do. But the Congressmen came, and I recall that we used that for the script as to what our plans were for the future.

Q: You had been involved before in the sea-level canal thing. Was that still alive?

McLEAN: It was published the year after I got there. Of course, the foreign policy study was based upon my work and followed the outline that I had and had many of the words that I had, but because it had been declassified, it was sort of sucked of its poetry and didn't really get to very much of a point, which was what I was trying to do. The way I outlined it, the design was to try to lead you to a yes/no conclusion. But the fact is it became somewhat irrelevant at that point, because once it was shown that this was going to be enormously costly, that nuclear devices could not be used to build the canal, and in fact here's a bit of history. One of the things, to go back to that study, I was in charge of was a $70,000 study by the Stanford Research Institute of the economic effects of a sea-level canal. $70,000 was a significant study in those days. When the first draft of it came out-it had been started before I got there, but I was checking on its progress-it said a sea-level canal would be a disaster for Panama, because all of the Americans would go away and what was really keeping up the economy was all the Americans. So, whoops, that wasn't the conclusion we wanted. It was really one of my first contacts with how you do economic studies. First off, I discovered later it was just an off-the-shelf standard economic model. Two, it all depended, of course, on what assumptions you made, so what we did was change the assumptions, change the assumption that there would be less Americans pulled out and we would retain more of a presence, and suddenly the numbers began to look good again. But other than that, that didn't become the real story. The real story was what sort of a negotiation we had for the canal that existed, and the canal that existed was a pretty good facility, and the question was how are we going to deal with that.

Q: Particularly reflected through the ambassador but from what you were getting, was there a sense that, well, this may be coming to a head, but certainly Nixon and Kissinger were riding high at this time, that this certainly wasn't number one on their list of priorities?

McLEAN: No, it wasn't number one. I think any president would want to put it off, as all the Presidents before and a few after would do until Jimmy Carter came along. It was just something so deeply ingrained in American thought that that was our canal and we shouldn't want to give it up, so it was nothing to want to take on. But, in fact, Torrijos was very clever in keeping the pressure on. When Kissinger left the NSC and went over to the State Department, which was just after the period I was there, it was he then who appointed Ellsworth Bunker to become the new ambassador and instituted a policy of actually trying to come to some sort of conclusion. As I say, Bunker adopted some of the arguments that I made, some that others made too, but an important part of it was the fact that you could stay in the Canal if you wanted to but it was just going to cost you more and more to do so. If you're going to get the political assent to stay there, then you had to change the rules and try to find a way to make it work.

Q: In a way, you all and others were diplomats looking at how to solve this, but the real problem was a political one in the United States, unlike most diplomatic things where diplomats can get together and settle things. This thing really more than anything else, as you have alluded to, was sort of deep in the hearts of every American. The Panama Canal: we took it, we stole it fair and square, and we're not going to give it up.

McLEAN: It's those truisms you learn in the fifth grade that you can't shake off. Of course, the Panamanians were the same way. They were totally locked into this thing. I remember Carlos Noriega threatening me though. He would say, "If you don't do something, you're going to have something similar to Algeria. You're going to have this type of total breakdown that we, the government, can no longer control, and you'll have just a chaos that you can't deal with." I think to some degree he was correct, not that lots of Panamanians wouldn't seek their own welfare out of this, but it was not working, and some things weren't working because of strange aspects of this very close relationship. The Kennedy Administration had declared that, Labor Secretary Goldberg at that time had decided that, the Fair Labor Standards Act applied to the Canal Zone. Well, that meant you had to pay the minimum wage, and that meant you had to lift the wage of all these Caribbean workers who were the backbone of the canal operation at that point. Well, that's what they did, and of course one of the results of that was we began to dismiss workers, began to use workers more efficiently, and as they were used more efficiently, it meant that, for workers who had been there for generations, their children couldn't go to work because they didn't have jobs. So we were creating something of our own tensions on these things. The integration of schools inside the Canal Zone caused us to decide in the mid-'50s that what used to be black schools, schools for Negroes as they would call it, suddenly became schools for Panamanians, and overnight the teachers inside the Zone were made to teach according to the Panamanian curriculum, i.e., in Spanish, and these people didn't speak Spanish. In 1964 we kept the Canal going despite the chaos inside of Panama City, but there was a sign that this wasn't going to happen again. We were losing the support of the very people that had helped sustain us.

Q: I've heard that also Panamanian society is rather peculiar. Panamanians are proud, but at the same time almost all the kids go off to school in the United States for college, I mean at the upper levels.

McLEAN: Well, for a little country-at that time it was just a million and a quarter million people-it is a country of extraordinary variety of people. You had this leadership class which the ambassador had most contact with who were, as you say, educated in the United States. They were very much people of wealth and European culture, but then you move off in all sorts of directions. Torrijos tried to invent an iconology for the country that they would try to play up the Indian heroes and the Campesino heroes and the others so that he would have everyone kind of mixed together in a Panamanianism, but in fact for a little country it had extraordinary variety and it was hard to hold it together, probably still is. I'm not sure what's going on right now. It's very hard to get Panamanians to move off in one direction.

Q: Well, Phil, you left there in 1973. Where did you go?

McLEAN: In 1973 I went from there to Bolivia.

Q: You know, I'd like to stop at this point, I think, and we'll pick it up. You're in Bolivia in 1973, and we'll pick it up there.

McLEAN: That's great.

Q: Today is the 5th of February 1999. Phil, you're in Bolivia, 19-when?

McLEAN: 1973, September of 1973.

Q: What got you called to Bolivia?

McLEAN: Well, that's an interesting question. Those were the days before we had an open bidding system, and you had to rely an awful lot on your officer who was taking care of you. I guess I had had a reputation in Panama as someone who got along well with the AID and worked with them, and so Frank Leventhal, my personnel officer, called me up and sold me a job in Bolivia that would be working in the economic section of the embassy, which I wanted to get. I wanted to get some economic background and be working with AID. I would be in effect sort of a campesino (farmer) attachï¿½. I'd be someone who would be involved in arranging small grant programs to campesino communities. Then Frank thought that my political background would be good for that. Of course, he didn't tell me-I discovered thereafter-that he was going to be the political counselor, so I imagine he had at least partly in mind the fact I was going to be a help to him in his work. So that was it. Of course, it turned out that when I got there they had given away the AID portion of the job, which was really my thing, and in effect I ended up the junior person in the economic section, which really was not a good job for me, because there was something I don't do well in economics and that's count, and this job was all about counting, statistics, and I had no background. But nonetheless, it was, like all jobs, it was interesting in a lot of respects.

Q: You were there from 1973 to when?

McLEAN: To 1975. The interesting thing was the day that I arrived. I arrived on the 11th of September, which was the day of the overthrow of the Chilean government. I always remember being in the airport in Lima on my way to go up there, at this long front area of the airport. We heard at one end, which I now know it as we had little airplanes come in, and we heard a shouting and screaming that just like a wave flowed toward us at the other end, the departure line, because the news was coming in of the coup going on at that particular moment. Of course, I got involved just a little bit as soon as I got to my next post. I was beginning to see cables about being on the lookout for various American citizens who were disappearing.

Q: Can you describe Bolivia at the time you arrived there?

McLEAN: Well, Bolivia was and is a poor country. Of course, the most extraordinary part when you go there is the altitude. You arrive at about 13,000 feet. I remember we were greeted by Ken Blakely's wife, a friend from Panama, and driving out she said, "Oh, by the way, you'll like this view," and I'll never forget it. It was the most impressive thing. You land on this sort of barren alto plano (high plain)area, and at that time you drove to the edge and you suddenly saw the city way down below. They were like Monopoly pieces down below us in the city, and up above you had these very high, beautiful mountains and what you call in photography a depth of field that was extraordinary, and it gave you a real high. That's one of the phenomena of being at that altitude: you really feel very supercharged. At the same time you're out of oxygen. It was a poor place, and the government had just come through a time when there had been a very revolutionary government, and so the United States was pouring in a great deal of assistance on promises that we made just after that, the overthrow of the left-wing government by a coalition of civilian parties and the military, and the military at this particular process was in charge of shoving the civilian parties out of power. In some ways it was an exciting place physically, exciting culturally, and the strangest, differentest places in all of the Hispanic world, but at the same time the work was rather boring, because there were really too many of us, we were overstaffed. I don't think people recognized that, but that made a very heavy U.S. presence, and a lot of the people whom we normally dealt with had left the country because of, first, the leftist and then the right government that was coming in.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

McLEAN: The ambassador was Bill Stedman, a very pleasant and fine person. I stayed in contact with Bill. He had a background in the Andean countries.

Q: Your work was what? Was it mainly dealing with statistics?

McLEAN: Yes, as the junior person in the section. The section had the head of the section and a minerals attachï¿½ who had been there for 20 or 30 years and an engineer. In fact, there was a commercial job which I was offered half way through, and perhaps I should have taken that job. And then there was an AID economist on the staff. The job really only made sense as it was originally sold to me, which was two ways. It was going to have an AID component to it, but in fact it turned out not to have that component. So for me struggling along, I did agricultural statistics, I did some weak negotiations, but in terms of family life it was a good time because I had a lot of time on my hands to be with my family, and the rest of it, but for me it was really quite boring. I did take advantage of it to travel a lot. The ambassador, I think understanding I was a little bit underemployed, would bring me in as a staff assistant from time to time, and I could be his advance on trips, various official trips. Once we were going out to see a project outside of Santa Cruz in a car that I had rented for him. He still remembers that. But the more exciting trip was going to Potosi and Sucre, which is officially the capital, and we were going to do it by train. It had been done by train by some people before us, but in the meantime the cars, the representation of cars they had used for this, had run down, so I negotiated with the railroad to allow us to refurbish the cars, and that would be the cost then of the trip. We went up onto the alto plano and across, then down into... In fact, they abandoned us up there on the alto plano overnight-I'll always remember that-and they linked us, connected us, when the train came along the next morning. But these cars were the cars of the former British owners of these railroads, 50/60 years old and older, with a fireplace and lots of combinations. I had done the advance for the trip to Potosi and arranged with the officials how we would meet and who we would meet. Of course, Potosi once the most popular place in the Western Hemisphere...

Q: Big silver mine.

McLEAN: We arrived the day the head of the museum in Potosi died, and that sort of marked this trip with a sort of strange.... I should never say that's a comic thing, but it was certainly a bad, very bad coincidence. It made the trip all the more difficult to pull off, and it was comical in other ways because of the efforts of the provincial authorities to put on a good show, but nonetheless interesting because it was a very ancient town and once a great source of wealth for the Spanish crown in Bolivia, but it experienced hard times at that particular point. It was extraordinary cold. You were even above the level of La Paz at that point, so it was very hard to breathe. But then we went down to Sucre, which is one of the great hidden secrets of Latin America. It's a beautiful little town. It shows up on the maps as the capital of Bolivia, and the Supreme Court is there, but it's small and set in just the right climate with wonderful churches and monasteries. The library from colonial times is beautiful because the weather is just perfect for conserving the documents, and we took our party there and showed them. In fact, I remember seeing in one document they were showing us a picture of torture in the late 1700s, and I told the ambassador that we should write it up and send it in as an airgram and see if anyone noticed that the date was 1790, by way of showing that there are certain consistencies in Latin American history. Again, it was the problem of how the courts work and how they bring real justice to people. But it was a good trip. It was such a good trip that I decided that on a personal basis I rented a heavy-duty Jeep and took my children back there, the hard way of going back through the mining area and through areas that, I must say, you feel, or you did feel at that time, that you're as far away from European civilization as you can get in these Americas. But it was fascinating, the colors of the different villages, one after another, the different cultures. Of course, they hardly spoke Spanish, they didn't speak Spanish in many cases. But it was a good trip and fascinating.

Q: Bolivia is renowned for having coup after coup after coup. These coups, were these pretty much limited to, in fact was the government sort of limited to, La Paz, and life went on elsewhere in the same old pattern, would you say?

McLEAN: Well, it certainly is true that the Indian indigenous communities were a world unto their own, had learned to throw off almost literally the Hispanic civilization around them. So that is a truth to a degree. The military and the government did have a projection out into the corners of the country, so it wasn't quite like maybe even Colombia today, where there are just parts of the country that the government does not rule, where it would like to rule but can't. In the Bolivian case, they had a system that went back to colonial times of relationship between the capital and these campesino communities. The 1952 revolution had caused a type of land reform that had returned the land to these campesino villages, which again made them even less dependent upon the culture and the trade and economy of the world. You had to be very careful. One of our embassy people, one from our embassy group, went out fishing one time and found themselves trapped in their cars with a community around them jumping the car up and down to give them a good sign don't come back, this was their land. But you can walk. I got involved, my wife got involved, in a village outside of town and went up to it one Sunday when she had been going up with a youth group, and we decided to walk on to go to the next village. Within an hour walk, we got to an area where nobody spoke Spanish. So you're right, there was that aspect. That's how it was at that particular time. We also had this very strong labor movement that controlled the mines, and the mines were becoming less and less productive. There were some limited efforts at getting modern mining. One was led by a young engineer in his 30s by the name of Sanchez Gonzalo. Of course, he later becomes president and a person I would deal with later in my career. So I knew some people and I knew the president, because this mineral attachï¿½ was married to one of the relatives of the president, so we did meet lots of people of that rank, but what we didn't meet was a lot of middle class, because, as I say, the middle class was outside the capital. We all lived very well, because the housing had been abandoned by this middle class and had been rented out, and so we could rent some very nice houses at little price. I'm sure that living was in that sense good, tennis club and all those things. They welcomed us with open arms, because so much of the middle class was out of the country.

Q: Were they beginning to drift back?

McLEAN: I guess they were beginning to drift back. What I remember is the fact that our conditions at the tennis club got more difficult as they started upping the price, as things calmed down, so that the middle class was coming back. And we had, as I say, just an extraordinarily large AID program and military assistance program. During the time I was there-I had worked in Washington on these country analysis papers and worked on them in Panama-so when we went through that exercise in Bolivia, I became a critic on them. I said I don't think that we really thought through why are we giving these resources to this country, particularly the military resources. We were coming up to the anniversary, the 100th anniversary, of the War of the Pacific.

Q: Did the War of the Pacific raise any of this? Was this something always in the air?

McLEAN: Oh, yes. Right in front of the ambassador's house, in fact, there was a famous statue of Abaroa. Of course, he was pointed in the wrong direction, but he was the only hero that came out of that war for Bolivia. But the idea of returning to having a Pacific coast was a great touchstone of all politicians. They had to say the right things and do the right things.

Q: Were there efforts to drag us in?

McLEAN: I think they would have liked to have, but we were very careful in not being dragged in at that time. I guess my one contribution to that-I guess I made two contributions. One was that those railroad cars that I refurbished in fact served the president a year later for his meeting with Ben Shade, the Chilean dictator, on the border. The second point was that there had been a study done at INR, the Intelligence Research part of the State Department, on the War of the Pacific and tried to bring it up to date as to other incidents that took place thereafter. It basically said that Bolivia should have no problem because there were lots of European countries, Austria and others, that did fine not having a coast, and I took that issue on and tried to show that in fact this was a considerable problem for a country because it was not in control of its own trade and it had to pass through other countries, and that was the stimulus to trade.

Q: Where did Bolivia point as far as trade goes? Was it Pacific, or would they aim going to Paraguay?

McLEAN: At that time, one, trade was a very low proportion. It was only tin, and the tin could go out in either direction, mostly the Pacific.

Q: What was your impression of the aid program, both military but also the other aid program?

McLEAN: I thought it was overstaffed just in numbers, and what we were doing was bringing in lots of contractors, and you had a problem because you had to break through this cultural barrier. In fact, one of the few studies I thought, or the few groups I thought, that dealt with these problems was the agricultural group, but in effect their studies-basically done by Utah State University-had been there for many years, but their conclusion was you can't get there from here, you can't do this. You couldn't, there wasn't a way. The campesinos were so involved with different culture. For instance, they maintained large stocks of llamas and sheep, because that was their savings, their store of value, and of course this had a terrible effect on the ecology.

Q: Eating the trees, grass...

McLEAN: They overate. The land was held in common in many cases, so it didn't really work, so they ended their program during the time I was there. What we did try to work on, we tried to work on the bureaucracy through public administration studies, but those didn't work so well because people moved in and out of the bureaucracy and the bureaucracy had a political function rather than an economic function. You couldn't send anyone off to training and expect that they would either want to have a job or stay in the job after they got back. A big public service loan wrapped up when I was there, and most of the people they had trained for these didn't want any part of the government at all. I think there were only three or four that were still with the government out of some 200 they had trained over the years, and those were the last three or four that they trained.

Q: Was there a certain almost inertia about our aid program? This is what you did, and whether or not the results were coming out or...

McLEAN: My own impression is that people truly wanted to reap effective and adequate programs. The problem: Just how do you do this under these circumstances? I think it was the case that you just didn't know how to have that effect at that point. It's a very conservative country in terms of the massive population resisting change.

Q: How about the government, your experience and your colleagues', in dealing with it? Was it an effective one?

McLEAN: I would say it was fairly ineffective. Below the minister level they weren't people of great quality. They didn't seem well prepared for the jobs that they had. There were individual exceptions, and there were fine people, but I think too many people were out of the country at that particular time. I dealt a lot with the minister of commerce. At one point the man was a general. When he was a colonel, he was identified as the man who pulled the trigger under Jagavar's chin. That was probably his main qualification for that job. Another one was a politician from the Santa Cruz area. I remember one time I was flying with him and he pulled out a book he was reading. It was called Meenia Estodia; in fact it was Mein Kampf. There were fine German families in Bolivia, but there also were at that time ex-Nazis. I used to see Klaus Altman, as he was called on the streets. Of course, we all knew already that he was Klaus Barbee, a butcher from France, and he used to walk down the street with two big bodyguards. Of course, he wasn't there by accident. Somebody was protecting him at that particular time. It's interesting in retrospect why we didn't make more of an issue of it than we did, since we had so much influence with the government.

Q: Was it the French were impressing us probably, and the French really didn't want to get into this thing?

McLEAN: I don't know. I never saw any sign of anyone pressing, either the French or even the Israelis from the Jewish community, at that time. Maybe those pressures were taking place. It just didn't appear on our screen, at least my screen. But it's just incomprehensible today in 1999 to think that that would have been going on. He was very open. In fact, I think he had a pretty regular route of having his coffee in the mornings down in the bar, sort of a German-centered bar that was not too far from the embassy, and he would walk right by the embassy during the daytime.

Q: Were there any coups?

McLEAN: I'm sorry. I have a great deal of respect for a lot of Bolivian friends now, but at this particular period sometimes it could be very comic. One time, just in order to try to stir up some interest, the political section, Bob Pace and I, tried to get a group together in the embassy of people who would be interested in some of the issues so we could get into it a little more deeply. So one night at my house we invited over a man who was a leader of a group that sought to make the Indians an organized political force in the country, which they weren't, so I had him over, and when it was over with, I took him up into the city, and in the strange geography of La Paz you go a long way up to the downtown area, go up to the downtown, and you keep going to where the poorer people live on the sides of the hill just below the alto plano. I took this man to his house and let him off when I took him back, and I just missed being involved in a little comical coup d'etat, because at that moment the forces stationed on the alto plano were coming down into the city with their antipersonnel carriers and trucks, particularly antipersonnel carriers, and they got to the presidential palace and banged in the door. At that point their antipersonnel carriers ran out of gas. It was typically very much an intermilitary origin and not something that was going to affect us one way or the other. It was rather silly. One of the interesting things I did there was I did civil aviation negotiations and also followed the civil aviation trade, and at that particular point again things were not going well. They lost a third of the planes, registered civil aviation planes, that were, most of them, bringing meat up from the lowlands to the city of La Paz, running into a mountain. Eventually they found the radio beacon was badly placed and was steering the planes right into the mountain. One of our own planes went down in other circumstances where a C130 was coming into La Paz and a propeller cargo plane of the Air Force was coming into the city and was told it could drop down to a certain level. Of course, when it dropped down, it ran into another one. Things weren't going too well, and there was a lot of chaos in institutions.

Q: You left there in 1975 after not what one would call an over-challenging tour?

McLEAN: No, it wasn't a great tour. On personal terms it was fun. There were these trips that I made, and what I did develop was something of a claim to expertise in the Andean area, because I traveled a lot, privately and with trips. One time I saw the first coca coming out, and I was beginning to get acquainted with some of those issues which were to do me in good stead later on. And I met some people who were low-level people who I would think of later on and consulted with a group of people who later became ministers. But at that particular point, not a great trip. And I was a little frustrated by the economics, because I felt I wasn't being effective, and therefore I asked as an onward assignment either to get me out of this completely and off to eastern Europe, central Europe, or teach me some economics. I then went from there to start on my way towards economic training. I wanted very much to get out of there. They wanted to keep me in La Paz until I would touch with my replacement, which would be a couple months beyond that, but I just for family reasons wanted to get back my family and get them started in school, in university, and so I showed up early in September...

Q: In 1975?

McLEAN: ... in 1975, and had been accepted to go to SAIS (School of Advanced International Studies), Johns Hopkins' SAIS. When I was talking with a friend of mine who was the deputy director of the Foreign Service Institute, he said, "Well, I've got a better idea. If you're going to use up leave to do that, you're going to use up money. Why don't you come and fill in at FSI as a teacher for this coming semester?" And they would give me money for a couple of courses at American University, which I then did, and I taught two of the Latin American seminars, because there was a lack of a professor at that time. And then I helped out-a friend of mine was the teacher of the junior officer course, and he wanted a break and a little help. And then I also was getting ready for starting an economics course in January.

Q: What was your impression-this would be 1975-1976-of the junior officers that you were seeing?

McLEAN: Well, that's an interesting point. It's always good to check in with things that you knew at the beginning and then you see it later on. By that time it was a time when they were hiring people according to cones, and I thought that was unfortunate because people who came in to be political officers were, you could tell, sort of puffed up and thought they were better. I was a political officer myself, and it wasn't always obvious that they were better, and economic officers even less; and people who were in the admin cone, who seemed to be really fine people and well qualified in many cases, were timid, and I thought that was too bad. It was creating a class system that was unnecessary. But the quality of the people, I thought, was very high, some really good people, externalists, and very, very bright who worked for the people. I had somewhat suspected that maybe you'd find people being more disaffected, but they were probably for their day-it was 1975-a conservative bunch of people.

Q: When you got to SAIS, how long were you at SAIS?

McLEAN: I didn't go to SAIS. What I did was decided then that I wouldn't go to SAIS; instead I would do this American University business. In some ways I regret that, and I was always looking for that further background that SAIS would have given me. No, that was just that one semester. In January I began the economics course.

Q: At the FSI?

McLEAN: At the FSI. It was this intense course that they gave.

Q: A six-month course?

McLEAN: Six-month course at the time. It was tough for me, because it was very math oriented. I had avoided all my life doing math. In fact, when I was there, I discovered why I had a hard time doing math, because I don't see very well. I do have an eye problem, and they would correct my math, and I had a lot of trouble with micro-economics because I kept referring to my radical background that I had come from this Catholic, leftist orientation. They teach you in micro-economics that there is no such thing as a just price. It was a very hard thing for me, and then, to make it more abstract, I did well on the macro-economics. I came out somewhat saved from my former lack of orthodoxy.

Q: After that course did you feel that you had a pretty good...

McLEAN: It was amazing, I thought, because they were able in such a short time to bring you enormously up to date on what's happening in economic thought. In my next jobs thereafter I found myself very much up to date. However difficult, I did have micro-economics. The assignment that I arranged for myself was basically in micro-economics, and it was four years later by the combination of that experience plus what they had given me at FSI when I finally began to understand what I had been studying. I remember one day I was seated with William Nordhouse and Gary Jessanowski, two of the bright lights-still are bright lights-in economics, working with them on designing programs for structural adjustment basically, micro-economics in the OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development).

Q: When you left-this would be what, '76?-you left...

McLEAN: Left FSI.

Q: Where'd you go?

McLEAN: Went to an office called EUR/RPE, the regional economic affairs office of the European bureau. It's really not quite so regional as it is, or at least at that time was, an office that backed up our missions to the OECD mission to the European Communities. And it turned out intellectually it was one of the most exciting jobs, series of jobs. I had two jobs in that office, first dealing with the combination of being responsible for agriculture and development questions because at that time the north-south dialogue was going on.

Q: Could you explain what the north-south dialogue was?

McLEAN: At that time there was a confrontation with the developed countries over-here we were, the world was in something of a crisis with the energy crisis, and all the economies of the world were suffering the after-effects of that plus the problems of commodity prices and the sense that the developing world wasn't getting its share, so they began a series of conferences. The president began a series of meetings which were quite structured. There were, I think 12 or 13 developing countries and then the Community and some of the other countries in Europe, and Japan and the United States and Canada on the other side. This thing went on for a couple years, which was great for TWA (Trans World Airways) because we were always flying over to these meetings. I don't think it accomplished a great deal other than to take the pressure off at that time for fundamental change. When the Carter Administration came in, they gave it again more serious attention, but much of what was being asked just wasn't possible, wasn't reasonable, and probably wasn't good for the countries themselves.

Q: Well, this idea of the poor countries asking for support from the wealthy countries-I would imagine there was a certain amount of lip service played, but deep in everybody's heart, particularly on our side and sort of the Western European side, you knew that it really wasn't going to be a real distribution.

McLEAN: I think that that was understood. Again, I still was leaving behind my Homer orientations, and it probably was four years that caused me to finally do it, because as I dealt with each and every one of these issues, what the developing countries were in effect asking for was a bureaucratically mandated distribution of wealth, and that really is against what we know about how wealth is actually created. It's not created by bureaucratic direction. So from the United States' side, it was something of a game of trying to just keep talking until something happened. The Europeans, I think, had something of a different orientation. I caught the attention of a number of people, Dick Cooper and others, when I wrote a memo as to why the Europeans took this attitude, that they needed it domestically, they needed to appear to be generous and also to actually be generous, because their aid-giving numbers were far above the United States at that time and they need that look for their own domestic constituencies, coming out of the era of colonialism. I explained these things, and it caught some attention. I don't know if I did it on purpose, but I got attention actually by sending a telegram to our delegation, back channeled to Chuck Mizener. When he was in Paris, I saw some position that he had done, and it caused me to quickly get this cable out. Of course, when you send a limited-distribution cable, it's noticed, probably more than if I'd sat down and wrote a memo and circulated it around, this got a lot of attention.

Q: You now had the Carter Administration in by this time.

McLEAN: Half way through. As I say, my first job was backing up some committees in the OECD and becoming an agricultural expert, also being an expert on the European Community's aid-giving programs and their special trade programs with other countries around. Then after two years doing that, I took the job of my boss, so I covered that area plus the rest of trade industrial policy with Europe.

Q: The first job started in 1976?

McLEAN: 1977 and 1978, and then 1978 to 1980.

Q: Well, let's talk about the first part first. You were looking at the OECD. In this mid-'70s period, what was our impression? Was this going anywhere?

McLEAN: It was a good time for the OECD. Cooper, Richard Cooper, was the Under Secretary for Economics under Carter, and in fact he had been the author of books that talked about the need to have worldwide, particularly trans-Atlantic, coordination of economic policies, and the OECD became a place where those things happened. They backed up the north-south dialogue, the whole consideration, the idea that the Third World was going to bring down the developed world by sending us cheap imports. That was an intellectual argument that was argued out in the OECD. I went to at least one meeting specifically on that topic. The OECD invented the name for this type of countries as newly industrializing countries and did the analysis which improved the public debate on these issues. I would say the OECD worked quite well. There are always a lot of nonsensical and not particularly important activities going on in the OECD in some of the subcommittees of the industry committee or some of these standards meetings, but much of it at that particular time was....

Q: The OECD at this point meant what?

McLEAN: It was the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, and it was, it is, located in Paris and with a series of committees, some of them in the macro-economic area, the financial area. It was not my job, but I followed what they did over there. Then there was a series I followed. I went to the agricultural ministerial at one point with Bob Berklin and the Secretary. It was at that time an opportunity for negotiating among agricultural ministers as to the way things were going. There were trade committees, there were labor committees, and each of these had an activity. The office that I worked in was sort of the Washington secretary for organizing position papers, which gave us a lot of leverage, even though we didn't have a lot of expertise, in shaping the way that our issues were being presented in the OECD.

Q: You said at one point you had some responsibility for agricultural products. I would have thought that this would have been a particular buzz-saw in the industrialized West, because, well, it remains that way, particularly in European agriculture, and we have our own subsidies in agriculture. It's almost more a social function.

McLEAN: Well, the debate was going on at that point, and the real experts, agricultural experts, at the Department of State were in the office of the Economic and Business Bureau, but they often were just repeating the arguments from the U.S. Trade Representative's office or from USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), whereas in my case I could argue an argument that would put in more of what our political interests were in these things, and I became the expert on this, probably the only person in the whole town, maybe the one technician in the U.S. Department of Agriculture who could explain what a European green rate was, calculating values, agricultural values, according to a special agricultural exchange system. I got it down so I could do a 15-minute quick explanation of what was going on in the big system. Eventually, some things that began during the time that I was there.... At the time I was there the Tokyo round of negotiations, trade negotiations, was going on, and it result in zero, almost zero, advances in the field of agriculture. After that came further discussions and some real negotiation on agriculture, and part of it was because of work that was done by the OECD. The OECD figured out how do you actually compare subsidy systems from one country to another. They developed a methodology, and it sounds boring and is in many ways, but in fact it turned out to be a highly useful tool and was an example of an international organization doing a job that needed being done but no individual country could do it.

Q: Well, who was staffing OECD? Was it the UN?

McLEAN: No, it's a separate organization, a separately funded organization. It has its own budget, and the staff is drawn internationally just like any other international organization but a separate trunk of the UN system. The countries-I think there were 24 at the time-were only European, Japan, and the United States and Canada. Since then, of course, it's expanded.

Q: Did you find of the Western countries any ones that were particularly difficult, I mean taking separate stances?

McLEAN: Well, there were always games being played with the Germans always pulling us in to try to play us off against the French. The French, of course, were always the most difficult one on issues but we were dealing at the community level and sometimes there were difficulties in trying to get positions together from the European bureau because individual countries and individual desk officers might have some other ideas as to what was going on. But France was always one of our problems.

Q: Canada?

McLEAN: Canada was not a major factor to us at that time. The British sometimes could be surprising when you discovered that they were supposed to be our friends and they were doing things on quite a different tact, but generally we were dealing at the community level and I don't think there was a cause of any additional friction. But it was fascinating to see the European Community grow. Almost every time I'd go to go to Paris for the OECD, I'd go to Brussels, and going to these different parts of the community and watched them trying to work out positions among themselves and trying to implement them in ways that were somewhat compatible.

Q: How was the European Community, or whatever it was called at that time? Was it becoming a factor, or were you pretty much dealing with individual countries?

McLEAN: No, we were very much dealing with the Community, the Community staff, the Commission staff. It was called the European Communities at that particular point. It was always changing its name, the European Union. No, we would deal with the directorates of each of these. I dealt a lot with DG8, which was the developing country directorate. We had serious negotiations at the time. We had good ambassadors. Deane Hinton was there at one point, and then Tom Henderson had come along afterwards. We had strong representation, and we dealt almost entirely with.... It was amazing to me at the time to see that the Community was taking over from some other countries. Germany, I made one visit to Bonn and was advised that, as strong as the Germans were-they had very strong staffs-they weren't dictating the Community as such to the Commission. The thing I used to deal with the Commission a lot about were north-south issues and particularly the Lome Agreement. One of the functions of my job was to describe some of these obscure mechanisms that they built into the Lome Agreement, and then they were developing a series of other preferential agreements with countries around the Mediterranean, trying to keep track of this, trying to figure out what they were doing and see if what they were doing was consistent with their obligations to us from GATT. Just at the time that the Republican administration was leaving over the issue of-it was a trade issue; we were retaliating against them-I remember Kissinger's annoyance at having to make decisions on this thing in his last days in the Department. But referring to these preferential agreements, there was one with regard to Yugoslavia. The Community wanted to create some special preferences for them, and we were fighting them as to not increasing preferences. William Casey, he had been under secretary some years before for economic affairs, had reached an agreement called the Casey Soames Agreement, which was supposed to put a limit on how much the Community gave preferential trade arrangements to other countries, and they were always overstepping it. Part of our job of our office was trying to keep an eye on this and negotiate. Our ambassador in Yugoslavia, of course, was reluctant to see us pressure the Community not to give help to Yugoslavia. So it became something of a bureaucratic battle.

Q: Who was that, Silverman or Eagleburger?

McLEAN: Eagleburger. That was my first encounter with him.

Q: Then you moved over to, in 1978, you moved over to what?

McLEAN: In 1978 I became the officer in charge of a two-person unit, and many of the things I've just discussed really took place in both periods. I would say by the time I was beginning to work myself out of the bureaucracy a little bit. This tour, of course, was the first tour I had been back in the Department since I had been a special assistant and had all this freedom and ability to move around the Department. Then when you're thrust back into the bureaucracy, you discovered how difficult it is to get work done, because no one was telling you exactly what's going on or giving it a clear view. You're having to write things and all that were being double corrected, and it created a great sympathy I hope I used when I went on to other positions in the Department. At this point I was beginning to get a little bit more relevance around the Department, and when I left, as I was leaving that job, Secretary Cooper asked me to come up and be a special assistant, and that was a big vote of confidence, particularly since the guy who was leaving the job was going to become a deputy assistant secretary. You know, maybe I should take this job. I didn't.

Q: How did you find the role while you were doing these things and all? Were things pretty well settled as far as your marching orders?

McLEAN: No, not at all.

Q: I'm just wondering what the role of, say, the bureaucracy, the bureaus and the ambassadors would be.

McLEAN: First of all, what was interesting was the slight degree to which the U.S. embassies in European Community countries were playing a role. Bonn was something of an exception. You didn't find a strong dialogue with those embassies, which I thought was strange at the time. We didn't have a clue what Italy, for instance, thought. The French sometimes. One exception is Japan. If you were dealing with Japan, you'd have good solid positions from them, either for or against. We tried in the office to give our embassies a good sense of what was going on and to certainly give our mission something. We would often get these unintelligible requests or instructions, draft instructions, from the Department of Commerce or some other department, and we would have to put it into a shape that would make a coherent whole out of it.

Q: You were saying during the Iran hostage crisis, which started what-was it in November of 1979?

McLEAN: November of 1979, I think. In that year that followed, just the month that followed, it was highly secret, of course, the negotiation, but nonetheless you needed some instructions when you were supposed to be preparing your bosses for visits. I can recall that at time Deputy Secretary Christopher was making a trip that winter. I was the one who took care of all the cables going back and forth with the European allies. I don't know why I had that job, but I did, and I can remember the cable from Christopher which begins, "This is a coldest day in Europe in many years, and I can believe it." He had just come from a meeting with Maggie Thatcher. Before that trip I had been asked to write a position paper from an economic point of view as to why our European allies should support us in pressuring the Iranians. I remember writing it and then finally coming to the punch line and then asking, "What's the punch line?" and nobody would tell me what the punch line should be and "we're going to cut you off forever," but no one would give me quite that instruction or any other instruction as to what sort of pressure we were going to apply to it. It was all reasoning and not anything very strong. I remember feeling resentment and frustration at that type of thing. It was typical of what you had when you were in the middle of the bureaucracy and people don't feel that they can discuss with you details to what's going on. I don't recall that anyone ever did say what exactly what was going to happen if they didn't cooperate.

Q: How did you find the response when we were trying to deal with this particular crisis?

McLEAN: My recollection was, and this is pure recollection, is that they were basically down on us for having gotten ourselves into the situation, that we shouldn't be making so much of it. I found it a basically intolerable position of the Europeans at that time.

Q: Did you find within the European bureaucracy and within sort of the leadership of the government sort of a spirit of "if you can stick it to the Americans, do"?

McLEAN: I think I want to go as far as what I just said, that they felt almost a sort of pity. You guys just don't know how to play a sophisticated diplomatic game like we Europeans do. So I think they would have liked the crisis to go away, but they weren't willing to do anything more, show us or cooperate with us, in getting it to happen.

Q: Well, by the time you left in 1980, what was your impression of whither the European Union?

McLEAN: Well, at that time I guess I felt some skepticism, maybe even cynicism, about the European Community. I hope on this tape I can use a bad word...

Q: You can.

McLEAN: Eurocrap. You got so used to the propaganda of the Europeans, and in some ways looking back, I am surprised that it has gone as well as it has, and it shows the value of Jean Monnet's idea that you build institutions and they will come. Things begin to change. We had-I can remember going to Airlie House in that period for a conference on a common currency, which seems so remote, so impossible. It's taken a long while, almost 20 years, but it looks like we're getting close to such a thing. But it did give me a kind of sense that we are beginning to come together and the lessening of tensions among countries. In my subsequent years certainly what I saw then of the positive side of the Community has been confirmed, that it does build towards something of value. The thing that you sometimes do, we had to cut behind the propaganda, particularly on these north-south issues where they tried to pose as being holier than the United States was, trying to reason that they were better than us, a lot more spiritual than we were. Things like the agricultural policy were attitudes about the poor Third World, and at the same time they could be dumping their commercial goods on the international market to the point that it would drive product prices down for the very same poor countries.

Q: Did the Soviets enter the picture much?

McLEAN: In fact, I would say in my time I dealt almost not at all with Soviet issues. I dealt with the Polish ham-dumping case at some point, but Central Europe and the Soviet Union were not factors at that time.

Q: Well, in 1980 you left?

McLEAN: In 1980 I left. I had decided for my own family it would be a good idea to go overseas. My marriage was not in very good shape at that particular point, and my children had already grown up and gone off to college and then got married, and so I think I wanted to do something for the other two children, and going to Europe seemed like a good idea. The job that I wanted in OECD and the U.S. mission to the European Community were covered, so I looked around and found that the number two job in Milan was open. I had a vision of my ideas about Milan being similar to Sao Paulo, which I had known in my American context. Sao Paulo was a very strong and important mission, and so I though, well, Milan would be something like that. It was and it wasn't.

Q: You were in Milan from when to when?

McLEAN: I was in Milan from 1980 to 1983.

Q: What was the role of...? You talked about how you saw Italy in 1980 to 1983 and how Milan and our consul general fit in there.

McLEAN: I went there with very much of an economic orientation. It probably was one of the few times that I really couldn't say that I hit the ground running. The very important exception to that is my time was quite weakened at that point, but I certainly knew economic issues. But when I got there, I discovered that not even the personnel that were on the chart as being... weren't there. I had been told I was going to be a deputy principal officer, and when I got there, it was emphasized that I was really the economic political officer in charge in an economic political section and, in fact, there was no economic political section. There was one, maybe two, local employees, Italian employees. There was only one when I arrived. As it turned out, we had an inspection just as I arrived, and I sat down and did an agenda of what I thought that consulate could do with reporting time. In fact, it was rather convincing, because they then started the process to get that economic job back. Secondly, when I met with the consul general, it was quite clear that he...

Q: Who was the...

McLEAN: Chuck Johnson.

Q: Chuck Johnson.

McLEAN: He made it quite clear he considered me to be his deputy. The embassy had fixed up some system whereby the consul general was going to rate all the American officers, all the section chiefs, and they were to be reviewed by embassy personnel. It was a way that the embassy could get a hold of managing the consulate. It took my a while, but little by little I became the deputy principal officer, and I rated the people, and he, the consul general, did the reviews, and that made a big difference in terms of how people pay attention to whatever they were doing. I got that job back, and I began on this agenda of the economic and political reporting, but particularly economic reporting. The consul general was supposed to do the political reports. Both he and I really got into it an awful lot. For some reporting they would travel out to small towns, and I eventually did the same thing, go to some provincial towns and do reporting back. In political terms it was only a little more important than some of the other parts of Italy, but in economic terms, of course, it was giant. The reporting had fallen down in a series of changes that had taken place, like personnel, and it was a job to get it built back up again. One was working on just trying to get a concept of what was going on in northern Italy. Politically the country was very much in crisis, as you know. You were down in Naples. At that time it was just the year after Aldo Morro had been murdered, and there were brigades, but all that said, the economy was beginning to rebustle and things were beginning to happen, so much of the earlier reporting I did was to try to analyze that and get out to know people, to try to describe some of small dynamic companies. One of the things I found was the degree to which these small companies, in fact, worked together. They almost worked as divisions of the same company in many ways. The associations of a company-for instance, like the metalworking area-the association of metalworking area would have a research side, they would have a marketing side, they would have a finance side which would help the small companies function as if they had a much larger scale than they did at their first site, so Italy was changing in a very positive way on the economic side. I also got to know some of the larger companies. Our consulate general overlapped with Genoa at that point. There was no consulate in Turin, and Genoa was supposed to cover consulate and political matters, and we were supposed to cover economic and commercial. As I say, that worked out very well, and I got to work with Fiat and to know them and Olivetti and some of the other firms in the region on a broader basis.

Q: What about the unions?

McLEAN: I did labor work, and in that respect I should have done more labor work throughout my time, because I think it would have helped my Italian. The problem was, of course, that when your Italian isn't up to a certain level, then you run into people who want to speak English, whereas in labor that was not a problem. But I did do some labor reporting at that time. The labor attachï¿½, I think, came up twice during my period, and I would set up meetings with them. I had set up meetings with our attachï¿½ there and got to know some interesting folks, and it did turn out to be a useful set of contacts.

Q: Was there a problem with the communist unions and non-communist unions, and was there a problem at that time of contact with the extreme left?

McLEAN: That's right, there was, and not even the extreme left, even the moderate left. You had to dance around a little bit. I think as far left as I could go was I could meet the socialist unions within the Communist Federation, and I did that. One of them was a guy I met a number of times whose brother was a film director, but, as I say, those were good meetings, and it gave me a lot of stuff for my reporting. Some of the stuff that we were after: one is I wanted to get back from Rome the functions that had really been taken away. If there was a dumping case against Italy, the embassy would actually call the industry association in line and get the data that way. I tried to develop us that we did those things, because we had done trade cases before, and that was very useful in terms of getting to know people inside the community. I tried to get away from the reporting that had been done for 30/40 years, CERP (Comprehensive Economic Reporting Plan) reporting, which was the standard reports, very standard, boring reports that they'd been doing year after year on the textile industry and the calculator industry, using an old-fashioned name, trying to break loose of that and tried to do reporting that was more current, up to date, and to estimate the degree of change that was going on in the country. Little by little I got into things that were rather fascinating. One thing I remember, a person came up in the embassy one morning to have some first meetings with the ENI, the state energy conglomerate. The United States had always had bad relations with them going back to the '50s, and with that first opening it became just, you know... As soon as you walk in the door, you suddenly find everybody wants to talk to you. The benefits-of course, this was during the middle of the energy crisis-the benefits... I could talk about a number of common energy concerns in the United States. One of them was the Soviet gas pipeline, and that was a big issue of the day, and it turned out that they became an enormously useful source, because they weren't just going to be a purchaser of this gas; they were also different divisions of ENI. It's hard to know in retrospect why it was true, but they felt they wanted to dump information on us. I think only Bonn which similarly was having contacts with the state, a private company, gave the type of detail that they were able to give on it. I was able to give two discussions of the types of cells, the pumps, the pressures, very technical stuff that were very much wanted to be known, not only just the strategic issues but they also wanted those other issues, and we were given them as almost a gesture of friendliness on their part. There were also issues on Libya. There was a Libyan gas pipeline that they were building, and I was regularly reporting on that. So it was an interesting area to get into. Milan is a big area of former trade with the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, so there were things like... I was trying to do some stuff-I don't know how successful I was doing it-but I was looking into switch trading, getting around some of the trade barriers and also the lack of foreign exchange in eastern Europe, talking with Fiat, doing reports on Fiat's activities in the Soviet Union. One time we got a report that there had been actual tram shipments, and I remember that, through a personal friend that I had known in a moving company, I got him to come in and sit down with a team from Washington, and we were able to actually show how there were trade diversions going on. People from the United States were shipping to companies in Italy, but the stuff had never been entered in Italy and was being put on planes immediately. In one case a plane came in for a box the size of this desk to pick up. The machine they were taking out was a machine to copy microchips, which was a very important technology at that particular time.

Q: We're talking about getting the bypassing of-what do we call that? It was based in Paris.

McLEAN: COCOM.

Q: COCOM, which was essentially to keep strategic materials and things just like that machine from going to the communist world.

McLEAN: These were the early Reagan years, the years of great confrontation and great determination on the part of the administration that they were going to toughen up on those things, and so we were able to play a role that I think was rather exceptional. There weren't others giving the type of information of any agency.

Q: Well, how could you find out information about this?

McLEAN: When you know people, you often can. You just start making telephone calls and you say, "Do you know someone who...? Take an example: I remember I read in the newspaper one morning that the Israelis had bombed a French plant in Iraq, a nuclear plant, and that was an interesting thing. In the article, if you read the article carefully, it said right next door there is a plant owned by an Italian chemical company. I was dealing with part of that chemical company on a dumping case, so they had some reason to listen to me when I picked up the phone. If I picked up the phone, they put me on to the man who was in fact the chairman of the board of the company, and I sat down with him, and I gave reams of material on not just their plant but whatever else was going on. It was one of those telegrams that was a big hit. It was right on target. But it was totally something where you talk to people. The best instrument for finding out things was to pick up the telephone and call.

Q: One of the big issues during this 1980-1982 period was the introduction of SS20 medium-range missiles into East Germany and that area, and we were countering this with putting our Pershing and other type missiles in, and Italy, of course, was the strategic place for doing this in these early Reagan years. Did that come up in your area, or was that elsewhere?

McLEAN: No, it really did come up. It was some of the more exciting things that you do. First off, just to begin with, there was enormous change. Carter goes, Reagan comes in, a new ambassador comes in.

Q: Rabb.

McLEAN: Rabb, Max Rabb, a lovely person who used to give speeches which were just brisk and effusive affection and emotion for Italy. But here he was invited up to talk to the chamber of commerce, which I don't think was his basic style, so I sat down and I said to Rabb, "Could I give you a draft of the type of thing that I expect these people want to hear?" because the chamber of commerce, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Milan, is a very strong institution, one of the largest in the world, and still is. So I sat down, and I took one of Reagan's speeches, probably his first speech to the Congress, and I tried to put in the Rabbisms, but I still had difficulty with Reagan and what he was saying. How am I going to write this just to copy what Reagan was saying and just rewrite it. That's what I did, and sent it down. Well, that was Rabb's speech. It was handed out and published as what he said, so that was what he said. But that was quite a different change of what the United States is all about. As you say, one of the big issues, by the way, is this issue of the SS...

Q: SS20, Soviet SS.

McLEAN: SS20s, and the debate they had all over Europe. One day, a Saturday, there was a great demonstration with everyone there, and I remember reporting on it as it went along. Saturday I was in the consulate, and the consulate was up on the seventh floor of the only skyscraper in the town. I remember the embassy calling me and saying, "Are they there? The radio is saying that they're parading in front of the consulate. Are they?" I said, "No, there's nobody up there." There was a big square, a long area which was basically a wide, super-wide, avenue from the train station down into the center of town, and we were along the side of that, and I said, "No, there's not a sign, not a sign anywhere," and then I said, "Oh, Jesus, there they are," and it was one of the most impressive things, 120,000 people marching in a very file by file. They came around the corner and started to march right past us. It was a very impressive thing, and later that day they had the major event. I did reporting in that period of other events that were taking place in some of the organizations and the PCIs (Italian Communist Party), the Communist Party's attempts to make much of that. So it was an interesting part of what was going on. Of course, all of this is against a background of a lot of tension in the country. When I first got there, I discovered that again, once again, our reporting in Milan had fallen to such a point that when a man was assassinated in a subway station just a few blocks away from where we were, the embassy called up and said, "We're going to report on this," and I said, "No, you shouldn't report on it. We should report on this, Milan should report on this." So we began then to develop the capability to do this, and I made contacts with the anti-terrorism police, and along the way I got a concept that, trying to get something more on that, I knew I couldn't do the secret-type reporting or try to make contact with the terrorists themselves, but what I could do was go to the judges who were interviewing these people. So I developed sort of contacts in which I was getting information from the judges who were interviewing the terrorists. It came to be enormously useful in the Dozier kidnapping, because I was there talking with all...

Q: He was a brigadier general, an Army brigadier general?

McLEAN: He was a brigadier general, and he was kidnapped in Verona, which was in our consular district. It's the headquarters of the NATO land forces command in southern Europe, and we got some indication that there plans afoot to do something. In fact, one of the things I had done in this period was with the consul general. The consul general always had a meeting with the businessmen; he would select seven or eight businessmen for a meeting in his office. And we began to introduce me into these meetings and also into the chamber of commerce discussions about protection for Americans, security protection, and how we would do it and how they should be done. Well, Dozier was kidnapped, and I was able to get a flow of information going to them, such that somewhere in that period when he was still being held, the family communicated to me. Dealing with the police was sometimes difficult, because many were Sicilian and the accent was totally different, and I remember developing a technique of hearing what they say. If you took notes, they would clam up, but if you listen to what they say, and then what I would do is dictate back to them in my Italian, which was getting better, so that they would actually be able to correct if I got it wrong what they were saying, they would do this. But Dozier was very important, because it showed that in fact our security problems were real. The safe house was just three blocks down from my apartment. The notes were put in trash cans and others. Somewhere in that period-I can't remember whether it was before or after Dozier or during Dozier-there was a bomb left at the consulate itself but it didn't go off.

Q: What was your analysis of what were these kidnappings, assassinations, threats about?

McLEAN: Well, you know, Italy was going through an almost rapid change. In fact, as I was leaving Washington to go to Italy, the agricultural specialist at the Commission office had a going-away party for me and invited the UNSA, the Italian news agency. I remember very dramatically he talked to me about how 20 years before then Italians were basically in the mode of the Don Camille movies or books...

Q: It was a series of books about...

McLEAN: The priest who was a strong person in the community against the communist mayor, and it's a very closed little society. Italy was a very uptight society according to this journalist, and yet now they are out doing nude bathing. That's too big a change and caused a little confusion inside the country. That was the impression that I had too, that the left was really becoming very inarticulate, and they articulated themselves through terror rather than through problematic basis. What was interesting about the Dozier thing was the degree to which, once Dozier was released-and they found him, contrary to some of the popular things written, they found him by a series of plea bargains, probably some pretty heavy questioning, but I had no evidence that torture was being used, but they did have plea bargaining in which they were bargaining with people until they got to the people who were pointing out where Dozier was. But in the subsequent months, year, the red brigades came apart. I remember Chief Adigos, telling me that one of the most awesome things was they were coming apart at the top. Each cell was breaking by its leader. The leader would break, and he would then accuse everyone else in that cell, and down and down it would go. It was a very impressive unrolling of what was going on. During this period, of course, one of the questions was what security would do for you. I, in fact, tried... I didn't have protection. The consul general went around with a body guard with a briefcase with a Uzi inside, but for substantial periods when I was in charge myself, they would try to put this man on me, and I just refused because I didn't want the attention of raising my profile and then they'd be gone and I'd be by myself, so I would go "Don't do that." And I would practice very much what I was teaching: vary your routes and your times, and change the way you looked to the world. I did do a lot of thinking about it at that time and putting a lot of it into practice with the consulate and the American community as a whole at that time. We became a source of information and counseling to the American community, a piece of the large American business community.

Q: From my experience, really you're talking almost about a different world than the one I saw. I was Consul General in Naples from 1979 to 1981. What about industry, because where I was, for example, in Naples there was not a single registered glove factory, and yet it was the glove factory capital of the world-the gray market, sort of unofficial, non-taxpaying economy was just tremendous. But Milano, I take it, was different.

McLEAN: Well, I think somewhat different, because they certainly were established and they were very visible and were forces in the society. They weren't all playing by the rules, by any means, and some of the industry structure was due to trying to structure a way around being subject to certain laws or taxes. I think there were various scales. If you were a certain size, you had to pay more taxes or you came under certain safety regulations or whatever it was, and so a firm would be broken in two, put in two different places but would be actually one firm. So that was going on. The Italy of the north, of course, had this great sense of disdain for the south. A man from your staff came up and talked me into to going over to Mediobanca, this great center of world finance, this very impressive place. We walked in and were treated with a type of respect I hadn't had in a long time, and a man, number two in the organization, came in and saw us. We discussed other matters, and I sprang this question, "What was the Italian banking community doing for the south?" "For the south charity, investment never." It was their very strong view of things.

Q: Did Turin play a role?

McLEAN: I'm sure it did play a role, but it's not one that we watched greatly. In that period one of my contact was General Dalla Chiesa, who was the head of the Carabinieri (police), and I used to take people by to see him. One of the things he said to me one time when I brought Ambassador Rabb in to see him, he emphasized to me the need of still trying to be normal in the face of all these things, and he was talking specifically about the Red Brigade. He would get in his car on a Saturday and go with a miniature Fiat and drive the streets, and people would recognize him, and he felt that was very necessary to give a sense of normality. He was then transferred to Sicily, to Palermo, to take on the criminal organizations. Of course, as you know, what happened was he was going down to the kiosk to read the newspaper one morning, he was assassinated. His wife, of course, died, his young wife died with him, and we had the task of consoling her father. Her father was always coming in and somehow trying to get meaning out of all this by learning what the rest of the world was reporting.

Q: I have to say that I found that one of... At a certain point I was brought up as Episcopalian, but I could have gone through the Catholic mass in Italian very well. I kept going to memorial masses of people who were killed. You know the train station bomb; was that in Milano or Bologna?

McLEAN: That was in Bologna.

Q: Bologna. And I mean we had all sorts of other ones, and there was always a solemn high mass when these happened, and there we were.

McLEAN: As I said, the orientation in the north was more political than Bologna. We still don't know for sure today, though some people are now saying that it was the Libyans, but it always had more of a political cast.

Q: That was supposedly a rightist bomb.

McLEAN: It was supposed to be a rightist, but the more recent reporting is that it was moved in this other direction, and they were saying Libya was part of it. But there was always the red against the black. But clearly there was corruption, and many of the people that I knew at that time, including the man who was the head of the Socialist Party and later became mayor, were right at the heart of the clean-up of what took place. And Berlusconi, I knew Berlusconi as a rising rich guy.

Q: Was there TV or media?

McLEAN: You're taking Canal Cinco, Channel Five, the first private television station, taking the money out of it and real estate. Of course, he's, one, a significant Italian political leader now, but he's still suffering from the problem that these very same judges have dug out. But it's not the visible Mafia, the feeling of the Mafia.

Q: You had been working on the European Union. How did you find the attraction towards the European Community, I mean where it really counted and that would be the business community, and Milano? Was this taking hold, or how would you sense the attitude?

McLEAN: I would say it very much was taking hold. Many of the northern Italians who despised the south, and the south then included Rome, would in many ways say our true capital was in Brussels, looking in that direction. You have to remember Milan is about the same distance from Paris as it is to Rome. Physically it's removed, but also the whole concept. I remember going to agricultural fairs in Verona, following up on my interest in agricultural and economics questions. It was the community that supported them and the community that kept things going. I remember one Senator telling me that the only way to keep the contadine, poor peasants, down was to make sure that we gave them lots of money, but this was all European money. I thought it was a little strange, but maybe in fact when you think about what went on in Yugoslavia.

Q: You went to the Yugoslav border and all that, didn't you?

McLEAN: No, we went only to just short of Venice.

Q: Oh, yes.

McLEAN: So we didn't go all the way over there. In fact, I'd never been beyond Venice.

Q: I was wondering whether you were picking up any... Did you have the Brenner Pass and that sort of thing?

McLEAN: Did have the Brenner Pass, and when I finally got a junior officer, a relatively junior officer, to come and be my economic assistant, he was a German speaker, so he went on to there. I regret in some ways that I didn't go myself.

Q: I was just wondering whether that German separatism..., because whereas the northern Italians had gone to the south, I guess the German speakers looked down on the northern Italians.

McLEAN: That's correct, and I didn't do that reporting myself.

Q: How about Giovanni Agnelli? Because he was sort of both a jetsetter and a mover and dealer and almost bigger than life, and I was wondering whether you found dealing with him-you had a Fiat, I guess.

McLEAN: I in fact never dealt with Gianni Agnelli directly, but I dealt with one of his relatives who was in charge of the international side of Fiat. You had to dance around the General a little bit, but we didn't do the socializing so much with the Fiat crowd, but we did do a lot of contact with them on the economic side. And it came in indirectly when, for instance, Rabb, Ambassador Rabb, made a trip to Turin and we set it up. I never met Agnelli. I did meet the head of Olivetti at the time. I set up trips, and I did more the economic side of those trips. When we had a Congressional visit, the Agnellis would attract people to come in. I remember often they never could understand why they were there, but they somehow knew they should go there. It came to the point where I would wire briefing papers to them ahead of time so they would know why they were going

Q: Even when I was there, Turin was open but it was sort of Agnelli's.

McLEAN: Post office.

Q: ...post office or what have you.

McLEAN: It didn't really make any sense. I think when they saw that they opened a super-small consulate, they saw that that was not going to happen. Closing consulates was in the works. One of the other things I may mention to you is a fascinating aspect of work there was the fall of the Banco Ambrosiano.

Q: Could you explain what this was?

McLEAN: The Banco Ambrosiano was a traditional large bank centered in Milan, but over the years it had become very close to the Vatican, so its financial problems began to be a major problem, and it got also involved in this P2 congress, which was a Masonic lodge with ties through Italy and down to Argentina, and all the obscurities of that. It was a very hard story to get into and tell. In fact, one of my first political-type reports I did there was, in fact, to talk about Rome. A major Italian newspaper, had gotten involved in this and suffered deterioration because of this politicalization. Roberto Calvi eventually went to jail, and then he came out for a short moment and then he disappeared, and he shows up one morning and picked up a newspaper, and it says, Calvi was found dead hanging under Blackfriar's Bridge in London. It just turned out that day I was just finishing a report. So I began the telegram, I rewrote the introduction, and said, "This morning Roberto Calvi figuratively and in fact was found at the end of a rope." I think I changed that, and the report went out directly.

Q: But you write these things, and then you change them to make them a little more palatable.

McLEAN: Basically was the story of how this had played out, this Banco Ambrosiano, and I felt pretty proud of that reporting even though I'm not a great financial expert, but I developed a wide range of contacts. Fifteen U.S. banks had come into Milan in those previous years, and each one would always come and stop at the consulate general, and I'd get to know them at the U.S. Chamber. So I think we had a pretty good bead on it, and I stayed in close contact with our treasury attachï¿½ in Rome. They were in fact very pleased that this happened during the summer when they were a little short handed, so I did much of the major reporting on that event. Church was tarnished by it. Church had moved in and out of Italy without problems, and it was clear that we'd get a better rate of return if you're involved with something like Banco Ambrosiano. They probably were not aware that the reason they were getting the rates of return was because when you're legal, you usually just get a better rate. Part of this was this P2 connection, which was partly described in short words here, but again one of the interesting people I had met and gotten to know up there, had come in to see me and established himself as my contact, was a former Hungarian ambassador, Joseph Zoll. He had been the Hungarian ambassador to Rome at the time of the negotiation of Broconsenti, and somebody, C. L. Sulzberger, had recorded his many contacts with him. He was their correspondent. He was a very interesting man, he and his wife, but poor Joseph was always getting himself in trouble in one way or another. One, he was found to be a member of P2 and gave me a lot of information...

Q: It's interesting that a bank that's used by the Vatican and you have a Masonic group which is essentially kind of anti-Catholic, although I think that has gone back in the good old days of Napoleon and was considered pretty daring.

McLEAN: Trying to parse all of those things was a hard job. Zoll was always somebody I still stay in contact with, a fascinating individual, likes Americans, didn't like living in the United States. So he ended up out there and he was very useful to me introducing me to people on the left in Panorama magazine and others, very useful. But I also, through him, made contact with people in Hungary who would come down to visit him. In fact, on one occasion I set up meetings for young dissidents coming out of Hungary at that point to meet with their consulate in Munich. So the consulate was a fascinating place as a reporting vehicle for the U.S. government.

Q: I was wondering whether you had any of the same reaction that I had. I was not an Italian speaker. I was Consul General in Athens. But I came there and started looking at the Italian political scene, especially the scene through the south, and we'd get these requests, you know, "How is the latest permutation within Rome in the political circles. .203 percent has moved over to here or there," and all. I found when I tried to ask around in Naples, they kind of said, "Well, we really didn't know it and we really don't care." But it seemed to me that our embassy got caught up in this minuet of Italian politics at the time. I think it's changed now, but in that time and for 40 years it had been essentially the same minuet.

McLEAN: I totally agree with you. You're right on. It's almost a point that I would make totally myself. One of the last big reports that I did, by the time of my ending, I started doing more political reporting. I had arrived in Italy with some knowledge of Italian politics. I for many years had subscribed to a magazine called The Reporter, which was a political magazine. It was edited by a man who was of Italian origin, and they had more and more, a lot, of Italian coverage. But it still was a terribly confusing place, and as you say, the consulates had this great history of going out and doing all this micro-political reporting, which I was encouraged to do but frankly didn't do because I had gone to some other broader economic themes that I wanted to play. But by the end we were coming up to national election, and I stayed one more day so I would be there just the day before the election and do one last report of what was going on. In fact, I made an estimate. The only thing wrong with my estimate was that the number estimate I gave was very much praised that I did that. The only trouble is my totals didn't add up to 100. I had done a report a month or six weeks before the election to one of the newsmakers, and I always have to remember Milan was really the center of so much publishing and information, and he had basically given me a line, which I added to and again got some good marks on what I basically started talking. The point you're making is that the parties were losing their ideological fervor and importance, and all of this measuring small changes of numbers didn't make the difference that it used to make. That was an important message to get across. What I didn't get and didn't identify at the time was the degree to which the loss of that ideology was causing the political systems coming apart to some degree, and eventually with the fall of the Soviet Union, it really gets totally restructured, which, of course, I didn't have a clue about.

Q: One of the things too, I noted that there really was an Italian corps in the Foreign Service. I had people down there who were married to Italians who were on their third of fourth tour, not terribly effective people frankly, but they liked Italy.

McLEAN: Actually in the notes that I made for this thing, my first words up here at the top, "Breaking into the Italian team."

Q: Oh, you really feel outside.

McLEAN: It was just exactly what you're saying, this sense that I was an outsider. The one thing, of course, I brought was a lot of in-depth knowledge about the economic issues, so nobody would argue with me about those issues, but I really felt like a rank amateur. Of course, it fits in with Italy itself. Your Italian corps is going to be like Italy naturally. The Italians love to put curlicues on everything to make things more complicated. That was the way the Italian team always was. "You couldn't possibly understand Italy, because this is your first tour," and I wasn't really encouraged to want to go back, though I thought this was a very successful tour and went very well. One thing that wasn't as successful was that I hadn't learned yet how to write my own evaluation, which would have helped me in later years in my career when no one would write it if I didn't write it. I discovered the glories of writing your own performance report, but at that time I don't think, I mean I think I did a very good job in this particular assignment.

Q: Well, why don't we pick it up the next time, 1983, whither?

McLEAN: That's good for me. We'll go to the National War College.

Q: We'll go to the National War College and pick it up in 1983.

Q: The 24th of February 1999. So you're off to the National War College. When was that?

McLEAN: This is 1983.

Q: And you were there till 1984, I assume.

McLEAN: Obviously one year.

Q: Can you describe sort of the atmosphere of the War College at that time?

McLEAN: Well, those were years of great excitement on the Pentagon side of things. They had money. It was the first time I had been with an organization that had a lot of money. The military budget was up, and people were pumped up, and we had in fact a great group there. At the moment my classmates include the present deputy chief of staff and the chief of staff of the Air Force and Tony Zinni, who is head of the Central Command, so a number of them went out to have high rank in the service, and it was the years of great reflection. All the things that you have heard about in recent years about the Colin Powell approach to things. Well, those ideas were very much developing at the time. These were people who had served as relatively junior officers in Vietnam, and they didn't want to go through that again. They wanted this great emphasis I'm sure the War College always has, but I think it was particularly emphasized, about you have to have a policy and know what you're trying to accomplish before you get into conflicts. I had gone there somewhat reluctantly. It certainly wasn't my first choice at all, but coming out of Milan I was being offered to go back into EUR at basically a lateral position, which I wasn't too interested in, and the job that I thought I was being offered in Lisbon didn't come through because they discovered that, despite my vast economic knowledge, I wasn't an economic cone officer, so I went to the War College, and out of it I began to exercise a lot and jogging, and I met an enormously great group of people and got to know them and worked with them, and then I got some academic background. Probably if you would ask subsequently, what I got out of it was working with other agencies. It wasn't just the military but it was other agencies, and we worked together, and it was an interesting year.

Q: Was there a feeling on the part of the military, would you say, that sort of the politicians and the State Department people got us into Vietnam and we're not going to let them do it to us again?

McLEAN: I think there was great suspicion of the State Department, where they looked at us with a lot of skepticism, but I don't think they thought of Vietnam so much as that particular thing. They thought more of the presidents who did that. I think there was also a recognition that the military themselves didn't have a plan when they went in, and I think they were critical of their seniors as much as anything, and they felt that they had to do something differently. There wasn't a conspiracy theory on this thing. It was much more of a practical idea, we've got to do better.

Q: Was there also a look at what type of wars would be fought? I mean was everything pretty well still focused on the Soviet Union? Were we looking at the periphery?

McLEAN: There are a couple things I can say about that. One is there was a great change in doctrine. I think a new field manual had just come out that would forecast the type of war that would be fought in the Gulf War. It was much more of emphasizing mobility, and that was exciting to many of the military. Another thing that was exciting to them was they were getting the first glimpse of high-tech warfare. The head of the War College was one who was one of the leaders in thinking about how you use the new capabilities for smart weapons and technology to do things. Secondly, this was a period when you had a number of localized actions that went well or didn't go well. Granada happened, and in some ways they thought it went pretty well, but they saw that, for instance, the Navy and the Army forces couldn't communicate with one another, these types of basic problems that they were a little stunned to find out, and we had briefings on that type thing. And then there was a particular dramatic thing that went on that had an effect on the War College in years afterwards, but we were the first to receive it. We had received a briefing from a man who had just come back to head the Lebanon mission, a Marine, and he came in and put up on the board projections of the various mission statements he had been given and how it was revised, and you could see that he didn't have a clear mission statement, and what was dramatic about that is that within months, maybe weeks, of his presentation, the Marine barracks blew up, which said exactly what he was trying to get across, that unless a military mission has a clear idea of what they're trying to accomplish, then they don't do the job well. So it was a very dramatic thing. I understand that same lecture was given in subsequent years, because it was a very classic example of how, whether it's the man in the field or it's an Army or it's a military institution as a whole, there must be a clear mission of what you're trying to accomplish, and that was good stuff. The other point about the Soviet Union, clearly this is the talks. We had just had all this confrontation, and maybe we're still to a degree having it in Europe, over installing missiles, medium-range missiles, in Europe, and this was a maximum time of confrontation with the Soviet Union and the evil empire. We had the first briefings on... I used my Q clearance, my atomic energy clearance, from many years before to be briefed on some of these ideas about anti-missile defense, which many of the military I was with thought was enormous waste of money and resources, because they saw things in different context. But the Soviet Union was the enemy, and that had a practical effect that every year they have trips and it's sort of a lottery system, and I asked to be involved in a Soviet trip, and I was in fact selected to go on the Soviet trip, and I had done some of the courses to try to prepare therefore, and then at the last minute our trip was canceled because of the confrontation. Recall it was also the year of the shootdown of the Korean airline. The rhetoric that was going back and forth was pretty strong. So one of the minor ways that they retaliated against us was to cancel that particular trip. I ended up going to my first and probably only visit to Iceland and Switzerland. I think we always tend to go to Finland, so we went for the neutrals.

Q: Iceland was not quite as neutral.

McLEAN: That was the theme of the trip. It was not one of the great moments, but it was interesting.

Q: Obviously this is a school and was not the planning thing, but I was wondering, was anybody looking at what the Soviets were doing in Afghanistan at that point? I mean was this a topic of conversation?

McLEAN: Well, we weren't studying Afghanistan more than anything else. It was part of the area studies, of course, and I don't think there was appreciation by any means of the failure of the Soviet effort at that time. In fact, I believe, if I recall correctly and I suppose that this is unclassified, that our last war game was a war game about something that begins in Afghanistan, so there was a sense that that was going on. But it was the view mostly in the College, I would say 95 percent, that the Soviet Union was the threat, a growing threat. There were concerns about, one, that the Soviet Union did not see nuclear policy as we did and, therefore, our idea of mutual sure destruction doctrine didn't really fit with what they were thinking about, that they were thinking in terms of offense, their spetznaw units, their idea of jumping in and getting behind the lines was very worrisome to them as they began to think about these things. But there was actually almost no indication of weakness, but I cite two cases and I think they're rather strange. One was a very hard line Air Force colonel who had just come back from the attachï¿½'s office in Moscow, and he would tell us how bad they were and how difficult they were, but when he actually got down to showing us pictures of his tour, he showed crumbling buildings, he showed filthy conditions, he showed what were really Third World conditions. As I say, he was talking about 1981/1982, and so that was not quite in concert with this other idea of the Soviet Union. The other one was we had a man who sometimes was quoted, but the first time I heard his presentation, a guy from Georgetown University who did a study. He was a demographer, and he was the first to identify that Soviet men were living..., their life expectancy was decreasing not increasing, which again was an indication that something at the heart of the Soviet Union wasn't as strong as the general picture that people had appreciated. But those were very much the exceptions. In fact, as I say, I still deeply regret that we weren't able to make that trip, because I think having seen that would have affected some of it.

Q: Well, in 1984 you left the War College. Where did you go?

McLEAN: In 1984 I went back to my home bureau, in fact, after my little European excursion, and even though at the War College I was trying to build up my European credentials, I had really done Europe as an economic focus, I think trying to build up more of a military focus and military-political. But when I really looked at the jobs, they really weren't there. So back to the Inter-American Bureau I went as deputy director of the Office of Andean Affairs.

Q: You were there from '84 to when?

McLEAN: I was the deputy director for one year, and then I was acting director, and then I was the director. The period that I was in that office was for three years.

Q: 1984 to 1987?

McLEAN: Let me see. Yes, that's correct, 1984 to 1987.

Q: You had been dealing with sort of the major issue of east-west and all that. Coming back to ARA, was there a feeling of this is a side show or not?

McLEAN: Well, in my mind as I came back, I probably had that idea in my mind, because Latin America had come to focus on Central America, and here I was going back to Latin America but to the Andean countries, which were not at the center of things at that particular moment. I wasn't even going back to Brazil, which in my own mind I thought Brazil or Argentina, which I thought were great countries. But humankind is that way. As soon as I got to where I was, I discovered it was highly important.

Q: It was the center of the universe.

McLEAN: In effect it turned out to be. None of us at that time would think that the President, as he has recently in the last few weeks, talked about world policy as one of the most important things that you do in the world is fight narcotics trafficking. In fact, the story I think, part of the story, is how we went from narcotics trafficking being very much of a side issue to being something of a much more concern of American policy.

Q: We'll pick that up, but I was wondering: When you arrived in the Bureau, you had been away, you had Ronald Reagan and he had a major focus, at least his administration did, on Central America. You were somewhat removed. What was the feeling there of the people you were talking with? I can see coming in being a bit skeptical about, you know, this is a bit overblown. Was there that feeling?

McLEAN: Well, the Central American activity was really apart. We lived in almost a different world, though we were down-I guess we were on a different floor even, but we didn't mix a lot, and we did our thing pretty much apart from it. I used to see people going into meetings with the assistant secretary and Ollie North would be coming out and I would go in. We didn't have joint meetings with Ollie North, which was part of the deal. But there was a transference. We had translating of some of the ideas. Soon after I got there, there was a great concern that Bolivia was going to go communist. It really sounded like something antique, but there was in fact a minister or two in the Bolivian government which was communist, a declared communist, and there were those who wanted to do something about. One of the early major things we did in that office was to try to fight that. That was a major early activity, trying to show that this was not a real possibility that there was going to be a communist regime established in the High Andes. Bolivia at that time was very chaotic, and it had an inflation rate of 20,000 percent at one point, and it was hyper-inflation. It was one of the early cases of hyper-inflation, and in fact that's one of the things that I contributed. I brought my economic background to the analysis of the question and tried to show how you dealt with that problem, and also working with the ministers and others that came up in looking at ways we could get international support through a program that would bring this inflation down.

Q: Andean Affairs at that time covered what countries?

McLEAN: It covered Venezuela to Bolivia, so it was Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

Q: Chile?

McLEAN: Chile did not. Chile was part of the southern cone. Chile, Argentina and the two small states were a separate office. And then there was an Office of Brazilian Affairs. So our major activity of the office was a theme that I had mentioned before when I was in the Latin American Bureau, and that was development. When I hear stories of what this Cold War was all about, I say, well, that's interesting that people think that, but in fact a very large part of our Latin American policy was developing the area, was trying to improve the way of life of Latin Americans. Certainly there was a Cold War motive in it, but it certainly wasn't the only one, and at times it wasn't the primary one. Most of the reason we were giving aid to that region, the Andean region, at that time, specifically to Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, was to help people. The program was justified mostly on the fact we had an El Niï¿½o in the previous years that had been devastating, and as a consequence you had medium-sized aid programs going on in those countries, very traditional aid activities for economic development.

Q: Particularly with Peru and Ecuador, were we over our troubles? With Ecuador we had the Tuna Wars, and with Peru we had nationalization and all that.

McLEAN: Those things had been overcome at that point. They were all recently returned to being democratic countries, and that was part of our line. Belaunde had come back to be elected President in Peru. He wasn't a terribly effective president, but he was democratic and, therefore, attractive to us, and the Ecuadorians were among the first countries in Latin America to go from a military government back to a democracy, so again those were reasons to support them and to show our effort. In fact, in those days when we did planning papers, we said that the ranking of interest was democracy, development, and then this third thing which was called anti-narcotics objective, and it was very much the third activity. Early on when I first got to the office, that began to change, because there was a crisis going on in one of the larger and more important countries, Colombia. The narcotics traffickers had just assassinated the minister of justice, which was an incredible event. It was an event that we could not believe that these criminals would have the guts, the sanity, to go out and do this thing, killing, and so suddenly there was a focus on narcotics which was quite different.

Q: How did this manifest itself within the bureau?

McLEAN: Well, at first there was a little reluctance, and I cite an example very early on. I think this must have been June. I had made a trip as soon as I got to the office to Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, just a get-acquainted trip, and the embassy in Colombia was the main focus of that trip. I spent a week there, and there were great security concerns, and that became one of my subjects of specialty in the subsequent period. How do you protect this mission? How do you compose the mission? But soon after I came back, the Justice Department, Steve Trott, who was then the Assistant Attorney General for Criminal Affairs in the Department, called what he called a Colombia Opportunities Group, which was a meeting getting all the agencies of the U.S. government together to talk about what we could do, following this assassination of this justice minister, to take advantage of what seemed to be some change in the Colombian body politic and some willingness to go beyond the very small things that they'd been doing up to that point to take on the narcotics traffickers. So he called this meeting. Well, that was a great affront to the State Department and the Bureau, that you would actually have another agency call a country-specific meeting, inter-agency meeting. That was totally against everything that we had done. So as a consequence the lowest level person that you could find to attend such a distinguished meeting was me. So the Deputy Director of Andean Affairs goes to this meeting, and there I began to establish my reputation for whatever it is. I got in arguments with William Von Robb, the head of the Customs Service at that time, a very well known, colorful figure, and others. I was pushing a certain agenda. And I came back from that meeting and began to say, "Hold it just a second. Narcotics is not just one of our issues and it certainly is not a subsidiary issue; it is a major issue and it is a foreign policy issue, because unless we do something with these countries on narcotics, the foreign policy towards these countries is going to go totally out of control. In fact, then we did something about the narcotics, and one could argue that the problems did go out of control, but that's part of the story of what went on, and so I became one of the advocates, in fact one of the few advocates in the early days, of trying to push the narcotics agenda and working with the other agencies to change the tenor of our relationships with these countries.

Q: Did we have, when we first started out, any sort of fix on who these narcotics lords were in Colombia and all?

McLEAN: We did. I was just thinking of that on the way here to make this presentation, because we have to look back to recall, when you go into a new area, how ignorant you are and how bad the State Department, or maybe the U.S. government, is in giving you a read-in with some structure to it so you can start working with some intelligence. I know it took me a long time to get to know the narcotics traffickers by name and where they were and what was their method. The State Department is so good about giving you a job, and you're supposed to pick up right from where the other guy left off, but, yes, I think there was some sense. But there was then a lack of information, and there is now a lack of information. These are criminal enterprises, and they're very hard to get clear ideas about, particularly difficult when you have several parts of the U.S. government with different views on the subject, and your entire interpretation of what's going on can get very skewed.

Q: In a way did you find that really the Department of State was almost the wrong person, it was either ill equipped to deal with this, or maybe we could act as a mouthpiece for other people. We try to get agreement through the government and the government can't control the narcotics trade, and we deal with the government. It seems like this is not a very good line of communication.

McLEAN: There's a question about who can do it. Every agency of the U.S. government has wanted themselves to do it, the Drug Enforcement Agency or the CIA or the U.S. military or the Customs Service, but in fact I think you eventually revolve down to that in fact the State Department is the best person because we didn't have the programmatic career needs, so you didn't tend to go into a narcotics cone and go up through a service, and you could stand off a little bit. So I think the way that it had evolved, and it clearly had evolved before I got there, was that the State Department had a small budget, whereas every other agency had to go in for their own specific operations, but they couldn't influence things beyond that. So the State Department, I think, at that point had a budget of about $35,000,000, which meant that they had little goodies they could give out both to other agencies and to local governments to get them to move in a certain policy direction. That budget had to grow enormously as we began to do things that had larger investment cost to it such as helicopters, which began at that period.

Q: Let's talk about the individual countries, how we dealt with them. What about Venezuela?

McLEAN: Venezuela was seen at that time as being out of the narcotics question. The major question of Venezuela was oil. A major question of Venezuela was coming out of a period of turmoil with Venezuela over the '70s when Venezuela had been one of the leaders of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and Venezuela had made enormous amounts of money, and suddenly the oil price was coming down, and it was causing great tension inside of the country. It was a country where people used to give their children graduation presents of getting on a plane and flying around the world. At the time the country was bringing... Eggs, for instance, were flown in, and other food items, were flown in from Florida every day. What makes the country work was beginning to collapse, because Venezuelans had so much money...

Q: We're talking about a rather narrow band of Venezuela...

McLEAN: The whole economy, to some degree, had become dependent upon this oil money and had been weakened in its own structure to be able to do things. It was also a country, of course, that had been highly statized, as many of the countries there were. So the total effect of this was to be very debilitating on the country. Aside from those important issues which drove a lot of our involvement with treasury and debt recycling and with the Department of Energy in terms of the role of U.S. companies, Venezuela didn't quite have the relevance that some of these other countries did. It did have the relevance because the Venezuelans themselves were putting a lot of money into U.S. foundations in Washington, and so there were always conferences on Venezuela, but they weren't the most interesting conferences. They frankly didn't lead very far in going any particular new direction or give us any particularly new ideas, which in retrospect is unfortunate because people I don't think were really thinking through the problem that that country was beginning to have in the future years. I got involved Arm & Hammer. I became a big friend of Arm & Hammer and the head of Occidental Petroleum trying to get compensation for... Actually Arm & Hammer had a major problem in all five Andean countries.

Q: It was Occidental Petroleum.

McLEAN: It was Occidental Petroleum. In fact, for Occidental we did good work in helping them resolve each of those five problems that they did have, even in the Venezuelan case, which was a nationalization case. We had a major problem in getting an ambassador approved, because he was seen as... The political parties, COPEI (Social Christian) and Action Democratica, were very much aligned with the U.S. Democratic Party. Therefore, when we nominated a young, very dynamic, conservative person, they resisted and we had to work to...

Q: Who was that?

McLEAN: Otto Reich.

Q: Whom I have interviewed, by the way.

McLEAN: But that took some doing, to get Otto approved, and he turned out to be a fine ambassador.

Q: Talking about a new ambassador coming in, did Reich come in with a-this was the Reagan Administration-with sort of a mindset that you felt that, you know, probably wasn't going to work too well in dealing with Venezuela?

McLEAN: I didn't see anything of that. The Venezuelans may have thought that, but in fact that is not correct. He was very inventive, and I think he did very well. I think he was a good choice for the job.

Q: How about Cuba? Cuba was messing around at one point in Venezuela, but by this point...

McLEAN: By this time it was not, no. By this time Cuba had faded as a major issue in that part of Latin America. It was clearly an issue for the Central Americans, but for us we knew of activities going on. I'm going to jump ahead a little bit. Later when I'm in Colombia, we actually bring people in to brief the government on the Cuba threat, and they're not impressed, because in fact we couldn't show them the information that there was a great Cuban threat. I'm not saying there was none, but it just wasn't so clear and relevant that they would make the case. No, the problems with the U.S., Venezuela, Cuba was not a major problem in that period.

Q: How did the Venezuelan embassy and through it the Venezuelan government view what we were doing in Central America?

McLEAN: Actually at that time we were working together with them. In fact, what was later to lead to the dethronement of the President, Carlos Andres Perez, was that he was diverting funds from the Venezuelan government into activities, for instance, to provide bodyguards to the new democratic president of Nicaragua and so on. They were trying to be a force on the good side. In fact, that was not something that we in that office were terrifically involved in, but in fact it was taking place. Venezuela was considered to be good guys at that time.

Q: Colombia: Let's talk about the non-narcotic problem first. Do we have anything?

McLEAN: Colombia was, like all the other countries, having financial problems at that particular time and had to turn around and nationalize all its banks. But Colombia is the-I think this is correct to say-only country, perhaps with the exception of Chile, that has never rescheduled its debts. It always paid its debts. That doesn't mean it didn't get new loans that in effect were used to pay off old, but they always kept to their contracts. Yet they were in very deep problems in that first period when I first came to the office. What I didn't understand as I came into the office-and I don't think anybody in the State Department did, and I learned about it later-was that Paul Volker, who was the Chairman of the Fed at that time, had his private operation going. He was doing things privately to help pull the Colombians into a program that would save them. It was quite different from the Treasury. The Treasury was looking to force Colombia into a rescheduling program, and Colombians didn't want that. It was against their sense. They weren't going to be just any other developing country. They were going to be a country that kept its debts, and Volker supported them, and that program worked in the end, and Colombia made reforms but really never deviated from moving its debt forward in a very conventional way rather than going through the IMF and being required to take a program of discipline. They did not do that. That was an interesting thing. We eventually found out what Volker was doing, and by that time the program was underway, and part of our job down at the State Department was to hold the Treasury off. I know that I got in trouble with David Mulford on part of my efforts. David Mulford was the Under Secretary for Monetary Affairs and the key guy in Treasury on these things, and myself and others were struggling to keep them from pressuring the Colombians at that point to adopt an IMF program.

Q: On the narcotics side, in the first place, was it difficult doing business there because of the perceived and probably real threat from the drug people?

McLEAN: Yes, there was. Our ambassador at the time was Lou Tambs, who was a very colorful and a very warm person in many ways. He was an academic founder of what was called the Santa Fe Group, which was a group of conservative scholars on Latin America that provided much of the meat for the first policy of the Reagan Administration on Latin America. Lou invented the term narco-guerilla, which was very insulting to Colombia. Colombians always thought of the guerrillas as romantic figures, Robin Hoods, and to hear someone say that they were involved with narcotics was a real heresy and stirred up a lot of hatred. He also made other statements right in the face of the narcotics traffickers, so, yes, he did attract a lot of hostility. He did understand. It was actually when I was making my first trip there that he was beginning to understand that what he was stirring up wasn't just against him but it was hurting the embassy as well. But, I must say, his approach to it was very nervous. One day-I was staying with him at that time-he not only had his Uzi in a holster right in front of him, but he had his hand on a .45, and I must say it made me a little bit nervous. The embassy had begun this practice of driving very aggressively through the town with front and back cars and cutting off traffic and the rest of it. Eventually after some months, when the threats got very personal and very real, we pulled him out, and he stayed out and eventually was given Costa Rica as an ambassadorship. Lou told me in that period, somewhat contrary to what he later testified in Congress, he said, "I listen to you guys at the State Department. You're my source of instructions, but I really get what I do from my friends over at the White House," and he made a big wink, most of which I think was quite accurate, that he was taking a lot of his cue. But I again in retrospect don't condemn what he was trying to do. He was trying to move this agenda of narcotics to be something of more important concern to the United States, though because of his ideological bent, he put a lot of emphasis on the fact it was communism that was driving this.

Q: Was there a communist movement there that was significant, or was this money?

McLEAN: I think communism, not just there but almost everywhere, had died as an ideological movement. There was one of the groups that was still driven by something almost a Christian communist activity of the ELN (Ejï¿½rcito de Liberaciï¿½n Nacional), but the major movement, the FARC, was a way of life-the Force Alamadas Revolucionadios Kolombianos (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Columbia). It's sort of a place where people go to drop out, in Colombian terms-at least it was at that time. And though there was a lot of skepticism-and even today there are arguments about it-people forget that we did... Shortly after Lou began this argument talking about narco-guerrillas, we sent people in who were qualified to look at the information, and we came back convinced that in fact he was right, that the FARC was receiving some of its income-at that time we would not have said the majority of its income, but some of its income-from guarding narcotics plantations or laboratories, and, in some cases, from actually providing it. Eventually we also found that they were involved in arms traffic and there was an international side to it. They were becoming a significant force in the narcotics, they were a factor, they were another cartel in the narcotics activities by the time I left there, by the time I left my time in working on these questions. Today there is no question that a major portion of the FARC is supported by narcotics, its narcotics activities.

Q: I assume we had thrown in our face, "Well, our people are selling the cocaine, but they wouldn't be selling it unless you Americans were buying it." Was this something you had to deal with?

McLEAN: It is something we had to deal with, and we probably should have dealt with it better than we did. I know I tried to deal with it. I wrote an op ed when later, my next assignment after this, I was a DCM and chargï¿½ in Bogota, and I actually wrote an op ed piece trying to get USIA to turn its activities around, and to try to make the point and try to put this in perspective for Colombians was very difficult, one, because USIA didn't particularly want to do this job and they were very reluctant, they weren't geared up to do it early on in the period when I first went there and I was in Andean Affairs. But it's also true that Colombians didn't want to hear that. They didn't want to hear a more balanced view of what was going on. They would only hear the United States talking against them and not hearing that in fact we were talking about our own consumption problem. So I think we should have made a better presentation of our case. Perhaps our policy should have been better as well. We should have been putting much more emphasis on demand reduction. It is, in fact, just in this period in the late '80s that, whereas our consumption had been going up rather dramatically, the curve suddenly turns the other way and begins to go down also very dramatically-a fact that is not often noted. It's hard to get good news about anything in the narcotics field. The United States clearly today is a much less druggy country than it was back in those times.

Q: What were we doing? What were our policies during the time you were dealing with Andean Affairs in Colombia?

McLEAN: As I say, we still would cite democracy development. They had no real development program to speak of, so we began to... one, they wanted helicopter-not easy to do but we in fact began to build up a helicopter activity for the police. We also began to look at what the armed forces could do to increase this-pitifully small considering the problem that they had since they couldn't get around the country. Really large parts of the country were out of their touch just because they couldn't get there, they didn't have the forces to do it. So you began to build up, mostly putting our emphasis on, developing a helicopter capability for the police and giving them training. We also obviously began to give them intelligence assistance, both the armed forces and the police, and the police thing was coming through our State Department budget. Some of it, of course, is trying to get them to do for themselves. We tried to get publicity on what we were doing as a way to get them to feel the need to do it on their own side. I'll jump ahead into a time that I was actually serving there, but we began also to work in terms of offshore trying to pick up the planes as they came off of the country, and then a whole series of other. Everything you read in Tom Clancy's book, we at least thought of all of those things but we didn't do any.

Q: What book was that?

McLEAN: A Clear and Present Danger, which was an extraordinary book. It really got into the mind of those of us who worked in it, because people were trying to invent all sorts of different things to do. A big part of our program was to try to get them to extradite their major criminals, and it met with great resistance. They finally did capture one of the three leading traffickers and extradited him, but the number of major traffickers was always held down by the fact that there was great fear that, if they did that, the narcos would retaliate, and in fact that's what began to happen. They began to retaliate. Again I have to skip ahead to the time that I was actually serving there when that became almost a war.

Q: How did we view Colombia at that time about the power of money and corruption and...?

McLEAN: I would say that we didn't see it. We tended to take on face value the people we were working with, because we didn't have specific proof of anything or allegations that would say the people that we were working with were deeply involved in this. In fact, Colombians had that same view, the same view that, of course, if there was any corruption, it wasn't any of the good people that were doing this. I think we know in retrospect that that wasn't true. We tended to accept Colombia's own view of itself as being a victim to what was going on, and we tended to minimize-again I'm talking about the early period-to minimize the impact it was having on the economy. All of our reporting tended to say that this was not a major economic activity. The facts, of course, began to change, certainly the appreciation of the facts began to change as we went through and began to see that the penetration was rather heavy throughout the whole economy.

Q: Did you find that because of our concern, particularly of the Reagan Administration, with what was happening in the communist versus Western clash in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador, that this meant that the White House and all really didn't have much time to worry about narcotics?

McLEAN: No, but I think it was compartmentalized. They too had-I'm trying to think of his name-but they did have a narcotics specialist who served on the staff and rhetorically, I think, gave it a good deal of attention. The linking of it to the communist thing didn't last after the first period. They began to see it as much more of a... you've got to go after the major cartels. The images of the cartel was something that grew in this period. Little by little, people in the United States began to know who Pablo Escobar was, that these were figures that appeared in their papers. They appeared in the Fortune 500 list of the richest people in the world. So you began to get a sense that the perception of what was going on changed. But I would say it was really toward the end of the Reagan period and through the Bush period that the issues became put on a much more solemn basis and people began to see a strategy. Earlier on, despite that meeting that I referred to in June of 1984, you didn't have a government-wide strategy that attacked all parts of it. And everyone was looking for a simple way out. The State Department, with its money, began to invest in eradication activities. Before I got there, that was first done in marijuana and over the course of this period had a great deal of success. Colombia stopped being a major source of marijuana for the United States, and we began looking at ways that we could use aerial spraying to eliminate the coca crop, and that was thought of as going to be a great solution-because we were always looking for a silver bullet to knock this thing down. Well, in fact, it turned out not to be that easy. Because with something like coca it takes a much stronger chemical to defeat it, environmental concerns were raised and we didn't go forward with those programs at that time. We go back to that later, but at that time that wasn't done. So the issue began to stand on its own as its own program. It became divorced from the communism business, and it became much more of something that people would talk about as a separate issue.

Q: What about concerns as an economist? I mean you have the Escobars and all making billions of dollars, but you have peasants. Raising coca is how they make their money and almost at a subsistence level. Were we trying to make substitutions?

McLEAN: In Colombia, no, we didn't, and one could argue about that. First off, I think, if you do careful analysis, you always come up with the fact that narcotics is bad for your economy in the way it destroys institutions. But it also creates dependencies among the farmers who move off of food crops and into these very lucrative cash crops. That's a very strongly held view in many parts, but I think it's one that, if you really carefully look at it, it doesn't work. These markets didn't exist until very recently. The country would be much better if they moved off and did things that were legitimate crops rather than this. Helping the peasants probably does have that role, once you have a program of enforcement in place. The fumigation program that we did against marijuana-at a particular point after we had harassed them and gotten a reduction in the crop, the final stroke was the government of Colombia itself went in with an assistance program. It wasn't very big, but it was just sufficient enough to lure the farmers away from doing it. The United Nations, for instance, had a program in southern Colombia that was sold under the rubric of being an anti-narcotics program but in fact it wasn't, because it had no enforcement mechanism. You're trying to convince farmers. There is no crop that competes with narcotics, the illegal good. The illegal good by definition is going to be very high priced, and therefore you're never going to do that. In line with an enforcement program, it can work. That was an option that we always had and always thought about, but that isn't where we put a lot of money in, certainly not in Colombia. Later when we talk about Bolivia, I can talk about that in more detail, where we developed a more structured program of development.

Q: As one gets into these debates of what should we do and all that, was the fact that we had strong political support for the tobacco farmers ever sort of thrown in our face?

McLEAN: No, not really. In recent days our policy of helping tobacco farmers only comes up now because most Colombians who smoke smuggled cigarettes from the United States, manufactured outside of Colombia. In fact, those are the types of things that it took us years to understand, that in fact that smuggling culture, which in fact we were on the import side of, was a very big part of how these entrepreneurs learned to do the opposite, to export, the other direction, export something to us. And I believe it is only now, and I really mean now in 1999, that people are beginning to focus on the illegals, the cigarette trade going into Colombia, and trying to see it as how it functions as part of the money laundering operations.

Q: Moving down, Ecuador, what were our issues with Ecuador?

McLEAN: Ecuador in this period was, as I say, one of our real heroes, because it had gone early on from military government. It had terrific debt problems. It's a very difficult-to-govern country, to get a political consensus on. In this early period that I'm talking about, we had a very hard-line president, Febres Cordero, but he was democratic up to the limit. He was a good friend of Vice President Bush, later President Bush. We wanted him very much to be a friend, and when Secretary Baker came up with his Baker Plan...

Q: Wait a minute. Baker would have been later on. We're talking about 1984 to 1987.

McLEAN: That's right, and Baker at that time was Secretary of the Treasury.

Q: Oh, okay, excuse me.

McLEAN: He was Secretary of the Treasury, and we lined Ecuador up to be the first candidate on that. In fact, let me just mention the Baker Plan. I'm sorry, things aren't linked together here.

Q: Oh, no, no, no.

McLEAN: The Baker Plan in part comes out of Baker's first trip to Latin America, which was in 1985. He had just become Secretary of the Treasury and went down with the delegation for the swearing-in of the President of Peru, Alan Garcia. Alan Garcia was famous because he had declared that he was going to have a moratorium on debt because it was a totally unjust debt that had been accumulated by military people and the country shouldn't pay it and couldn't pay it; and in the end what he did do was say that what we're going to do is only pay ten percent of our export earnings as a payment of debt. But I went on that trip with Baker, David Mulford from Treasury, and Elliott Abrams, who was the Assistant Secretary. On trips like that you have time on the airplane for discussions on the way down and time on the way back, and when we were there, we had meetings with the various presidents of the region. As a consequence, I think that it focused minds a good deal. Among other things, Elliott Abrams, who was a very articulate person, did the notes on it. He began to circulate them around in a very advocacy sort of way, saying, "We talked about doing this. Shouldn't we be doing this?" I think Elliott's initiative had a major effect on causing Baker very quickly soon after that to come up with this plan to begin the process of settling the debt problem that was overhanging Latin America. Well, Ecuador was one of the first countries that signed on and tried to do this. Eventually they're not going to be successful, not going to be greatly successful, in doing it, not going to live up to the promise of reform. But otherwise Ecuador was basically a fairly tranquil place. The old issues of the tuna thing had really backed off, was not a major problem. We were coming up towards the 50th anniversary of the Rio Protocol which decided the line between Peru and Ecuador. At a later date, when I would come back as deputy assistant secretary, I worked to try to stir up interest and try to anticipate a conflict, that eventually does take place, but it's very hard to get a bureaucracy to be interested in a theoretical issue. So in the early period, we got almost zero attention to it.

Q: Well, then down to Peru. What was the situation?

McLEAN: Peru was in bad shape in 1984. The economy was hobbled along. They were tied up with antiquated policies. They had built up a great deal of foreign debt, and the narcotics problem was beginning to impinge on it. Narcotics were located up in the Ayacucho Valley in the middle of the country, a lot of coca was being grown there; we knew that. We also knew that there was corruption. It was beginning to corrupt the armed forces in the area. And so we had begun to work with the police. Just as I arrived up there on my first trip, which must have been early '85, you had the same phenomenon of guerrillas actually beginning to enter into the narcotics areas and taking advantage of the social destruction that was going on there. When I traveled into the Ayacucho Valley the first time, it was the week after this first attack that had taken place. I saw the burnt-out AID projects that we had built for crop substitution, that were now just burnt to the ground. I saw the police cars that we had supported, full of bullet holes and was shown the spots of the massacres that had taken place in this sort of 'Night of the Long Knives' that took place in the valley. So it was a sobering event. And then I also met with the commanding general of the area, who had really done nothing to save the situation. Of course, I was aware at that time that there were accusations that he was on the take for the narcotics traffickers, so you began to see this complicated situation. The President, as I say, was a highly pleasant and popular person by the name of Belaunde, who'd been kicked out by the military back in 1970 or 1969, and he was back but he was not running an effective government. So early on in 1985 Opera, the party with a larger popular base, was elected. A very attractive guy, Alan Garcia, a tall, smiling, quick-of-tongue was elected and, I must say, was a highly charismatic figure. We were deeply worried by his economics, or lack of economics, his belief that you could solve economics by declarations. But I will say that when I met with him, I went in with Baker to see, I said, "Boy, this guy could really do something for the country." It turns out he doesn't, but that's another story.

Q: Was Fujimori at all a...

McLEAN: Fujimori was not a factor. This is five years before Fujimori comes along. I also attended his inauguration five years later. At that time Garcia leads the country into economic disaster. I heard the statement that he in effect took the wheel of the economy and ran it at full speed against a wall. Eventually, by the late 1980s, the country eventually ends up in hyper-inflation as well.

Q: Were you getting any reflections of what Pinochet was doing in Chile? Was it, "Look here. This guy may be a bastard, but he's certainly doing the right things economically"?

McLEAN: You were beginning to hear that, but it was always covered by the fact that it's an uncaring, it's not a democracy. The democracy movement was underway at that time, and I knew it was offstage that this was going on. I can remember once, one of the few things that did happen in Ecuador was the president was kidnapped by a military unit at one point, and we put together an operation. We moved up to the operations center to coordinate U.S. response to this thing, which turned out to be very little, and appropriately we didn't do very little to respond to this danger, which was worked on by Ecuadorians on the ground. But while we were up there, my immediate boss, Bob Gelbard, was using the cover of coming up to the operations center to do some very interesting work on the Chilean issue at that time.

Q: Was there a sort of feeling at that time that democracy is on the march and those almost economic things, well, they've got a problem but, by God, democracy's on the march and we're going on the right course?

McLEAN: You have to understand that much of the democracy thing was something that was happening that the United States may have influenced, and there was an argument that we did influence, because in a sense the anti-communism policies of the Reagans who came in got turned around in Latin American context into a pro-democracy. I would say that my own opinion is that that happened more because of Luigi Einaudi than anyone else. Luigi is a conservative in the sort or European Tory sense, but he turned this hard-line anti-communist position into a pro policy, an active policy, for democracy. That doesn't mean that the economic thing was ignored at all. Quite the contrary, what do you do about it? And the State Department-George Shultz had been Secretary of the Treasury, and he diminished the economic role of the Department during the time he was there. The message we got quite clearly was this is not an interesting subject. When you're dealing with a conflict between departments, you're in very great difficulty if your Secretary of the Treasury doesn't back you up. In some ways the same thing happened with Baker. Those were two very intelligent and wonderful people, but they had been Secretary of the Treasury and, when they came to Secretary of State, in effect decided the Department's role was going to be subsidiary on this and we weren't going to challenge them. So the policy of debt in the region, which was the major problem, dwarfed any economic assistance program that we could mount, and it was drive by U.S. domestic needs; that they would save U.S. banks was what it was about. And I'm not saying it was inappropriate, but that's where the policy was and left not an awful lot of instruments for the Department of State to work with. Trying to influence the new presidents in Peru, both Belaunde and Tommy Garcia, was probably about the extent of what we could do, and we weren't greatly successful. We were finally successful in Bolivia, but we'll get to that later.

Q: What about Bolivia now?

McLEAN: Bolivia was already in chaos by the time I got to the scene in 1984. I knew Bolivia a little bit, because I had served there. In fact, that was, I guess, the basis of my assignment to the job, because I had this Andean background, and I served in effect somewhat as the economic officer for the desk. Deputy directors have that function of sort of filling in where you can, and in this case I filled in as the economic officer. They had hyper-inflation. On my first trip I can remember I went out to buy a book on Bolivia and made an exchange at the embassy, and actually a paper bag full of Bolivian bills that I brought to the bookstore to buy one book. It was a whole lunch bag full of money, and it was the equivalent of $25. The President, Siles Zuazo, was formal President, but he was elderly, he was not fully in control of the country, and it did cause a great deal of concern. He was really incapable of doing anything effective. He also was kidnapped at one point very early after I became deputy director. He was kidnapped by a unit that we had trained for anti-narcotics work. The first thing that they did was they kidnapped the President. Then we tried again, and the new unit, the next thing that they did was, the police unit, was to invade the central bank, because the employees at the central bank were trying to keep anyone, including the IMF, from coming in, because they were playing games with selling foreign exchange preferences because with the hyper-inflation it was enormously profitable to have the right to buy dollars at any particular price. So our anti-narcotics unit got off to a rough start. Bolivians like to believe narcotics is, that coca is, a sacred event but, of course, it's playing games with tradition. The campesinos, the peasants, do chew cocoa, though more and more are not chewing cocoa, because it's bad for the teeth when you put lime on it, but it was used as an excuse for not doing very much. In the major area, the Chaparia by Cochabomba, we were trying to set up assistance programs in the area, and that will be the story through the coming years of what we tried to do. Probably one of the early things that I did in this period was in 1986, just as I'm becoming director of the office, finally being blest-I'd been acting director for nine months before that-there was a major drug conference in Panama. It was hosted by our narcotics bureau but it was inter-agency, and each country team embassy was making a presentation and I would consult with them each time to make sure that what they were going to say as an embassy was coordinated within themselves and was also consistent with what we were saying in Washington. And it worked as I went down through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru. But I remember the morning of the second day I had breakfast with the Bolivia team, and the last person to show up. On the Bolivian team was the DCM, and the DEA and others were there, and I heard their complaints, but despite their frustration because they weren't able to do anything on narcotics, we did agree with the line we would take in front of the inter-agency community, except the State Department person who was the head of the narcotics assistance unit didn't show up until as we were ending. But I went over it with him again, and we'd go into the session, and as we go into the session, we make a presentation but this State Department officer in the narcotics assistance unit in La Paz begins to rattle on about what's wrong with our narcotics policy in Bolivia. Well, the meeting just blew up. You could just feel the heat generating, and what was happening was the planting of narcotics was growing, the area that was planted was growing, the labs were beginning to be identified in Bolivia-and that's important because before the raw coca paste had always been brought to Colombia to be changed into cocaine. But the Colombians were bringing their technology right into Bolivia. In Bolivia there was nothing to do. There was not a helicopter in the country that was working. So what were we to do about this? DEA rather dramatically said that they believed the next thing they were going to do is pull out of the country and from their point of view declare Bolivia an enemy state. Well, this would have been a major foreign policy complication, quote unquote. So I quickly arranged to meet with the head of the DEA, their foreign operations guy, and his Latin American chief and took the DCM with me, and we went to lunch at Albrook Air Force Base. At that time there was beginning to be some public debate. Shouldn't the U.S. military be involved in some degree or other in the narcotics? At that point he drummed up an initiative to go to the U.S. military station there in Panama and get them to see sending helicopters out on narcotics missions as a good way to do exercises, to see whether they could do these things or not. Can you fly in? Can you unload the helicopters? Can you do this? And so I dreamt up this thing, we got agreement to do it, we got the military to think about it. I went back to Washington. The narcotics bureau discovered what we were trying to do. They first balked and then they argued and then they agreed with it. I then informed my boss, Bob Gelbard, and Bob likes to be aggressive about anything and everything, and he said, "Wow, that's a great idea," so away we went. Well, a problem with this is that the message did not get to George Shultz, so 24 hours before this thing is to come down, George Shultz hit the fan. Luckily his anger was directed at the narcotics bureau for failing to keep him informed rather than ourselves. But, as I say, my bosses in the bureau, and I do not recall whether in fact, I suspect we didn't ever send anything forward to inform the Secretary's office, since it was really a very secret thing being handled by the narcotics bureau. I didn't know at the time, I didn't understand Shultz's great skepticism about narcotics policy. As an economist he has often felt that this is a little crazy. I perhaps should have understood it. I think it was in that year before then I was working on a major speech, trying to get the Secretary to make a major speech on narcotics, and we worked on it and worked on it and finally we had a pretty good speech ready to go, and then Shultz goes out and he gave a speech that was totally different from the other speech. It was about how the Sandinistas were involved in drug trafficking. We had some secret pictures of Sandinista leaders helping transfer cocaine to planes headed for the United States, with Pablo Escobar present and the rest of it. And he used the speech in that way. So this was one of those questions where Central America anti-communism came together in the narcotics thing but in a way that kept us from having a much broader discussion of what narcotics was about. As I say, Shultz's anger was quite perceptible, and the thing became a major news item for a couple weeks. It hit the front cover of Time magazine. It was the image of U.S. helicopters going into a Third World country. We scrambled at that point to try to put something together. We put together an inter-agency team to go down and try to do a follow-up to this. The secretary of the presidency, who was out of the country when he made this decision with the new President, Paz Estenssoro, and got Paz Estenssoro to agree to do it, was furious and so he put the team together and went down and negotiated with him to structure a policy that would increase our aid-giving activities, continue to support his effort to get the economy straight, and then have a program of cooperation between DEA and the police. It helped get us support in Washington as well, and we were able to increase our assistance program because we could show Bolivia was a narcotics-fighting country. We were also able to get the military out of there after a few months, and in fact they did some great work. They discovered some great labs and were able to eliminate those, and they were able to build up a capability of the Bolivians themselves to have their own transport helicopters, which meant that DEA could go out and bust labs, and the phenomenon of labs developing in Bolivia decreased. The key point is this administrator of the presidency, Gonzalo, Sanchez Gonzalo, a very bright person, was probably giving me this idea before. In the period of chaos when I first came into the office, all the opposition people used to come in to see us. Because I had some Bolivia background, I was one that they saw more than others. I had known Sanchez when he was a young engineer while I was there in the embassy. He's very inventive, clever guy, and he had the idea that the way to get at eliminating narcotics cultivation in Bolivia was to cut off the buyers. If you didn't have buyers, then you wouldn't have demand, and that would help lower the price. The way to cut off the buyers was to get at the labs. The trouble is that "Goni", which is what he was called, was not ready to take that on at that point, but when he was out of the country, in Paris-he had an appendix operation while he was in France and was kept there for many weeks-we launched this activity. So when he came back, we re-established good graces with him and established this policy, which was the policy that you could go after the labs as a way of reducing the price of the coca leaf. Goni later becomes President of Bolivia. But that was our theory at the time.

Q: Well, then in 1987 you moved to...?

McLEAN: In 1987 I become the DCM in Colombia.

Q: Did you go there with some trepidation because of the danger and the situation?

McLEAN: No, I was really excited about it. In fact, let me mention one thing that I did that caused me to receive some favorable attention, and that was early on when I was still Deputy Director of the Office of Andean Affairs and Lou Tambs was having his problems and the threats were coming on very hard, we knew that there was going to be some discussion of this thing, and on a Sunday the Executive Director of the Bureau said something I was always grateful to him for, he said, "You know, Phil, nobody has got to the assistant secretary a note that would allow him to answer these questions at the staff meeting on Monday morning, and shouldn't you get something for you?" So on a Sunday I went into the Department, Sunday evening, and wrote a four-page memo that really laid out everything with regard to what were the threats and what were our options and then a recommendation of what we should do. And I turned the machine off with the plan that I would come in on Monday morning, print it out, and hand it to him before he went to the meeting. I was just learning to type and just learning to run computers, and I turned the machine off in the wrong way and wiped out the message. So I started again at twelve o'clock that night. This time I wrote a two-page memo. Well, of course, a two-page memo is far better than a four-page memo, and since I had written it before, it was very compact, and it became the basis for the planning that we did on security for Colombia. The Assistant Secretary was wildly happy, because he could present it, and he gave a copy of it directly to the Secretary and sat down with the Secretary and told him what he was going to do. For all my implied criticism of George Shultz, he certainly was very concerned about security and wanted nobody to die in this process. So when I went to Colombia, I felt very prepared. I had just separated from my spouse, and so I was very excited to go off on a new challenge and get myself totally involved in something that was different, and security was a constant of theme of my activities from then on.

Q: You were in Bogota from 1987 to...?

McLEAN: From 1987 to 1990.

Q: Why don't we talk about the security problem first? How did you live, and how did it work out?

McLEAN: As I say, the security problem had already been building up in previous years. By the time I got there, the DCM himself was already much more highly protected than most ambassadors were. It's something that bothered me as a newly single person a little bit, but after a while I got used to it, and it was part of our life. I had bodyguards with me at all times. My apartment had bodyguards. We trained continuously so I would make sure I knew how to use the guns that I had at the apartment, and we trained also on the road and how we would handle ourselves. I had an armored car. When I first got there, my armored car was painted yellow, and I said, "That's very strange. Why is it painted yellow? That would draw a lot of attention." They said, "Oh, we repainted it. It used to be painted red." I had it painted sort of cream color. We were very interested in everyone in the embassy's security and very sensitive to the fact that it wasn't good for the ambassador and myself to be seen protecting ourselves but everyone else was...

Q: Who was the ambassador?

McLEAN: When I got there, it was Tony Gillespie, Charles A. Gillespie, who himself was a very security-conscious individual.

Q: His background was a security officer.

McLEAN: Early on. But Tony was the best manager I ever worked for. He very much delegated and told you what he wanted done and then stood back and let you do the job. I had had experience in security in Milan. I had drummed into myself the ideas of varying your routes and times and all that. But a big problem was making sure that the embassy, which was beginning to grow because we were getting more people coming in for this anti-narcotics program, how to get them to take care of themselves, so we involved it in training, we involved it in having regular security meetings. I adapted a security style. I discovered early on that if you said to people, "What should we do?" you got just a cacophony of people discussing their own inner fears and various bright ideas, so I adopted a system that said, "Let's spend the first half of this meeting discussing what is the threat. What are we being threatened by?" And each of these meetings usually was because we had some new threat information. And then we would discuss it until everyone got comfortable that they understood what we were being threatened with. Then I took the second half of the meeting to discuss how do you design a response to those particular threats. It always wasn't easy, because they always wanted then to jump off onto some other threat. But how do you define that particular threat? And that worked pretty well. It worked both in terms of being able to have out of each of those meetings a telegram that showed Washington that we were looking hard at each and every threat and all the possibilities that were coming up, but it also showed programmatically what we were doing, which was changing our profile, getting DEA not always to go to the same bar every night. We adopted a system where my people were driven to and from work, and their pick-ups in the mornings were randomly chosen. We had a computer program that would generate on a random basis the schedule for each person so that they weren't picked up at the same time every day, and design the routes for the vans to pick people up. At various times we had additional guards that we put on to our people. We built up the diplomatic security unit. I think it had 12 people at the maximum. I think most of the things were basically trying to drum into people to be aware of it without trying to scare them. We limited travel. At that time nobody could go to Medellin. There were some few, very minor exceptions. There was at least a minor exception or two that was unauthorized by certain agencies, but by and large we kept to it. I've never been to Medellin, as much as I know about Colombia. We even had a live fire exercise one time. We were out playing tennis and suddenly guns went off. I thought that was a bit extreme. We all hit the grounds and we did an exit, just to make sure we knew what we were doing. One of the more interesting and effective things I think we did was the Department of State would send down teams that would do fantasize exercises and crisis exercises that I think were very useful in terms of getting us to work together. Eventually we did counter-surveillance teams because we were getting so many..., well, we actually were being attacked, we had two rocket attacks. One was not effective at all; it was a made-up piece, broke some windows. But one was an anti-tank rocket that luckily went off after hours and hit a piece of concrete up on the top side of the building. We dismissed it at the time, but the next morning when people went into that area of the upstairs, they discovered that there was a small hole but it had blasted, like anti-tank weapons do, through the inside and would have killed people. So we did have threats, and we did have specific threats. We had a counter-surveillance team we brought in one time. I was a little reluctant to have that, but, well, okay, you've got to do everything. There was a tendency, if security people told you you had to do things, there was a tendency to say, "Okay, we've got to do that." It's hard to pull them back a little bit. But I will say in that particular case, after they had been there for several days, they brought the camera to me, and rewound the camera so you could look in and see what the camera had seen, and they showed me how the ambassador had been surveilled, and you could see people at certain places looking and taking notes and the rest of it. And then they said, "Look here. Here's your car. See what happens. Your car comes in. See this guy over here. He walks up, and the next day when you come by and see that same person walks up," and I said, "Yes, yes." I remember I put down the camera and I began to talk, and yet no sound came out. My voice is very light anyway, but I had no liquid in my throat anymore. But you recognize the fact that these things you're always thinking of, in fact they're very real, something was taking place. So it was a constant concern. The ambassador and I both did leave the country a fair amount. We took full advantage of our leave. As a consequence I was left chargï¿½ a lot or I was out of the country a fair amount, but in fact I think that was good for relaxing tensions, because at the time things were going on. The narcotics traffickers had decided to launch a reign of terror to scare the government and to get them to stop the policies of extradition. So there were periods when you would wake up in the night and hear bam-bam-bam-bam as the bombs went off in various parts of the city. I can remember twice hearing very major explosions and going to the curtains-I had a penthouse apartment that looked over the city-and seeing these big mushroom clouds rise up. One of them was the newspaper, a major newspaper, El Espectador; and another was one that was on the route, the principal route you used on the way to the embassy just below my apartment. I later met a lady whose father was blown apart in that bombing. And there was a third one in which the secret police's, Colombia's FBI's, headquarters had blown apart leaving a hole greater than the size of this room in the pavement, breaking the back of the building. These things always happened when I was chargï¿½. So the next day I went over to see the chief of police who was determined that he was going to stay in the building. So he stayed in this building, locked in. It was like walking into a building under construction. The plaster and tiles from the halls and stairways had just been torn off. We walked up, and way in the back of the building we found this guy seated and determined to hold on and to give us a sign that he wasn't going to be threatened by this. The explosion blew up and blew away and destroyed other buildings nearby including a piece of the debris landed and destroyed a warehouse where we were at that time working on armoring vehicles for the judges. It was one of the programs that we were doing, and we were secretly putting this armory together, but it was one of the ironies that this debris landed on the very building and we had to start all over again.

Q: How did this security affect your operations? You're not there just to protect yourself but obviously to exude American policy and do what embassies do.

McLEAN: I think we did pretty well. Clearly we didn't get on the ground as much as we would have in a place like Medellin, and I think that threw off a little bit our interpretation of events, but we traveled pretty widely through the country. You know, you only had volunteers there. It was a constant question I was always being asked by the press-I did a lot of press interviews-"Aren't you putting people in danger?" In fact, I remember one night CBS stood in front of the embassy and said, "The people in this building are in danger," and that night my daughter calls me from Seattle saying, "Daddy, are you all right?" But, no, we tried to function pretty normally, and I think we did. We had ways to conduct ourselves. We tried to keep the numbers low. At one point, I think mistakenly, we had a drawdown of spouses and some others, but generally I think we tried to show that we could do the job but we were prepared to take people out, prepared to shut the embassy down if that was what it came to. As I say, there was always this tension on the diplomatic security side of things to always want to take a further step. I would often have to say, "Well, okay, are you ready to take these consequences? If you are not, then you have to put it against what are the dangers, because we're not going to lose anybody in this operation," and in fact I'm proud to say that in the whole time that I was involved in it from Andean Affairs to the time that I left being Deputy Assistant Secretary, to have anything to do Colombia, there were no Americans killed or kidnapped even though the threats were continuous.

Q: I find it remarkable that you couldn't pick up a vice consul or somebody fairly low down in the embassy, because they would go out places and all that and, I guess, almost target of opportunity rather than a...

McLEAN: I suspect they could, and yet that isn't what they were aiming at. They were aiming at those of us who were somewhat more visible. That was the threat information we had at the time. But I never denied that it could happen. It was just that we tried to take all measures that would keep it from happening. You had some people in the embassy who chose to be there for the wrong reasons. We had danger pay, so they stayed basically in their apartments and didn't do anything. But the majority of them, vice consuls particularly, we had just enormously good bunch of people, very eager and eager to do the job but also to protect themselves. I'd let them go to all sorts of parts of the country. There was a vice consul in Barranquilla. When she did get picked up on, we were threatened and we pulled her out. But by and large, people went out and tried to do their jobs. There was a lot of bravery but not stupidness, and I think the people understood that you this was serious, and we kept reminding people it was serious, and we kept reminding people to think about what they were doing. But it didn't happen, not saying that... It was dangerous. I watched the technology of terror increase during the time I was there from bombs that would go off as people passed to finally we had these types of ANFO, ammonium nitrate fuel oil combinations, the type of thing that went off in Oklahoma City. We had two of those that went off and one that didn't go off but was identified and defused before it happened. I guess the fuse didn't work, the dynamite that was supposed to set it off. That one, which was a truck bomb parked inside of the neighborhood, would have hurt some of our people if it had gone off, so you can't say it couldn't have happened, but you try to lower the possibility as much as possible.

Q: What were they trying to do?

McLEAN: The narcos at that time were trying to weaken the government and remove the government's willingness to act. In some ways they succeeded. They certainly scared the pants off a lot of people and caused major difficulty for us to get our job done. I can remember one time the cabinet appearing on television when the president reinstituted extradition, and I wish I had a tape of that, because they were scared to death. It was written all over their faces that they were frightened to death that this was occurring, because people were dying, and people were dying. By the time I left, eleven people that I knew were dead. Within a few years the number I could have counted had gone up to 14 or 15, and these were people who were assassinated in one way or another and didn't die of natural causes or even accidents; they were people who were subject to somebody trying to assassinate them, including several presidential candidates. One was the leader of the UP (Patriotic Union), the civilian communist party. I had him in my apartment, and we were supposed to be talking about what the UP wanted and we did talk about that to some degree, but I was mostly talking to him about his security. By that time I had become somewhat of a security nut, and I was telling him how he was mishandling the security and how he had to do it better-and my God, if he wasn't assassinated two weeks later. It was terrible. In fact, the next case was then the most dramatic. It was the leading presidential candidate by the name of Galan. It had invited him to my apartment. I remember it was July 3rd, and I invited the ambassador and his wife, and I invited the lady who is now my wife and one of his aides and he and his wife, Gloria, to my apartment, and we discussed security. He told us how he was being threatened. We offered assistance to him. So he knew he was being threatened, and we knew some of that, but then he gave us a better, clearer idea of it. I, foolishly in retrospect, said to him, "You know, you really should make narcotics much more of an issue, because that's the way to face these guys down." President Barco's popularity had always gone up when he stood tough. He told me quite frankly, "Phil, I can't do that. I cannot do that. It's just too dangerous." What occurred was about six weeks later. In fact, in the interim he called me on a visa problem. It was very typical, and he talked to me about this offer of protection or help on this protective unit he called me about, helping one of his relatives get a visa. But he went out on the campaign trail, and he was assassinated. It was a deeply emotional thing for all of us, for Colombia, the trauma. In effect that is when President Barco reinstated extradition and began a program that showed that we wanted to move ahead. It was a time when I worked out so that the helicopters came in and the C5, and Bush at that point declared an anti-narcotics program in a very dramatic way. But these were sad events. I had another instance: the narcos blew a plane right out of the sky, blew a 727. That's very dramatic. After the investigation of looking at this metal, a type of metal I recognized, because I don't know if I mentioned it at the beginning, but for a brief time after I dropped out of college, I was a Boeing mechanic, and I recognized the skin and how it's put together and the rest of it. You could see where the bomb had blasted through. They were probably again trying to assassinate the major presidential candidate. We had the information. I was due to be on that plane but in fact didn't do it. I knew one of the people that I mentioned was assassinated was on that plane. It was very dramatic. But these guys, as I say, developed their technology. They probably got it through-here again you have the guerilla connection, and the guerrillas that we knew were getting training. They were bringing back this training, and then they were defecting over to the narcos, going to work for the narcos, and they designed these remote detonation things. You hear the most incredible stories of close calls, and they we'd hear from time to time cases of people falling down and dying.

Q: When you left there in 1990, what was your impression of whither Colombia?

McLEAN: Well, I probably thought things were going pretty well. They had just elected a new president, a young man whom I knew, and I thought they were beginning to get their act together at that point. We had a major shift in terms of instituting new programs. Colombian opinion was beginning to come a little ways towards us in the sense that Colombians were no longer saying it was just the United States' problem and beginning to see that there was some problem on their own. They were beginning to see the violence at times had nothing to do with what we were doing; it was simply that the narcos are violent people. There were examples of them going into things like the used tire business, but as soon as they went in with their own investment and their open money, violence began to increase. It was just an interesting factor. So Colombians were beginning to turn, and I thought we had the embassy together in a pretty good programmatic way, and I was pretty happy about it. It turned out to be obviously over-optimistic, which is not unusual in those circumstances. The narcos, particularly Pablo Escobar, in my time, before I got there, later had been captured and brought to the United States and tried and convicted. During my time another one of the major and one of the most violent people was brought down with not our direct assistance but our indirect assistance. Then the one outstanding was Pablo Escobar, but then he began a campaign of kidnapping in the period just after I left Colombia, which was recorded by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his book News of a Kidnapping, and he did a series of them, and he designed it in such a way as to really get to the Colombian governing political class, which made it very difficult for them to keep their game going, so that in the constitutional convention which was designed to reform government, to improve their government, then nine months later the political class caved and agreed no extradition, which left them holding the bag with "What do you do with these guys if you can't send them out of the country and you can't credibly keep them and try them in your own country?" In fact, one of the things I haven't mentioned up to now that I should mention, which I was involved in as early as the time I was in Andean affairs, was a focus on the justice system. I thought if we're going to do anything in this area, we have to do something in the justice area.

Q: I'd like to stop at this point, because I've got to move on. So we've talked on Colombia. We're going to finish it off by talking in some depth about what our policy was with the Colombian justice system, and then we'll move on to your next assignment.

It's the 26th of February 1999. Phil, you sort of got disorganized, so do you want to start putting it together?

McLEAN: Let me start by just saying that justice and how justice systems work was really at the heart of what we were trying to do in these countries. Maybe it wasn't the heart; if it was a heart, it was a weak heart, one with a lot of disease in it. In effect, narcotics put enormous amounts of pressure on legal systems in Latin America, which weren't really equipped to handle it. The system of civil law, which requires finding an honest man, a judge, to go out and investigate and come to some good conclusion, doesn't work well in a system where you have corruption and intimidation, and it gets harder to find that honest man who can do it by himself, so a theme that runs through all of this was the failing justice systems and their inability to deal with these questions and then the U.S. role in trying to find a way to deal with these countries when their justice systems couldn't handle it. I might begin by something that occurred when I was still Director of Andean Affairs. On one of my visits to Colombia, Ambassador Gillespie had taken me in to see the Justice Minister, and this was in the period after the murder of his predecessor, and he was in a closed room, a drawn tightly office, and he was clearly a man who felt very threatened, and he felt threatened not just by the forces outside but the fact that he did not feel he could find the truth inside his own government, and he didn't feel he had the instruments to deal with these things. Yet, despite that he was a person who was speaking out on the narcotics traffickers. Eventually the pressures got to him, and they sent him off to Hungary as ambassador to get him out of the country. Well, in Hungary the narcotics caught up with him, and here it was in the days when you had the so-called iron curtain and the narcos sent an assassin to kill him. They came very close to doing so. He came out of his house one morning on a snowy day and caught lots of bullets in his body, and that was a big shock on everyone's part back in 1986. I remember my involvement in it was the fact that we tried to be helpful. We felt that this was an incredible act by the narcos, and I managed to get the U.S. military to send a plane into Hungary. I'm told it was the first U.S. military plane that had gone into a Hungarian airport, a hospital plane, and picked him up and took him out. The other humorous side of that is that about six months later I got a bill personally-it was addressed to me personally-for that particular operation. I must say it made me a little uncomfortable, and I guess somebody else figured out how to pay for that thing, because I didn't do it. But I think it was a point of support by us. When I went to Colombia as DCM then, right away I was involved in these issues very deeply. It was both a justice question and a security question, because although we had seen the extent that these folks would go to to threaten the institutions of the government, in one of the first meetings that I remember, Senator Lawton Chiles came through. I took him to see the Supreme Court, and the acting head of the Supreme Court at that point had us meet in their temporary chambers, temporary because just the year before a group of guerrillas, who I am convinced were working for the narcos, went into the Palace of Justice and held the whole supreme court in hostage. In the counter-attack which we authorized that night-I authorized from Washington, in fact the year before, getting U.S. explosives in to help with these things-this particular confrontation ended up with the death of a large number of the members of the Supreme Court. Here it was a year later I'm meeting in the Supreme Court and Senator Chiles, and we meet in a room that has on its walls large portraits of all of the justices who had died dressed with black mourning around it, which as the senator and I came out we commented from the content of the conversation but also, more importantly, the place and the way that it was set up indicated these people were deeply threatened and were not about to do anything to confront the narcos. So that was very much the atmosphere in which we were involved. We then tried, and we were always trying, to find ways to be helpful, but the justice systems are very resistant to outside play. I had even found that back in my days in Scotland, when I discovered that the most radical Scottish nationalists were lawyers because of their legal system being different than England's, and this was true there. When we tried to extend a helping hand to the justice system, they basically turned us down, either because of the natural phenomenon that I speak of but also because some of them clearly were being affected by the narcos directly. Our first effort at offering them a program of assistance to improve their justice program was turned down by their legal institutions. We found then the AID director or the one AID person that we had in the embassy had developed a relationship with a private foundation, and we used the relationship with that foundation to channel our money in the beginnings of the program. It turned out to be a very good program, because it didn't have quite the onus of being government to government and allowed this foundation to bring in people from the government but also from the society as a whole and to work in a very nonpolitical way in trying to strengthen the justice system. On my side, my personal contribution, because of my experience in Italy, I had come to admire the Italian judges despite the clear problems of the Italian justice system. I had seen them struggle to find ways of reforming it.

Q: They are the spearpoint in Italy of most reforms, and the investigating judges really are effective.

McLEAN: And they were doing that at that time on the two fronts, anti-terrorism and anti-criminality, anti-Mafia. They had begun to design things such as what we call plea bargaining, which is something that was very suspicious for them. They found it very difficult to deal with that, the Italians did. The lay depenedente was a very controversial thing, and yet it became very effective. During the Dozier kidnapping I was being kept informed as those negotiations about the terms that these people would serve for their crimes led to more information. I wanted very much to see the Latin Americas adopt these types of things, particularly the Andean countries. I went to Italy when I was still Director of Andean Affairs in 1986 on my way back from a conference in Vienna and tried to get the Italians interested in playing a role in Latin America. It had some effect, where they began to come up to the table and be much more involved. Then I did this again when I was in Colombia. In 1988 I went over, specifically at Ambassador Gillespie's request because I had been talking about this, and it was a particular time of crisis, which I'll talk about in a minute, but I went over and again had meetings, and they turned out to be extraordinarily useful meetings. It was during the time of the twice yearly meetings between the U.S. Attorney General and the Italians, so I was there when the U.S. Attorney General, Ed Meese, was there, and I got him together with the Colombia Minister of Justice, Enrique Low Murta. I had a long session with him, and then through Ambassador Rabb's assistance I also got Murta together with parts of the Italian government. We went to Fanfani's office, couldn't meet Fanfani, but we did meet his number two, in effect his parliamentary minister, and we had a long session with Scalfaro. Scalfaro is now the President of Italy but at that time was just coming off a long period when he'd been Minister of Interior of Italy, and we had a long session with him. Out of these meetings, not as much as I would have liked, but there did begin to be some efforts by the Italian government to have more contact with the Latin Americans. My next ambassador, Ambassador Ted McNamara, took the lead in trying to get some seminars going in Italy with the Europeans and the Colombians. All of this was by way of trying to find a civil law country that was involved in reforming its system to have contacts with the Andeans in general and the Colombians specifically.

Q: As we're doing this as Americans, we tend to be somewhat arrogant about saying we've got this wonderful system and why can't everybody be like us. But I've been reading accounts of the civil rights thing, and there was a complete breakdown-in fact, it had been going for maybe 50 or 60 years or more in the South-as far as being able to get real justice to blacks in the South. There were some horrendous things that were happening during the '60s, and I was wondering whether this ever once in a while was thrown in our faces.

McLEAN: Oh yes, all the time. As I say, that was one of the reasons for my interest in using the Italians something as a surrogate for our efforts at reform in this regard. I was trying to show that the Italians were doing specific things like plea bargaining and protection of witnesses and a number of other things. Particularly also one of the things the Italians, Judge Borsellino, who became one of my contacts on this, showed me or gave me a lead into how the Italians were able to hide the judge who was making the decision on cases, and that helped relieve the pressure on individual judges, because the Mafia or whoever it was couldn't just simply kill or threaten the family of one judge, they would have to do a large number because in the room the defendant couldn't tell exactly which one of the judges was the one who was going to be making the decision. And that was done in open court and done in a very democratic manner. Of course, the trick of all this is that as a foreigner you're never sure that you know enough. You think you have an insight, but you can't get into the other person's side completely, and when you try to push for reforms, you discover that maybe they don't come out quite like you wanted them to. In the specific case of hiding the deciding judge in cases, unfortunately this occurred-I say thinking of my own reputation-after I left Colombia, but I discovered a couple years later that as we entered into direct contact with the Colombians and were pushing them directly, they began to in fact almost create a star chamber system not like the Italians at all but one in which the judges were behind a wall and talking through a dark glass with their voices disguised, which turned out to be very threatening and I found very objectionable. Later as a deputy assistant secretary I began to object on human rights terms to something that I myself had been the one that had really gotten it started. And other things were even more important. One of the ministers that I dealt with, Enrique Lo Murta-I will get into a little bit how he always ends up on the wrong side of the issue, not being brave at one point and then being too brave in speaking out-well, the end of the story is he gets killed. I must say my personal sense of dread and regret for ever trying to encourage him to be brave, because he was a very kind and good person though somewhat foolish, I believe, are moral things that you have to deal with and recognize that when you're dealing with other countries, you're dealing with different institutions and you're dealing with different situations that you as a foreigner can't really quite fully appreciate.

Q: Working on the legal system, was Colombia in a way, when you were looking at the area there, a unique situation as far as justice and the narcos, or were they having their effect in Bolivia and elsewhere?

McLEAN: I think in all of these countries there is this problem. In the Colombian case it was worse because the Colombians strangely are a very legalistic country, somewhat different than these other countries. It's almost an exaggerated legalism, and yet ironically the legal institutions were quite weak. But the work that we did on justice reforms and some of the things I got started in the Andean affairs office, we in fact were also applying to Bolivia and Peru specifically.

There is still a major problem in all of these countries. In Peru, for instance, it's really not clear that the judges are independent from the government. Their sensitivity to human rights issues is still very weak, so in all of these countries it's very hard for the judges to take on major parts of the political institutions, and they generally don't do so. Colombia is doing a number of things but in ways that are confusing. They have basically three supreme courts. They have in fact three or four major parts of the government that do prosecutions. The system is always falling over itself one way or the other, but they have done something. They have increased the salaries of judges, they've increased their training, and they are giving them some protection, which was new. In this period just after I got to Colombia, the judges were being killed on a regular basis if they stood up. These are judges, and when we talk about judges, we think of dignified men in robes, if not in a wig, but in fact in the Colombian case it's a fairly low level of civil service, and they would be waiting for the bus and would be assassinated. Our Congress, congressional staffers, came through one time and were horrified by this, and so the next thing we know, we have a million dollars to spend for protecting judges. Then thereafter every time a judge was killed, we would get a Congressional inquiry, "Why haven't you spent that million dollars? Aren't you responsible for the death of these judges?" So we scrambled like crazy trying to do something, but again, just throwing a million dollars at the problem doesn't necessarily solve it. As I think I mentioned earlier in part of the presentation I talked about, we actually began to armor cars. We used a little bit of money to bring in some armored cars from the outside for the most endangered judges, but one of my ideas was to try to build up the capability inside the country to armor cars. There was nobody who did that at that time. It's now a big business in Colombia, but at that time it wasn't anything that was done locally. We tried to give training in security procedures and trained guards. But again, all of these things didn't work automatically. I know that at one point the guards that we had given to one judge, I discovered they were being used as personal servants to them, so those are the types of things, that just because you have a program, just because you spend money doesn't mean you have immediate impact, but over the longer term, I would say, it is beginning to happen, is beginning to have some effect. On recent trips that I've made to Colombia, I've actually seen instances where I thought there was good protection being given to endangered people that had never been done before. Again, this was with money that they themselves are now putting forward. We in effect did some seed money, and they in fact have taken up the idea and become more sophisticated about it, even in the communications for protection and creating a part of the police that would be permanently in charge of looking after these people. But the problem is just that, that you have a very weak system of deciding who's guilty, and you have a very weak investigating system. I know one time we had an American, he'd landed at the airport and disappeared. One of the most shocking things to me was that our own diplomatic security people, with a little bit of police training, actually went out and solved the case, whereas the local police couldn't do it. They found the body of the man and were able to reconstruct what happened and identify who the killers were. Here was the American embassy doing a murder investigation because the police didn't have that type of capability to do it. Those are really shocking types of things, but it wasn't unusual because when you looked at their offices, they were crowded, they didn't have a typewriter even for each person, the judges went out to investigate murders on the bus. They took a bus to go out and do these things. It was really a shocking type of activity. As I was leaving, we were beginning to get more money from the U.S. Congress for these types of things, and we moved away from this foundation, channeling money through the foundation, and began to do it more directly. I oversaw this from Washington but I think with a little trepidation. I wasn't sure that in fact our first way wasn't the better way, because once the United States got involved in it, we tended to want to do it our way and, as you say, we tended to want to talk. Thoughts about legal systems is something almost deeply embedded in people's sense. We in the United States watch Perry Mason and think that's the way it should be, whereas, as I say, they had a fundamentally different approach to it. I know that in some of the discussions that we had early on when I first got there about extradition, I would sit there with groups. On their side and our side people had some international experience, yet they were lawyers and when they talked, they had a very hard time with one another. As a non-lawyer I would watch them just talk past one another. They wouldn't have common grounds to communicate, and it was a very worrisome thing. But we kept on it. After Lo Murta left and was assassinated, I kept going. I had a subsequent anti-narcotics meeting. Again when I was still DCM in Bogota, I went to Madrid. Frankly I had gone to Madrid on vacation but got dragged into an anti-narcotics convention. I was trying to get the European, the Spaniards, the Italians, the French and the Germans to do something and help. We got big promises that were little delivered on at that point. But I arranged a side meeting with the new minister of justice, with my contact, and with a very famous Sicilian prosecutor, who just months later was then assassinated in Sicily, showing they were giving a lesson to the Colombians that here these people I was trying to force on them as models in fact did have their problems of the very same nature.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss? We're really looking at the Colombian period, aren't we?

McLEAN: That's right. I think a key point here would be extradition, and that's what really set the key, and it's related to the justice thing. The narcotics traffickers, narcotics cartels, were most afraid of being extradited to the United States, because they perceived, and I think they perceived correctly, that there was sure justice in the United States. If you're charged, you're likely going to be convicted, and if you're convicted, you're going to spend a long time in prison. Therefore, they in effect had declared war to try to keep their government from extraditing them to the United States. Early on at my arrival in Colombia, Enrique Low had been appointed as the Minister of Justice. He was known as a friend of the United States, and so the president asked him, gave him a charge, to go to the United States embassy and work out how we would do extradition, and he came with an open mind and we began to talk in some concrete terms. But unfortunately just after that, or maybe fortunately just after that, the police in Cali, Colombia, stopped one of the major traffickers, Jorge Luis Ochoa, for a traffic violation and then took him in and held him. The police that were involved were contacts of DEA, and they informed the embassy that they were going to have to be releasing this man very shortly, and thus somebody at a high level would order his retention by the police. So Ambassador Gillespie called President Barco, and this created a great crisis in the Colombia government, but in the end Barco agreed to hold him and then to decide whether they were going to extradite him or not. That then began about two months of confrontation between the United States and Colombia over whether this guy was going to be extradited or not. Low, who had started to be on our side-in fact, I remember it was at a Thanksgiving day meeting with him in his office where the windows of the Minister of Justice were now open, which indicated to me that he wasn't really taking security very seriously, and he had with him a young lawyer whose husband we knew represented narcos-turned around and began to put up reasons why this extradition could not take place. Another month went by, and I was then chargï¿½ d'affairs in the period just after Christmas. I finally-the frustration in Washington was mounting-called Low up and asked him to come see me, come visit me at my house, my apartment, and we had a long conversation, two hours. He had arrived late because there was a riot in prison nearby. Well, we discovered later-he called me meekly later that night to say while he was at my apartment, while the rioting was going on in one prison, Jorge Luis Ochoa had walked out of the other prison and been let go. That created the major confrontation in our relations with Colombia for many years. I very quickly received some of the most intolerable, inflammatory instructions that any chargï¿½ or ambassador would ever want to receive, that basically I was told to go in and tell the president of the country off. Well, I was still new at being chargï¿½ and a little timid about this, but I also felt that I had to deliver my instruction. The usual way to do it is, of course, to type up what you received and hand it over as an aide memoire, but this time I decided not quite to do that. I called in his chief aide, a man whom I had breakfast with every week or so, and I showed him my instruction. He read English very well, and he knew how bad it was. And then I went to see the president, and through that I said, "I must see the president right away." When I went there, my friend was not there but instead the Foreign Minister was there and the president, and the president, of course, had been briefed that I had some very difficult instruction. But I very briefly but I believe accurately laid down the tenor of the instructions I had and what I was saying, which was this was totally unacceptable. The President then got red in the face and began screaming at me. I remember his finger was close to my nose, so I had to cross my eyes. He was shaking the finger, just furious that this could happen. As he was talking, I was speaking in my voice which was a little low, and I was speaking underneath his voice and saying, "Mr. President, I understand your objection, but, you know, there's only one way out of this thing, and that is for us to cooperate," really talking at the same time, which is unusual for me, but I found that I really had to get through to him that we had to do something, that it wasn't acceptable that we just be in this mode. Even as I was doing this discussion, the U.S. head of customs, Von Robb, had unilaterally decided to go to war with Colombia and was causing Colombian shipments of all types to be held up at the ports interrupting Colombian trade. Perhaps for Colombians the most difficult thing he was doing is that he was-basically if you flew into the United States for Colombia, you had to wait two hours in a long line-he was hitting the Colombian political class right where it hurt. It was embarrassing them, and this was causing enormous pressure on him. So we terminated that meeting, and Ambassador Gillespie within about a week decided to come back but come back in a very dramatic way. He borrowed the Commandant of the Coast Guard's executive jet and flew in and we went out and we had pictures, and we went directly to see Barco. It was agreed that I wouldn't attend that meeting if the Foreign Minister, who was considered not to be friendly, would not attend as well. In the meeting, according to Gillespie, Barco went down the program that I had outlined and said, "Yes, we will do these things, do do do do," and so it was a very dramatic thing, and he began the march then towards working with us much more closely than it had really been his want to do. He became much more aggressive in terms of trying to get Colombians to sign on to doing something more seriously.

Q: Within the President's staff, entourage or ministry, were there people who were trying to find a way?

McLEAN: There were people, and luckily they were. Barco himself was known to be very pro-American. In fact, that wasn't quite accurate. He was also supposed to speak good English, and that also was not accurate. He was married to a woman who had American citizenship when they were married, and he'd lived in the States for a good time, but his English was not really good. I think he basically wanted to be friendly to the United States. As I say, his closest intellectual aide was a man very close to the American embassy, and the Secretary General of the Presidency was a former head of Ford Motor's subsidiary there and a very pragmatic, practical man, and he and I developed a close relationship when I discovered I could go and see him late at night and sometimes Barco would stop in and we would talk. In fact, I understand later Barco thought pretty well of me, but not in his early days. But the problem was the public as a whole was quite convinced, and many are still convinced, that this narcotics was a U.S. problem, not a Colombian problem, and that any political leader had to battle that particular problem. Then they also were terribly threatened individually by all of these things, there's no question.

Q: It's easy for us to talk.

McLEAN: Sure. The crisis that I just described took place against a number of things that were also happening. Their attorney general, who was an independent position, had been one of those opposing extradition. I got to know him at a couple conferences and discovered that maybe his argument wasn't absolutely solid, and then he and I began to talk. Finally he had me to come to his office one day for a long session, and as we exited I discovered he had not only informed the world of this, he brought the press in, because he was trying to show the press that in fact he was having contact with us. This was just before Christmas that year 1987. What happened then was that within weeks he was going home to his hometown of Medellin and he was kidnapped and eventually assassinated. Again, you feel like you're very much in the middle of things. Here you'd been part of this man's effort to change his position, and he gets killed. At the same time, the candidate for the mayor of the city of Bogota, Andrï¿½s Pastrana, now the president of the country, at that time was kidnapped, again by an effort to threaten the political system. In that period I tried to bring in American resources from outside to be helpful in the kidnapping. In that at one point people came in and were able to identify where the attorney general was being held, and I went to the government and did that. The government sent out forces, but they were not able to locate the Attorney General, who was killed that day, but in the process they found the Mayor and released him and he was freed. So this period, late 1987, early 1988, January of 1988, was a period of enormous pressure and confrontation and death, and the country was totally on the edge, and the United States was in a very hostile position towards Colombia because of the perception that Colombia was not taking the drug problem seriously.

Q: When did the confrontation between the United States and Noriega in Panama take place?

McLEAN: That took place the next year. Some of that problem did spill into Colombia, because it was perceived that drug traffickers had been working with Noriega in that time and they tried to get Colombian figures, personalities, to testify in the trial. In fact, I can remember the night that we were supposed to have this Special Operations man from the Joint Chiefs was supposed to come down. I had known that a young Marine had been killed in Panama, and then in the middle of the night I got a call saying that the Special Ops guy would not be coming the next morning, and I thought to myself, oops, I think I know why. The young man who had been killed in Panama was an American, but his family lived in Colombia, so we had been involved in informing the family of the death. I could see that the United States wasn't going to stand for this.

Q: If I recall, during the period there was all that stuff in the newspapers and all about the Colombians in Miami and elsewhere, that these were particularly violent people and they were prone not to take our law too seriously and to sort of walk into wherever they had to and kill people in drug battles. It was all said, "These are the Colombians, and these are violent people." It was sort of like madmen with guns. Did you back off there?

McLEAN: Well, this, as I say, was going on at this particular time. Of course, I don't want to say too much about the Colombian violence. Now I'm married to a Colombian, so I wouldn't want to exaggerate that. Colombians are, in fact, enormously elegant and very polite people, but there is a level of violence that goes back into the last century, and there are people that come out of it that are just almost unbelievably violent. One of them was a man by the name of Rodriguez Gacha, and he was one of the three cartels. There was a Cali cartel, a Medellin cartel, and a Bogota cartel. He was related to the Bogota cartel, and he just keeps killing people in just massive numbers. You'd have big slaughters that would take place. Ten and 20 people being wiped out at parties and different events was part of his game. We helped track him down, and in fact we paid a reward to the man that provided the information to allow the police to follow him. It is not true that we were involved directly in his capture, although they did use helicopters, the police used helicopters that we provided, and we did provide information from an informant and through our reward systems paid that person. It is very likely that that person also was working for the Cali cartel, but again this is part of the confused and difficult area. And this man, Pablo Escobar, was enormously violent, such that he would kill his friends if they were threatening him or not doing the right thing. There was one case that is an example, that shows the confusion of how things were in those days. After the Palace of Justice incident, one of our pieces of analysis was that the incident had happened because the police and military didn't have an intervention force a la the United States swat teams, and therefore we trained a joint task force of theirs that was attached to the army but was made up of different units of the government. We were also very close to a man named Massa, who was the head of the police, the secret police, the FBI of the country. I had also been trying to keep control of what we were doing. Sometimes, with Massa for instance, various agencies were working with him, and one agency might intimate that he was tainted and dealing with the wrong people and he wasn't quite on our side, and he would get word of this, and back and forth. Sometimes the ambassador and I would have to play peacemakers. Massa himself is a pretty violent guy. He himself sent out swat teams at various points. Perhaps, and I believe that it's true, in one instance he went in and tried to blow up Pablo Escobar's apartment, and in another instance he probably went in and shot up Pablo Escobar's office, killing many people. If we had perfect knowledge about these things, it would be one thing, but at the time you had a feeling that this was going on. In the incidents that I'm talking about, it took place in an apartment house, and that makes me nervous because it was right across from my apartment. My apartment was just up the street from the ambassador's, so the people who had done this chose to do it right among where we lived. They had an apartment, and they were representatives of the emerald dealers, who were another criminal force in the country. They obviously had contact with Massa and they were working with Massa. It is my belief-this again is a belief that I cannot be sure of-that they also had contact with the U.S. Marshal Service and with the plain clothes part of the Florida police, or so Massa has indicated to me, that they in effect were trying to develop some sort of team that would work against Gacha and Pablo Escobar. This is significant in the sense I had kept the head of operations for the Marshal Service out of the country on two occasions. On one occasion he actually threatened me with obstruction of justice because I was keeping them out because they were trying to mount a team to kidnap some of these major drug traffickers. The man, of course, is now the head of the New York City Police, but that's a different story. But you felt very much on the line. Then we had this incident in an apartment where the swat team that we had been helping goes in and attacks the team that had relations with Massa and probably with the Florida State and Marshal Service, and it shows somewhat the chaotic and almost irrational situation we were in. All the people in this apartment were killed except one, and he managed to hide himself behind the shower curtain and was not found and therefore was able to tell the story. After the police and others showed up on the thing, the man shouted out the window and was then taken into custody, and we brought him into the United States to keep him out of harm's way. Again, it's how difficult it is to find out what's going one. One of our DS agents very bravely went into the building very shortly after the shootout and brought me back the truth. I must say, I believed in the beginning that in fact it was a legitimate operation, but the more that I have known through time of this thing, I recognized that it was bad guys shooting bad guys, and the U.S. role, thank God, was never made more clear than it is. But it again is a question of, when you do things, they don't always turn out quite as you want them to be.

Q: Is there anything else you want to talk about before we move to your next job back in Washington.

McLEAN: Well, yes, there are a couple things. One is that Barco's commitment began to pay off in the summer of 1989 when he finally made a commitment to do serious extradition, to have a serious AID program with us, to change his own police and try to get a much more active program. It had taken him a long time, and we knew this was coming. I had been working with the new minister of justice, a young lady who was in fact fairly brave in standing up, and she was helping to design some programs. The announcement actually came just the day that Luis Carlos Galan, the presidential candidate, was killed. Sometimes they say, it is often said, well, because Galan was killed, Colombia started taking action. In fact, it is absolutely true that that happened before, and in fact most of the speech on this matter was delivered, was taped, before news came in Galan's killing. The country began to move seriously. I remember turning to Ambassador McNamara in the days after this saying, "It just occurred to me that we had some helicopters that were coming up from Peru." They'd been active in Peru and they needed some reconditioning. They were going to stop in Ecuador and then come there. I drafted a telegram for Ambassador McNamara which urged Washington to skip Ecuador and bring them right into the country, and we brought them in, and it was very dramatic because it just happened to be the day that President Bush was giving his speech on the Andean initiative, and this came out and they showed the C5A disgorging these helicopters-again one of those public moments that in fact turned out not to be. Those helicopters didn't fly for many months after that, because they had to be repaired, but it did have an enormous impact on showing that the United States was ready to do it. And then our aid program just went up like crazy. For the next nine months, ten months, we began to pour in material, particularly into the police but also into the military. As I say, our justice program began to grow, so by the time I'm leaving Colombia, a very strong program was underway. In addition to that, the president asked for a summit of the countries, and we put together a summit in late February of 1990 of the presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the United States. Bush went, and that was a major event.

Q: Was he there?

McLEAN: He was there. He went to Cartagena. I did the advance trip on it, but I myself stayed in Bogota. The ambassador went down to Cartagena for the event. Again it was an event designed to try to put backbone into the Andean countries' political leaders. I think to some degree it did, albeit... I remember listening to the television commentary as the summit was going on, as the camera pans around, and the television announcer is treating it as if it is a summit on economic matters. He never mentions the word 'drugs' throughout the whole event. Of course, we knew that this man in fact had had calls from Pablo Escobar, and we had seen the substance of those calls and we knew he was totally terrorized, and he was certainly not the only one in that.

I may mention just a couple other small things. As a part of this thing, we were beginning to have concerns about human rights. I know that I was given a medal on my last days in Colombia by the police in a very dignified ceremony, but as I stepped to the side with the ambassador and the three generals of the police, we unleashed a lecture to them about human rights and about how this whole thing was going to collapse unless they got their human rights effort together. Obviously there was a whole part of this in the time about their peace program which we began to show the Colombians and they began to understand and accept that narcotics was part of this phenomenon of strengthening the guerrillas. We also began a program of trying to deny visas to people who we had reason to believe were in some ways associated with the narcotics traffickers.

Q: I would have thought that, Colombia being so oriented towards Miami and all this, putting the families of the Escobars and other cartel people-I mean the kids couldn't go to school. If we just keep them out of the United States, it would be far more effective than, say, if you would do it to the French or something like that.

McLEAN: And it's surprising that that really wasn't done. One, there had been on the books for several years a law which said that visas could be refused if you had reason to believe that someone was abetting. It was a very low standard that you could use, and in fact we weren't using it. We were the first ones, in Bogota, to do this. I will say that we tried to do it very carefully. We tried to lay down... David Hobbs was the consul general when we first did it, and we made sure that we had both sides of the law covered, that we had reason to believe and that we had indication that there had been an exchange made between something the person did and the narcotics traffickers. It was very hard to go the next step, which you mentioned, and it disturbed me at the time, that many of these narcotics traffickers had their children in school in the United States, in one case in Harvard. And yet it was very difficult. We had two consular officers in Barranquilla, and the people in Barranquilla, because they just would know the community so well, were able to put together files that did just what you're suggesting. They began to refuse visas to family members as well as to known traffickers, and they were able to do it by way of showing that the flow of money was in fact benefiting these people for their education or their shopping trips or whatever it was, but it took very careful work. The young lady that did this, that led this program, vice consul, she was threatened. They began to identify that she was in fact the problem. I tried to get similar programs going out of the consulate in Bogota, but it was much more difficult because people didn't have the knowledge of the community in the same way that they did in Barranquilla, where you had local people indicating to the consul general information that was helping them make these justifications. My own sense is that probably the visa system went on beyond us, that the things that we began then they began to do much more after we were there.

Q: It's not going to change real things, but it serves... It hurts, because what do you make this money for unless you're passing it on to your kids and all that, and you're stigmatized. This is a real stigma, I'm sure, in Colombian society if you can't go to Miami.

McLEAN: These techniques that we used-and again, I truly say that this is something that we did, and I would give credit to the consul general, but I think we all, the two ambassadors and myself, had a lot to do with taking these steps, using all parts of the embassy including the consular section to do the job. One of the things we had there, by the way, on the consular side was kidnappings. They probably had more kidnappings than any other country in the world at that time, and again I got the consul general in a position so he became the coordinator to get an inter-agency approach to play a positive role in getting the release of people. When I first got there I discovered that there was somewhat of a passive attitude towards this, that the United States, the U.S. government, shouldn't get involved, didn't want us involved, because if we were involved, there'd be difficulty about paying the ransoms, which were important. But I still thought there were things we could do, and in some few cases I think we did have a...

Q: Who was kidnapping whom, and what was the motive?

McLEAN: The motivation was money in most cases, all the cases that I can think of right now, but they often were the guerrillas. In fact, the thing that set me off was I discovered we had two young men kidnapped in the far Amazon region by the guerrillas, and in the end I discovered that a private agency went and freed them without paying ransom, but it did so by getting into the area and making local contacts. That just said to me we in fact could have a more positive effect, and I think in some cases we did, by then getting to church people, getting to private organizations, seeing if you couldn't find some way to get at freeing these people and doing so in a way that you didn't endanger lives, but doing so.

Q: Then you left there in 1990, is that right?

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

McLEAN: I think that's most of it. A couple positive things that we did that weren't narcotics: We got a scholarship program going, which was very hard to do. We discovered that the Fulbright program, because of the cost of education in the United States, was becoming really a vehicle for very rich parts of society. So we got a program going, and got it through Congress, to get scholarships for lower class, lower middle class people. It was very hard to keep on track, because there was always a tendency in Colombia for the favored goods to go to the rich. I remember one very powerful person in the Colombian community calling me up and pushing for a scholarship for a certain person. He said, "He's a member of the country club only because he inherited that." But that was a good effort. And the other thing, I guess, is the fact that we struggled to get the embassy site where it is right now. They were building new embassies under these new programs...

The security programs, the Inman Plan, and there just is a tremendous to put these all towards the edges of cities because you had to have setbacks, but I think there was something of a mentality that it's better to have it in the suburbs. My own sense that was going to really hurt the effectiveness of the embassy. I forced the situation, and finally a fellow in building operations said, "No, it can't be done unless you can find land with so much setback," etc, etc. I went to the then mayor of the city, Andrï¿½s Pastrana, and we located some land, and that's where the embassy is now. It's very close to the presidential palace, at least it's within a 20-minute shot, whereas where the FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) wanted it, it would have been an hour and 20 minutes in traffic to get from the embassy to the presidential palace. So it was one of those very small victories that you have. Why you fight those battles is never clear, because you're not going to be there when...

Q: Well, in 1990 you went where?

McLEAN: In 1990 I came back to Washington to be Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America.

Q: And you were doing that from when to when?

McLEAN: I did it from 1990 to 1993.

Q: What was the spirit you were finding in ARA then? The Reagan Administration in bureaucratic terms was long over. ARA in recent years has been a place where there's an awful lot of heat generated almost domestically by true believers in various types of government and all, much more so than other parts of the world. How'd you find it at this point?

McLEAN: Well, at this point certainly there was that which you speak of, but the Bush Administration, when it came in, had decided they wanted to solve the Central American problem. They wanted to get it behind them, and they chose Bernie Aaronson as the Assistant Secretary, because Bernie had had some relationships on this issue and he had been recommended by former Speaker of the House, Wright, Jim Wright, and he had worked for Jim on this issue. Bernie didn't have a lot of background in Latin America, but he was very dedicated to getting peace in Central America. So that became his major focus, and he was quite clear to me when I came into the office that South America wasn't going to be his major concern and that I would be out there trying to do this thing that concerned that part of the world somewhat on my own.

Q: Could you describe where you fit in? There's assistant secretary, and you were deputy assistant secretary. Who else was...?

McLEAN: When I first got there, there was always a senior deputy, but in this case the senior deputy was also not interested in South America. By the second year, in the middle of the second year, Bob Gelbard had come, but Bob initially had a treaty of peace between us. Even though he had had the job I was then occupying, he would stay out of South American matters himself. So basically I was supposed to be the narcotics coordinator for the Bureau, and certainly in the early period that's what I was, but it became a little complicated as Mexico and Central America became involved in the drug problem and it became more difficult for me to play that role. As long as it was basically looking over the Andean area, which I knew very well, I could play a very effective role on the narcotics side for the Bureau and maintain good relations with the narcotics bureau, the International Narcotics Matters Bureau, INM. And then every Friday throughout that period we had a meeting that first took place in the NSC and then later in the office of National Drug Control Policy, which was a small inter-agency group that tried to oversee the Latin American drug program, the activities that we had. It was something that had been started back when Bush did his Andean initiative, and it kept going thereafter. It was a fascinating view at a very high level, and you always had-initially it was just somebody from the NSC (National Security Council) and somebody from DEA, the Pentagon, and my State, and INM, the Narcotics Bureau. Eventually it widened out, and the chief of Customs and the chief of DEA and others would attend the meeting when it went on over to NDCP, but it was the major group.

So narcotics was one issue. The other issue was that Bush had given this Enterprise for the Americas Initiative speech just before I got there, which offered free trade for the Americas, and obviously the countries that were most concerned with this, which would have been in effect an expansion of NAFTA, were the South American countries, so economic reform was a big part of my portfolio, then finally trying to block the proliferation of weapons and dismantle the nuclear missile ambitions of Brazil and Argentina. We did things on all of those quite successfully.

Q: Well, let's work on narcotics first. You know, in a way you represent the history of this. Narcotics, when you arrived, was fairly far down the line. You were saying this is important, and it ends up by being sort of the major thing, which essentially signifies a losing battle. Now we're talking about Central America and Mexico. Was there that feeling? You'd have these programs and you were doing things, but the traffickers were ahead of us.

McLEAN: Well, I think I told you that's always the story that's told. The story is always told that it's like a balloon; if you press on one side of the problem, it squeezes off to the other side, and so if you block one trafficking route, they go to another trafficking route, and certainly that is true. The only thing is that most all those arguments assume that we in fact haven't made any progress, and I tried many times in those small weekly meetings to make the point that, if we were going to keep coherence about this thing, we were going to have to at some point say that we were having some success. In fact, there is some success, but it's very seldom noted. The United States has had an enormous decline in drug use statistically. Unlike most of these, all drug statistics are bad, but one of the better ones are these large number-of-users surveys which are done, and they show a continuing decline in the number of users in the United States, and a particularly sharp decline in the years that I'm speaking of. The high point was 1988, and it has continued to go down through recent years. But that isn't the good story. The good story is always how the narcotics traffickers are outsmarting us and the violence has increased. I will say this, that none of us anticipated the incapacity of these countries to resist the corruption that they were involved in, and through the years I obviously continued to question in my own mind are we doing the right thing. I have continued to believe we are doing the right thing, but not without examination of conscience. I have seen instances. As I got involved in Mexico, I've actually seen videos of an army unit firing upon and killing a police unit because the army unit was receiving a load of drugs and the police were there to try to stop it, and you had actually a war between two parts of the country. In some ways I think you can only argue that there's a certain inevitability about this. The United States is not going to, despite all the dreamers, legalize the use of narcotics in the United States; and if you don't do that, then you're going to have to do something. We needed the help, and we still need the help, of the Latin American countries, and we're going to have to find a way to make it less damaging on them, because it certainly has been damaging, but also it's part of their job to step up to the plate on some of these issues. I think in many cases they are doing so, and people are doing so with a great deal of courage, to the point that people are dying.

Q: You had what you call South America. I take it the Caribbean wasn't in there.

McLEAN: No, the Caribbean was not, except in my narcotics role. As we pulled the balloon on one side, on the Mexican side, then they began going out in the Caribbean, but they'd always gone into the Caribbean. You would see this from time to time, that they would have the surge of that, but the Caribbean was not my main area of concern.

Q: What about the economic enterprise democracy business, if you were doing that, in South America?

McLEAN: Well, to just touch on the fact that as part of it, we had another summit on drugs that increased. We had Venezuela and Mexico and San Antonio. Again it was in an election year in 1992, and that was a sort of capping at that particular point that we did have a drug strategy. The Enterprise in the Americas Initiative grew out of the fact that, when Bush went to the first drug summit in Cartagena, on the way back I'm told, I've been told by a couple sources, that he is not a man to get angry but he was annoyed clearly that he didn't have in his briefing books the material to reply to what the Latins wanted to talk about. The Latins wanted to talk about economic development. So he set everyone to work in late February of 1990 to come up with a program. I know we were interested in a program. We were interested in a program that would have elements that would encourage the Andean countries, Colombia specifically, to get on board and stay on board with this. We in fact had been pushing for an Andean preference plan, tariff preferences, and that was a good thing, and that had been announced as part of Bush's plan back in 1989 and was being pushed going through Congress. We also pushed special credits for the EXIM (Export-Import Bank), but I was on the phone continuously with Washington, specifically with USTR (U.S. Trade Representative), to try to shape this program that was coming out. And then I'm told, and in fact I was told specifically in late May, that the program had disappeared, it had been taken off the table. We had had all these inter-agency meetings, and suddenly everything had stopped. What had stopped was that it was taken away and brought over to the Treasury Department and put into this initiative, which was an initiative to propose to Latin America that there be one free trade area from Tierra del Fuego to Alaska, in effect taking the free trade aspect of NAFTA and pushing it outward. So that caught an almost enthusiasm in Latin America, because the old model of protectionism and state industries, basic economic nationalism, wasn't leading anywhere good for Latin America, and they were ripe for these types of ideas, and they saw NAFTA and they saw the potential for success in that, so they bought on board, and it was a very exciting time, and it gave us an awful lot of oomph in the area. We began negotiating bilateral agreements with each of these countries to have consultative mechanisms with them. I had proposed, and it was adopted in some of them, that they have business groups as one of the dimensions of the dialogue that was set up, and we went forward. One of the first questions was which country was to be the next country after NAFTA, after Mexico, for these negotiations. I pushed very strongly for Chile, which had recently been democratized, which had also made many of the economic sacrifices to adopt a reform plan to open up its markets, and I thought we should give them a double reward as being the first country. It was very difficult to get that done. There was major conflict. USTR did not want to choose Chile because they thought that negotiating with Congress about one country would be as difficult as about many countries, and in some ways they were correct. On the other hand, I felt very strongly that we needed to give Chile that particular encouragement. President Bush was then going to make a trip to the region very soon after I got there. The trip was postponed because of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, but he eventually did make the trip in December of 1987 to Brazil, Argentina and Chile with enormous success. It was particular success in Chile, where the President did agree to say openly that Chile would be the first candidate. That came about basically because Ambassador Gillespie, who now had gone from Colombia to Chile, came in and had a very strong showdown with USTR, one of the most heated meetings I've ever attended during my government service.

Q: Who was the TR (Trade Representative) at that time?

McLEAN: Well, we had the meeting with the Deputy USTR, Katz, and with the Latin American program, Miles Frechette. Miles was born in Chile and lived there for a good part of his early years. Initially he was very reluctant to see Chile get on board, but he has his reasons. Maybe you'll get him on tape someday to find out why that was true. But we won that one, and that was an important battle. That gave our diplomacy in South American a big push, and it was particularly helpful in debt talks that were going on then and gave the Latins a cover for the types of painful changes they were making. I did state visits of each of those principal presidents in that period.

Q: What about Brazil, because Brazil had been promoting its own free trade zone?

McLEAN: Well, at this particular time Brazil was just coming out, just trying to get its democracy feet. They had just elected their second democratically elected president, in fact the first one to actually take office as the man who was elected. His predecessor was a vice president succeeded before the inauguration. So the new man comes in, and he proclaims a whole different spirit for Brazil. He says, "Instead of being the number one country of the less developed world, I would prefer to be at the bottom rung of the developed world," a totally different approach to things. He clearly, we know in retrospect, had his flaws, but he did get things going in a different way. As time goes on, Brazil is very afraid-I should be correct here: The intamatache, which is the foreign office and its career services, was very afraid that we were going to try to take over the region and lessen Brazil's influence. Brazil, which had previously looked outward and didn't see itself so much as a Latin American country, now was beginning to increasingly do that. At one particular meeting that we had up here in Washington, I was renewing an acquaintanceship I knew with a man who was a junior officer in the etamatatique in Brasilia when I began, and he and I used to argue around about economic nationalism back then. He always talked about the U.S. military industrial complex and all those types of ideas, and he continued with these ideas, and he turns up as the head of economics in the etamatache, so he and I had a number of go-rounds. One particular one, we were meeting with the Mercosur group. They are the group that was just taking form, of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. We had signed an agreement with them as a joint group, which was fine. We wanted to see local integration as well as global integration, but the Brazilians began to dig in their feet on having this thing move forward. I, in a loud stage whisper over to the Argentine, said, because I had some information that this was true, "I understand you folks are now thinking about joining NAFTA and pushing yourself forward." Well, my God, that remark caused a flurry during the next month or six weeks of cables going around the world that the Brazilians were afraid that we were going to slip Argentina out from under their hegemony at that particular time. But frankly I loved the joke, and it did some good because my Brazilian friend overheard it and passed it on and got worried and did something about it, and that was good.

Q: You were there during the election of 1992. Did this play any role?

McLEAN: Yes, I was there, and Latin America was not a very big part of the election period. As far as I was concerned, I probably incorrectly thought this is a type of policy that the new administration could buy onto very easily, and in fact in some ways they did. I think they had some problems with the narcotics problem, as you suggested, these very same types of concerns. There clearly are people in both parties who think that legalization is a better way to go than actually standing up to the problem, but I think they quickly understood, and certain President Clinton understood, that that's not a good idea, in fact not in the cards. The American people weren't about to let you do that, so the first thing they did was cut budgets for the UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme) office, and then they also cut the interdiction budget. But in the end again their policy is very much like what went on afterwards. They also pushed the free trade idea even more than Bush had, and before I leave government they move towards having a summit in Miami, again plays up the idea that Bush had first laid on the table. So there wasn't really a great change in that regard.

Q: What about the nuclear sophisticated arms business?

McLEAN: That perhaps was for me one of the most interesting parts, because it was new. I'd been doing narcotics for a long time. At one point somebody asked me at a conference what my ambition was, and I said to be drug free. I was getting a little bit worn down by it all. By that time I was married to a Colombian. I got married to a nice Colombian lady a couple years after I left Colombia. But it was an exciting part, because Brazil had had a-actually Brazil and Argentina both had programs of hoping to be nuclear powers. They both had had basically made the decision, at least at the political level, that they were going to get out of it, but getting their militaries out of it was a much more difficult question, in the Brazilian case even trying to track down the people that were the technicians. As Brazilians shut down the program, of course, the technicians went off. One of the particular guys was in Iran at one point and he was in Iraq at a different point, and there were parts of their industrial apparatus which were being helpful to the nuclear industries in the Middle East. In the Argentine case, there was also the problem of the Condor missile, a missile that was being put together for sale to the Middle East and other places. It was of German technology and Italian investment skills, and it was being done in Argentina. We pushed them, the Argentines, into finally declaring that they were going to get out of it, but the political side had a very hard time getting hold of what their military was doing. In some cases we had difficulty because we had more information than their political leaders did and yet we had to protect sources. One particular source which was when it came down to a critical point of where the guidance systems were from the missiles; we knew how many there were and the number didn't track, and we'd been sending teams in. I remember I played a game when I couldn't reveal... I knew where these guidance systems were, but I couldn't tell them. So I was playing a game of you're getting warmer, no, you're getting colder-the children's game of I don't now what it's called but it was like that. I was trying to guide them, and they eventually did do it and did get rid of the remains. It was enormously important that they did, because in the Gulf War the Iraqis' pieces of this were found. There was an intention to develop this. If ever an Argentine missile had landed on U.S. troops, I don't think our relations would have ever developed in the way that they have, in a positive way. Another case was the nuclear program, and I would say it was the most important single decision I made by myself in the U.S. government. We were trying to get the Argentines to back out of their nuclear program, particularly their aid to... They had a program of helping Iran, and again it was one of those situations where late in the afternoon you get a call that says they're loading these reactors which are on their way to Tehran, and for the next three hours I'm on the telephone trying to get instructions put together throughout the U.S. government, and I couldn't get anyone to react to it. They hadn't gotten information or they didn't want to make decisions on their own, so I finally at eight o'clock that night called the chargï¿½ in the U.S. Embassy and told him to tell the Foreign Ministry that if they let that shipment go, the U.S. relations with them would be deeply damaged, particularly on all of the things we were trying to do on this matter. Then I got a call back from the Foreign Ministry myself. They claimed that if we did this, we were going to have to pay for it. I told them, "Pay for the damages for their failure to fulfill their contract with the Iranians? Like hell we will. This is something you do because it's good for you and not for us, and I'm just telling you don't do it." I must say I was sweating, because I had no authorization to say any of these things. It was something I made up on my own. And they didn't do it. They stopped the contract. A couple years later I saw an article in the New York Times after I was out of government, or as I was leaving government, that says it worked out all right. They didn't do that, didn't ship it; they did have to pay for contract termination, but in fact their scientific industry has profited because of its better acceptability around the world, and there's more employment than ever and higher quality jobs in that field in Argentina than ever before. So the types of things we did on nonproliferation in both countries, and in both countries we negotiated export control agreements with them, and they were particularly helpful.

Q: What about high-performance aircraft?

McLEAN: That was an old issue, and the Brazilians claimed that they didn't want high-performance aircraft at that particular stage of the game, and maybe still don't. They didn't have the money for it. The Argentines, on the other hand, had been trying for years to get some better aircraft. They were actually trying to just fill in the A4s that they had, and those are not very high-performance, but they were worn out and there were no parts for them, and the United States had not been selling them ever since the Falklands War, Falklands-Malvinas War. That was again one of those terribly tiresome things, because the Brits had terrific influence over what the U.S. does or does not do, and I would get everyone concerned with Latin America convinced that we should sell them a few of these old A4s, and then it would get stopped at a much higher level because of the British intervention. It took a lot of negotiating in some very rough sessions with the British directly. I know the new assistant secretary came in when we had consultations with the British...

Q: Who was that?

McLEAN: It was Alec Watson, and Alec turned to me and said, "Weren't you a little hard on the British in that particular case?" But I really wanted to make the point that they were deeply exaggerating the threat to the Malvinas, the Falklands, of the A4s, and I think they really weren't seeing things in a strategic context. They were still suffering from Falkland War syndrome. One can understand to a degree, but it really didn't make sense to keep alienating or keeping Argentina as an enemy when Argentina had fundamentally changed in many ways. We did other things in trying to encourage the Argentines and the British to come together on the Falklands, I don't think with a great deal of success at that point. Margaret Thatcher and her government, the subsequent conservative government, were not willing to have much in the way of change. On the Argentine side, Gido Detela, whom I had known when I first came back-he'd been the Argentine ambassador, and he was a friend of a former teacher of mine at Indiana, and then he'd become the Foreign Minister-he was an enormously positive influence in our relationship. Argentina became, after 50 years suddenly became, one of our best friends in all of Latin America, maybe even internationally. One of the other things I did in this field was trying to get the Brazilians to see the need for radars-again back to narcotics-but Brazilians had no great interest in doing anything on narcotics despite the fact that we were showing them that a lot of trade was going through their country. On one visit to Brazil I got the Air Minister, Socrates; I told him, "Have I got a deal for you, because you were complaining about not having any radar coverage of the country." You forget that these countries in many respects still today don't know, the authorities don't know, what planes are flying over their country. I opened up to them the possibility of using U.S. Export-Import Bank credits to buy radars, and that, of course, has gone on and now is being put to use. That greater network is now being constructed.

Q: You were there at the beginning of change of administration. As regards Latin American affairs, how did the Bush-to-Clinton transition go?

McLEAN: Well, those are always difficult at any time. As much as you think that things are going to hold together, things do begin to fly apart. Just as I had seen it as an aide to assistant secretary back in 1968 and 1969, here this time I was experiencing it, of course, and it's a little disconcerting because, unlike then, I found my powers of command were lessening immediately as soon as people recognized that you're not going to be there forever, despite the fact that Elequatsa was a close friend. And just trying to get a feel for what the new folks want and how you can package what you've done up to that point to pass on to them, and their great suspicion of what you identified with the last administration. It was enormously ironic for me that I had been a Democrat since I campaigned with my grandfather in 1948, and yet the Democrats found me to be terribly suspicious, I'm sure because of my rather annoying view on drugs and then identification with some other successes in the Bush line, and I had a tendency not to run down what we had done before.

Q: Well, new boys coming in are always going to do a better job. You old crocodiles are just in the way.

McLEAN: Precisely so. That was not surprising, but they weren't particularly strong. I think the best idea they had was of doing this summit, and I'm not quite sure who did that. Richard Feinberg claims that he was the one that suggested that, and it was a way to get the President to focus on Latin America, at least for certain periods of time, and eventually Mack McCarty, I think, performed a good role, but that wasn't clear at the beginning. We were very much out by ourselves, and certainly the Secretary of State and all those around him had no knowledge of or interest in Latin America at that particular time.

Q: Warren Christopher. Well, when did you leave that job?

McLEAN: I left that in 1993. I just might mention in that period one of the things that we did which was the Fujimori coup and terrorism in that case. Fujimori was and is a difficult person.

Q: He's the President of...

McLEAN: He's the President of Peru. He came in to everyone's surprise. No one expected him to be elected. I had, in fact, an aide, a guy who worked closely with him in USAID in Lima when he was at the university. The guy came in and said he'll never get anything accomplished, the place would fall apart because he never sees anything through, he's always more worried about being in control than he is about getting the job done. That turned out not to be an accurate summary. The guy was and is very much dedicated to getting some things done and changing the country. The country was in a terrible mess as he took charge, with raging inflation and institutions falling down around the country. I went to his initial inauguration, and we were pleasantly surprised that he said a lot of the right things. He had suddenly become a convert to orthodox economics and brought in a lot of good people, people like Fernando Desoto and others, but it was hard to get in close to him and know what was going on. One of the biggest things that was going on in the country, of course, was the Sendero Luminoso terrorism activity.

Q: The shining path.

McLEAN: The shining path. That was one thing that my boss, Bernie Aaronson, was very much interested in, because Bernie saw himself, I think correctly, as a peacemaker, and he saw there a chance with this terribly extreme group of people, people that next to the Cambodian Pol Pot regime, the Khmer Rouge, the most savage group of people that had ever been around, and it was growing in power. We had some very quiet programs that did in fact have some good effect, working again with the police and not so much with the military. I remember Bernie was a little stunned when I called him to say that actually Guzman, the head of the Sendero, was in fact arrested by people that we had worked with. But one of the things that happened before, just before that, was that in frustration of getting things done, Fujimori-it happened when Bernie made a trip down there with my office director, and while he's there-boom, Fujimori declares that he's shutting down the Congress and taking over, so there was a real question of the legitimacy of his regime at that point. We had to struggle with the idea of what are we going to do now. Are we going to recognize him or not recognize him? His vice president was in the country in the U.S. at that time, and I know a few times there was some question whether we shouldn't be doing something with him. It was one of those moments when you're trying to find out what policy you're going to follow, but you have a sense that Fujimori is in charge, and if you're not going to recognize him, you're going to have a difficult time, and Sendero was still going on at that point. I remember I called Vargas Llosa the famous author, Peruvian author who had run against Fujimori and been defeated by him, and Vargas Llosa in effect said, "Hey, there's nothing for you to do but continue to recognize him." And then the question was how to put pressure on him in order to get him to move back towards a more democratic stance and get him to make some agreement. I worked with his finance minister, who was in the midst of a major negotiation about the debt and getting the country back on its feet, and he worked with me in terms of putting pressure on the political side of government to say that they're not going to have these economic reforms, they're not going to have international support unless they take some steps back towards democracy. I got the IDB even working through...

Q: IDB?

McLEAN: The Inter-American Development Bank, to make some decisions which would further put pressure in saying, "We're going to stop negotiations with you unless you do this." In the end I think it worked out very well. We pushed them along, and we got them to make some step towards having another election for a new congress, to do that right away, to do in terms that were acceptable democratically. They have some voting observation teams go in from outside. Very dramatically we went to the Organization of American States' General Assembly in the Bahamas and got Fujimori to come up and make these statements to the international community, which eased considerably the pressure we had to move against him in some sort of punitive way. He was still a problem, though, because he is served by a rather dark figure, behind-the-scenes operator, head of intelligence, and trying to work with America on non-government organizations, which very much wanted to see the United States play a role to bring down Fujimori and to stop him from his human rights abuses and the rest of it. In this process we were always promising lots of aid and yet we could never deliver it because of human rights concerns. Every time we were about to crank out some of the money that we had promised into the international community that we do, the Japanese were a very strong force in favor of Fujimori, and promised them and others that we would do this, but we were always kept from doing it by Senator Leahy and others in Congress who were worried about Peru's human rights record. In the end the money promised probably was as effective as money delivered, because we kept the process going and, in fact, certainly not in my time, and I don't think immediately after, did we ever disburse any of that money, but we were always promising it, and that always added up in the total that was needed to get the IMF agreements for the different programs and the World Bank programs that were put in place at that time. But in the end human rights was still a problem.

Q: Did the fact that this American woman was arrested who was an ardent member of the Shining Path, did that cause any problems for us?

McLEAN: Well, that happened after I was there. She in fact was found to be helping the other guerrilla movement. Peru had more than one problem and more than one guerrilla group. This was a somewhat less bloody group of people, and she was helping them. But that crystallized in the years after I was there, the concerns that we had had, and particularly since the courts were so difficult to deal with. With my Andean Director and her ideas, we had put together a team, an international team, again including the Italians and others, to go to Peru and to try to move them to a more open and really just juridical system. I think there had been some changes but certainly not enough by any means. And this lady-the real argument is, one, did she get a fair trial and, two, is she being humanely treated? And I think those are in doubt, in question, because it was pretty much of a summary judgment at that particular point despite the fact that all indications are that she did what she was accused of.

Q: We'll just make a note here. You left in 1993, and where'd you go?

McLEAN: In 1993 I was out of job, so I went up to the UN as the State Department's representative that specialized in Latin American affairs, and that turned out to be an interesting experience, not a great experience. I found that the mission itself wasn't terribly interested in Latin American affairs, whereas those advisors are supposed to really work on the General Assembly. That's what they're up there for. I volunteered for and did work on the various groups that were taking place under the umbrellas of 'Friends of', the Friends of Guatemala, the Friends of El Salvador, Friends of Nicaragua, and the Friends of Haiti; and I did work on all of those, and then served as Albright's, who was the ambassador at that time, as her representative on most of those groups.

Q: Did she take much interest in Latin America?

McLEAN: Not a great deal. She was there when you absolutely needed her, I think particularly on Haiti.

Q: This was a priority?

McLEAN: That was a priority at that particular point. She was as effective as she could. Most of the time I would deal on the Guatemalan thing and trying to set up a more active program of human rights observation, on El Salvador trying to hold the peace accord together particularly on building a police force separate from the army, but mostly it was on Haiti, the Haiti interest.

Q: You were there from when to when?

McLEAN: I was there from September to December of 1993.

Q: And then what?

McLEAN: At that point obviously I was discomfited with the fact that I hadn't, for all my great labors that I just talked about, was not offered an ambassadorial appointment, but at this point I was put forward, was interviewed, to be the head of the supply side, Deputy Director for Supply in the Office of the National Drug Policy Coordination. I interviewed for that job, and I was accepted for it. It was a job that required Senate approval, and I therefore began the long process of investigation and all those good things, so I stayed around the Department for about six months waiting for that to happen. I did some things. I worked on the Haiti Task Force, and I worked on preparations for the summit, but basically was fairly bored. Then finally in August I cleared off for the announcement. The President was going to announce my nomination for this job, so I finally broke out and went over and discovered that the job had been severely diminished in stature. At that point I was offered-totally out of the blue, Ambassador Babbitt, Harriet Babbitt, invited me to be her candidate for the number three job in the Organization of American States as Assistant Secretary for Administration, which I took, and left the Foreign Service at that point and went out and made some money.

Q: I was wondering... Obviously there are some things you can fill in when you get this, but something we were talking with off mike, I wonder if we could talk a little about it, and that is from your experience, is your impression of the use, misuse, what have you, of intelligence activities-we're talking mainly about the CIA in your experience-as you run across this in a number of places, and you had some rather balanced comments on this. I wonder if you could talk about this without obviously getting into classified matters.

McLEAN: Well, a constant theme, I think, through these tapes that I've done with you has been how so much of what we do in the Foreign Service, some of the information that's needed can be had without going to covert means. Most of the time, a lunch, a call, a book, a trip to the United States-these types of things can get you the type of access and openness, particularly in Latin America though I would say in Italy as well, that you need. I do not want to discredit the enormous effort and successful effort and the professionalism of those who go out to get it in other ways. It's just that throughout my career it seemed to me that there's enormous duplication and enormous seeking of information from people who would in fact relate to us in an overt way without requiring these other methods which sometimes I think on their face are corrupting. The most intense experience was in Panama, where you have so much intelligence activity going on. It's sort of almost forms the character of Panamanians, because it's a very small country, and if you're at all bright, you have been approached by some agency or other of the U.S. government.

Q: Including the military.

McLEAN: Not just one military, there was a joint military activity, and there was army, navy, air force, and probably another in the Canal Zone. It was a very large set of activities. I can remember one time having a conversation with two people, two Panamanians, and then seeing the conversation reported on the intelligence net that the

My great suspicion always has been that the people like Torrijos and Noriega just have such constant sense that the intelligence services are much more important than anything else, and I think it's the wrong impression and it is a harmful impression. There are types of things that you can't get at without intelligence. When I came in as deputy assistant secretary working on proliferation matters in Brazil and Argentina, clearly we needed good intelligence, and happily the DDI (Deputy Director for Intelligence) side of the agency was extraordinarily helpful in educating me, giving me the technical knowledge of what needed to be known and what needed to be done and making me fluent in some of these issues. But it does seem to me that it's an abuse when we go in and recruit exactly the people that you have successful open contacts with. In one instance I can remember I came across a source who was enormously successful to me, but it turned out that he was a previous source of another agency and I was mandated to stop, much to the complaint of Washington. Maybe they stopped complaining when they started getting the information from a different source, but I had picked up on a former source, and they claimed priority over the fact even though I was reporting it. So I think it's unfortunate that we don't do these things better. Maybe in the present world, the new world, we'll reach a better balance on some of these things.

Q: As a practical measure today, a lot more money is paid to the intelligence activities than to the overt Department of State, which strikes one as...

McLEAN: It does seem to me that the State Department is in part responsible for this. To a degree it comes out of the lack of professionalism on the State Department's side. If the State Department did a better job of playing a role of saying, "Here's the type of information we need. You send it in. We liked that information. We didn't like that information," I can tell you, I can almost list on my ten fingers the number of times when I had that happen. Too often you did good reports and they disappeared into the maw of Washington without giving you a sense whether you were on the right track or not on the right track of what should be done. And also, there should be some standardization in the style of reporting and in what you're doing. It seems like that's even getting worse now with e-mail and other types of very informal communication. It seems to me that there should be some formality that runs along the informal system to make sure that we're touching all the bases.

Q: It does seem to also have been a basic problem all along, and that has always been intelligence ends up in Washington and really ends up in various bureaucratic nooks and crannies and doesn't really get out to the people who need it. In many ways you have the intelligence people saying, "We knew that all along," but it has had no pertinence to the working ability of those who were having to deal with the problem at hand.

McLEAN: I think in some ways that's also the problem, that there needs to be a Washington function of not only tasking, receiving, but distributing, and I don't think that that's done quite as well as it should be. The Agency is such a big institution, and I believe that maybe the State Department needs to do a better job of having the intelligence and research part, INR, do a job of tasking and distribution of what comes in. On occasion you would have certain types of intelligence brought to you by INR and said, "Did you see this? You should see this," but not often enough, I didn't think, and that's a problem.

Q: Well, you mentioned too, just at your working level-I don't know whether you were in Panama or somewhere else-how you found that if you reported something from the embassy, which would be overt and essentially available to all, the intelligence agencies would weigh in with their evaluations and in a way sort of, if not undercutting, it was bureaucratic. How did you deal with that?

McLEAN: Well, Panama was an extreme case, because in effect there were two reporting officers and the political section had three people, three men as it happens, in it, and basically only two of us really did the work from day to day. No matter what we did, we would stimulate the positive sometimes but more often a second guess as to what you were trying to do and trying then to pull that together. One thing the State Department can do is, in addition to doing the types of just MemCon (memorandum of conversation), so and so said such and such, or answering specific questions, it can do a first cut at synthesizing information. We tended not to do that in Panama because every time we tried to synthesize or make a judgment, such as-let's say, one of the judgments we would have made was Torrijos was highly nationalistic tending towards the left but not a communist or a Cuban agent, and yet that was always, every time we would even hint at that, along would come reporting that would try to get on top of us, and we'd find that they threw so many facts at us that we would have to scramble to justify our reporting, so what we tended to do was just do memcons. When the agency's own biographic part did a biography of Torrijos, believe it or not, they ended up using a lot of our material, because our material had color to it. Since there were psychologists who did these things, they loved the more colorful details that we put into our biographic reporting and MemCon reporting. But I think it is something that the United States in the world has got to think about how we do this job. I found I could work with the agencies at various times very successfully. I could be helpful to them, I could steer them to things that I knew that I couldn't get at and, in fact, could even help them with sources, but I didn't feel I often got back the same in return. I remember having people over to my house as a still fairly junior officer and then having the contact disappear on me. Basically it had been taken over. You'd still get the flow of reporting, but it was being done by another agency other than our own, and that would be, shall we say, annoying.

Q: Well, if you've got one more minute, could we talk a bit about while you were in the UN on Haiti? Could you explain what the Haiti problem was at that time? This was in 1993?

McLEAN: That's right, 1993.

Q: And sort of from the perspective of the American mission to the UN, how were we involved?

McLEAN: The problem then, of course, was that Aristide had been elected president previously and overthrown by the military, and the United States was continuing to recognize Aristide, and then we had this military government which was becoming increasingly more repressive inside of Haiti. The flow of immigrants, refugees, however you were going to name them, was increasing, much to our concern. There we were trying to keep an international aspect to what we were doing. Our initial idea was to try to find some limited way to get a U.S. presence in, and much to my consternation, and I remember the day that it occurred, I was watching CNN when I had gone home to my apartment for lunch, and the terrible events that took place in Somalia were underway where some special forces people were killed and dragged through the streets, and their dead bodies were dragged through the streets, and then the government, U.S. government, decided very quickly to pull out and get out of there. Just at that moment we were sending in a small mission into Haiti, and at the dock a group of thugs came up and banged on the chargï¿½'s windows of her car and the rest of it, and boom, right at that moment we decided not to send in this small unit, which may have saved us an awful lot of money. If we had gone in in a small way, we may have begun to grow a presence that would have allowed us to avoid the later invasion, but we backed off, and then I think it had an enormous effect also throughout all of Latin America. Later in 1994 and when I came back, people didn't want to really get around Haiti in most of the Latin America Bureau, and I was, as I was saying, sort of bored, so I volunteered. I served on the task force at various points, and at one point, when a new initiative was underway, Aristide wanted a radio station of his own, the Haitian equivalent of Radio Marti. I had met up in the UN his cultural minister, who assured me that Aristide's message was getting through. So I was appointed to be ARA's candidate to run this project, and I ran it by saying this is a really bad idea and explained why in some detail, and everyone agreed that my memo was just brilliant. That was the first time I was fired. The White House appointees didn't want to hear from me that this was a bad idea, so we went in and put a lot of money into a very special program for a few months, but I continued to do my thing.

Q: Well, this does seem to be a tendency today. When in doubt, you've got to do something. If you make a broadcast, it sounds like you're doing something. Nobody's going to get stoned or anything like that.

McLEAN: You don't get ahead in the Foreign Service, and I certainly didn't at whatever level I reached in the Foreign Service, I didn't get there by doing nothing. It is one of these things-don't do something, just stand there. You don't win by doing that. On the other hand, you always have got to be reflecting on the effect of what you're doing and try to make your best judgment. The night of the actual invasion-that was August or early September of 1994-I was heading the task force in the Op (Operations) Center, and it was very interesting that Strobe Talbott, the Deputy Secretary-he's a very pleasant guy and I'm sure that's when he didn't have a very clear idea of what the task force did or did not do-but he felt it was quite necessary to keep me informed, and he would call me into his office or he would come into the room and give a pep talk and general briefing to all of these various secretaries and others that we had assembled. The night of the invasion he called myself and Alec Watson into his office to say this is it, we're going in, and this is what's happening, and giving the order that it was going forward. I thought at the time, I remember, too bad we have to do it this big, and I said to Talbott, "This is really going to be easy," and he said, "What? What did you say?" Of course, I was thinking to myself I really don't know Haiti that well, but I thought I knew it enough-I'd been there a couple times-to say they're going to be scared to death, as they were, and it went off without a hitch. One of the things that happened that night which was really strange was that President Carter had gone in...

Q: Former President Carter.

McLEAN: Former President Carter, and Colin Powell and I think someone else had gone in to negotiate with these military leaders to get them to leave, and as he left, he apparently thought he had an agreement that they would leave, and there must have been a misunderstanding that he thought that we would then hold up our invasion, and he left, and then what happened is they discovered that in fact by the time they left the invasion actually had already started, we had put in special teams ahead of time. His aide, Bob Pastor, got on the telephone to Watson, and I was there with him. "What's going on? This isn't what we agreed on. In fact, the troops are not supposed to come." Alec kept him on one line and called Talbott on the other line, and the word came back, "Just calm him down. Tell him everything's going all right," and that's what happened. So I suspect that history will show that in fact what Carter thought was going to happen didn't in fact happen that way. We had always planned to go in at a certain hour, and that's the case.

Q: Well, there was a concern that we might have Carter and all on the ground when we went in and fighting would break out there with our former President sitting in the middle of the enemy.

McLEAN: Haiti is an easy problem on that side, but it's a hard problem to actually get anything done in a positive way, but you need to go in and make your presence known, and that's what we did. Basically that's what we were trying to do in the UN. The original question was to get international support for what we were doing, trying to get the Russians, for instance, or the Secretariat man who handled the thing was a Russian, and it was a tit for tat because we were doing things in Georgia and we wanted to make sure they didn't do things in Georgia, and he wanted to make sure that we didn't do the wrong things in Haiti, and it was trying to keep some balance.

Q: Well, we'll stop at this point.

End of interview