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

AMBASSADOR ROGER G. HARRISON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Ambassador Harrison.]

Q: Today is the 30th of November, 2001. This is an interview with Roger Harrison. This is being done on the behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. To begin with, could you tell me when and where you were born?

HARRISON: I was born on the 25th of May, 1943 in San Jose, California.

Q: All right. How about, could you tell me a little bit about the background of your mother and father?

HARRISON: My mother was second generation of a Swedish immigrant family that eventually ended up in the Central Valley of California. They were farmers. My father's family came via Iowa and Alabama where they had a turpentine operation that was wiped out in a hurricane and ended up in California as well in their case in Santa Clara Valley. My grandfather had achieved some eminence as the president of the Spanish American War Veterans in California and his sons went on to do various things. In my father's case, he was a grocery clerk.

Q: How about, did either of your parents go to college?

HARRISON: Yes, they both graduated from San Jose State.

Q: What was your mother's field?

HARRISON: She was in music. When my father died, which he did when I was ten, she went back to teaching music and taught choir in a little country school in a place called Cupertino which was a little country outpost in those days. It is now the heart of Silicone Valley. She taught mostly rural kids and choir and later when they lost the kind of funding you need to support a separate music program she went back to school and got certified to teach social studies and did that.

Q: Your father, what did he study at college?

HARRISON: He studied sociology, but he never put it into use. He kind of bounced around a little bit and ended up working in Kylie's Market in Santa Clara.

Q: As a kid, was that area basically a farming community in those days?

HARRISON: Yes, it was a minor industrial place, but it's mostly prune orchards and apricot orchards, beautiful place. Probably one of the nicest places to live on earth in those days.

Q: Yes, I worked one summer a little farther down the valley in Coalinga, but that was pretty barren.

HARRISON: Oh, you were across the coast range in the Central Valley. Coalinga is not one of the best places. But Santa Clara Valley was; it used to be called the Valley of the Hearts Delight in fact, I know that because I worked in a cannery in college. We canned hearts delight fruit cocktail and it was. It was a wonderful place, no humidity, wonderful climate, no smog in those days and not too many people, just orchards from valley wall to valley wall.Q: Where did you go to school?

HARRISON: I went to public schools, a variety of grammar schools, I went to Campbell High School with Craig Morton who later became the quarterback in the National Football League. Actually there were some interesting people I went to high school with, Bob Pisano who is now Chairman of the Board for MGM because we ended up together at a new high school called Delmar from which I graduated in 1961. Then I went onto San Jose State which again is a state supported institution and graduated in '65, but in '63 I went off in a program called the California State International Program which had been founded by a then obscured professor up at San Francisco State named Tom Lantos who was in those days I think he'd been in the States for about ten years, you know, from the Hungarian events in '56. So, I went to Germany to the Freie University in Berlin in the academic year of '63 to '64 already having determined that I wanted to join the Department of State. This was the way of beginning.

Q: I want to take you back a bit. Elementary school. What were your interests in school?

HARRISON: Fighting. I'd get in a lot of fights, but otherwise I didn't really have any interest in school other than getting through the day. Except reading. So, I was mostly self-educated. I didn't pay any attention in school. Got lousy grades in high school, but I read a lot.

Q: What sort of books did you read?

HARRISON: Oh, I read a lot of adventure books, I read a lot of books about sport heroes. I read just about anything that came along that looked vaguely interesting. I used to read pretty much. That was my leisure time activity. I didn't read the classics in those days. I read for enjoyment. The heavier stuff was not attractive to me.

Q: Nordhoff and Hall and that sort of thing, Mutiny on the Bounty? I was wondering.

HARRISON: Well, what did I read? No, I don't think I ever read Mutiny on the Bounty. Did I read anything along those lines? No, the only reason I knew about the English authors is that we used to have played Authors. Remember that card game? Yeah, we used to play a lot of Authors so I know who'd written Wuthering Heights, but I'd never read Wuthering Heights. One I remember was off tackle, Nate Archibald, Nate? No, that's the basketball player. A guy named Archibald wrote about an end on a college football team, that kind of stuff, but a lot of it.

Q: In high school, did you go out for any sports?

HARRISON: I did, I went out for basketball and tennis. I won my letter in tennis. We had good players, nine-player team. I was the ninth player, but I was better than the tenth player, so I got to play tennis and I won a varsity letter in tennis, but basketball I played for three years, but never really made any impact at all on the basketball team.

Q: Your father died when you were ten? Were you a problem for your mother?

HARRISON: Oh, no, I was a good boy. No, no, I was a well-behaved young lad. I was actually her favorite of the three of us and I was the guy who cut the lawn, washed the car. I was a good kid. Not good in school. In fact, the interesting thing was I was a national merit scholar, but I had a C average in class so that made me relatively nonsaleable to good colleges.

Q: Well, how can you be a national merit, how does this national merit scholarship work?

HARRISON: Well, a national merit scholar is based on a test you take when you're a junior. It's given the same time the SAT tests are given and it just measures generally.

Q: SAT means Scholastic Aptitude Test?

HARRISON: Yes, that's right. It's a separate test from that and the achieving young scholars from around the world take it, actually from around the United States take it, and then you get to be what is called a finalist, and from the finalists are chosen those people who receive the actual scholarships. The rest of you have that achievement to use when you're out applying for college, but because my grades were so bad even though I had finished well on that test, colleges were not all that interested in me. Plus, we didn't have any money, my mother being a widow and so forth to pay for incidentals, so I was pretty much stuck at home at San Jose State.

Q: How about during the summer in high school and all? Did you have summer jobs?

HARRISON: Yes, I had a lot of summer jobs. I was a fry cook; I was a pretty good fry cook. I could do forty hamburgers on a grill. You know, that's pretty much maximum fry cook activity. Did a lot of counter work. Worked at A&W Root Beer stand for a long time. I was pump jockey at a Hancock Gas Station mostly during school and then in the summer, cannery work as soon as I was old enough which was eighteen. I worked cannery every summer because they paid better money.

Q: Was Del Monte up there?

HARRISON: Well, ours was U.S. Products, but the cannery I worked in was supplied with a jobber. They labeled for a lot of people, so you know, they supply and if you need an extra Del Monte pallet or two, they'd label our stuff Del Monte and ship it off. So, they used to have a label room there actually, about every label imaginable, but yes, there was a Del Monte cannery right next to us and it used to be a big cannery area down in the valley, the Santa Clara Valley, before that real estate got too expensive.

Q: Did politics, your mother and prior to that your father, had they any sort of affiliation or interest in politics?

HARRISON: No, not any that I ever noticed. We weren't a politically active family at all. I took an interest early on, but it was lonely in my family. We tended to be, the family tended to be mid-west conservatives and I was a fiery young liberal and maybe just to irritate them I took contrarian at least in my family's points of view. So, we had many hot Thanksgiving discussions in my family, but no, they were the salt of the earth or slightly gone off salt of the earth kinds of people and of no particular achievement.

Q: Well, I mean, they were doing their thing. While you were in high school, did the outer world intrude at all? Did you read newspapers about what was happening?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, I always read newspapers. In fact I remember the newspapers such as they were in those days which wasn't much and the San Jose Mercury News didn't take much interest in, which I delivered. That was another job; much interest in foreign affairs, but I sort of remember the morning that Sputnik went up because that was a big headline. After Sputnik we were all going to be engineers. Do you remember those, maybe you do, too, Look Magazine, Life Magazine, would do these articles about how the Soviets were bound to beat us. They'd have charts of engineers, right, so the last year we graduated you know, fifty engineers and everybody in the Soviet Union who graduated was an engineer last year. If you extrapolated those curves, everybody in the Soviet Union would be an engineer. There would be no engineers in the United States at all and so they would inevitably win the contest. There was a lot of pressure on all of us in high school after '57 I think it was that that went up, to become engineers to take on technical education; a lot of push in that direction.

Q: It was an Eisenhower priority, a part of his administration's priority.

HARRISON: Yes. It's one of the things that government can't do. It's always nice and maybe I was getting an early education of the futility of the American government trying to do stuff like that. Nobody pays any attention, so.

Q: The whole thing worked out pretty well anyway.

HARRISON: Yes, I mean the way in which we and we're doing again. We tend to overreact when something intrudes. You know, we're jerked awake and we kind of start flying around in all directions.

Q: We always plan for the worst case. Well, San Jose State, you were there from when to when?

HARRISON: I was there from '61 to '65 with the exception of that year I went to Berlin.

Q: When you were there in '61, what sort of major were you?

HARRISON: International relations.

Q: What brought you to that?

HARRISON: Actually, it was interesting. They had a career day out in front of the library and they had people at card tables pitching various careers. It was government career day, so everybody was there, the labor department and the military guys were there and I sort of surveyed the field and there was one natty looking individual there. I forget who he was, he was an FSO on a year sabbatical at Berkeley and I thought he was well tricked out so I went over and asked him what he did and he told me. That was the beginning of my desire to become a Foreign Service officer. Pretty much I was aimed at that from my freshman year in college.

Q: Was Tom Lantos a professor of yours?

HARRISON: No, he was the head of this program in which I participated. An extremely handsome man in those days, one of nature's favored young men like Billy Graham, that mane of blonde hair and very charismatic guy. So, I had some contact with him because we were the pilot group of students going off to do this and he was sort of hovering around us because it was a career move for him and he wanted to succeed. I saw him a little bit, but no my, there was a professor there named Martin Birnbach who was the only professor who I really had much personal contact with. It was a big place. You sat in classes of 20 or 30 or 50 or 100 undergraduates. You didn't do any seminar work in those days. It was kind of a factory to turn out degrees. They had 22,000 people there even then. There was only one professor that I thought - and I don't know if you've observed this, too - but I think there are very few of them that are actually genuinely still interested in ideas in the sense that they - except those that they've been defending for years, that are still open to intellectual discussion. He was one, a great guy, teaching political philosophy, which was the beginning of my interest in that subject to which I've usually carried on to this day. I owe a debt to Martin Birnbach.

Q: Before you went to Berlin was Europe sort of attracting you?

HARRISON: No, I guess I heard about this program and thought it would be an interesting thing to do, but the main thing about it was that it was cheap and they had some scholarships available for it. So, it ended up I think costing me about $1,500 which I could make in the cannery in a good summer. So, it was something I could do and I thought it would be interesting to get out. I'd been studying German so it would obviously be a way to perfect those skills. I thought if I'm aiming at a State Department career, this would be a good thing to see whether I liked living abroad. So, off I went.

Q: From '61 to '65 how did the sort of the election of 1960, did this engage you at all?

HARRISON: Oh, I remember, yes, sitting with this guy who became chairman of the board for MGM had an election night party at his house the night they were announcing the Kennedy Nixon election. Yes, we were all for, actually I think in those days I was for Nixon, strangely enough. Why would I be for Nixon?

Q: Well, you were interested in foreign affairs and Nixon seemed, he was a young man, too, it was not that cut and dried.

HARRISON: You know, when I think about it I think he was prejudiced against old Joe and the stories about how old Joe had engineered a phony Pulitzer prize in a book that Sorenson had actually written and all that stuff seemed a little manipulated I guess to me. Even from eighteen years old sitting out in California. But, I'd seen Kennedy actually at a campaign rally. He came through San Jose and so we all went out in high school. He used to wear these suits. Actually, the story later was that they were cut small so that he'd always look vital to be bursting out of his suits and he was bursting out of his suits. I saw him drive by in a car like you see people go by in campaign rallies. Nixon I never saw, but I watched the debates. All that is very vivid. I guess as it is to most people who lived through those times.

Q: When you went to the Freie University, what was your impression? This was your first time abroad I take it?

HARRISON: Yes, it was, in fact, the first time on an airplane, all that stuff. I think the most vivid impression was established when Kennedy was killed because I'd been there then about, well I went first to the institute to do some language study and then off to the university and I was sitting in a guy's room. We were talking with the Armed Forces Radio on the radio and that report came over, but we missed it the first time and it just you know, it kind of registered subconsciously. That was about Berlin time as I recall about 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening and by 10: 00 that night the German students had organized a torchlight parade in which began over at the zoo; the railroad station, Bahnhof Zoo downtown, not far from Kurfï¿½rstendamm. We all went down there; I was living in Schudendorf (the student village), which was out on Poffchemersalle. It's probably ten miles from downtown by underground, but we all jumped on. We went down there and they had these torches. Everybody was given one; they must have a stockpile of torches somewhere in Berlin for this kind of event.

Q: I was just thinking that torches are not something that you just whip up.

HARRISON: Well, maybe they had old stockpiles of them, I don't know.

Q: Leftover from Hitler.

HARRISON: Yes, left over from a different time. At any rate they whipped them out and they were these pre-made things, wax impregnated paper and we took off on this long procession and ended up what used to be called Zahlendorferplatz in front of Zahlendorferplatz Rathaus in front of Berlin City Hall and filled that. It's now called John F. Kennedyplatz because of that night, because it was all filled with I don't know, 10,000 people with these torches. Then Willy Brant came out on the balcony and eulogized Kennedy. It was quite a thing and what impressed me most about it was the sheer organization that went into it. Well, that and in retrospect the sentiment that attached overseas to Kennedy you know, which you can't imagine attaching to any of our subsequent presidents. Nobody would do that for any of them or I think they would be, the people would be apprehensive for a lot of reasons.

Q: I was in Yugoslavia at the time. Actually I was in Graz and then I came over and I went back to Belgrade. Flags were at half-mast, there was, you know, Yugoslavia was in mourning.

HARRISON: People were stricken by that. He had some quality. It might have happened for Eisenhower, but in a different way.

Q: It was the youth I think, too. The feeling of youth I mean it was.

HARRISON: Absolutely, yes. A lot of it was phony.

Q: When you look back at it, it wasn't that impressive, but there was an aura that made a difference.

HARRISON: Yes, it did and I don't think it's going to be. I mean, because we had, you know, Clinton was young, too. I guess he was 46 and Kennedy was 42, but there was no chance of recapturing any of what existed then. Sort of a restored moment and it was a pivotal moment, like September 11th from that point of view. I remember thinking that the next morning we all got up that history had switched directions and the new direction was not as promising as the old direction had been or at least we thought it was, that things were going to be worse.

Q: Did you get any feel for the sort of the German attitude at the time about whether or the relations between east and west. Was there a feeling in Berlin particularly?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, it was fascinating actually. The other thing I guess which impressed me. We spent a lot of time in East Berlin because as students we could go across the border at will. We went through check point Charlie to the point that and well, we saw, and we were conducted - as they used to do for everybody coming into Berlin to stay for any period of time. We were given a tour of the Wall and a tour of some of the Nazi sights that had been preserved, torture chambers and what not. Then they had created these visitor centers for the wall, like tourist attractions so they had platforms that you would go stand and look over the wall and then there was a museum of the Wall there. The Wall had only been up for about 8 months at the time, but where they had the pictures of them building it and the famous picture of the Volpo crossing.

Q: Dropping his gun and jumping?

HARRISON: Yes, all that stuff. Then we'd go across and most would go to opera in East Berlin and because everything was virtually free. You changed your money in West Berlin and you got, I don't know, it ended up being about 28 East German Marks to the dollar. The opera, the best seat in the house was 30 marks, East German Marks. We didn't spend that much because we got to know the ladies who did the seating, the little old ladies, the tea ladies. So, when the house lights would go down, they'd smuggle us over into the best seats in the house, which were seldom occupied. The Comosho was particularly good, one of these cultural showpieces that the Eastern Europeans used to love to establish to show that they were really wizard people after all. It was a city - and I think now if you look back, anybody who dealt with Eastern Europe, and I lived there later, decided it was a city that wasn't working. My impression at one time it was entirely composed of side streets. You kept walking down these streets expecting to come around and see the main street, but there was no main street, they were all. All the shop windows with all these depressing consumer goods, not all of them. One thing of each kind, the magazine kiosks with these paper magazines with cheap ink, all state magazines, all healthy and wholesome and just absolutely rendering kind of uniformity. The food, if you bought it, as we did, you go into a cafe and get their dessert, their ice cream and I think it was made in one of those factories that is now a toxic waste site. It certainly wasn't made out of anything that ever been near a cow and it would leave this awful taste in your mouth. The shabbiness, I guess, just the fundamental shabbiness of everything. I went off once on I guess an S-Bahn. The East Germans have the over ground railroad and the West Germans the underground. You could take the S-Bahn from West to East Germany and off to Pankow, just to get out of downtown East Berlin.

I went to a movie and the movie was about a brave border guard, a Volpo with a beautiful wife and he goes off to do his duty and he's shot by an escaping East German who is trying to get over the Wall and shoots our hero in the back. It was an interesting kind of perspective. We met a student once. We were with some friends walking down the Unter den Linden after we'd crossed under Brandenburg Gate on the other side of the Wall. She took us over to the university. I used to know the name of it and it may come to me in a minute [Humboldt-Universitaet]. It was a big university in Berlin where in fact, I later became a Hegel scholar. Hegel had studied and taught there, he didn't study, but he taught there. We went into the auditorium; she was sort of stationed, it turned out, to do precisely what she'd done. She'd picked us up as students and took us in and we're sitting in the auditorium and telling us about the strengths of the East German society and she leaned over and the arm of the chair in which she was sitting fell off, which was I'm sure just happenstance. Being impressed by the pro-crustacean nature of all the arguments that they use insofar as it agreed with Marxism, it was right insofar as it didn't, it was wrong, you know. She was nice and it was a little bit. Actually we met her because we stopped to talk to some people who were proselytizing for religion on that street who were collecting money, but it turned out the churches, like everything else were state, state run. So, you could see really everywhere the terrible... I think that the signature for me is coal smoke and you've smelled it in Yugoslavia. Anybody who has ever smelled it I think it associated it with that awful squalid dead hand of communism that was put on these societies.

Q: What about the students you were with at the Freie University? How did you get any feel about how they felt about the future? Did they feel that this horror was going to take over or did they feel optimistic, I mean I realize I'm over trying to characterize them. What were you getting?

HARRISON: I never felt they felt, to be under threat certainly not ideologically. There were some leftists around who felt that that was the wave of the future we were looking at across the Wall. Most of the students in those days - and I was at the Otto Suhr Institute which was the political institute at the Freie University, were more or less conventional as everyone was. I mean, it was sort of a German replication of American universities before the free speech movement at Berkeley. They were interested in careers. They wanted to get advanced degrees. They wanted to get married and have children and have a career. The men. The women were much more thinking about family life and so forth. It wasn't that much different from an American university from that point of view and there was no sense of threat. I mean, we used to wake up at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning in the Studentendorf because the tanks would be moving down, you know, these huge U.S. tanks would come up through the corridor and then clank down the highway making tremendous racket. You knew it was there and the Wall, of course, was a reality for everybody and especially for the Germans who lived there before the Wall went up, more than for us because we'd come about six months after the Wall.

So, the only Berlin I knew was the one that was divided. I didn't feel these people felt, these students felt threatened at all. They were all working for their own future and the contrast between West and East Berlin was so utterly stark, which is why the Wall went up in the first place. There was no way to prevent everyone in the East from moving to the West, if you didn't put it up. It was really, I guess in retrospect, an absolute sign of failure of that society. It was said at the time to be a statement of failure to society. Subconsciously I think we all sort of had this nuclear holocaust thing in the back of our minds. As a social threat, I don't think anyone felt it. The sort of ugly American. I read that book, too. You were talking about books I read, that's one I read as a teenager and it had such a profound impact by portraying this ideological movement which was really sweeping all before it, but it had this appeal for a third world and our system didn't. It was nice, but it didn't travel.. The communists not only had this ideological appeal, but were ruthless and we were naive and so on. The prospects for us were dim and that, of course, because that book was so popular created a public mood of pessimism, I think, vis-ï¿½-vis this great social movement which we were taking at its own evaluation and which we saw even when we were there through a perspective which was skewed by this idea that they were going someplace and we were historically a dead-end. I think we were victims and I imagine, I remember the Eisenhower campaign. I remember the McCarthy hearings. I remember being happy when McCarthy went down and I was ten that year and an Eisenhower supporter. I was in fourth grade I think. We worked ourselves up in this national psychosis which prevented us from seeing the societies in function. You went in and you saw it.

Q: Well, this is one I think historians in the future will kind of wonder what in God's name what in a way was the concern. I mean, there was obviously the military concern, but ideologically, the Soviet Union, I mean, looking back on it was on its, on very wobbly legs. It just couldn't deliver.

HARRISON: Yes, it was I think about that time that ideology was dying throughout the region. It had become a kind of cynical exercise in power. It was like that great oxymoronic Institutionalized Revolutionary Party in Mexico, it had become a cover for corruption. Nobody believed in that stuff anymore, but people's power depended on the perpetuation of the system. No one could see in particular how, without abdicating political power, you transform those societies into something approaching the society that is obviously doing much better than you are on the other side of the Wall. So, what they were doing in their propaganda, two things I think which struck me. One was the great emphasis on World War Two and the widespread destruction and the myth that they had been disproportionately ravaged by World War Two because both the damage and defeat of the Soviet depredations through East Germany taking away the industrial product. Of course, the best thing to do with it was to take it away because then you build new and then you're better off - which had happened in Japan, but it wasn't happening in Germany. So, I think that was an element, but you know, this kind of national psychosis on our part went on for a long time. We had in this country, as you know, still in the '80s in the early '80s this huge movement, which was an element of the Reagan defense policy, that we were going to be hopelessly outdone by the Soviet military at a time when the Soviet military was really on the brink of collapse. We put out a book every year, Soviet Military Power. You remember it?

Q: Oh yes, it's a red book.

HARRISON: Red book. I still have my copy. You know we were really out of luck. I mean we had this F-15 and that was a pretty good airplane, but look what the Soviets, they have this and that. I mean it was I know there was a political purpose we were feeding this drive to increase defense spending and it was propaganda. But, it was propaganda that drew at that point on a long tradition of viewing these people through their own propaganda prism, and failing to see how bankrupt they were, or failing to admit how bankrupt those societies were.

Q: Did you ever feel when you were in Berlin that the students there were enjoying Berlin but were going to get the hell out and get into?

HARRISON: Yes, most of them came from other places. They were subsidized to study in Berlin. Most things in Berlin were subsidized because it wasn't a natural place to go and kind of be cut off from West Germany, so the government poured a lot of money into it and part of it was tuition subsidies for the students who studied there. So, the education was good and you got good professors and it was cheap and then you went back to wherever you came from. Most of the students I knew did come from other places and went back to those places when they graduated.

Q: Did you have any contact with the American mission there?

HARRISON: Oh, very little. I think we were invited once to some kind of reception for students at the mission and we went there for something else. I knew where it was. We used to go and hang around the commissary and try to get people to buy stuff for us, but that was about all. We went over and watched them march around once in their chrome helmets. They used to have a display group that would come out and show the flag, but otherwise, no.

Q: Well, then you went back in?

HARRISON: Oh, I should mention I did go interview a guy in the political section at the mission and asked him about the Foreign Service. I don't remember him as particularly welcoming, but he did give me some time.

Q: Well, you went back to San Jose in, this would have been in '64 and had your senior year there? Was your resolve firm about diplomacy or were you looking at other things?

HARRISON: No, my resolve was firm. I got married in February of that year so and had a baby, a son the following February. I was in dire need of a paycheck.

Q: What is the background of your wife?

HARRISON: She was also a Californian who had been raised on the opposite side of the valley from me, Santa Clara Valley. Actually I was a flatlander and she was up in the hills on the East Side of the valley. Very much into horses and 4H and that sort of thing and became a nurse. I met her when she was a second year nursing student at San Jose Hospital.

Q: What was her attitude toward Foreign Service?

HARRISON: She thought it was going to be a great experience. Of course, in those days, women accepted this kind of thing much more readily than they do now and had not learned to ask the question, "Why should I do that?" So the notion that she should pack up pregnant and go off to Manila in the Foreign Service didn't arise. If it had arisen, I don't think I would have had a very good answer for it, but it didn't come up so she just accepted that that's what you did, and that's what we did. I think she liked the idea. I think she thought it was great that someone had a goal. I think all women are reassured if the people they are involved with have some definite plan in life.

Q: Also, I think much more than today the thrill of going overseas. I mean, people didn't, Americans didn't really have much opportunity to go overseas. I mean, it wasn't that many opportunities to go out and do something.

HARRISON: Well, she'd never been overseas. She'd never been to the East Coast and neither had I. Never been to Mexico and neither had I. I'd been to Canada for ten minutes one day. The time I went to Germany, my range was limited. She had gone to Chicago and New Orleans, but that's as far out of San Jose as she'd ever been. There's a good argument that in San Jose, which is a self-sufficient place, you have no particular reason to go anywhere else. I mean we have San Francisco up the road, which was a great city, 50 miles away where you could go if you wanted to be cosmopolitan. We were meanwhile, living in this new paradise, why would you want to go anywhere else? In fact, all of my friends from high school stayed there. I don't know any of them who left California and none of my close friends from high school with whom I'm still in contact or even that I'm not, left San Jose. They all stayed, knowing a good deal when they saw one, as I unfortunately did not.

Q: When did you, I take it you took the Foreign Service Exam?

HARRISON: I did. I went off from San Jose to Claremont Graduate School in Southern California with my then wife and in fact, then pregnant wife, to begin to study for my Ph.D. I was. Why did I go to graduate school? I thought it would also be helpful for the Foreign Service. I tried at that time with becoming a teacher, but at graduate school I should back up a step. I had applied for Princeton. My grades in college as opposed to my grades in high school were very good from the outside except they were grades at San Jose State, but I had very good result in the Graduate Record Exam being wonderful at multiple choice examinations. It was really a skill. I was wired into Princeton whether I knew the subject or not. So, I applied to the Woodrow Wilson School and one of the chief inducements being Princeton on the one hand, but also that it was free on the other. If you were accepted, you were paid for. It may still be true, I don't know, they must have had a monster endowment from somebody to do that. I was interviewed down in Southern California, down in LA by somebody who came out. There were maybe 15 of us there to interview and the question I remember him asking, well two. One is why I had done poorly in French, which I had done. That's the only C I ever got in college which caused me immediately to transfer to German which fit my logical mind better. Also, why when he talked about my wife, I'd chosen to take on this additional burden at this stage of life. Not a bad question, but now when I repeated it to her later and I was turned down. I didn't get that position, so I had to go where they would offer me money to go and Claremont offered me some money, not a lot, but enough to pay tuition, so off we went. I took the Foreign Service Exam at the end of my first year, I think it was given that year, no in the beginning. It was given that year in October.

Q: Well, it used to be the first week in December.

HARRISON: December, yes. I passed and then I took my oral I think in June or July in California again and so was accepted and that summer between my first and second year of graduate school. I knew I had a job waiting and we just toughed it out. I remember that summer we came up to San Jose from Claremont because my mother was dying, she had cancer. So, and Joanne was a nurse so we thought we could be helpful, but we had I think $80.00 altogether to our names. We were trying to keep the place we had rented in Claremont and so I went off. I had to get a job. I went off and got a job in a factory making field refrigerators for Vietnam. These were big air transportable refrigerators and these people had gotten the contract for them and they had picked up a sort of motley crew of people, wonderful fun. I really enjoyed it. It paid $3.00 and some cents an hour, $3.50 I think. I was in the door installation crew. We were putting the doors on these refrigerators with a motley 12 other people, some college students, some kind of guys out of the Hispanic ghetto in town, including my workmate was an Hispanic guy. Pacheco, he had all the tattoos.

Q: This was a gang, sort of gang type of Hispanics?

HARRISON: Yes, it was the first kind of vague intimations of what was going to become the Hispanic influence in California. Although as far north as San Jose, we hadn't seen it much. We didn't see it in my high school at all because we were over on the West Side and we had no blacks and we had no, we may have had an Hispanic or two, but it was a minority small to the point of disappearing. Elsewhere in town, or so we heard, especially on the east side where my wife went to high school, there were these Hispanic toughs that were called Pachecos. You could tell them because they did ballpoint pen tattoos especially of a cross here at the intersection of the thumb and the first finger which this guy had. It turned out that he was the smartest guy and the best worker out there and we became a crew putting these doors on. We got into it. It's really a lot of fun. It's a lot of fun to do it well. I think it's a lot of fun to do anything well and manual work is no exception. And to be fast and to be good. We got fast and good and we got this huge competition going among all the door installer crews working outside, which in San Jose is a pleasure in the summer and it would be hell here, but there it was good. It was a great summer of work, it was a sad summer because my mother was dying and did die soon thereafter, but you know, I was able to make a little money, which we needed because we had a year of graduate school to go and my scholarship. My wife was working a swing shift in a rest home. I used to bring the baby in to nurse. It was about a mile from our house so she'd nurse on the job and then go back to work because we couldn't afford for her to lounge around after the baby was born, six weeks and then, hey, back to work. It was something that she resented, but knew she had to do. Sometimes she would take the baby to the office and leave the intercom on and so she could hear him wherever she was. Actually the baby was a good thing for the old people who were there. We were not comfortably off. Although we lived in a wonderful house that we rented by chance which is still being occupied by the renters who rented it after we left in 1967 and is still there. It is unchanged. Just a wonderful little cottage and a big garden, wonderful place. We were poor, but happy I guess is the way to sum that up.

Q: Do you recall your oral exam, do you recall any of the questions?

HARRISON: Yes, I do. I'd kind of scoped out the oral exam. The written exam, too, but I was asked for example, and I really, I think all this is gone, but it was great at the time. I was asked to recount or give a summary of the literary history of the United States from the Revolution to the present. So I did, because I thought I might get a question like that. So I'd read a book. I knew all the jargon in those days. I remember some of it still. I was asked if I were the administrator of economics in a developing country and suddenly we were given a grant from the United States for economic development, how would I spend the money? I had fortunately taken a course in this in graduate school, so I was full of theories about how you would spend the money and also full of skepticism about how they spend the money according to those theories. I think what impressed my examining board was that I was also skeptical of some of their theories. I questioned a couple of my questioners and when I was challenged I responded well and I think they were all impressed by that. So, I passed the oral exam and knew after my first year of graduate school that I was going to become a Foreign Service Officer. The other thing was that I needed a job. I mean I had to go to work. Most people then were spending three of four years to get the Ph.D. done, but that was a luxury I couldn't afford. After the two years I was there; off to Washington I went. My dissertation therefore, took another ten years to get done.

Q: What was your field of your dissertation?

HARRISON: It was Hegel, a German political philosopher, partly chosen because I thought I could, I would need relatively little research facility to do it and mostly working from original sources. That was a discreet body of stuff and because I thought I was going to be in places where research would be difficult this would be a good idea. Also because Hegel's great in the sense that it's puzzlement, as the king says in "The King and I". It's a very complex system. It rewards close study, but it doesn't yield its secrets easily. You don't run into a lot of people who claim to know about Hegel. It's not too easily shown up so it was a challenge from that point of view. I'm just writing an article about Hegel now. He's kind of stayed with me.

Q: At Claremont were you able to get a professor to go along with this?

HARRISON: Yes. Ted Waldman, and he was another guy... in fact, after a year of going to class I decided I didn't enjoy going to class and listening to other people's opinions. So, my second year I really arranged mostly tutorials with various professors there. I'd just go in and ask them if they'd agree to give me one tutorial a week and then I did it that way. They'd give me readings and I'd come in and spend an hour and tell them what I'd learned during the week. A far superior method by the way than sitting there in a seminar. Ted Waldman was a professor of philosophy, actually Harvey Mudd which was the preeminent and still is engineering school, one of them in the country. He was the kind of guy Martin Birnbach had been in undergraduate school. That is, he was very tough, intellectually rigorous, but willing to admit that maybe you had a point. Not simply defending a point of view that he'd come up with. I ran into, fortunately, I ran into a number of those kinds of professors in my academic career, which I'm very thankful, because it makes all the difference and there are few of them around.

Q: Just to finish up on that, I think it would be hard to get the continuity over ten years, I mean, you know, faculties change and all that, were you able to?

HARRISON: Yes, it was hard actually because the other thing that happened was that, before that, if you passed your comprehensive exams, oh by the way taking them after two years these days is unheard of. Now, you know, this is a lifetime occupation and I think the average time to Ph.D. is seven years.

Q: It's dragged out I think for them, it's like a guild.

HARRISON: I think that's right. I mean, they've got to keep professors employed.

Q: Not too many come in all of a sudden.

HARRISON: Right, but I was on the other hand, motivated by economic necessity and therefore, taking a lot of classes and I didn't see any reason to hang around. So, after two years I took my chance. Before that, at Claremont, they allowed you go to off to do a dissertation and sort of stay registered for free, but they decided that they would charge you, in fact my first year out, a fee. Well, my first salary with the Foreign Service I think was $7,300 and now I had two children. The fee was $150 a semester and that was more than I could afford. I didn't have $150 for a semester. So, I let my registration lapse, but in 1973, well we'll get to that story later in my career. Eventually, by taking a year's leave without pay I finished my dissertation and then I had to go back to Claremont and find who was still alive to be my readers and there were some people there whom I had known. Claremont, as long as I paid all that back tuition I hadn't paid, didn't charge interest in their benevolence for the ten years; they were happy to let me reenter the process. I submitted and finished my dissertation and now it's '79 so I have been out of there 13 years and have finally received my degree. Yes, it was a continuity thing, I was lucky. Ted Waldman was still there, one of my readers, and they let me use Felchinski, who had been my mentor at Oxford where I went on my year of leave without pay, but we could probably come to that.

Q: Well, you got into the Foreign Service around '67 or '68?

HARRISON: '67, 69th class and in the old numbering system, yes, with it was a big class. They'd had cutbacks. You know, the Foreign Service has an absolute inability to take in a number of people they really need which they've discovered again in this decade. It's marvelous how things are repeated. It's endearing about the organization. Anyway, so they had small classes and suddenly found that they didn't have enough people. There were 70 people including USIS people in my class, including some luminaries. Ned Walker who went on to be Assistant Secretary and is now a mainstay on the talk show circuit around town; president of the Middle East Institute. Bob Blackwill who has had various positions of power and is now ambassador to India. They were the two outstanding members. Dick Bowers who went on to be ambassador to Bolivia and later was in my class. Harry Copu was rising very rapidly, but decided to go off and make money, sort of mid-career after he was DCM in Brazil; certainly would have gone on to great things. Tim Carney who became an ambassador in Cambodia. So, you know, when they came out to tell us there were future ambassadors in the crowd, that was right. I mean, I thought it was a shuck at the time, but it turned out that there were some people who proved themselves to be able public servants.

Q: How did you find, I mean, coming to Washington and getting into this big class. Did you find it was what you expected or what were your reactions?

HARRISON: One thing that will amaze future students in this process or incoming Foreign Service Officers is that in those days, the State Department was just an office building; you walked in and went wherever you were going. The whole sort of inquisitorial process that's there now wasn't there. None of it was. So, I walked into the designated office, which was in a sort of mini conference room on the first floor on the right hand side as you come off the lobby with my fellow Foreign Service Officers. I think one thing that surprised me was the variety in the incoming class. You know, there were people who were obviously very smart and people who were obviously not very smart. I thought I used to say you could probably find the same kind of composition just by going out in the street and sort of swiping the first 50 thirty-year-olds you found. It seemed that the process wasn't producing any uniform product at all. Otherwise, yes, I wasn't over at FSI. I wasn't disappointed at all. I thought that the FSI course was good. In those days they brought in luminaries to talk to us, like Joseph Campbell was there. Dean Rusk talked to my incoming class. You know, I thought all that was wizard. This was the day we had women in the class although they were already being told that nothing awaited them. It was a thoroughly sexist organization, but trying not to be racist anymore or elitist so they were already trying to get people in from the West and trying to break out of the Ivy League mold.

Q: I was wondering whether you felt coming from San Jose State and Claremont, a fine school, but I mean still, out of the sort of Eastern orbit, or the Western orbit was Stanford or maybe Berkeley, and that was about it?

HARRISON: No, I was, I think I was naive about that in those days or maybe I was over willingly self-confident, but I didn't feel that I would be at a disadvantage to the people who came out of that view. I think I was. I think that they did have an advantage early on in the process and I think still do, but I only discovered that later, thankfully. I didn't last very long. I abhor people I remember from that era that seemed to me to have a kind of automatic entree that I didn't have, who did not succeed in the terms that the Foreign Service sets for success because they had some. You know when they were put in positions to deliver they couldn't deliver one thing or another. So, I think in the end you had to be able to deliver and I think if you could deliver in the end you'd be fine, but I think initially, yes, if you'd come out of Georgetown or Harvard, if you'd come heralded by some professor calling in to somebody he knew at the State Department to foretell your coming; that the system was biased to give you a shot at some jobs that I could only dream about in my early career. I think I was shunted aside a little bit, but it was probably my own fault, too because I think I impressed my interviewers when we got to the assignment process as being, I'm trying to think of a noncatalogical word that would express a notion I'm after here, there must be one. A jerk, that's the four-letter word I'm after and you know for whatever reason I think I probably was a bit of a jerk.

Q: Well, there's jerks and jerks. What kind of a jerk?

HARRISON: Well, I was the kind of jerk, doing consular work, who loved to talk about what meaningless stuff it was to my supervisors who were career consular officers. That was the kind of jerk I was. So, it was, you know, maybe a valid judgment on me because that is jerky behavior and I didn't recognize it at the time. But, I still think it's true that the State Department is over impressed Ivy League credentials. I never found when I became a supervisor that it made the slightest difference. I think some people can do the work and some people can't and whether you went to graduate school seemed to me not to correlate with that or what college you came out of. I met some awful fools who came out of Ivy League colleges and I met some very intelligent people who came out of the mid-West. Bob Blackwill being a good example, you know, I think he was from Kansas, or somewhere, the University of Kansas or something like that. Although it is not something that you will find heralded on his resume even to this day, but you know he was an extremely impressive guy. Dick Bowers who was probably the most impressive guy I met in that incoming class who was from Berkeley, but had been in the army, was a veteran, he was a little older than the rest of us. Ned Walker was already showing promise of good things to come you know, he was probably the slickest of us. He was from Hamilton. I was introducing him the other day and said that he had won the prize for best looking in our incoming class which I think is also true although we didn't give that prize and I said that I had gotten one vote in that competition. That bias simply exists, and its overcome, I think it doesn't help you very long, but I think out of the starting gate I think it gives you an advantage. My assignment out of the starting gate was a two-year consular stint in Manila. The other reason for that was, in those days, if you didn't have a language when you came in, they gave you one and then sent you to a language post. I had German when I came in, a 3+, 3+ so they sent me to an English speaking post. I didn't stop for language training before I went so I went direct and you know, we were supposed to do visas then, just like you were supposed to visas afterwards. I was kind of a convenient guy to send to Manila, although I had no interest in the area of the world.

Q: I was going to ask did you have any, you know, going through this, what were you picking up in the corridors? You know, where were the hot spots, where do you want to go?

HARRISON: You know, I think we're entirely ignorant about all that stuff. I mean the thing in the corridors strangely enough, no, I guess that was later. No, I mean everybody was sort of glamour placed. You know, I want to go to London, I want to go to Paris, I want to go to the places that I know. Nobody wanted to go, well, I think the intelligent thing to do out of FSI is go to State, stay home, get mellow for a couple of years and those people that did tended to do very well, and I wish I had done that. I think learning how the building operates is what you should do and then you should go. I think, in fact, every incoming officer should spend a tour in the building before they go anywhere else so you know what the organization does, which you don't as a junior officer if you go off to the visas which is sui generis. It's what it is. My view of it hasn't changed a lot in the last 35 years, but my expression of that view may have moderated over time. Partly it was a reaction of how it was billed, you know: you'll be making decisions everyday and you won't be just some junior political officer someplace. You'll actually be on the front line. Giving out immigrant visas is a clerk's' job. I never saw the point of it. I mean, you know, they came to me as a vice consul sitting out there on the floor of this vast bureaucracy which was the Philippine consular section with a complete package of stuff in which this whole set of puritan questions that we asked of immigrants had been answered and which, if you had answered, and the one that was most often answered negatively, that is whether you have ever achieved the majority of your income from the proceeds of prostitution.

It's near a big military base, of course, in those days, so we saw a lot of people who had, then they had a waiver from INS from that which was also available. It was a great exercise in hypocrisy. I remember one guy came up once and one of the questions on the form, which I think, had been devised by Cotton Mather was, Do you believe in bigamy? It wasn't what you engaged in, it was whether you believed in it. This guy had put in yes, I do. It turns out he was a Muslim so here I had a chance for a natural substantive question for one of my interviewees. So, I asked him, "Yes," he said, "I am a Muslim I can have four wives." I said, "Well, let me put it to you this way. If you believe in bigamy, you're not a bigamist, are you?" "Oh, I only have one wife." I said, "Well, if you believe in bigamy, then I have to turn down your request. On the other hand, if you change your mind in the next 30 seconds and decide you don't believe in bigamy, then I can give you a visa." So, he had an awakening. But that was about as much substance as there ever was to it. I was working with three Foreign Service, what did we use to call them?

Q: Locals?

HARRISON: No, no, there were 20 locals there. No these were stamp officers and they would get through about 10 or 15 of these applications a day and I was sitting out there getting through as many as they could give me because I didn't see anything to do. I couldn't understand the intellectual basis of the activity I was engaged in other than putting the information on the visa. I was not overly happy and I thought I was wasting that year, and the next year, too, although it was intellectually more stimulating because I was doing citizenship, a lot of citizenship there because of that military presence, so I was bitter, but I was lousy at it. I was a lousy consular officer I guess as my supervisors would see me. I was kind of a jerk and not altogether convinced of the seriousness of the enterprise and not very good at it. You know, then I became a non-immigrant visa officer. We used to do about 200 interviews a day, 220 interviews a day, probably on any objective scale, half of them fraudulent, you know, half to 75% were not really intending tourists, politically acceptable to turn down about maybe 10% or 15%. You know, we would plow through these things every day and just cranking them out, sitting on a window on a stool which reminded me of my old A&W Root Beer days where I sat at a window on a stool, too and took orders. I didn't ever think that there was much more substance to it than that.

Q: What was life like in the Philippines in those days? You were there from what, '67 to '69?

HARRISON: '67 to '69, yes.

Q: What was it like, I mean, did you get anything from being sitting on a stool in the consular section?

HARRISON: Well, we all lived on compounds, most of us right in the city. I lived in an older compound, which had walls, actually it was a kind of a precursor of California today. It had walls and private police forces, all very manicured, all very nice. It was wonderful food, a lot of good restaurants in town and this sort of thin veneer of extremely rich people living extremely well and then this huge vast poverty stricken mass. Actually, it's a shocking thing. We came from California through Hawaii, even with jets in those days I think we were probably 15 hours out of Hawaii when we finally got there. Joanne was pregnant and we had and 18-month year old boy and so it was not a happy trip. When we got there after this incident at the airport which illustrated the situation Hawaii used to be in, which we can talk about, we drove through some of the worst parts of Manila which are around the airport to get to where we were going which eventually was the embassy and then to the Filipinos Hotel. It was then across from the embassy they had put us up. To sort of look at this poverty, which is the first time I'd seen that kind of thing or any Joanne had, people living in sort of corrugated kind of cardboard, vast settlements which are still there and may always be there, I don't know. So, yes, I think there was an impact of that. I think the greater impact of that was my boss's wife, Lou Gleek, was the consul general. She'd come out to the airport. There were a couple others on the plane with the head of the woman's association for the embassy when such things still existed. I guess it would be called the spouse's organization now and there wouldn't be anybody in it, but of course in those days they were quite large organizations. As we came straggling into the waiting lounge waiting for the staff to get our passports stamped we sat with these people and Mrs. Gleek spent the time berating the woman about some mix-up they'd had in the administrative arrangements for getting out there. So, we kind of looked on in stunned disbelief, but it turned out to be her personality. She was a Foreign Service wife of the old school who felt that the other wives in her section were chattel, and one of the wives I think that led to this revision which came four or five years later in the status of spouses in the Foreign Service, which has had some unintended consequences which I think have not been good for the organization, but which, you know, inevitably in the way of social progress were coming anyway. So, we were kind of stunned already and were also jetlagged of course, to our back teeth, and then driving through the worst parts of Manila on the way to where we were going, yes, that is a shock I think. I had seen none of that in Germany in my time. We also of course, dealt socially and so forth with a very rich group of Filipinos. We were in with kind of a upper middle class group of young people, but also every embassy function we would see the upper strata of Philippine society, people with a lot of money. That contrast was the other disturbing thing about the place and I'm sure that is still true, too. But, Manila sort of incorporated that contrast in itself. You could live very well in Manila in those days and many people did.

Q: How did you get along with the powers that be within the consular section?

HARRISON: Luckily, there was a man named Lou Crossen who was head of the visa operation and his wife, Maggy who was a wonderful woman who took us under her wing. In fact, I think the first break in this general gloom that had settled over us in this Filipinos Hotel was when Maggy Crossen showed up at our door, having brought us a maid to look after the kids who in fact stayed with us the whole time we were there. Her name was Anita and she was 18 at the time, but Maggy Crossen who was just full of life and good humor was an angel for us. It was incredible the difference it made meeting Maggy and in fact, I tried to find them when I was sworn in as ambassador to invite them, but couldn't locate them. I think they may have been dead by then. Lou who as a very nice guy who was my, he wasn't my immediate boss, he was head of the operation. I was the vice consul. I had a couple of intermediate bosses, but also like him. All of that was fine. Lou Gleek who was the head of the consular section was a disappointed political officer who had had something happen in his career, which had been meteoric, but had stopped being meteoric four or five years before. He was just on the brink of being selected as an O-2 in the old system and didn't know which way he was going to go. So, we had that. He was on tenterhooks my first year and probably not at his best. He made an occasional shot at showing me the ropes, but you know, I think he was not in a good place in his career. It was a difficult time for him and he was married to Kyra, which would have been a trial in my view at any time. From that point of view, it was not a happy circumstance. In fact I discovered that I had thought I was getting along better with some of the supervisors than they thought, and I got very bad efficiency reports in Manila partly because, as I say, there was a certain jerkiness to my nature which offended people and partly because I wasn't very good at the work. I was intellectually dismissive of it and I think not a good attitude to take. I got an automatic promotion the first year that everybody got from 7 to 6. I'd come in as a 7 and then I stopped getting promoted for a long time and based in part on those Manila efficiency reports. On the back end of them, do you remember, they used to have two parts, one that you saw and one that you didn't. It was easy to get blindsided in those days and all of that was changed, too, in that general reform in the early '70s. So, you could go back and look at the part that you couldn't look at. There was an efficiency report in there that would have sunk Foy Kohler that had been written about a period they'd had a gap in my efficiency reports for two or three months, which was longer than the gap you're supposed to have. This was written in retrospect at the end of my tour by an officer who had not found me to be an engaging individual and so he did his best to do me in. Eventually I got it out of my packet, but not before I had gone through a long almost selected out process, kind of hanging on by the skin of my teeth for years.

Q: Did you get any feel, I realize that this is a huge consular section and all, and you were buried in the bowels of that, did you get any feel for either the ambassador or the American Philippines relations in that period?

HARRISON: Well, some yes, because one of the things I did was occasionally sub for the special assistant to the ambassador. This guy named Bruce Apt, who showed up interestingly enough on a documentary about Silicone Valley, he is now a psychiatrist out there. The angst of getting very wealthy very quick - he treats people like that, which must be a very lucrative thing to do. But in those days he was a FSO and he was the ambassador's aide. Blair, was there, William McCormick Blair who was an aristocratic man in the best sense. I had had some dealings with him. Actually the first time we met him we were invited to a movie screening. We used to get Hollywood films, first runs before they were released. He got a very good movie called In the Heat of the Night and it was showing at the embassy. We were invited. Joanne was pregnant and during the showing her feet swelled up so she couldn't get her shoes back on. She'd taken them off and she couldn't get them back on. So, we had to come back out through the reception line. She was barefoot. Of course, in those days we thought that sort of thing would do you in for good. She was really upset about having to walk through barefoot, but try as she might she couldn't get those shoes back on. So, walk through barefoot and she did. The McCormick Blairs were extremely gracious about that and everything. They were very gracious people. They had old money. He was replaced by G. Mennen Williams as ambassador; he had been governor of Michigan, carried a lot of water at the '60 campaign for Kennedy and at the nominating convention was rewarded with an ambassadorship to Manila and was a politician to the marrow of his bones who kept behaving as a politician once he got to the Philippines. Part of that was, he wanted to go everywhere and shake hands with everybody. So, he did and he wore out Bruce Apt who was supposed to go with him. Various of us were delegated to take over and go places with Mennen Williams. I made two or three trips. One actually fascinating trip I made with Mennen Williams was up to Angeles for a funeral. It turns out that Benito Aquino who was now I guess mostly forgotten but was later to play a key role in Philippine history.

Q: Oh yes, his assassination and his wife's ascendance.

HARRISON: At any rate, we went up to this funeral and I found out some of the down sides of being an ambassador. One was that you were in the place of honor always so in the funeral cortï¿½ge you were right behind the exhaust pipe of this 1955 Cadillac hearse as it winded its way in a 105 degree sultry day to Angeles City which seemed to me to be 20 or 30 miles. I was actually getting lightheaded because there was this great press of people. There's no way of getting out of the way of this exhaust of this hearse. After that we went up to the compound, the Rimaldas compound. She was a Rimaldas, he did not come from money, but she came from enormous money. We flew into this compound that the Rimaldas family had in central Luzon with sugar. They had built for each member of the family this huge house in a compound in a circle around a circular wall around which they had built a golf course for their own use, which Robert Trent Jones designed. I think that was one of the. I've met some really rich people since then, but you begin to see what really rich people, how they live and he came out and we had a long talk with him you know, and I sat there. Part of my job, I had this briefcase full of paperweights. In those days they were plastic paperweights with a bust of Lyndon Johnson inside. Bronze bust of Lyndon Johnson. Not the world's handsomest man. Not something you want staring at you from you desk, but this we handed out. We handed these things out and medals and beads and bits of colored glass. I was the guy who followed along sort of giving this out as Mennen Williams shook hands, but I also went to this meeting with him. Then as we were leaving, Aquino said, "Well, I want you to meet my wife." So, off to the kitchen he goes and back he comes with Cora who's been fixing the food and she's shy and she's wiping her hands. I'll never forget on her apron as she walks out to shake hands with the American ambassador and for me it's always been a little bit symbolic of the social change since then that it turned out that we were talking to the wrong guy. We should have been out in the kitchen talking to her. Also, in some ways for me symbolic of the Philippines that he would have been assassinated on the ramp of the airplane. I think only the Filipinos would have thought that they could have gotten away with that.

Q: It's just incredible. I mean, you know, the stupidity of that.

HARRISON: Yes, and it was. It was a strain of absolutely profound stupidity of the ruling class in the Philippines. Impenetrable stupidity. It was which I think was never better exemplified, but Aquino was an exception to that. You know, he was an alert guy and an educated guy and I think a genuine informer although he was operating in a system where people were getting killed. Then we were at the funeral where one of his bodyguards had been shot, someone we were encouraging and but, you know, fate plays interesting tricks. It was actually she who becomes Prime Minister. He was cut off early.

Q: Was Ferdinand Marcos or Imelda Marcos in the picture at that time?

HARRISON: They were, still democratically elected, still darlings in Washington in those days. Imelda was seen as kind of Jackie of the Philippines, beautiful, beauty queen, gracious, well dressed and although of course, we had made a point of at the time, well shod. It was two or three years later that he decided the democratic process had become inconvenient, but there were already signs of corruption. He was moving to take over, for example, the Lopez family properties that he coveted. It was a kind of family oriented power grab going on from his family and its associates even then and of course, the corruption was endemic. Actually, it leads to an interesting story because the Humphrey-Nixon election took place when I was there and the reason it leads to that story is because all these families ran their own television stations. It was a mark of prestige and also politically useful. There were more television stations in Manila than in Washington, DC in those days. Desperately hard up for things to put on so you saw a lot of old farmer cartoons from the '30s and anything else they could get their hands on. They were mostly there for election campaigns. In election campaigns of which they got very active with political propaganda and they were also running on the largest network in the country 24 hour election coverage. So, they came to the embassy and asked for people to come over and be moderators for the election coverage and I was one of the guys chosen. I don't remember what the process was to go over and be one of the anchormen, one of two for this all day election coverage that we did with interviews and you know, we had a big map of states and we were awarding them. Actually we got tired late at night and started awarding them arbitrarily. Until then, based on ticker stuff coming in and so I became a television celebrity briefly in the Philippines as a result of that. It just leads back to the families and the fact that there were all these TV stations for this reason. He was still a democratically elected leader. I was not moving in those social circles, but I saw him a couple of times at general things that the embassy did. I thought it was interesting. Mennen Williams who wanted to fit in as a politician used to come to work in barang pallagos which were these heavily embroidered shirts that were formalwear in the Philippines whereas Marcos always wore a business suit to the office. We would many times have our ambassador in Philippines native dress talking to Marcos actually in French native dress, that is very expensive French suits that he wore, which felt really peculiar to me. I think it was a lesson to me about going native, which when that became an issue later I always staunchly resisted doing it. But he was a very nice man. He had a great skill, which I found later I didn't have, of sleeping whenever he had time to sleep. If he had 10 minutes, he could sleep for 10 minutes. Churchill had that, too. It's an enormous advantage bureaucratically to be able to do that. He was always very nice to me. He didn't look at me as a substantive part of his team, but traveling with him, which I did a couple of times, gave me an insight into sort of what ambassadors do and it wasn't altogether attractive to me at the time. All the schmoozing that has to go on. He was wonderful at it. He went to places in the Philippines where even the people there were a little uncertain about where they were and he got out and shook hands and handed out trophies and Johnson paperweights. I remember we went up once to where there is a concrete marker where the Big Red One, a mission division, had come out of the hills of central Luzon after a terrific campaign in the Philippines in '44. They had lost a lot of people so they had erected this; well it was just cement about four feet high. It had been neglected. It was in this - outside this - Filipino village at the foot of the mountains, this concrete pillar painted kind of red, but that had worn away over the years. I don't think anybody visited this thing in decades, but he did. Up we went and the village was just astounded, an American ambassador had never been within 100 miles of there in any direction, but he did. He was marvelous. He just had a politician's drive and a politician's gift; no hand should go unshaken. I greatly admired him for that.

Q: Did the Vietnam War intrude at all while you were in the Philippines?

HARRISON: Oh, very little. I was still in contact with a lot of my classmates. A lot of them had gone CORDS (Civil Operations and Redevelopment Support Program) which was the program for Foreign Service officers who had gone off from our class to Vietnamese training and then gone to Vietnam as province deputy or assistant province advisors. We had a guy come into our class from the CORDS program to proselytize for CORDS and he's wearing a sidearm to show you that this was pretty macho stuff, none of this pantywaist Foreign Service officer business that the rest of the class was going to go to, but I had a wife and two kids. CORDS which was not a company in those days didn't have much appeal for me and I didn't go, but they did. For example, after Tet, one of them sent me a piece of the facade that had been blown off the embassy. One of these concrete hunks of plaster they have which I had on my desk for a long time. I don't know what happened to it. A lot of wives were there unaccompanied because of you know, there was a lot of activity. The way it impinged on me was that the fleet was based out of Subic Bay and the other side of Luzon from Manila and would come in every, I guess, they would be a couple of months on station, Yankee Station, and on to Vietnam to do flight outs for that time and then the liberty port was along Subic Bay and the fleet would hit along and 10,000 to 15,000 sailors who'd been in very dangerous and extremely hardworking situations on those carriers, and the men - which they all were - it was just a fantastic thing when they would come ashore. The Filipinos had constructed outside, and this was much truer than in Angeles City, which was the air force, which you know, they were there, but the navy guys weren't. When they came ashore and went into this bordello community which is what Blanco was, the mile long strip of bars, it created a scene that I hope never to see again, but was germane to my work. Well, it wasn't really, but it created a lot of those marriages which I later had to give the wives were going back to the States and I had to give them visas. The legal officers over there became friends of mine because they would call up and say, "We're sending down Corporal Smith with his wife." The navy would do investigations of the girls by Filipino employees, who would go off and sort of document their history in the flesh trades before they met these guys.

Q: You were saying it was all a silent process?

HARRISON: Well you can imagine, 15,000 sailors hit the beach all at once, deprived of women and liquor and even relaxation for three months and they're all in their early '20s. It was a scene out of Dante. It was incredible. So, I would be invited by the legal officers there, (one of whom was just our guest for Thanksgiving, these are enduring friendships) to go down and take a look to review this situation. Incredible - and also on the base. Those bases in those days were set up as R&R bases so they had riding stables, they had fabulous golf courses, they had pretty much any activity, they had baseball diamonds, there were country clubs; Subic Bay obviously should be fitting and so forth, but for the people on R&R from Vietnam they were wonderful places. It impinged on me to that regard, but to that degree. I never went there. Vietnam passed over me since I never served there and I was never in the military and I was never an active anti-war protestor and I was kind of removed from that experience.

Q: You weren't picking up having a strong opinion about what to do there and all that?

HARRISON: No, I was never a radical. I remember we went up to one of those backup pieces back in '64, the free speech movement at Berkeley and I was at San Jose. So, we drove up to Berkeley to kind of hang around and went to a teach in which is you know, kind of a cultural icon now and went in front of Sproul Hall and you know, looked at all the sort of blooms and things. At that time, I'll never forget it, I mean San Jose State was a conventional place. Fraternities and sororities were big, madras shirts and the women would spend a lot of time dressing before they came to school. When I taught, I went back to Calera College and taught a couple of times and you know, the only way to tell the students from the people who lived under the bridge was that the students were carrying books. Otherwise, the dress code was exactly the same and the degree of cleanliness, too. In '65 when this change began, it was a two-hour process I'm sure for women to get ready to go to class and I mean, they looked good. They were dressed and the boys, I guess we called ourselves in those days, were, too. I wore jeans to school. That was a big thing. That was as radical as I ever got, but it was unusual. Also, a backpack, a canvas backpack to carry my books around which was so unusual that my wife's cousin seeing me with this thing told her about it as an indication that I was not good marriage fodder.

Q: Well, then here you were coming out, did you, what was your experience? I mean you had two kids, you had to have money and you were in a job where you were getting money. Did you feel this was for you or were you dubious?

HARRISON: Oh, no, I was very dubious. I mean, certainly consular work wasn't for me. I always counted the days. I knew I wanted to be a political officer and there was no possibility of that for my first two years. So, I saw it as a necessary hurdle to get over and I was really, I thought I was wasting my time in broader career terms and in life terms. I was making money, but what was I making? I think I was probably up to $9,000 a year, but we had to maintain an establishment. We had two maids. You know, we'd come out of a situation in graduate school where we used to put the baby in its baby seat on the dryer and put a towel in there so it would shake around and books around to brace him and turn on the cycle so he'd shut up for half an hour so I could do some studying. Suddenly we had a lavandera and an amah and a dressmaker and all this stuff. We were always broke. We were sort of living a life of someone with much more money than we had, but we didn't have much, we didn't have any. No, the money wasn't good. Everybody I knew was making more money back in real life and were doing more interesting things than I was doing. I was a vice consul, which was a title that impressed people. The relatives were pleased, but the actual work, that wasn't what I saw myself doing.

Q: Did you have any problems while you were in the Philippines with people coming to you for visas and all that?

HARRISON: Oh, yes. That was huge. That's all anybody ever wanted to talk to you about. I mean, it was, once they found out you were a vice consul. I'm sure if you talk to a vice consul in Manila today it would be exactly the same. It is. That was your social cache, that was your entree. That's why you got invitations, that's why people wanted to know you. That was a huge part of Filipino society, that visa process. And all the travel agents, too. In fact one of the innovations that I suggested and implemented was to make the travel agents wear their license on their shirts when they were inside the compound because before that they'd been filling up our waiting room coaching the applicants before they went to the window. So, no, that was, I mean, yes, that was another part of it I disliked. I mean, who wants to be sort of seen as the font of all travel documents. It's not a happy thing to get involved in. It was always at the edge of every personal relationship you had with a Filipino.

Q: From your observation, was there a problem of the officers who were coming to the lure of money, sex, and prestige, what have you? You know, in other words was this something that you were watching from the side or not?

HARRISON: I don't know of any case of that. There was a lot of it going on in Warsaw which was my next post, but and I guess after I left they uncovered a huge ring among the national employees in a Manila visa sale ring. I'm sure it was going on. It almost inevitably would be happening, but I never had any immediate experience of it. Certainly blandishments were offered from every hand, but you know, in that circumstance there will be people who are taking advantage. It wasn't obvious. Later in Warsaw it was more than obvious. It was sort of everyday cocktail party chatter, but that wasn't true in Manila. The one thing that was true in Manila that I should add about that experience is that as I said the people who went to the going away function; I mean we all went to the ambassador's residence for the welcome to post and then we all came back for the departure thing. There were a lot of people that I saw only twice in my Manila experience. Once at the hello and once at the goodbye. So, we had a good group of friends there, but that place was vast and you only knew 5% of the people you were serving with.

Q: Okay, I think this is probably a good place to stop now. We'll pick this up in 1969 when you're off to Warsaw. Great and we'll talk about that.

HARRISON: Okay.

Q: Today is December 10, 2001. Roger, 1969, going to Warsaw how did the Warsaw assignment come about?

HARRISON: Actually in 1969 I went to language training and in 1970 to Warsaw. It came about because of the rudimentary personnel system we had in those days, which you may remember where you were asked to express a preference of places to go. The elaborate Byzantine system we have now had not been imagined at the time, so I put down a preference for Eastern Europe because it seemed to me I had German, I had some experience in Germany and I had some Eastern European experience. I was given Polish language training with an onward assignment to Warsaw. Actually it turned out there had been a mistake made, one more person had been assigned than they had positions for. So there was one more of us in language training than could have gone, but one of us had to drop out. We ended up having a job for everybody and we went off to Warsaw in July, I guess it was in 1970.

Q: Let me ask you a question about the language training. Two questions. One, how effective was it and often, when you take a language you are getting quite a feel for the culture of the country and how people act as you're interacting with these native speakers. How did you find this?

HARRISON: Well, when I arrived at the post border driving from Paris, we picked up a car in Paris and drove across Europe. You know, I had I think what maybe a universal experience the first time encountering a native speaker on native soil and having no idea what he was saying - he was a border guard - or what I should say back. So, you know, I stammered at him and he looked uncomprehendingly at me and I wondered if the whole FSI thing had been useful at all. Over time I think when you begin dealing with the language, I think the FSI training was fairly good. The reputation in those days was that Monterrey was better and that people who went through Monterrey for Russian as a lot of people I knew did, had a more rigorous training and came out better able to speak the language. Mostly what they did was sit with earphones in Berlin listening to transmissions.

Q: I did. I graduated from Monterrey in '51 and sat for three more years listening to Russians.

HARRISON: Right. I don't know which; you've probably taken FSI courses as well, as Monterrey, so you have a better basis to compare.

Q: Well, you know, I'm a lousy language student. I found when I got to Yugoslavia after a year of Serbian when I hit the border guard there was this look of incomprehension, he was trying to figure out what I was saying. Finally, we ended up talking German.

HARRISON: That's the trouble with German, I mean, German is such an easy language by comparison. The easy language pushes out the hard one. Your brain wants to go the course of least resistance. After I left Poland I was pretty good after three years, at least on political topics, but then two or three years later when I was in a situation to speak Polish, German words kept popping up rather than Polish ones.

Q: You got to Poland in 1970. What was the situation relation wise between the United States and Poland and also what was the government like at that time?

HARRISON: Right. Well, that was the last few months of Gomulka who had had very cool relations with Washington. He was a product of the post war of Poles who had come back, who had been nurtured by the Soviets and who'd come back. Urban Poles had been largely Jewish, at least they'd had many of their leading figures had been Jewish, had come back and been imposed on this new reconstructed Poland that the Soviet Union was then building and Gomulka was the final expression of that. Well, it turned out, not the final one but certain the semifinal gasp of that old system and not someone with whom Washington felt it had or could have very fruitful relations. By the way this time I was in the consular section because the system then was that you would spend a year in the consular section and then move for two years in the political section as the junior member of the political section. That's the term that I accepted in going there because I wanted to be a political officer. One more year in visas. You learned to speak the language in visas in a kind of limited way; you certainly got to listen to a lot of southern Polish dialect. Actually, one of my predecessors in the office that I occupied had pulled out the desk slide, that board came one day and here I was. He had pasted a lot of insulting phrases in Polish on there so he could remember and he could get these people out of his office. "Your mother wears army boots" in Polish so that they'd leave. So, you did and you saw a lot of people. I wasn't directly involved in the political analysis process although I was up there sniffing around all the time trying to get them to use me for things they didn't want to do going to meetings or going to listen to speeches that they thought were probably not important, but they wanted to have somebody go do. I would go off and do that to try to do as much political work as I could during that year. Tom Simons who was the second ranking man in the political section at that time and one of the most superbly talented, gifted I guess is the better word, Foreign Service officers that I ever ran into. A marvelous linguist, a marvelous political analyst with a Ph.D. in history, he really had all the tools. It was daunting to watch him do the job, but I was trying to learn at his knee and he was kind enough to give me some things to do. One of them was some trips that I took up to the North Sea coast, this was also part of shipping and seamen which had fallen as my responsibility in the consular section. We didn't have a lot of shipping and seamen there unlike Manila where it had been a big issue because we didn't have many American ships dock in Polish ports. But, there was a job and I decided to make the most of it and go up and talk to the people on the sea coast who did that sort of thing, the Polish shipping companies and the port authorities and people like that. To do a kind of political reporting job at the same time which I did, but the result of that was that I was in Gdansk about a week before the riots there in December of 1970 and then about a week afterwards so I stayed in the same hotel. You always stayed in those days not only in the same hotel, but also in the same room.

Q: Knock on the wall and say lockurnochr or whatever the equivalent was?

HARRISON: That's right. Yes. But, it was eerie afterwards. This bustling town had been turned into a ghost town with burned out buildings. I was virtually alone on the streets the second time I was up there so you really saw the result of public indignation boiling over. To say that we had any inkling of any of this in the embassy would be an exaggeration. Any inkling of really anything is probably more accurate.

Q: Could you put for the reader, could you explain what had happened?

HARRISON: Yes. There had been a price increase for basic foodstuffs, all of which were subsidized, in this communist system in November, late November in 1970. Leading up to the Christmas holiday season. A lot of the commodities that people bought for the Christmas holiday season had been increased in price and there was a spontaneous outbreak of violence, both in the mines in the south and the shipyards in the north where the largest concentrations of industrial workers were. The shipyards had been taken over by their workers. The beginning really of the Solidarity movement which was going to use that same incubator, but this was more spontaneous in the figures who later arose as leaders of Solidarity were not yet in evidence. Walesa, who was involved, was still an electrician at the shipyard for example. The government took measures to put this down and kill people. They had to shoot some people. There was a breakout at the shipyard; the party headquarters in Gdansk was burnt, general anarchy until the government reimposed order. It was unanticipated I think by any of us although we'd seen the price increases, but no one as far as I knew had any sense of the depth of the resentment. We were about 11 or 12 years thence since the last public riots in Poland and there was a general awareness I think in the embassy and in the federal government insofar as they thought about Poland that the system there wasn't working. The price increases were evidence of that because since wages were administered, prices were administered, everything was administered. It was all part of the plan. Lack of increased productivity and exports had created a bad situation for the Poles in terms of foreign exchange and trying to lure foreign capital, which was very difficult for them. They simply couldn't afford subsidies on food that had kind of been part of the social contract for the workers. These commodities, basis of life is cheap. There isn't much else to buy, but you know, at least you can get by. You have a job, you have some security, which in Poland, after its experiences in the war and then the civil war that followed it, that was currency they could count on for a decade or two, but it had outlived its usefulness by 1970. The price increases were rescinded, not only rescinded, but the government had to promise that they would be frozen at the lower levels without any time limit on how long the freeze would extend and it was a protracted negotiation with the workers, too. Although they were put down in the military sense, the government realized that there had to be some negotiation to get them actually to work as opposed to stop rioting. The party leadership was going up there and listen at public meetings. Some of them were published in the press a bit of opening of the government all of which brought about Gomulka's replacement, a man named Boleslaw Bierut. Gomulka was overthrown by all of this. The Soviets obviously were very concerned and the government in Poland was always trying to prevent the Soviet intervention. It was one of the leitmotifs of that political system. Gomulka was obviously yesterday's man, he was shunted aside and Bierut was brought up by the party leader in the big mining region presumably because he was a populist and because he had some experience with these large worker organizations. He was relatively enlightened; younger generation, 20 years younger than Gomulka. He was a technocrat; at least that was his billing. The new generation communist leader. In fact, eight years later, ten years later, he did exactly the same thing that Gomulka did. He increased prices on basic commodities. The end of that freeze that had become increasingly expensive over that decade just before a holiday showing how these people work. In any case, Gomulka was out, there was rioting, very exciting even for a guy in the consular section trying to hold on to the coattails of the political officer. I would say, probably, well, I know for a fact that we had no inkling that it was coming. In the aftermath, however, Washington got more interested in Poland, more interested because unrest there was a possible flashpoint with the Soviets and they had no interest in that. More interested because the thought was that you can work with this new leadership and they were more enlightened and more open to the West and in fact, they were. They wanted money. In those days it was almost impossible for them to raise any money on private capital markets to get any private investment in there because they didn't have a convertible currency, among other things. It was, they were having to engage in a barter system. Even with their Comecon friends, that is the Warsaw Pact Economic Union, was mostly barred because their currencies were not mutually convertible. Nobody wanted any of the other person's currency, they were actually dealing with hard currency areas or if you didn't have hard currency what goods can we trade for the goods of Europe. Very inefficient system, but not one which any foreign investor with any sense wants to put any money in. So, what you needed were government guaranteed loans. You needed to have some capital which came from governments or guaranteed by governments and which you could then use for investment purposes and that in fact was arranged.

At any rate, it was therefore, my first year, a time of transition, the kind of thing that all young Foreign Service officers hope for a break in the continuity, but the system was not fundamentally altered which was the problem that the new government had. They were more enlightened people and they were more open to the West. They did realize that you had to have investment capital, you had to have technology that you didn't have that you couldn't produce it indigenously, that the Soviets were. Although you needed their patronage they were a weak reed to rely on in terms of anything; that you in fact were in the same position as the Dutch church is to the Vatican. You had to, any innovation was going to come from the province, it's not from Moscow and you were trying to be more Catholic than the pope. They had to be for their own legitimacy sake. So, any experimentation had to be done in places like Poland. You couldn't do too much experimentation because then you risked heterodoxy and you'd be brought up short by the people who were ultimately exercising control. You had a huge Soviet military presence in that country and still recent experience from Czechoslovakia, which was only two years before I arrived. '68 as I recall. So, only two years before the Soviets had exercised their muscle and everybody understood. The system that emerged out of the Gdansk riots was the same as the one that they had begun with except that the workers had shown their power to prevent any peripheral economic reform because really the ending of the reduction of subsidies on basic food stuffs was a form of reform. You had to begin installing some kind of price mechanism which more or less reflected the cost of the production of those commodities rather than simply being arbitrarily set as a part of the compensation package for the population as a whole because you were going to eventually end up where the Soviets did with hog farmers feeding subsidized bread to pigs because it was cheaper than feed. It was a peripheral reform and I think everybody understood nothing basic was changing and workers understood that this peripheral reform was coming out of their hide and out of that social contract whereby they were guaranteed certain basic economic rights in return for their acquiescence in this foreign imposed economic and social system.

Q: What was our concern, I mean, is it true we're getting from people in the embassy and all, the policy really was that the Poles don't go too far because frankly we didn't want to see the Soviets move in and so we were hoping that the workers didn't get too uppity?

HARRISON: Oh absolutely. I think we saw the border as we had proven twice in Czechoslovakia, well once in Czechoslovakia and once in Hungary. We saw the border that we had to defend as being a German border, the border between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. We had no great pretensions about rollback. We weren't interested in fomenting revolution and the local revolutionaries understood that if they were to foment a revolution they could look for no help from us. Our overwhelming national interest was to avoid a direct military clash with the Soviets and the Poles were counters in that game. We were interested in stability in Poland and gradual reform, but stability overwhelmingly.

Q: When you were in the consular section, can you tell me a little bit about consul work. What sort of things were you dealing with?

HARRISON: Well, I was a visa officer. It was another mill, slightly smaller than Manila had been, but it was a conduit for workers mostly to the Chicago area, a big Jewish, no, a big Polish neighborhoods in Chicago which had been created during the potato famine in the early 19th century in the southern regions of the Tatra Mountains and Zakopane, Nowy Targ, places like that, these small communities. They are just like the ones in Ireland and the ones in Sweden, which my forebears came also because of the potato famine in both places. It populated areas of Chicago and now we're using people who came on V2 visas, tourist visas for employment for a year, 18 months, two years, three years, and then these people would come back and take advantage of the currency system in Poland which had pegged Polish currency at an artificial level vis-ï¿½-vis the dollar. But a man with a real dollar operating on the black market in Poland could do extremely well because prices were pegged at four to one in those days. I may be wrong, it may have been five or six to one on the black market. You can get 30 to one easily, so your black market dollar would come back in at 30 to one and pay prices even for the things such goods as there were in Poland. At four to one you did extremely well and people would come back and build houses and get married and buy land. There was a huge economic incentive and of course, has always been a demand for cheap labor, menial labor. These people were cleaning office buildings for example. They would come in and we had by then a new immigration law so they were all not qualified to get tourist visas, but they were also on huge waiting lists if they wanted immigrant visas. These were at that time I think they waited about six or eight years. Most of the immigrant visa preference itself, the only way to get there was a tourist visa and we saw 150 or 200 people a day on either one of them. As I say, most of them ineligible, but it was as it had been by the way the Philippines, too and is all over the world, there is a certain amount of, there is a certain turn down rate that can be sustained politically and after you pass that level all kinds of consequences flow. My predecessor who had been even more interested in political work than I did, soon figured out that the more time he spent turning down people the more time he would have to spend doing consular work, so he did about 10%, I raised that to about 20%. Then my successor who was a man from Maine who had little time for the nuances of life, who saw the law in literal terms raised it to 85% which was accurate I think in terms of the meaning of the law and the eligibility of the applicants we saw, very few of whom were eligible. That provoked a huge congressional reaction because it turns out that there are Polish congressmen as well who represent the districts where these people are going. The charge, which can be leveled in all such cases, is racism, which had also been levied in Manila.

Whenever the refusal rate got about 15% or so then all sorts of consequences would begin to flow, the parliament, or the congress in the Philippines would begin to inveigh against the Americans and the racism of the whole process. When that happened and this is now, I'm in the political section, we eventually got congressional inquiries and investigations and the congressional foot came down hard on the consular structure there, but I was long gone from the process. It gives you a sense of the way the consular system worked. I mean, the refusal could only be really applied to the most egregious cases. The applicants were depressingly uniform. They were all, well, not all, 80% of them from the same area of Poland. They were all small landowners, usually the brother of somebody or the cousin of somebody who was already in Chicago or in New York or in Milwaukee, which were the destinations for these folks. They had no particular economic means. They were usually being sponsored. They weren't going with family. They were going alone. They were overwhelmingly men although for the office cleaners there were some women, too. They were workers almost in uniform. Not a bad thing on the whole. The U.S. gets cheap labor, Poland gets a source of hard currency, a lot of arguments that we should make at this process, which we did. Doing it was not a lot of fun. One of the things that I always remember about it was the evidence of the system that would walk into my office every day. For example, there was one scarf on sale for women that year. You could buy a scarf in Poland if you didn't mind that scarf. It was a paisley scarf and somewhere in the bureaucracy of the central planning office it had been decided that this was the scarf that would be produced. So, every woman who came in my office who was wearing a scarf was wearing that one and there was something similar for men. This was the jacket, there was one; this was the one you bought. Also, the men, the farmers all had that great farmer tan.

Q: The hat was, you had the line across the forehead.

HARRISON: That's right. I remember seeing, they had ironically enough a Menotti opera, The Consul, came to town. Going to see it when you are a consul is a different experience. But you know, any people - most of whom and that was the other constant about them - they'd never been more than ten kilometers from home in their lives. They were already off balance in Warsaw. This was already a foreign place for them to be and then to come and see me was a frightening experience. I didn't feel like a frightening individual. I was just a junior Foreign Service officer, but from their point of view I was authority. I was Charon the boatman. I was either going to row them across or I was not. I didn't like it. I didn't like any part of it. There was nothing about it that attracted me in the slightest. I didn't - I thought it was demeaning for both sides of the table and I got out of there as quickly as I could.

Q: Did you get any feel for the Warsaw intellectual community that's usually the one saving grace about doing something like that; you do get in touch with sort of the artistic intellectual community sometime.

HARRISON: Very little. I mean in my case, one reason for that was that the consul, we didn't have a consul general, it wasn't big enough, we had a consul.

Q: Who was the consul?

HARRISON: Lois Day was her name.

Q: I replaced her in Seoul.

HARRISON: Well, she, is she among us? I don't know. I thought she'd be an old lady now. She was probably then in her early '50s I would guess. Her job was, if anything, less enviable than mine because she was dealing at the political edge, you know, where we'd turn down people and she'd have to deal with appeals with came with very special interests which of course is what consulars do a lot in places like this. What they had done almost exclusively in Manila where I'd been before. She consoled herself by interviewing the interesting people who came in and which I probably would have done in her place. That left me with the Zakopane people. No, there wasn't a lot of that. We were able to do a lot of cultural things in town. There were things like that, but the other issue was that the travel of all these people was restricted. Both because they didn't want to lose the cultural assets that they had, for their opera and for their symphony orchestra and so forth. Those who were employed were outside, they didn't want to go be employed outside and they had saleable talents they wanted to keep around. Because they were generally restrictive on travel by intellectuals. So, for both of those reasons, we didn't have a lot of interesting people come through our operation. A lot of very talented people in society as a whole of course, but you know, it was this huge dead hand of this crazy system. Then the shadow in the background of the Soviet displeasure meant that artistic expression had to kind of be, school was out in different directions under this huge foot stamping down on all this culture. So, you had some paintings, which were very original. Lord, I mean, it was very dark stuff. You know, expressive I guess from that point of view of the sentiment in the cultural world, but dissection tables and just not a lot of lighthearted stuff. Grandma Moses would not have, one of her things would not have looked at home in the art galleries that existed at the time. That was true I think across the board. There was folk art, the traditional kind of factory hand painted paper cut stuff that was churned out, you know, for the tourist trade and there was the avant garde. The avant garde in the literary world was writing for their own amusement for the most part in the avant garde. The visual arts were turning out stuff that although it wasn't socialist realism, thank God, I mean it was, they had more freedom than that, it was still expressive of a system that simply didn't work. It was crazy. It was nuts. It was kind of a huge insane asylum.

Q: I mean, looking back on this you wonder how people, well I won't say how they accepted, it was accepted because of military force. You were in the political section. Who was the ambassador while you were there?

HARRISON: Walt Stoessel, the first year and then Davies, what was his first name?

Q: Dick Davies.

HARRISON: Yes. Dick Davies came in for year two and three. So, when I was in the political section it was Dick Davies, Stoessel had left.

Q: Who was the DCM and head of the political section?

HARRISON: Gene Boster was the DCM and do you know Gene?

Q: I know him yes.

HARRISON: Is he still around?

Q: I don't know. He was interviewed some time ago.

HARRISON: He fell upon hard times. He made a life after being ambassador to Bangladesh and then to Costa Rica I think. First of all, Stoessel was one of the grand old men of the Foreign Service even then. I always said he looked and acted more like an ambassador than anyone, except Adolphe Menjou in The Ambassador's Daughter, a great cinemascope epic of 1956. Aside from Adolphe, Walt Stoessel was the most ambassadorial person I think I ever met. I think his wife was probably the most efficient ambassador's wife. She certainly was the model that my wife followed; she was a shining example. Very professional couple. He was an old style ambassador. He would come in about 10:00, read the cables, go off and play tennis and come back in about 3:00 after lunch and a nap and read the cables and then go out to the social rounds in the evening. He led a very gentlemanly existence. He was not driven by that puritan excess which is so marked in Washington in particular. I never thought it interfered with his efficiency at all. In fact I thought it was a good way to do the job and wish I had followed his example. Part of that was because Gene Boster was a good DCM; a long experienced guy and someone that Stoessel had 30 years association with. That took a lot of the burden off of his shoulders. The head of the political section was a man named Giff Malone when I was in the political section, who was the son of Dumas Malone.

Q: Yes, the University of Virginia scholar Jefferson?

HARRISON: Yes, a Jefferson historian, author of a four or five-volume biography of Jefferson. Yes, a great Jeffersonian scholar and who I met out there once. Actually he came to visit his son. I don't know what happened to Giff Malone either. He disappeared from my scope.

Q: Oh, I interviewed him some years ago, but I don't know where he is now, I think in the area.

HARRISON: In Washington, I think he must be, yes. There was a permanent job there, a two year job which I had for a while on a kind of rotating basis and then Vern Pinter took Tom Simons' place as that section's kind of deputy, and there was a third guy who was me, and then Vern left. I became the official deputy, but they had decreased the section because we were downsizing so the guy who came behind me into the consular section didn't get to move. He was midway in his first year in the consular section grinding out the visas and was not going to be moved to the political section as he had been promised that he would be able to. So, he was stuck down there at the visa desk. He was the guy who raised the refusal rate to 85%; it may be that that played some role in that. We went down to a two-man section. My impression was, which I think has only been strengthened subsequently, that we knew very little about what was going on.

There was a group of quasi intellectuals who were cleared to have contact with embassies and they had contact with them all. We all had contact with them and they very seldom had to pay for a meal or cook one; they were being feted by one of the embassies or another. Everybody knew who they were. They were all into cocktail parties and so forth. Some of them were considered to be liberal within the system. There was a fellow who wrote a series of indecipherable articles on ancient Polish mythology. Because nobody could understand him, everybody thought it must be politically subversive. They were just incomprehensible, I think. As a result he was quite the social lion in embassy circles. The next time I saw him after I left, I saw him at a reception here when we came back, was when martial law was declared in '73 I guess it would have been. He showed up in uniform as the spokesman for the military junta who had taken power.

Q: You were saying that one reason why we didn't penetrate the system intellectually was?

HARRISON: Well, partly because they were so well organized to deal with us. They knew our game and they set limits on where we would have access and they were careful to debrief those people with whom we had access on a regular basis. If you knew that you were one of those people then you were on a very short leash at least in Warsaw. I think in Krakow where we had a consulate I think the situation was a little bit different because there was a group of Catholic intellectuals, some of them gay, who had their own publication which was under the fierce protection of the man who later became pope and who was cardinal in Krakow in those days and under the general protection of the church and therefore, had a little more latitude. They too had to be careful with their contacts with us. Although dissidents were not knowledgeable and you know, I think people should always look for the distinction; because you don't like the system doesn't mean you know what is going on with this system. Because you have the courage to speak out, and however muted it was, doesn't imply that you have better information than anybody else. I think our information was, we made it up, I mean we did analysis which means that we went out and talked to people and then tried to decide what all that meant and we read the papers. We did all the things, the Sovietologist things that were done in Moscow as well. We looked to see who was standing next to whom, who was mentioned often, and who wasn't and tried to decide which of these guys was rising and which was not. Actually within that system it was irrelevant who was rising and who was not. None of them were rising because they had any particular good ideas about how the system could be reformed or any desire to reform it. They were rising because they were more adept at playing that system than the people whom they were rising above. So, we knew I think very little. We had some inkling that Gierek was falling into some of the same problems that Gomulka had had. About this time by the way after a year or two of being out of office Gomulka either wrote or someone wrote and published under his name in the West a biography, which was fascinating. It came back in to us with a cite to them and we picked up some of the excerpts from this so we had a subscription. They had a very good correspondent, a Pole, whose name I've forgotten, but I knew him slightly because I attended a lecture of series he gave when I was at the Freie University at Berlin. I was always afraid not to go because there were only three of us there. Huge lecture hall and there would be three of us sitting there. So, we all felt some obligation to be there. He paid; he just read his stuff. Yes, I wish I could remember his name. I used to meet him out in the West occasionally when I would go out of Poland and I would find out what he had to say. They published these excerpts and Gomulka talked about how hard it had been to get information. It was really a fascinating case study in why the systems didn't work. He said, "You know, I would be walking down the hall at central party headquarters and I'd see my colleague in there, the minister of finance and I'd raise my hand, but he'd disappear around the corner and go into an office or turn around and go the other way, anything except talk to me." You know the minister of finance doesn't want to be asked about things he doesn't know about. They had absolutely no way of discovering what was going on in that economy. They were simply cut off and as a whole as a society. They were cut off by all the mechanisms by which democratic leadership is impressed within these requirements of productivity sentiments in this society were absent. They were steering, but I was always impressed that they were like kids with a plastic steering wheel you know those little baby ones? Steering like crazy, but having absolutely no impact on which direction the car was going and spending a lot of their time just establishing legitimacy of their government which of course, had none, and spending a lot of money to do that, too. I remember I used to lecture to visiting groups of Americans who would come through, tour groups. One of my jobs was to go and talk to them and I would hold up a copy of the biggest morning newspaper, the Tribune of the People. There's a rule about that. The more often you use "people" and the less attention you pay to them - you know, peoples' parties are the most repressive on earth - and the Trybuna Ludu was exactly the opposite of what it professed to be. The front page never had any news on it and I'd point this out. I'd read the stories for them. The front page was entirely an exercise in establishing legitimacy of the government. He would have some statement by the first secretary or he'd have some visit by some of his subordinates to a factory somewhere where the workers would have reinforced their support for the resolutions of the 23rd party plan. None of it was news. All of it was you see, we're the legitimate government of this country and you have an obligation to do what we tell you to do and then you'd turn the page and you'd find some news later on. Their problem I think was the same as ours. I think this was a great conspiracy of ignorance. We at the embassy didn't know what was going on largely because they didn't know what was going on and what was going on that they knew about, and that we could find out about occasionally, it was not important. It was simply the shuffling of functionaries' placement in a system that didn't work. The Titanic was resting on the bottom and these people were busily arguing about their position in the line of bailers.

Q: Well, I remember one person I interviewed who was at a consulate general, where was that?

HARRISON: Poznan or Krakow?

Q: Yes, and he was saying that when he was there which was in the '70s that statistically there were probably about three convinced communists within Poland.

HARRISON: I never ran into one, but.

Q: There had to be someone somewhere.

HARRISON: Ideology was long dead by then. Nobody believed in the ideology of communism. I think what people believed in was the necessity of maintaining the system against something worse, which was Soviet intervention. I think the Soviets were frantic not to have to intervene and I think that was the bargaining counter, which the regime had which they never exploited fully. I think they were more frightened of the Soviet invasion than they had to be, because I think it was option 500, because the Soviets were running into the same problem as the Poles were. You had to export things, you had to acquire technology, you had to get foreign investments of some form because you couldn't generate out of these creaky systems. You had to have the benevolence even then of the United States in order to do all of this because we were the gatekeepers on this international system to which you had to somehow have access. That meant that you couldn't go around cleaning up these little insurgencies in neighboring countries unless you thought that your own security was directly affected by them. What you wanted, as I understood it, was you wanted these awful pesky Poles to take care of business. This Polish Peoples Party, the PRPZ whatever, I've forgotten. For heaven sake, quiet things down. I think that was overwhelmingly the message from Moscow in those days. The Poles trying to do it, but with absolutely no inkling of how to make this system which didn't work, work.

Q: Well, now were you getting anything from some of the at the workers' level, I mean were the shipyards producing ships, were things coming out?

HARRISON: Yes, things were made and produced. I took a tour around. The diplomatic foreign office organized tours for new diplomats. In Poland we were taken around and shown things working. We were shown the mines working, we were shown various little factories working and we were shown a ham production facility. To give you a sense of the economy of the time, ham and coal were the two money earners for the Poles. So, we went to a modern ham production place and saw ham being made, which by contrary expectation, never put me off eating ham. So, there were people doing that. We went to a furniture manufacturing facility and there were people doing that. But, aside from commodities like ham or coal, for which there is a generalized demand in the world and you can export into that marketplace, it was no way of Polish manufacturing responding to international demands. I'll give you a good example. They used the money that they had arranged as private loans from bank consortium in New York for the most part to build a TV tube factory. It took them longer to build the factory than they had planned by a couple of years. When they finished it they were building TV tubes which were outmoded and which they couldn't sell except to the Eastern Bloc and domestically. So, what had meant to be a hard currency earner ended up not being a hard currency earner, which mean that the hard currency loans that you had taken out to build it couldn't be repaid. That was true throughout the economy. Because the currency wasn't convertible because there was no price mechanism with in the country to regulate what was produced and what wasn't. You weren't nurturing the talent you needed in the areas you needed to be competitive internationally. You weren't because you had no marketing, you had no marketing skills and you had no marketing knowledge, so how are you going to market to countries that had superb marketing capability. What you could do was to begin some sub manufacturing using cheap labor, you could begin doing some textile. You were putting together clothes for example for markets in New York, but that, in the function you could easily be outpaced by the emerging Southeast Asia countries where labor was even cheaper than your labor was. So, that wasn't a direction you could go. In technology you were simply out of luck. I remember we used to have trade groups come through and one trade group that came through was very much interested in Poles. These people built factory, metal factory buildings that you could put up in a hurry, you know, with metal trusses. Poles were still building factory buildings out of cement blocks and it was interminable way to do it and it was very slow. So, when you wanted to expand the capacity you had this bottleneck that people looking from the outside did not suspect. It just took you a long time to create a facility in which to do it. Of course, you had a disaffected work force, a drunken work force. I saw even on this tour that the foreign office arranged, we saw a lot of drunk workers on the job and if you looked around at the place they were on the job, you could understand. I would be a drunken worker, too. Just the most primitive kind of Dickensian conditions these people were working in. The showplace factories to which the foreign office in their vast ignorance took the diplomats I guess to demonstrate to them why the system, maybe there was an ironic tinge to it that we didn't anticipate at the time, but why the system was broken. So, I mean, you could see on every hand it wasn't working and it was rubbed in your face everyday that it wasn't working, but that wasn't the message I think that was read in Washington about these systems.

Q: I think that of course, this is the great question really is that we tended to build these countries up to be much more than they were. This is one reason why I think we really weren't predicting the collapse of the Soviet Union, you know to say; well it's probably got another few years. It wasn't a countdown of when is this going to collapse. It seemed like it would go on forever and always be a menace.

HARRISON: Of course, the Reagan administration for its own reasons was trying to build up the Soviets as a military rival in the early 1980s and you may remember the pamphlet Soviet military power to prove that we were on the defense. The Reagan administration was interesting. We were a power behaving as if it were an underdog somehow as if it were a revolutionary power that had, or was at a disadvantage internationally just as the United States was emerging as overwhelmingly the powerful country economically and politically in the world and militarily, too. It led to some silly things that we did and I hope we have gone through that period now. So, what we did, we, political officers would go out and see these people all the same kind of group. Yurgi Rubon was a guy that I saw. He was a writer of political that was again seen by the embassy as writing things between the lines which were commenting on things which could be commented on iconoclastically. I had a writer named Daniel Pesant who was especially interesting because he was Jewish. Oh, by the way, that was a fascinating thing I did in the political section: I was the religious officer. I would go over and talk to the people at the office of the cardinal about how the church was operating. The church was by all odds the most interesting social organization in the country and the most independent and very strong then because it was seen by the population as the one place that was not controlled by the party. They were constantly dicing the party about things like church permits and that was the big issue for them in those days. You had to get a permit to go to church. They didn't have enough churches. The government wanted to restrict the number they could build, wanted to restrict the number of priests they could train. They were trying to harass them administratively around the edges and all kinds of different ways without attacking them directly. The church was exercising a good deal of independence and trying to preserve it by not resisting the government. There was a very interesting contest that I was able to not participate in because the last thing the church wanted was the United States as an ally in this struggle, but which I could see going on. The other job I had which was interesting was trying to trace the Jewish community in Warsaw, which had been reduced to fewer people than were necessary for a minyan. What had happened because of Lubens Poles I had had a Jewish cast, anti-Semitism and anti-Luben or anti-Soviet became identified you could attack the Lubens Poles by being anti-Semitic and therefore, anti-Semitics had a new vogue in Poland. In the late '50s and '60's as a national strain broke out, nationalism and anti-Semitism, which of course in Poland are always closely associated and were again. There was another purge of Jews from the party as a result of this and as a result of a power struggle in the party. So, the Jews lost jobs and a lot of people who were Jewish ceased to try to be identified as Jewish. I mean every effort to erase any tinge of that identification - with the result that by the time I was out looking for Jews in Warsaw there weren't enough for me. There was a synagogue. The politics of that were interesting, too. The American Jewish community was interested in the remnants of the Polish Jewish community because it had been the main fodder for the Holocaust, of course. Therefore, we were attentive and the Polish government therefore was reluctant to eradicate all signs of the old Jewish community from Warsaw although the ghetto had been largely blasted to pieces by the Russians when they had allowed the Germans, where the Germans had done physical work, the Russians had sat across while it was being done. So, it was all cleared away and all these heartless, soulless, concrete apartment houses had been built, but the synagogue, the central one had been allowed to remain. The new grid of streets of was different from the old grid and so the synagogue was sitting on a 30 degree angle on an empty block between all these terrible socialist apartment houses all around it and there it was, I went there to visit periodically. There was a guy who was a caretaker there, a Jew who supplemented his income by making matzoh and he was the one who told me that there wasn't a minyan in town anymore.

Q: Minyan is what?

HARRISON: It's ten Jews. They have a service. That Jewish babies when they were born which was extremely rare, they couldn't find a Rabbi to perform circumcision so the community had sunk to that level. But, there was also a Jewish cemetery in town, an old Jewish cemetery and that was one focus of the American Jewish community expressed by the congressional Poles in part, but also by those people who were concerned with the aftermath of the Holocaust. The Polish government had for years wanted to build a road across this Jewish cemetery and the American Jewish community was determined to prevent them from doing that and my job was to go over periodically and check out to make sure that they hadn't. It was really an incredible experience because this cemetery had been there for 150 years and was all overgrown. No one was maintaining it. It had gone back to primeval. You came through the gate, there was a gatekeeper there, an old guy who never shaved. I guess he shaved about once a week. Shaky and he'd open the gate and you'd walk in to this kind of wonderland of forests and vines with all these tombstones interspersed among them. Of all these people there was wonderful, that was the other impression, accomplishments. These concert masters, there were scientists, these professors, these eminent businessmen with their records all laid out on their tombstones now in this incredibly overgrown secret garden in the middle of Warsaw which I'm sure is still there. I'm equally sure they never built that road across it. So, that was kind of the political situation that we were trying to divine and as I say I don't think that we ever divined much about it. I mean, we you know, sent in various speculations about who was up and who was down. Who was up and who was down was of absolutely no consequence.

Q: Well, when you think about this, I mean, the effort that you put into this, it's sort of like a criminologist, it boils down to when really Khrushchev or Gorbachev came, it didn't mean a thing.

HARRISON: No, it didn't mean anything it was really just bureaucratics within the system. It was some people who could exploit the system better than others. There was no one who said I'm the third way. You know, we didn't have any Bill Clinton figures arising because our system simply prevented it. It was no conduit. Except, and here was an insight of my colleague, Tom Simons, which I thought, was very astute at the time. The security police, it was his conviction, which I think, was right, that the brightest, the best and the brightest run the security services because that was the road to the top. Putin is a good example of how that is true. Once the party bureaucracy ceased to be able to promote these awful time servers, the worst kind of bureaucratic presence, once that weakened sufficiently, the people who broke through were the security services, the people who had been mentioned in that system and he knew some of those people. He was adept at talking to them because he drank with them for one thing which you know, you had to sacrifice your liver for your country and because he had good historical jobs. He had in fact gotten his Ph.D. in history of the region. He knew the stuff thoroughly, plus his language skills were extraordinary. The combination made him as good as we could have had in that system at the time, but you know, I saw nothing that he developed out of all of his skills which gave me some particular insight into what, it may be simply because there was no insight to have. I mean it was no there or there, it was nothing fomenting, it was just dead. It was like doing an autopsy rather than doing politics.

Q: Were the Poles, you were looking at what the Poles were doing overseas. Were they a tool in all of the Soviets as far as Africa or elsewhere?

HARRISON: They probably were and we weren't aware of it. I think what we were interested in was using them in peacekeeping operations and especially in Vietnam where they did send a contingent. We were trying to arrange for this decent interval as we were withdrawing and there was an international presence established there. The Poles were part of that and the Poles were eager to do anything that gave them international legitimacy outside the Soviet Bloc or independent of the Soviet Union, so this was something, which they were prepared to do. At the end of the day this is a very intelligent productive society and within the army some discipline, at least in the officer ranks, and great capability. A lot of the smart Poles around, as have been shown since this awful dead foot of the system has been removed. They've done extraordinary things in the meantime. So, that's I think our least, as far as I was aware. I think what the agency was doing at the time there was collecting mostly from the Soviets I think that was their major concern rather than probing into the details of Polish political life. At least I never saw any of their product which gave me any more insight than I had and which was, I say, which was minimal, blind man and the elephant stuff. When it all broke I think that we saw the reason there was no great intricate machinery that was being effective in ways that we didn't know. There was just nothing behind the facade.

Q: Well, then, after this rather depressing look at a depressing situation, I mean did you feel this way at the time or was it all kind of new and kind of fun?

HARRISON: Well, you know, I was trying to make my way as a political officer and keep up our end of the competition with the British embassy which was about the only other one in town that was trying to do any sort of political analysis about what was going on. So, you wanted to see the people. My rule was always to call everybody. I would call people as a second secretary I had no business going to see and no one else was talking to them. How about I come over and say hello? I got into some bizarre situations that way. Sometimes people would say no and often times they would say yes and over you'd go. I did some exploring off on the right wing because I was the junior guy and nobody was out talking to the right-wingers. That is the sort of remnants of the anti-Semitic nationalist movement which was still around, but of course, as much a threat nationalist as to anyone else to the communist. There was a guy named Rokosky who spoke very baroque Polish and my problem with him was I would sit there, and I was always about a paragraph behind, trying to look attentive. I was still trying to parse what he'd said two minutes ago, trying to remember what he was saying now; it's an imperfect interpretation machine. You know, I don't want to give you the impression there weren't a lot of decent people. There were a lot of decent people. They were all; people in Poland were forced to operate under two personas. They tried; I think the decent ones, tried to keep their differences small as they could under the circumstances. There was a sociologist named Shopinsky for whom I had a lot of respect who had had some success internationally as a sociologist and had some interesting things to say about the system. One of these was that if you wanted to persuade people to make the huge effort it took to change society then you had to convince them the changes would be much greater than they would actually be. If you told them how much it took to move a little bit, then no one would ever begin the effort. So, there were people like that. There were people in exile, too, whom I would see. I'd go out to Oxford and find Poles that had left the country and were around. Cole Cokesby was a guy like that who had been a university professor. He'd left in '56 and was at Oxford and I could talk to him, but those guys were cut off, too. In the sense that they weren't there, they didn't know what was going on, they didn't know the pulse. They knew the general problem of society, but not the pulse. You met decent people, people trying to survive in this awful system. Even for those people it was not... I mean, I was never so charming a person that you wanted to risk the political poison in this system in which you had to live, in order to be my buddy. I don't think I ever met anybody who was that personally magnetic. No one had an interest outside this group of people whose job it was to keep us entertained at lunch. No one had an interest in talking to us, a personal interest. They had to ignore their personal interests in order to do that and so you know, it was not the situation in which you could have a wide circle of friends. You could have a lot of acquaintances, but that was the extent of it.

Q: Did the large American community, Polish American community in the United States did that have any affect on you all?

HARRISON: Well, it did eventually when the visa, the refusal level got high, but otherwise, not much. It did not have an effective lobby in Washington. It was not organized as the for example, the Jewish community in the United States is, or the Greek one, to produce, and it was anti-communist. So obviously the Polish government there is not seeking its benefit in Washington. None of the ingredients were there to make any political impact on us. It was an enormous American Polish community in Poland and one of the great sources of hard currency for Poland was social security, which went a long way in Poland those days. You know, whatever it was, $200, made you a plutocrat because of the exchange rate, so a lot of folks came back and spent their declining years in Poland and living very well. We had a big stack of social security checks to hand out every month. The government tried to get that money and opened stores in which they sold hard currency items and if you had hard currency you'd buy. Of course, no one did except people who were getting hard currency this way and the government could therefore get the hard currency and use it to buy what they needed to buy. I think it's an indication of how bankrupt the system was that you had to do that. It wasn't quite as bad as the North Koreans selling duty free booze out of the trunk of their cars to keep their embassies going. My Soviet colleague selling furniture out at the embassy to meet his bills when the Soviet Union fell, but it was pretty bad. As a national strategy for acquisition of hard currency, it showed how depressed that country was. Did some traveling around and I tried to trump up excuses to go traveling and just touring around. There was nowhere in Poland that you wanted to go for excitement. Poznan, for example, was a cul-de-sac for us because East Germany loomed on the other side so the people in Poznan were kind of off trapped against the East German border which they could not cross and having to come to Warsaw to get out of Poland. They had a close little community and also, a very much more provincial communist system there that did a lot of surveillance and it was a more Stalinist structure there. Later in Krakow where a friend of mine was beaten. There was a lot of that sort of thing as Solidarity picked up speed. A lot more physical repression not just the kind of psychological stuff that we contend with. That was not true in my day. The death rows of the government were not easy for the people who were there, but they were not yet on their death rows.

Q: What about, when you traveled or just going around Warsaw, were you targeted or given a difficult time by the security forces?

HARRISON: Well, you were always put in the same room. You were followed occasionally, but no, the general answer is that I was much more closely surveilled when I drove across Saudi Arabia than I ever was across Poland in the early '70s. They were sort of, I think what they were doing was dispatching from one place to another, not following from place to place. In fact out in the countryside of Poland you didn't have that much to worry about. It was not much changed in a couple of hundred years. You weren't going to form a rebellion out there or do anything else in particular, so there was no real reason to sort of track you as you moved around.

Q: Did you ever get involved in the checking of social security claims and things like this?

HARRISON: Never did that, no. There were people doing that. The progression there in the old days, time honored, was to serve your time giving out visas and then move to the political section. As I say that ended, I was the last guy, which is good because I certainly would have been separated from the Foreign Service if I'd had to spend more time in the consular section. I was in fact on the cuffs and the cone system had been installed by then. This was in the '70s and I had come in without cones but had been conically rectified in the early '70s. We all had to choose cones as you recall and I chose the political cone. Then I was told I hadn't done any political work so I couldn't be promoted in the political cone. We also, when they installed time in grade requirements so I was a six, and I was a senior six in the Service so they said I was called out to Frankfurt with some other unfortunates from around Europe. There was a group from personnel for this purpose from Washington so we all had our individual interviews and I was told - it was actually a panel - I was told that if I were to transfer to the consular cone I could be promoted, but as a political officer it was questionable and therefore, I would probably be selected out and I said, "Well, you know, I don't want to do consular work." So, if that were the choice I'd take my chances in the political cone. I was then luckily, the first year, doing political work, and so I was doing some political stuff and eventually got promoted and so escaped the dark sword of the new personnel system, but the guy who had come behind me and who didn't get into the political section and was given that same choice. Had been in Vietnam his first tour. That was not counted in his political work with the CORDS and stuff in those days. He took the devil's bargain and became a consular officer, but with no more enthusiasm than I had had, but the feeling that since he wasn't going into political that he had no choice. I was later able to rescue him from the clutches of the consular system. Doug Keen. Do you know Doug?

Q: No, I don't.

HARRISON: He's now a 35 year man, but he I guess is about to retire, but later went on as a special assistant in PM. I had a look over the personnel system in PM and so I smuggled his file to one of the office directors of PM and gave him a big push to get a job, which was a political job which enabled him to get back in the political cone. He meanwhile had to spend some time in Pakistan in another visa mill. I think it happened to a lot of people. The system changed and if you were on the wrong side of the great divide, you had to figure out a way to get back over. I luckily had a political job which let me do it, but those people who didn't, not because they hadn't wanted a political job, but because the Service hadn't given them one, were kind of given a hopeless choice.

Q: And given promises that never were kept and that sort of thing.

HARRISON: Yes, the Foreign Service is an awful organization. There's just absolutely no doubt about it. It's always been an awful organization and always will be an awful organization. It's just something in the genes. I always enjoyed the work, but you know, what was really depressing was thinking about the group that I was belonging to. Thinking about the Foreign Service bureaucracy and their inability to ever get it right. You know this is off chronological order, but I remember reading Kennan's biography when I was a graduate student thinking about the Foreign Service and it stuck with me ever since. How he was called in by some grand old man at State who used to do this sort of thing who told him what his future had in store. You're going to go here and there and this is what you're going to end up. This is what we need and this is what you'll be. By my day this was all up to you, there was no grand old man to tell you anything and the bleak realization soon dawned on me that there was no one there persecuting me either. Although I had friends who long tried to personify that process it wasn't, there wasn't no evil person sitting there trying to screw you, thinking about nothing else. There was no there there.

Q: In 1973 the very personalized personnel system is ready to do something for you. What had it thought up?

HARRISON: Nothing actually, but I had wanted to take a year's leave without pay so it allowed me to do that. I went off to Oxford for a year to finish my dissertation, which I had left unfinished in '67 when I joined the Foreign Service. I applied for leave without pay and it was granted and off I went to Oxford.

Q: So, how did you support yourself for this?

HARRISON: Well, I had built up a lot of leave and in fact my leave didn't run out until I think February and I left in May. I only had about three months of relative pandering and we rented a house from a British diplomat who had a house outside of Oxford and gave us a break on the rent. My wife worked as a nursing sister at the Radcliff Infirmary for a while, so we were able, so to speak, to get by from there.

Q: Again, what was your dissertation on?

HARRISON: Hegel. There was a Pole there, who had been in the, had fought his way out of the ghetto uprising in '45 and picked up by the British and had become a tutor at Oxford. So, he was my sponsor and oversaw my year.

Q: How did you find the system there at that time?

HARRISON: At Oxford? It was fairly agreeable for me because I had always preferred the tutor student relationship to the classroom relationship marginally because I got to talk more. I went to some classes at Oxford, but I found it excruciatingly boring and stopped and just did my reading and writing.

Q: What were the classes?

HARRISON: Well, there was something pretty much in whatever you were interested in that someone at Oxford knows more about than anyone on earth and would give seminars. So, there were seminars going on that you could attend. It tended to be too specialized for me and so I didn't see a lot of value in it. It began on a level above that which I had been able to obtain, so I wasn't really deriving a lot of benefit and so I started just writing and going to my weekly sessions with my tutor, who by the way, was also Bill Clinton's tutor, five years later when he came. There's always some cachet to Oxford. It's nice for someone like me to burnish up the resume. I think it helped me get the job I went to, the fact that I was at Oxford impressed people who were looking at various candidates for the job which was special assistant to George Vest who was at that point was director of political military affairs (PM) before that job was made assistant secretary. The second one Sy Weiss had created that place and then George who was an old Foreign Service officer I guess he had gotten to be a grand old man of the Foreign Service.

Tom Stern tried to get in touch with me at Oxford and I got the message down at Pembroke from my wife calling down and he calling back was one of the great feats and logistics of my life. In fact he was calling from a pay booth in Oxford on this old British pay phone with a red box, you know, you had to put enormous amounts of money in them. I wonder if they've gotten a lot cheaper over the years. But, he later said that it was the Oxford thing that impressed him that made me stand out among the candidates for the job although it had absolutely nothing to do with what I actually did. So, we had a year off essentially. I did the Ph.D. partly because Potensky had invited me to come, and we had gone out to visit from Poland when I was still assigned there, and they were such nice people. We thought for a guy who was teetering by his fingernails in the Foreign Service then it was probably a good idea to have some credential to show. So, we decided to take a risk and go off and do it, which we did.

Q: From '74 until when where you at politico military?

HARRISON: '74 for about 18 months. It turned out that George Vest; a grand old avuncular soul, that he had conceived of my job as really staff assistant. There was a staff assistant, this was a special assistant, but he saw no distinction. What he wanted was his cables arranged and underlined and he wanted taskings followed up on the Department and PM and he wanted the daily activity report to the Secretary done, which was my job. He wanted me to come in about 6:30 because Kissinger used to have a morning meeting at 7:45, I think it was, and no one wanted to go into Kissinger's presence unaware of what had been the cable traffic. My job was to go in and get that stuff and mark it up and have it on George's desk so that he would not be caught short in the steely gaze if the Secretary would turn to him. It was all stuff that a secretary could have done and nothing substantive to it at all. I once asked him if, he was going up on the Hill to do some testimony, and I asked him if I could come just to watch how that was done. He said no. He didn't want me up there. So, you know, as always I was trying to find substantive things to do or anything else to do. I kind of took over the personnel function for the bureau because nobody else wanted to do it; essentially because it wasn't a big enough bureau to have a personnel person. In those days of course, you could just send down for somebody's file. Privacy was unknown of course. So, if you had someone you were interested in or you know, there were half a dozen applicants for a job you'd get their personnel file, warts and all, up there and that taught me a lot about how the system worked. It taught me a lot about what efficiency reports did and didn't do for you and what mine had really been like. I saw as well the old back end which by then no longer existed, but all these things had been left in peoples' personnel files.

Q: There was a confidential part of the efficiency report.

HARRISON: A confidential part that you didn't see. I mean, it's just astounding. The other astounding thing is when it was abolished it left all of these rear end reports in peoples' jackets so you know, you could go in there. I was not above reading these things I must say just for the fascination of it. Seeing these guys getting skewered without knowing, as I had been skewered without knowing it. I guess human nature on parade. So, I did that and I also came into contact with a lot of people that were later to play roles in my life and roles in foreign policy in general who were either my fellow special assistants, although more elevated than I like Ned Walker, or were working in PM like John Kelly and a bunch of other names will occur to me I'm sure.

Q: What was PM about when you were there?

HARRISON: PM was the embodiment of the theory of bureaucratic replication, that is every bureaucracy has to have a model of the rest of the bureaucracy and its own structure and defenses. It started ISP for that reason to sort of have its own mini State Department, we therefore, had our own mini Pentagon with arms sales with arms control all of those things. In fact, it did a lot more than it does now. A lot of that stuff has been broken off into separate bureaus. But it was all consolidated in those days in a relatively compact bureau. I think we probably had 40 people, 45 maybe people, probably 200 or 300 now doing the same thing. Of course, ACDA (Arms Control and Disarmament Agency) has been digested by the process, too and so. There were some interesting people who passed through and they had a lot of interesting issues to deal with, but I was not dealing with any of them. The benefit for me career wise was that I got to know everybody because I was wandering around offices asking them for their contribution to the daily report and because I was someone from outside to talk to. People suspected that I might know what was going on in the front office although that expectation was always exaggerated. Also because although George Vest was not a man to confide in his special assistant at least at that period. I never, I don't think, had a conversation about policy with him all the time that I worked for him, he had deputies, Tom Stern, John Goodby as one of his deputies then who were of a different stripe and from whom I learned a lot and who took an interest in me to my great benefit, both personally and professionally. So, now by the end of that period I had been in the Foreign Service eight or nine years except for one CORD special assistant who was thinking about nothing other than getting out of the Foreign Service. I had never supervised anybody. I had never done any great works, had been a kind of junior political officer for two years and that was pretty much the extent of it and had been very slow to be promoted. I was I think at a discouraging point in my career and wondering, too about my future in the business. It didn't seem to be, the business itself insofar as it had a mentality, it didn't seem to have any particular need for my services or desire to keep me along.

Q: Could you tell me about how Tom Stern and Jim Goodby operated, I mean, what were their roles?

HARRISON: Goodby did the arms control stuff and Tom Stern did the arms sales and he oversaw the mission's control office which licensed on sales which was another of PM's responsibilities in those days. Les Brown was head of the office that was dealing with NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and dealing with the F16 issue which was a big issue. Which airplane was NATO going to purchase? There were a lot of interesting issues strung out among the six offices of PM and I saw them all, learned about them all. I was an observer because I had read those cables that I had to underline. You had to read them and underline them. I saw some of what George was writing about with his contacts with Kissinger. You imbibed a lot in that experience, so it was professionally useful from that point of view, but I had responsibility for nothing. None of those issues that PM did was something that I did. My responsibility was to get the daily report to the secretary and have the cables on George's desk so he could be prepared for the secretary's meeting and make sure that when SS (Staff Secretariat) called for some suspense, that somebody went over and asked the office why it hadn't been done yet. Those were the things that I did. So, the skill I think that was necessary for that was organization - which never was my strong suit - and being able to go around to these various offices without ending up with 45 people dedicated to screwing you for the rest of your career because I never got good news. I was always showing up to ask them why they hadn't done something or to do something they didn't want to do. There were various approaches to take to that, but mine was such that I ended up with people there with whom I have stayed in contact ever since and whose friendship I value and whose professional expertise I always respected. Also, dealing with the secretaries which we used to have in the State Department in those days. In fact, there were a lot of them which you probably remember, many fewer now who were a tribe unto themselves and much more sensitive to their relative standing than the officers I dealt with everywhere, including the two who were in the front office of PM. One of my great battles was whether they answered my phone, no personal answering machines in those days either so, if you weren't there somebody had to answer your phone and they felt themselves to be too senior to be answering the phone of a junior man like me. So, their view was that it just rang. I was eager for someone to answer it when I wasn't there, we had a prolonged negotiation about that which ended with them agreeing to answer it, but not to answer it with my name. I mean, they wouldn't say, "This is Roger Harrison's office." They would say, "Hello", which they did, but at least somebody answered the phone and took messages. Actually, one of them, Ruth Sinclair, which I ended up being very close to in later years and when I would go back in later years I was always greeted as a prodigal son. It was not easy to deal with them when I was there. My philosophy was to be respectful to my elders and my peers and my subordinates as well. I was never abusive in any of those relationships and I knew a lot of people who were. I realized my relative power standing in the hierarchy, which was I had none, so I behaved accordingly. I think for that reason did better out of there than I would otherwise have done.

Q: Well, one of the things I've noticed; I've never been a staff assistant, but this seems to be one of the preferred courses for moving up in the hierarchy. In fact, some people have done this for a number of jobs and it means you meet everybody, you get known and somebody who has the reputation of producing or getting things done, but the problem is, there's no real bloody responsibility. It's not the best place to have your top talent trained in that; a little of it goes a long way.

HARRISON: Everybody, as I reflect on that experience, it seems to me that there is a unique insight however and into how the Department works, because the paper trail is everything at the end of the day and you also got to know all the people on the line. You got to learn how SS works and how the secretary's office works and they got to see you kind of hanging around so people began to know who you were. So, as opposed to being a junior officer at a desk someplace where you would be known to maybe ten people in the bureaucracy in a job like that, you were known to a hundred. That's always useful if you're well and favorably known and I certainly was not, PM was not the boss bureau in the Department. If you wanted to be special assistant to a seventh floor principal, that was the job of choice. Failing that, if you wanted to be special assistant in a geographic bureau because those were the guys that the geographic bureaus were picking to cultivate and you know, were going to have a future in those bureaus. PM had no jobs overseas and therefore, couldn't promise that kind of outcome, so it was really sort of hanging on the periphery of the special assistant business. It was just on the caboose of that train, but it had the advantages that all the special assistant jobs had in terms of sort of getting yourself about. The wide variety of things that you saw, you know, I used to see a lot of first time out seen intercepts and stuff like that, code red material. I was also, by the way, the guy who, I had a wonderful title. I was special assistant to director of political military affairs and staff director of the interagency political military group. This was like another job I'd had. I'd been in Warsaw briefly - as scribe for the U.S. China talks, which were taking place then. Tom Simons had left and had anointed me as his scribe, but we never had a meeting because Kissinger had the ill grace to go off to Beijing and that ended the Warsaw discussions. Although I had the job, I never actually did it. The same thing was true of being an executive director of the interagency political military group. It never met after I had the job, so I never had to do that, but it was part of my title. I don't know where that story was going.

Q: Except for the fact that showed you that there were these non-operative parts of.

HARRISON: No, I was thinking about all the classified stuff I saw, but I saw a lot of things about what was happening in the world and learned a lot about a lot of areas because the advantage of PM as a functional bureau over the geographic bureaus was that our responsibilities were worldwide so we saw a lot of stuff pretty much everywhere and you could follow issues like whether or not we were going to let president Bongo of the Central African Republic buy a new executive jet airplane, or that NATO issue about what new fighter they were going to buy or troop movement issues or ship movement issues. There were a lot of interesting things and therefore, I think a good job. I felt frustrated at the time because I was getting a little long in the tooth to be a tail ender staff assistant and not promoted out of that job either, but then a big break which I guess we can talk about the next time. The big break was that Tom Stern who had taken an interest in me was also a friend of a staff member of the National Security Council staff at the White House. An opening came up in what was called the planning staff of the embassy staff and Tom arranged for me to get that job, I mean for me to interview for it and then to get it. So, I moved from being a tail ender staff assistant by the grace of one of my superiors in that job to being on the White House staff, which was about as great a leap bureaucratically as could be imagined. Before that I had to get George Vest's approval. I went to George Vest and it was out of cycle so his proviso was that I find a replacement for myself before I could leave. I was sitting there puzzling over that issue. I had a door on a hallway in those days and a guy walked by, and my staff assistant knew him, a guy named Joe McBride. He said, you know that guy is back from Vietnam looking for a job and he's wandering the halls. I actually physically went out in the hall and grabbed Joe McBride who I'd never seen before by the arm and pulled him into my office and said, "Have I got a job for you." So I found a replacement for myself and off I went.

Q: Okay, we might pick it up then in 1976 about?

HARRISON: Yes, now we're in '76, exactly. Yes, the late summer of '76, no spring of '76.

Q: Spring of '76 because Tom went out to Seoul as DCM just about that time.

HARRISON: Which Tom?

Q: Tom Stern.

HARRISON: Oh, yes, that's right. You know Tom?

Q: Oh very well.

HARRISON: Is he still alive?

Q: Oh God yes.

HARRISON: I've got to see Tom again. The only man I ever knew who wore patent leather pale blue shoes to work. I always liked him.

Q: Still does.

Today is the 16th of January, 2002. Roger, we're in what, 1976?

HARRISON: Yes, let me get back to 1976. In 1976 I was just finishing at the bureau of political military affairs, is that right? Yes. That's right, I was just about to go to the White House. Tom Stern had arranged that and it came out of the blue. Tom knew there was an opening over there because David Radisson was departing in a job in something called the planning department, which had been a powerful base for Dick Kennedy. The story that was current after I got to the White House was that Dick Kennedy and Brent Scowcroft had had a power struggle from which Scowcroft had emerged victorious. Kennedy had left and the idea had been then to make sure that the planning staff did not become another power center for someone else, another powerful personality. Scowcroft had been elevated to deputy assistant to the president and then to assistant to the president. When I got to the White House he was assistant to the president and NSC advisor for the first time. They elevated the deputy of the planning staff; a man named Clint Granger, to the directorship of the planning staff and took away many of his functions. There were three other members of the planning staff when I arrived there. Don McDonald who was active duty colonel in the air force, an ex-Phantom pilot from Vietnam, and Terry Dargis, and there was a State Department position there. Clint was also, Clint Granger was also a colonel and still on active duty at the time. What I was given to do was, for the most part, foreign military sales related issues and therefore, I worked closely as well with Bob Oakley who at that time was the head of the middle east office at the NSC and also his deputy who was Arthur Houghton, because most of the arms sales issues were revolved in one way or another around the Middle East. One of our major issues for example, was the Israeli military aid levels and another was the beginning of the sale of non-lethal equipment to Egypt.

Q: This was before Camp David, way before?

HARRISON: This was before Camp David. This is post the Yom Kippur War and Sadat is now the leader of Egypt and there is an opening from him to the West that the Soviets have been expelled from Egypt, can we begin building that relationship and arms sales is one of them? Symbolic ways that you can begin to restore the relationship. This was all before Sadat's trip to Jerusalem, obviously which made all that a lot easier. But in these days there was still a lot of opposition. The pro-Israeli lobby was already very active and had been in trying to curb the arms relationship with Saudi Arabia and they took Egypt down as well. Even though the signals that we were getting at that time from Tel Aviv were that they were not - the government was not - necessarily opposed to the improvement of U.S. Egyptian relations, within bounds obviously we were sometimes frustrated at these signals, by the activities of the lobby they felt they were trying to be more assiduous than the government itself wanted it to be.

Q: This often happens particularly with I don't know if you can quite call it immigrant groups, but they are 110%. The foreign governments tend to be more realistic about relations, where immigrant groups and all tend to be more hard line. It's a lot easier to be hard line if you're without responsibility.

HARRISON: Right. The competition within the national ethnic groups tends to be won by the more extreme members. In moderation, it's difficult to rally support around, as it is politically in general.

Q: We've seen that with the Cuban Americans the past few decades.

HARRISON: Absolutely, and in the absence of any countervailing force or lobbying force in our government they tend to carry the day legislatively and so on. Then as now it was difficult to marshal a congressional majority. There was already a requirement at that time, just actually beginning then, that Congress be notified of arms sales and then have about 30 days it seems to me it was, it might have been 60 days, to object. It was a silent procedure. If they didn't object the administration could go ahead and complete the arms sales, but obviously out of the ones involved in the Middle East, this was a more difficult process. I was also in charge of getting the clearance from the administration to go forward to the Hill in this process for arms sales for the rest of the world, which was as many political military issues were, a province of the planning staff rather than any geographic offices.

Q: I mean, arms sales, where was initiative coming from within the American government? Was it the Pentagon, was it State?

HARRISON: It was a combination actually. The Pentagon had an interest because they were watching some production lines closing down. This was not a time, this was before Reagan so it was a time of restraint. Vietnam had ended and so in '75 I guess. This was a couple of years after that, so production lines were shutting down. They were looking to extend production runs and arms sales. One way of doing that, of course, they were under pressure from companies who were looking to a cooperative relationship they had with the Pentagon, were looking to continue production of some of these systems; the C130 was always a crucial one here.

Q: We're still building them.

HARRISON: I think we will forever. They're built in the south and since the south has risen again, legislatively speaking. The Pentagon was generally supportive of these kinds of sales. The State Department was interested in improving relations on the Arab side of the equation of weaning the Egyptians - of completing that process - away from the Soviets. Obviously there is a vacuum; the Soviets had gone by this time. Still great suspicion between us and the Egyptians, so there's a kind of an inching forward, which the State Department is trying to encourage. So, it was really a contest between the administration and the legislative branch. President Ford at this point, Nixon resigned at least a month or so before I got to the NSC. The new president, as far as we could tell from the NSC at least from the staff at the NSC, was generally in favor of an opening to the Arab countries as well. Of course, a consummate politician had come up through the House of Representatives, kind of sensitive to the kind of counter occurrence you run into on the Hill. We were inching forward and we had to choose our spots and one of them was C130 sales to Egypt. So, sheparding that process was.

Q: You might explain what a C130 was.

HARRISON: Oh, C130 was a four engine turbo prop transport plane, kind of a workhorse that's been around for 30 or 40 years now. It's produced in Marietta, Georgia. It used to be the constituency of Newt Gingrich, which kept it running for a long time. The Air Force every year says it doesn't want anymore. Every year more are produced. But a useful transport plane, proven over a long period of time.

Q: A lot of countries have them now.

HARRISON: A lot of countries have them and I'm not sure they're still the plane of choice or not for the emerging world, but it certainly was at that time. It had a great capability and all kinds of things and also, here is the other key point. When you bought American weapons systems you got a logistical tail end, an American presence that was welcome. The Soviets were never very good at that. Never very good at the aftermarket service of their weapons systems and the weapons systems themselves were never as reliable. They were expensive to maintain and the Russians tend to be more obnoxious guests in your country than we did. But, the political connection which all of this brought was what many of these countries were looking for as well. It was extending U.S. sway and that's one of the reasons the State Department was in favor.

Q: Looking at the globe, from your prospective you must have been seeing a different world than the normal person does and that's a market. Where could you see opportunities, where did you see places we didn't want to mess with and all that?

HARRISON: I'm not sure that I was speaking geopolitically in those days. It's quite a transition to go from being a special assistant in the State Department, which is really a paper-pushing job, especially the one I had. It was just a matter of underlining cables and running around and getting the inputs for the daily report and making sure that the staff secretariat is the watchdog over papers going to the secretary and his principals on the seventh floor were satisfied that you'd met deadlines and levied on your bureau. It was entirely administrative type of job. There was no substance at all except that you saw a lot of stuff because you were underlining cables and sometimes took the trouble actually to read them, comprehend themselves. A bureau like PM, which is a functional bureau, sees things from around the world because political military function extends over. So unlike someone who, say, was in the front office of the Near East South Asia bureau where they'd only see things which are germane to that geographic area, someone in a functional bureau like PM saw everything. There was an educating process there, but there was absolutely no power. No one ever asked me what I thought of anything. Personnel, by the way, as aside in those days, if someone was up for a job you could just summon, even I as a junior officer could summon his personnel folder up from personnel and read all about it, including all the rear end secret reports that had been written on him largely, sometimes her, almost always him in those days, in which the officer in which himself had never seen in many cases. That's one of the things I did in that context and there's kind of a sneaky sense of power there, but in terms of policy absolutely not. My thoughts were my own.

When I went to the National Security Council it was an interesting stage in its development because Kissinger had really brought it to a new level of power by manipulating the system which he had constructed and essentially funneled everything through the NSC staff and the National Security Advisor reporting to the president. He was working for a president who had a very private approach to policy in general and of course, well documented now. Nixon distrusted everyone in Washington, but I think no one as much as the Department of State. He's on record many times, his view of the policy and sexual proclivities of the inhabitants of that place. Kissinger could easily characterize the views knowing Nixon's prejudices as he did and being close to him could easily characterize the views of the various agencies. His cover memo on policy issues going into the oval office in ways which would predispose the president to decide as Kissinger had wanted. There also comes into this Kissinger's personal force because everyone was afraid of him. This respect for his intelligence, which was widespread in the bureaucracy, and also for his ruthlessness. No one wanted to cross him. Everyone was afraid of his judgment of their work so he had adopted for himself a very powerful position. Just to explain that a little further: the president would make decisions on foreign policy usually on the basis of a memo from the National Security Advisor which outlined in several options which are being presented, or disagreements being presented, would come through the bureaucracy for the president's decision. No decision gets to the president on which there is not disagreement. Powerful interests and other things through which these agreements can be settled at a lower level are settled at a lower level according to general policy outlines and law and other guidelines the bureaucracy observes. When there is disagreement on fundamental policy it's usually going to the president for a decision, the decision memo in those days was two or three pages, sometimes four-page decision memo drafted by the National Security Council staff and signed by Kissinger. Kissinger, of course, was also Secretary of State at that time. There was a peculiar process of him occupying both jobs when I first got to the NSC. When he would send in the State Department view which would generally reflect his requirement to satisfy the State Department bureaucracy as all cabinet secretaries have to do. They have to show their subordinates that they are taking their subordinates' view into account, you can't simply dismiss the culture of your agency. He was in a unique position of being able to do that in the State Department memo and then ignore it with his National Security hat on. No one ever sees the memo that goes into the president; no one did in those days. I don't know what the situation is now. From Kissinger to the president, Kissinger is now the National Security Advisor. No one knows what Kissinger has recommended among the various options the president is asked to decide between. All anyone knows is that the decision itself signed by the president, which comes out of the oval office but is actually drafted by the National Security Council staff under the direction of the National Security Advisor. So, if you were Defense and you recommended in favor of the C130 sale to Egypt and you sent the voluminous documents over to the NSC to support your arguments and these would go into the president and a tab along with your cover memo and then your argument would be summarized in a paragraph, say on a decision memo which covered this whole pile of things. The president's different approaches to these great piles of documents that come in for decision. Some of them, not many, Carter was probably the prime example, would read through the whole stack of papers and make marginal notes on page 56 of the State Department's mission - and that has a chilling effect on the process in terms of how one characterizes those arguments. So, it tends to lessen the influence of the staff people. Others like Ford never go into the supporting documents. I'm sure it's true of Bush. It was always unclear even if Reagan ever went into the decision memo on the front of all the documents. Certainly Ford never read beyond page two or three or wherever the NSC document ended. The only arguments that he saw were the ones that were characterized by Kissinger and no one had control of that because no one else in the bureaucracy saw how Kissinger had characterized their arguments or what Kissinger had recommended. The NSC had become vastly powerful and had also taken on a kind of organizational culture, which derived from Kissinger's own approach and a general contempt for the bureaucracy. These kinds of organizations where headed by a powerful figure like that will tend to adapt the kinds of attitudes he communicates when they deal with the rest of the bureaucracy. So, it had become a formidable organization at that time when Kissinger was still in charge and then Kissinger engineered this strange process whereby when Rogers resigned he became Secretary of State as well as National Security Advisor. That led to the strange bureaucratic, what should I call it? procedure of memos going not from the under secretaries to the National Security Advisor as had previously been the case, but rather from the executive secretary of the Department at that time a guy named Springsteen or something to the executive director of the National Security Council. Otherwise in the case of the State Department it would have been a Kissinger-Kissinger. When Kissinger became Secretary of State he transferred much of his power base to the Department of State and Scowcroft, who had been his deputy, became the acting. He was still the deputy because Kissinger was still National Security Advisor, but he operated as a de facto interim National Security Advisor but very aware, since he was very bureaucratically canny guy, that he was not an independent source of power. He did not have his own power base and that the real power in foreign policy was still with Kissinger wherever he was. The NSC began to lose some of that power bureaucratically that it had before. Although it was still a formidable organization. All of this by way of explaining that when I went from being special assistant to George Vest in political military affairs courtesy of Tom Stern who arranged that, not to knock the Foreign Service itself which never would have conceived it in my case. I went from being a bureaucratic entity to being a player in the process to being someone who could call assistant secretaries who had previously been in the stratosphere above my lowly position. It was quite a bureaucratic joke even to the rather diminished position both at the planning staff which had been much downgraded by then and the National Security Council staff which had been somewhat downgraded at that point, but still to me it was a whole new world. As an example, one of the things that we did was approve Navy ship movements if the Navy wanted to redeploy carries from one part of the world to another part of the world. They had to have White House approval to do it and White House approval meant me. These memos were coming to my desk as a kind of preliminary part of the process and if I objected to it, they would have to appeal over my head to the powers that be. They were often reluctant to do that because of the problem you have with any staff member in an organization you perfectly understand; which is you don't know whether he or she can wreak vengeance on you. That kind of act or not, an endemic problem dealing with the Hill now, gives Hill staffers a lot of power. For example, when they wanted to lower their carrier deployments to Asia from three to two, they had to get me to agree. This was and I had my doubts. Young and untested and entirely ignorant of Asian politics as I was, which caused them great consternation and a great deal of effort to convince me that this was a good idea, whereas no one had ever had any need to convince me that anything was a particular good idea before in my Foreign Service career.

Q: But when you're getting something like this, you would think there would be something more than Roger Harrison sitting at a desk saying I don't think this is a good idea?

HARRISON: You would, wouldn't you?

Q: But there wasn't, I mean?

HARRISON: Well, I had to go and talk to Quinn who was the guy in Asian affairs who was kind of my level and who later became an ambassador to Cambodia. But if, generally, those people on the NSC staff who had an interest in Asia were not particularly concerned one way or the other

Q: You were saying it was so difficult.

HARRISON: To get any access to a decision from the front office of the NSC. There was a weekly staff meeting. I sat in the back row of that, but are generally taken up with great matters of state and because Scowcroft operated along with Bud McFarland who was his deputy then and then later Bill Highland came onboard. In a very insular kind of environment of serving his client, the president, and his now semi-client, the National Security Advisor/Secretary of State, but with a very secretive kind of atmosphere. He was not easily accessible. It was hard to get decisions from him. We never knew when we did get decisions on what basis they'd been made or what follow up should be taken, he simply didn't communicate. This was true generally on the NSC staff, so we were kind of floating around in a political limbo which meant on one hand that on big issues we were paralyzed, but on smaller issues we had a great deal of independence since there was this great divide. The National Security Advisor sits in the West Wing and the staff sits in the Old Executive Office Building. The road between them East Executive or West Executive Avenue was a wide divide in those days. I remember that when I was briefly in charge of African affairs at NSC because it was a one-man office. The man had gone off to be ambassador to Liberia and I had been doing some backup for him and, therefore, succeeded to that job. I had some decisions in that job which I had to have Scowcroft's guidance on, but the only way I could get it was to go over to Scowcroft's office and literally stand in the door when he came back from a meeting and ask him. Phone calls did no good. Memos did no good. You had to actually physically corral him and then he was very gracious. So, there was that kind of dividing. The other reason was that Clint Granger, my boss, was scared to death of Scowcroft and McFarland and the whole front office. When I got to the staff I wanted to be brought over and be introduced to Scowcroft. You know, this is the guy, this new member of your staff. The staff maybe had 30 professionals on it then and so I was one of them and he ought to know who I am. I couldn't persuade Clint to do that. He never did it in fact. I never was officially presented at court. He was just afraid to. He had the feeling that the only basis on which his tenure would continue is if nobody noticed him and he was a lot like that guy in Dilbert now.

Q: The comic?

HARRISON: Yes, the comic character in the comic strip. An amazing guy to be occupying a position of responsibility in the federal government. It was one reason that in the planning staff we had some difficulty knowing exactly what we ought to be doing. The result of that was that on some of these issues that for example, the British had an African problem that they wanted to address. I'm trying to remember where it was. My recollection is that it was in Nigeria and they had to send some supplies up. They couldn't get over flight clearance. So, they hatched the idea of sending these around the world. It must have been on the East Coast of Africa someplace and I can't remember what the issue was. They, therefore, were going to send the stuff through the United States and across the Pacific and across Asia and come in the back way and fly 20,000 miles instead of the five it would have been going direct, but no one would give them overflight clearances. Going the other way they just needed over flight from us. I was asked to approve that and I said, "That's silly." They were trying to show that they still had capability. I said, "Well, they're just showing they don't have any through this." It went away. Also, we were the custodians in those days of the National Security study process of NSSMs and NSDMs - National Security Study Memoranda and National Security Decision Memoranda - which were the formal mechanism by which the government thought about foreign policy issues to come and made decisions about them or changed major elements of policy. In some of those I was the NSC contact point including one that was begun by policy toward Iran in which case I would chair meetings of the interagency to try to cobble together some agreed text of the study which would go in, ostensibly to the president, and would be the basis for policy determinations which would come back out of the office. Many people in the bureaucracy thought that this was just the way Kissinger had of keeping everyone busy and giving them some sense of participating in the process, therefore, make work and not anything serious at all, but the reputation of the NSC was still such that everyone wanted to be involved and participated in good heart. In fact, that was when I first realized that if you task the Defense Department to do something, they always did it, no matter what they had to do. They would get it done. Not an efficient bureaucracy, but a reliable one, which I think, has been much of the source of their influence in Washington. It was not true in the other agencies in town and less true as the fear factor induced from the NSC declined over the months that intervened. Another comment about Clint Granger. I rapidly became aware that we had three secretaries for our four man planning staff, but they were never available because they were always at the xerox machine. They were xeroxing five or six hours a day. One of the things that is true about the NSC staff in those days, I guess it's still true, is that you see everything pretty much that the U.S. government produces. The CIA output for example, we had the National Intelligence Daily, a lot of code word highly classified stuff intercepts, great stacks of stuff six feet high would come in every day. Six feet is obviously an exaggeration, but it would literally be eight to ten inches of material which was given to offices by some system, but again I was in a functional office and therefore everything came to us. What is happening, is that Clint was having his secretaries xerox all this stuff and then taking it home and putting it in these legal binders with little holes in the spine and lining his family room with it. I went to Jean Dickson, may she rest in peace, who was the executive director of the NSC in those days, after some agonizing and told her that that's what was happening. I didn't know what he was doing with the stuff. We were xeroxing the entire intelligence product of the American government everyday and as far as I know nothing ever came of it, except years later when Clint was gone. Clint had at that time had failed to make a star in the army, which I guess is testimony to some degree of good sense on the part of the military. He had sent a letter to Scowcroft volunteering to be hired in his position as a general services, general schedule employee. In other words, a permanent government bureaucrat which would have put him on the payroll of the NSC. Of course, they were always trying to keep their payroll down by having people come in from other agencies, so he didn't get that job. He departed, but not actually somewhat after I did, but not because of this classified information thing. After he left, I think he sort of bopped around to various consulting things. But then got into a very messy divorce and one of the things his wife did aside from taking a shot at him was to take some of these legal binders down off the walls of their family room and send them off to Jack Anderson. So some columns began to appear, in fact a whole series of columns that Anderson based on this material that she'd sent him. All of which caused great consternation. Eventually, she ratted Clint out in this divorce proceeding about this stuff that he'd used as wallpaper. They sent - this now comes from someone at that point who was very high level in the government who I'd known at the NSC - they sent a van over to; they had one of those vans. They pick all this stuff up and they picked it all up and I guess burnt it. But, I asked the question why wasn't prosecution brought in. I mean this was probably, I can't imagine a greater security breach. I mean this was astounding. The answer was it was too embarrassing. To prosecute Clint you would have had to admit that nearly everything as far as I know everything produced by the intelligence community of the United States had resided for several years in a suburban family room in McLean, Virginia. I think it's a lesson in a couple of things. One is, that now of course, leave a confidential out overnight and they will hound you to death because the security atmosphere has much changed. Much, therefore, laxer in those days although all the trappings were there. The security, the cover sheets and all of that, but still even with all that someone could succeed in doing this sort of thing which is mind boggling.

Q: It really is. Troop movements, I'm coming back to the carriers, just to try to look at various things. What were the concerns?

HARRISON: Well, the concerns were that the Soviet Union was always a question of what signals we were sending. There were policy reasons. I was talking before about the heady experience of actually having some control or power over bureaucratic issues like that, but the issue was how do we contend navy power with the Soviets in that region in the seas around Australia where the deployment was and we wanted to move it to Indonesia? If the Soviets had not reduced their presence could we from a policy point of view reduce ours? The Navy's concern was logistical largely and cost. How much did it cost? How much wear and tear on your equipment and they wanted to minimize that. So, it was an issue of their bottom line against our policy requirements and whether or not this was the place to save money. From the Navy's point of view they go through their list of priorities to decide this is the place to save money, but they have different priorities than the government as a whole does. From the point of view of NSC they don't have to worry about where the navy will find the money if they don't save it doing this. The issue is thrown back and the Navy has to make their savings someplace else and you don't know where that someplace is going to be so, that was the concern. What signals did it send about our profile in the region? The Soviets at that time were being very aggressive. Our relations were on a downward trajectory, which culminated with Afghanistan, which was a couple of years off.

Q: December of '79.

HARRISON: About a year off or so, but there was already a kind of general atmosphere of worsening relations and of the cold war intensifying. That political dice game that we played with them where profile was important, the presence of those navy carriers was important. In a way that policy issues played out, the Navy always is going to pee on you. I could not be the final word on anything. They could get their desk officers I was dealing with, they could get their principals involved easily make a phone call and go over my head. The issue was how much they wanted to invest in the policy, how serious they were about it. If they were serious and determined, there was no way a guy in my position could have made any difference, but if they weren't serious and determined and they encountered resistance then they might decide to shift their priorities differently which in this case they did. They didn't try to overcome that objection. It wasn't a refusal. I didn't have a policy role like that. It was just a question which they perceived as a bureaucratic impediment and therefore, how much effort is warranted to blow it away and they didn't think that much. They could not have been that serious about it.

Q: You were there when to when?

HARRISON: I arrived in '74, it would have been the summer and left in the general exodus of Carter's victory and that would have been the beginning of '77.

Q: What about arms to Iran? Was this sort of these things like arms that usually you didn't question, you just chopped on?

HARRISON: There wasn't, that's right, there was no particular political objection to it. In these cases there's a lot of economic force behind these sales proposals and some of them can be quite large. So, there's a standing constituency for arms sales. You have to muster some geopolitical or some objection or some lobbying objection in order to overcome that kind of force and in Iran's case, that wasn't present. In fact, as you know, although we were ambivalent about the Shah, that's where we'd made our bets and we, we kept shoving more chips in the center on that issue. Later Gary Sick had come to the NSC at that point as Arthur Houghton's replacement and then continued into the new administration and became a key figure in that Iranian policy once the Shah began to weaken in the fall. Henry Precht over at State in the PM bureau, Precht and Sick were kind of the two major staff members doing that, but all of that was after my time.

Q: I was just wondering because as I recall when the Shah was in full power there was some questioning within newspapers and others and I think people I knew in the State Department, saying what the hell are we doing. I mean, we're a little concerned about what the Shah might do. This seemed to be a bit much.

HARRISON: It was not an issue and I'm only relying here on my lack of any memory of any issues coming up with Iranian arms sales in those days, which isn't to say that none did, but that they were not prominent enough to have stuck with me all these years later. Whereas, what we did on foreign military sales and what we did on Israel arms sales and the Israeli FMS budget which Kissinger used to like to threaten as a way of exercising some political control over Israel over how much money they were going to get. That was an issue that came up in every budget cycle because in those days it was still, it has become institutionalized now. It is the same amount every year and there's a strict kind of ratio between Israel and Egypt and all of that. In those days it was very much in flux. The issue was how much it was going to be and whether it should be institutionalized. The view that I took was that it should be phased out over time, that if it were institutionalized it would become a necessary part of the Israeli defense financing system. All kinds of decisions would be made on the presumption of its continuation and therefore would have to continue. The political force would continue and it would increase and it would lessen the necessity within the Israeli armed forces assistance society as in general to make hard political decisions and military decisions, which in fact they should be making. That what we should try to do is set a schedule by which it would be phased out over some period of time. In fact, that's what happened with the last Ford budget. There was some sympathy in the front office, but it never had much political impact except, and this had no impact at all. Every outgoing president has nonetheless to devise a budget for the coming fiscal year because the deadline on the budget submission are such that it's incumbent on the outgoing administration to provide figures. This is sometimes used as a political tool because everyone realizes it has no political standing, the new administration, whoever it is especially another party is going to submit another budget which is the one that's going to be implied. For example, Carter could try to wrong foot Reagan by putting a 7% defense budget increase in his outgoing budget which is what Reagan said he would do, so that Reagan would be in a position where the democrats could claim of never having increased the budget really. That was already the budget proposal when he came in, but he trumped them by increasing it by 14%. His 7% plus 7%, which took our Defense Department colleagues by surprise and caused them to get a lot of dusty old plans out of the cabinets that were trying to justify spending all that money. As Stockman well illustrated. So, what Ford did was cut Israeli FMS (Foreign Military sales) at his last budget. That went up to the Hill, but it was a largely symbolic and soon forgotten gesture. As you know all of that has become institutionalized as we predicted 25 years ago that it would be. All the things that we said would happen, happened and the hard decisions that the Israelis would have had to make were less pressing and I think this was a disservice to them and the peace process.

Q: Did arms to South Africa raise any questions?

HARRISON: Yes, they did. That was obviously a very hot issue in those days. The embargo on our sales to South Africa, but those issues were fought on the margins in dual use items and whether certain things that might be considered from one of point of view legitimate exports were actually being imported by the defense establishment. All of that gain is very much played in a shadow world. Of course, the South Africans were using all other kinds of ways to get their military equipment that bypassed our formal procedure. Illegally exporting various things as well although that's sincere penalties attached to that, that's too expensive, but they still do it. People have to risk jail to do it. That's always astounding how many will. Yes, although I think the real, the policy was engagement in those days that we should be strict with South Africans, but nevertheless keep the channels, try the dual track approach which inclined the policy to be more open to dual-use kind of items than otherwise would have been and then. When the Carter administration came in and Andy Young took on some of these responsibilities this all was discredited. So, being moral, then the policy became much sterner toward South Africa than it had been with the outgoing folks. So, that's generally how I spent that 18 months, frustrating because you couldn't really get a lot of good guidance. I had to say that Bud McFarland and Bill Highland later and Scowcroft - if you could manage to corner them somewhere, and that meant physically doing that - were always very gracious and forthcoming. My African stint was only three or four months, but it happened during Entebbe so I was the first.

Q: Explain what Entebbe was.

HARRISON: Entebbe was a raid by Israel to free some hostages being held at the airport there in Uganda by the Idi Amin. The Israelis brought a C130 in and unloaded some soldiers led by Netanyahu's brother who was the only casualty. He was killed and they did rescue those people and took off again successfully. One of the brave commando raids of history. I was the one notified at the White House about this. The staff officer, I got a call about the situation and then I called Scowcroft so I felt for a moment there I was engaged in high policy and got to do some nice social things, too. This was the period of the bicentennial and I was briefly during the African stint at least on the books of the Senior Director so I got on that invitation list and got invited to the bicentennial celebration at the White House which was a nice thing. Ella Fitzgerald was there. This was the one for, it was kind of a diplomatic corps, but also it was various centers, I guess all of them, not all of them, couldn't have been. Liz Taylor was there, married to John Warner at the time. White tie. Ella Fitzgerald and Roger Miller were the entertainment. Dinner in the pavilion and dancing in the East Room. That was one of those things, nice perks that came with the job. I noticed what was interesting. We came up in our old Mazda station wagon there to the entry which was over on the East Wing, they had laid red carpet on either side of all the red carpet are all the news people and cameras and it's like the Academy Awards. People walk up the carpet and all the flashbulbs are going on and we drove up in the old Mazda and walked up the carpet and not a single camera went off. It was a chastening experience. I danced next to Liz there who had her leg wrapped in those days and, of courses, John Warner was of short incumbency, as her husband. At one point the Fords came up to us who were just sort of walking from one room to the other. Something had come up I don't know what, he was looking for Dobrynin and asked me if I had seen him. I wished I had, but I hadn't. It was very heady. We would occasionally get invited to state dinners when Africans were in town. Sometimes you're invited to state dinners there, too just to fill out the roster or just to do a nice thing for a member of the staff who said he could have gone to one. But, your after dinner guests which is an interesting thing at the White House, there's real dinner and everyone sits at the table and then there's the after dinner entertainment and the kind of strolling around. There's another group of invitees who are held in the basement literally until everyone rises from dinner and then you're brought in. There's another reception line and you go through that and then you're there for whoever the entertainer was. From Liberia it was the old president William Tolbert, soon to be crucified in a beach by Samuel Doe, but didn't know that then. He was smoking a cigar. They had Wayne Newton for some reason. So, it wasn't always first class entertainment, but at the bicentennial celebration, there was Ella Fitzgerald. That was great and the other things were great. Sometimes as well, there's a presidential box at the Kennedy Center and there are tickets for you every night obviously and occasionally you could get those tickets because nobody wanted to go or nobody was going and that was interesting, too. You know, you could invite all your friends to come because you had the whole box. We did that a couple of times. It was great fun and one day we were standing around talking. It was late and so we were wondering why the thing wasn't starting. It turned out we had to sit down first. Of course, everyone's craning, who's that? We were then and forever remained mysterious. So, all of that was great and wonderful stuff. I mean that's how you sort of see yourself in Washington when you're out in San Jose dreaming about a career. You see yourself dancing in the East Room, you know, and watching Ella Fitzgerald. The other thing we got to do was watch the bicentennial fireworks on the South Lawn of the White House on the Jefferson Mound there. It was a nice thing to be able to do and the president and his wife came out on the Truman Balcony there. All of that was good and the Christmas party where you get to bring your kids and you get to walk all around and touch things and no ropes in the White House and look at all those nice Grandma Moses they had in those days and all the Christmas trees and take the kids to the Oval Office. Altogether a wonderful thing to have been able to do. At the end of it, however, when Ford had lost there comes a very strange period in the life of a White House staff because they have absolutely no power at all suddenly. Scowcroft who had then, Kissinger had by that time become just Secretary of State, and Scowcroft had succeeded him as National Security Advisor decided that all these ongoing studies, that we had commissioned on the bureaucracy had to be finished before the administration left office, but the bureaucracy recognized this for the useless thing it was since these were going to have no impact on anybody, especially with another party coming in. Suddenly calling people up and getting them to meet deadlines and so forth became impossible. In fact, many of those things were never finished, but the other thing was you have absolutely nothing to do because there are no more decisions to be made. There is no more policy to be formulated with. There's nothing. I mean, you have two months of sitting around.

Q: I mean, there must be a two-layer thing. One is the day to day government where somebody has to make decisions because you're the United States government irrespective of anything and the other is policy.

HARRISON: Right. Policy basically stops. The big stuff is always made in the agencies within whatever existing policy guidelines there are and if there aren't, the decisions are put off. No one is going to raise a controversy during that two months period. You're not going to say you know we've got a crisis and it has to be handled. That's something else, but that didn't happen. In that hiatus, it was simply a hiatus. It was a strange environment. It was also strange because everyone wanted to stay, pretty much. Among other things, it's in the middle of an assignment cycle so there's nowhere particular to go in January or February. Therefore everybody wanted to impress the new people who, in fact, held interviews. Everybody went in and talked to this group of young people who supposedly were assessing your suitability to stay on, but actually they weren't doing that because nobody was going to stay on. In the end I think just Gary Sick and Bob Kimmitt. Bob Kimmitt, that's another interesting part of that experience, was at that time a captain in the army who was in law school to become an adjutant general lawyer for the army. The army was paying his way. He was a Vietnam veteran, a West Point grad. His father was a secretary in the senate, I believe, a doorkeeper or something, so had political connections and Bob had a summer between law school classes and he came as an intern. He was put in our office and sort of given I was given the job of finding things for him to do which. I gave him some things to do and largely for that reason got my embassy eventually because Bob Kimmitt was a freebie. He was paid for. He was off the books. He stayed there through the transition, went back and finished his last year at law school and then was brought back having caught the eye among others of Jim Baker who was at the White House then and therefore, had a very rapid rise which involved his resignation from the army and his general increase in power you could tell at the beginning of the Bush administration he became, Baker became Secretary of State, Kimmitt became under secretary for political affairs. I was grateful that I had given him things to do when everyone else was ignoring him over at the NSC staff although it was not that many years before and therefore, became and advocate for me in the process of dividing up embassies. Since he was a member of the under secretary's committee that does that it was a lot better for me than it would be if.

Q: Well, what were you looking at? I mean, did you find for example, for one you're off cycle with personnel, but also being on the NSC, does this create certain tensions with you and other people. The power there and all?

HARRISON: No, not so much with me. There were tensions with Defense, but I wasn't going back to Defense, so that was okay. No, there weren't any tensions in particular with the State Department. The transition back was interesting, too. I was going to go back to my home agency which was PM over complement because there weren't any jobs. Frank Wisner who was at that time director for South Africa and had a deputy also, may he rest in peace, Dennis Keogh, who was going off to Africa on a trip and I had been doing African affairs at the NSC because filling in, essentially, at the end of the administration, so nobody had really come in to take my place. I was known to Wisner and he had this two-week hole to fill at the very outset of the new administration. Literally, we left the NSC on inauguration day and then fetched up at State on the first day of the Carter administration. He wanted me to come and sit in for Keogh who was off in Africa; it was a two-week trip. He persuaded Les Gelb who didn't know me from Adam and was incoming director of political military affairs and had no job for me anyway, to let me go fill in for Dennis. He's now up on the board in the lobby. He was killed in Namibia five or six years. He was a very good Foreign Service officer. This time the battle had immediately been joined over South Africa, that is whether we should continue this kind of dual engagement, dual track, whatever you want to call it. There was a term of, now I forget, of strict abstention on one hand, but an opening for dialogue on the other which the incoming administration felt had simply encouraged the white separatists, segregationist forces in South Africa, the apartheid movement and so forth to think that in fact we were not serious about our attempts in that system. The battle was immediately joined with the new people and the holdover people who had some responsibility for that policy and therefore felt that it had to be defended in this process or chief among them, because most of the other people had been removed like Frank Wisner. But, Frank sort of made me his battering ram for that process. He sent me off to meetings where this unpopular policy had to be defended and he sent me around with memos for clearance to these people who had such contempt for it and so I got belted around pretty good. Frank went up to address his prep school graduating class one day, I remember, and said, "I'll be back this evening." We were working until 9:00 or 10:00 at night doing this, but I was kind of a sacrificial lamb in the process; it was short, two weeks and then I was over to PM and then suddenly reduced to anything even more menial duties that I'd had before I left there 18 months before to go to NSC because they had no particular job for me. Lucy - and I've never, this will be disrespectful to her, but I've never been able to remember whether her name is Lucy Wilson Benson or Lucy Benson Wilson - it was one or the other.

Q: I think it's Lucy Wilson Benson.

HARRISON: Lucy Wilson Benson had been president of the League of Women Voters and was made undersecretary of state for science, technology and arms control and weapons and a lot of other things which bureaucratically were under her at that time. She knew nothing about any of that stuff. The Carter administration was very interested in both elevating her and giving women prominent positions so she found herself in charge of a vast and complicated area and part of that required her to do a lot of testimony on Capitol Hill. My job was to put together briefing books for that testimony and then to answer the letters which inevitably came in after the testimony, about what on earth she'd been talking about. I have several times in my career been in charge of putting together briefing books for powerful people and my experience is that some of them read them, some of them read none of them. She read them, but it is very difficult to get up to speed as quickly as she would have had to do had she needed to go testify before Congress. I mean, you could imagine some of these issues and you've been in office a month and suddenly you're in front of Inouye and he's asking you in detail about arms sales issues around the world. The way that this, you know, they liked her, I mean she was not a kind of original figure. Inouye liked her and he's not the most aggressive person.

Q: You're talking about the Senator from Hawaii?

HARRISON: Yes, Senator from Hawaii. Dan Inouye. He's not the aggressive guy on Capitol Hill anyway. He's still there. He was always polite to her, but the problem was that she had answers and he had questions and we had all those answers and questions in the briefing book, but she didn't always get them in the right connection. She'd give the answer, but it wasn't to the question he'd asked. The staffers would then take the transcript of the testimony and send a letter to us saying what on earth did she mean by this and then we would send the letters back saying well she actually meant to say this. When I say putting together briefing books, I wasn't actually writing any of this stuff. I was punching the holes in the paper and threading the paper onto the three ring binders and making sure the tabs were in order and making sure that people who were supposed to write the stuff actually wrote the stuff. So, it was kind of a staff assistant job. Sitting in PM working for Steve Winship who was a nice laid back guy at the end of his career had kind of given me office space. No one knew quite what to do with me. I also poked my nose into other things because I was underemployed. One of them was suggested to Henry Precht with whom I had worked on Iranian arms issues on how he should handle his responsibilities, but he evidently felt that he could get along fine without my advice. There wasn't much to do in that area. I really did sit there doing things that the secretaries who were more prominent in the State Department in those days and a great source of power unto themselves refused to do. Too menial for them. It was not a happy period and it lasted for about five or six, five months I think.

It's always been my experience that leaving your fate to the personnel process is a bad idea. I think most people in the State Department have that impression that you have to try to take charge of the process yourself. It's sometimes better to take a job less than you might wish as long as you can sew it up without getting into panel and being mistaken for the guy who drinks too much. I had heard at that point that I'd known for a long time that we had teaching jobs, the State Department did at each of the military academies. So, being unhappy with my hole punching duties and my letter writing to explain what people had actually meant to say. I didn't even write those letters either. I just solicited them. I decided to take a job at the Air Force Academy whereby hangs much of what happened to me after that. On the proviso that they would allow me to start out there in June the beginning of their summer session rather than waiting until September or August because I wanted to get out of where I was and so they all agreed and off I went. I bought a motorcycle from Jerry Jennings who'd been the security officer at the NSC in my time and who later got briefly famous because he is the guy who found a watch that the Koreans had given to Dick Allen - the two watches I think. Allen's big mistake had been asking for that second watch left behind in the file after Allen had gone, and at any rate part of the White House intrigue. Sounds like the West. So, off I went and showed up out there in Colorado and became an assistant professor in the department of political science; which is my excursion tour in the State Department. In those kinds of tours you are entirely cut off from anything going on back in Washington. I was the only civilian in those days, that position was on the staff at the Air Force Academy because everyone else, several hundred faculty were military, were Air Force. There were some exchange officers from the other services, but there was only one civilian and that meant that you got treated outside the normal protocol system of the place. By rank I was captain in those days, but as a civilian I was treated like a general. That was super. I got a parking place in the building, which is important up there, because winter can be harsh and walking down from the remote parking in a blizzard is no fun. I got a window office overlooking the Front Range. The most beautiful view you ever see. I got a locker in the gym of my own. All wonderful stuff, plus met a lot of wonderful colleagues out there that the section was headed by Irv Rocky in those days and then became deputy at DIA and who I also served in London.

Q: DIA being?

HARRISON: Defense Intelligence Agency. I'm sorry NSA, the National Security Agency, more important, bigger. A consummate government. Jim Keegle was a young captain out there. He's now a dean at the National Defense University. Joe Desuter who is head of the school of executive education at NDU was one of my colleagues in the Department. I had a very favored position, wonderful place, wonderful job, too because although all my colleagues were shot through with rivalry and they're all trying to get promoted. They had a very cutthroat promotion system in those days. There were caboodles and loops and all the usual things you'd associate with any organization that size. I was exempt from all that because I was a Foreign Service officer. I could be everybody's friend and, generally speaking, was. That was great. A great place to live. I was teaching eventually political philosophy which I enjoy very much and teaching some people who now miraculously have been transformed into men of some influence in town and I think in five years some of the people that I've taught will be particularly in important positions. I just talked to one the other day, who's up at the Council of Foreign Relations; he's ticketed for his first star. There's a kind of a legacy in the sense that I have continued to run into people who I taught who remember me fondly from those days.

Q: Well, in the first place, you were there from '77 to when?

HARRISON: '79.

Q: What was your impression of the educational system?

HARRISON: It's overloaded. They all have 20 or 22 units or so, the normal college parlance. A lot of those are hard science units, electrical engineering and so forth that they all have to take. Then they huge military duties, plus they have mandatory physical education stuffs. They prosper or fail to prosper according to how they can juggle their priorities. They have to become, if you can do that well. If you know what's important or not important at any moment of the day you do a lot better than to be confused about that. The stuff that I was teaching was known to the cadets as a fuzzy study. It's the kind of thing you might be able to guess. You can't do that with electrical engineering. You have to have some idea of what the professor is talking about and regurgitate that on a test. Political science, that's not going to be your first priority. The job there was to entertain. It was to convince them that this was an interesting thing so, that you had their attention at least for the hour that you had them. It was an atmosphere in which I had a lot of fun. I think I made an impact at least on those cadets that came into my class and in which I had auditors, which had never been known there before. I mean, for a cadet to audit a class for which he is not getting credit, had been at that time unheard of. It was good. I enjoyed it a lot. I keep running into these cadets as I said, including one who became a political philosopher and who told me it was because of the class.

Q: When you talk about political philosophy, what are we talking about in the context of the air force academy?

HARRISON: It's traditional political philosophy, Socrates, Plato, Machiavelli, all of that stuff. It is part of political science, not the philosophy department which concentrates there on military ethics, but it's part of a political science major which is not a basic requirement. It's a requirement for the majors who graduate there as some do, about 100 every year as political science majors. There's a great competition for majors there because everyone takes the same basic course; but majors in any particular discipline determine how many students you have. This is not true in electrical engineering. They have a ready supply because much of the aeronautical engineering, much of the basic course, is in their bailiwick. For places like political science, the number of faculty you have depends on how many cadets choose you as a major. There was a lot of competition for majors. There had been no grade inflation, or minor grade inflation, at that time and I was always a tough grader. There were still academic standards in that sense which I think were certainly by the standards of Harvard today, very rigorous, probably not as rigorous as it had been there 20 years before, but those days, wholesale, grade inflation did not exist there. Also, a lot of freedom about what you could teach and what you could say in class. Even though the political science department there had been officially abolished in the early '70s because of some conscientious objector problems that the academy had, which they traced to the invidious influence of political science. Philosophy had just come back into existence a couple years before I got there. It was still viewed as an ugly stepchild by the academy as a whole. From that experience I have great respect and liking for cadets for the wing; an overwhelming majority of whom perform with great grace under pressure and are fine and very able human beings. I came to realize that the best of them were of a capability that is difficult to imagine, people who were much brighter than I was, much more capable and would on a level playing field of the same age make short work of me. That doesn't mean I was intimated about teaching them because the playing field wasn't level, but it does mean that I don't underestimate the quality of the officer corps of the United States which is now occupied by many people of whom I talked.

Q: I'm wondering whether, you wouldn't have been in a position to compare and contrast, but the Air Force had the reputation of being concentrated on technical things, whereas the Navy was in driving ships, whereas the Army and Marines in a way were a little looser because they had to consider going into foreign countries and doing things rather than steaming the seas or flying over.

HARRISON: At that time I didn't lecture at West Point during my tenure at Colorado Springs, so I can tell you what my colleagues told me about that. What they said was that the Navy, because most of their or half of their faculty were civilian, was the loosest of the three. That the Army, which had an all military faculty and was greatly burdened by tradition, was the least flexible. And that from the point of the other two service gatherings, we were way out in left field up in Colorado. What I know to be true is that there was never any inhibition there on my academic freedom. I was never directed to pull my class in one direction or the other. I taught a lot of American history, I taught a lot of corps out there, too. It is not a place where the faculty attracts the radicals of life. They also come almost entirely from the Air Force officer corps. They weren't going to come in there, hippies and smoke marijuana, they were more of a disciplined bunch of people. It was I thought a very open system. I think the problem those academies all have is that the cadets for the most part can't afford the time necessary to think. I mean, think in a contemplative way about some of the issues that are raised in a philosophy course. They can't follow that line of argument. They can't do any independent study because those few who would in any case do any independent study is not something you find often in any academy or university. In that case in particular you just don't have time to do that. The most prevalent question I was asked actually in my two years was what's on the test. What they want to do overwhelmingly, the impetus is to meet the requirement and fill the square, go to the class, pass the class and go on to the next class. There is a thin strata, 10%, of the class that are competing to be corps commander or wing commander, or a regimental commander, or whatever they are competing to be and who want to come out of the academy as ticketed for greater things. Most of the people as in any organization are trying to get through it and out into the Air Force, but some want on to excel. Those, you know, they were achieving prodigies of work, including Chris Miller, the guy who is up in the Council on Foreign Relations now. He wrote tests for me that I could not have written myself; extremely thoughtful, smart, nice kid, as many of them were. When I went back in '93 I had a unique opportunity, I think the only opportunity ever to teach cadets after a hiatus of about 15 years or 14 years and I found them to be unchanged. The uniforms and haircuts were all the same. There's a great sense of deja vu, anyway, for me it was the same people.

Q: Women were there, too.

HARRISON: Well, women were there when I was first there. That was one of the great controversies. LCWB, "the last class with balls" which was '79 and wanted to put that slogan on their ring were not able to. I think the problem the academies have is the number of women at the academies is limited. I don't know that this is true. The last time I checked it was about 13% to 15% which is not true of the Air Force as a whole anymore, but it keeps the women in a situation of a constant minority. The ethos of the place is heavily male as a result and intentionally so. I have thought always and thought again when I came back, it prepares the officers to deal with each other, the women and the men, when they get out of the Air Force and for the men as commanders to deal with the women under their command. That if they brought the academy attitudes toward women into the regular Air Force that they would have a hard time. I would like to see that proportion of women increase. I think it's necessary to the culture of the services. They resist that of course, very strongly. I heard a lot from male cadets about the incompetence and emotionality and all this jazz - I mean the stereotypes about women that they would trot out the slightest provocation and which I would challenge greatly. It is an interesting kind of situation, a kind of mixture of contempt and lust. The male cadets toward the female cadets. The signals the female cadets get, or did in those days, was that same mixture, which is kind of confusing for them. I thought that those first women who got through the process and graduated was a formidable group of women. That was through all the other challenges that cadets face, they had to multiply it by two for the women. A lot of them excelled; competent and self-assured to get through that process.

Q: This is after the Vietnam War and we had pulled out, it wasn't that long thereafter. Much of the military had really taken - particularly the Army - had really suffered both in the contempt with as much of the civilian society, but also a deterioration of morale and all that. The forces in Vietnam, have their problems obviously, but also even in Germany and elsewhere, lack of discipline and poor equipment and all that. Were you running across any after effects of this?

HARRISON: No, I don't, I can't really say that I was. I had no basis of comparison then except that there is a degree of cynicism in the wing that hadn't been there before. I had colleagues and friends then and now who had been in early classes of the Air Force Academy and were still up in Denver before it moved to Colorado Springs in the class of '58 I think was the first one, or '59. I asked them the question, "What had changed in the wing?" That is what they said, that the idealism was gone which they had felt. They had taken all these at face value. The great thing about teaching political science and political philosophy when I was there was that there were always a half a dozen cadets in my class who were willing to tell me that there was no such thing as justice. Their ethical attitudes were conditioned. They thought these things because they had been conditioned to think them, but that they had no particular universal validity outside this conditioning system to which they had been. To deal with people like that is always fun because it is possible to challenge, to push those kinds of attitudes to ridiculous conclusions. It was prevalent and I understand it was again when I was back there in the early '90s and was again when I went back to lecture. Actually I was asked to come and lecture on Aristotle there a couple of years ago. I asked by way of illustrating Aristotle's distinction between tyranny and kingship which is whether the rule is in the interest of the individual who is ruling or in the interest of the people he rules. The first being a tyrant and the second being a king. I pointed out to them that the Air Force Academy is a society about the size of the one that Aristotle had in mind when he was talking this way. Four thousand or so people. It was a community, which was relatively isolated as were the city-states Aristotle knew, and was headed by a superintendent. So, the issue was, for Aristotle, to live a virtuous life. And society requires kingship and requires a conviction that the rule is to the benefit of the group. Then the citizen can exercise his civic virtue in an atmosphere where he knows it will be rewarded. Whether they considered the superintendent was out for their best interests, or was simply trying to further his own career. Almost unanimously they said he was a tyrant and not a king. That was the attitude, too in the late '70s, that the hierarchy there was interested in their own advancement rather than in the welfare of the wing. Then you can make the point how much easier it would be to be virtuous in your job as a cadet and how much more likely you would be to be virtuous in this way if you believed that the leadership was virtuous as well if you believe it or not. Then it's much more difficult for you to exercise your proper virtue, as a cadet, which I think, is absolutely true among other things as well as being a good point of Aristotle. I think it shows the cynicism was this pervasive at that place, since that place represents really the best of the generation. Not that all the best are there, but are certainly there from the best group that is coming up. I have to think is probably generally true of young people.

Q: '79?

HARRISON: '79. Actually what happened, I thought I'd extend. I thought my Foreign Service career was probably over. Among other things I had not been promoted. I was still now an FSO-5.

Q: This would be a major in the military?

HARRISON: Captain. I was a captain. I was just about at my tenth anniversary. I got a ten year length of service pen sent me in the mail which didn't seem to me to be the sort of honor that I necessarily should be aspiring to since it denoted that I was still alive, but otherwise, my thought was that I would probably try to find a job out in Colorado and leave the Foreign Service which seemed to not think highly of my efforts. Then near the end of my second year there, the summer and the spring I got a call from Dick Bowers who had been a classmate of mine, but who had made much better than progress than I and had become - at this time I was an FSO-3 - and he was executive director of the European Bureau. For those who are reading this in 2050 was a very powerful position because it was the executive officer of the most powerful and prestigious bureau in the building and therefore, the guy who had control over the personnel system. He didn't make the decisions, but he influenced them and he saw them all. He saw a job coming up in the political military bureau of the office in the European Bureau in charge of NATO military affairs, which he suggested I would be good for. Luckily for me the deputy assistant secretary then had also been one I knew in PM, Jim Goodby, when I had been special assistant there, and so between them and Steve Ledogar who was the director of that office then who had dealt with me on the NSC staff - and I guess I had been nice. Because of all three of them I got that job and it actually is the best job within the State Department in my view and certainly the best job I ever had in the Foreign Service, the most fun. I was head of an office of four people. I had been in the State Department for ten years. I'm finally supervising somebody; I'd never done that before, including Jim Cunningham who is now number two guy in the UN and was our acting ambassador there for a long time. He was in my office and other very good and very bright people. We had responsibility for the political dialogue in NATO which was a key part of foreign policy in those days and we had responsibility for a meeting of what is called the political directors of NATO, that is the big four, the French, British, Germans and the United States who met regularly at the assistant secretary level. We would staff that, and we had responsibility for arms control and for not all of arms control, but for that part of it which was called the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, CSCE, which was a backwater of arms control and security policy in those days. Something the Soviets had suggested and we had bartered with them because they wanted to be included in Europe and CSCE covered all of Europe and made them a European player, which is why we had tried to avoid it.

Q: These are the Helsinki Accords?

HARRISON: These are the Helsinki Accords, yes, absolutely. We would then be for mutual ground force reduction talks because of our concern about the disproportion of their conventional force in Europe. They agreed to be a part and we agreed to CSCE, but no one was very enthusiastic about CSCE, which was seen as kind of a soft to the Soviets. CSCE took on a life of its own, the Helsinki process had included a statement of human rights and spawned a whole series of interest groups in among other places, the Soviet Union where the watchdog group there became the center for opposition to that awful regime and was supported very strongly by groups here, a whole community of them. Congress, which strongly supported this process was calling it the CSCE Commission which was a constitutional abomination because the board was made up with both administration and congressional officials. Dante Fascell was the chairman on the Hill, a congressman and Patt Darien who is Assistant Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs was vice chairman. In fact I was in a situation up on the Hill, someone testified - I don't remember who - and Fascell left and Patt Darien sat in the chair. So, there we were in the House committee room sitting at the table and testifying before a State Department official sitting in the chairman's sofa. It was a strange situation. It was our baby and because it was a backwater nobody else cared much about it and, therefore, I got a great deal of attitude on that issue. It was important to the Europeans; I got a great deal of exposure to the European capitals, too. It turned out when I went there I was astounded. I would show up in London and I had an invitation to lunch from the Foreign Commonwealth Office who did care about this and knew, by then, that the only guy in the State Department that really knew where all the bodies were buried in the CSCE was me. What had happened is that at the beginning of my tenure CSCE was not important, but the other things began to drop off. MBFR talks stagnated, SALT talks stopped, the situation was deteriorating and the only place or game in town was CSCE, but by the time that everybody decided that that was the case, there I stood. I was the guy who knew about that issue and the only guy in the State Department really who knew about it. So far, I'd go to Europe to NATO meetings at the head of delegations 15 people. A wonderful thing for me, and - I like to think since I'm a smart guy - a wonderful thing for the policy, too. There were still a lot of people sniping at it, prominent among them, Bob Blackwill who had tossed up at the NSC and also a classmate of mine and who had done much better than I and was a couple of grades above me. He had determined to kill this whole process, which offended realists. I think I offended him personally, too, but was a formidable competitor in this process in trying to keep this thing under wraps. So, there was a huge bureaucratic conflict over it and keeping it alive, nurturing this little blossom through this bureaucratic storm, was my job and it was great fun. We could do all kinds of interesting stuff. It brought home to me how much power you do have as a staff person, especially on an issue like this which is complicated and which no one has been paying much attention to while you have been paying attention to it. All this came home to me once when the NSC, in an effort to curb the movement toward this agreement on this policy, toward enthusiastic participation in it which was my position, called a meeting at the White House and in order to rein it in. It occurred to me before the meeting that if I didn't go they couldn't have a meeting. It was Boland, who was later assistant secretary for European Affairs and my colleague, and one of the other subdirectors in RPM to go for me and tell them I was sick. And off she went for me, and by God, without me there, they couldn't do anything. That's a wonderful position. Pardon me?

Q: You know, the whole Helsinki Accords, what are they three baskets and all sorts of eggs in each basket, what specifically were the issues you were dealing with?

HARRISON: Well, the most outstanding one was that we were all looking forward to the Madrid Conference which was going to be the first follow-up conference to Helsinki to see how the accords were doing and the issue at Madrid was going to be whether we named names - that is whether we specify people in the Soviet Union who are being oppressed by Soviet authorities. The State Department had been opposed to naming names because they saw it as an aggressive policy aimed at destabilizing the relationship with the Soviets still further, poking them in the eye. The Europeans were neutral to opposed. Some of the smaller Europeans didn't mind naming names, but the major European allies were very much in the State Department's view on this. Don't poke them in the eye, it's a delicate process. It should be nursed. This whole series of interest groups I was talking about was very much in favor of naming names and very insistent that this be done and very willing to try bureaucratically to remove anybody who didn't agree. They had all the enthusiasm and went after, among others, George Vest who was the assistant secretary then, who actually wasn't paying much attention to the issue. He got blindsided publicly about it. How aggressive we should be. What was emerging at that point was the idea that although we had adopted the CSCE it now gave us a great tool to open up the Soviet Union to scrutiny and that had been unexpected. The formation of these Helsinki watchdog groups had been nothing that the State Department had encouraged or the U.S. government had encouraged. It had been a spontaneous thing, but it turned out that the Soviets, all unknowingly - they had, you know, they had a cavalier view of the international agreements generally - discovered that they were being held by the international community subject to scrutiny on the basis of the human rights that they had promised in the Helsinki agreement to respect.

Q: The major thing that the Soviets wanted was to firm up the lines of the European borders with them inside and also the German border and all that. This is what they wanted, to be on the side, the human rights, oh sure, freedom to travel, what the hell.

HARRISON: Oh sure, well, we're committed to those things, right. What they didn't anticipate was the public relations use that would be made of them by the dissident groups in the Soviet Union and then by their supporters overseas. So, gradually the American government, which had seen this as unwanted engagement or legitimacy - or at least some elements of the American government which had seen this as giving legitimacy to the Soviets that they did not deserve and of accomplishing and seeing it the same way the Soviets saw, they would dismiss the human rights part of it and they would use it to increase the legitimacy of their puppet states in the eastern Germany - began to see that perhaps it had a much more beneficial impact, and that it could be used to modify Soviet behavior. Suddenly the Soviets were open to public scrutiny and they had an agreement, they had signed solemn agreements to do things that they obviously were not doing.

Q: Also in context by this time if I'm correct, the invasion of Afghanistan in December of '79 had taken place. This is after you were on the desk, but that meant that we weren't being overly, we were beginning to look at the Soviet Union in not so benevolent terms.

HARRISON: Actually it's a fascinating story because Marshall Shulman was then at the State Department as a kind of Soviet factotum. He was outside the normal bureaucratic stream, but Marshall Shulman's view had been that the Soviets were a xenophobic and essentially defensive power, that they had built a military organization in part because of their paranoia and part because they had no internal control systems that would allow them to control that process once it was underway. You built a plant to build tanks and you had to keep building tanks whether it made any sense to build them or not, it was kind of a microcosm of building C-130s in the United States, but it extended to their own defense establishment. The image of the Soviets from the Shulman point of view was that they were not as aggressive as had been assumed. No plan for world domination in some safe in the Pentagon, which isn't to say they weren't dangerous, but they were dangerous because they were so incredibly incompetent and disorganized and because they had all this potent weaponry for whatever reason they developed it. Then came Afghanistan. There is a process in government when you walk into a room with other people for an interagency meeting where there's policy discussion of any kind. There are certain assumptions, which enter that room with you, that form the basis for a discussion at the table. There are certain things taken for granted and those things influence what can be said at the meeting, what can be erased, what can be discussed, what ideas are considered to be legitimate. Before Afghanistan, you could legitimately raise policy points based on this Shulman idea of the Soviets being defensive which influenced a lot of things, how you should approach the Soviets and those eastern European countries, where the cooperation would be fruitful or not; whether the Soviets could be expected to keep certain kinds of agreements and therefore, those agreements should be entered into. How big are defense establishments. All of these things depend on how you view that Soviet situation. Now, after they went into Afghanistan, which of course, the greatest mistake of that generation of Soviet leadership and a huge disaster for them, for the Afghans as well. Of no particular - since Afghanistan has never been an invasionary to any group - no particular geostrategic interest to us, nevertheless it discredited the Shulman approach. Here was a case in which the Soviets had used their military force to extend their domain, just as the Cold War - modeled behavior would predict that they would do. Now, even though the Soviet Union was at the same place, certain arguments were no longer credible, were no longer legitimate and the whole force in direction of U.S. policy toward the Soviets changed to become much more aggressive, much more confrontational than it had been before. That was the atmosphere in which this small blossom of CSCE, which was exactly the opposite of that approach, at least as seen by many people in the bureaucracy, was being undertaken. Then because of this climate of opinion, which was that process would screw you and a process not unlike the one of creating a climate of bureaucratic opinion. Now we're creating a climate of world opinion. It came to be seen, by at least a ponderance of the foreign policy decision makers, as part of an aggressive approach to the Soviets. That is, that we use CSCE to hold Soviet feet to the fire on this issue and to expose their practices to international judgment. Largely we were successful in doing it. So, what they had seen as, the Soviets had seen as their entree to Europe, actually was transformed into a public forum critical of their own internal practices and to make less legitimate the Soviet rule in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe - which they had hoped the process would be more legitimate. And gradually the American government came to see that process and began to capitalize on that process. The key figure in that transition was Max Kampelman. He was appointed to be deputy ambassador to the Madrid conference. The Madrid conference was going to be the central feature of this emerging situation.

Q: This was in 1980?

HARRISON: The 1980 Madrid conference, the first follow up to the Helsinki conference which had resulted in the Helsinki Accords and, therefore, the review conference as it was called. Granted, Griffin Bell, the ex-Carter attorney general, had been the first appointee as ambassador and Max Kampelman who was a long time Democratic operative in town who had begun life as a Humphrey staffer and had gradually become kind of a modern Republican wise person, the sort of person a Republican administration would liable to be put on the board for a Democratic presence. He was a modern, reasonable guy. Griffin Bell was one of these people I was thinking about when I was talking about being accepted a job for reasons I've never understood. We tried to get William Scranton to take the job, the ex-governor of Pennsylvania, but he turned it down. I don't know how Griffin Bell's name surfaced, but on the eve of his first meeting in NATO, now we're six months before the Madrid conference and we're beginning to assemble the ambassadors who are going to represent NATO in that meeting in Brussels. Griffin Bell was going out to the first meeting of that group under Max Kampelman and the cast of thousands with my office and me as the major staffer for the process. We had put together a huge briefing book because this was an incredibly complicated issue. The history of CSCE, but the history of Europe, too. It was all bound up in these issues which were now going to be discussed. There was a whole philosophical underpinning as well as the political, as well as the historical underpinning and then the European attitudes toward these things, which were different than ours, from ours. We had a briefing book of monumental proportions, too. The idea was that we were going to send these briefing books down to Griffin Bell and I was going to go down after he'd read them to brief him and answer any questions and then off we would go to Brussels for the meeting. I did go down and it turned out that the date for that meeting was Election Day 1980. November whatever it was, 3rd or 4th in Atlanta in his law office and we went down with my copy of that huge briefing book and met with Griffin Bell and discovered that he had never so much as cracked the cover and didn't want to when I was there. He had absolutely no interest in talking about any of that stuff. He wanted to talk about how Jimmy Carter was going to lose that election and that's all he wanted to talk about. I briefed my earnest young Foreign Service officer. He paid no attention and the result of that was, in fact, I got on a plane. I was supposed to go a meeting in Brussels and it was going to set this meeting with Griffin Bell, who was supposed to attend and do the preliminary work for it. By the time I got from Atlanta to New York early results were in and it was clear that Carter was going to lose and Reagan was going to win and win big. We all knew that when we got to Brussels we would have nothing to say because we were in one of those hiatus periods and we had no policy suddenly. But Griffin Bell stated his position for the meeting and he knew nothing. He read everything on the page, which is what he would do. He would come to whatever agenda item is, he would open his briefing book to whatever the page was and he'd begin reading with a heading and he'd read everything that was there. He spelled the abbreviation, for example, the abbreviation CBMs which was Confidence Building Measures which was one of those security components he read as CBMS and there were a lot of things like that. He read the stuff that said "don't," you know, "here's something to consider." He read the stuff that said "don't say this." He read whatever that was on the page. In that kind of circumstance it's kind of funny actually. You have this table, a horseshoe shaped table with these fellow ambassadors looking all around us and then behind them all the staffers that you deal with every day. All of them are looking at you, not looking at Bell, some of them smiling, the French in particular. Some of them looking questioningly everybody wondering from you what the hell is going on. What I like to do in that circumstance is shrug, but that really is when the battle is joined. When the new administration came in it came in with a lot of very conservative people who - and this is actually one - who were very determined to kill this process one because of their view of the Soviet Union, and another because of their view of the French who were the key European supporters of it. Anything supported by the French in Washington gives you an immediate suspicion. They set out to do it in and would have succeeded in doing it in, but it turned out that Al Haig was interested in repairing the relationship with the French and so the fact that French sponsorship of this process was an anathema to the rest of the bureaucracy was in fact a positive aspect of the policy for Haig. Haig made the decision that we would continue on the course with CSCE which we had been following. Griffin Bell retired to private life and Max Kampelman became the ambassador. Max for whom I have great respect had very strong ties to the human rights community, which had been very insistent on naming names, and there was never really an administration decision on this. I just went to an experts meeting in the spring and announced that we were going to do it, actually on my own recognizance because I knew that was what was going to happen, and why not? So I did. With Haig's support, he was still a formidable figure and of course his tenure as a formidable figure was very brief, but this was the first six months of that process. There's another example too, just to illustrate the power of a staff member. NATO has biannual meetings with ministers which take place in Brussels and then in capitals alternatively. One in the spring of 1980 was going to be in, no it must have been in 1981, was going to be in Rome, but it was going to take place right at the time of my 20th high school reunion in California and I wanted to go to my 20th high school reunion. The date of the, I probably shouldn't tell this story, but what the hell it's history. The date of the ministerial was a silent procedure in NATO which meant that it will be adopted by unanimous consent unless one of the delegates breaks silence to object to it so I got together with Bob Harper who was my deputy. We got together a memo to Haig saying that we couldn't allow, this was going to be in June, we had to show the importance we attached to this NATO relationship and we had to seize the early opportunity to impress the Reagan agenda on the Europeans by moving up the date - what a dramatic sign it would be of the importance we attached to NATO policy if we broke silence and insisted that the conference be moved up a month - and sent that memo up to Haig and got it back with a chop and broke silence. And all ended up in Rome freezing to death in early May. They had chosen a venue, which had no heating because they thought it, was going to be in June. It was actually in May and I got to go off and dance with Lee Bohanson at my 20th high school reunion in California in early June.

Q: So you froze the delegates?

HARRISON: For example, Haig, liked muscular verbs. If you populated your memo with all kinds of ...

Q: To strangulate, to crush, to press, to thrust.

HARRISON: Crush, press, thrust, all that kind of thing, he'd like it much better than if you didn't and I'd already figured that out. We had all kinds of that kind of language in this thing. It's, I guess it was from one point of view it was frivolous, but you got to have a sense of humor. It didn't really matter when the NATO meeting took place anyway, but it did matter that I got to go to my 20th high school reunion - or at least I thought it did. We did rescue the CSCE policy, we did, I think and the conference on security and the associated Organization on Security and Cooperation on Europe which came out of that and which is now well established as OSCE.

Q: OSCE.

HARRISON: Yes. I think the guy who deserves a lot of credit for that, Max Kampelman, because of his conviction that we had to name names - we had to. You could take an aggressive approach to the Soviets as long as we kept the allies on board. This came to a head right at the beginning of the period when Kampelman had shown up. Warren Zimmerman was his deputy and later became ambassador to Yugoslavia and were all walking down the street and the Soviet ambassador had asked Max for a private meeting and Max was wondering if he should accept this invitation and been tempted to. I told him that it was vitally important that he only accept the invitation after consultation with his colleagues in the NATO caucus. He could not do it if they thought he was doing an end run, he was making real contact and that he would only be able to do it if there were an agreed agenda. Which suggestion he accepted, and that began the consultative process which really held the rest of the delegations together through that meeting and resulted in an outcome which was precisely what the Reagan administration held forth. It was a strengthening of those; first of public exposure of Soviet behavior, and the strengthening of those obligations under which that process had been made legitimate, of calling the Soviets to task for their behavior on human rights. I think a great weakening of the legitimacy of that regime, to which I think the Reagan administration contributed greatly. I mean, I didn't always understand this at the time. For example, when Reagan made his "evil empire" speech I thought ... I had the usual State Department reaction that kind of thing was unnecessary provocative, but I came to see over time that Reagan's willingness to be frank about the Soviets as in the evil empire speech was also a great influence in delegitimizing the regime and that the erosion of its legitimacy, in the eyes not only of the West, but in the eyes of its own citizens, was a key factor in wiping away that awful stain from Europe and from those nationalities that it had imposed that awful bureaucracy, that had been repressed for so many years. That drove home to me that you can fall into the State Department habit of speaking or thinking that other bureaucracies in town always accuse of us. I think sometimes justly.

Q: It's caution trying not to be too provocative.

HARRISON: Moderation, negotiation. It is a necessary flywheel in the jungle of Washington politics on these issues and what everyone expects the State Department to do, but it's not always right. I mean, some of these guys who have contempt for it, turn out to be smarter about these things than you are and so it taught me to be a little less confident in my own opinion and more admiring of Reagan, although I'm conflicted to this day about Reagan. We can talk about that next time. We can talk about SDI and all that.

Q: One question before we finish this session. As you got there, what was the role of France because France was not in the military side of NATO, but in the political side of NATO which is something often forgotten. During this time you were there, what was the rule of France?

HARRISON: France cast itself as the ying to our yang. It saw itself as the source of maintaining a European identity and existence and culture as otherwise the United States - recognizing the importance of the United States in its overall standoff with the Soviet Union, but nevertheless asserting very strongly first, an independent French identity, and then under assumed French leadership, a European identity. That's why they were so strongly in favor of CSCE because that was a European organization which the Soviets and the United States were participating in an equal basis, but which the center of gravity would be European and therefore the influence of Europe as an entity would increase and the French of leaders of that entity would increase. I think it was misconceived, perhaps not. It was in a sense a counterpart to what was going on economically to the European Community. One of the things that we saw happening then and of course, it has vastly increased now, was the tendency of the Europeans to want to make a common policy choice in that context before coming into NATO. In the process leading up to the Madrid conference, for example, there would always be a European caucus and the caucus would meet outside the conference at the confines of the experts meeting and try to cobble together a European position so that when we sat down at the table it was for common European view versus an American view and there would be from their point of view some balance so to strengthen unity in numbers. Their problem of course, was the British who wanted to maintain a special relationship with us so were never, were more in the game of playing the French and the United States off and thereby enhancing their own influence by slavishly adopting the French point of view they realized that they would subordinate themselves to a bureau dominated by the French and the Germans. The Germans were playing a subordinate, but because they weren't assertive in foreign policy, in those days as much as they are now, although this is the most assertive than they had been before. They wanted the Americans in; they wanted the American influence in because it was their influence in the process so that was the dynamic. Even if you have a caucus with your European allies, you couldn't always come up with a policy or maintain it in the face of American opposition. So, that was the dynamic that went on in that group and it was fascinating to watch. There was a man named Venuwy Dubblview who was my counterpart from the French bureaucracy and with whom I came to like a lot, but the dynamic at the experts meetings as we were setting these things up was always between me and him. What I would say, what he would say. Part of it revolved around the issue of confidence building measures, which the conservatives in our government were very concerned about. We can go on with this the next time. I'm going to have to go, but I think that's maybe where we should leave it with some prospect of talking about how the Defense Department saw confidence building measures, how the State Department did and how the Europeans did and how that led to the Confidence Building Measures regime that we ended up with.

Q: Very good. So, we'll be talking the Madrid conference is something that we should, is that part of the Madrid conference?

HARRISON: It's partly a lead up to the Madrid conference and part of the Madrid conference, too. We can talk about the Madrid conference and some of the bureaucratic dynamics, which I find always more interesting than policy I have to admit; how that worked and how Max and George Vest interacted and so forth.

Q: Today is the 14th of March, 2002. Roger you heard where we were last time so you want to continue?

HARRISON: Yes, we were talking about CBMs, Confidence Building Measures. Actually there's a funny story about that when maybe I told it last time. Griffin Bell who was our first ambassador to Madrid, briefly our ambassador, and often forgotten now because Max Kampelman took over right before, but we did a speech for him before he went to a NATO meeting of his counterparts, before Madrid, and we had put in the acronym CBMs always pronounced CBMs, but spelled CBMs as a plural. He thought however, that he could read that as CMBS or CMBSes, because he didn't know what the letters stood for, not having taken the trouble to brief himself on the intricacies or even the broad outlines of the policy before he went off to accomplish it.

Q: Griffin Bell was a former attorney general?

HARRISON: He had been attorney general for Carter and by the time this all occurred he had gone back to his law firm in Atlanta. At any rate the issue on CBMs was in part I think a product of desperation because other arms control processes were going very poorly at that point. MBFR, the mutual balanced force reduction talks, had been stalled for a long time by our demands and Soviet resistance to asymmetrical reductions in conventional forces, which we were arguing for on the basis that Soviet troops were not only more numerous, but closer to the battle field and therefore, a bit more of them would have to be pulled back. That's why we always called these talks mutual and balanced force reductions which, of course, the Soviets never accepted as a principal or either as a name for the negotiations. They were going very poorly and the SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties) negotiations, in those days, this was before Reagan transformed them into START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty), had stalled as well, partly because of Soviet objections to American pressure in the Carter administration for human rights improvements and Carter's reception of certain Soviet dissident figures in the White House - which had put the wind up in Moscow. And one of the impacts of that had been to slow down the strategic arms discussion, but there were other issues there, too. Obviously, because of the modernization that was going on coincident with the talks about reductions, and the impact of multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles merged which had thrown a real eccentric into that dialogue. They were showing progress. The Europeans were eager to show some movement on arms control: eager as always to stabilize that border between east and west Europe which was their border. Of course, something they were very sensitive to. CBMs was one of the responses; it was something that we could do. Confidence Building Measures: each of us would take certain steps which in themselves were minimal, but which would add up to a climate of confidence which would allow other steps to be taken. This has become quite a trendy approach in recent years, but this was the first time that it was tried between the great powers as they then were. The battle lines in Washington were drawn around the question of the military significance of these steps, whether they were political steps or should be construed to be or made to be militarily significant. To give you an example, one of the CBMs which was being talked about was notification of exercises. The notion was that you would have to give a notification, a year in advance, of all the major exercises that you had planned and therefore, there would be some predictability in the exercise that you staged. If you staged some exercise outside that context; for example, if you massed troops on the border of one of your neighboring states as political pressure against that state, this would be a violation and, therefore, bring a rebuke or some other political pressure on you to withdraw. There would be a kind of standard predictability in the process except when there wasn't. The view that the joint chiefs took was that CBMs were only valuable, should only be supported if they enhanced warning. I as the principal State Department action officer for getting these CBMs devised and then approved bureaucratically in the United States and then approved within the allies and then finally launched at the Madrid conference, set out to discover what enhanced warning was. What did enhanced warning mean? They were very reluctant to talk about it by the way, the Joint Chiefs and actually the office of secretary of defense. Lynn Hanson was there at the time as the head of that office or the deputy assistant secretary with responsibility for this area of the office of secretary of defense Richard Derelick and Lynn Hanson were a couple of officers with all whom I was under very good terms. I like them still. I have great respect and admiration for all of them, but they weren't about to talk too much about enhanced warning. I began an investigation of what it meant and one of the first things I asked was if it meant, I'm trying to think of the right word here, earlier warning. Then enhanced warning would mean that you would, by these measures that the other side took in violation agreements solemnly pledged, give you earlier warning of possible attack. The response to that was a vociferous no. They weren't going to give you an earlier warning and the military said that their intelligence was what they counted on for that and they didn't think this would make any difference in all. What it turned out to be, enhanced warning really meant that, or reflected a general fear at the Pentagon that the political leadership in times of crisis will tend to temporize, will tend not to take military steps which are necessary, will tend to try to explain away the actions of the other side because you always hate to take steps which from a political point of view seem to be irreversible, leading you on to conflict - as they had a lot of experience with the political leadership behaving in this way. They saw the balance in the inter German border as being critical. They had to take military action soon because our forces were outnumbered so delay for us would be fatal, but the delay that they worried about, was the political delay. That is, the political leadership failing to take the necessary steps which could be seen by the other side and would be portrayed by some on our side as provocative and therefore be politically difficult today. That if CBMs added to their side of the argument that an international agreement had been broken, in other words if their operation was such as to limit the president's political options in the time of crisis and to give political weight, not force him to, but give political weight to the necessity to take counter steps militarily, then they were in favor of them. Enhanced warning in other words, was politically more potent warning from their point of view and warning which gave political leadership less choice in the matter; narrowed options. Once that was understood, it was easier to design these CBMs so that they could achieve agreement by these people. In fact, my view was that they wouldn't have that effect. There's an old principal in political science that subordinates always try to narrow the option of their superiors and superiors always try to keep as many options open as long as they can so that's been my experience. There has been dynamic in bureaucracy.

Q: During these calculations, was anybody looking at what, in those days, we called a satellite states, East Germany, Poland, looking to see if you mobilize troops. I mean basically the mobilization; a sudden mobilization would not really be for the most part against the West, but against one of their own troops. Would that tend to limit the ability of the Soviet Union to quell its discontented allies?

HARRISON: Yes, the State Department, one of the State Department's motives in pushing these CBMs was to make it more difficult for the Soviets to do that. The Pentagon also had a scenario where the Soviets would ostensibly massing to repress the Poles or the Hungarians or the Czechs and would use that as a cover for invasion of Germany. There was some coincidence there. The State Department worried so much about that it didn't think it was imminent, but did see the value in keeping the Soviets away from say the Czech border when the Czechs were being rambunctious. Yes, both of those were motives behind this. My job, as I saw it, was to get agreement. Getting agreement meant that you had to accommodate the interests that existed in the federal government. There was a coincidence of interest in CBMs if you could formulate them correctly. Now, there was also another impact of that policy which was coming from the White House principally from a guy named Bob Blackwill who is now shaking up the Indian subcontinent as ambassador in New Delhi. His view was that CBMs were only useful if they were militarily significant. Now there was another phrase along with enhanced warning, which had a slippery meaning. What was the military significance after all? If you could establish that as a criterion among other criteria, and this was the eventual outcome, devising not CBMs themselves as a prelude to discussing this with allies and then at the Madrid conference, but devising criteria which CBMs would have to meet - those criteria serving enough of the bureaucratic interests within the United States government to get the United States behind that policy - then the issue of the actual content of those CBMs would have to be decided in Madrid by what the traffic would bear and the political winds would blow. It was actually very cleverly done. You can't agree on substance so you agree on structure and knowing that the substance is going to follow because once you get into negotiation there is a certain dynamic - and that process you can't determine ahead of time anyway. I actually devised the four criteria, taking them from what I knew about the view of the various agencies of the government. One of them was that they had to be fairly significant. Of course, it wasn't specified what that meant. One of them was they had to extend from the Atlantic to the Urals, and that was another key factor because of course the Soviets were trying to apply the rules of this collective European entity, the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, only through their westernmost areas. We were trying to define our European areas as extending to the Ural Mountains because that was from a military perspective the theater of operation if there would be a contest there. By stating Atlantic to the Urals we were trying to get them to concede the point politically that we were trying to drive home. Military significant, Atlantic to the Urals and two others that I'm sure a historian can find and I probably will when I edit this manuscript, but now 25 years are lost to me.

Q: Looking at it from the Soviets' side, I mean the assumption all along is that NATO is not going to attack the Soviet Union. So, therefore, if you're building confidence, you're really building confidence on the NATO side that the Soviets aren't going to strike. What were the Soviets thinking? Were they, was this purely something they had to give away to make it as weak as possible in order to get what else they wanted which was the firm border, or did they have anything in this?

HARRISON: Actually it was sort of opposite of the firm border. What they wanted was to be accepted as a European power who could negotiate with other Europeans and had an equal voice in European councils. In fact, the original proposal for a conference on security cooperation in Europe, the 33 European nations including the Eastern European satellites, was offered by them as a counterweight to the mutual balance force reduction, which was our proposal. The idea was that we would have to give them this political concession. They were European and not only that, their Eastern European satellites were independent in legitimate nations with independent voices in these councils. We had to by this process accept the status quo in Europe and to say by this whole process of security measures that we weren't going to challenge it militarily. There wasn't a military challenge effectively to be mounted, but there was a political concession implicit in all of this, which to them was very important. From the military point of view they could very well argue that they weren't really giving up anything since whatever the restraints this process was creating were ephemeral at best. In a real crisis, the last thing that would inhibit anyone would be CBMs. They could see this as free and we could see it as marginally stabilizing, but for the most part a sop to the Europeans who otherwise weren't getting much comfort and from whom we wanted certain other things. For example, such as increased defense spending and eventually stationing of certain nuclear missiles on their territory. A lot of things for which we had to build a political basis, and this was one of the elements of trying to do that. It was a creaky structure, moving forward. The interesting thing about it is how it was turned around to be used against the Soviets in ways that they had not anticipated. There were baskets to the CSCE: economic, security, and humanitarian, three baskets, issues. We essentially took the humanitarian issue and ran with it, using the standards of the Helsinki declaration on freedom of speech and assembly and all the things that had been written into that. Of course, since the Soviets claimed to be practicing all of those things, accepted by them. Then, spontaneously giving rise to the Helsinki committees, watch committees, in these countries using these standards against all of their expectations as the standard for their behavior, which then was taken up by NGOs of the United States and rather slowly by the government - which was slow to see the potential of this so that at the first follow up conference to Helsinki in Belgrade, the United States had not named names of dissidents in the Soviet Union. That had become the issue, shall we name them individually or shall we just complain in kind of general terms? It was a battle at that time chiefly between NGOs and the administration. The administration did not wish to be provocative in this process. The NGOs were pushing for more confrontational.

Q: Do you recall some of the principal NGOs?

HARRISON: Well, Helsinki watch was the principal one, but there were a lot of the Jewish organizations in New York that were also behind this push, and Amnesty International. They were all over the radar. I used to love to go up and talk to my opponents. I was always a great fan of that, unusual as a State Department officer. So, I went up to New York, I think on 48th Street right by the UN there on the East Side. They were all lined up down the street and I just went from one to the next talking to these people about their concerns. The change in that policy actually was also engineered by something called the CSCE Commission which - I think I had talked about it the last time - part of a congressional legislation, a legislative-executive branch joint commission with an independent staff on Capitol Hill to oversee the implementation of the CSCE process. Part of the ratification process in the House had been the creation of this supposedly bipartisan commission, Dante Fascell being its chairman in congress, Spencer Oliver being the staff director, and then a staff of mostly young people drawn from these kinds of NGOs. They were very hostile to the State Department which they saw as many people do as kind of temporizing namby-pamby group of appeasers who generally preferred calm negotiations with their Soviet counterparts to any progress that might be made on the social issues of the day. I must say there is some justice in that perception. But they had, because they had Fascell as their chief inspiration and because Fascell was then chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, they had considerable clout. Spencer Oliver was kind of an eccentric guy who I think did not realize that potential as much as he might have because he was seen by the administration as kind of dangerous and eccentric and out of control. I think that also was a valid perception, but what it meant was whereas it could have been enormously powerful if he had been taking the care to be seen as a more responsible actor in the process. He wasn't as nearly as powerful as he could have been, but still very influential. Since they went along on all of our meetings, off to NATO and they were represented in our councils of government, they pushed hard to move things in that direction. It all resulted in the naming of names, were we going to name names in Madrid? That's actually a funny story because I made that decision as an FSO-4 I think I was at the time, but I was heading the experts groups that would go out to NATO to talk about this. In our case it was with 16 or 17 people because everyone wanted to make sure that I wasn't going to say anything they disapproved of. So, we would be almost as big as everyone else combined sitting around that NATO table. I used to joke and say is there some point at which we should put our delegation chairs in a circle because really we were watching each other, that was our goal in life. I just made a statement at the beginning of one of these meetings saying that we were going to name names. Nobody ever objected to it. I thought probably that was the way the wind was blowing and we needed to do that in order to get agreement in the federal government about anything else to do with this thing. The CSCE Commission and the NGOs didn't care about the security basket and they didn't care much about the economic basket either. Those things had to be done. We had to remove the roadblocks and I just announced it.

Q: Who was opposed to naming names?

HARRISON: Well, George Vest, who was the assistant secretary for European Affairs, was identified by Spencer Oliver. I went over to see Spencer, too, one of the first things I did which was also unprecedented. People didn't go over to see him, he was seen as under the enemy camp. I've always enjoyed that kind of thing. So, over I trooped and saw him and was treated to a 30 minute denunciation of George Vest who I worked for earlier in my career, a kind of grand old man of the Foreign Service; you know, how awful a person he was and just sort of generally aiding the Soviet cause in life because he was unwilling to use CSCE as a source of confrontation with the Soviets. This, as you'll remember, was a kind of tail end of detente, so we were making nice with them. That was the policy, which George was committed and also he had, as all of us had, a sort of endemic State Department fear of posturing. That has become the order of the day now and it's hard to remember a day when we, you know, posturing was considered to be bad foreign policy tactics. It's all we do actually now, it's foreign policy entirely. In those days there was this perception that since we weren't going to do anything to upset the balance - since the tacit division between East and West was stabilizing the long term - and that any change of that balance would have to be accomplished by force of arms that might lead to nuclear exchange since there was some very uncertain process leading from the initial military clash to the ultimate nuclear exchange. Everyone was very frightened of that. Having accepted that tacit division, having made our peace with it, having failed to intervene when opportunities presented in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, that we should not posture about it. We should not substitute rhetoric.

Q: Well, I think we've been badly burned by the '56 Hungarian revolt where it was seen that we had fostered the hope that something would happen through Radio Free Europe and all of that. I mean that was the perception and this had sort of been one of those lessons learned.

HARRISON: Actually, there's a funny story about that. Eisenhower sent Nixon to the border and the Czechs are streaming across the border after the Soviet tanks began rolling in and Nixon was photographed hugging and kissing and generally overwhelming these refugees coming across the border. It turned out that the first refugees across the border the ones he was greeting were the old secret police who were escaping from the Czechs, not from the Soviets. I don't know if that's true, it rings true somehow. It's a different world. It's a world in which you would face a nuclear armed adversary, where destruction of the world is very much within the capability of the two sides, and in which the tenuous balance in Europe is the keystone to that structure so you're not going to upset that balance. You've made that decision and therefore why posture? Why poke the bear? You weren't altogether sure what the bear was going to do. You didn't have confidence in their judgment; you didn't have confidence in their command or control. They were increasingly seen as kind of an invalid, unpredictable.

Q: I mean also, to put it into perspective, we're not that far from December of '79 when they went into Afghanistan which always is still is sort of wondering what the hell went on. I mean, it seemed like a stupid move to have a coup against a communist led coup?

HARRISON: Oh yes, it was, but profoundly influential in the American political debate because since we're talking about this process that is leading up to the CSCE. The kind of mindset of the State Department and of the NGOs and of the breaking of that impasse by the agreement to name names in Madrid, which frankly I viewed, as inevitable. If it would help us bureaucratically as it did getting the rest of the position together, why should we insist on that position? Otherwise, I still wonder about that. I was actually an FSO-4.

Q: It's about equivalent in those days to a major?

HARRISON: Yes, I was. I didn't think anybody was going to complain because I thought that the State Department also recognized the inevitability of this and didn't know how to get from where they were to where they had to go. I just went there, and if you're willing to take the blame... The invasion of Afghanistan, which comes during this period, had an enormous effect because it changes the perception. We had developed a theory. Marshall Shulman is often associated with it and he was then in the State Department as an advisor on Soviet policy that the Soviets essentially were a defensive power, a xenophobic. They built this huge military weaponry because they couldn't stop. They had no bureaucratic mechanism once they were building tanks to stop building tanks. So, they weren't being aggressive, they weren't posturing, they were just trying to defend their place and that was opposed obviously to the traditional right wing views of the aggressive power and it's somewhere in a safe in the Kremlin and also the plan for world domination which eventually would be carried out once we had our guard down. The trouble with Afghanistan, although it was from their point of view tacitly stupid and a huge mistake, which probably was the most fatal mistake - this bunch of old geriatric old self-serving bureaucrats who were in charge of the place committee. It shattered the perception. After Afghanistan - which was in fact the use of military power to conquer a country outside your borders and outside that established zone of security, which we had tacitly agreed to, you couldn't argue that way anymore - Shulman left and the whole argument was discredited. The Soviets now had to be seen in a new light. It all comes down to what, when you sit down around that table in the State Department what argument will be heard and what not. Right now, for example, with Iraq, the argument that you can't make is that we can contain the Iraqis without removing Saddam Hussein. That argument simply is not acceptable politically so it can't be made. It might be right, but we are beginning that debate bureaucratically after that argument, at the point of how to do and what to do after. It changes the whole dynamic of the bureaucratic decision making process and this did, too. In profound ways which reverberated down through the years through the Reagan administration defense buildup, to which the political opposition had essentially disappeared at that point, largely because of that perception gap with Afghanistan. The irony - there are a lot of historic ironies around - that it was a stake through the heart of the old Soviet Empire. It was the "bridge too far" for them and really exposed every weakness of that system in a way which was no longer deniable even to those people who inhabited and prospered from it which I think was the thing in the end that brought them down, and not Richard Perle, as he thinks. At any rate, that was really the kind of key to getting the Madrid preparations done, and off we went. Griffin Bell in the van giving a speech in which he talked about the dark shadow of the Soviet repression which is a line which I wrote and which Warren Zimmerman ever thereafter claimed, but which was the tag line in the coverage of the speech. Then, having given that speech on subjects that he didn't understand and had no interest in, having been around a week or two, he resigned and Max Kampelman took over. We talked a little bit about the beginning of Madrid and the decision to keep close consultation with allies as Max dealt with the Soviet ambassador who had tried that at the beginning to sort of hive him off and deal with him, one great power to the other over the heads of the Europeans. But that was turned back and to Max's great credit he forged an agreement out of Madrid which clearly foresaw an international structure, a European structure which was inhospitable to Soviet policy to the Soviet system which, in a sense they had been snookered into agreeing to. They'd been hoist on their own petard. They had been - essentially their own pretensions had been used against them. They either had to abandon the pretensions or abandon the process and they could do neither, so essentially what we did was to say to them, you want to be a European country, there is a price of admission and, essentially to junk the system that you now have. They allowed themselves to belong to a process which increased the pressure on them to do just that.

Q: Back to the confidence building measures, are the American military only concerned about the political mindset of the United States with these things or do they have military problems with these confidence builders?

HARRISON: Well, they did to this extent that they wanted them to be verifiable, that was the third. Now I've got military significance, verifiable and from the Atlantic to the Urals. There is one more, which I'll probably, come up with. In arms control they have always been conflicted. They're all in favor of the other side and tough verification, too. They're more than willing if the other side should submit to it. When it begins to pinch the military they actually have to implement these things. Reciprocity rears its ugly head. They get very antsy, very ambiguous about it. Whereas on the one hand, they want them to agree they are military significant on the other hand, they're not going to agree to anything that's going to have Soviet observer playing volleyball at the American military maneuvers. On the one hand to satisfy the robust people over at OSD and at the White House who wanted to have measures that bite, they would agree to the rhetoric of tough measures. On the other hand, for the details: when the rubber hit the road and they had to start thinking about how they would absorb these things, they really had common cause with the Soviet military. I mean the militaries had more things in common here than the political usage did. So, that was the dynamic for them. They had nothing but contempt for the confidence building measures as actually military significant. They were willing to agree to the concept because it gave them a hammer to use to destroy anything that they wanted to as they saw it because none of it was going to be militarily significant and if they wanted to make a point of that they could defeat any of these individual measures on that basis once that criteria had been established. That same ambiguity was also very clearly evident and the verification debate later intended later INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty) and so forth. I had meanwhile left. My last hurrah was right at the opening of Madrid, then I transferred to London and went out there.

Q: You were in London from when to when?

HARRISON: From '81 to '85.

Q: What were you doing in London?

HARRISON: Well, I was after a short interval, the deputy political counselor in London, but my portfolio was all of that defense stuff that I had been, well much more than I had been doing in PM because I hadn't been doing all the hard arms control in PM. I'd been doing the soft stuff that had just turned out to my great career benefit that the soft stuff was always going on. Of course, in London the big issues were nuclear arms reduction. There was a big movement then. CND, Committee on Nuclear Disarmament, which existed in the '50s for the first time, but had been revived in the late '70s, to Russell, you know, the mathematician. Lord Russell who had a first name.

Q: Lord Russell was his name; it'll be submitted. Let his wife worry about that.

HARRISON: It certainly was not Bernard, but that's the only one that occurs to me. Anyway, he had been one of the fathers, intellectual fathers of this, but it had been revived and it was drawing enormous crowds.

Q: The Ladies of Green Common.

HARRISON: The Ladies of Green Common. Yes, they were great fun. We were trying at that time, in keeping with our theory of nuclear deterrence, to deploy intermediate range nuclear forces. I hope this will be put in the media because a hundred years from now people are going to have a hard time understanding this, but I will explain. We and the Europeans had different perceptions about the purpose of our nuclear deterrent policy. The Europeans perceived this as an effort to fight a nuclear war in Europe and we perceived it as an attempt to prevent a nuclear war in general. We had evolved over the years from massive retaliation which had turned out not to be credible, that is anyone launches at us, we massively retaliate, destroy them, root and branch. This made a lot of sense when we were the only ones with nuclear weapons and even a lot of sense when we had a huge preponderance of nuclear weapons, but no sense at all when the other side built survivable nuclear delivery systems because we could maybe wipe them out, but not the nuclear weapons and therefore, we'd have to take a hundred million or so casualties and no one thought that was credible. Therefore, under that standoff the Soviets with their conventional preponderance could easily invade Western Europe, roll up our allies and establish their reign, and too bad for us since we wouldn't be able to oppose them conventionally in time. In order to counter this idea, we developed all kinds of intermediate stages in this process. Now the Indians and the Pakistanis are going through the same process interestingly enough, with all kinds of concepts, which were brought together under the rubric of flexible response. Flexible response required that you'd be able to respond at various levels in the nuclear escalation. That is, if the other side attacked you with tactical nuclear weapons you would have tactical nuclear weapons, battlefield weapons to use and you could respond on that level and keep this was a theory the escalation from moving to what was called the central systems which meant blowing us up. So, tactical nuclear weapons and then theater nuclear weapons were the next level. For a long time there weren't such things, weapons with a range of 2,000 miles, that is enough to reach all of Europe from the Soviet Union and enough from Europe to reach all of the Soviet Union this side of the Urals. That had been a hole in the nuclear standoff for a long time. The Soviets filled it in the '70s with a weapon called the SS-20, which had three warheads. They started deploying these things and now we had no response. The issue was: suppose we have a Soviet tactical attack on Europe, will we respond with central systems, which was all we had? We had bombers, but bombers were vulnerable. By then you couldn't guarantee they'd get through the Soviet air defenses which had become formidable, and probably they couldn't have so or at least any numbers. So, our argument was we needed to station nuclear weapons in Europe as a deterrent because if we had them and the Soviets launched this attack against Europe we would destroy the Soviet Union from Europe and therefore, they wouldn't launch the attack; they would be effectively deterred and we would not move to central system. What we saw as a deterrent, many Europeans saw as war fighting strategy. That is the Soviets launch on Europe, and we fight to the last European, exchanging between Europe and the Soviet Union and then getting rich on the scrap after these places had been reduced to rubble, while keeping U.S. sanctuary. That was the other side of the puzzle. Really, you could draw both conclusions depending on the presumptions you began with about U.S. intentions and so forth. The weakness of the U.S. argument had always been the willingness of the United States to accept a hundred million casualties on behalf of the Europeans which the Europeans never believed and which the Americans never really believed either because the issue was never really raised. If you put it to a vote it would not have carried a majority of the American people and no one in the administration really believed it either. We were in a position of trying to convince the Europeans of the truth of something we were ourselves not convinced of, really in our heart of hearts. We wanted to deploy these missiles to create this balance and therefore keep a seamless deterrent. That was our argument. In Great Britain there was a huge opposition to this. They had their own independent nuclear deterrent of course. Polaris submarines, they still have, supplied by us. Because they didn't trust that guarantee ultimately that was why they had them. They had a big political debate going. This was the time of the nadir of the Labour Party in the UK and Thatcher triumphant. She was facing the election of '82 I think it was, Michael Foot and the Labour Party which had been dominated by the kind of loony socialist left which Michael Foot, a very nice man, had always represented politically. The very left coterie of the party which had provoked the break off of the social democrats, David Owen and friends, Roy Jenkins and others protesting that left-wing movement. It left the Labour Party a very ineffective opposition and one of the reasons they were ineffective was because they were both anti-Reagan and anti-nuclear. They were constantly portraying Reagan as a moronic ex-actor of great irresponsibility and simultaneously arguing that they should rely on the nuclear weapons of the United States and get rid of our independent nuclear deterrent. People saw through that and there was absolutely no argument there that could be sustained by them. The public on the other hand which was more viscerally against these deployments rose up in their hundreds of thousands to protest and one way, and these protests in Hyde Park I used to go over, it was a lot of fun actually. They'd march around with banners and corpses and effigies and American flags and have a gay old time which is a good thing on the whole I think. My job was to coordinate with the British government to get these things deployed and to defeat the Women of Greenham. Now, Greenham Common is one of our deployment sites and it was the one closest to London, or the easiest one to get to really. It was the center of a lot of demonstrations and eventually a vigil which began as a coed vigil, but it got cold and rained and the men being men went home, but the women being women, they may still be there. I don't know, but they stayed and after that had happened the women became militant being by themselves and excluded men. This had begun as kind of a de facto situation, but had rapidly become an ideological statement so men weren't invited. The women ran around harassing the base. One of these things they did was to pour super glue on locks on this big chain link fence around the place, they'd super glue the locks. The military would constantly chop those locks off and put new locks on and those were being super glued. They would lie down and prevent people from leaving and coming and then the British police would come and drag them off and they would go and lie down again. So, this was kind of a suractic thing that went on and very dismal circumstances. You had to admire them because it's the worst in the English countryside in March after six months of gloom with another two to go and you live in tents out there. I mean it was just awful. Her Majesty's government was making common cause with us in getting these cruise missiles deployed so what we did - actually what I did - was to form a committee which included them and us at the Embassy and then the commands in Europe that had charge of this, EUCOM (European Command), for example, to get everybody together. We did that once a month to plot strategy, which in the end was successful. It was a last sort of gasp, but the peace forces had a mole inside the defense ministry - Hazleton's office - who leaked to the papers the day that the C-140s were going to show up; were the first of these missiles. It was a Saturday this leaked and the British government, being civilized, doesn't work on Saturday. They all go to their country homes, those who have them. We being puritans and having left because of the sinful imbalance that we saw around us, work on Saturday much of the time. I called Murray Stuart who was the Under Secretary of Defense at his country place with this, and we conspired to move up the date of the arrival by one day, so they were all preparing together on Monday when the first of these airplanes were going to show up, but actually they showed up on Sunday. We kind of stole the march on them and they began to be deployed; a very expensive and nice facility out there. That was the main thing I was engaged in, but I was also coordinating with HMG on all aspects of defense and arms control policy which was great fun because my counterparts in the bureaucracy at the FCO - and I'm going to forget one man's name now, but I will remember it for the transcript. One was John Westin who was at the defense department and later went on to be the ambassador to the UN, Sir John and the other whose name is escaping me to my great chagrin, one of the greatest men I've known in my service who was the assistant under secretary at the time for this subject and then went on to be the permanent under secretary eventually and then was made Lord and then died young tragically three or four years ago. At any rate they were tremendous people, at the top levels of the British foreign office are, they're all smart. Some of them are patronizing in a way which renders them less effective than they otherwise might be, but cling to that sense of superiority with tenacity which would amaze. Neither of the people I dealt with principally were in that category. Later Brian Cartilage moved into that job and he was much more a foreign office type, although a nice guy, but much different. I was very fortunate in my counterparts and my interlocutors. They were much higher ranking than I was, but you know, I was the U.S. guy and it was very good. This was the period of the Star Wars speech by President Reagan so that was in March of '82 I think it was. He gave the Star Wars speech taking our bureaucracy by surprise, and theirs certainly and changing the whole nuclear debate, the whole strategy on doing Herman Kahn. Undoing 35 years of nuclear strategy which we thought he knew nothing about so could easily undo it. Couldn't be confused by all of it and putting a new emphasis on defense. That was interesting, too because it showed, I think better than anything in my career, the power of a president who knows what he knows. I saw this cartoon that was - a lobby group called High Frontier had produced this cartoon - of laser platforms in space destroying reentry vehicles as they try to get through this defense, and it looked like a good idea. It was of course, complete fantasy at the time, a complete fantasy now as far as that goes. It had great political appeal and Reagan was a great politician, maybe the best, well certainly since FDR, a man who knew what would appeal. If it appealed to him, it would appeal to the people and it appealed to him and it did appeal to people, but didn't appeal to the people who had laboring in the vineyards all these years according to a theory which had been propounded by Shelly and Herman Kahn, both of them mathematicians, 40 years before. That theory of nuclear strategy, which I gave an inadequate summary of a few moments ago. All of that contrary to common sense, horrific in its consequences and a justification for the massing of massive nuclear arsenals on the two sides, far beyond anything that could conceivably ever be used: 23,000 warheads at one time for us. One of the great challenges in those years had been finding targets because there aren't that many or even kind of that many legitimate targets for nuclear in the world as a whole, let alone in the Soviet Union. It was all a kind of a huge bloodthirsty, awful, academic nonsense in fact, but Reagan was the first one to see since he, I don't think he did the puzzling through of this to reach that conclusion, it just didn't make any sense to him. He said that we enacted on it, which was a complete right turn or maybe a 180 for the federal government.

Q: How did your British colleagues react? How were they seeing this?

HARRISON: SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative), very negatively. They thought it was terrible. They thought it was going to throw off negotiation. They thought that - because the theory held that defenses were aggressive: they were aggressive because they created a sanctuary for your forces and therefore gave you freedom to use your forces, and therefore gave you freedom to use your forces and therefore they were destabilizing. We all, that's the theory we had been operating on, the forces were based on it, the negotiations were based on it, everything was based on it, the mindset was based on it and their programs were based on it, too among others. They were just trying to get their submarine force modernized at that period and Reagan had just said all that stuff was irrelevant, would soon be useless. It also for them meant that the United States was going to shelter behind this kind of cosmic national line, and it portrayed - and I think they interpreted it this way quite rightly, this idea of which we've always had if we just got the right technological fix it would relieve us of the necessity of dealing with these pesky foreigners all the time. They saw that. For all those reasons they thought it was a disaster and said so and I dutifully reported that fact with the great encouragement of Rick Burt who was then Assistant Secretary for European Affairs and also saw this as a disaster. I went on reporting all of this after he had sensed that the political winds were shifting, he decided that he would get with the program. Before that I was back talking with Jim Dobbins who was then Deputy Under Secretary and he said essentially we'll just sort of ignore this thing and he'll forget about it and it will go away, but Reagan didn't forget about it. He became a kind of road star of policy. The whole policy machinery, because Reagan couldn't be confused with facts, he couldn't be out argued because you knew more about Herman Kahn and his theory of deterrence than Reagan did. He didn't know and he didn't care which may in retrospect have been precisely the right attitude to take. An aside here: when nuclear weapons became a weapon of war and when the Soviets acquired them in the late '40s, politicians found themselves unable to cope and essentially abdicated responsibility. And bureaucracy did, too, to academics to deal with - what to do with these things. The academics were eager, as academics are when presented with an opening in the policy world to propound a policy for this. Although it had absolutely nothing to do with anything really except itself. It was this great invert universe of massive retaliation and flexible response and defense and depth and all of these things which intellectually followed from one another, but followed in this course and erringly departing from anything that anybody was actually going to do. Reagan didn't see all that, but somehow intuitively cut through all this endless crap. For example, in the late '70s, one of the debates that I was involved with had to do with multiple pinpoint basing because the theory held that your forces had to be survivable, your central systems had to be survivable, but there had been increases in accuracy, there had been MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable reentry Vehicle) missiles and overwhelming defenses you'd built for them. These silos out in Wyoming, which were good if the guy could get within half a mile of you, but if he could get within ten feet, not so good. The theory held that he would therefore preempt because he could disarm you with the first strike and in order to prevent that and to keep robust and deterrent you had to protect those systems. Because of accuracy improvements you couldn't protect them if they were in one place. The other side would know where that is could destroy them. You had to cover them. How are you going to move them? All kinds of ideas were created which were as fantastical as can be imagined. One of them was racetrack. The idea was you would dig a huge trench in the shape of an oval out in the Nevada desert somewhere and the problem by the way you had to do it somewhere and wherever you wanted to do it there were senators and congressmen who didn't want you to do it. You never were going to be able to do it. You would be in this trench which would have a cement movable cover which would be 50 miles in diameter or so, 20 miles in diameter. You would have railroad tracks. On these tracks you'd have cars and on these cars you'd have missiles. The cars would move around in unpredictable ways on these tracks so that the other side would never know exactly where you'd take the target to get the missiles and you would have these cement covers so they wouldn't be able to see and they couldn't destroy your deterrent. They couldn't target them enough to destroy them all if you made that circle big enough. Somebody once calculated that it would take the cement production of the United States for ten years to create the cement to do that, but we were off in this Herman Kahn-Shelly world of fantasy anyway, so what difference did it make? Then, since you also had to try to limit these weapons you had to have verification and you couldn't have verification with a mobile system because when the verifiers showed up it could be someplace else. These cement covers you had on this race track would have to roll back once a year or once a month or once a week or whenever it was when a Soviet satellite was overhead and they could then see the whole race track and see how many missiles were on it and verify that we hadn't put too many on there and then you'd roll them back and move your missiles real quick so that they were someplace else by the time the Soviet targeting missiles arrived. Millions of man-hours were put into devising plans like this.

Another one was called dense pack and the idea there was that you'd put all your missiles close together and now the Soviets are attacking, but they have fratricide problems because the initial explosions, it's impossible to coordinate all these missiles coming in so that they'd explode simultaneously and the first ones would explode and destroy the others coming in. Even though you'd lose some of your missiles you'd have enough when you could attack. Complete baloney. I mean, unbelievably inventive nonsense, all of it. Reagan just cut through all that stuff with another bit of unbelievable nonsense, but a different kind and a bureaucracy which had been headed off in this direction unstoppably. This bureaucracy in this sense, a lot like the Soviet tank production. Once you started, you couldn't stop. We had built 35 years of theory and treaty and armament systems and spent hundreds of billions of dollars to flesh out this thing that these mathematicians had devised and by God, we'd give it up reluctantly. In fact, we didn't give it up, we kept it and had the defensive thing, too which was the ultimate outcome because we were trying to get congressional funding of the MX missile at that time and you know, at the same time Reagan had said that these missiles are all going to be obsolete by the year... it kept moving, but I think the original goal was '95 or something. I don't know. You know, there's a period of time in bureaucracy, seven years, which really is forever. It's like counting in prehistoric, one, two and a bunch. The government's the same way. The first year out here, the second year out here and then forever. Now Bush is saying ten years from now we're going to do something. What was it the other day, I forget? Well, ten years doesn't exist. I mean ten years from now that's fantasyland. The only thing we've ever done for ten years in this country is the interstate highway system and social security, but otherwise, ten years is beyond the policy horizon. You're not going to be there in ten years and 90% of congress is not going to be there in ten years. California is going to be 60% Hispanic in ten years. You don't know what's going to happen in ten years. You can say that you're going to have an impenetrable missile defense. I think, what is it now, 2006? Congress continually passing resolutions saying when this is going to be. So, it's another bit of nonsense, but the great thing about it was that it broke the old glacier of the previous nonsense and that's got to be good. If it had been issued in something rational, that would have been even better. At least we got some innovative thinking and racetrack was dumped and dense pack was dumped and all that other nonsense. Now, of course, we're talking about maybe having a force, which is a tenth the size of the one that we thought was necessary because of what all these academics thought in 1948. It's kind of parabola. You know, God loves fools and drunks and the United States, even though we stumble along blindly, never thinking reading a map drawn by idiots, we seem to have sometimes stumbled along in the right direction.

Q: Tell me how did you feel about this, were you seen and your colleagues as having to look at this hard; in more practical terms than the academics, you know, the blackboard and they're sitting back in New Haven?

HARRISON: Well, no, I mean I was part of the "in" mindset. I'd been raised in that mindset. That was the way I saw the world so I thought this was nonsense. I think it was nonsense, but so was the stuff we were doing.

Q: But, were you seeing the stuff we were doing as nonsense or had you gotten so absorbed in the minutia that you're beginning to lose the forest?

HARRISON: I think there was much of the tree phenomenon, but there was an argument to be made and which can still be made that no matter how nonsensical it is, it was stable.

Q: If the other side is looking at it the same way, then it has a dynamic of its own.

HARRISON: But they always refused to, that was the kicker. They always refused to accept any of it. They said, no, no, no, this is all nonsense that we don't accept. This is just a device that you use to negotiate from the point of advantage with us, nonsense. Once nuclear war starts, it cannot be controlled. Yes, when you gamed it, you sit down and do some gaming, that's right, that's the way it'd come out. Somebody said the battle plan never lasts beyond the first shot that is fired. Certainly in nuclear war, the notion that you were going to escalate by any precise plan that you had was absolute errant dangerous nonsense, and the Soviets said so. Now, they said we've got to prevent any exchange, but you see, they said that because they had, we said, a conventional advantage in Europe. If the nuclear weapons were taken out of the equation because they could not be used without ultimate destruction for both sides then we were left with the conventional balance. That meant we had to spend more money, put more troops and persuade our recalcitrant allies in Europe to actually do something robust, which we knew was beyond us.

Q: Were you seen at this time, now it's extremely evident that the Europeans were falling way behind in technical innovation, well investment in military things?

HARRISON: Oh yes, absolutely. We spent a lot of time talking about it. Carter had set a 6% - was it 6? I think so - their defense budget should rise 6% in real terms every year and however long it took to and they all solemnly swore that that would happen. It was a nice thing to solemnly swear and made us all feel better, but didn't happen. They didn't have any political constituency to do that so that was the end of it.

Q: Well, the British by this time, you know, one of our, I don't remember who it was, you know, the British have got wonderful bands and good parade functions, but they really don't have much. They had to scrape together a navy, which had already, to go to the Falklands which?

HARRISON: And could easily have been beaten there.

Q: Easily been beaten and it was the navy that if they'd waited another year wouldn't have even been there?

HARRISON: Right, plus if the Argentine armorers had fused their bombs better it would have been a complete disaster for them. There was a lot of luck involved in that. We could see it and the armies are a lot like symphony orchestras really. They get relatively more expensive over time because they're labor intense. Labor becomes an expensive commodity and also in defense terms the machinery of defense was doubling in cost in real terms every generation and they simply weren't going to do it. One of the things they tried to do was to combine, build a fighter for Europe, because none of them could afford to do it on their own, but they simply didn't have a political consensus. In Britain it was better, I think they got 3% or 4% in real terms in Thatcher's first four or five years. On the continent it just wasn't going to happen and when the Soviet Union faded from view, we were out of luck. They were going to spend their money on other things and not see the threat.

Q: While you were doing this, although you were with the British, were you seen, how were the French on this? I mean, the French usually are the odd man out.

HARRISON: Well, we hadn't made the mistake of trying to deploy any of these missiles in France so they didn't really have a voice in debate. They had their own nuclear deterrent and their view had always been, we don't rely on American systems. We have a sufficient deterrent to bloody the Soviet nose and relative to the prize we constitute it's sufficient to deter them and we don't care what anyone else does. That's their business, so they were not actors in this play. The Italians were because we wanted to deploy there and the Dutch because we wanted to deploy there, because we wanted to spread out this, you know, we knew if we tried to go into any single country we'd be defeated because no country would take all the risks. We had to have multiple deployment sites which meant we had to fight in multiple parliaments and everyone of them it was a political uphill battle to get these things deployed, these intermediate range missiles because of a perception that we were eager to fight to the last European. The interesting thing was, the bureaucratic dynamic was that if you wanted to get these parliaments to agree therefore, you had to have a credible position on arms control. Even though you were in the Reagan administration and then dominated by people who were very anti-arms control, they founds themselves forced to engage in the process credibly because otherwise they were going to lose that battle. Their goal throughout these years was to look credible without doing anything. The State Department's goal was, too, because they saw that was a transparent strategy which would lose the fight in the end to get them to do things which were actually meaningful in terms of arms control and that was the dynamic. It was a dynamic because we wanted to deploy. Once we got the deployment in, that became less pressing, but by then Reagan had become the most anti-nuclear president we ever had. He didn't like nuclear weapons, he wanted to see them gone and it was another part of the orthodoxy, which he rejected, which was again very refreshing and in a way wonderful. He at Reykjavik in these years agreed to give up all land based ICBMs, had to be dragged into the bathroom by Bob Linhart and Richard Perle and persuaded that he couldn't do that. Then they had to spin their hearts out to claim that he never had. Everyone knew he had and it was absolutely marvelous. They were terrible destabilizing weapons and he didn't like them. He wanted to see them gone. So, in the INF debate, we're trying to force credibility on defense, but trying to avoid any real steps in state defense. Richard Perle came up with what he thought was the wonderful solution and that was a zero option. The zero option was that in the negotiation that both sides would eliminate all of this weaponry. Neither side would have any. It wouldn't be reduction which we'd been trying to negotiate, stable level, no, none of that, none. It was wonderful because from his point of view he thought it was unattainable for a very good reason and that was that the Soviets had already deployed 600 odd warheads. They'd spent a lot of money doing it. There was no assurance that we could do it. We hadn't gotten the political agreement in Europe yet. That was questionable and even if we did it, ours were going to be mainly cruise missiles which was a much less effective weapon system than the SS-120 and they would have a permanent advantage. Why on earth would they give up something they'd already done for something we might do, but maybe couldn't? At least Richard Perle thought so and he thought it was foolproof because he knew it would be very popular with Reagan, who hated nuclear weapons, and with the Europeans and would undercut the movement in Europe against this INF negotiation which effectively it did. It was marvelous from that point of view, but the irony, which history is rich in which I have discovered, is that Reagan did not see it as a tactic, as Perle did, but as a genuine negotiating goal and got Gorbachev to agree. So, instead the outcome was exactly the opposite of the one that Perle had hoped for, which was to have a robust nuclear deterrent in this area, but nothing in this area because the INF treaty was agreed. All these missiles that I had worked so hard to deploy were removed in the late '80s, and that probably is a good place to stop.

Q: Okay, well is there anything else developing during the London time?

HARRISON: I would have to think about it. There was always the domestic politics. That was the period of the coal strike and I want to talk a little about the embassy itself because some future historian may wonder. Ed Streator and John Louis our first ambassador and Price our second ambassador there and sort of how that embassy worked in those days.

Q: Yes, I'd like that very much, the view of Thatcher and the coal strike and particularly how this is dealt with. Also, how were your political military mandates viewed by the embassy? In other words, what were you getting or were you kind of doing it and working it? So, we'll pick all that up next time. Today is April 30, 2002. We're in London in 1982.

HARRISON: 1981.

Q: 1981. So, your job is what?

HARRISON: I was the pol/mil officer there and then I was the deputy political counselor after Rick Melton left to a guy to Dick McCormack who was the political counselor and had come out of policy planning before that. Big political section, a lot of future stars worked in it. Bob Frasure who later became a luminary on various ways and tragically died in Bosnia, was the guy who did African affairs and Jim Hooper did Middle East and Brunson McKinley who was later ambassador. All three of those people became ambassadors, and Robin Raphel who became ambassador a couple of times, and assistant secretary always a lot of very good people there which mean that the embassy and the political section ran without a lot of supervision. Most of those people, too were sent by their respective bureaus. They had slots, the bureaus all had slots there and they sent people there as reward for good service as well. Gib Lanpher who later became ambassador to Zimbabwe was in that section. You know, when you work with good people it is always a joy and there were certainly a lot of good people there. Dick McCormack took a very hands off management approach. He had to be persuaded to have a staff meeting. He thought professionals should be self-directing and so which they all loved because they were self-directing. There weren't a lot of people there that needed supervision. My job was to liaise with HMG on arms control issues and political military affairs at large. That was my portfolio. Later when I became a deputy counselor I did some other things, but that was always my main focus. There were many things going on at the time on arms control, the star treaty. This was the period in which Reagan made his speech; Star Wars in March of '83 during my tenure there, so debate was hot and heavy. Also, the British anti-nuclear campaign CND, Committee on Nuclear Disarmament, had revived. It had initially had its heyday when Bertram Russell was its most prominent figure in the 1950s and '60s and then had submerged only to reappear. The occasion of that reappearance being the desire of our government, supported by Thatcher's government, to deploy intermediate range nuclear forces in Britain as well as in Belgium, Italy.

Q: This is in response to the Soviet SS-20s?

HARRISON: That's right and a part of the general theory of deterrence, which held that you had to be able to match the other side of each possible level of escalation. The problem was that from the European point of view, stationing missiles in Europe was a way of limiting the war to Europe. What we argued was that stationing missiles in Europe was a way of linking the European conflict to central systems and therefore, that is to say that our land based and sea-based nuclear forces and therefore increasing the strength of deterrence. That is, we argued always, under NATO Article 5, attack on Europe our NATO partners would be an attack on us and be treated the same and therefore, a nuclear attack on Europe would be treated as a nuclear attack on the United States. The theory was that we would have, therefore, we had to link this nuclear exchange which might occur in Europe because of the Soviet SS-20s which were multiple warhead missiles which could reach all of the European capitals of our NATO partners, but to deter their use we had to build a linkage to our systems so that we could argue with the Europeans that this would involve a general nuclear war and therefore, not one limited to Europe. Their fear always was that we were devising this strategy to have a nuclear exchange which did not touch our homeland, to keep the United States as a sanctuary. The problem was that the argument cut both ways. You could argue either way, it all depended on your perception and intention and you could never establish intention and you could never change perception so the side you ended up on could argue with equal ferocity from their point of view. The problem that the British opposition haand it was being led by the Labour Party, Michael Foot, was its leader, a very ineffective fellow, past his sell by date by ten years or so, an old socialist and kind of a ditherer, no match for Thatcher who had certainly in abundance. Foot was one of those people who liked to analyze issues. He generally came out on one side, but he liked to dither a lot first. He was not a decisive force, but a more fundamental problem they had was that they were very anti-Reagan, very anti-Reagan administration.

Q: This is talking about the Labour Party?

HARRISON: The Labour Party I should say, yes, very anti-Reagan who was pictured as a cowboy, having a hair trigger on the nuclear might of the United States and therefore, absolutely undependable on the one hand. On the other hand, they were arguing for the abolition of British nuclear forces. The Polaris system the British had and were about to modernize, they were arguing against that. That argument depended on your assumption that the American nuclear forces could be counted on for deterrence against a Soviet nuclear threat. I used to tell them that they were pressing on the gas pedal and the brake at the same time. It was not a credible policy; it was not acceptable to the British public. They were decisively defeated in the elections of '82 I think; I might be wrong, and driven to kind of a rump party in parliament. The protest in the meantime was going on in the streets, CND was gathering 400,000 or 500,000 people in Hyde Park to protest the deployment of these missiles and the British government under Thatcher was staunch for this, as she was staunch for many things. There is no underestimating the value of staunchness in politics. If you are prepared to defend your position and you have a certain force of personality, as she certainly did, to intimidate those less certain, you can go a long way in life. Or you do what Reagan did which was to have a vision which is unsullied by fact and cannot be influenced by fact. It can be influenced by anecdote if you could think of the right one, but not by fact. An example of that anecdote thing, there was a cartoon we were trying at that time to deploy or that is to say we were trying to reduce the vulnerability of our land based systems and how would we do that? Well, one I think we talked about last time. One idea was to put these things on rail cars and run them around in tunnels in Nevada and then lift the roof every so often. A cartoonist named Off, I think at the Philadelphia Enquirer in those days did a cartoon, which I think was Brezhnev, he's standing, he's one of these shell game guys. He's got his three shells and he's standing behind the table. I'm sorry I've told it wrong. Reagan is standing behind the table with these shells and he mixes these shells up and he grins at Gorbachev who takes out a hammer and breaks all the shells. That cartoon by anecdote changed Reagan's mind and killed the multiple in point bases. It was true that if you could present your argument in a picturesque way or in terms of an anecdote because that's how he thought. He argued, too in terms of an anecdote. Back to the certainty of the Thatcher policy. You had on the one hand an absolute force of nature in Margaret Thatcher who was solidly behind the deployment policy and that in the end of a parliamentary system where the prime minister is recently reelected with a majority which is undesirable, in the House of Parliament that's the last word on the issue.

Q: I take it that you and others in our embassy felt quite comfortable with her?

HARRISON: With Thatcher? Oh, I think so. John Louis was the ambassador then. I was going to talk some about him. He as a very nice man, a very shy man. He'd inherited a lot of money. He was on the Fortune 400 list. His father had been the man who suggested to the Johnson Brothers, of Johnson's Wax, that they sponsor a radio program called Fiber McGhee and Molly. He was a publicist, Louis's father, and married one of the Johnson daughters and therefore. No, I'm sorry, his father did. He inherited the money from his dad, four hundred million or so, which is peanuts these days, but in the early '80s put him on the Fortune 500 list with the board saying that he had like actually pretensions to the first book of the republic. Sisyphus says to himself that his father, his grandfather had made the money, his father had pissed it away and he had maintained the fortune that he had inherited which is what Johnson had done, Louis had done. A very shy man, very retiring and absolutely no knowledge at all of European politics or any politics. He was not a political man. He had been appointed. I may have gone through this last time and, if so, the editor can take this all out because as the candidate, well, the rumor was because Mrs. Annenberg, who was the wife of the ambassador publisher who had rebuilt the residence to a high standard - a wonderful house, one of the greatest in the world - thought that she was the person to maintain it. Mrs. Louis, who was as in many cases you will find the opposite of her shy, retiring husband, a very forceful dynamo of a woman who in the modern era would doubtless be a CEO of some corporation, but grew up in a time when you had to count on your husband to do that sort of thing, so you ended up with a lot of frustrated women using energy and intelligence for relatively meaningless tasks, like that embassy residence. That's all, but I don't know that that's true, but there must have been some reason for it. He was, there were two factions in the Reagan camp. There was the Annenberg faction and the Tuttle faction and they fought over these big embassies and Louis was an Annenberg man. At Louis's first wedding, the best man had been Charlie Price. Charlie Price in the end was a Tuttle man, Holmes Tuttle in L.A. who'd been one of the early bankroll people for Reagan when he was running for office in California. They had resented losing this embassy to the Annenberg people so were kind of gunning for Louis. Louis who had arrived self-deprecatingly and acknowledging his lack of experience in diplomacy or lack of knowledge in European affairs, unfortunately never gave up that sort of line. He kept doing that. I remember talking about Ed Streator who at that time when I arrived in '81 had already been there for five years as DCM and was to stay for another three. In many ways the epitome of the diplomat of that generation, ambitious certainly in intelligence, but with a style that you don't find much anymore. A very cosmopolitan man with some money himself. There is a famous story; I was jut in London since our last encounter here. I was in London. There was a famous story in the embassy in those days of the battling Streators. Coming from a reception on the M3, they had a fight on the superhighway outside of London, so he ordered the car to stop and ordered her out beside the freeway. It turns out when I was back there, there was one driver who's still there that I knew from 20 years ago, the last of the old crowd and I asked him about this story. He'd been Streator's driver so he told me no, she'd ordered him to stop and to get out of the car. Then Streator tried to get him to go and negotiated back in. A very contentious relationship. Streator was also a diplomat of the old school in the sense that he cared about the political functions of the embassy and was extremely well connected in the British establishment. He was seen by the government and society as a whole as really the substantive part of the embassy. Kingman Brewster was ambassador before that and he was a man of a certain standing and weight in which Streator played a secondary role. When Louis got there, Streator emerged as the power not even behind the throne, kind of in front of the throne.

Q: Somehow or other Louis and I overlapped at Williams, but I never knew him.

HARRISON: Oh, as undergrads? Yes, well he is a very nice man. I told I think the story of about how he had a button under his place at the table at the residence there so he could summon the staff to clear the course and how he got to pushing that faster and faster so he could get those people out of there and how someone like me who came there for the meals a lot learned to eat quick. That food was not going to be there long so he could get out. It's been my experience in life that some people are just pathologically shy. You're born with that. I think they've done tests now to show that is a congenital thing. I mean, you're shy and many of them join the Foreign Service for reasons which I've never understood. I mean it's a job for an insurance salesman. It's a job for a carnival barker. It's not a job for a shy person and I think they see this side, this analytical side of it as you know, as attractive and then they end up at cocktail parties talking to sock manufacturers from Dubuque and it's torture for them. It was torture for him. I was once going out to the residence in the car with him and I asked him what he was going to do on the weekend and he said he was going to I don't know, one of the lord and lady's country houses, with incredibly boring and meaningless people who would have long sense fallen into obscurity in any place but England which is the last place you can excel because of who you are and not because of what you do. Our ambassadors tend to get very fond of that community and see these people as their social set; useless. So, they spend a lot of time because of sin of pride at country homes over weekends with boring conversations with people who have no influence on anything. He told me how much he was dreading the weekend to come and the worst of it was, he said, there wasn't even a golf course within range. He was a great shooter of birds, was John Louis, so that I think helped keep him sane.

Streator, because Louis was there dependent entirely on Streator, Streator emerged as de facto ambassador for all substantive purposes. Streator was a difficult man, but he had the great quality of appreciating good work which I've always found to make up for a lot of evils in supervisors, but only good political work. He didn't care much about the economic part of what we did and he cared nothing at all for the rest of the embassy. The fact that he was good at communicating to the people who worked in those sections. I remember when he left, we tried to get a fund up for a present for him from the embassy staff, but it was hard salami except in the political section because we all thought he was great. He would be querulous and difficult, but if you stuck to your guns and if you did good work at the end of the day he was very supportive. The great thing about him was that he was willing to try anything. He was willing to contradict Washington. He was willing to launch any idea you came up with and we came up with a lot of ideas. It was a time and I think for those in future generations who may find this dusty CD someplace, it's always time for good ideas. I just had this come up the other day, people now have a lot of money for terrorism programs. They don't have a lot of terrorism programs, so you're in charge of some office, you suddenly find yourself with ten million dollars, you're desperate for good ideas. You have a speech to give, you're desperate for good ideas and it's unlikely that you're going to have many. The fact that you're creative is not necessarily what put you in your present job and some people are imaginative and other people aren't. If you can find a guy with money and you have an idea, he'll be on you like a cheap suit. I mean it's like magazines. You know, they've got to divide the ads, the offices have to have ideas to spend that money. We had all kinds of good ideas we came funneling. Anything I came up with he'd send through.

Q: Can you give me some feel?

HARRISON: Yes, I'll give you a good example. We were trying to organize the deployment of these missiles. Well, after the election, the political outcome was preordained. We were going to deploy the missiles, but the women of Greenham Common, and I think I told this story, too were out there at one of the bases where these missiles were going to be deployed. We had to exercise if we were going to use these because a lot of them were mobile missiles, so to make them effective you've got to get them out of that base and out on the countryside roads. To do that you have to exercise doing that because the military can't do anything they haven't exercised to do. It's a fact of life. Once you get out of the base you were at the mercy of these women, so there was a big political issue there. In also just managing the deployment thing. I suggested that we form a committee because we had all these different people involved and one of them was EUCOM, the European command, the military side who was in charge of that. We had the FCO, Foreign Commonwealth Office and we had the MOD and of course the embassy and the State Department. I suggested that we form a committee and we'll meet once a month in London with the embassy chairing together with the MOD, my counterpart.

Q: MOD is the Ministry of Defense?

HARRISON: Ministry of Defense, we'd bring all these people together. In short order they had such committees in all the deployment countries, things like that. We also had a meeting of all the deployment countries that we hosted in London where we brought all the officials from Washington talk about the political intricacies of this. It was great for me. I got a lot of exposure on the issue and I dealt luckily with two of the best diplomats of that generation at the Foreign Commonwealth Office, primarily David Gilmore who was the head of the Defense Department at FCO, a wonderful man, very untypical British diplomat, a terrific guy among other things. He was also very adept and ended up as permanent under secretary and ended up as Lord Gilmore and died tragically young a couple of years ago in his early '60s and John Westin, both Lord Gilmore and Sir John as he was to later become the British ambassador to the United Nations was also. Both of them were wonderful interlocutors to have in that they had agile minds and the best of the British system which are very good indeed. Since we had this special relationship, I was free to share a lot of information with them and they with me and Rick Burt who had been in London and was back in Washington and was very solicitous of the British and these people in particular. I ended up having a whale of a time until Ed Streator left and we just had a good time. The policy was successful; it's a wonderful place to live. There's great people to deal with, the conversation is the best in the world, around a British dinner table. It's kind of I think also diplomatically it's a validating experience because like they used to say in the old song, if you can make it there, you can make it anywhere. The British don't suffer foods badly, but you can hold your own in that company you can hold your own in any diplomatic company.

Q: Tell me, what was your estimate at this time of the British military establishment because at one time one of our generals had said well the British have got great military bands, but I was just wondering. I mean, they had had a real problem scraping up enough just to get to the Falklands just shortly before you arrived there?

HARRISON: Yes, they had a secular decline in defense spending over the past 20 years. I was just talking to some Brits in London this last time around. Professionalism of course in the highest order, but continuing strains on the budget and so they began shrinking. One of the problems they had was that, too, to maintain equal standing with great powers you had to have all kinds of very expensive weapon systems. They tried kind of to do it half heartedly, for example, with the carriers with the Harriers on them, and they were debating in my time a new destroyer. It turned out the platform is relatively cheap to build, but the equipment that goes on the platform is hugely expensive because it is all even then getting increasingly complex in electronics. So, the question was not sort of building the shell of the ship, but how much equipment you should put on it. This was where the compromises were being made. I think they'd already accepted their relatively subordinate role militarily, but they were still sort of viewing themselves as a praetorian guard for the Western alliance, shrinking, but not trying to shrink the essentials and keeping the nuclear deterrent which was sort of the hallmark of their military standing, great power standing, nuclear power standing kept them at the table. Not a credible deterrent really, but their argument, which the French also made, was that you didn't have to do a lot of damage to the Soviets to discourage them from destroying Britain as opposed to discourage them from destroying the United States, a greater rival. Otherwise, you'd be dependent on American nuclear release policy, which you couldn't trust. They face it again now because their systems are getting old and they have to decide whether to replace them and that's going to be even more hugely expensive against a shrunken defense budget.

Q: Was it evident then and a matter of concern about the discrepancy between the American capabilities you know, I'm talking about equipment and all?

HARRISON: Not so much. I think first of all, the technology had not exploded as it did in the '80s and '90s. Precision guided munitions were not yet an issue, not yet a possibility. It was just a question of size and you could hope that quality in the kind of conflict you were liable to fight in would count for a lot in that circumstance. It was a subordinate role, but arguably had been a subordinate role since about '44. It was still a legitimate one and then as the gap increased I think the mood set in later after I'd gone that you couldn't really play as meaningful a military role anymore because the gap between you and the Americans had grown so great. But arguably the kind of conflict that we're now fighting, there's a British contingent in Afghanistan, feeds right into British capability because now we're talking again about small unit operations and high quality special forces and all the kinds of things that they can support. We're happy to share technology so I think a British military role is emerging again, albeit always subordinate to the United States. One of the things that they lack is lift capability. Actually everybody does now except us. If you want to get someplace to do whatever you want to do you've got to count on us to get you there pretty much unless you want to go by ship and by the time you get there, the crisis is long past. The Russians have some lifts that you can rent, but I don't think that probably is politically acceptable yet. Maybe, actually before too long because I think the Europeans would like to have an alternative to this dependency, but so you know, the standards of professionalism are very high and of course, the traditions. I once had a regiment up in Sandhurst I went up. It went up and ate in the regimental mess. This was, it was like eating in college at Oxford, even more so. It is a very tradition filled thing. You don't just tuck in. You go into the dining area of the commander's house and the regimental honors are there and there's a whole procedure you go through. You know we'll betide you if you miss a step in this process. I don't remember all of it, but it's a little like a church service, to maintain the traditions of the regiment. Their traditions are all ... and I can see the point of it, it's important to have that tradition to maintain morale in the fallow periods, like the '80s. So, I think the MOD will continue to be a major player and maybe a more major player now than they have been. I think that Washington would see them as an essential component of this anti-terrorism war because the political backing for it is there and it is very questionable elsewhere.

Q: How are we doing on time?

HARRISON: I'm going to have to leave in about five minutes. I'm sorry.

Q: What war were we looking at? You were there from '81 to '85? What war were we looking at?

HARRISON: Well, we were looking at the inter-German border. That was our main focus. The Soviets were at a conventional Soviet superiority offset by a superior U.S. technology and by the threat of nuclear retaliation for conventional attack. Flexible response, defense and depth, all of these strategies that had been devised for that asymmetry to maintain stability were very much at the forefront and pushed weapons procurement like the INF debate and the intermediate nuclear force debate like the tornado decision. It's nuclear capability, like the Polaris decision. All these things were based on its essential theory of deterrents which went back to mathematicians and game theorists in the late '40s and which was overthrown by Reagan in '83 who didn't understand it and therefore, felt no compunction about contradicting it. I'm sorry about this. I didn't realize I was going to have to go and we're only probably to '82.

Q: Well, we've kind of done a tour of the horizon, but we will pick up any issues in '82 to '85 so to speak. Great.

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This is the 31st of May, 2002. Roger, let's, we may be repeating ourselves, but you were in London '82 to '85. Do you want to talk bout the British election that was held then and from our perspective what were some of the issues?

HARRISON: Actually it was interesting, the election for British political purposes, too, because it was Thatcher's first re-election. She had been in office four years so the outlines to where Thatcherism had become fairly clear: the dismantling of much of the welfare state and the reprivatization of key industries, sort of the undoing of much of what had been done in '48 to '46 actually by the Atlee government that followed the war. This stuff that hadn't been working very well, and arguably just in time. Also, assault on the power of the unions which really was mounted in earnest after the election. The Labour Party had been drifting left as the Conservatives moved right and made as their leader, Michael Foot, who was an old socialist activist from the '30s, a newspaper man originally. Intellectual, a very nice man, kind of befuddled and I think he has always been kind of befuddled. He was sort of the typical absentminded hyperactive politician who was more ambitious than he seemed and seemed to have been for the Labour Party kind of a nod toward their past before they rushed onto the future. One of the key issues was updating their Polaris missile system and coincident issue was the Reagan administration. Thatcher's relationship with Reagan, Reagan having a very poor public image in England and much of Europe, much as George W. does now actually to which he has just been adding or maybe I should say subtracting.

Q: We're talking about George W. Bush the first time in Russia who was able to tour the Hermitage Museum in 15 minutes which I thought showed a great grasp.

HARRISON: Of speed and assimilation? Yes, maybe. Reagan had something of the same reputation and since Thatcher had seen the Reagan connection as one of the mainstays of her foreign policy, indeed, the mainstay of the foreign policy, this was used against her as well. The thing of probably having a problem of being anti-nuclear and at the meantime, defaming Reagan as a cowboy who was irrational and marginally sane. The problem with that was their nuclear posture was implicitly reliance on U.S. nuclear deterrents because the Soviet Union was very much in business in those days and none of us knew that it was only going to last another 16 years or so. Therefore, they were as I used to tell them pressing on the accelerator and the brake at the same time. They were trying to use the Reagan connection against Thatcher at the same time they were implicitly relying on the U.S. good nature and reason in controlling the deterrence for the West to which they would then not have any trigger as their nuclear deterrents had traditionally been seen. Also, they were burdened still with the labor movement in the Labour Party, which controlled the nominating process as much as the screwballs in our parties now control our nominating process. The activists tend to be more influential in that process than any actual election and they therefore were unable to nominate a more modern figure in the party so they were moving left. Tony Benn was staying out to the left of course and was kind of the figure they were trying to avoid and Michael Foot was a bit of a compromise, and a terrible campaigner.

The other problem they had that year was that seeing us move to the left there had been a split in the Labour Party and the moderates had formed their own party called the Social Democratic Party (SDP) which subsequently was going to merge with the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party always existing through this period. The Social Democrats trying to be then what the Labour party is now, a kind of Tony Blair Labour Party. To get out from under the private unions and despairing that the union power never to be broken or at least I shouldn't say never, but a political never that is never in the period in which they would be eligible to be prime minister - those that broke away from the Labour Party to form this movement. Widely popular initially, but the system of voting in Britain favors the established parties, and even though the Social Democrats did 18% or 19% they didn't break through the magical threshold of about 22% or 23% that you need to begin picking up various seats. They did all right, remained the wrong party. Labour was buried and Thatcher returned triumphant with all those parts of her policy intact, and that meant for us at the embassy that the issue of INF deployment of intermediate range of nuclear forces, which was essentially my brief there, had ceased to be an issue. So of course in that system there is no way parliament could effectively or ineffectively to publish the wishes of the prime minister who is after all in parliament of another parliamentary party. The issue, the policy issue was over, and there would continue to be demonstrations and so forth, but there was no longer any doubt about our ability to deploy those missiles or about how staunch the British would be in defense of our Star Wars initiative. Very staunch is the answer to that. Thatcher was one of the only enthusiastic supporters in Europe of that initiative even though her foreign ministry was not enthusiastic and again much like the current situation where Blair is an enthusiastic supporter of the Bush foreign policy for purposes of his own, but his foreign office is not.

Q: Would you say is that endemic to the situation, does the foreign office represent a point of view if the British government gets too far to the right or to the left, the foreign office feels it should balance it?

HARRISON: No, the Foreign Office has an institutionalized view, much like the State Department has, they are inherently multilateralists. They are inherent negotiators that like international agreements, they like to uphold international. All the things that established foreign policy thinkers everywhere in the world, are very distrustful of the kind of right wing recklessness that is evident both there and here, and also very suspicious of left-wing internationalism. I think that these foreign office views tend to be more alike internationally than some of them tend to be in agreement with their own administration, but there it's interesting because of this system of parliamentary democracy which gives the FCO an independent life which the State Department doesn't have. The State Department now is populated increasingly by political appointees who are sent there as an effort to control what is seen as recalcitrant bureaucracy, which is going to oppose whatever you want to do. This was certainly true of the first Republican administration. It's more true of Republicans but since Clinton came in after the Republican administration the Democrats were equally suspicious that it was a hotbed of Republicans. It's always a hotbed of what you don't like. You want to send people to control it and in our system you can down to the office director level if you want to since your political appointees are not likely to take anything lower than that who actually have to do some manual labor. It doesn't work because it is entirely professional foreign service there are no political appointees except the minister who is also a parliamentarian of course and the under secretaries who are parliamentarians usually, but there are only two of them. The rest of the building is staffed by this establishment point of view. It tends to have a more insular approach and it's insular as well because they don't have the system of testifying of course, they don't have the hearing process, they have a kind of or a form of it, but it's not at all an imposition on the bureaucracies. That means that bureaucracies don't have to worry about Parliament as the State Department has to worry about Congress. Parliament is under the same control that they are. So everybody is going to be back in the same policy and they don't have to go testify, they don't have to explain what they've been doing. They don't have to worry about Parliament subpoenaing their notes and therefore, they can have a good deal of independence, but also they tend to have an insular view of the world, which perpetuates from one FCO generation to the next. Even if our system is superior in some ways because it is much more responsive if you have to go up and testify. You know you're going to have to go testify. We're always seeing policy in the State Department in terms of how it's going to look at the front pages of the New York Times, plus it's a leakier bureaucracy and it's a much more distorting one with rivalries that often play out in the press to a much greater extent than the bureaucratic rivalries.

Q: The traditional one being the one between the Pentagon and the State Department?

HARRISON: Yes, exactly right, but not just there, everybody in town is prepared to stab you in the back - even some of your own bureaucratic compatriots. It makes our bureaucracy a much more responsive, changing, flexible institution. FCO is not. So, when Prime ministers come in they sometimes ignore it, which is what Thatcher did. She simply did not pay a lot of attention to the FCO bureaucracy; she built her own small foreign policy staff. Of course, the other problem they have is that they don't have a NSC either. The Prime Minister doesn't have an independent staff of foreign policy experts occupying a huge building to call on. Although they do have party experts they can use and they can call on anybody they want. The cabinet is self protective in an interesting way and of course, cabinet ministers do tend to get captured by their bureaucracies as that program has shown very well.

Q: Well, what is it, the principal, what the?

HARRISON: Yes, the PUS, the Principal Under Secretary, the senior civil serving the nation's bureaucracies and the cabinet secretary who is the sort of head bureaucrat. They'll be there when you're gone and self-protecting all of that stuff I thought very well in that series. After '82, there is a political decision to be made by the people, but this was so overwhelmingly a Tory victory, the Social Democratic moderate had failed to receive attraction, the Labour Party was completely discredited and everyone knew Foot had to go. I think they were down 140 seats, something like that. We got involved in the succession struggle for Labour Party leadership - involved in only the sense that we were very interested in who was going to take over for the party and whether they were going to move to a new generation leadership. One of their weaknesses was that they didn't have the moderate corps of the party, which had left for the Social Democratic Party largely to turn to. Those guys were gone and what they did have was a new generation and Dennis Healey who was old generation, a very canny, very visceral politician who had made his peace with the unilateralists of the Labour Party in order to keep an influential role. Ed Streator who was our minister then knew all these people then, was very well connected, had Healey to lunch and I was there to ask him what this Labour Party succession infight was going to bring and Healey said if it lasted six months that he would be the leader he thought and if it were more than a year it would be Neil Kinnock, a rising young Welsh politician, red haired with a radical wife, but himself relatively moderate in the terms of the Labour Party today. In fact, within three months of that lunch the party had turned to Kinnock who became the . Streator, who was chargï¿½, had him to dinner the night he became the leader and I was at that dinner, too. I think I said this last time, the editors will take it out, that the great thing for the Kinnock when they showed up was that they had a car and driver which was for them a revelation to look around for a parking space. Kinnock talked about how he was going to move the party back to an electorally attractive ideology, about all the left-wing problems he had to face and the particular power of the unions. But now to the rescue, Margaret Thatcher, who determined after the elections to break the unions and in particular, the coal miners' union.

Q: This was Scargill?

HARRISON: Scargill was his name, the world's most pronounced combover he used to try to look under, I mean where did the hair actually start. You could see, it was like looking into an aircraft hanger. You could hear back there.

Q: In other words he combed his hair back?

HARRISON: He combed his hair over. A choice I chose not to do.

They had a lot of small collieries that were inefficient and you had to close them down. Also you had to break the kind of cycle of coal miner wage increases which were tied to productivity, but their larger goal was to break the whole of the union movement on the economy, largely based on many other things: the cultural condition, the class structure, the working man versus the manager, the aristocrat. All of this stuff was very deeply ingrained, much more so than here. With the coal miners you could hope to achieve that with building up huge surpluses of coal to begin with. So, the government started stockpiling coal and then essentially provoked a strike. The other thing you wanted to do was to pick a particularly unattractive labour leader as your opponent. Arthur Scargill was certainly every bit of that, kind of looked like a racetrack tout and talked like one, too. He was not a sophisticated kind of guy. He was the sort of guy that would rise from the ranks without much thought to public relations and therefore, when he was thrust into this battle with Thatcher he looked liked a ward heeler and he kind of was a ward heeler, so you know, they quickly went to the mattresses as the mafia says. Everybody has extreme positions and the government just waited out the coal miners by using up this great surplus of coal and broke the strike. Broke in a sense the labour movement in England as well, England, Wales and Great Britain. One of the great tragedies of that was of course, the parades which the collieries used to put on every year where their brass bands would be featured because they all had brass bands with uniforms and banners and parades in the old days were miles long where these brass bands competed and of course that tradition is all gone now. But breaking this really made it possible for the Labour Party to modernize to come out from under the shadow of that legacy which had become electorally a huge burden. You simply couldn't hope to achieve a majority as long as you had that freight in the system. That economy, like our economy, had been becoming less and less blue collar and more and more white collar and the white collar constituencies that you had to win had different interests than the blue collar constituencies that had been your mainstay. How are you going to win?

Q: From the embassy point of view, say from your point of view, but your colleagues, I'm making the assumption that whereas a lot of the Foreign Service are essentially rather liberal, when it came to Britain, all of this had been grown up with movies like, I'm All Right Jack and the labour movement was pernicious as far as allowing the United Kingdom to be a solid economic power.

HARRISON: Oh, true, but they are so much nicer people. That kind of offset that. I think that if there was an embassy point of view in those days we had a Republican administration so we had Republican ambassadors. You have an enlightened officer corps who understood that a lot of this stuff was an anachronism and that all of that had to be modernized. You couldn't just go on with the sort of system subsidizing people who dig coal which you'd fallen into, energy modernization was necessary. It was all irrational choices and that the ideology of the late '40s was not proven, you do it and it doesn't work and therefore, you have to move on and so I think that was the general view. Offset by the fact that if you went off to a big meeting with labour people or if you had them over for dinner or you went to a reception, it was fun, because they were nice human people I mean they were a lot of fun. There was a Labour Party dinner at the residence every year, which various Republican ambassadors' wives were always threatening to cancel, but always stayed on the agenda. They'd start singing and drinking and it was wonderful. The Tory parties were all these constipated people in diamonds and you know, merchant bankers and everything.

Q: It was a fun crew.

HARRISON: Oh, just deadly, dull, boring and smelly and self-satisfied. You had to have some sympathy for the labour people as people and you also had to have some sympathy for the situation they were in. They were coal miners who had no opportunity to see to do anything else. There was sheep farming, which was the only other thing you can do in most of the areas where the coals were being mined. It was not a growth industry and no one recognized them as the kind of economic potential that the leaders in Ireland turned out to have once they could lift that yoke. Their concerns were justified. If I had been a coal miner I would have had similar concerns. Also, no one was greatly impressed with Thatcher's empathetic abilities.

Q: Warm and fuzzy were not the adjectives one would use.

HARRISON: No, that's right. She was prepared to accept no end of suffering among people with whom she had no contact. Maybe you have to be. Maybe political leadership requires a certain callousness to be effective which even Lincoln, if you look back, was able to summon up - although the compassionate man, but could be callous when callousness was required. Thatcher was naturally a callous person who couldn't understand why anyone would think other than she did or be unwilling to make a sacrifice as she saw as so necessary to the health of the country. So at any rate that whole drama played out that Thatcher emerged triumphant. There's always the Falklands. It was the elections; it was the breaking of the miners' union. All those things happened. It was the emergence, which eventually fizzled, of the SDP, in the Social Democrats. It was the beginning of the reform of the Labour Party. It was the completion of the intermediate weapons deployment which went forward then and was completed on the two track process and of course, the key to the deployment was the negotiation which was simultaneously going on to eliminate the missiles that we were deploying, but the negotiation then seen as largely a ploy for political purposes. Then, and this was a key thing, too, Richard Perle came up with a zero option as a way to keep European governments onboard for deployment - and that is the option of raising the negotiation the Russians, the level of zero for these missiles rather than an equal level of about 500 warheads it seems to me it was. The Russians had deployed about 1,600 warheads, 500 missiles. They were independent re-entry vehicles, but not independently targetable re-entry vehicles, so they were difficult to intercept, but you could necessarily take out three different targets with them. So, 1,600 or so warheads, and we were trying to put 500 on the ground and negotiate a figure lower than that as an equal level for the two sides which is what the theology of this, the old nuclear doctrine of the Cold War demanded. Not that we didn't have that level in the nuclear escalatory ladder filled. It was always a dangerous part of the theology to leave a rung out of the nuclear escalatory ladder because then you would go to the next rung which was a more serious exchange and more destructive, as the British and Europeans continually pointed out, involved our central system. We wanted to get that rung filled. Then Perle came up with the idea of suggesting zero, thinking that the Soviets would never accept it. Perle not being an advocate of arms control of any kind, but thought that zero would be very popular politically, but would be unattainable in the negotiation therefore the best of both worlds. It turned out that Reagan took it seriously and so did Gorbachev and that was the eventual solution once I was back in Washington where that was also my job because I was deputy assistant secretary then. At any rate, all that played out. The other big issue was, once they were deployed, once was our missiles were deployed, was that we had to exercise them and that meant because they were mobile missiles, making them mobile; taking them out of the base, running them around on the byways of England and taking them back into the base, so that the mobility would be demonstrated. Also, exercised because of the rule which I think is less true now than it used to be and that is if you have an exercise then you can't do it. I think that is very true. You've got; the military has to have an exercise plan. You can't just tell them to do something and they haven't an exercise to do. So, the idea was to take these missiles out of Greenham Common and the other places they were deployed and run them around. Well, the problem with that was there was a lot of protestors who were ready to try to stop that process and would lay down in front of the trucks or otherwise to make a political issue of this. No one thought that running nuclear missiles around the byways around England even without the warheads was going to be a public relations coup for our side. At that point we had been running this whole deployment process out of a committee which we had established at the embassy including the EUCOM people and the FCO people and kind of chaired by us. At that point, Hazleton was then British Minister for Defense stepped in and essentially cut the embassy out and made common cause with the EUCOM commander who was also not terribly happy to have embassy interfering with what he wanted to do with his missiles. He was okay with our role as long as it was a question of politically overcoming the obstacles to deployment because he didn't have missiles then. Once he had missiles he wanted operational flexibility. He didn't want the embassy sticking an oar in and Hazleton felt the same way. He didn't want the embassy sticking its oar in either, he wanted to talk to the operational commander and they could run that together. Suddenly I found my sources on DOD on this issue drying up and eventually determined what had happened. They did not volunteer to me what the new guidance was, but I sussed it out after sitting in waiting rooms for long hours wondering why these guys who had been so friendly not a week before were suddenly unavailable. That had been Hazleton's connection. Our response to that, we didn't have any response.

Q: You're talking about, we as the embassy?

HARRISON: Yes. The embassy obviously had a political interest in staying involved, but we had an ambassador then, Charlie Price, an ex-candy manufacturer out of Kansas City. He was not about to make any waves on this. We made a kind of wave in a pro forma way. I think the argument was sound, that the missiles were essentially still political, where these things moved and when they moved and all that stuff could have great political consequences and therefore the embassy should be involved. To get the embassy involved when SACEUR (Supreme Commander, Europe) is insistent they not be requires an ambassador put his muscle on the line and Charlie Price didn't have that much muscle, and what he had he wasn't going to put on the line. We basically gave up without a fight on that issue. Then bureaucratically the position is that if they screw up, we'll document that we had nothing to do with it. We're not to blame. You know, we told them they needed our sage advice. At that point - and I had now been there for three years and the glory days in terms of my own involvement were over because we had lost much of what I had been sent there to do, had been done - and I began looking for an onward assignment and was offered the directorship of RPM (Regional Political-Military Affairs) and NATO which was traditionally great NATO fare in the European (EUR) office, a great job, but my supervisor would have been a person that I didn't particularly like, but even more to the point didn't like me.

Q: Who was that?

HARRISON: Jim Dobbins. He had been my predecessor in London, but was now the deputy assistant secretary - about to leave although I didn't know it at the time or I probably would have taken that job. Instead I took the job as political counsel at Embassy Tel Aviv in May of '85 I shipped myself off to Tel Aviv into an area where I had never served before and knew nothing about.

Q: A fascinating place. Before we leave the UK, you were talking about the theology of the exchange of nuclear weapons, you know, if you use one this will signal and all this. Did you find your military counterparts say on the British side, were they buying this at all?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, in fact they had a considerable investment in the theology because they had their own Polaris submarines. They had tried in the '50s to build an independent deterrent that was independent also in hardware terms. They had had a Balkan bomber, an intercontinental bomber they'd build which they could continue building and using pretty much under their own control, but they had come to realize that their bombers were outmoded. They couldn't afford to do a new generation of intercontinental bombers or in their case intracontinental bombers. They also could not afford to develop submarine capability on their own, so they essentially turned to us for the submarine capability even though the theology of their nuclear deterrent was never that it could on its own deter the Soviet Union, only that it could be used as a potential trip wire to nuclear war, but that meant that they had to have their own key. It couldn't be a dual key operation, which the Polaris system wasn't. One of the big issues there was whether the ground launch cruise missiles would be, would these be dual key or not. Of course, our strong preference was that they not be dual key because we didn't want to have British permission to launch. By the time you got it, with those systems they would be destroyed. They weren't hard against any kind of particular determined attack they were revetted, but they weren't really hard, so they could have been taken out preemptively without much trouble and would have been so. They were very much in the same kind of mind frame. When Reagan came out with this speech in '83 March on SDI, the Stars Wars system, they were scornful of that because among other things it interfered with what they were trying to do which was modernize their submarine base as a deterrent with a new missile. That was going to cost some money, too and now Reagan was saying that missiles were outmoded and defensive systems were the thing to do and why spend all this money on outmoded systems? So, it kind of played into the opposition to this and they didn't like it much. Also, they as purists, they saw the whole thing as antic since we'd been arguing against the Soviet defensive system for a long time on the grounds that they would destabilize them. Our systems were stabilizing and theirs destabilizing. The FCO hated it and said so to me and I reported it which was great with EUR because they hated it, too back here at the State Department, until they didn't hate it anymore, and that change occurred because they understood eventually - and actually it didn't take too long - that the president was serious about this, that he hadn't just kind of made a speech he didn't understand. That he wanted to do this. He was willing to promote or not depending on whether or not you were willing to talk about the theology of Star Wars with a straight face and when they saw that this was a policy with some legs they decided to get with the program which was the only rational thing for a bureaucracy to do in such cases. After which they became less tolerant of the British Foreign Office comments about it and therefore, my reports reflecting those comments about it. I got called in by Dobbins, which is what happened and was told to cool it; it was no longer in the marching orders. People didn't want to see that in Washington. They understood.

Q: While you were there did Reagan come over at any time?

HARRISON: Yes, he actually did and that's a great story, too. He came over one occasion I think in particular was a state visit which he announced the democracy initiative which actually was, as many things are, hatched by a speech writer and it's a good example of something that I was talking about a couple of tapes. That is and probably will talk about it in future tapes, too if you want to, principals are constantly making speeches and they want to say new things, they don't want to say old things. They're looking to ideas from their speechwriters who are desperately looking for ideas anywhere they can get them. If someone has one and it makes good rhetoric they are liable to put it in. The axis of evil to give a recent example on how this works and then everyone sits around and tries to figure out what the hell it means and why we're not behaving in accordance with it. This was true of this democracy initiative which sounded good. He put it in his speech to Parliament, Reagan did, a great effort to promote democracy and put some money behind it and so forth. No one really knew what we were going to do. It was just a name, it was a speech writing conceit which eventually issued the U.S. Institute of Peace downtown and I'm not sure what they do, I don't think they're sure of what they do either, but you know, one of the things they're trying to do now is trying to find programs for pay so that they can support more programs just like every other think tank in town. That was one of the products of that Reagan visit and Thatcher of course, made a big deal of it.

The thing, lasting impression for me is a couple of things. One, I wrote some remarks Reagan used because he was going to meet the parliamentarians so we went down Parliament and picked up bus loads of them, all Tories, the Labour people didn't want to come. He just liked Tories, too. A great busload of white, well dressed people. I remember telling them as I got on that they'd have to go through the metal detector to make sure none of them was packing a rod and that got kind of a titter. We got them up to the residence, which is this great eleven-acre thing in Regents Park, and we disgorged them and they all went and stood adoringly at the end of the podium. Out Reagan came and read my remarks. Well, on my remarks I had put a heading and then and he began reading the heading. Then he assimilated to the text. He realized what he had done. It was in front of him and he was reading it. He slid way into the text so smoothly that only I of all the multitude there understood what he had done. That was really. He knew how to do that stuff. He was used to that. He could sell it. He could sell even my turgent prose like nobody I ever saw and nobody will ever see again either. He had a genius for it. The other thing about that visit was the grandeur of the United States. I mean, you come to this house and they're all standing there out on this huge lawn which stretched out like one does with these helicopters. You had a Marine band there in their resplendence and they're tooting away Hail to the Chief out he comes and then the entourage sweeps down across the lawn and gets in these helicopters, there must have been ten or so and then off they lift in this huge armada of helicopters flies off into the and it's just the modern equipment of the viceroys in India coming into their entourage of elephants to impress the villagers. It was just a hell of a deal. It was something to see. What else about this before we leave bonny old England? I guess some impression of the Labour Party that no longer exists, too because I had known all these defense people and they were nice. They were all well to left of our policy, but I always enjoyed in my career to go and talk to people that didn't like us. I used to like to go out and talk to the CND people, the Committee on Nuclear Disarmament and it made them uncomfortable to have me around. On the other hand, as an enlightened leftist movement they couldn't say they wouldn't see me. They'd have to go out there and this Monsignor Bruce somebody, the guy is gone now would take me to tea in the working class neighborhood of London. It was one of these bangers and mash teashops and we'd sit down and have tea and he'd be affable and we'd talk about the policy differences. I used to talk a lot to the Labour Party MPs who as I say are nicer people, but Denzel Davis was a Welsh MP and a lot of them were Welsh. Kevin McCormack, Kevin McNamara who is still active in Parliament after all these years. Davis in particular was an interesting guy, but a complete stone drunk. You'd call to have lunch with him and he'd be sort of watching when the pubs were going to open. They opened at noon. He'd kind of be in a half crouch to get over there to the pub when it opened. Maybe I told this story last time, too, one night Rick Burt he was the assistant secretary then and I said that I was going to have different people at dinner than I normally have. I want a new crowd, lively people. So we made the guest of honor Denzel Davis who was the defense secretary. Then we had Roger Scruton who was this rightwing columnist for the Times and he's still around, a complete, kind of insane. He was completely nuts. He was eccentric as the British. He was just nuts, you know, just very crazy, not rightwing kind of. Then we had the editor of the Sun Times who was sitting next to me. I put this whole thing together and Davis arrived roaring drunk, well not roaring drunk, but belligerently drunk. We all sat down to dinner and he got really insulting right off the bat with Burt who was sitting there. Beyond, it wasn't witty was the problem with it. It was just nasty. He was just banging on him. It was so embarrassing that the whole dinner was over by 9:30, everybody was gone. Then there was a front office guy there, too, that actually, a quintessential Foreign Office guy you know, unctuous kind of. To calm this down, he intervened, Brian something, and said, "On the one hand, on the other hand, he begins. The editor of the Sun Times leans over the table next to me and says, "Typical Foreign Office twaddle." It went downhill from there to a point where a New Statesmen journalist had been there came up to me later and apologized because Davis he hated to have a guy like this representing the foreign view. It was good insight into what kind of Labour Party it was and Davis was. Later, he faded because he just couldn't stay away from the bottle and when he came in it was Robin Cook. Now Robin Cook was another guy who we dealt with a lot. He was a sharp little guy with a goatee mustache in those days, left-wing intellectual, more rational than most, hated by my political counselor, who couldn't stand the guy. I saw him quite a bit, had him to dinner and so forth and then he emerged as foreign secretary eventually. Then happened the scandal because he tended to take an Islamic view on the number of women he could simultaneously satisfy so he had that problem of which he survived. He's still around as spokesman for something or other I don't know, but he's not a foreign minister anymore. We dealt with a lot of interesting people.

Q: Did you run across when Reagan and Thatcher were together, somebody I interviewed, I can't think of his name now, Mike Smith maybe, who was in the White House during this period and would say how in the White House they would get very nervous when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher were in a room alone together. The same with Brian Mulroney of Canada in that Ronald Reagan loved these people and they were afraid of commitments being made that they knew nothing about and so they always wanted somebody there to sort of keep watch and make sure that the president didn't give away the store.

HARRISON: It's always true that bureaucrats hate when the political leaderships are together and could be doing something out of control. She was incredibly influential on Reagan and very proud of her relationship with him, but it had not been without problems. One of them was something we hadn't mentioned in the England period was Grenada. Our ambassador got instructions to go over and ask her advice on the invasion of Grenada so he took himself over to Number 10. This was a rare occurrence because he was very seldom in the tip, this was Louis, you know they generally just ignored him and let him look after the house, but here was a real thing to do. Over he went and he said, "You know, we're thinking of this invasion of Grenada and we need you to give us your best advice, the president wants it." She convened her cabinet, it was already about 6:30 at night and so at 8:30 at night the cabinet is meeting and deliberating, what should she say about this back to Reagan. As they're deliberating in comes her aide with a notice that in fact we had we weren't asking her advice we were going to do it anyway; it was just a pro forma thing. She was absolutely furious and furious at poor Louis who had not had anything to do with this. He simply had gotten the thing that said for him to go over there and he'd done it and he'd said what it had said and he'd gone away and she's absolutely furious that he didn't know. It is a blow, I mean, the ambassador is supposed to know, he's supposed to understand that we are about to do this and to give her some head's up that this is not really the kind of request for concurrence that it seems to be. But he didn't know. Nobody probably could tell him and he didn't have the wit to ask and so off he went and did this. After that she didn't see any value in dealing with anyone.

Q: It may also be somewhat responsible for the coldness that our invasion of Grenada seemed to arouse in the British government because people were sort of surprised that the British government did not give its blessing.

HARRISON: She didn't hide her displeasure. She didn't know, they didn't give their blessing and this was especially painful for them because traditionally it had been an area of their responsibility. Of course, they had withdrawn from all that years before, but they still felt some paternal interest in the area and felt they should be consulted on it and hadn't been.

Q: I think the British ambassador there was nothing very, I mean, this is what I've heard, this is maybe put to dispute, but sort of sympathetic to what was happening on the island and didn't see that there was any danger which probably there was a real danger.

HARRISON: It's hard for me to reconstruct what threat that might have been. I mean the Cubans were building an airfield.

Q: Well, it wasn't that so much. I think it was really there was a certain amount of civil war there and a lot of American students.

HARRISON: Yes, but you know the response then is to send them, get them over to the embassy and send a helicopter in. There is a way to respond to that. We have that problem a lot. We have it in Pakistan now so in a much more serious way. They were looking for something to do especially because you remember this was coincident with Irangate so they were looking for a way to change the subject from arms for hostages' thing. No, I think that's an anachronism. I think Irangate was later, it must have been.

Q: It was later. Lebanon was the thing.

HARRISON: Lebanon was the thing. They were trying, yes, they had just lost all those people in Lebanon and that was interesting, too in Lebanon when the barracks explosion happened. All those marines were killed. The British were also in Beirut and I went in with the ambassador and the message was - actually it was Streator the DCM - to see Bulyard the political director at the FCO and the message was we're going to withdraw now; but we'd like to withdraw in order and fashion and like to go offshore. The British were already gone by the time we got over there with a demarche. They wasted no time. They were looking I think partly to change the setting for that and they were trying to assert a Reagan doctrine and you know about the hemisphere and they couldn't do anything about Cuba so this was kind of a surrogate way of getting at the Cubans. The notion that this was any security threat to the United States, no.

Q: No, I don't think that. It was put in terms of I think of American students there.

HARRISON: Yes, that was the justification. I don't think it ever was taken seriously by anybody, but it was ineptly done. We had a tremendously hard time getting it done given that the opposition was a kind of a rag tag police force with some Cuban construction workers, albeit they were armed, but we lost an inordinate number of people to do this thing and looked terrible in the process. I remember the Sunday Guardian running a picture of this corpse of an American helicopter pilot who had been kind of blasted apart. There he was lying on this ground on this big, 8 x 10 front page picture of it, which I thought at the time must be very painful for his family to see. I think it exemplified their view of this kind of what they saw even across the political spectrum this kind of a bellicose, fatalistic spasm of American power. That was really a setback to our relations with Thatcher which took some time to heal, but because she felt as if she had been disrespected and that her relative power of position had been cast in a sharp relief.

Q: Did the bombing in Berlin and the disco and the responsive bombing of Qadhafi, did that happen on your watch?

HARRISON: Yes, that did and in fact I was sent over to CINCUSN. They sent in an area two star admiral who commanded that exercise at his headquarters across the street from the embassy and so they wanted a political person over there in his control center as the task force came down into the Gulf of Sidra to do something about that. I was the guy who was over there for much of that time watching them. The admiral wouldn't have thought of asking me for any political advice, which was just as well because I didn't know anything about it, but I was sort of an embassy presence while he was conducting this. The French refusing overfly rights and we had to go the long way around and so forth - all of that putting one up Qadhafi's kilt. It was part of the atmosphere of this large debate about the missile.

Q: How did the people you were talking to review this response to Qadhafi because we did use American planes coming out of the United Kingdom which always struck me as a little bid odd since we had carrier planes down there.

HARRISON: But not F-111s which is what they wanted to use and in those days the F-111 had the only real precision guidance capability. The Navy ships didn't have it. What they were doing were suppressing air defense with those carriers and Qadhafi sent up some MIGs and we were sort of watching that dogfight process, but he soon determined that he wasn't going to get anywhere with that so he grounded them to try to keep them intact. Then the F-111s came in and did the actual bombing and they were all based in England. They had the range, they were refueled. We had the refueling capability in Spain and they went down and up the Mediterranean.

Q: How was using this to attack Qadhafi, how was that viewed say by the military establishment in the UK and by the public and all that?

HARRISON: I think it was not a great ripple. Qadhafi was not a sympathetic figure. He was at the height of his antic invading at that period.

Q: He was messing around in Ireland, too?

HARRISON: Yes, he was sending weapons to the IRA, so he was not a popular figure. It added to the cowboy image, which was the predominant view of Reagan and therefore, made it more difficult to talk about relying on this U.S. deterrent that we were trying to deploy. In electoral terms it made no difference. In poll terms it made no difference in terms of support for Thatcher and Thatcher's support for the U.S. and the fact that they'd used some UK based military assets, the Labour Party made an issue of it, but it had no resilience in particular. She sailed through all that undamaged and by-elections - which of course in a continuing barometer of political opinion in Britain - didn't show any trend. It would give pause about a more bilious foreign policy and it was very much in keeping with Thatcher itself. Remember all this stuff is taking place after the Falklands. You've had this modern woman warrior who has charged off to this crazy thing that the British have off down the coast of Argentina and in fact it was an enormously expensive distant war to recapture this useless territory that of what, 10,000 people or 8,000 or 5,000, but an insult to the country; the last great overseas expedition I'm sure we'll ever see of British arms. The ideological base for opposing a U.S. reaction to what we saw, as a challenge was no longer there. You couldn't get very far and they didn't get very far. Although our foreign policy was not looking particularly enlightened. Our military policy was looking a little bit scatter-shot, a little reactionary, more bellicose than necessary. I don't think that the objections to it were near as serious as they are now because the Cold War was still going on and at the end of the day the United States is your guarantor whatever they were like. Politically I think it was not decisive one way or the other and also because it was successful. As the months go on and Qadhafi pulls in his horns and decides that maybe provoking the United States is not such a good idea, the argument for those people who claimed that you have to take this kind of action against people like this strengthened. Of course, Qadhafi hadn't given up as we discovered on that Pan Am flight.

Q: Lockerbie.

HARRISON: Yes. He was not a sympathetic person. Arab leaders in general are not people with whom one can build a great cause to defend, and about whom we suspect even the darker reports are true. Maybe the racism inherent in British establishment played some role in that, too, I mean it would be harder to attack the Swiss I suppose than Qadhafi. It was not a key bump in our road. We found out off our ticker, we had a ticker in the political section and somebody shouted down the hall, "Somebody's invaded Grenada." Then a second later, "It's us." We knew nothing about it and especially the ambassador didn't. I think the key point out of all of that is that it discredited Louis and she just never dealt with him again. He was already discredited because he had not known anything about foreign policy and kind of not tried to find out very much. He sort of saw himself as a figurehead.

Q: Well this is the problem in the normal course of events these political ambassadors, particularly to places like the United Kingdom, France or Germany, you can get away. It's no big deal there, sort of do the social occasions, but there are times when there is a serious issue and it's hard for them. I mean if you have a lightweight in there who essentially doesn't understand the issue, they're not a very good messenger.

HARRISON: No, and they have to be wired into our bureaucracy, I think that's the key. I mean, they have to know what's going on beneath the surface because the British know what's on the surface and don't need you for that, especially the British know. They are well wired in Washington and they're on the phone all the time in our bureaucracy and so forth. You don't want to be the least informed guy in the room. Washington will make no effort to keep you informed so you have to make the effort to stay informed and he didn't know you had to do that. Streator, to be honest, was not eager for Louis to play an activist role because that left Streator as de facto ambassador which pleased him and you know, he liked it that people in the society saw him as the go-to guy at the embassy instead of Louis and so he was willing to kind of pamper Louis on the one hand and keep his relationship there good while he ran the operation on the other and Louis didn't interfere very much.

Q: We're talking about 1985?

HARRISON: We've been skipping around. I mean we were just back in '81 I guess.

Q: But now we're coming back to your leaving.

HARRISON: Yes, '85 May off I went and left them in good shape. It wasn't my fault what happened later, but I had pretty much worn out my welcome, too. The things I had been sent there to do had been done. We had a new ambassador my last two years, and a new DCM my last year, Ray Seitz who later became ambassador. Whereas Ed Streator had been kind of rocking boat kind of guy. He liked to shake things up which was fun for me. Ray Seitz was not and therefore, much less fun for me so I was ready to go and did off to be political counselor in Tel Aviv working for a couple of weeks for Sam Lewis. I show up in Tel Aviv and we're in the middle of a transition government in '85 resulting from an indecisive election which had resulted in a coalition government between Labour and this peculiar arrangement where in the middle of the government five-year term, Peres agreed to step down and give his position to Shamir. The issue for the first year in Tel Aviv was really actually to do this, whether he'd adhere to this or whether he'd try to break the government before that happened, go to the elections and win a mandate on his own behalf and Shamir couldn't win it. He had that and the economy because the economy had been stagnant at that point for five or six years and the currency was in precipitous decline. The labor unions there were powerful, too. The old socialist tradition, the terrible bureaucratic weight of the old socialist bureaucracy which had been imported on the back of the Ashkenazi, largely socialist immigrants from Europe, who made a settlement to form the original Labour party and who had sort of transported much of the terrible bureaucratic morass that they had been escaping from, brought with them to transplant into Israel. The burden of defense spending. All these things that added up to a kind of crippled economy and a crippled political system. In '85 I think we were seeing the beginning of the divisions in Israeli political life which had progressed at a pace, aided by their proportional representational system, which gave representation in the Knesset to even rump parties. Marginal requirement for seats in terms of votes, a percentage of votes, so you've got a lot of splinter parties and the number of splinter parties are increasing at this point. Two major parties are slowly shrinking and the need to build coalitions of parties in the Knesset is at a pace which all these trends have continued in a kind of destructive way in that society since and this transition government was the first expression of this lack of any social consensus in Israel of what to do. This is prior to the Intifada.

Q: You were there from when to when?

HARRISON: '85 to '87 and Intifada was at the end of '87, I left in December of '87. Intifada and the interesting thing then was

Q: This was the first input?

HARRISON: The first Intifada. When I was there the occupation of course was in existence, but it was cheap for the Israelis. They did not have to station any people in the occupied territories in order to occupy them. They had roadblocks here and there, but I would guess a couple of hundred reservists would be all you would find on the West Bank and in Gaza on any particular day partly a legacy of the economic prosperity which the occupation had brought to these areas in the '70s, after Egypt and Jordan, who had been in occupation before the Israelis took those territories, had been awful - both of them, in their treatment of the Palestinians and economically and politically in every other way. When the Israelis came in there was actually an economic boom in fact in high single digit and double digit economic growth which had taken a lot of steam out of the protest movements and because Palestinian nationality was not really developing. It was still developing then. Arafat was of course, already around, but he had been forced out to Beirut and then out of Beirut to Tunis without really much resistance on the West Bank and off he was in Tunisia with his small coterie, more or less irrelevant to the process. Things were going along in a way which was stable to the point that I could take my bicycle from Netanya on the coastline up to Tulkarm on the West Bank, right across the border without realizing that I was and suddenly being in an Arab city and riding around there and riding back. People would go and buy oranges and stuff and they'd move freely around the West Bank. The settlement movement of course was already in existence and proselytizing energetically in the suburbs many of whom - American Jews - had come over. Meir Kahane, who was the head of, was already there, the Kahane movement was in place. The notion of expelling all the Arabs from Israel to Jordan, Jordan is the real Palestine, all these things were already in existence.

Q: You talk about expelling the Jews not just from the issue of the West Bank, too?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, from the West Bank in particular. The question of expelling them from Israel was always more ambiguous, but I think that if Kahane had had his way he would have done that, too. They were Israeli citizens so that's a little tougher, but certainly the West Bank - just push them all across the river, and that solves your problem - which is an idea which has never died and is still current in the Israeli political debate. All this is coexisting with stability in these areas, very few incidents and those incidents that broke out were mainly rock throwing and you know, then the Israelis would overreact. Sometimes a lot of ammunition and would kill some Palestinians, but that never had the knock on effect that it was to have later. I used to talk about the flying Palestinian because the Israelis would always be claiming the fire over their heads would always hit them. The Palestinians said well we must have levitated to intercept the bullets. All the irritations, all the implicit discrimination against the Palestinians, all the contempt for them which is also so much a feature of Israeli political life now, also very much in evidence then. No Palestinian national identity strongly enough established to create the kind of opposition movement that exists now. As in many things in life, although this jumps ahead a couple of years, I think that there's an old psychological theory, that you don't run away because you're afraid, you're afraid because you run away. I think the same thing is true in a sense of this Palestinian movement. It didn't necessarily precede the Intifada, but maybe the Intifada preceded the national consciousness. At any rate, in '85, '86 and '87 the dirty secret of the occupation is that it's cheap. It's easy and there's no real political impetus to do anything about it.

Q: The ambassador for a while was Sam Lewis and then who took over?

HARRISON: For a very short while. Tom Pickering. A very short while - Sam Lewis was just leaving. He gave a press conference in which he revealed that Sharon had lied about the invasion of Lebanon which had taken place five years before. The Israelis had gotten involved with Sharon's instigation and it was very ill advised attempt to put a Christian Maronite prime minister in power in Beirut. Completely antic idea, which showed this profound ignorance of anything going on in the Lebanese political scene. Wasn't going to happen under any circumstances, but it was a rationale, which Sharon used. He lied to us, they were going to clean out people, you know, go up 50 kilometers they said, but they were going to go to Beirut from the beginning, did go to Beirut, set off the civil war which was so destructive in the years afterwards and gave rise to Hamas and all these things were created by this Sharon adventure north, which they're now having so much trouble with. It really is a Frankenstein problem, which they created out of their arrogance and profound ignorance and the two things go together because if you're arrogant enough, you don't realize how ignorant you are. Often a problem of ours as well. By '85 the security zone had been established in southern Lebanon and we have built the SLA (South Lebanon Army) with the Lebanese army in the south, under Israeli tutelage in the south of Lebanon, in their security zone. The attrition of Israelis up there has begun which would eventually lead to the removal of those people there. One of my early cables was debunking the idea that the Israelis were going to withdraw from there anytime soon because no Prime Minister could stand the consequences of withdrawing and having rocket attacks. It would be a who's to blame issue, would he be to blame for taking the troops out of there? At that point, the rate of casualties wasn't high enough. That created a political backlash if there's the presence, so there was no political push to leave and so they were going to stay and of course, they did stay for another 15 years to their great regret and I think to the great detriment of Lebanon as well. Sharon had mounted this thing, Sharon was out of favor in this period, Peres is prime minister, Rabin is minister of defense in the transition government and then stays on, which is one of the great things for me, when Peres leaves. The great political issue was, after the economy was stabilized by devaluation although it remained stagnant for another five years, until the peace process really got underway, whether this transition government was going to take place. The other issue was the activism of Tom Pickering in a number of areas but in particular on the peace plan in collaboration with Peres and a guy named Nimrod Novik who was one of Peres's advisors and to a degree Yossi Beilin - although Beilin always played a more ambiguous role and who was another advisor to Peres to bring about a peace plan which could then be the subject of an election which would then prevent Shamir from coming to power. The idea being that Peres could not simply declare that he wasn't going to leave office, but he might by proposing a peace plan that was acceptable to the Arab side, the Palestinian side, he might then put that to referendum which would have the same effect. Peres was continuing promising Pickering he could deliver the Knesset for this which was the key issue of course, the prime minister can't do it on his own, he has to have the Knesset along with him. But the notion was that if you came to the Knesset with a fait accompli with the Palestinians' signature on it, and even though the Likud was opposed to it and hard over and ideological and so forth, the Knesset would accept it and therefore or if they turned it down you could take it to referendum in the country as a whole and win. Pickering was conspiring and he's also trying to because on one hand he's playing a quasi-partisan role in the political equation, dealing a lot with Peres's people, not very much with the Likud and especially not with Shamir, because you couldn't deal with Shamir. Shamir was impervious to being dealt with. Shamir had been the guy in the revolutionary period who had known all the secrets. He had been the guy who knew, he was the walking archive of Irgun. Because you needed somebody who knew, but you couldn't have more than one person who knew, because you were penetrated by the British and so they chose Shamir because of the confidence that he was not going to tell anybody. He was a man entirely bereft of personality. He had no affect. He was the perfect guy to tell your secrets to unless they were of a political advantage to him to tell them. So, you couldn't deal with him. I mean, he was not, Pickering was this huge dynamo of a man and would be activist wherever you put him down, whatever you told him to do and sees in that situation the possibility of writing Peres who is desperate to hold onto power to compromises with the Palestinians, which then could be incorporated into a movement in the peace process which in those days and we weren't talking about a Palestinian state at all. I mean it was a much milder form of Palestinian control over occupied territories, and withdrawal. It would have done something about settlements, which not yet you know, would have already been a huge problem, but not yet the problem that it was going to become. I thought it was all nonsense because I thought that Peres could not deliver. It was my view that he was over promising on what he could do. You could not ram this down Kahane's throat, because Kahane's represented a greater percentage of the population than Peres did and that there was no peace without Kahane. Whether you didn't like him or not, whether you could deal with Sharon or not, or Shamir or not, and Sharon of course is already around, but now he has been marginalized because of Sabra and Shatila. You just simply couldn't override their wishes as Peres hoped to do and ram it down his throat. So, I sent in a dissent message or tried to, but Pickering held it up for 24 hours because he realized that the 24 hours were the period in which this decision was going to be made in Washington. My dissent message, this was on the London agreement as so-called later, never got into the process before the London agreement had already been turned down in Washington because the Reagan administration decided not to go ahead with it. I think they took my interpretation of the facts without seeing my interpretation of the facts, although I was congratulated in some corners for the futility of my gesture afterwards. So, that was part of what was going on. We had very good contact. I saw a lot of Rabin, although not on my own. I was the political counselor, but it was not a good job because I had working for me Dan Kurtzer who is now ambassador there, he's a very smart guy and was already wired in and was kind of a peace process guy. I had an activist ambassadors who was also retentive and an activist DCM and in that circumstance.

Q: Who was the DCM?

HARRISON: It was Bob Flatin the first year I was there. In those circumstances the political counselors were always ambiguous at best. From my point of view and because Pickering didn't ever feel in need of political counsel, least of all from me. I mean, he was not a man tortured by self-doubt, so he essentially didn't use the political section. He'd talk to Dan, and he had some input because he was dealing with people like Nimrod Novik and that was a conduit to Peres, but the rest of us kind of did our thing in isolation from the front office and indeed sometimes in contradiction to what Pickering was sending in, as I was discovering occasionally once when I was chargï¿½ and sometimes when I was acting DCM and I would poke around in files and I would find out what he had been saying to Washington - because he never volunteered to me and I didn't know what he was trying to do most of the time. We went on doing our thing. He never asked us to do anything in my two and a half; I guess two years with him. He never asked the political section to do anything and as far as I know never read any of the stuff that we did do. A couple of times people would come in from Washington and comment on our reporting in his presence and he would not be aware that these reports had been sent. It was a little of like operating your kind of own little mission in orbit around the great planet, but out of radio contact with the home base. Difficult, from a lot of points, it was awful, of course, to have supposed responsibility, but no authority which was the situation I was in, but also because I'd show up for meetings with people and he'd be on his way out. I was literally in waiting rooms waiting to see somebody and Tom Pickering would come out and walk by me and say hello and go out the door. It became a kind of a standing joke in Jerusalem that this was the case with us, so a very uncomfortable position to be in.

Q: Then, of course, it being such an intense political place, everybody understood, I mean the people you were dealing with understood your position?

HARRISON: Yes, they understood it. I was the object of sympathy, but of no particular respect. It wasn't, I wasn't the man you had to see, I mean I would be somebody you could see just to be polite, but I wasn't the player and the political section really wasn't a player either except for Dan, who was. We were just kind of doing our thing, sending in our reports. Dealing with and meeting a lot of interesting people, I think the key thing for me was watching Rabin operate because I would go over as note taker when Pickering went over to see him, which he did a lot. I got to know him pretty well.

Q: Rabin, at that time, was what?

HARRISON: Minister of Defense. Then in his 60s he had been ambassador to Washington, he'd been Prime Minister, there had been a scandal about money that he and his wife had taken offshore in various stringent currency regulations they had enforced. He had been forced to resign, forced out and of course, was to come back in great glory later, but then was in relative eclipse at the ministry of defense. He had this great basso profondo voice with 40 years of cigarettes he of course, smoked three or four packs a day of cigarettes. The great thing about him was there was absolutely no bullshit to him at all. There was no pretense. Dealing with him you brought home how much pretense there is to most of us, you know, because he had a very straightforward view which I know a lot people claim to have in my life, but he was somebody who genuinely saw the world very clearly, saw people for what they were and knew his own mind, knew who he was and dealt in a very straightforward way. He would do what he said he was going to do. He thought what he said he thought. He had contempt for what he had contempt for and would not try to candy coat that for you. He had a sneaky, fast sense of humor and I had enormous respect for him then and later, more than anyone I ever dealt with in any of my jobs. For all those qualities, it was quite a spiritual journey that he made from being the most effective of the old Arab killers to being a man who finally reached out in a genuine... I mean we have all these guys like Netanyahu and all these slimy people who have in essence effected Israeli politics. We have people like Sharon who have never shifted gears from the '53 mode or the '48 mode where he'd grown up; he had actually been a little junior to Rabin and always been junior to him militarily, but they fought side by side. Then Rabin had begun to understand the need to bestow respect on the Palestinians, essentially it comes down to that, some human self-regard, some recognition of the legitimacy of the Palestinians as human beings.

Q: I take it that was something that was really lacking in the body politic of Israel at that time?

HARRISON: Lacking then and lacking now. I mean he unfortunately didn't start a movement in that direction, he was unique I think in that way. I mean, there are certainly Israelis who understand this, but not Israelis that had his credibility as founding father of the state who had also been in the front lines so often beginning as a very young man. He's given his life to the state, but then on that basis still made that transition, but not on - I don't think from my experience in life, I don't think there are any unmixed motives. I think that looking for purity is feckless in life. I think Rabin also had political motives for what he did. I think he saw certain political requirements. It was genuine in the sense that was beyond the political. It was a genuine acceptance of the humanness of his antagonist. Now you see the handshake on the White House lawn. This is now skipping forward ten years, eight years, six years. The first time he shakes hands in public with Arafat. You see him leaning away. It's the most tortured position physically. It reminded me of Rosemary Woods in the Nixon administration trying to describe how she erased those tapes by stepping on her eraser button over here when she was typing over here. So, there's Rabin shaking hands, but trying physically as far away from this guy as he could. The journey, the spiritual journey he made, written in his posture in a way that was very graphic for me.

Q: I think it was Phil Brown who in an interview was saying that he was talking to Rabin I think shortly before the handshake where Rabin you know, put out his cigarette and says, "Well got to go now, showbiz."

HARRISON: You know there's a great story in Rabin's biography about he comes to Washington for Carter and he's Prime Minister and Carter says after they're talking at the White House, he's staying there, "I'm going to go and kiss Amy good night. How about coming with me?" Rabin says, "No." The only world leader who would have said no and Rabin, I think the contempt he always had for these army drill teams and which he expresses in his biography, too, which is pure Rabin, you know, the chrome headed, aqua cravated, rifle throwing groups of performers which he...

Q: I always feel uncomfortable around those.

HARRISON: Yes. He said that you shouldn't make them circus performers like this. They're fighting men; they should be treated like fighting men. He thought it was demeaning and it's true, but nobody says it except Rabin. A great joy of my professional life was being able to see him up close and to know that he came to kind of like me. He came to one of my going away parties for example, which for me was, you know, I was political counselor, that's not something you normally see, but he did it which I thought was a great vindication of what had been a very difficult service for me there. Peres came to another one and he didn't know that it was for me and there's a picture of my wife and me and Peres and she has a strange look on her face because Peres was grabbing her ass while the picture was being taken she told me later. So, you had this dichotomy. Peres was this slick name-dropping autodidact who thinks he's smarter than he is. He is kind of a pretentious guy who was the bureaucrat at the defense ministry when they were fighting all these wars and for whom Rabin has this healthy contempt. Coexisting, the two great fathers of the Labour Party, coexisting with Rabin who is a man of action, but really, not the bullshit thing that people claim to be without pretense, and Peres is all pretense. Pretense on this peace process thing, too which is the key to the political relationship the first year that I'm there because he's selling a line to Pickering who, because he's an activist ambassador he wants to make a difference, wants to bring about things that Sam Lewis couldn't do. Sam Lewis meanwhile was hanging around by the way, showing up every month or two and spending weeks in Israel and doing all kinds of things that he shouldn't be doing as an ex-ambassador there because he'd been seven or eight years.

Q: Seven or eight years. It must have driven Tom Pickering wild.

HARRISON: Yes, although Pickering never would have admitted it, but I'm sure it did. It was just bad form for Lewis. Lewis never cared much about what people thought about his form, bad or good. At least he didn't by that stage of his career. So, I'd keep seeing him. He'd show up at something there and Lewis would be there. By the way, I was very - I think it was two or three weeks after I got there, Lewis left - so I never really suffered under the lash. I heard all the Lewis stories about chewing the scenery, but I never had that problem because I wasn't there long enough and he didn't care at that point, he was transitioning out. Good luck. Then Pickering came in and we began this very strange association which was no real association at all, kind of running my own little independent.

Q: Was there any, I'm not sure what the right word is, I won't say warmth, I mean, friendliness?

HARRISON: No, no, no warmth at all. He's doesn't have warmth. That's not one of his characteristics. He doesn't have a sense of humor. He's just this huge depository of information and energy. He is a phenomenon. I've never met anybody like him. He's kind of that he, when I would bring people in to brief him on whatever subject you care to name; people would come to the embassy and would want to brief you on this. It would never be more than three or four minutes before Pickering would be briefing them on whatever they were the experts on. He knew more than you. There was an old radio program, Doctor; no he was a comedian in the '40s and '50s who billed himself as the world's foremost authority. I always thought of Pickering that way. The world's foremost authority. He knows more about it than you. A lot of it he certainly did know more about it than me, but I had a lot of qualities, I was able, that's why I was there. I'd been promoted to the top of the list from 3 to 2 on the smallest list there had ever been and so you know, hey why don't you use me for something useful? He used me for nothing at all and I didn't even actually see him that much and he was off doing his own thing, which I didn't know about much of the time.

Q: Roger, I'm looking at the time. It's probably a good place to stop and I'll put at the end here as usual where we are. You're in Tel Aviv from '85 to '87?

HARRISON: Okay. Yes, '85 to '87 and I have talked about, I haven't talked about Lebanon yet, so we have to talk about Lebanon, what the Israelis were doing there because that was one thing that was in my portfolio. I don't think we've talked about the political situation very much as it unfolded, Shamir, the prime ministry, haven't talked about that; Ronnie Melow who was the deputy over there at the time and all of that stuff.

Q: I'd like to ask you about how you saw political influence from the Jewish lobby and other lobbies on our policy, our relations with our consular general in Jerusalem at that time and the nuclear developments there if that came up?

HARRISON: Yes, that was the period in which Vanunu was captured. If you knew of Vanunu that was, yes.

Q: And other things, but what you have talked about was how your relationship was with Tom Pickering; how you were essentially frozen out and all. I would like to talk about the embassy staff, how it fit in, was there an Israeli bias to it because in a way, now it's much more evident that you can be one side or the other, but in those days was there sympathy for the Palestinian cause.

HARRISON: I want to talk about Pollard, too because Pollard was on.

Q: Yes, the Jonathan Pollard spy case. Okay, so that's great. Talk a little bit about what happened in-between Rostow, the head of ACDA and Secretary of State Alexander Haig when he was in London.

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Okay, this is the 10th of September, 2002. Roger going back a bit, do you want to talk a bit about Rostow and Haig?

HARRISON: Well, the incident there, we may have talked about it before in which the editors will have to do us both a favor of taking it out. The incident that I recall involved the editorial staff of the Economist magazine. Rostow was a frequent visitor to London. He was an Anglophile as many of the Republican Party stalwarts were in those days and probably are. Weinberger was another who was constantly thinking of excuses to come through London. I would be the control officer for Rostow who was head of ACDA at the time and ACDA the Arms Control Disarmament Agency, now disestablished was always a stepchild in the bureaucracy, had been established at the behest of Hubert Humphrey as an advocate for arms control within the administration, but as the case with many congressional initiatives to change the way the executive branch does business, it had miscarried. It turns out it is very difficult for legislation to control the way bureaucracy functions and there was no institutional interest in arms control other than the one the State Department always has to maintain good relations with allies and credibility internationally. ACDA ended up being simply another agency in government whose position on arms control and any other issues really depended on the ideological leanings of its director and conservative president acts to take an anti-arms control position. To maintain its independence, the legislation had left a very ambiguous relationship between the director of ACDA and the Secretary of State, to whom the director of ACDA was subordinate in some respects, and from whom he was independent in other respects. Secretaries of State always dislike that ambiguity and directors of ACDA usually made the most of it they could. If you had two strong personalities as Gene Rostow and Al Haig it was a formula for conflict, in fact they were constantly in conflict. Haig never quite being able to bring Rostow under control and Rostow never being able to make himself into the arbiter of arms control policy in the State Department that he would have liked to have been, since there were many other pretenders for that throne and because he really didn't have the bureaucratic position to do it. The incident that highlighted this for me was a visit by Rostow out of London in which we met, I as his control officer, at lunch with the editorial board of the Economist, very influential group of people since the Economist is probably the most influential news weekly in the world. During which Rostow did his best to convince the editorial board that Haig was insane and not just nuts in the normal bureaucratic sense as a lot of people are, but clinically insane. He did this by indirection. He didn't say that, but he talked about the medication that Haig had been taking since his bypass surgery which then had taken place a couple of years before and how unpredictable Haig had become because of it. The word that I remember - the sentence that he used which I thought was at once a nice stiletto and good example of hypocrisy of his presentation - was "his friends don't recognize Al." Then he gave a lot of examples of Haig ricocheting off the furniture, which I guess Haig in fact, was doing. They weren't necessarily untrue stories, but the fact that the director of ACDA would try to convince the editors of the Economist that the Secretary of State was not responsible for his own actions I thought was an incredible thing. As a young naive, Foreign Service Officer, not so young then, I guess I was 40, I went back to the embassy and talked about this with Ed Streator who was the DCM, with a canny old history here and he said we ought to report that in back channel to Haig, which we did. If there were any consequences I never heard of them and Haig at any rate was not long for his job because he was heartily detested by the White House staff and not a likeable guy in general. I think he'd been more effective in that rigid hierarchical military structure than he was in the looser bureaucratic structure that he came into. He had tried to form the bureaucracy so that in foreign policy terms it was responsible to him at the beginning of the Reagan administration.

Q: He used the term he was the "vicar of foreign policy."

HARRISON: He was and he tried to organize the national security system so that it funneled through him taking what had been Kissinger's role in the Nixon administration, but it turned out that it couldn't be done from outside the White House anymore. There were simply too many pretenders to power and too many agencies who felt they had equities in the foreign policy arena to allow State to play that role. In fact, I noticed that presidents have stopped even paying lip service to the notion that the State Department Secretary of State is the leading voice of foreign policy, it is certainly not true in this administration, but practically I don't think will ever be true again. In fact I think it's a relatively weak bureaucratic position now so that even someone like Powell who comes with a constituency and a great deal of savvy and knowledge I think is disadvantaged by being at State especially vis-ï¿½-vis national security advisor. If you were in that job it would be a much different world than it's going to be. But, we were on Israel and there was a list of things there.

Q: Well, you were mentioning Shamir.

HARRISON: Well, this was a period of a divided government. It was the transition government, the election result had been more or less an even split between Likud and Labour and so the coalition, grand coalition, had been formed a couple of years before, '83, I believe by the provisions of which the head of the Labour Party, Shimon Peres would be prime minister until midway in the five year term of government at which point he would cede that office to Shamir who was head of Likud, and so they would do a kind of peaceful switch with Peres moving to the foreign ministry as foreign minister in the Shamir government with Rabin at the defense ministry for both. So, it was an odd kind of situation. The politics of the process from Washington's point of view was that the peace process was more benefited when Peres was in office because he was more flexible on land for peace and in dealing with the Palestinians, whereas as Shamir was seen as having no flexibility at all on those issues which proved to be true. In the first two and a half years of this government, the focus was on intrigues to keep Peres in office, that is he would break the government before it's two and a half year transition point and go to elections which legally and constitutionally in Israel you could do. He was the Prime Minister so he could dissolve the government and then call for elections. His interest was in positioning himself so that that would be politically acceptable to the country since it would also be going back on his agreement with Shamir and not a step easily taken. Tom Pickering was interested in the peace process prospering, also saw Peres as a much more flexible partner on these issues than Shamir was and, therefore, was interested in devising with Peres a peace proposal which would be attractive domestically, but unacceptable to the Likud, the notion being that that would be an acceptable basis to break the government to call elections on grounds which would be beneficial to Peres and by that means to pave the way to a settlement with the Palestinians. Seems a little naive now 14 years later as we struggle with these same issues. That was the focus of the political battle. At the same time, the economy in Israel was in bad shape, so there were other bases on which Peres was being judged by the electorate, but this was the major point of political exchange I think between the embassy and between Washington, the focus of Washington policy. It could not be done openly since that would alienate the Israeli electorate aside from being inappropriate for the American ambassador or for the American government to be conspiring with one party to disadvantage the other in Israel, never something they could openly do and probably had it been openly done, it would have backfired. There was still a sense that this would be a good outcome. Peres who was also trying to achieve this kind of proposal, therefore, consulted closely with Pickering through this period and eventually came up with an idea which he put to Washington. This is now three or four months before the point at which the transition would have to take place to see if he could get Washington's approval and that was occasion for great debate in Washington and I think by the way, I'm being anachronistic here because actually that debate came to a head in Washington after the transition had taken place between Peres and Shamir. By the time that that proposal was put to Washington it was an attempt of Peres to break the government with Shamir as Prime Minister rather than prevent the transition. The parties in fact, in the end that was a damp squib, that went forward as agreed - the transition. Then Peres as foreign minister, began working on his proposal: the idea again being that he could present this to the parliament it would be reason for the government to dissolve and go to the country. Labour would win and Peres would be back. This is now '87 and the period I was talking about was late '85. I'm sorry, go ahead.

Q: Did you find yourself pulled into this by, I mean, by indirection in talking to political leaders and all that?

HARRISON: Oh, no, not really. Pickering was running this out of his vest pocket. This was throughout this period. He certainly didn't solicit my advice about it or keep me informed about what he was doing. But you know, you hang around the embassy and you see and hear things and you can kind of put two and two together. At the same time, Dan Kurtzer who was working for me as one of the political officers there, and is now the ambassador in Israel, had very good relations with key members of Peres's staff, so he was involved in the process more than I as political counselor was. He had been there when I'd showed up. Dan was a man of great qualities, not just expertise in the region, but keen analytical ability and intelligence. So, not someone that I would have thought would have been taken off that portfolio, even if anyone had agreed I should do that. So, it was not really the main thing I did.

The other initiative in those days was to do something on the aid legislation for Israel, which had been frozen. I had worked on this at the White House at the previous incarnation between their civilian and military aid. This had been pegged at $3.2 billion at that point for oh, I guess for seven or eight years after a lot of toing and froing about this in the Ford administration. The Israelis were, because their economy was doing very poorly, were very eager to get that age level up and because their weapon systems that they wanted then to purchase were increasing in price and so they would lobby to get their aid appropriation increased, but at the same time the economy in our country, this was the first couple or three years of Reagan was not doing well. Inflation and unemployment were up; budget deficits were skyrocketing, so the notion of increasing foreign aid - never popular domestically - would have been even less popular. By the way, I think the case that foreign aid, no matter for whom, is never popular domestically. Israelis don't get an exemption from that once it becomes a public issue. An effort was made to keep it from becoming a public issue and yet increase it and the idea was, which I think was Pickering's idea, he certainly promoted it was to index Israeli aid to inflation. Running about 6% or 7% a year by which Israeli aid would go up every year by whatever inflation index I guess we measured our inflation by denominated in dollars which would have meant over the 15 intervening years, probably doubling that aid request. Pickering was working on the finance committee the Senate side who was a firm supporter of Israel, but what scuppered that idea was that Pollard - in driving up to the driveway of the Israeli Embassy: Jonathan Pollard, naval intelligence analyst who in fact was being run by Israeli intelligence and had I guess transferred truckloads of classified information. This goes back to an old dispute with Israel about how much intelligence we were willing to make available to them. They always felt that we were being too restrictive on intelligence.

Pollard was about to be arrested, got wind of that and packed his wife in the car and went over to the Israeli Embassy seeking asylum. Well, the Israelis were not about to bite. Eventually the Secret Service came and collected him from the Israeli Embassy and he was put in jail where he remains, thank God, to this day. There was much speculation Clinton might be provoked to pardon him.

Q: Yes, well when Clinton left office there was thought that he might pardon him, but he didn't.

HARRISON: No, the intelligence community has always been extremely opposed to that. When Mark Rich was a relatively uncontroversial pardon compared to what Pollard had been at least among the professional intelligence community.

Q: Was it apparent at that time, I heard Seymour Hersh on the radio once saying this was obviously some years later, but on the Pollard case that Pollard had been tasked, he was a naval, he was working for naval intelligence and he had been tasked by the Israeli handlers to supply up to the minute information on American nuclear submarines, the ones with the missiles on it which could have been of absolutely no interest to the Israelis whatsoever, but of great interest to the Soviets. The theory being that the Israelis were taking this information, peddling it to the Soviets in order to get more goons out of Russia or something like that. Did that come up?

HARRISON: I heard the story. I don't have any reason to think it's true, but it was certainly true that they were beginning to work on the immigration of Soviet Jews at that point - it didn't begin in earnest in '88 and '89 which is the timeframe, which is a couple of years after Pollard. Whether that played, I certainly wouldn't put it past them to do that, but I don't have any reason to know that they did. Anyway, what Pollard pretty much scuppered was that inflation index idea, because the Israelis were in high odor there for a while. It cost them a lot of money. I mean, if they had gotten that through then that would have been several billion dollars on their aid bill that they would not have gotten or it would have been very difficult that they'd been inflationist off there.

I was going to talk a little bit about Lebanon. One of the portfolios I did have was Lebanon. Oriel Brawny was the coordinator for Lebanon. I would go see him and he would speak elliptically.

Q: He was the Israeli coordinator?

HARRISON: Yes, the Israeli coordinator. At that time the Israelis had their security zone in southern Lebanon this always to the incident of the '82 invasion of Lebanon where the Israelis ended up in Beirut- after assuring us that they had no such intentions - with the notion that they were going to put a Maronite Christian government and by that means would pacify Lebanon and albeit to pacify the northern border. A completely antic idea, which got a couple of people, killed in Lebanon for collaborating with them. I think it showed how completely ignorant they were of the politics of their neighbors which I think is something, although they are also supremely confident in their ability to analyze what's going on next door, so their disasters never daunted their confidence in that regard. By '85 when I arrived that Lebanese adventure had resolved into a strip in Southern Lebanon called the security zone where Israel had some troops together with something called the Southern Lebanese Army under a general named Lahad who is now I'm sure in Paris or somewhere. He used to spend a lot of time there at the time. A local militia, villagers from that area who were out of sympathy with the people in Beirut anyway and had ethnic differences and they created this enclave in which they were taking casualties at a relatively steady rate. Brawny was in charge of that and, in general, of the Lebanese policy. I would go talk to him and I became convinced early on that they were going to have to stay in that security zone forever because - in fact they just left under Barak a couple of years ago - because of the fact that the answerability of any politician who decided to withdraw if they were then deterioration in security of the Northern areas of Israel because of that withdrawal, whoever withdrew would have a heavy price to pay. It was potentially a lot heavier than the price politically of losing three or four or five soldiers a month up there in ambushes and land mines and so forth. It seemed to me that that situation would continue and it did for a long time although the casualty count mounted and in the end it was absolutely in vain. They achieved nothing in particular and a couple of years ago the Israelis were finally ready to admit it and withdrew giving rise to then this what they called the Hezbollah. The Hezbollah claimed that they had forced this withdrawal and it showed that the Israelis could be forced to make political concessions and therefore was the support for the suicide bombing campaign and bringing pain to bear. There has been sufficient pain in that case and therefore argued you could create sufficient pain in other cases to give you the same result. It had a kind of a dual negative impact on Israel at first by this long accretion of casualties over the years, and then by encouraging their enemies with the misconception that force would be a useful tool against them. Therefore, it was all together a disastrous policy, as the initial force in Lebanon had been disastrous and became the founding event of the Hezbollah movement which is now such a problem for them. A fair going case from beginning to end of miscalculations, stupidity, mendacity and all the other human vices that one can imagine. There was not much actually happening in that area. I was basically monitoring that situation. The Israelis had given up by that point any notion that they could mix successfully in Lebanese politics and had ceded to the Syrians surety in Lebanon, but were very careful about maintaining the military borders of that sovereignty. There were informal agreements brokered by us between the Syrians and the Israelis about where Syrian forces could be stationed and in what form in Lebanon. We would be the intermediaries when the Syrians would push against those limits. We would come in and talk to Rabin. This was always with Pickering and me as note taker and Pickering, Rabin would tell us where the Syrians had violated this informal agreement and that the Israelis would have to destroy those installations and then we would transmit this to Washington. It would go out to Damascus and a demarche would be made and those installations would be abandoned, plowed up, but others would be somewhere else. They were constantly dicing like that with the Syrians and also in the air. The Syrian MIGs defense of the Israeli airplanes over Southern Lebanon taking threatening maneuvers and then breaking off and so forth. There was a miscalculation in '85 resulting in a shoot down of three of the Syrian MIGs. Both sides were interested in keeping that from escalating. There was a lot of fulmination from the Damascus, but no particular consequence. There was I think a lock-on of Syrian radar on some Israeli airplanes and they shot the Syrians down, but it was already evident. There had been an air war at the time of the original invasion of Lebanon between the Syrians and the Israelis. The Syrians had lost 110 aircraft I think to two Israeli losses, some ratio like that. It was already fairly clear that the Syrians did not have a credible air force to contest the Israeli air force. Assad knew that as well as anyone and also had begun to see by the mid-'80s that the Soviets were no longer going to be a reliable resupplier of his losses. They were already insisting on cash on the barrelhead and, of course, soon thereafter the communists were going to disappear altogether on their own. It's one thing to lose an airplane, but somebody else is going to replace it, if it costs $25 million especially if you have this crack brained economic system as the Syrians had then and have now. All in all, that kind of maneuvering went on, but it never seriously threatened to escalate into war. By then as well the Egyptian peace treaty was institutionalized, there was not going to be a two front war for the Israelis, and the Syrians had known all along that they had no chance in any one front contest. Indeed they had no chance in a two front contest either. It was a question of maintaining a certain tension by not allowing that to escalate. Both Assad and Rabin knew each other and had been dealing with other for a long time by proxy, of course, but were similar in the very jaundiced views they took of humanity. They were both realists. I think there was a kind of grudging respect on both sides that and also an understanding that Rabin would do what he said he would do and had the capability of doing it. He's not a man you could bluff. Rabin I think understanding that essentially Assad was going to exercise a restraining influence on Syrian ambitions in the region even though the Israelis had by then incorporated the Golan Heights into Israel and that was something never accepted by Syria that there was no practical possibility the Syrians were going to try to retake that by force as long as Israel remained vigilant and determined to keep it. That was going to be status quo and indeed it was, but the Syrians could bring pressure to bear on the Israelis in Lebanon by supporting those elements in Lebanese society that could attack the Israelis from the northern border and also in the security zone. Rabin was always intent on having an address for the attacks on Israel. It had its origin in Lebanon and so his determination was to make Assad the address - the Syrians would be responsible for it ultimately and, therefore, since he realized the Syrians could have a restraining influence if they wished to have on what was happening in Lebanon. I think generally a foreign policy principle is that it is more difficult to hold the proxy responsible and there are diplomatic inhibitions against doing, not the least of which is that you can't go attacking the masses all the time or at all. That takes a large commitment force and a large commitment of international diplomatic credit as well and you can't do that for pinpricks, which is what these were. So, as long as it stayed an irritant, but didn't escalate beyond that, the outside could be relatively sure that the Israelis could not massively move against him. They would, by the way, mobilize the tanks every so often and huff and puff around. Assad knew he could keep that situation from escalating from shooting the odd Lebanese when he had to which of course, he was perfectly willing to do.

Q: Did we have any stand on this what do you call it the protective zone, were we telling the Israelis at least to get out or were we winking at them?

HARRISON: We were winking at them. We accepted the necessity of the security zone and at the same time our position was for the unified sovereignty of the Lebanese government over all its international territories, so we played both sides of that street, but we were in the same position really as the Israelis I mean you could not urge a withdrawal if we could not also do something about insuring the security in Israel would be guaranteed, and we couldn't do that so nobody was about to get on their case about the security zone.

Q: What about Jerusalem, and the West Bank and how about the Gaza Strip? What were your views on them?

HARRISON: Well, you asked first about the relationship between the embassy and the consulate in Jerusalem in those days, which was interesting. Actually they weren't bad. They had been awful in the period before that when Brandon Grove had been consul general in Jerusalem and Sam Lewis was ambassador down in Tel Aviv. Both men of massive ego. Theoretically, the Jerusalem consulate is subordinate to the embassy in Tel Aviv, but in fact it has always been the de facto embassy to the Palestinians and the consul general in Jerusalem prospers by having good relations with the Palestinian authorities of various sorts. In those days of course, the PLO was verboten but there were all sorts of quasi PLO people you could meet and representing their interests in this interagency battle. The embassy had no interest in that at all. There was a natural friction between the consulate and the embassy, which exacerbated because Grove and Lewis were not best of friends. But Wat Cluverius had come in to be consul general and he was much less assertive of the consul general's prerogatives than Brandon Grove had been. Meanwhile, Pickering was much less interested in subordinating everything Jerusalem did to the embassy than Sam Lewis had been. Although Pickering certainly took the peace process and all those issues for himself, although with Cluverius' input. I think Wat always found he had a role to play there and so in our time, in my time after '85, the relationships were good. Doug Kean was the number two guy there and later was my DCM in Amman and had very good relations with the Palestinian community. The embassy did not have good relations with the Palestinian community because it was concentrated in that consular district and there was a division of labor there. Gaza, on the other hand, was in our bailiwick. We had a Gaza officer, not a very good one in my time. He didn't go down there much. I never could quite figure out what he did, but finding out about Gaza was not among the things that he did and so we didn't have as good coverage as we should have even with Gaza. That relationship was okay. Your sympathies tend to lie in the Foreign Service with those who are your clients, certainly it works out like that.

Q: Where you stand is where you sit as they say?

HARRISON: Yes, so it was natural that if you were in Jerusalem to see the justice of the Palestinian cause in sharper relief than Washington did or the embassy did in Tel Aviv. My view was always that, and is still, that people who can discern a moral superiority of one side of an issue or the other have a finer moral compass than I do and that anyone who thought that the bullshit quotient was higher on one side than the other had a finer bullshit protector than mine, that we ought to be very skeptical about both sides and ought to realize that our interests were separable from the interests of either, but that I don't think has been the prevailing opinion in our government. Since then it certainly is not.

Q: Did you find the embassy staff, I'm particularly thinking of the officers, with their biases there or not?

HARRISON: No, none that I ever saw. I mean, you know, it really always was in the days before political correctness that Jews assigned to Tel Aviv would have a natural sympathy for Israel and one focus of that on the Arab side was Dan Kurtzer who has been ever since. The accusations as he has become increasingly responsible that this is someone who would be biased toward the Israeli point of view. I never saw any hint of that and I had the highest respect for him. I always felt that his analysis was always based on U.S. interests.Q: What was his job?

HARRISON: He was political officer, was he a second secretary then, he may have been whose portfolio included the peace process. Joe Sullivan who later is ambassador now in Namibia I think was my deputy and his portfolio was the Knesset internal political scene. I had a labor officer guy who did the defense portfolio. We had I think six or seven people. It was a big section and of course, a lot of interest in Washington in what was going on and we reported it. That's one thing about Israel, you always knew what was going on. There were no more secrets in Israel than there are in Washington. Fewer if anything - very active press, voluble politicians.

Q: Well, I've talked to political officers there and you can tell they had fun. I mean because they could talk to people as opposed on the Arab side where you never really got beyond a certain veil.

HARRISON: That's right. On the Arab side, you could talk to everybody, but they all had the same opinion. There was no purpose in talking to everybody. Talk to one guy and go sit by the pool. In Israel there were as many opinions as there were people to express them. In fact I've always found that the debate about Israeli policy toward the Palestinians is much more honest and lively in Israel than in Washington, including now. They were nothing, nothing was hidden. The whole thing was just an open book. It was like being a surgeon with all the organs exposed, you know, you didn't have to guess at anything. It was about as far from my experience 20 years before in Warsaw as it's possible to imagine. It is for a political officer, it's a good place, it's very fraught, everything is fraught, you know, all issues are a crisis. Everyone's a news junkie. There's always news. A lot of exaggeration in the media, a lot of the newspapers means a lot of funny stories, so a part of what we did - the real from the phony. But I thought there were some standards you could use to understand Israeli politics which gave you some compass through this morass and one of them was the understanding that it was a brokerage system, again much like our system. That it was a system that abhorred political outcomes which were a zero sum, in which one side contesting something achieved all of its goals and the other side achieved none of its goals. That would always be the way that the issues were framed, as absolutes and there would be a huge rhetorical battle. This still goes on between the one position and the other and then it would reach a crisis very quickly in a day or two as the rhetoric escalated and finally someone would accuse somebody else of a blood libel which seemed to be the signal for people to sit down and begin parceling out the goods very carefully. I always thought the beginning resembled the civil war and the ending resembled the negotiation between General Motors and the United Auto Workers okay, a little of this and a little of that. You get this and I get that, we all live to fight another day. So once you understand not to take the rhetoric seriously, but to understand the positioning that was going on and the system was essentially moderate in the sense that it did not want absolutist outcomes and was designed to avoid them and in that way to accommodate these very wide differences of opinion within that society. It all made sense and I think that's still true.

Q: How about the religious parties, I would think they would be the most difficult ones to reach compromises with?

HARRISON: No, I don't think necessarily. I mean they had things that they wanted from the political system as well and they had things to barter for what they wanted. Knesset votes were one of the things that they had, but also, support for the peace process since the ultra orthodox, I think this has changed a little bit in the meantime, but the ultra orthodox believed that the Israeli state is illegitimate since the Messiah has not returned and, therefore, in those days took no particular strong view of land for peace. The land was not important to the ultra orthodox point of view and, therefore, could be counted on from other coalitions on the peace process as long as you could accommodate on the social economic side. What they wanted for example, was exemption for their yeshiva students from military service and that was granted. They wanted a lot of money to build yeshivas and that was granted. There were all sorts of things from the political system, which they were lining up to receive. Where the rubber met the road; and that could be accommodated, too, because it was just a question of money. Where the rubber met the road was in the socially restrictive laws that they wanted to pass to impose a kind of orthodox social system on society which had a large secular component to it and a militantly secular component. So, there were areas in which they was societal agreement. For example, Shabbat should be respected, no commercial activity during Shabbat, there were people who wanted to engage in it.

Q: Shabbat, we call the Sabbath?

HARRISON: Shabbat, sundown on Friday and Saturday. But there was a general societal consensus that that could be accommodated. That in hotel restaurants and the kosher restaurants they all had to be kosher and that you have to have dairy restaurants and meat restaurants so that the mixing of dairy and meat which is contrary to kashrut, so religious loss would not take place. There would be some area of basic consensus, but there were a lot of areas of friction on the edges of that consensus. For example, if the religious parties tried to push these social restrictions then the secular community would push back. One dispute when I was there was about the starting time for soccer matches after the ending of Shabbat, sundown on Saturday. If the soccer match began too soon after sundown the orthodox argued it would be necessary for people to travel before Shabbat ended in order to be there when the football game began, but in summer to meet the orthodox requirements you would have had to begin those soccer matches at 9:30 or 10:00 at night and the next day was a work day. There was a great pushback against that. In those cases the orthodox would come out in their thousands to demonstrate and the police would wade in and just beat the crap out of them. This would all be broadcast on television and it was a part of the kind of social contract, that is the vicarious whacking of the orthodox community publicly broadcast was a great source of satisfaction to the secular community and social stability in the countries as a whole. I always thought that the whacking which was usually from the mounted policemen and with great enthusiasm, so there was kind of public ritual about this which was stabilizing I thought. Already then and even more now you could see the division of the community into smaller and smaller political groupings which unfortunately was encouraged by the same political system which had been devised to accommodate the different interests, and that is proportional representation. It was a great system in that you have this brokerage system, proportional representation. While having that impact it also encourages even further division of opinion and the multiplications of the parties and therefore, increases the need to do what proportion representation does. That has continued, so the society is divided to a point where the second Intifada began, that the existence of the state was being called into question and indeed, I think, one could argue that Arafat and the radicals who have been the savior of the Israeli political system which really is now - aside from being unified in opposition to the suicide bombers and so forth, it gets pretty difficult to identify where any consensus at all exists in that country - but they're absolved from the necessity of having to find one by what is currently going on. I think and it is often said even then that if the Arabs really wanted to destroy Israel they'd make peace and made the Israelis to contest with each other about the future of their state and its Jewishness. There are some contradictions there that were evident already, well been evident for 50 years.

Q: Did you ever see the change with the Soviet Jews coming in at that point?

HARRISON: After my time when they began to come in in numbers, that was seen by Israel as demographically a saving grace because it postponed the date at which the Arab population was going to exceed the Jewish population in most territories claimed by Israel. Probably put it back 10 or 15 years, a million Soviet Jews or so. Of course, not all Jews, as is well documented now. A lot of people who the orthodox had not considered Jewish, which was then another source of conflict in Israel because the orthodox claimed the right to decide who was Jewish and who was not. A lot of the Soviet immigrants didn't meet the qualification, but politically it was impossible to disqualify them. A lot of reasons not to do that. That was another source of societal division. Now, as I understand it, what's happened, of course, the assimilation of Soviet Jews is a great achievement. Luckily it coincided with economic upsurge which coincided with the beginning of the peace process in the early 1990s after the Baker mission. Israel began to grow very rapidly and that made all the difference in terms of assimilating Soviet Jews. Now course the army is the great engine of assimilation in Israel since everyone has to join up except for the orthodox. Universal draft still in effect so everyone goes and everyone has their unit, units are mixed and as in this country, a great social solidifier. The Soviet Jews then still identify themselves as a group, still have grievances they want to address, Sharansky is the head of the party who came in my time. Israel is the kind of forerunner of this immigration in '86 I guess he came. He becomes a considerable political figure in his own right. What happened - of course, the expectation was then that the Soviet Jews would be in play politically and could tip the balance between the major parties. What actually happened was that the Soviet Jews consulted their own interests and became another party altogether and the two major parties in the mid '80s had begun to erode anyway and it went off to the point where Labor is on the point of extinction altogether and the Likud is no longer a party so much as it is a coalition of convenience, which, when they'd lose power, would break up into constituent elements again. All those trends that were already evident in the mid '80s continue.

Q: What about - the term gets loose, you know you call it the Jewish lobby and the Israeli lobby, in the United States. At the time you were there, did this effect your reporting, did it affect the operation of the embassy?

HARRISON: No, it had no effect on us and they tried to have no effect on us. They concentrated on Washington and indeed were independent of the Israeli government, especially the Peres government who disapproved of some of the things they did, would have been more open to. The major benchmark for the Jewish lobby in the '80s was arms sales to the Arabs, and that's an issue on which the Israeli government was much more relaxed than the lobby was. The lobby proved its worth to its own members by working against those sales and so the lobby interest really was to keep the donations coming in. You had to show to the American Jewish audience who were supporting you financially that you were effective. One way to do that was to block the arms sales and that was a very clear issue and a politically doable thing and the administrations in this country, Democratic and Republican alike were always running uphill to ease that pressure. Gradually making inroads because they had formidable allies who had formed the companies that wanted to sell those things. Congressmen representing the districts in which those companies were - increasingly more and more of them. It gradually made progress. But that was where the fault line was; it was certainly not true in Tel Aviv. The Israeli lobby in Washington didn't care what the embassy was reporting, didn't care much what the State Department felt. It cared what Congress thought, and there it could be very active and so we never saw that influence at all. The influence on Israeli politics came from Jewish organizations, which were separate from AIPAC (American Israeli Public Affairs Committee), which is the major Israeli lobbying group. There is the organization of presidents of major Jewish organizations, in those days a moderating influence on Israeli policy. They would come - these various rabbis and men of import and they were, these were substantial men politically and economically in our community and also in the Israeli community because great contributors and organizers of contributors to the state of Israel. They had a hearing and they had a moderating influence. They tended to be inclined toward Labor in those days and would come sometimes threaten to withhold their contributions under certain circumstances. I think that's all gone now. The American Jewish community has been radicalized too many times, so the restraining influence that they used to exercise is no longer there.

Q: I'm looking at it, could Israel really exist without American financial support, both government and?

HARRISON: Yes. The Arabs tend to exaggerate the impact of that. It used to be a lot greater than it is. It has stayed relatively stable. It's drifted up a little bit, but the Israeli economy in the '90s has increased six fold. It was a period of very rapid; not six fold in real terms, but tripled. At the time it increased with a very rapid growth and the Israelis have become a $100 billion economy, in which of all the contributions externally are probably 5%. Also, they have a self-standing arms industry, although they certainly get better stuff from us. If all of that were to be removed they would still be miles ahead of any combination of their neighbors. You know, there would be some belt tightening and economic austerity, but there would also be some unification in Israeli society if that money went away. The place that it could have been effective was in forcing them to make some hard choices on settlement activity and that's what Bush used. The housing guarantees for settlement as a way of forcing the Israelis to look at their settlement policy and toward peace with the Palestinians. But that pressure is gone now, too. There is no pressure at all on the settlement policy, which is kind of the original sin of Israel now. They have a much stronger political, ethical and security position without the settlements, but it's the tail that now wags the dog in Israel. We're not in that business anymore. I think we'll have to come back into it at sometime.

Q: The current Washington commentators that say that the end game is kind of known to those and that is the Israeli settlements will have to be dissolved and a part of Jerusalem will have to be, you'd given some status and the Palestinians will have a little hunk of Jerusalem and that's the way you're going to end up.

HARRISON: Yes, I think that's Camp David, too. Someone said we have the light, now we have to dig the tunnel. Yes, that's where it's going to end up. Everybody knows what the political outcome has to be and the issue is whether the political will exist to get there and what role we will play in bringing it about. There was some thought early this year that we would do it, as the price of Arab support against Iraq. But that has been successfully countered politically in Washington among those who count, by the argument that regime in Iraq will have a special impact on the peace process. That argument has been turned around and right now all is on hold with regard to that dispute waiting for the other deck to be shuffled by this invasion of Iraq.

Q: While you were there, were nuclear developments an issue at all?

HARRISON: No, they weren't. The only issue was Vanunu, the man who was at the Israeli nuclear site at Dimona who leaked the information details about the Israeli nuclear program. He was picked up in a honey trap, he had a woman, he fell for it, they arrested him and brought him back to Israel where he still sits in jail, but meanwhile had given details of that program. It had been an open secret for some time, but the Israelis had never admitted to it. Washington had no hope of effecting the program already decided so as far as I know, so that issue, except for that brief flurry of activity, didn't come up. The other area in which it played was in nonproliferation efforts, which we were hot to strengthen in those days because of the argument that we had a double standard. We were trying to keep the Arabs from acquiring what the Israelis already had, which weakened our nonproliferation efforts, but in my view, our efforts in that regard would have been useless in any case. Certain Arab countries were determined to get nuclear weapons and they were going to do whatever is necessary to achieve that whether or not we entered the fray. Others saw that as a bad option, the Egyptians didn't pursue it for example, the Iraqis did, the Iranians - not an Arab country - were pursuing it from the beginning of Khomeini's time, so we weren't going to effect that outcome.

Q: Were you there when the Israelis bombed a nuclear facility?

HARRISON: No, no, that was four years before I arrived, something they'd take great pride in now. In fact, interesting that the Iraqis just took the newsmen to that facility the other day to show them that it was still destroyed and keeping with Saddam's inherent maladroitness in public relations he takes these newsmen to show them how the Israelis by preempting and preventing nuclear weapons. I just don't understand who was advising him on that issue, but it's true. Saddam is an opponent right out of central casting. If you could choose a guy to move against in the world, you couldn't construct him from identikit any better than Saddam has been constructed by nature or nurture. He suits our every purpose. He does and seems to, whenever he seems to be gaining in some way in public relations terms, he's careful to screw up something so that he loses that again. Really a complete moron in many ways, but obviously crafty in terms of making power ruthless, but in international terms that guy is such a bozo as is hard to imagine.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss about Israel?

HARRISON: Well, let me see, were there any other big issues of the day? There's always the usual coming and going. You know the Pickering thing with the London agreement as it was called, was trying to put a piece of the puzzle under the Knesset which would bring Peres back to power, that failed. Washington wouldn't support it. The personality of Shamir, Shamir had been the guy in the Irgun who had told all the secrets. Of course, they didn't want to write any down, this was back in the Palestinian mandate days.

Q: He was a killer, wasn't he? In a sense?

HARRISON: No, he wasn't a killer actually he was the guy back at the home office who ...

Q: Maybe the Stalin who kept the records?

HARRISON: He was never a front line guy. He was the recordkeeping guy. He was told all the secrets. He knew where everybody was, who all the operatives were, where all the bodies were buried because everyone trusted Shamir to keep his mouth shut and that is absolutely true. Shamir never said an unguarded word in my hearing and I'm sure outside my hearing to Pickering. He was absolutely a man who could talk without communicating. He was not susceptible to flattery. He was not susceptible to argument or anything else, blandishment. He was entirely a self-contained individual who knew what he thought and had the wrong sense if he'd ever any doubts, put them aside. I doubt he ever had any. He knew what you wanted and was determined that you wouldn't see it and he was actually comfortable with that. A remarkable guy in many ways. Certainly Pickering, who is a remarkable man in his own right, could never make a dent. Pickering always counted on being able to overwhelm you with eloquence of fact and argument and force of personality. He was kind of the LBJ of the State Department and that tide rolled in and there stood Shamir and the tide broke against the rock and that was it. I watched a lot of that interchange. There was that, the Intifada was still in the future while I was there and it would have amazed us to think in our time that it was going to take place because our assumption was that the Palestinian community was quiescent. The joke that I used to make about it was that as opposed to the radicals elsewhere in the Arab world, the Palestinians always wanted to know, when you wanted them to make a suicide mission, what the getaway plan was. The occupation had been cheap for the Israelis for a long time. They could do it with very few people. There was the occasional demonstration and the occasional Palestinian would be shot, but the economic cost to Israel was small, the personal offering was small and there was no reason to rethink in the summer of '87 when I left that that would change. Certainly we didn't see it coming. Nobody at the embassy and nobody in the intelligence community predicted that this would happen, which is true by the way of almost all the major departures of international relations of which I'm aware. The analytical community in Washington is not equipped to deal with revolutionary departures. They're equipped to deal with nuance in situations, which we all accept as immutable. That was certainly true of the Soviet Union; it was true of each of the individual countries.

Q: There's also a straight-line projection.

HARRISON: Yes, it's the safest thing to project and therefore, the thing the bureaucracy is most likely to project and all the individuals occasionally can be heard as crying in the wilderness but they're almost universally ignored because their supervisors are not willing to take the risks that would be necessary to promote a point of view which depends on things tomorrow being absolutely different than they were today. There is a 90% chance you look foolish and only 10% chance you look prescient and that's a no brainer in the bureaucracy.

Q: Well, in '87 you left?

HARRISON: I left, yes I did. By the way I left by the speed of writing a letter to Alan Holmes, who was then the director of the political military bureau (PM). I'd heard from a visitor he'd had a deputy assistant secretaryship open and putting myself forward for it, having formed the conviction by that time that I should not wait around for the Foreign Service to decide unanimously and by acclamation that I was just the person for any job I wanted, and that if I wanted a job I'd better go out there and sell myself for it and be willing to take the rejection, which takes places about 90% of the time. But it's like you know, propositioning a lot of women, you know, eventually you'll succeed. So I did that with a great good fortunate for me career-wise, because it was a DAS ship and also very good fortune because Al Haig had arranged that the vestige of the Haig-designed system to put the State Department at the center of the bureaucratic system on foreign policy was that State still chaired all of the interagency arms control groups. The job that I came into in PM was a job that was the chairman of those groups. Bill Burns, the father of the current assistant secretary for NEA was then the senior deputy in PM and had been chairing those groups. I think the plan was to keep him in the chair, but again, after a couple or three weeks in the bureau, I spoke up and said it was properly my job and before anyone could figure out how to deal with that effrontery I was in it and therefore, chaired all the interagency groups for the last couple of years of the Reagan administration. This was fortunate because Reagan had by that time discovered arms control and the roadblock which had previously been placed by an office of the secretary of defense against arms control, those same people who are in charge now, trying unsuccessfully then...

Q: Richard Perle?

HARRISON: Richard Perle and Paul and Frank Gaffney and so forth. They had been undone by Reagan's apostasy on the issue. They had confidently expected him to be a cold warrior and he had not been. He'd actually been the most anti-nuclear president we ever had. He wanted to see those weapons gone. Insofar as you could appeal to that sentiment, he would agree with you and the State Department had a better appeal than the Defense Department did. By the time I got there the old system that OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) had used to frustrate arms control efforts had been to force everything to the White House. The systems works as you - but maybe this Venetian scholar who has unearthed this CD and is listening avidly to what I am saying does not know - that the system functions by funneling opinions from the various agencies who were representing their own equities through the national security council to the president for a decision. If there is disagreement at the assistant secretary level, which is effectively where I was operating although I was a deputy assistant secretary, then it goes to the White House. If there's agreement at that level it never goes to the White House it simply becomes policy. If you disagreed and could count on the president always to decide on your side of the issue you force it to the White House and you'd win every time and that was their assumption, but they began when this heated up. In the first Reagan administration there really wasn't an important distinction because relations with the Soviets were in a deep freeze, the post-Afghanistan invasion period; there simply wasn't anything going on anyway. In the second Reagan administration all that changed and they began to see indications over at DOD that they were going to get overruled on some of these issues. They began to try to decide everything or tie it up at the other agency levels or decide it, because if they tied it up it would go to the White House. So they tried to make the best deal they could in the interagency process. So, that made those interagency meetings a lot more interesting than they'd been in the old days when the purpose was obstruction and now the purpose was compromise and that's always more entertaining. This had really come into its own just as I was coming onboard as the chairman of those committees, but also, the State representative on them and that also was an interesting role because I would have to be impartial as the chairman. This is why by the way the Haig system never had a hope of working and was only kept in place because everybody was afraid of what Reagan would do if they went back to him on the issue. I would have to chair the meeting and then take off that hat and represent the State Department view and then go back to being chairman. I had to establish credibility with the members of those committees that I was in fact an impartial chairman and establish credibility with my own betters that I was in fact an energetic advocate of the State Department view on these issues. It was an interesting position to be in and for me fascinating. Very productive. We made a lot of progress on the strategic arms limitations and also signed an intermediary nuclear weapons agreement with the Soviets in this period. This committee was backstopped to the negotiating team, so a lot of fun. We were working late at night, on 24-hour suspense most of the time so that was my major job.

Q: Were you involved in the SS-20?

HARRISON: Oh yes, that was the INF negotiation. Very much so. The other thing about that system was that Reagan, although he had strong views, was, to say the least, not a detail man. He didn't care how the machinery of government operated and paid very little attention to it. Also he didn't care about the details of the agreement, didn't know much about the doctrine which had informed our policy for years. Actually, when I came on board I didn't know much about it either, graduate school, but it was pretty much the same. Mutual assured destruction, flexible response, defense in depth, escalation dominance, all the jargon was still very much the accepted wisdom. Now, Reagan had launched his SDI initiative when I was still in London.

Q: Strategic defense, called Star Wars?

HARRISON: Right. The right wing in Washington had welcomed it because they thought it would make any negotiation with the Soviets impossible because the Soviets would see this as threatening, as indeed it was within the prevailing ideology of the day, which is that increased defenses gave you first strike capability by making you invulnerable to a weakened adversary's second retaliatory strike and therefore, removing the inhibitions you had to preempt. But Reagan didn't know that. He didn't understand it, had no interest in it. The problem was that when you came to negotiating details of an agreement which affected the fate of a thousand or so nuclear warheads, that's serious business, you have to get the details right. The last thing anyone wanted to do was to ask Reagan about them. Theoretically this had to be a presidential decision, but in practical terms everyone labored long and hard to keep that from being the case. Defense didn't want these issues to go to Reagan because they were afraid of Reagan's anti-nuclear leanings and had been - particularly since Reykjavik, the summit where Reagan and Gorbachev had decided briefly to abolish all land based ICBMs, before Reagan had been hauled into the bathroom and told that that was not in fact the practical thing to do, especially when we were trying to get money out of Congress for the MX missile, which was going to be our biggest land based ICBM. That sent a chill through Defense and ever after they were afraid of Reagan making decisions which would be sweeping and contrary to their view of the world. So, they didn't want Reagan deciding on the details of verification. State didn't want Reagan deciding on the details because the perception was that he had absolutely no capability intellectually to do that, that he was remarkable political leader precisely because he didn't get bogged down in details and couldn't be influenced by facts. There was a mutual agreement in the bureaucracy to accommodate these decisions by other means and the other means, there was a group called the contact group, an informal group that met at the White House under the chairmanship of a man named Bob Linhart. Bob Linhart had come to the NSC staff as a lieutenant colonel and a theorist of deterrents in arms control and strategic matters and was a very adept, very intelligent and very personable guy. I have a lot of respect for him. Everyone had a lot of respect for him and even though he was only a lieutenant colonel, later a colonel, he became the arbiter of arms control policy for the United States for the White House. My committee would send - and it had a great incentive as I say to agree - but when we could not agree, we would send issues to the White House. Bob Linhart would assemble a contact group which included Jim Timbie from State who was advisor to the secretary of state, but was kind of a free agent separated from the State bureaucracy. It included Richard Perle I think was on the contract group, or maybe it was Frank Gaffney from defense, and several other people from the CIA and from the other players in the process, JCS. The contact group would then decide, would talk about this issue, but not decide it. Then the next day or the day aftethat's where I think the process really was for Linhart to test the waters - and then a couple of days later the decision would come out of the White House in the form of a presidential directive signed by Ronald Reagan. This is going to be our policy on verification inspections and portholes. There was an issue for example, should we have inspectors at the portholes of weapons development facilities so that they saw what came out. You know, it's a production facility, it's hard to build another one, especially that we don't detect, so if it's going to be produced, it's produced there. So we should have our guy standing at the egress of this place making sure that nothing comes out or that what comes out is provided for in the treaty. Which is fine in theory, except JCS naturally worried that they have Russians then standing at our missile production facilities doing the same thing. The issue went to the president and came out with a presidential decision. No one imagined that the president had actually decided it or even that he necessarily signed the document that came out of the White House. This was something, which Bob Linhart did. Now, Linhart had real restrictions on what he could do. This was the era of Shultz and Weinberg at State and Defense and Shultz and Weinberg had an unhappy relationship. They disagreed strenuously on many issues and competed for the president's ear and Linhart knew that as long as he could operate in this area of consensus between State and Defense and he could operate, using the disinclination that everyone had to wheel the president in personally to make these decisions, as long as he didn't exceed certain parameters. Those parameters were shifting and they could generally be described as the trigger for Shultz to call Reagan or Weinberg to call Reagan and say, "What the hell is going on and who is this colonel anyway?" With great deftness and intelligence, one of the great public servants actually in our era, all unrecognized, Bob Linhart performed that function. I would say and many others involved in this process would say, he was the single greatest influence on U.S. arms control policy other than the president for the last two years of the Reagan administration, as a colonel at that point. When he died about four or five years ago at 51 or 52, I wrote an obituary for him and sent it around to the old community. Mike Litman who had been our INF negotiator and Paul Nitze and other people who'd been aware of Linhart's contribution, and our idea was to publish it in the Washington Post. We were all very much in agreement that this was exactly the role that Linhart played and all signed it. The Post wouldn't publish it on the basis that they didn't publish joint letters like that. It was signed in the end and given to Bob Linhart's widow. That atmosphere was one in which you could really operate and it was a lot of fun. Also, my committee had good people on it. The old ideologues had been washed through and so Frank Gaffney would come every so often and he is of course one of the foremost of the old school, but the great thing about him was that he was always poorly briefed because he prided himself on being able to sit down and handle a meeting without reading his briefing book. He could be hard to maneuver. Bob Joseph who is now at the White House in charge of proliferation and all such matters was the OSD rep and although he's conservative, he's a very decent guy. Lou Nosenzo was at ACDA and was the ACDA rep. I'd known Lou for a long time and he was an extremely intelligent and able guy and had the great advantage in that for me in that group of having no ideological clients to represent. JCS had, you know they were very constrained with their reps, and also the OSD reps were always their superiors and to the equities of their agencies. The CIA in particular. But ACDA didn't have any equities. It was a conservative regime, so arms control, they were an arms control agency, but they had no interest in arms control. Ken Adelman who was in charge was kind of a flake. Lou could basically be a casting vote for reason in this process, which is very valuable. Another ACDA guy in that context could have been destructive, but Lou luckily, we had Lou, I think God arranged Lou to be there. Tom Fox was the JCS rep. These were all people for whom I have great respect and who were public servants in the best sense who disagreed. Bill Hiser from the White House, Linton Brooks, who disagreed about issues, but always within the context of the benefit of U.S. national interest and ultimately that was always the test of all of the people that I've named. The other people involved in this process brought to the table and in those circumstances and since the people that you meet in a context like that are the best of the best. People with enormous ability. It makes for a very exciting time. I feel privileged to have been associated with that group of people and it's really a dream I think of anybody who comes into the bureaucracy to be able to do something meaningful with a group of people like that and all of whom have remained my friends ever since even though it was often very tense discussions. We would spend 12 hours doing it and people would lose their temper, but there was a core of mutual respect in that process which really made all the difference and I don't think exists anymore.

Q: What was the outcome of all this? You left there when?

HARRISON: I left there actually right after the election, six months after the election when the Bush administration came in. The outcome was the INF treaty. We never were able to solve some of the Start problems. MBFR - we pretty much put the stake through the heart of neutral balanced force reductions with the Soviets, but the INF treaty was really I think the center point because this is now the period from '87 to '879 which is really the demise of the Soviet Union. The INF treaty is really one of the hallmarks of that of the new relationship, which is going to emerge between Russian, and the United States. The socialization of the Soviets in this new Russian U.S. relationship, although we didn't know it. Well, you know, if you'd asked me in '89 when I left that job, well maybe '89 it was beginning to be a little more clear, but '87 when I took up that job, you know with the Soviet Union 50 years from now I would have said, yes, that that relationship will still exist - and actually it had about three years to go. What we were doing was paving the way for that transition although we didn't know it so it was concrete stuff. It was important stuff and it meant the disabling destruction of a thousand nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles on the two sides, which is a good thing. That was good, that was the outcome. There were a lot of other things going on at the time. I had Jenonne Walker doing the conventional side, Jim Holmes was head of the office who did all of the strategic stuff and Jim is now, went on to be ambassador in Latvia and Jenonne to be ambassador in Czechoslovakia. He was a Foreign Service Officer, she was a formidable CIA officer who came over to State and we had a lot of fun. The other great thing about that job is that we had a lot of fun. We had a great office. Alan Holmes, one of nature's gentlemen, was the director of PM and he always maintained a very nice atmosphere. We had very good people including Ron Barteck who had been on the INF committee who came back who is a great guy and Vlad Lehovich. So that front office was like no other that I think has ever existed up there on the seventh floor including the penny pinching sweepstakes. We used to pinch pennies a lot, but it was a lot of fun. The best job I ever had, certainly the most fun I ever had in the Foreign Service.

Q: Who was your putative boss at that time? Well, it was Alan Holmes?

HARRISON: Alan Holmes, yes, was the boss. We had an under secretary for science and technology, Reggie Bartholomew for some of that period, but never really impacted us at all.

Q: Did you find that you had to operate below the Shultz-Weinberger enmity?

HARRISON: Oh yes, that was a given.

Q: I mean if you're trying to get something done, you had to keep that from.

HARRISON: Oh, yes, no it didn't. I think that's changed. It didn't influence my relationships with the guys at DOD. There's a sense that, you know, that they're always trying to gain a step on you and you're trying to gain a step on them and you're competing bureaucratically, but it was a fair fight in those days. There was a context that made it less the bloodbath that it has become since. We all felt that we were on the same general team and again, I think there was a mutual respect and a feeling that the other guy was honestly trying to do what he thought was best in national interest.

Q: Did you run across, was there a breed of cat who really loved the nuclear weapons or not or were most people kind of repulsed by them. You know, I mean Reagan was and I mean everybody should be.

HARRISON: Well, yes, I think there was a whole group of people who thought it was a legitimate weapon of war and who were represented in OSD which is always the font of any ideological views on defense over at the Defense Department, but the JCS people didn't feel that way. They were always very practical about this stuff. They'd bring to the table. In fact, that was one of the revelations about how the system works. As you sit there with a group of people from the bureaucracy who understand that they represent their equities, they're not free agents sitting around the table. The positions that they bring to the table are a result of a long internal process within their own agencies which has involved accommodation and compromise and decision. So you know, that is what makes their position valid. I don't want a guy sitting there from CIA who is representing his own point of view. That's not valuable to the process. He's got to be representing CIA, so the last thing he's going to say is, "Gee, I just heard the State Department view, I'm persuaded." No. The only thing that will happen then is there will be another guy from the CIA at the next meeting. What you wanted was a guy who could accurately do that and knew how much flexibility his agency had, what his parameters were and knew when he should take some thing back and try to get his agency to change because whatever position they were on was untenable. At the end we had in our group and Gaffney at that point resigned, or actually was fired and Perle resigned and Weinberg left mostly because they saw the policy moving, I always thought, in the other direction, and then went out and organized and came back in force with Bush II. We had eight or ten years of Sandy and I've become convinced in my old age that political victories are always finite. You never win forever and you never lose forever. Certainly they've shown that to be the case and I hope that a more rational point of view will now show that that's the case by throwing the rascals out, but at any rate. The other thing we did in those years - which was suggested to me - we were looking for an initiative on the conventional side or a non-nuclear side and one of my officers, I forget his name, pointed out that the Geneva convention on chemical weapons in 1919, I think was the year, was in need of updating and it occurred to me that the French were about to have their bicentennial and would be looking for a centerpiece for that.

Q: This would be the 1989 bicentennial? Or tricentennial?

HARRISON: Of the French Revolution, that's right. So, there's a big celebratory year in France. I hatched the idea of reconvening the Geneva conference parties for reaffirmation of the convention on chemical weapons limitations. Great resistance in the bureaucracy especially from OSD to this because chemical weapons were seen as another legitimate war fighting instrument, and also the assumption was - which turned out to be true, that the Soviets would not be limited by the convention - so that the only effect of such meeting would be to strengthen limitations on the United States, which I think probably in retrospect was the correct position. We got it through anyway. The way we did that, essentially I did it, was a bureaucratic compromise. We agreed to send a letter to the French to ask whether they were interested in the idea. I already knew that they were interested in the idea, so once we broached it, they would pick it up and run with it, which in fact they did. The only fly in my ointment was that they didn't want any input from us once they grabbed the idea. That was it. We should stand aside and they would run it, which they did. It turned out to be the biggest international conference ever held and was the centerpiece of their bicentennial and we were sitting around trying to think of a follow up. How are you going to keep momentum going for this? It occurred to me that we could have a meeting of manufacturers of precursors of chemical weapons with the governments to talk about the control of precursors.

Q: What does that mean?

HARRISON: A precursor is one of the chemicals that is a necessary ingredient in the manufacture of chemical weapons. There are some you can manufacture simply by buying commercially available chemicals and so the issue is how do you keep track of how those available chemicals are being sold. The Australians would - this was actually a neat bit of work if I do say so myself - the Australians had tried to stake out a position for themselves in the world by championing chemical weapons causes, limitations on chemical weapons. To make this conference a reality. This was also now the Bush administration and they were looking for initiatives and Baker was about to go make his first speech at NATO. Baker was the 800-pound gorilla in that administration on foreign policy. If you could get something in one of Baker's speeches, that was it, that was policy, too bad for DOD. I brought this idea up to Dennis Ross who was writing Baker's speech. Now the other reality for all you future bureaucrats is that speechwriters are desperate for ideas especially for a first speech to a NATO ministerial. The last thing Baker wants to do is to trot out there with all the old ideas and all the old rhetoric from the old administration even, if it was a Republican administration. He wants to make his mark. Well, you make your mark with innovative thoughts; speechwriters don't necessarily have them. They're desperate for them. So, I fed some things into Ross for which he was grateful for at least a day or two, he put them in the speech and suddenly they were policy. Before that we staffed the president, no I guess it was Baker to call the Australian Prime Minister to say would you host such a meeting. The Australian Prime Minister was on that like pork on beans and so it was announced at the end of the speech that the Australians had agreed to host. I got a call the next day from the Australian Embassy here in Washington saying well, where's the money going to come from? That was the only problem; we didn't have any money in the budget to do this. So, I said, "Well, that's what hosting means." They had to pay for it and to pay for it they had to close a half a dozen consulates. Now flash forward five years and I'm ambassador to Amman and my Australian colleague a nice guy, a good friend, has a party because he's assembling all the ambassadors from the region in Amman and I'm invited. It turns out that some of these guys five years before had been at some of the consulates that had been closed. It was kind of an interesting thing. That meeting took place and created an organization which still exists which is dedicated to some of the residents and some of the stuff we did there. But the lesson for me was how you get things done bureaucratically. It's possible, if you know where the leaders are, to get the Department of State to turn on a dime. Most people think that it is an intransigent bureaucracy, but it can react very swiftly if you know what you're doing. The upshot of the Paris conference thing we sent - oh there was another initiative in that first Baker speech, too, which was to speed up by two years our removal of chemical weapons from Germany. We had agreed with the Germans to move them out and Baker loved it because it was a nice gesture to the Germans so he put it in his speech. I went up to see the staff secretariat, to the executive secretary of the Department. His name will come back to me. I said, "You said you better send this over to Defense." He said, "No, to hell with Defense. If Baker wants to do this, it's in the speech." So, he never cleared it and they went absolutely berserk because they had to actually do it and they had no idea how they were going to. A lot of political problems in Germany, security of these shipments in taking them out of depot and moving them to the border or to the port. Then you had to take them to Johnson Island where there wasn't any room because that's where they destroyed chemical weapons out there. You sure as hell weren't going to take them anywhere else and they didn't have the storage facilities at Johnson Island, which was already overtaxed. They went berserk and saw me as the major culprit. They arranged some hearings up on Capitol Hill because immediately that we sent this cable. We sent a cable to Germany, the way it worked, saying we're thinking of doing this and Kohl jumped all over that and announced it publicly. No sooner had that cable arrived than he announced it because he was in the election campaign before we'd actually said we were going to do it. We just said we were thinking about it. So, they inspired hearings. Strom Thurmond in the chair to pillar me and I was invited up to testify along with Bob Joseph and Bob Linhart. Why had this been done? Why hadn't Defense cleared on this cable? What I did was the other great bureaucratic lesson, which I had been practicing for some time, I took the blame. I said it was a mistake. I didn't blame the executive secretary in fact who was to blame, I simply said we had tried to withdrew the cable, but by then Kohl had already announced it and too late, but it had been a grievous error for which we were grievously sorry and should have never have happened and would never happen again and that defused it. There was no way, I mean, what were they going to say then? They were all set up to denounce me. Joseph has testimony denouncing me, but that essentially ended the matter. We didn't try to defend what we'd done, it didn't matter, who cares who's to blame? It's always the way it proceeded. It solves the problem; you get down to actually doing stuff. That was the end to that.

Q: This is probably a good place to stop. So, when did you leave?

HARRISON: I left in '89 about six months into Bush. Then went off for a year to Colorado College as diplomat in residence, then I went to Jordan so we're coming up to the end of the culmination of my career.

Q: Why don't we just talk about Colorado College and then we'll stop?

HARRISON: Well, I actually arranged that. There was no embassy for me. The other part of the story was that State was going to make me ambassador to the Committee on Disarmament in Geneva and then I got blackballed by Defense for many of these sins I had committed in their eyes against Defense. There was nothing else for me and I needed a year, I had a year sort of on the beach, so our home is Colorado Springs. I have a friend out at Colorado Springs so I called up and asked if they would accept me as diplomat in residence. I called the assignment people and said, "You know, I want to be diplomat in residence and Colorado College has agreed to set this up." They said, "Oh, no you can't do that. We have this long list of colleges who signed up for diplomats in residence, and Colorado College - you'd have to go to the end of the line." I said, "But we're not an organization of colleges, we're an organization of Foreign Service Officers. So, it should be our interests that we promote, not theirs, and in this case, mine." So, they agreed I could go out there and I went out there and taught for a couple of semesters, which was a lot of fun.

Q: What was your impression of the interest of the student body. I mean you're in the heartland of the United States?

HARRISON: Well, they get their students from all over the country. At that point I had taught there once before 10 or 12 years before and my impression had been the great movement of social equality, but the notion of equality was that everyone should have a BMW, there was no notion of equality that we all should take sacrifices in order to build up the standard of living throughout the world. It was a very upper middle class kind of place. There was some interest in these issues, but there was no ideology to it when I went back. There were no movements for this or protests for that, you know, people were kind of mildly interested. Political activism was entirely dead.

Q: The earthshaking events of 1989, that latter half of '89 and '90? It wasn't?

HARRISON: Took it all in stride. In a sense these people were all coming into political consciousness when the Soviet Union was going out of existence. The old Soviet Union the one in the '50s that we had conjured or the '60s filled their horizon. They had already been as they began to be aware, that picture had been altering so this was as imaginable as it had been unimaginable for us who lived and dealt and had our being in that world. No, I mean, they were reasonably hardworking, usually hung over on Monday morning; it was a great thing to be at a small liberal arts college and to be 19 or 20 years old and had plenty of money. Nice car and a place like that.

Q: No draft to worry about.

HARRISON: No draft to worry about. It should be when we die, Stu, that's where we should go if you live a good life. If you wake up as a freshman at Yale with a minyata and a voice saying, "This is all yours." I was astounded at what a wonderful thing it is for these kids. It's a beautiful place. They all complain and moan and bitch and think that they are working themselves to the bone when in fact they're operating on about 10% of capacity, most of them.

Q: Okay, we'll put at the end here, we'll pick up sort of the ending and this is, we haven't talked at all about your next assignment which was to Jordan, but we'll talk about it how it came about and the situation and all that. Good. Great.

Q: Today is the 20th of September, 2002. Roger, how did this appointment to Jordan come about? First of all, what dates are we talking about? You were in Jordan from when to when?

HARRISON: From August of '90 through July of '93. The appointment came about actually as most appointments in the Foreign Service come about, by combination of good luck and circumstance. I left the job as Deputy Assistant Secretary in Political Military Affairs in June of 1989 and the new administration had come in, new people had been appointed. Reggie Bartholomew in particular to the under secretary job supervising PM and so it became increasingly clear that the power relationships were shifting and I wasn't going to have much of a role in that process. I was not unhappy to leave that job in June of that year, so about four months after the new bunch came onboard.

Q: This would be Bush?

HARRISON: This would be the Bush administration, Bush I. At that point I had no assignment, but there was a program called Diplomat in Residence from State and I had a friend out at Colorado College, so I arranged for the Colorado College to invite me and then for these people to ship me out there. They were happy to do it because I was a senior officer without an assignment. They're always happy to find places to put people like that. Out I went. In the meantime, the State Department had sponsored me as the ambassador to the committee on disarmament in Geneva, but I'd been blackballed by Ron Lehman over at OSD because of his unhappiness with the chemical weapons convention conference in Paris which I'd been instrumental in setting up in '88. He was not eager to see me off to a forum in which arms control was going to be their chief subject, because allegedly he didn't think I was sufficiently robust, or would be, in negotiation with the Soviets. That had fallen through. I was sort of on the beach for a while. Luckily I had someone in the hierarchy working on my behalf in the person of Robert Kimmitt, who had been appointed Under Secretary for Political Affairs and whom I had known for a long time and who was eager to get me an embassy in part, simply to I think do me a favor. He had lined up Tunis for me, but Bob Pelletreau was in Tunis, but he had decided to extend because he was going on to Cairo and then took another year. He extended in Tunis and that fell through. Essentially the next thing I knew I got a call from the paneling board saying that I'd been paneled as ambassador to Jordan. It was a little bit of a surprise when that happened. It was in January of '90. I began preparations at that point I did some Arabic language training and arrived in August of '90 in Jordan. There were a couple of things that happened before that though. As I was briefing up at the Department there was a visit by the foreign minister of Jordan to Washington and I was invited to sit in on the meetings between him and Secretary Baker and I got my first sense in that meeting of the atmosphere of U.S. Jordanian relations at that time, which was not good. It was deteriorating coincident with the deterioration of our relations between the United States and Iraq. Jordan had great interest in Iraq, both financial and political and of course, saw us as the ultimate guarantor of Jordanian security, so the king had cast himself as the role of intermediary between Saddam Hussein and Washington. In this meeting the Jordanian foreign minister tried to convince Baker that Saddam was actually someone who could be dealt with, that Saddam was someone who the king knew and he was not as bad as he was being portrayed and that what we should be doing is to find some communication with Baghdad. Baker was very impatient with that argument and dismissed it out of hand. By then Washington was becoming increasingly convinced, by which I mean, the Bush administration, that Saddam was a bad actor and his use of chemical weapons in Iraq against his own citizens and the Kurds had felt that and also the statements about burning down Israel which had been made within the six month period before that meeting, had pretty much convinced Baker and Bush that Saddam was not someone whose motives were as benevolent as the Jordanian foreign minister was trying to portray. The meeting was not a success and so I sought a meeting with the foreign minister at his hotel after that partially to introduce myself, you know, one on one context. In the course of that meeting I told him that I thought that the position that the Jordanians were taking on this issue was not going to be acceptable in Washington. Washington was not, in fact prepared to accept that Saddam was a benign or a potentially benign element in the region and that the result of that was going to make the Jordanians look complicit in Saddam's strategy toward the region which in fact I had already discovered was increasingly true in decision making circles. That conversation was going to play a role later because the foreign minister took my statements in that regard to be an indication that Washington was set on war with Saddam as early as, I think this was in April of 1989.

Q: '89 or '90?

HARRISON: '90, I'm sorry, April of '90 and so that no matter what happened after that the war was going to be inevitable and the invasion of Kuwait was pretext. He always argued that way. I don't know if he took it seriously or not. It was a debating point, which he hit me over the head with often later. In any case, Jordan was looking in bad reputation, the king's reputation, Jordan's reputation as not at its highest in Washington at this period. I was due to leave to take my assignment up in the last week of August, but the invasion took place. I in fact had gone to the White House. The person never called me by the way to ask me to accept this assignment, which I guess had been the practice I think maybe, at least he never called me.

Q: Well, I don't think Bush did, Reagan used to call.

HARRISON: I thought it was the custom before that.

Q: I'm not sure.

HARRISON: At any rate, I didn't get a call, but I did get my ritual meeting with the president to get the photograph for the piano and so forth. Scowcroft was there because he and Bush were conferring obviously from their conversation on the sort of the hour by hour Kuwait situation. I remember Scowcroft telling the president that it was actually looking a little better, that it might be easing a little bit at that point.

Q: Was this on the day of the invasion?

HARRISON: It was, yes, it was about three hours before the invasion. It was 3:00 in the afternoon in Washington, so that would have been midnight in Kuwait. It came in about 3:00 AM. They, at least from that conversation, were not aware that the invasion was imminent at that point, which was a point I often made to Jordanians who thought that - many of them - that we had provoked the invasion and were pretty well tuned into it from the beginning. It was sort of part of our notorious plot. That meeting went well. The other thing that I had tried to do, because I had detected this worsening relationship in light of communication with Hussein, was engineer a letter from the President to Hussein that I could take with me. I wrote a letter like that and shepherded it through the NSC bureaucracy to the president's desk; by the way, I did this after the invasion. Before my departure there was a period of what, I guess about ten days. The letter said essentially that we were about to embark on this very difficult period, but that the president's relationship with the king was going to stand us both in good stead and that he looked forward to collaborating closely and we had to keep our heads and work to undo this, I forget the word I used, this invasion, to restore the status quo in the region. That in fact was signed. The other thing I did was I decided to speed up my departure because of the war and because I knew that the chargï¿½ out there was having to meet with Hussein on some very difficult issues and thought I should be in place. I canceled the events, my swearing in and so forth and the dinner, which the Jordanian ambassador was planning to hold for me and I departed on the 10th of August instead of the 24th, which had been the original plan.

Q: Question, Roger, when you saw Scowcroft and President Bush just before the invasion and you had your picture taken, was this completely pro forma or did either of them say, Jordan's going to be a key component or something like that?

HARRISON: Well, no I mean I'd love to tell you that they asked my opinion on this and informed me of the policy, but actually they talked to each other. My impression was that they were using this occasion to touch base, because the president obviously has other things that are going on, so any time that Scowcroft had access on that day he wanted to fill the president in on the situation. The president wanted to talk to him about it and that they were using the occasion of my meeting to do that, so I was pretty much just listening while they chatted. I think the president probably wished me well and did all the usual things, but I was an accessory to the meeting rather than anything else. At any rate, I had sped up my departure and arrived on the 11th of August with that letter in hand. Before that, by the way, I had my plane, I think it was a Saturday and my plane was supposed to take off at 3:00 in the afternoon, but the letter hadn't issued out from the White House bureaucracy, so I was over with my wife in the car with our bags all packed waiting for that letter to emerge signed by the president and not knowing whether it was going to emerge or not. It came out just in time to get me out to the airport. I had letter in hand, flew first class as we used to as our first trip to post in those days, another one of those nice things that our rather Puritan penny pinching government has eliminated in the meantime. Pan Am has also been eliminated in the mean time. We arrived on the 11th about 6:00 in the evening there. On the way I had been in the first class cabin on Royal Jordanian out of London with that fellow who turned out to be Prince Fahd, the King's cousin, a nice man. He was reading an Arabic newspaper with the headline, which I'll never forget - I had deciphered it and was proud of myself - was that Syrian troops had reached Saudi Arabia, because they participated in Desert Shield. The example they offer now is the benefits of coalition as opposed to other approaches that seem more fashionable at the moment. At any rate, arrived, taken to the house of course, the usual fussing around and the next morning I commenced to try to get the letter delivered. Since I hadn't been accredited yet, wasn't quite sure how to do that, but I ended up talking to Crown Prince Hassan on the phone and he sent a courier over for it and off it went and I think it bypassed the foreign ministry altogether, which would usually be the way of doing this. Off it went to the king and the result of that was that the king called Bush. They had been rather reluctant to do that. He'd talked to Bush about four days before the invasion and assured him that the invasion wasn't going to take place, and was something, by the way, the king ever after denied or neglected to mention - that it was just a diplomatic feint. I should say, too, by the way, that as I was briefing I noticed a change in the tone of the briefers in the last week or so before the invasion. I think the intelligence community was slowly, as it always does, had come to conclusion that there was going to be an invasion. The key indicator was that the Iraqis were moving expendables up to the border, ammunition, petroleum products all the things you need for a modern army. It turns out, of course, that modern warfare is material intensive and you have to move that stuff. You can't move it after you start fighting, but moving it is expensive and time consuming and if you do it, usually it means that you're going to use it. You're not just parading people around to put the wind up your opponent. So, that had been changing, but the king had talked to the president from Aqaba; he'd seen the text of the conversation essentially and said no, no, this is just a diplomatic feint instead of a diplomatic endeavor. That call was embarrassing to him in the event because of what happened, so he was reluctant to call the president again thinking that he'd discredited himself and knowing that his position on this was already suspect in Washington and that he was seen as an apologist for Saddam. He had not called, but the letter appealed to him because of the friendly tone. It was a great relief to him and he immediately picked up the phone and called Bush. Bush invited him to come to Kennebunkport. I guess I could say that I was the officer of the Kennebunkport meeting, but since it turned out badly that may not be a thing that I want to claim. At any rate, so it was necessary, because I still wasn't accredited to get my credentials presented, so that was a great advantage there, because some people wait a month or so to get those done and can't operate effectively until they get their credentials presented, but I presented mine on the day after I arrived and then had my first meeting with the king and handed him my credentials as you do, and made the ritual statements about desire for eternal friendship. He did the same and shook hands, so I was there. The embassy of course, there was a lot of apprehension around in the embassy, which had been without an ambassador for about six weeks. One of my jobs was to try to give the embassy some sense of direction and purpose which I commenced doing, but also because the Kennebunkport visit was on and I had presented my credentials I was going to be on that trip. I think I arrived on a Saturday and he left Wednesday of the next week. So four or five days after my arrival, he invited me to come back with him on his airplane. My first real meeting with any of the officials of the Jordanian government was on that airplane coming back from Amman. I came out to the airport. They have a VIP center there from which the king always leaves. Whenever he leaves the country the whole of the establishment shows up to bid him farewell and of course, they were all there and I found myself walking out to the plane with a short gentleman in a military uniform whom I didn't recognize, but I chatted amicably with. It turned out that he was the crown prince, Hassan, but because he was in a military uniform I was thrown off because he was not a military officer, so I had a little moment of disengage there, but didn't say anything nasty to him, so that all went well. Got on the airplane, the king always piloted his airplanes to take off and so I sat in the back there. There was a big lounge area in the middle of this plane. It was a DC-10 and all fitted out as an executive jet. From the wings forward it was a big sort of conference room thing, a sitting room with tables that hydraulically raised out of the floor and all sorts of wood accents. In fact, the pilot told me that as we had to stop and refuel, that the reason that the plane was so heavy was because it had all this wood and folderol on it. I got in and I sat down on one of the lounge chairs in one corner in the back and up in the opposite corner in the front across this lounge area, the cabinet was meeting. The foreign minister, the chief of the royal court and Adnan Uday and Mudar Badran, the prime minister were all huddled around the table and smoking like crazy, talking and occasionally glancing over to me and then after we were up on auto pilot the king came back and went over and sat down with them and they all smoked and all had a confab and I sort of sat back there on the other side of the cabin quietly waiting to see what would happen. Eventually the king got up from that group and walked over and sat down with me, which was my first real conversation with him other than this exchange at my credentials presentation. He began to lay out what he planned to do in Kennebunkport. After describing to me what he had been doing over the past year, which had been trying to avert the crisis which he now saw, trying to avert the invasion of Kuwait, partly by urging the Kuwaitis to be moderate and partly by urging Saddam to be restrained, but that the Kuwaitis had ignored him and instead of being moderate had been increasingly obdurate in demands for Saddam to repay his indebtedness from the Iraq- Iran war and in recalcitrance about setting of the final border between Iraq and themselves. On the issue of oil prices, the issue there was Saddam, because he had this huge debt from his war with Iran, was a constant force within OPEC to raise oil prices, and the Kuwaitis had resisted him on that score - in his view allegedly because they were doing our bidding, but in fact, of course, because they had their own strategy about long term oil prices. For whatever reason, from Saddam's point of view - as the king described it - they were demanding repayment and then denying him the means of acquiring the money to do it. The king had been warning, he thought, Washington about all this. He essentially had this presentation which he wanted to give the president absolving himself of all complicity in casting himself as a prophet of this then current crisis who had been roundly ignored by everyone. It was a kind of a combination of "mea culpa" and "I told you so." I listened to all of that and then I told him that I thought that was not the right approach to take. I told him that it seemed to me that he had a limited time with the president and that the president was going to be interested in what we did now, what our future collaboration was going to be, how we could ease tensions as we jointly attempted to address this situation which had now been created and that the president wasn't going to be eager to go over all of these past events. Part of the reason that I told him that was because I knew that it was simply going to raise hackles because nobody was going to accept this insane rendition of what he had been doing. It didn't fit with Washington's vision of what had happened and it was going to get into a process which was fruitless in any case. These were not historians; they were politicians and now preparing for way. What they wanted to do was talk about how we solve the problem not how Hussein wasn't responsible for the problem arising. He took all that onboard, went back to flying the plane and we eventually got to Washington about 3:00 AM Washington time when we got there. We went immediately to the State Department because Baker was going to leave for the Kennebunkport meeting the next day and wanted to know what was going on in Jordan, and I was considered from my 72 hours in country the expert on that and so I prepared a memo and basically in the memo I told the Secretary what the king had told me about what he was going to do and what I told him. Then the next morning about 8:00 I went back to the hotel for a couple of hours, no actually we had 24 hours and this became an issue. The king had asked to stay in Washington for 24 hours before he went up to Kennebunkport and he did. That was later portrayed as letting him cool his heels in Washington in the atmosphere that was then created, but in fact it was his request to kind of assemble his thoughts and to get over jet lag before he went to Kennebunkport. There were 24 hours in the Department telling them all I knew and then the next morning I met with the Secretary and we rode out to Andrews together where they were all going to join up and take the plane to Kennebunkport and told him what I knew about the situation, about the king's state of mind, and so forth as we rode out to the airport, actually it was the longest conversation I had with him over my three year tenure even though he came to Jordan seven times. We got on the plane, flew up to Kennebunkport, they basically chatted about old times, you know, it was all, there wasn't much substance in the discussion. Everybody waiting for Kennebunkport. Took a helicopter, landed there, escorted in and then off the king and the president went for the tape session with no one in the room. I was in the outer room with our cabinet, more or less, Bob Bates was there and Baker was there and Scowcroft was there and other people, too. I'm not sure now in retrospect quite who all the crowd was. The thing I remember about that session with everyone talking about the situation, was Baker's unhappiness that there had been an announcement of the call up of the reserves. But he hadn't been consulted about it, but he thought it was a diplomatic signal when we call up the reserves and he should have been consulted. There was no indication that he saw that it was an unnecessary step, he just thought his area had been transgressed a little bit and he was unhappy about that. I think part of the other element of this was that it's still not clear because at that point we didn't have solely the agreement to station troops there we needed to have in order to mount this counteroffensive, if we were going to be able to mount it. Baker thought the announcement of the reserve callout was premature. There was a lunch. There is a pattern in these things - for all the future historians - is always the lunch is non-substantive, usually the lunch is non-substantive. There is a general meeting between the sides. There was no meeting of minds and although I was briefed about the session later, it was clear that it was not going well. The king had done what he had told me on the plane he was going to do. He had not been deterred by my wise and sagacious advice and the session hadn't gone well. The impressions on both sides were not good from that session and it had I think the opposite of the effect that I had intended the letter originally to have, which was to reestablish communication. The meeting did something to weaken communication between the two. I think that essentially the fault was the king's because he was absolutely intent at this point of adverting war between the United States and Iraq, and that was his agenda. The president, on the other hand, was increasingly hawkish in those days and therefore, was bound to view what Hussein was trying to do as appeasement of Saddam and apologetics for Saddam as well, which didn't sit well in Washington. Had the king been a little bit more adroit he might have approached that meeting in a way which would have solidified his relationship with Bush and increased his influence on what was then going to ensue. He was often moved by emotional considerations and by the necessity as he saw it to defend his own actions. He was inclined I think to take the wrong approach. At any rate it was not a happy occasion. I did get to know members of the Jordanian cabinet because we then hopped on the plane and flew all the way back. The other thing that happened...

Q: Well, when you were talking to them, did they reflect how badly this had gone?

HARRISON: They didn't really know. None of us had been in the private meetings. The open meetings had been amiable. I think it was only later that, as the reaction to the meeting set in as the reports to what had been said there came out, that it was generally seen that this had not been a happy occasion. I don't know what the king told them about it. I'm not sure that he realized it hadn't gone well, maybe he did. Nothing he said to me though. The other thing that happened in Kennebunkport is that as we were leaving, going back to the helipad there, the president had asked the king, there is a long path up from the house to the helipad and it goes by a little cottage there and in those days the president's mother was living and his uncle, her brother, had died the day before. So, as they were going to the helipad, the president asked the king if he'd mind that he, Bush, stopped off with his mother who was distraught about her brother's death and the king of course, said, absolutely no problem, that's great. So, back to the helipad we went. The president was therefore, not with the king when he got on the helicopter and that was recorded for posterity by the news media who aired and reported it in Jordan as a slight that he hadn't actually gone to the helipad. I was in on the conversation when the president asked to stop off to see his mother. I don't think this is conceivable that this was intended as a slight, but I would doubt greatly that it was. I think it was simply a natural reaction by both of them, which was then blown up into a diplomatic incident as was the king's 24 hours in Washington. So both of these things, in that atmosphere, were signs of strains in the relationship when they were both just circumstantial. We flew back.

Q: During this flying and talking with members of the cabinet, did you find any sense of indignation or something over the fact that Hussein had invaded Kuwait? Did they have the same reaction that we had?

HARRISON: No, absolutely not. I think the cabinet and the king to a degree shared the view of the public in Jordan, which was that the Kuwaitis had it coming. The Jordanian-Kuwaiti relationship had been very troubled because it was a dependency relationship. The Jordanians got subsidies to the Kuwaitis and the years prior to 1990 the Kuwaitis had been increasingly, as the Jordanians saw it, miserly with the handouts and had asked for more groveling in order to receive them. The king had been treated with less and less courtesy on his periodic begging trips to Kuwait City. They had lorded it over their poor cousins from their point of view.

Q: Apparently from people, who have been in the area, the Kuwaitis have a reputation of being insufferable.

HARRISON: Oh, absolutely. I think the one thing that unites the Arabs, is that everyone detests the Kuwaitis. That's the one sort of constant, you know, the remnants of the Baathi philosophy. You know, we don't agree on anything else, but we all hate the damn Kuwaitis. We did, too. I mean we didn't hate them, but you know, we found them to be very vexatious folk. Their votes in the UN, their support for terrorist organizations and various strikes. They were really not an attractive bunch from Washington's point of view. The only thing that could possibly rescue those guys and deal with Washington policymakers, was an invasion, but it certainly hadn't rescued their reputation in Jordan. There was a lot of satisfaction among Jordanians that the Kuwaitis had taken them on in shorts and you know, I mean, hit them again with the kind of general view that the Kuwaiti ambassador in Amman turned out to be less popular than I was. He was kind of holed up in his embassy and not receiving visitors for a long time. No, no. Of course, the overwhelming public reaction in Jordan was in favor of Saddam Hussein. I mean it was absolutely an emotional catharsis for the Jordanians to think that here was an Arab leader who was decisive, who had hit these uppity Bedouins in Kuwait, this creation of imperialism who had been so arrogant about distribution of what after all was an Arab and not a Kuwaiti asset. It was just stunning. Jordan is not naturally a politically unified place because it has a Palestinian community and also this Jordanian Bedouin community who view each other with mutual suspicion. But on this issue they were absolutely unified. I never heard anyone express a contrary view, partly because it's also a small and therefore a conformist society, and partly because you tend to express the view in Jordan that are acceptable to the palace because there's always been consequences of expressing other views, and partially because there is such an outpouring of repressed anti-American feeling and anti-Western feeling in generally. Finally, here is an Arab who is daring to sort of cock a schnook at the Western powers to undo this division of the Arab world imposed on Arabs by the British.

Q: It sounds a little like the reaction in that part of the world to Nasser taking over the Suez in I guess it was '56 or '55.

HARRISON: Absolutely. Nasser had been the great hero and he had had feet of clay as it turned out and here was the next Saladin to lead the Arab cause and it was astounding. One of the first impressions I had was that the overwhelming public sentiment - and part of it was this spontaneous appearance of pictures of Saddam all over the country, as it had been true of Nasser, too. Just as with Nasser a lot of concern at the palace that Saddam was becoming more popular than the king. One of the expressions of this was in this picture, which was sort of placemat size, which kids were hawking on the street corners in traffic like they sell puffs on cigarettes in Manila, they were selling these pictures. People would stop and pay a few pennies through the window and then put these in their car windows. Every shop had Saddam's picture; posters of Saddam pasted everywhere. At the beginning with little icons of the king up in the corner. By the way, these pictures of Saddam he always had a penumbra behind his head. He was doing benevolent things and there was one in which he had a young girl on his knee who looked Swiss, a blonde young girl on his knee and he was being avuncular. Obviously not an image we could get away with here, but one that had great currency there. Then the image of this icon of the king up in the corner starting down benevolently began to disappear from these pictures and it was just Saddam.

Q: Did this attitude surprise you because you weren't a Jordanian hand when you came out there and I think you know within the United States all of us were sort of realizing that this was a pretty beastly act and Saddam. Were you ready for this when you got there?

HARRISON: Yes, I was. First of all they had been reporting about it from the embassy so I knew about it intellectually, but also, after I had been 23 or 24 years in the Foreign Service you don't have many illusions about how people in other countries view the United States. We're not seen as quite the benevolent force in the world as we see ourselves and how complicated that relationship is, and the kind of wellsprings of anti-American feeling there are around waiting to be tapped. Saddam had hit a gusher. It was really astounding. It showed the context in which the king was trying to conduct his diplomacy, which was the other element of it because his kingship was always, was and always would be, artificial. It was imposed on Jordan, which had no tradition of kings. It's an alien notion in that part of the world. I was as exampled for me by the use of the crown iconography. For example, on the Royal Jordanian airplanes there's a crown on the tail and there's crowns everywhere. One day I asked the political chief about the crown. Where is the crown? Oh, there is no crown. I mean any Arab leader put on a crown he'd be hounded out of office or laughed out of office. It's not an Arab tradition, it's a Western transplanted one, but it points out the artificiality of the Hashemite monarchy. It wasn't one which arose from the place that it was imposed. They were Hejazi, they were from the Western part of the Hejaz who were kicked out by the Sauds- harder men - and sent as wandering princes around the area and scooped up by the British and by the French - the brothers - to be nominal figurehead leaders, to give some legitimacy to their occupation of these places. Nobody had voted that when old King Abdullah, that King Hussein should be king. He had no popular mandate. So, his own survival was never assured. That's the problem of being a king, you have to be so responsive to public opinion, much more than a democratic leader who can ignore it if he wants for periods of time between elections. Kings like this one in a country that had only existed as truly independent for about 25 years at the time. This was not a well-established entrenched bunch. The king's foreign policy had always been based on this careful balancing act, small power balance of power politics. He'd try to balance off the big powers around and be friendly with everybody, if you can, and get whatever economic benefit you can and sort of hope that the balance of the larger powers will keep you independent. This was the game that this family had been playing for a long time. Don't unnecessarily antagonize anyone, especially the Americans. Don't get real fanatic about Israel, you know, it's a fact of life which you haven't the power to change and you're not even sure you'd like to see change for a lot of reasons. You have meetings with them surreptitiously and do some intelligence changes with them, cooperate, be nice, you know. That's essentially the place that Hussein stood and also with his own people. The reason the Hashemites persevered was, precisely and ironically, because they aren't Jordanian, they weren't Bedouin, they weren't East Jordanian, they weren't Palestinian, therefore, they were acceptable to both of those communities in a way that a Palestinian would not have been to the East Jordanian community or a Bedouin would have been to a Palestinian community. They were in a sense the people you'd have to invent if they had not existed, but they existed on grace and favor. They were subject to popular discontent. They had also had riots two years before, when they tried to end some subsidies, and it had been these riots in Amman when the king was in Washington which was one of the centers of their support which was always rooted in the East Jordanian community. That's a very East Jordanian place, Bedouin place, Amman in the south, and the truckers down there had rioted and they had gone absolutely berserk. They had sent, since Hussein was in Washington, Hassan the crown prince had gone down there, but a more inept political figure would be hard to imagine trying to calm the crowd. The king had gotten on the plane and gotten back, but they had calmed things down, but they were very gun-shy after that. They realized the tenuousness of their position. Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown you don't have. This Iraqi thing was a great threat to them, this outpouring of support for Saddam, the knowledge they have that erasing the border between Jordan and Iraq and making it all one place under Saddam's leadership would be seen as easy as drawing it had been 70 years before with Churchill at the Cairo conference. So, this war was in fact both from a domestic and a foreign policy point of view their worst nightmare, and exactly the right thing for the king to do what he could to avert it. The problem he had was once it was decided upon the middle ground, which he'd always occupied, disappeared and he was forced to have to jump one way, or the other. He could never do that so he discredited himself, but luckily we are jumping ahead of the story here. He still needed the Hashemites anyway, but they had to be rehabilitated, but that came later.

Q: How did things go after he came back?

HARRISON: Well, the first issue after I came back arose because there had been an outpouring of refugees from the Gulf and from Iraq itself of all different nationalities, a lot of Egyptians, but Sri Lankans, a lot of Filipinos, a lot of Indians, and Bangladeshis and it was a whole Noah's Ark of folk. They had come rushing out of that area trying to get into Jordan and the Jordanians were overwhelmed. They closed the border and these people began to build up in this no man's land between the Jordan and Iraqi checkpoints out there. There was about a 30-kilometer strip of desert between these two and that's where these people began to crowd.

Q: This was in August?

HARRISON: Yes, this was in August, out in the desert there. I got called in. Two events arose from that. One was the foreign minister called me in and this was about three days after we got back and said that the U.S. Navy which had already begun blockading the Jordanian port of Aqaba against contraband that was headed for Iraq under UN mandate had stopped a Yemeni ship which was coming to Aqaba to pick up the Yemenis who had been transported from this no man's land to Aqaba to get them out of the country. They couldn't leave because the Navy wouldn't let the ship pick them up. At that point the Jordanians had started trying to ferry these people down through the border in bunches in Aqaba if they had some transportation out or to the airport in Amman in a kind of orderly way. The foreign minister, Marwan al-Qasim, a very blunt spoken man, the same one I'd met with in Washington, said that he'd given orders to close the borders and tell the Navy to raise this blockade of Aqaba. He would let nobody across. Our interest in particular was a lot of Americans in this group, or some, a few hundred. We had actually set up a trailer out there, an old school bus with some officers in it to process these people and make sure they got across the border okay, but Marwan said he was going to close all that. I protested strongly. I pointed out that I had no instructions before I went over there, to make a general point that I seldom knew, in fact, what U.S. policy was. In a situation like that, policy is evolving very rapidly and Washington may be unaware of the situation and if they're aware of it, very likely they haven't made you aware of it. Ambassadors are not high on the information food chain. I thought that I was on firm ground in protesting very strongly on behalf of my government to closing the border and telling the foreign minister as I did that this would have profound repercussions on relationships between Jordan and not only the United States, but the rest of the world and urging him to reconsider his decision. He was adamant; he was an adamant man. So, I came out of that meeting and immediately from my car phone I called the palace. The king was out of the country again then and so the crown prince was regent and I asked for an immediate meeting with him on an urgent basis and he agreed. I went to the palace and met with him and told him the same thing I'd told the foreign minister that this was a grave error which have profound repercussion and that this decision should not be implemented, that the border should not be closed. Then I went back to the embassy and I got a call from the foreign minister to come back and back I went to the foreign minister. This was all in a space of about three or four hours. A very upset foreign minister told me that he had in fact rescinded his order to close the border, but that he would impose it again unless the Navy would give him an assurance of not stopping any other ships that were going to Aqaba to pick up refugees. The border was not closed. I never bothered to ask the Navy for that kind of assurance because I knew, number one that they wouldn't give it to me and number two, that the foreign minister was not in fact in a position to close the border at that point. This was a face saving step on his part. Two things that arose out of that sequence of events. One was that the border stayed open and eventually brought great credit on the Jordanians for the processing of these refugees and the other was that the foreign minister conceived a great dislike for me because I had gone over his head essentially. Foreign ministers in Jordan are not particularly powerful characters because most of the key point policy decisions are made at the palace, not at the foreign ministry. Most foreign ministers are content with that, but Marwan al-Qasim was a very assertive individual in whatever job he had. He prided himself on being blunt spoken and was jealous of his power as foreign minister and overestimated it as well. He saw this as an affront and the consequence of that was that, ever after during the foreign minister calls, he wouldn't sit me on the couch and he never offered me tea. I would always come and sit at the desk. I would sit at the chair in front of the desk and he would stay behind the desk and I was never given the courtesy of the traditional Arab tea. In retrospect it seems to me I did the right thing, would do it again exactly the same way in those circumstances and it turned out to be the right move for Jordan as well. I think the other lesson to be drawn is that in circumstances such as this that existed in Jordan at the time, some of the diplomatic niceties which you'd normally observe, and you'd have to, go by the board as there are larger things at stake. Your relationship with the foreign minister might have to be sacrificed as mine was, although it later improved. Now, it's easier to sacrifice your relationship with a foreign minister in a country where the foreign minister is not a particularly powerful man. It would be suicide for an ambassador to do that in Washington. Nevertheless that's the sequence of events.

The next time this refugee thing - which was the major issue for me in these first days - I decided to go out and see for myself what was going on at the border and we're about the 23rd or 24th of August. It was an incredible scene when I got out there. Beyond the border posts there were these huge encampments and some of them were simply in the open air, people sitting around in great circles. Some of them were in tents. There were some international organizations out there, but not too many American ones. Maybe Sans Frontiï¿½res [Doctors Without Borders] were there. The Jordanians were there and when I got to the border post there was a great disinclination to let me in and at the border posts there were a passel of newsmen who were trying to get out there, but were being prevent from getting out there by the Jordanians. I gathered all the newsmen up and sort of bowled my way through the colonel at the border and off into the no man's land with the media having been convinced that we had to get some media attention on this because nobody knew what was going on. I had already asked for example - and here's another sort of bureaucratic venue - I had $25,000 in emergency aid, which ambassadors have, that I wanted to release and I had asked for some emergency supplies from State to release. In particular, we had some prepositioned stores in Jordan. We had a lot of MREs, meals ready to eat. I ran into a bureaucratic roadblock because the issue was are these refugees in which case the refugee bureau would handle this, or are these displaced persons in which case there was a whole other bureaucracy that dealt with displaced persons. I was sending off burning cables pointing out that there was actually a human tragedy here and that we ought to probably put the bureaucratic wrangling aside and see what we could do about it. We got the MREs released and then it turned out a lot of them had pork products in them. Ham and eggs and so forth. Most of the people out there were Muslims, so giving them ham and eggs was not the political thing to do. So, we set up this elaborate screening process where these things went through three different checks making sure that the ham and eggs had been separated from the stuff that the Muslims could eat. Luckily we had no orthodox Jews out there that would have tilted the thing altogether. Then we distributed the ham products to the Filipinos who were Christian and so that went through. I went out there and saw what was going on and talked to the people who were trying to cope with the problem and started giving interviews. I went back to the border and started giving interviews to BBC and other people to try to highlight this problem and saying very carefully with great admiration for the Jordanians for what they were doing, but they were overwhelmed and there needed to be some international response to this. I discovered first of all, I don't know what particular impact that had as opposed to the general dawning and realization about this that would have occurred in any case. It probably sped it up a little bit because they got pictures out there and so forth including a nice picture of me in the New York Times out there which I think helped get some publicity to this. What I experienced which I think is the experience for a lot of people dealing with this crisis is that at first you can't get anyone to pay attention and you can't get any help. Then it reaches a critical threshold and then you can't stop the help from coming no matter what you do. The next thing you know you have Dr. Barnot out there with a planeload of relief supplies when you have very few people left to eat them, but that's what happened in this case. The other and I came back, you know, I had again no instructions to try to publicize this issue. I knew that Baker was very allergic to his ambassadors showing up in the press too much, but thought I could see if I could get some leadership to policy on this and so I did although not without apprehension. Often in those days I was taking actions that I did not know would be supported by my superiors and just sort of because the circumstances required it. It was a lonely position to be in especially because I think ambassadors tend to be colored with the same brush that is applied to their heads of state. If your head of state is in high odor in Washington, you tend to be in high odor, too, and it's also the case that my predecessor, and the most part of his predecessors in Jordan, had always been seen as having the most outrageous clientitis. Rocky Suddarth my predecessor had made the mistake for example of always referring to the king in cables as his majesty. The protocol in Jordan in fact is he is not referred to as the king but as his majesty. It's a mistake to refer to him that way in State Department cables which had been his habit, so there was a predisposition to see me as a special pleader for the Jordanians as well.

The other event, I'll come back to that because there was a key issue there in an early cable I sent. The other time I went out to the border was with the crown prince. There was an Indian who had shown up in Amman, a minister, I forget what he was a minister of. He was a big, overfed man in a Nehru jacket. I think this guy was probably the last guy. It looked like he had attended a fire sale at Simms, you know, nobody, Nehru jackets were not. He had one on and we got in a C-130 along with the Indian ambassador and a bunch of the cabinet members and the genre. I always liked the genre. Off we went to the border and because as it turned out there were 30,000 Indians out there and we got in a jeep with a machine gun jeep behind us and off we went to where these guys were assembled. This was fantastic scene. They were just squatting out there in the desert. They had had no attention from their government. They'd been there at least a week by then with no contact from the Indian government and they were not happy. When this guy stepped down from the jeep they, it was the most incredible thing, there was instantly a circle of 30,000 screaming Indians being held back by a ring of soldiers with the eight pack on this machine gun trunk under which I was sheltered and in the middle of which was this fat Indian sweating in this Nehru jacket. This was August, probably 110 degrees out where we were. He's smiling, but it's not a happy smile. I remember the image, have you ever seen the footage where they drop a pot roast in a piranha infested pool and then they dangle it there? Well, that's exactly the impression I had because all you could see in this crowd of people around the soldiers in this circle, maybe 50 yards across, were teeth. You know, people bearing their teeth and this guy saw it, too. He was alone out there in the center, so he walked out there to the edge. By the way, everyone's screaming. There's this great animal scream in the background, constant and this guy walked over to the edge of the circle and where he walked it bulged in and so he took a couple of quick steps back which I would have done, too. He's trying to talk to these people, but they're not interested in dialogue. Then he walked over to another part of the circle and it bulged. These guys and the soldiers are trying to keep these guys away and I was standing under this machine gun truck watching all this with the minister of transport and he turned to me and he said, "What are we doing here?" I said, "Oh, gee that's a good question, I'm not quite sure." We eventually reconvened that guy and got in the jeep and beat a hasty retreat out of there. I remember at the same time somewhere else in this vast field of people because there were 200,000 people out there at this time on this land, Queen Noor had come to see what was going on and she landed in her helicopter. The problem was that the helicopter kicked up this huge cloud of dust, which then drifted over all these people who were miserable enough in the heat. Suddenly they were sitting out there in the heat covered with this helicopter backwash. We eventually went back in the C-130. The interesting thing about that was that when we drove into this place we landed on the Jordanian side of the checkpoint and then driven with the crown prince on a road that had been newly bulldozed around the checkpoint and that road was going to become a great issue between the finance minister because it was also wide enough for trucks carrying contraband to bypass the border checkpoint. I had a long dialogue with the finance minister about whether that road was actually there when I got back because Washington of course, was very eager that the Jordanians stop all traffic into Iraq. At that point, all traffic, nothing was supposed to go over. Having a road that didn't actually pass through that checkpoint was not a good indicator that the Jordanians were doing that in fact which they were trying to do whatever they thought would not trip our reaction. We came back to Washington and to Amman from that expedition and eventually the aid starting coming in and just to finish the refugee story.

The other thing I did was the, you don't think about stuff like this, but there were a lot of diabetics in the crowd. I mean if you assemble 200,000 people, you're going to have some diabetics out there, actually 3,000 or 4,000 that need insulin, but insulin has to be refrigerated and there wasn't any insulin for the country. A friend of mine named Lionel Rosen, who was an old Foreign Service Officer...

Q: I know Lionel. I was with him in Saigon, yes.

HARRISON: Who was by then doing refugee stuff so I called him, well he called me and wanted to come and I said to bring as much insulin as you can. He brought all this insulin out in refrigerated trucks. My wife was very active in trying to organize the administration out of these camps and the other American wives. There was another one of these centers by the airport because what they do is bring people in. I took a helicopter down to Aqaba, a Jordanian helicopter to see the people backing up there along the road out of Aqaba, these great sea of people. We came over in a helicopter and they're all waving and shouting and shaking their fists just to show, they'd staged it. The other refugee story is about the Philippine residence which was across a narrow alley from ours in the old residence in Amman. Pacifico had got his government into sending some 747s to pick these people up, but they could only send one a day so you could only put on 400 or 450 people each day. He'd bring that many in and the night before he'd put them in the alley between our two residences so that he could get out there early in the morning for the plane. The problem with that was they had nothing to do out there. They'd come in in the early evening and then they wouldn't leave until the next morning. He organized this huge party every night. I always thought that the reason he did that was because Pacifico was an Elvis impersonator. Every night he'd do his Elvis impersonation. He'd come out and sing the whole Elvis cannon in the Elvis suit and so I got to listen to that every night while he was clearing these Filipinos through.

The other issue at that point was that there was a movement afoot in Washington to apply the sanctions to Jordan that were being applied to Iraq, and there was some logic behind it. The Navy blockade that existed off Aqaba was empowered to look at manifests and then look at cases, and if the cases appeared on the manifest they could let them through. They weren't empowered to open these things and see whether this stuff actually was what they supposed to be trying to stop, and it would have been overwhelming to do that. There was a certain pro forma quality to it since it's easy to fake a manifest and ship anything you want. There was also a lot of suspicion in Washington that sanctions weren't being implemented on that border with quite the systematic care that we would have liked. In fact, that was the case, public opinion always swore it was absolutely watertight whenever I would raise this complaint with him. My main job in those days was to be a scold and one of the chief things I was scolding them about was sanctions in port. A lot of reasons not to enforce sanctions and one of them was the economy of Jordan had really been rebuilt in the '80s from profits from the Iran-Iraq war, for which they were the main conduit of supplies to the Iraqi side. They had built up a huge trucking industry to truck stuff up from Aqaba to Iraq, which meant a lot of truckers, and there were better ones. Their livelihood depended on the trade with Iraq and they were very unhappy to think that they could not practice their livelihood especially because they were also sympathetic with Saddam. They were frustrated on two counts. Since they were the king's main constituency domestically he had to look the other way so a lot of this traffic went on. Washington realizing all this there was a hardline faction that wanted to apply the same sanctions to Jordan that were being applied to Iraq. I sent in a cable very strongly opposing that early on. I remember the subject line because my view was always that you had to get whatever your point was into the subject line, since that's all you could ever assure anybody would read. The subject line was Sanctions Against Jordan, A Very Bad Mistake. I got some support from Tom Pickering who was up at the UN, a former Jordanian ambassador, on that, but not much from anybody else. I think the problem with it was that although again, I think I would do it again just as I did it before. It reinforced the thought that the Jordanian ambassadors were natural apologists.

Q: You mean American ambassadors to Jordan?

HARRISON: Yes, natural apologists for the king and his cohort. In fact, I wasn't especially sympathetic to them, but it seemed to me that preserving the integrity of Jordan was an important thing to do as we dealt with Saddam.

Q: This must have been, this influence or impression probably was somewhat emphasized by the fact that it was sort of common knowledge that the political ambassadors who went to Morocco were apologists for the king of Morocco. Maybe this one Arab king went over to another Arab king.

HARRISON: Well, there is a natural inclination to see the State Department people as clientitis anyway because they are. I mean it's one of the functions of the State Department is to represent the point of the world to a bureaucracy. It was a particular problem with me because John Kelly was the assistant secretary then and he was not a particularly sympathetic figure, but he was kind of an emotional and erratic kind of guy. At this point of the story I'd only been in Jordan for a couple of weeks. The next week or two he was trying to get me recalled because of another cable I had sent in that period. The sense was that there was nobody really covering your rear end in Washington. In fact, you were more liable to be stabbed in the back than in the front. That was my sense, so I did not spend a lot of time seeking guidance from the NEA front office. My inclination was to do what I thought was the right thing to do and then let them cope with that as best they could. That came to a head because I had, the king had been to Baghdad after his visit to Washington and had come back having been very ill treated by Saddam, his sense of propriety as elder statesman. He had kind of come in as an elder statesmen to give this young upstart some sage advice and had been treated like a petitioner and had been greatly upset by that, or so I heard from the court. I proposed to Washington that we had some foreign aid that was going to have to be dispensed by the end of the year and I said, "Well, let's speed it up and give it to them now," I think it was $20 million, as a way of establishing this relationship with them that we hoped to have during the war. It's not new money; it's money that's already been appropriated. It just has to be given to him. Kelly seized on this as particularly egregious, but I knew it would be controversial so I called back to Kimmitt who was Under Secretary then and I told him what I planned to do and he told me to go ahead. That occasioned a couple of things. One was, I got a cable from the party - they were underway then out to Syria - telling me that I should go in to see the king and tell him that we expected him to make a public speech denouncing Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. I got that cable and was on my way over to the palace with it. I decided I wasn't going to deliver it because I was convinced that Hussein wasn't going to do that and probably shouldn't given his domestic situation. It was inappropriate to ask him and I simply decided that my loyalty here was to the president and was his representative and not to the State Department. Especially to NEA who had sent me this cable that had all the hallmarks of having been a staff drafted thing although it was personal from Baker to the king. Midway over to the palace I stopped at the Marriott which was midway and I turned around and called on my cell phone and told them I wasn't coming and went back. Actually it was going to be to the crown prince; the king was still out of the country. I went back to the embassy and sat on this demarche. It's very uncomfortable to sit on a demarche you're supposed to have made. In order to see if I could find some defense - I knew I wasn't going to get any from State - I called the White House. David Satterfield was there then as the junior guy to Richard Haass. I told Satterfield what had occurred. I said I didn't want to present this demarche and I thought it was a mistake. He agreed it was a mistake and he said he would see what he could do. Then I just sat, you know, and in the end no one asked me. Of course, I never reported delivering it and nobody asked me if I'd ever delivered it and it kind of faded off into obscurity, but I got summoned up to Damascus. Now I'd been in the country about three weeks because the Secretary was coming through, on his first trip to the region and with Kelly and Dennis Ross. I was summoned into their presence at the hotel about - I don't know, midnight or 1:00 in the morning- and was sent down. Basically they admonished me for being not tough enough on Hussein, and said that I would have to go back in and be tough on this issue of public support for our position on the public denunciation of Saddam, and that in effect my tenure depended on my acquiescence. The cable was not mentioned and the demarche was not mentioned. The next morning we met, the four of us met with Baker and so I decided to get the issue out in the open. I said to Baker that I'd had this discussion. I kind of preempted the conversation. I didn't wait for anybody else to talk. I said I had this conversation with Kelly and Ross the night before and they wanted me to tell the king that he had to do these things and did Baker want me to do that? Baker said no. He said, "I don't want you to do that." That was the end of the issue.

Q: It certainly didn't endear you to.

HARRISON: No, it didn't endear me to Kelly, but you know Kelly was a strange guy. I think if you went back and looked at the unsuccessful assistant secretaries that he would top most of the lists at least for NEA people. He'd been put there allegedly because Baker didn't want someone interfering with his Israel-Palestine policy. He wanted somebody to caretaker the bureau while he got on with and it was his style to do things himself. Kelly had been in Lebanon, but was not a Middle Eastern hand and certainly not an NEA guy, kind of imposed on the bureau. He was not in the inter-Baker circle. He had to be taken on these trips to the middle east, but he would usually be sitting in the room reading a newspaper while Ross and the Secretary were conferring on policy none of which made his mood any better, of course or improved his view of me. It meant that I didn't have to worry too much about retribution. I didn't think he was going to be around when I was up for reassignment anyway. I remember I spent the time on the trip up to Damascus figuring out what my pension would be, you know, if they were to cashier me now, what happens? Well, I hadn't had the pay raise then, so it was not going to be very high. I was sort of tottering on the edge of being recalled, at least in the view of the bureaucracy. I don't think that Baker would have. I would have had to be a lot more egregious for Baker to have moved to that step. I also got a call from Kimmitt saying that he told Baker the background on the cable that I got on the $20 million foreign aid release, that he had been conferred with that ahead of time and so forth. Some of that threat receded, but it contributed to a sense that I had which I really had throughout my tour there that there was no backup. There was nobody protecting our back and in fact, I had to be as worried about the people back there as I had to about the people I was confronting. I was kind of a lone figure out there with no political support and of course, I had as a Foreign Service Officer no constituency outside the State Department. There's some ambassadors come in with some political clout and I had none, so I had to maneuver around energetically. I also got no guidance from State in particular. Part of the reason that I adopted the tactic of going in and doing my demarche before I received it knowing the occasions on which Washington would want to puff up and blow. I'd go and puff up and blow and record it and include the instruction cable, which would tell me to puff up and blow and then insult him as well. I sort of adopted the tactic of preempting what I thought they were going to do which is also a more dangerous tactic because you've got to get it right. You don't want to go in there and luckily the issues were black and white enough usually that I could do that.

For example, early on there was an intelligence report that the Jordanians were training Iraqi pilots on F-5s in Jordan and there were certain maneuvers they were training them in. They didn't fly F-5s, but they were training in night maneuvers, which seemed to be pretty credible. At 10:30 at night I called the chief of staff of the military and went over there and said that I had this report that you're training these Iraqi pilots and I want to tell you, don't train Iraqi pilots. This is not going to be understood and then reported that. They stopped. I did a lot of stuff like that. I tried to stay in front of the story. Always I think in times like the present one, those people who have never sniffed gunpowder, tend to become very bellicose and they want to show how tough they can be. In that instance there was really only one Arab you could muscle up on and that was Hussein. The rest of them were either victims like the Kuwaitis or collaborators like the Egyptians and even the Syrians. Hussein was the last guy to kick and there was a great desire to kick. The tendency was to go overboard always and especially when you sent something around for clearance in the State Department. Since I've been there I knew, it's a great advantage what the clearance process is like and to know, therefore, how much intellectual or even policy validity there is and the resulting mishmash that you get pretending to be a message from Baker or the president. You can read down there and see every bureau, every bureau's sentence or imprint or paragraph. I ignored that stuff. I rewrote a lot of it. I never felt restrained by that process to go in there and parrot whatever it was that they were dishing out. I was an independent minded ambassador in the end. Although it also always frightened one because it was sort of day to day for me for a long time in this period, so a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of anxiety, not to mention of course, there is a lot of anxiety to what's happened to the embassy personnel because there was a lot then of planning for an evacuation. I think the hardest issue I dealt with in this period was the evacuation of dependents because of the unhappiness all that caused within the embassy community. On that issue Washington essentially had punted which is a mistake and they should never do, but they essentially said, well ambassadors will make the decision on when evacuation is necessary. That is exactly the wrong thing to do because it puts you on the hot seat with your staff in a way you wouldn't be if you simply got an order saying okay, time to evacuate, dependents out. Dependents don't want to go. There is nothing happening, there's demonstrations going on, but they don't feel any less safe in their environment than they did before. So you're really evacuating them against future contingencies that you can't predict. The wives don't want to leave their husbands. They don't want to take their kids out of school, so they're very unhappy. I finally had to make a decision about that in which I did after much soul searching. That was a huge strain on me at a time when I should have been doing other things and really unconscionable on the part of the Department's future. It's undoubtedly a decision being made right now about evacuations and I hope that they've got a plan for ordered evacuations that don't involve telling ambassadors they've got to decide when this happens because that makes no sense at all. I did send dependents out. I had a voluntary departure policy and then decided to make it mandatory and I sent my wife out on the first plane when it was mandatory. The interesting thing was that initially no one wants to go and then you get down to a certain point and everybody wants to go and there was a long debate about that, too. I think I may be getting ahead of my story.

Q: Was the decision about evacuation, was it because of the threat from Saddam or was the threat of the Jordanian populists?

HARRISON: It was the threat of military action first of all whether that would spill over into Jordan. Scuds were flying over at that point. There was some concern about an Israeli retaliation against Iraq which would have involved the Jordanian attempt to try to keep the Israelis from transiting Jordan to do that. So the majority of the Israelis, it was thought, would have to disable the Jordanian air defenses for example, because they couldn't rely on coming back when they were empty of fuel and ammo and vulnerable. They couldn't come back with active air defenses in Jordan so they would take those out as the first step. It would undermine the monarchy and you know, you could have a military assertion of authority and all kinds of awful things could happen. That was part of it and the other part of it was you know, demonstrations against our citizens. In that period, too, we just dealt with the evacuation of Damascus because as you know for a couple of months Saddam held the embassy personnel in Damascus wouldn't let them leave as hostage in Baghdad.

Q: I interviewed Joe Wilson up to December.

HARRISON: Yes, December. The king always took credit for persuading Saddam that he should let these people go and so he did and the way point was Amman of course. So, we had just been dealing with the processing of those people through Amman and getting them on their way and I was going up to meet them and so forth. The other thing of course, they had the I don't want to call them, jackals. We had the peace groupies, that's probably too dismissive, too. Those people whose international representation demands that they intervene in issue of dispute between us in foreign countries. Ramsey Clark, Jesse Jackson, Mohammad Ali all came through. It's kind of funny. Ramsey Clark I don't know what happened to Ramsey Clark and he's still doing it and he's still up to it. He must be 105 now, but he was clearly a collaborator I thought. If not a paid collaborator, which is, I think in some ways better than an unpaid collaborator, which he may have been. There were absolutely despicable things that he was doing, but he didn't bother with us. I always wanted to meet Jesse Jackson, so when he showed up I went out to the airport and drove him in. He sort of talked to himself all the way in about what he was going to do in the guise that he was talking to me, but he really wasn't talking to me. It was kind of interesting to see him do his thing, then he went off to Baghdad and then he went back just like most people in that circumstance. I remember noticing about Jackson though, the Jordanian are very watch conscious. One of the things the king had always done and also Saddam when he was trying to influence Jordanian politicians was hand out these Rolex presidentials, gold Rolex watches you can buy. He had the presidential with diamonds around the edges, so I was very impressed with that. There are only a few of those around and I thought that Jesse Jackson was not going to be out-watched by anyone he met, giving instant credibility in that crowd. The other guy who came to us was Mohammad Ali and I was very eager to meet him. He already had the Parkinson's problem that he has now, but with him I went over to the hotel and he was kind of a big inert figure in this huge entourage of people who seemed to be grinding their own axes. In particular, this one guy, I wish I remembered his name, I would like to record it here for posterity, who decided he would sort of make the embassy his command post and for sorts of things he wanted us to do at Mohammed Ali's request. But having met Mohammed Ali and sat with him for a while, I doubted very much whether he was making these requests because he didn't seem to be much engaged in this trip. In fact, much engaged in the world in general. He seemed pretty heavily medicated. I eventually, in fact, very early on, I just barred this guy from the embassy, he kept showing up. I told the Marines to not let him in. I thought that Mohammed Ali's situation was not a happy one at that junction. I got to see all these people as they came through. We greeted the Iraqi refugees coming out. We began evacuating our people to their great disgruntlement. It also raises issues that you have to think about in training, and one of them is you have to close the school. Well, then what do you do with teacher contracts and what do you do with the teachers for that matter, who are not your employees? What do you do with rent on the building, how do you pay it? The money stops from the Department that subsidizes all this. Also, your commissary. You have all this food that you have to pay for, but now you can't pay for it because nobody is buying it because nobody is in the country. I had a terrific admin officer. That was one of the chief blessings of my early months in Amman was Lee Loman who was the kind of administrative officer - there are two varieties of them in my experience - one who'd look for ways to do things, and one who looked for ways to not do things. Thankfully, he was of the first category and just did a marvelous job of getting us through this difficult period. When we had this huge infrastructure which depended on this stream of income which had stopped. In many other ways, too. Of course, we were building a huge embassy complex and the construction had to be shut down and all the people sent home, including the security people who were preventing listening devices and so forth. The issue arose how we were going to secure the embassy so that we would know when we came back that it had not been compromised in the meantime. It was just a construction site. With Lee's help we devised an elaborate bricking up process with all kinds of imbedded wires and things which would be very difficult to reproduce if you were to burrow in there. We were able to resume the construction of the embassy when everyone returned without having to tear it down because we didn't know whether the security of the embassy had been compromised. All those things were going on as well. I guess I should stop there because I'm running out of inspiration, plus I've got to go back.

Q: All right. We'll stop at this point. You've talked about events leading up to, I mean the operation is beginning to build up in Saudi Arabia for our counter offensive, but we haven't talked about the possibility of a real war coming. I mean, up to now you've been talking about the reactions of the Jordanians, but we should talk a bit about, you know, were the Jordanians beginning to realize we were for serious and this was, how were they beginning to look at what was looming on the horizon and figuring out maybe they were betting on the wrong side and all that. Do you have any notes you want to put in here to where you want to pick this up?

HARRISON: Yes, I want to talk a little bit about interaction with the prime minister, interaction with Abu Oday and the palace staff, my contacts with the king and how they went, and his effort to sort of make me one of the family which he did in those early days. My role as a communicator because of his inability to communicate and how I messed that role up in one particular case because of a mistranslation of a speech that he'd given and my relations with the crown prince which is another area in which I had not shone in the best possible light because I'd been puffing myself up here. I probably should talk about some of the areas in which I had done things, which I might have done a great deal better than I did do them. What the Jordanian public reaction to me was, how my movements were restricted, some of the publicity, some of the parliamentary denunciations and the status as a social figure in town, all of that.

Q: Did the queen play any role in this?

HARRISON: Oh, the queen's role, yes and my early lunch with the king before he was going to go off to, I've got to talk about that, off to Baghdad, Saddam and the interacting there.

Q: We've got a lot to talk about.

HARRISON: Yes, there's another 10 or 15 of these I'm sure.

Q: Today is the 21st of September, 2002. Roger we've got a lot to talk about. I guess the big thing to do is to talk about your relationship with the king and the court and the sort of ruling elite and whatever.

HARRISON: Well, maybe I'll talk about the king a little bit. When I got there he'd been on the throne for 37 years. There were a lot of anecdotal stories about his early relationships with American ambassadors which for some of them it had kind of been a father and son relationship. In the early '50s when he first became king when he was 19 or 20 years old and before he fully had his feet, he by reputation was looking for a father figure. In fact, some people thought that Saddam played that role for him, too when he was looking that was part of his motivation, his admiration for Saddam Hussein. As history rolled on, all of that had faded and by the time I got there, he had in his relationships with me, it very seldom broke through to any personal kind of exchange. He was very formal in meeting, very conscious of his role as king, very quiet, renowned for his good manners which were in fact of a sort that you don't see much any more: of his consideration in social situations for people, of his habit of addressing all men as sir in conversation. He was in all those ways exemplary of a kind of an older, gentler European tradition. It was also true that he had learned the necessity of ruthlessness as king. It is instructive - I always told people to read their book of "The Courtier" - to be in a country to which all power flows from one man, which was the case in Jordan then and is the case in Jordan today. It creates all kinds of personal rivalries and backbiting and fighting for power around the throne and attempts by individuals around the king to use his power for their own purposes or for their own profit, in many cases. The king had learned a couple of ways to dealing with that. One was never to allow anyone to stay in the inner circle too long. He would rotate; even his closest advisors would be rotated in and out of the palace, so when they would be rotated out it would be sudden and unexpected and for no particular reason and they would be shocked and chagrined. The king was always very good about that. He would have them to lunch and he would tell them that they had been working too hard and that they needed time for rest and contemplation and thanked them for all that they had done and they would be cashiered and someone new brought in. He was also not above sacrificing Prime ministers for political causes. He would bring them in for some temporary and unpopular purpose and when they became unpopular, but the purpose was accomplished he would fire them again and move on. He did that several times for several purposes during my time there. All of that as an attempt I think on the whole, well I'm not sure it was successful on the whole, but to prevent usurpation of his authority. He was, in fact, very jealous of his authority, as the crown prince would later find out when he presumed to exercise it when the king was in his last illness, and suddenly found himself suddenly - the crown princdeposed, and a new successor of the king named. The king had that ruthless streak. Also he would not hesitate, if he thought that you were a threat to his regime, by which I think in that context, we always mean family, to have you arrested and tortured and otherwise persuaded that your views were not acceptable in that society. He had a very active secret service, not just for domestic extent, but also of course because he had many enemies and very active operations by foreign intelligence services going on constantly in Jordan, including attempts in the past to assassinate him. He survived four assassination attempts.

Q: The intelligence thing, did he have a good relationship with the Israeli intelligence service?

HARRISON: Yes, he did in fact he had a very close relationship with Israeli intelligence. There was one individual in particular whose name at the moment escapes me who was a regular visitor, as the king had been to Israel throughout his reign. He was forced to adopt a certain public posture, but in terms of the interests of Jordan and incidentally of his own survival - and we talked a little about how the king had to play politics, the politics of a small state surrounded by more powerful neighbors - it made every sense for him to not upset the Israelis and to cooperate with them. As long as he could do it surreptitiously, because of course, he had a domestic political problem to consider. The defining event for him politically before I arrived were the riots in Amman in 1988 which I described previously, they were food riots. I described how they upset the regime. It is true of hierarchal regimes of all kinds including monarchy, authoritarian regimes, that they have a very difficult time of keeping track of grass root politics. What's going on out there in the country, because there's a great disinclination to pass that information upwards to the king. We saw that in the communist countries and certainly it was true in Jordan so domestic situations had a tendency to get out of hand before the palace was aware of it. The kind of rough democracy that operated. There were two systems really. One was the direct contact system. The one system whereby everyone would have access to the king, of course that turned out to be the leaders of all of the groups of the country and especially the sheiks of the various Bedouin tribes that made up the king's court constituency, would show up at the palace unannounced and demanded to see the king and would see the king. This kind of direct contact, democracy. You saw it also in the petition process. I remember once watching the queen at an event we were staging to open up a project, an aid project in Jordan. She came in by helicopter. She made her way from the helicopter pad to this little ceremonial stand that we set up. She was surrounded by petitions, people with petitions written on pieces of paper. She had a petition gatherer, a lady in waiting whose sole purpose was to take these petitions in and they could be anything, college admission for a son, a loan. I suppose there might have been a request for healing at this session, whatever one can imagine would be in these petitions. She would very graciously accept them and dealt with. There was a staff to do that. The idea was that they had to be responsive and so they were assiduous in cultivating their constituency as any congressman in the United States in that kind of way, but it did not translate into any political field at the local level.

Q: I can see this in a Bedouin society, but what about all the Palestinians who were more city folk and all that? Did they have that type of thing; it sounds like this was designed for the Bedouins?

HARRISON: That's right, but I think there was the same system for the Palestinians, but it wasn't quite as carried out in a traditional way. I would often come to the palace because the chief of protocol hated to have the king unoccupied so he would always stack up the appointments so that there was never a time when one man would leave and there wouldn't be another ready to go in. Sometimes, because the king tended to be gracious to his guests, we'd back up in the waiting room for hours. There were often Jordanian Palestinians there with various requests for the king that they wanted to make directly. Of course, these were the elite. The Palestinians in the camps did not have access; they had to be represented at the court. They were not as enfranchised in this system as the Bedouins were, but they were not as important to the king, in fact, he was suspicious of them. We can talk about his attempt to get them out of the army, which happened in my time, to exempt them from the draft and so forth. He was always conscious of division between communities, but again, he was not of either community. It was one of the keys to his rule. So, an outwardly very gentle man. I never saw him really lose his temper, with the ruthlessness which is necessary to an absolute ruler - willing to do what was necessary to preserve family and in moral and ethical balance as far as I could tell - with the necessity to do that. I don't think he felt any remorse in that process. I think he spared self-doubt as to the need to do what he was doing. There was a strain of self-pity in him and a sanctimony and a moral dimension and ethical dimension to his judgments, and emotional-moral-ethical dimension to his judgments which often led him astray. He tended to see his cause as more as well, as being of international interest and himself as a great world leader who deserved respect and a role in that capacity, and was greatly upset whenever that role was denigrated. For example, he had a very keen eye for demarches, which reported to be from Secretary Baker or President Bush, that had in fact been drafted by the bureaucracy. Nothing was more inclined to bring a negative reaction no matter what we were requesting than that bureaucratic cast to a message to him. If the message was not genuinely personal, it would backfire and therefore, I often rewrote the cables from Washington to make them genuinely personal. This bureaucracy would always slip. It was clear if you look at it from the king's eye when these things slipped into this terrible bartering that goes on between bureaus when this kind of thing is being drafted. I had a good eye for it having been in that process for a long time, so I just rewrote them. I don't know that I ever quite fooled him, he was always a little skeptical of my rewrites, but not as skeptical. He'd just dismiss, he'd throw them back at me, these bureaucratic products, for which I don't blame him. I think a way of a bureaucracy asserting its own importance. They weren't in fact important. He understood that only Bush and Baker in the administration was important in terms of foreign policy, and he felt it was lese majesty to deal with drafts. He simply wouldn't do it.

I remember a lot of depression in him in those days. I saw a lot of it. The other thing in my first four or five months in Jordan was that he felt estranged from Washington, from Bush in particular, after Kennebunkport, and his ambassador was also estranged. You were always unfortunately subject to the relationship of your country with the host and the relationship between Jordan and the United States was bad, plus the ambassador in Washington was a career guy with no particular royal connection and therefore, was frozen out. That left the king dependent on me. He put on a big campaign to kind of bring me into the decision of the circle. The earliest example of this was on the weekend, early in my tenure, when he flew me down to Aqaba to spend the weekend with the family in the Aqaba palace. I showed up and was treated like one of the family. I was astounded. I wandered into the main house where there were a lot of cabanas around the main house; one of the cabanas was given me. Everyone was sitting around and the kids were playing. All of the kids, there were eleven of them. Everyone is in housedress. We had an informal breakfast. We'd go out on the beach and play volleyball. He took his kids out on his yacht on the Red Sea and he let me steer for a while and showed me how to operate the boat. That kind of thing, no business discussed, just a family weekend. I was treated kind of like an uncle from overseas who's coming into this environment which was in fact, of course, very flattering, very encouraging for the future, not a good harbinger of what was to come, but I was bait. I'll go, absolutely. To meet the family in that kind of informal environment, I don't think I was deceived by this. It certainly didn't affect my attitude toward Jordan, but of course, an ambassador lives or dies by access and this was tremendous access which my predecessor had not had and so I was very gratified, and attributed it to my extraordinary diplomatic skill and irresistible personal qualities. Also, soon after my arrival he invited me to lunch at the palace. These invitations would come out of the blue. I never knew what I was going over for and they dried up later, but in this case I came into the breakfast room in his Amman residence really, which had been all designed by Queen Noor. It was very House and Garden, green and white, a round table. Around it were seated the queen and the king and the cabinet. The king welcomed me very graciously and the cabinet wasn't so sure. There was a lot of sideways glances. They were not happy at all that I was there. When I say the cabinet I mean the Prime Minister, the foreign ministry and the chief of the royal court. I've already described at that point my relationships with the foreign minister so there's no reason for him to welcome my presence there. The prime minister had been appointed because of his close ties to Saddam Hussein and in fact, he was just returning as that lunch commenced from a very harrowing road trip to Baghdad. I remember the Baghdad highway was under interdiction then. There were odd patrols out shooting up cars and trucks on the highway.

Q: This was after the war had started?

HARRISON: This was after the invasion right before the ground war had started, during the air war. No, I'm sorry. This is a different occasion. He had not just come back. But he was there and we began eating and the queen began this long diatribe against Bush, against U.S. policy, imperialistic, and a very long dissertation on the favorite subject of all Arabs, the double standard, and also of our treatment of the Arabs and Israelis. Part of the diatribe was that our interest was solely in oil and we had abandoned our friends and so forth.

Q: What was the queen's background?

HARRISON: The Queen, Lisa Halaby, was the daughter of the head of Pan Am Airways who had come over initially to redesign. She'd gone to Princeton and been raised as an American and a Christian. She had become an interior designer and been hired, her firm had been hired to redesign the Jordanian National Airlines. That's how they had met. He was between wives. His previously Palestinian wife had been killed in a helicopter accident. He courted her and from all that I could see it was a love match, I think. I think that she genuinely loved him and in his way he did her as well. He did not put her aside as he had some of his previous wives. All the women, and all this was true of the American wives, too, were in a delicate position, and she was. She had made every effort of converting to Islam. Noor al Hussein was her Islamic name. Although she initially did the full Imelda in terms of just sitting around and buying expensive things, she'd toned that down. The economy had gone south in the late '80s and there had been a lot of resentment and she'd reacted to it by being less conspicuous on the international jet set scene. Although she didn't sell anything either. She just sort of kept her head down and did her long term good works.

Q: Anyway, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but you were talking about she was going after you?

HARRISON: Yes, she did this sort of initial opening diatribe which I listened to and it went on for I guess it must have been five or six minutes. Then he just cut her off with a glance. He glanced at her and she stopped almost mid-sentence and then she figured it out. Then he began to tell me why he had called me in to ask, and that is that he was about to embark that afternoon to Baghdad and he was going to try to rescue the situation by offering a deal with Saddam Hussein whereby Saddam would withdraw completely. The benefit for us was that he would withdraw actually from most of Kuwait because he, Saddam, would be given some border rectifications according to the Iraqi position, the border not having been established and having been a long point of irritation between Iraqis and the Kuwaitis because there was oil up there. So, the Iraqis position on borders would be reaffirmed, and he would also be given an island at the northern tip of the Persian Gulf which was an island that the Kuwaitis controlled but which itself controlled the access to, key access to, Iraq. So, Kuwait would move out of there, but otherwise Saddam would withdraw. The king was optimistic that he could persuade Saddam to accept that deal and he asked me what I thought. Of course, as I said, I think the last time, often as ambassador you, and especially in a position that is rapidly changing, you are asked questions on which you have no guidance. I certainly had no guidance on this case and he was leaving that afternoon, so seeking guidance was not in the program.

Q: You probably couldn't get guidance then, I mean real guidance.

HARRISON: Well, it would have taken 24 or 48 hours, but in a sense I didn't need guidance because I knew what the reaction of Washington would be. I'd been in Washington for a long time and knew the position of the government - mostly by reading the New York Times, not by anything they were telling me. I knew this would not be acceptable and in fact, it was their greatest fear that what might look like a reasonable position to the coalition movement we were trying to put together should be accepted by Saddam Hussein, and therefore interrupt the process and reward him for his invasion. We simply wouldn't accept it. I told the king that in fact I used the words, which I remember still when he asked me that. I began my response by saying that if he did that, if he went to Baghdad and cut that deal with Saddam that my government would repudiate the deal and repudiate him. Then the lunch went on. Even more uncomfortably as before and he went off to Baghdad and by all reports and did try to cut the deal which he had described. Saddam, as infallibly as he did in this period repudiated, or I should say not repudiated him, but dismissed him, he was not interested in cutting a deal, thank God. So, the king came back chastened by that experience, well, not chastened so much. I think he was irritated with Saddam. It gives I think an inside approach again. He was trying to play a mediator role after the period of playing a mediator role, and he did not understand and did never understand I think that there was no chance for mediation in this dispute. The only thing that he could get Saddam to do was to withdraw on the condition that everyone would thank him, but not with any conditions. But the king understood that this was a negotiation, or thought it was a negotiation, in which he could be the negotiator or the mediator and cast himself in that role which traditionally had been his role, long after it was appropriate to do so or if Washington was willing to tolerate him in that role. I think that was one of the major causes of dispute.

Q: Did you have the feeling that, I mean, here was this situation where his people were all for Saddam, the United State's main facture was not, that the king was concerned that he might be making another 1967 decision. I'm told that he, his decision to support the attack on Israel in 1967 when he lost Jerusalem and the West Bank really it was a bad decision. Was this in the background, thinking oh my God I might be doing it again?

HARRISON: I think that I don't know if that influenced his unwillingness to side with one side or the other. He certainly knew that Saddam was not going to prevail militarily. He knew what American military power was and he knew that Saddam did not know, and one of the things he always told me was that he was trying to educate Saddam, but Saddam had never seen the Western military man. In his battle experience had been with Iranians running across from their front with Korans held high, screaming and being shot. He didn't know what was coming and the king did. It wasn't ever a matter of siding with Saddam because Saddam was going to lose. On the other hand, he had a domestic constituency that was overwhelmingly emotionally committed to Saddam Hussein and to Iraq in its struggle and therefore, siding openly with the United States was also a problem for him. The appropriate thing in good old foreign policy terms as we understood them at the time, it was to try to continue to operate on that middle ground to be a mediator. Only by being a mediator could he satisfy both his own population and the United States and address this invasion which, after all, was not a good precedent for him either anymore than it was for the Gulf. A notion that someone can just come in if they have military power to do so and to depose you. Especially someone as Saddam then was in Jordan. This is not something that he could welcome. But if he could mediate a solution short of war, because war for him was the worst of outcomes. Iraq would be destroyed, and Iraq was his major economic partner. He couldn't then anticipate ten years of sanctions, but he certainly realized that the economic prospects for Jordan would be very dim if Iraq were to engage in war with the United States. If he could prevent that he was going to do it and that was his consistent effort, long after it was going to be successful. I think his miscalculation was that this was possible, but the overwhelming view of him and his government was - and the reason that it was impossible - is because we were set on war. We weren't going to accept any solution. The fact was, as I often told them, that was right: we weren't willing to accept any solution which involved an aspect by which Saddam Hussein would gain by his invasion. Simply weren't going to accept any rewards for this behavior. And since they despaired of getting Saddam to withdraw unconditionally, they were frustrated by what they saw as unreasonableness in this matter, but in fact it was a miscalculation on their part which led the king to do things which I think worsened his standing with Washington - which he didn't have to do, including a whole series of speeches in which the rhetoric was designed to please his population, but was very displeasing indeed to the United States. We've talked about imperialism; we've talked about the threat to the area of people that was involved in this affair. The other motive that the king talked about was the need for an Arab solution to the Iraqi problem. The notion that any other solution imposed by an outside power would split the Arab world and the Arabs knew that this was important and indeed it was important. In essence, his claim to some legitimacy beyond his little country and also, his claim to share in the assets of the oil producing countries - why should they give him money - that the Arab assets were one and belonged to all Arabs because the Arab world was one, but divided into political entities, but at a deeper level, an emotional level, all were brothers and that brothers should share with the brothers. If one brother is fortunate enough and is essentially arrogant and despicable, as the Kuwaiti, he should share with his more virtuous. The sign of their virtue was that God had seen fit to give them an acidic life by depriving them of the temptations of voluptuous which had been visited upon their less fortunate Kuwait cousins. Nevertheless, the Kuwaitis should be generous, generosity after all is one of the few tenants of Islam under the commandants, alms. Of course, the king never wanted it to appear to be alms.

As I said in a previous session, the Kuwaitis had made him grovel and increasingly humiliated him when he came to Kuwait City to beg for a few more million dollars. As the Saudis did when he came to try to keep his oil coming in for free. By the positions that he took, and by the self-righteousness by which it took them, vis-ï¿½-vis his Arab brethren, and by his tendency to deny any culpability in the process that had led up to the war, but on the contrary to pose himself as the prophet who had warned of these things and had urged on his brethren the kind of rational policies which would have avoided this outcome, had they not only been so stubborn and blind to this leadership and wisdom. He was alienating not just Washington, but the Gulf states and Saudi Arabia who were his paymasters, and had been for a long time, and they were not slow to show their displeasure so that one day soon after the beginning of the war the pipeline from Saudi Arabia, which had been supplying Jordan with oil for 20 years, suddenly stopped. The oil stopped coming down the pipeline and an urgent message went from Jordan to Riyadh asking why that had happened. The message came back that there was a little matter of a bill, which was unpaid for oil supplies for 15 years. The king said that he had been assured that King Fahd that this oil would be provided in perpetuity for free. This turned out to be something that King Fahd himself could not remember having promised the king and therefore, where was the money to pay for these supplies. Until it was forthcoming the Saudis said the oil supplies would remain, the oil pipeline would remain in the off position. Since all the oil came in that day and since there was no alternative to that, immediately apparent, because we were, remember, in a blockade of the port at Aqaba - which didn't mean that oil could not come in for Jordan but did mean that insurance rates for ships had skyrocketed. To go into a war zone now was enormously expensive and therefore, the cost of that energy, counting the transport, counting the fact that you actually had to pay for it and you had built an economy on free oil - which was a delusion as it turned out - and counting the fact that it would cost you a lot more than it would cost anyone else because of the insurance you would have to pay for shipment, and finally the fact that you had no foreign exchange to pay for any of it. That posed quite a dilemma for the Jordanians. They knew better than to ask any of the Gulfies who were even more, especially the Kuwaitis of the people that had oil, even more vociferously anti-King - and their opposition to him increasing as the threat from Iraq seemed more real. So, the Jordanians resorted to the only alternative, which was to take up the offer which Saddam immediately made to supply them oil at a greatly subsidized rate, which he began to do by tanker truck down the highway from Damascus. Which led to an incident, which led among other things to some very good videos for General Schwarzkopf who had shown them on our television from the Arab war and precision guided munitions coming in and blowing up these objects. They were actually Jordanian oil tankers and not Scud missiles that you don't park by the highway as these were parked. I was called in by the Jordanian foreign minister and asked why we were blowing up the oil tankers. The other part of this was that oil from Iraq was, in a series of United Nations resolutions had been passed at this point, in fact contraband. One could not legally import it and so it was in violation of sanctions and we had every right to blow up all those oil tankers in theory. Tom Pickering went to work in New York and persuaded the Security Council to take note of the Jordanian necessity to import oil from Saddam Hussein. They did not exempt Jordan from the sanctions regime or from the requirement to prevent that oil from coming across the border. It was a neat little diplomatic trick to ease them around the fact that otherwise their economy and society in general would have had to shut down. That was one of the issues that was exacerbated because of a combination of the king's bad tactics and his projection of this self-righteousness.

Q: Were you called in to try to do something with the Saudis?

HARRISON: Yes, I was called in by the minister of energy and told about this situation and Washington did actually, there was some intervention. Chas Freeman was down as ambassador in Saudi Arabia and he was not sympathetic to the Jordanian cause. He's not a man who is terribly troubled by self-doubt, and was very assertive on his position on this, and here was a place in which he could look very robust since he was trying to cut a break for his Saudi clients in other areas. Ambassadors in those situations always look for somewhere to dï¿½marche and Jordan was his. The embassy didn't bother commenting on our reporting in those days as well. At any rate, not my favorite guy. I think that the king misplayed that and I think that he would have suffered the oil problem anyway, but he made the situation worse with the self-righteousness with which he presented his position.

Q: Was there a press corps there that was reporting this back so that the Washington papers would constantly harping on, here is a guy who had been very popular in the United States, but going against he usurped the turpitude or whatever it is, our guy?

HARRISON: Yes, I think there was an element of that. The fact that foreign policy is actually a ruthless business in which your friends are always temporary, and the feeling in Washington was that we had done many favors for the king over the years. A lot of feeling that the king owed us an enormous debt and that he had betrayed us, double crossed us and therefore that he deserved what he got and that he should get more than he was getting. All of this was very much the feeling in Washington; what prevented from issuing a more draconian measure against Jordan chiefly was Secretary Baker and the president. The bureaucracy was all set to put Hussein firmly between the uprights, but whenever this issue got to Bush, he would moderate, as would Baker knowing Bush's mind. They had, they were the only ones that I ever ran into in the bureaucracy that really had an appreciation for the dilemma the king faced. I often - when the king said some awful thing about our policy or about them personally - would point out to him that they never did the same, there was never a denunciation of the same by Baker. He was in fact cast, himself, as a little bit of an apologist for what the king was doing, as did the president. Whenever asked about this they would always point out the difficulties under which Hussein labored. I was not slow to remind the king of this and to point out how his personal attacks on them were first of all unnecessary and secondly especially damaging.

Q: I would think that kind of explained the King's position why he was doing this would not endear you to the bureaucracy back in Washington it would further drive you into that into the category of oh this is just another apologist.

HARRISON: Yes, it actually drove me into private industry. Even worse. Yes, I think that was very true. I wasn't seen as a friendly force by the military because of my criticisms of the way the Navy was conducting the blockade in Aqaba. I remember we got information about a load of Iraqi dates in Aqaba about to ship out. It turned out to be the producer of the best dates in the world. Iraqi dates are what you want if you're a classic person. You can have, especially during Ramadan when the first thing you serve after the breaking of the fast is a meal of dates and dried apricots, and Iraqi dates were what the classic people wanted to have. There was a whole shipload of them about to be locked up and so I went in I protested these dates leaving. The dates were stopped and never got out to the Navy, who would have turned them back anyway and fermented away in the Aqaba sun there for the next six months turning into whatever dates turn into when they've been cooking in the hull of the ship for six months. There was stuff like that. On the general issue I think again there was no sense that I had back up from Washington. I thought I was in a position where any mistake by me would be pounced on and that my tenure was very tender all through this period. I thought that particularly of my Foreign Service colleagues. I always felt first of all that they were less forthcoming with information and secondly that they felt no loyalty to a brother officer in a difficult position at all. I suppose the disillusion about the nature of the business, although anybody who had been in it that time as long as I had should not have been disillusioned about it. I have to say that I was by that experience, which made it much more difficult for me because I always had to weigh the danger inherent at my rear as I was trying to deal with the people in front of me.

In fact there was a good incident, a good illustration issue for me of this after I left Jordan in '94. I was a professor at the Air Force Academy and an old air force friend of mine who was a deputy at NSA (National Security Agency) said, "You know, I was really worried about you. They were after you. They were out to get you." I assumed that he meant Washington. Well, it turned out, he meant the intercepts they'd had about the various operations that had been mounted in Jordan to harm me, but it didn't occur to me that this was what he meant.

Q: The enemy was us?

HARRISON: The enemy was behind me, absolutely as much as in front of me. The people in front of me were willing to go around me to the people behind me if they saw it in their interests and the people behind me were willing to - with one exception - to allow that. There were all sorts of incidents. I think one that really exemplified it for me is our current ambassador there, Skip Gnehm who at that point was our ambassador designate to Kuwait, who came out. He was traveling around during the phony war between the invasion and Desert Storm and came to Jordan, where he had served twice before. The last time as DCM, a job for which he beat me out by lot of big wigs for whom he was DCM. Laid down his body on the tracks to have me as his DCM, but the system defeated him. Skip came out, and as we're riding over to the palace, Skip said, "You know, I realize that you have had to bring all this bad news to the king." Indeed, I was sort of the official U.S. government scold. I was always complaining to him about one thing and responding to my instructions and trying to preclude getting harsher ones. He said, "But don't worry, I'm bringing a tough message here. So, you'll know that this is not just you, that you're reflecting Washington." Then we got in with the king. Skip began by saying, "Your majesty, my heart overflows to be in your presence again" which was just about the toughest thing he did. So, in the car on the way back, I said, "You know, Skip, I don't think the king is ever going to recover from that blasting you gave him." He was very apologetic." But I think it was really a part of the process then. I was sort of the front man for Washington's displeasure.

Q: Were there any of these traveling emissaries bouncing through, you know, telling the king what he should do and that sort of thing?

HARRISON: The only one that he had, and it was in January, and it was Rich Armitage who came. I welcomed that. Armitage was very popular among the Jordanian leadership because he had done a lot to modernize their military when he was assistant secretary of defense. He had a lot of credibility and he was an enormously likeable figure, has a manner which appealed very much. We set out basically to see if he could do something to repair the relationship with the king in January I think it was of 1991, which I thought, was great. He delivered a good message and went away again and all of that, I thought, was well done. So, I don't want to cast Washington in a consistently awful light here. That was the king. This all came to a head in early 1991 when - right after the bunker explosion in Baghdad. We had targeted the bunker because we thought Saddam was there and had put an earth-penetrating munition and it was very impressive. Reinforced concrete and it killed a lot of people, it turned out that it was being used as a shelter and that Saddam wasn't there. This was all broadcast by the Iraqis around the world and the king had seen it and had commissioned a speech. He does this to me every time he sees me. He always begins by telling me how unpopular I was in Jordan and then he tells me that he wasn't responsible for the speech, because what I discovered in casting around was that he had written the speech. He now claims that he didn't write it, he refused to write it and therefore, one of his subordinates wrote it and didn't check it. I just talked with a Jordanian who was in the inner circle at the time and told him that story and he just laughed. Whoever wrote the speech, the king delivered it and it was just awful. I mean it was all a repetition of all the ancient Arab prejudices against the United States and full of talk of imperialism and an attack on all the Arab peoples and all the kinds of things that just absolutely drove Washington berserk. I remember watching the speech and thinking that it was going to make my job a lot easier because there was nothing left to repair. There would be no contact, you could simply relax and go swimming and play tennis and wait for the whole thing to blow over which was going to take a while. As I reconstruct the king's motives, it was much further than he had to go. First of all, he did have a domestic problem to deal with, but there was an essential stability domestically for him and this was shown every time the war got anywhere near Jordan's border. Whenever that happened, the people I talked to basically shut up. All the diatribe. By the way, that was my daily fare. I was the universal ear for Jordanian discontents, not only the United States with Israel because of course, there was no Israeli ambassador there and I was considered his surrogate. Everybody would pour out their unhappiness to me as their one shot at affecting the cosmic order of things. When the war got close all that stopped.

People got very cautious because in the end there was a great and universal interest in Jordan for this stability as a society to be maintained. There had been a civil war there 18 years before. The people in leadership. 5 September between Palestinians, Arafat's attempt to take over the governing authority in Jordan and the king's resistance which the king had won. Everybody remembered that civil war, remembered the kind of thing that happens when your society dissolves and therefore did not want that to happen again. Even though they would protest, those protests would never get out of hand. There was an essential consensus that the status quo in Jordan should be maintained at all costs, so the king did not have to do what he did. As I reconstructed it, he did it because of his emotional reaction to watching the videos of that bunker. It was simply an emotional spasm of the kind to which he was given at the end of the day. He was not a cold blooded politician, and I suppose admirable for not being one, but it was a huge miscalculation and any other leader would have spilled at the end. Hussein was rescued by what he'd always been rescued from his folly by, and that was his indispensability to the peace process which was then going to ensue and needed Hussein. So he had to be rehabilitated after the war, but it was a huge miscalculation. It is remembered still by anyone who ever had anything to do with Jordan.

There was another incident soon after that which I should probably repeat in this instance. This was after the war, but the king gave his speech from his throne. We all went to attend. He gave it in Arabic and we were handed a text. The text repeated many of the same arguments that had been made in an earlier speech and therefore, this was right before the king was supposed to go to Europe to meet Baker who was going to be there. We took that text we were provided. My only Arabic speaker having been removed from the staff by then, I was at the speech with a couple of members of my staff all looking ceremonial while the king intoned. We took out this translation which was handed out by the palace of the speech and hustled back and used it as the basis for our report, but it turned out not to be the speech he actually delivered. The one he delivered was more moderate than the one that we'd been given and omitted some of the language which was most objectionable. So, it was a mistake on our part. I think understandable; we always wanted to be first with the news. We were handed what purported to be an authorized translation of the speech which was the same speech handed out in Arabic to other people there, but it wasn't the speech he gave. We had to come and do a very quick report saying that it wasn't the speech and that he'd given another one. That was an error on our part, which might have been avoided by having an ambassador there who was familiar with the language, as I was not. That was a problem. It resulted in the cancellation of the meeting in Europe that was supposed to take place and, therefore, slowed the rehabilitation of Hussein and of course, fed his own resentments. I never did find out why we'd been given one speech and he'd delivered another. That was in fact what occurred.

I should talk, too, about the role of the Crown Prince Hassan in all of this. Hassan was a peculiar man. There was a lot of insanity in the king's family. Hassan was not the next elder brother in the family, that was Mohammed who had inherited a greater strain of the insanity that had killed the king's father.

Q: Yes, it went from his grandfather to Hussein, Abdullah to Hussein?

HARRISON: It bypassed the king's father except a brief period and then the king's father had died institutionalized. It was a gene with ragged claws on the bottom of the gene pool and Mohammed had inherited it and he was medicated most of the time and interested only in playing chess. When he discovered that I didn't play good chess he'd dismiss me, which was great because having to sit with Mohammed for any length of time was a chore. Hassan was the next brother and I think that Hassan had gotten more of that same gene and it was good for him. He was a scholarly man who had been educated in England, thoroughly secularized. His wife once told me that he kept the air conditioner on all winter so that it would drown out the early call to prayer so he could sleep. They all were secular men who observed the religious conventions as required of their position, and since their claim to legitimacy was their descent from the prophet, it behooved them to uphold the Islamic traditions. In terms of their own personal conduct, they were not committed Muslims. They did not pray five times a day nor do the other. They all made the Hajj at one time or another. So, Hassan spoke in Oxford English, saw himself as the leader of the think tank element of the palace and had a group of bright young men around him, was continually doing studies and going to conferences abroad and entering into the international dialogue. He had a very eccentric side to his nature. I think, by the way, also a decent man, the only one of the royal family that was really monogamous. The rest of them, the king was a great philanderer and revered for it nationally and sort of the kind of guy who would see a new presenter on Jordan TV and point, and then she would be delivered up to him. Good to be the king. Of course, the women all had some choice. As Kissinger used to say power is a great aphrodisiac. The king made the most of it. The queen didn't like it going on much when she was around, but she was not around a lot, but all of that went on. No rumors ever about Hassan in that regard, partly because he was married to Princess Sarvath who was a Pakistani lady, the kind of trippy acid lady of the Pakistani upper classes, which is, as you may know, one of the most thorough communities anywhere in the world, but whose self-regard is succeeded only by their corruption. Maybe their corruption is exceeded only by their self-regard. She was very ambitious for her husband, too much so as also would have been seen eventually when the king was sick. Always wore Pakistani made dress, which alienated everybody. They didn't like Noor trying to assimilate, but they didn't like Sarvath not trying to assimilate. When I say that Hassan was not a philanderer I think she would have probably not taken as indulgently to that as Noor did. Hassan had a couple of peculiarities. One was a kind of hypophonic laugh. He had a kind of Jimmy Carter tendency to suddenly break out in this laughter in the middle of conversations at inappropriate times and invite you to join in the laughter which was one of the difficult things that I had to do as a diplomat. I never was quite sure why he was laughing. It was an explosive, kind of peculiar laugh, in which his eyes would roll a little bit. It was always a little bit disturbing I think. The other peculiarity he had was that he was no slave to antecedents in conversation. It took me a while to learn this that he would drop a subject in conversation, but come back to it 20 minutes later or 25 minutes later with no acknowledgment. Suddenly the next figure in whatever the argument that he was making would appear and if you were attentive you would realize that an argument being made at the beginning of the conversation was now continuing, but there was no obvious bridge. Always when I brought people in to meet with the crown prince they would go away confused because no one of course was sensitive to this except me, having heard the lot, so I would sort of explain what had happened, that the conversation was discontinuance.

I say this I think against the background that the fact that the crown prince was very well intentioned but had a problematic relationship with his brother, who I do not think had great respect for him. As indeed society did not. He had never for example served in the military. He had never had the opportunity to show personal bravery. The king had often had the opportunity and he was in fact exceedingly brave in command. The crown prince was not. Another anecdote about the king. I was in the period where I was sort of being one of the family the king took me down to see his vintage car collection because he knew I was a car nut, as he was. In his Mercedes going down to his garage in the big palace compound there, there were three guns. There was an AK-47 on the backseat and there was a MAC-10 in a special holder in the center console and there was a 45 in the door pocket. I remarked on this, I said, "Well, I see you're well defended here." He told me about an assassination attempt that had occurred and he said, in essence, that the only person you can count on to defend yourself in that circumstances is yourself. You can have all these armed guards, but they may think about their wife and kids, but you know that you're gong to defend yourself. He wanted to have the means at hand to do it. He'd done it several times so his bravery really was unquestioned. Hassan had never had a similar opportunity, never been a military leader or been a military person at all. He occasionally wore a military uniform, he had military rank, but he always looked uncomfortable. He was a well-intentioned man certainly with the best interests of Jordan at heart. He understood the international environment probably better than his brother did or at least took a more analytical view of what was necessary for Jordan to do. He was very much a proponent of various schemes. He loved schemes. The scheme to pump water to the Dead Sea from the Red Sea for example to produce electricity and to recharge the Dead Sea which was drying up was one of his causes. He had a lot of others. He always had studies to back all of these things up. Initially my relations with him were good. In fact, he even came to the house for breakfast when a congressman came through, which he hadn't done for years and in fact he didn't do as a habit. They deteriorated I think. One reason was that in this period between the invasion and Desert Storm he conceived the idea of convening a conference to deal with the refugee problem. The problem from our point of view, of course, the Jordanians had just been dealing with the refugee problem out at the Gulf, but he explicitly made part of the agenda that the refugee problem from Israel, on the assumption that the Israelis would expel Palestinians from their territory and that these people would come to Jordan - which was a problem for us. He invited Dick Murphy and a lot of international figures. He convened a group of ambassadors to ask for their support. I queried Washington about whether I should give that support, whether I should attend, and was told I should not attend. Without my attendance this was not going to be a successful event, which the crown prince well knew, so he called to make a personal appeal to me to attend and I had to say no having been told by Washington not to go. Washington was worried about how this was going to be exploited to highlight the possibility of Israeli expulsion of Palestinians from Israel, which would stir up problems in Israel, which they were then trying to avoid. The crown prince really never forgave me for that. Dick Murphy, who was my houseguest, retired then, former assistant secretary. I had shared all this dilemma with him and he told the crown prince what I had told him and the crown prince called me up in great anger to repeat what Murphy had told him - what I had said and the things that I had said. It was actually the only time in my three years that my confidence was ever betrayed, and it was done by a Foreign Service Officer for whom I'd always had great respect. I immediately called Murphy back in Washington and asked him why he'd done that and he denied doing it. I told him that I had just been told by the crown prince that he had done it and that it had made my job a lot tougher, as indeed it did. Since the crown prince never forgave me for that, our relations were never amiable after that. I apologized to the crown prince and told him that I could have handled that issue better. I don't think that solved the problem and in fact, I didn't see much of him for my last two years in country, and events like his daughter's wedding I was not invited to attend. There was another incident with the crown prince later which I will recount later. That made it very difficult, but I don't think the crown prince had much influence on the king in terms of the king's relations with me, but it was an uncomfortable aspect of the rest of my tenure there. I think it exemplified for me something about the Foreign Service, which is very distasteful, I think. An organization I've belonged to for a long time, but in which I've found very little organizational loyalty. I think it appears very unfavorably to the military and they certainly have their own backbiting going on, but there's a sense of paternity in the military that doesn't exist in our business of which I have many examples of in my time of vulnerability in Jordan.

That's the crown prince. As I observed the cabinet in those days, the key figure was always Prince Zeid bin Shaker who was the king's cousin, now elevated to royalty by the king in his latter years, a very charming man. I liked him very much. He exemplified a kind of old generation charm that you don't see much anymore and had a great knack of making people feel comfortable in his presence, and a good sense of humor, a very nattily dressed dresser. Prime minister for much of my time and also to keep the royal court, but not a restraining influence on the king's darker impulses. He saw himself as a facilitator for what the king wanted to do, and when he was prime minister, demanded with his prestige and authority. He had been a soldier of some distinction, but in fact hated messing with politics and saw himself above the ruck of politics. I should mention that there was a parliament in Jordan for various periods, which included the Muslim Brothers. The king had created the parliament again and recalled it and it held elections. After the '88 riots it seemed some mechanism of the expression of populace with that. He had gerrymandered the districts and the representational formula so that the East Jordanians, who were his court constituency, were vastly over-represented and the Palestinians were overly underrepresented. The parliament did, in fact I think, play a very useful role as a safety valve of public discontent. I was regularly denounced in the halls of parliament. I remember once I went with my Australian colleague to an archeological site above the Dead Sea and was then accused in parliament of having been on a spy mission. I was taking the view that I should be seen around town in this period and I should be highlighting the benefits of the good relationship with the United States. During this period I was constantly visiting aid projects. We aided a lot of businessmen to get started, so I went off to visit these businessmen and brought the media along with me. We built schools and I went to the schools. Here's a school we built; here's a new one we're building - to try to give a positive spin to the relationship. There had been a lot of benefits to Jordan and I wanted to highlight them all. I must say nobody was ever very happy to see me at these schools or these business projects, but they didn't know how to say no. I would try to give as good a name to the United States as possible. That was a diversion. I was talking about the inner workings of the cabinet. Abu Oday was the Palestinian, was the kind of house Palestinian from the inner circle: speech writer, advisor and advocate and he always sat for the Palestinian cause in Hussein's court. The chief of the royal court was Bin Shaker in those days. "Yes, my Lord" is the form of address one uses with superiors and I never heard anyone use it. The fact that Bin Shaker did in his discussions with the king showed he was not someone who'd object to what the king wanted to do. Abu Oday claimed that he did object, and it was claimed even more vociferously since then, that he'd object. Whether he was in fact objecting I have serious doubts. A nice man. The prime minister's name, which is escaping me, who was the representative of the Saddam Hussein constituency in the country, no one, of course, had close relations with Saddam - and with whom I never had any but the most formal conversations and meaningless conversations. The crown prince I think not as influential as he would like to project outside the family. There is a tension between the brothers that is always there. The king did not bring Hassan into the inner circle on debates on the key issues of foreign policy and did not have a lot of time for the various projects that Hassan had made his own.

The queen was undoubtedly at that point egging the king on. She was not a restraining influence at all from both her private and public comments, trying to, and I didn't complete this argument before, erase the sense that she was American. Of course, that never could be erased. In fact, Bin Shaker, I said once to him, that the queen has a very hard job. He said, "What's her job?" They worked very hard to freeze her out of any policy discussions. I think at that lunch I described before the king's trip to Baghdad, he was unhappy that she was there and that I was there. So that was a dynamic. The king in the end had developed the practice of never tipping his hand. I went, by the way, to one more cabinet lunch in that period which was as uncomfortable as the previous one had been. I remember the subject being the airline which was going to have to - the Royal Jordanian - close down because they couldn't afford to lose payments on the airbuses because they couldn't fly their airplanes. No tourist traffic and so forth. They had a lot of Iraqi planes at the airport then, too under embargo and ships in their port and every time those Iraqi planes would move from one place to another I was sent in to protest. There was a lot of attention being paid to that. All of this came to a head when Desert Shield became Desert Storm, 15 January '91. We were expecting this of course. I in particular had been telling the Jordanians that this process was taking the next course and that they should expect, in the absence of a very quick and unconditional change of mind by the Iraqis, that this military event was going to take place.

Q: Was the war being followed on TV in Jordan the way it was almost around the world using CNN (Cable News Network)?

HARRISON: Oh, yes, very much so. Although CNN was not widespread then. It was mostly the royal family following it on CNN. Everybody else had the Arab, in those days no satellite TVs. There was limited access, but most of those things were being replayed in any case on Jordanian TV. It all came to a head as I say in January when we unleashed Desert Storm. We were given the warning by the Department that this was about to take place. We had all kinds of contingency plans. We were down by the way to a skeleton crew. I should also talk about another great debate before we get to this, as we had gone through various stages of departure. There was a huge pressure on us to get down to eight people at the embassy, which I was resisting and this was coming directly from Secretary Baker. I never could figure out why because it would mean sending out my Marines, they would have to go to get down to eight given the people who had to stay. I wanted to keep the Marines there. Now it turns out of course, the Marines are not there to protect you, they're there to protect the classified material which is there, and could have protected us against any attack on the embassy. I thought the symbolic value was important and I was about to be disciplined for resisting sending them out when the war ended, luckily for me, quickly. It turned out that the reason that they wanted us down to eight people was because the evacuation plan for us involved the landing of a small aircraft at a prearranged site outside Amman where we would go and be picked up. There were only eight seats on it and the Pentagon had told the State Department that they would not be responsible for our lives in the event of war. That if the State Department wanted to keep us in Amman, any representation there at all, that was fine, but the Defense Department was not about to guarantee our safety, or rescue us if we were in trouble. They would have other things to do. The State Department had to have a credible evacuation plan, not credible in the sense that we'd ever actually be able to do all of the things that it described us doing. There was no possibility of government protection. If this broke down, that we were going to be able to get out of the embassy and go to the site and that the plane was going to be there and we were going to get on the plane, this was a fantasy. But a fantasy necessary to deniability by the State Department if anything happened to us. They had to be able to say that there was a plan in place and unfortunately it had miscarried, we hadn't been able to carry it out, whatever. They couldn't say that if they sent in an eight-person plane and there were 12 people. It was very much a cover your ass initiative in the Department, but they were absolutely insistent that we do it. So, that was another sort of bureaucratic battle I was fighting in those days. By then we were down to minimal staff. At any rate, we weren't told about the imminence of the invasion, but I was convinced that once the deadline passed there was nothing but harm in waiting, and as soon as the planes could get in after the 15th of January deadline had passed without Saddam's withdrawal, we would attack, which in fact we did. So I was kind of half braced for this. I got a phone call; my first knowledge of the attack was a phone call from the United States - someone watching this on CNN. I think it was 2:00 in the morning. I was in my residence. I went to the embassy, there was a message to deliver to the foreign minister, so I got him out of bed and went over and delivered the message about 3:00 or 3:30 AM about what we were doing and went back to the embassy. We had a plan in place for everyone to come in from their houses to the embassy and the skeleton staff we had, and we did that. We slept there for a couple of nights until it became clear that not much was going to happen. This of course, was the land invasion; the air war had been going on for some time. Then we dispersed. We had a kind of operation center, but after a couple of days it seemed silly. There was nothing going on. The domestic situation had stayed calm so we all went back home.

Later that day I had a long message that had come in to deliver to the king. This was the 16th of January of '91 and it was very uncompromising, a very tough message, the essence of which was that we were now engaged in this military operation, and if the Jordanians impeded us in any way that we would deal with them appropriately. The message was basically you better stay out of our way. It was put almost as bluntly as that in the message and I think probably an appropriate thing so there should be no misunderstanding in circumstances like that. I called for an appointment with the king and was told that he was over at the office of the chief of general staff and indeed that's where he was with his brother. The chief of general staff was not there. We were in the chief's office with the king in his military uniform and his brother also in his military uniform. I sat down and delivered the demarche straight. This is not one of the ones that I had thought I should tone down anyway and the king accepted it calmly as he accepted everything. I got up to go and the crown prince charged me which was kind of interesting, snarling at me about the effrontery of all this, and I think he actually was still smarting from the fact that I had not been to his conference on refugees. At any rate, he tried to bump me and the king intervened physically between us. The king sort of broke up the battle. I said you know it was a good time to keep our heads here and then left. That was an interesting experience to have the king break up a fight between the American ambassador, me, and the crown prince. I think also a good short example of what my relations with the crown prince were like at that point although I didn't always have to fear physical violence from him. It was not something from which our relationship was going to recover. Then the war thankfully was over very quickly. The Jordanian public stayed calm as indeed when things got serious as I mentioned before, they did. It illustrated a sort of stability existed there. Soon after the war the king sent a letter to Bush, which I went over to get; it was very conciliatory on exactly the opposite tone than the one he'd been taking before the war. It was much too quick. It was received with some astonishment in Washington as being shameless and blatant and full of professions of friendship and so forth. And then, just as a sidelight, the Jordanians began compiling the history of the events leading up to all of this under the crown prince's direction, which was designed to illustrate the point that the king had made to me on the airplane on our first trip to Kennebunkport and that is that the Jordanians were not to blame, that their position was always beyond reproach, that they had warned everyone of this possible outcome, that their advice had been ignored, just awful stuff. I let it be known that it was awful stuff and would be seen as apologetics and would not have the effect that they wanted it to have. This was not something for which I had any particular influence and the issue was a white paper, later in the spring of '91.

Q: During the time when Iraq was launching scuds at Israel, obviously you had to go over Jordan, did this cause you any problems?

HARRISON: Well, the only problems we had since none of them fell short. Chinese colleague there, I liked him very much, an old Chinese diplomat who was very concerned about these rockets; he was constantly afraid they were going to abort in flight and fall short. No, they flew over.

Q: This is tape ten, side one with Roger Harrison.

HARRISON: A couple other things where he commanded the air force called me in to warn me that the Jordanians would have to oppose any Israeli attempt to overfly Jordan to attack Iraq, but then pointed out that the Jordanian radars were malfunctioning in the south and wouldn't be able to see anything in the south, but by God if they did pick anything up on it they would certainly attack even though they realized they would be destroyed in the process. The other problem was if they came across, they would have to reckon with coming back for fuel so might have to take out Jordanian air defenses, which would be a terrible blow for the king and stability and so forth. So, that was one of the issues. The Scuds themselves were welcomed in Jordan. The attacks on Israel were never anything that would upset Jordanians. The only cause for concern was what the Israeli reaction would be. That was not a problem. Also there was an incident there, too where the CIA was very eager because they have psy-warfare at the CIA and psy-warfare operations have to conduct psychological warfare and I mean it's just a kind of thing. They wanted to drop leaflets over Baghdad

I should say something about the relationship between my station chief, the CIA station chief and me and between the station chief and the king. The CIA had a long tradition with the king. They'd once subsidized his operation and that was a thing of the past, but it was memorialized by the birthday gift they gave him every year. They would give him a Humvee or a satellite navigation system for his yacht. They'd give him something, it wasn't money anymore, but it was sort of a tied gift. There was a symbolic gift, which recalled that old relationship, and traditionally in Jordan the CIA station chief had independent access to the king. Most all station chiefs get really strange. I mean these are not normal people and he was one of the stranger ones around. It was true. He had independent access and the king tried to exploit that access. The CIA was happy with it obviously because it gave them influence and gave them information which they could report back. You soon learn as an ambassador you think you have control over what moves in and out information that moves in and out of your embassy, but in fact you don't. The CIA has their own independent means of communication. They have operations that you know nothing about and so there's a whole sort of sub-operation going on there. All ambassadors try to get in control of it and all station chiefs try to resist that and there's a kind of dynamic in all embassies, but particularly difficult in Jordan because of this whole tradition of direct access to the king and independent access. I was not invited to the meetings the station chief had. The interest of the CIA at that point was in exfiltration and infiltration into Jordan and its antics were to drop leaflets over Baghdad - an idea they had. Their area director for our area came out. I remembered to have a meeting with the king and try to talk him into this idea. The king had played all that superbly well. He delayed it, he dragged it out. Eventually the war was over.

Q: We used to get balloons over Seoul from North Korea and we'd get leaflets.

HARRISON: Well, anybody peculiar enough to be in psy-warfare operations, you want them just out there for eight hours a day in the general population. I think it's probably a good thing to keep them occupied. The king was not about to let this happen and successfully put it off. He was very cooperative in terms of infiltration and exfiltration, which you know, his stock was high. Also, the CIA takes a very much more practical view of foreign policy than the State Department is forced to take now. State has to be the spokesman for all of the posturing of the administration, congress, and it goes on all the moral swaggering about the world that we do. All of that is for ambassadors to represent. The CIA is fooled by none of that and conducts none of it themselves. It makes their job a lot easier than ours. One of the things that they had no illusions about was the sanctions regime. I spent a lot of time, most of my time, going in to talk to those people who came through about the lax Jordanian imposition of sanctions against Iraq, which I talked about before. The CIA did none of that. They treated that whole process with the disdain that it deserved. The king of course, welcomed station chiefs visits more than mine. He wasn't going to be hectored. He was somebody who wanted to talk about serious business in a serious way. This really became a problem after the war because the king conceived the notion that the State Department was his enemy in Washington and the CIA was his friend. The CIA understood and the State Department did not. He called in the station chief and gave him a message for the president to go around the State Department in that bureaucracy in which the station chief duly sent without letting me know. Ed Djerejian was by then the assistant secretary and I got a call, I discovered this for the first time because I got a call from Djerejian - John Kelly thankfully was gone - telling me that this had happened. This had come to Bob Gates of course, and Mr. Gates had not raised any...

Q: Gates, you mean the head of the CIA?

HARRISON: The CIA, yes. He was the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), an old friend of mine from our grubbing days at the NSC. But wasn't necessarily dedicated to protecting my interests, but certainly was dedicated to protecting his own through Secretary Baker, who was not about to go along with a message from Hussein for the president. He shifted it immediately over to Baker, who shifted down to Djerejian, who called me to tell me what the substance of the message was and to tell me that the State Department would not support me if I wished to react by removing the station chief - which would be the appropriate thing to do in those circumstances.

Q: That they would not support you?

HARRISON: They would not support me. Although theoretically I had the power to do that because we had been all assured that our staffing of our embassies was completely under our control and we could send anybody home anytime we wanted. This was not in fact true and in this case I was sort of cautioned in the process of being told about this breach that I could not redress it in the way that would be have been appropriate under these circumstances. I reacted to this in two ways. I told the station chief that if there were any other repetition I would send him home anyway, and he pledged not to repeat what he had done, a pledge which he and I both treated with seriousness that it deserved. I let it be known to the power structure around the king that this had miscarried from the king's point of view, that you could not bypass Baker or the Department of State no matter how much you thought the CIA was actually your friendly source in Washington. In any case, it was not a good way to do business. As far as I know it never happened again, but I think the only reason that it never happened again was because everybody involved in it happening the first time realized that it was not possible. Bob Gates was not going to go behind Jim Baker's back. To think he would misconceive the power relationships in Washington was very naive on everyone's part. It showed, I think, the tenuous grip I had on authority where the station was involved. I think this was probably more of a problem in Jordan than in many places because of the traditional relationship between the station chief and the king. This is also true that the king used that channel much more extensively in the second two years of my tenure in Jordan than he had at the beginning. The station chief was really the favored guest in the palace I think much more than I was. I was received, but he was invited. He would always come and brief me on his conversations with the king, but it was not a happy circumstance for me.

Q: Was this a message that was being sent to you, too?

HARRISON: It may be. It certainly indicated that I was not in favor, and I was not in favor. That much is clear. Whether that was a reaction to me or whether it was a reaction to the general sense that the people I represented did not have the best interests of Jordan at heart. It may have been a combination of both. I had early in my study of foreign relations read Harold Nicolson's book on diplomacy and had been very influenced by his description of the professional diplomat as one who never makes a wink or nod when delivering his instructions no matter how ridiculous he thinks they are, that his job is to present them as forcefully as he can. I always did that. I didn't curry favor with my interlocutors in Jordan and I was often seen as abrupt and may have been abrupt in some cases because of that and not sympathetic. I guess it was true of me that I was seen as unsympathetic by the Jordanians, and overly sympathetic by my superiors in Washington, so I succeeded in pleasing neither side of my equation. Indeed, a little like the king during the war, I could please no one. In any case, that was the station chief. We embarked on that post war period and the issue changed very quickly from war to peace. I should say that we had taken a line against Saddam's attempt to link his invasion of Kuwait with the Palestinians, but there was no linkage, not transparently. It was a propaganda ploy on Saddam's part to appeal to the Arabs and particularly the Palestinians in Jordan, which he succeeded in doing. It just increased his popularity among them, but of course was a sham from the beginning and we pointed it out. We said that as soon as the war was over and this thing was disposed of we would reengage with the peace process very energetically. Of course, no one believed it and I must say that I didn't believe it either. The point of view from the Arabs was why would you do that, you have defeated the only Arab power with any military force and you have successfully co-opted the rest who will know that Iraq's memory will be long and therefore your protection will be necessary. You'll have the oil producers in your pocket and you won't care about the rest. Really, it's actually traditionally not a bad way of looking at matters in that instance, but of course the Bush administration, to their everlasting credit it seems to me, reacted in precisely the way that had not been predicted by that cynical theory, and engaged in a major way to reenergize the peace process - beginning with a series of Baker trips to the region and him hammering out the preconditions for what became the Madrid conference. And to break through Israeli resistance, to establish contacts with Palestinians that were necessary in order to do this. That included of course, contacts with the PLO and with Yasser Arafat. I should say in this context that Arafat had been if anything more compromised by the Gulf War than the king had been. He had had even fewer illusions about Saddam than the king, who I think had had too many at the beginning of the war, but Arafat had none. He knew that Saddam was not his friend, in fact would dispatch him with alacrity if he should ever fall within Saddam's control and he was careful never to do so. The PLO also took a very skeptical view of the invasion when it first took place, not least because they got a lot of money from the Kuwaitis and were not eager to see that source of funds cut off by someone who was so ill disposed to them as Saddam was. The rank and file were overwhelmingly pro-Saddam, and Arafat very quickly found that if you wanted to be the leader of the movement he had to be out front. So he took himself off to make his peace with Saddam Hussein, which he did with a famous hug in Baghdad, and it was broadcast to the world and of course, put himself in a very bad position with the coalition which was about depose Saddam Hussein. After the war when peace was the issue, we needed Arafat again just as we needed King Hussein again so in spite of all their transgressions they were going to be players in this process, and Baker was the one who went out and rehabilitated them. I think he did a wonderful job; a very no nonsense guy, Baker, with very few illusions about anything really and earnestly committed to the cause, as was the president who sent him of bringing some final settlement to the Middle East. I think the fact that Bush I eventually sacrificed his presidency on the altar of Middle East peace because it diverted his attention from some domestic priorities which had he paid more attention to them - had he sent Baker to Peoria instead of Palestine - I think he would have assured his reelection. It would have preserved the popularity that he won in the war, but he did the selfless thing, unexpectedly from a politician, I think always unexpected from a politician. It's always reassuring and encouraging when that happens. Baker began a series of trips out to the region, six of them in the end, and meetings with the king to set out the preconditions. That was really the mechanism by which the king was rehabilitated. In this context he was eager to be of help. Our interests were convergent. He, too, wanted a settlement of that issue which threatened him in a variety of ways, military and other which kept his own Palestinian population on constant boil - to bring domestic tranquility and consolidate his own legitimacy rule he needed there to be a Palestinian state on his border. Actually what he wanted was not a Palestinian state, but a Palestinian dependency, but still a settlement.

Q: The king, when had the king renounced control over the West Bank?

HARRISON: It had been what, eight years before?

Q: Anyway, it was, I mean it was something in that area.

HARRISON: '82. He had renounced his claims to the West Bank which of course arose out of the '48 war and which was a first step really to the notion of some kind of political entity. So that bunch of trips went on. My role in that was interesting. Secretary Powell is much beloved in the Foreign Service, and one of the reasons he is that when he arrives in a country as Baker did, he always rides to the hotel or to the palace for his meetings with the ambassador and consults with the ambassador. But, Secretary Baker always rode with the foreign minister. I actually didn't see much of him. I would shake his hand at the bottom of the ramp. I would sit through the meetings with him and through the lunch where I played my key role. I'll talk about that in a minute. Then he would ride to the airport with the foreign minister, I would shake his hand again and he would get back on the plane and that would be it. I would go about trying to find out what had happened in the daily sessions and waiting for any follow up instructions.

The only time I played a role was in the first meeting with took place in Aqaba and afterwards the king had said something about going ahead without Syrian support. Baker wanted to establish that that's what he really said. He sent me back to the palace to confirm that with the king before he took off and he waited on the runway. I was motorcaded over to the palace, talked to the king, motorcaded back, very dramatic, you know, motorcaded down the ramp at the airport. The whole crowd is waiting to say goodbye to Baker, run on up the steps and talk to Baker and tell him what the king said and then, just like the movies. But in fact, not much. Baker never seemed eager for my advice. Occasionally I would intrude it at the hotel or sometime when I could catch him in some formula like that, but often the visits were day visits, it didn't involve staying the night, so I didn't see much of him. One morning during this session he had made what I thought was a mistake in his approach to the Jordanians. The only way I could see him was to follow him to the bathroom and take the adjacent urinal and tell him what I thought he should do, which I did. To his credit, he took the advice, went back into lunch, changed the position and I thought, got the agreement, which I don't think he would have gotten otherwise. He took good advice if you could show your way into the urinal next to him, but it was not something he solicited.

Q: Was Dennis Ross did you feel was the person, did you feel it was Baker doing this pretty much straightforward on his own?

HARRISON: I think Ross was his key advisor, Kelly was not in his time. Djerejian was much more influential because the secretary chose Djerejian, whom he liked and respected, to be his assistant secretary. Kelly had been put there as a placeholder, so he had no impact on the process. I think it was Ross certainly and then Ross and Djerejian in later years in my time. I knew also Margaret Tutwiler was important in that process, a kind of informal traveling partner. In spite of not being fueled by a lot of my wisdom, I think he did a marvelous job. He did achieve this breakthrough which led to great confidence and the Jordanians were in that process rehabilitated, as was Arafat. Our relationships changed very rapidly because the king's willingness to be moderate on this subject, as he'd always been, and now had the additional interest of trying to repair the relationship with Washington and so that was really the thing of my last two years.

Q: Did you feel any coolness towards you even more I mean as an aftermath I'm talking from the Washington State Department?

HARRISON: Well, I'm not so sure. You know, Djerejian certainly had known him a long time and he was a more sympathetic figure in general than Kelly had been, but I don't think ambassadors as a whole are seen as part of any decision making process. It's probably a failure on their part since you know something about what's going on. But especially in Baker's State Department, where power was all concentrated, he did not use the State Department much as an advisory mechanism, and those few State Department officers who were brought into the inner circle were not eager to serve as conduits to other colleagues. There's nothing more retentive than a Foreign Service with any real information. I always thought, by the way, that the political appointees were much more forthcoming with information than my colleagues were. There was a sense of detachment; there wasn't so much hostility. I was sort of operating as an independent subsidiary of a multinational without much corporate supervision. I remember once back talking to Ed, each of the deputy assistant secretaries was supposed to be in contact with the group of embassies there, and they sort of divided up the area. I said I wasn't getting any feed back from Washington on anything and he said, "You know I instructed my deputies to be in contact." I didn't know who my deputy was. This had been in place for six months and I had no idea who was supposed to be my deputy. I didn't have, I guess the bottom line, a lot of contact. I sent my cables in and said whatever I was going to say in them and sometimes used for specific points to clarify points that Washington wanted to clarify with the palace, continued to pay my calls, report what the king had to say and chat him up. But the two major issues in that period actually ran counter to each. One was this peace process which I was describing, the other was sanctions enforcement against Iraq, which was very lax, but which every so often there would be a report and I'd be sent in doing this. One famous incident - actually not famous except to anyone who reads this account - Bob Gates came out for a visit. He used to come into Aqaba. They didn't like receiving Gates at the airport in Amman and in the course of his conversations - we had had an intercept from the border post in Jordan to the effect that a warning had come out from Amman that Americans were coming to the border, so tighten the operation up here until they're gone - Gates mentioned this. Not directly, but he alluded to this in conversation with the king. The next day there, was a thoroughgoing revamping of internal communications within Jordan. They realized from Gates' comment that their internal government communications had been compromised and they had changed them. We lost a huge resource in Jordan because of Gates' comment. We knew that the sanctions were enforced spottily at best for all kinds of economic reasons and also politic reasons for the Jordanians. They did as much as they thought was necessary to satisfy us, and they fielded my protests about this which were given on a regular basis both to the king and to the finance minister who is also the customs minister forever holding their feet to the fire on this. They were denying that this was going on and I always said the same thing. Whether or not it is going on, there is a perception in Washington that it's occurring with which you're going to have to deal. Yes, it was a difficult period and I was called upon to do a lot of carping which I felt duty bound to do in a serious way even though I realized that it wasn't going to have any substantive impact on the situation. Also, as the conduit for unhappiness on other issues. Human Rights reports are always something that the ambassador has to do, of course. So, I would have to say that my last two years there were much less eventful. The king, you know, I was out of that sort of lunchtime inner circle business. I was always received when I asked for appointments so I never lost access to him, but I lost that process of trying to, I guess, co-opt me into this sort of family environment that I'd had. My relations with the queen were always correct, my relations with the crown prince were virtually nonexistent for my last 18 months there, which wasn't necessarily fatal, but it was uncomfortable. There was one other incident with him, actually I was sent in when he was regent; the king was in Africa; to ask about a vote that they were going to make in the UN and I was told by the crown prince that they were going to vote with us even if the Syrians voted the other way. I forget what the issue was, which I duly reported to Washington. This was in my last year and USUN took this and waved it around at the UN to try to rally other Arab support, the Jordanians were going to vote with us. When the king came back, this was on a Friday I think, Thursday, it must have been, the king came back that weekend and on Monday the Jordanians voted against us in the UN causing great consternation in Washington.

One of my reactions to that was that - I also wanted to illustrate a point to my staff - was to send in a cable to Washington saying that this was my fault, as indeed it was. I should have confirmed the vote with the king. The crown prince was regent, he'd been very definite in his conversation with me. I suppose I could be excused for taking his word as the word of the government, but I realized the crown prince was not the final word on this and he might have been exceeding his authority only because it was the kind of vote that he would have supported, but which would have been a break in precedence for the Jordanians in general. Therefore, when the king came back I should have had the foresight and wisdom to confirm with him or at least to say in my initial cable that this should not be treated as a definitive Jordanian response. Neither of which thing I did. So, I sent a cable in saying that it was my impression that the Jordanians had not switched their position as they were being accused of doing, but that I had misreported it, that I should have done what I just described to you that I should have done. The blame was really mine, and that they had undoubtedly had a consistent position and I'd simply misreported what their position was. One of the results of this was to bring great credit on me and - to illustrate the point that I wanted to make to my staff - which was that the key principle of bureaucracy is to take the blame. It saves a lot of time and you get great credit for it and people forget you are to blame. I always like using the example of Janet Reno after the Waco tragedy, which is antic and abusive federal authority as one can imagine in retrospect, but afterwards she took the blame. "It's my fault", she said and became a heroine of the cabinet members. People forgot that it was her fault, she was to blame and it was stupid and she'd done it. My experience in bureaucracy had always been that when a mistake was made there was great casting about to find someone to blame for it and until that happened nothing could be done. I always thought that if the Soviets ever did launch a preemptive strike, that we'd still be debating whose fault this was when the weapons landed. It's a great waste of life to have these debates in which everyone tried to avoid being the person responsible, and feckless conversations. Your days dwindle and your life drains. So I had already adopted years before that habit of raising my hand and taking the blame.

Q: You mentioned your staff. Could you talk a little bit about the role of your truncated embassy during the war and after the war, the DCM, political secretary, economic secretary, how did they operate?

HARRISON: Actually I think it improved our reporting. I think we did a lot better job with 12 people than we ever did with 80 or whatever we had. Especially, too, the political section, we got down to one guy, David Hale, whose now is head of Israel affairs at State and in the whole bureaucratic process in the political section and I got better reporting. He was a good officer, not everybody in that section including the chief of it was very good. I got more reporting and it was better. I didn't think our reporting suffered at all, I would have just assumed going on with 12 people. We had everybody come streaming back in after the war, but I did not feel advantaged by any of that. It just caused more administrative problems. I've always thought that if you want better analysis don't increase the number of analysts, decrease the number of analysts. I think our experience during the war was an example of that. Even Washington commented on our reporting improving. On the economic side, I don't think it suffered at all. I don't think we had any particular insight into the economic situation in Jordan that went out to the world and we weren't doing much on the economic side of it. It seemed to me we could have been much more compacted all along.

Q: Did you find yourself running into an exodus of Americans during the war when it was cranking up? I know in Israel their consular section was also overwhelmed by the number of Israeli Americans whose patriotism seemed to move toward the stars and stripes at this particular time.

HARRISON: No, our problem was being overwhelmed by Iraqis once the embassy in Baghdad closed down. The consular services for Iraqis. We were basically inundated with Iraqis who wanted various services and we didn't have the staff to deal with it. We didn't deal with it very well. We could have done better, but I think that we also weren't given any assets to it, so we were at cross purposes with the division of consular affairs for a while. I even sent my DCM down to be consular general for a while to run that operation because I didn't have confidence in the woman who was in charge of it. We were seen in Washington as having done too little too late on that subject. That was the major event. The other thing that I think all ambassadors have to do in that circumstance is to provide some leadership to the American community because there were a lot of Americans in the community. Even the diplomatic community had also looked to us for leadership. My wife was constantly being asked about her plans for departure because our departure was going to be used by a lot of different countries as a signal for the departure of their dependents, too. There were few of the ambassadors in town who had access and therefore had access to me, but not to the palace. I was kind of a clearinghouse for them to give them something to report, come and talk to me. I saw a lot of my diplomatic colleagues in that period. The British was the exception of course because of their traditional ties and they had a very good man there, Tony Reeves in my early days and sent in not such a good man after him, but Tony was one of the top people. Besides the British not many people have good information, so we were sort of the focal point for that, too. I did some meetings with the American civilians, had those organized to tell them what our apprehensions were about the situation and so forth, keep them apprized and also met with the local employees a lot, so that we could try to keep a lid on the situation.

Q: How did your Foreign Service Nationals perform during this particular time?

HARRISON: They performed very well. I had no complaints on that score at all. Of course, these were very good jobs and they were eager to keep them, but there was more of a problem for them when the feelings in the stream are running so high among the employees. They were loyal and efficient and we counted on them when the Americans left of course, more than usual. All my bodyguards were Jordanians and my drivers. My bodyguards were never called on to be bodyguards, which I was thankful for. They never gave me a lot of confidence. Every so often there would be a particular threat which someone would pick up and we'd send a detail out from Washington, secret service people to enhance my detail and for a few days they'd be very much more professional than when those guys left; they weren't good. I'm not terribly convinced that they were going to take a bullet for me. Luckily that was never put to the test. A lot of restrictions on my movements. I always had to travel with a follow car and essentially six bodyguards. We couldn't walk around. We couldn't move intrusively. We always showed up with a great fanfare and so there was no privacy for us outside of the house. We didn't have too much ability to see. We did anyway, but going downtown or going out to the countryside, was always a huge enterprise and not much fun. So, not as enjoyable from that perspective as it might have been under other circumstances.

Really we come through that period to the end of my tenure of '93. I wasn't able to go to Madrid. I was supposed to go, we were all invited; all the ambassadors in the region. On the way to Madrid I was in a collision in an embassy car outside Jerusalem and ended up in the hospital and watched Madrid from my knees on my TV set at Hadassah Hospital. In fact I had gone to the foreign minister, as there were no direct flights from Jordan. The Jordanian airlines in those days had to fly outside Israeli airspace, so it was a difficult thing to fly to Madrid from there, but I said, well, give me a seat on your airplane and he said no, we couldn't have the American ambassador getting off our airplane. I had to go to Ben Gurion. I took a Jordanian embassy car, a U.S. embassy car down to the bridge and got in an embassy car and got up to supposedly the airport to hop on a plane to Madrid. This would have been '91, in the summer I think, when Madrid was. There was a lady, a Soviet Jew as it turned out, who on this ring road around Jerusalem, a four lane undivided highway lost control and hit us head on. I ended up having to be operated on and was in the hospital for eight days and then in King David for another week before I could go back. I went back to Jordan and then should have gone back to the United States and taken a rest and forever blame myself for not doing that, actually went back to work. I looked awful. I had all kinds of scabs on my head because it had hit the front seat and it was really ugly. I looked like something out of a John Carpenter movie and beyond that I had lost 20 pounds. I'm not a fat man to begin with and I'd lost a lot of weight. I was bent over because I had all this abdominal surgery and also subject to abdominal spasms that could come on at any time including in meetings with various people. It was absolute folly to go back, but I did. I went back to work and sort of healed up on the job back in Amman. Then I guess it took three, four or five months and then I sort of went on with things. That was the reason I did not get to see the Madrid conference except secondhand. It was complete folly. I try to reconstruct now my state of mind at the time what I would have done. Absolutely one of the most antic things I did in my time.

Q: Well, then how did this reprieval recover then?

HARRISON: In the end there was a final trip to Washington before I left and the king coming back. As usual I was not on the plane. The only time I was ever on the plane was actually the first time, two days after I arrived. After that I had to fly by other means. I was in a meeting that he had. This was a new administration. He met with Clinton for the first time and then with Les Aspen who was briefly secretary of defense, but Collin Powell was there. The king was trying to explain his problem in building any kind of credible military, but not doing a very good job of it. I was sitting on the Jordanian side of the table for this meeting and which I think represented the defense department view if not in general, at least to me, so I kind of took over for the king and explained the Jordanian position, what the modern fighters cost, why they couldn't afford them, all of these things, which in fact I think meant that I left on a good note. The king was very grateful for that and we parted on good terms. I got the usual awards and so forth. I had by then come to be on very good terms with the foreign minister who had been so hostile at the beginning of my tour, but gave me a nice dinner when I left. I had been kind of accepted as you might accept an old, but familiar mole. I wasn't particularly liked and they would rather not have had that mole, but you know, after a while you get used to it. We all parted on good terms. I had decided in my last year to retire. I was going to be 50 soon after my departure from Amman and at that time the State Department was trying to shed as many senior officers as it could among other things because there was a congressional injunction coming about the number of senior officers they could have. They had the other problem of their agreement with AFSA, which gave me a certain sure tenure after I had achieved the rank of OC in the process. I'd become a senior officer, I had 14 years I think, by agreement they could not get rid of me except by low ranking people for 14 years and that would have been up in 1999. They were eager to shed anybody they could; especially anybody who'd had an embassy. The first sign of this, I came back in the spring of my last year and I had a meeting scheduled with the director general, but he had a guy to soften you up in those days. I was sitting out there with this guy who later became an ambassador.

Q: Who was this?

HARRISON: I'm trying to remember his name. He was whatever deputy, too.

Q: Who was the director general?

HARRISON: The director general was Perkins.

Q: Ed Perkins.

HARRISON: Ed Perkins, yes, with whom I had no particular in, so I had no personal basis on which to appeal to Perkins for a new job. I was sitting out with Larry somebody who is his softening up person and he said you know, he was telling me all sorts of stories about these ambassadors who came back and wanted to be country directors and didn't I think that that was hilarious that they would think such an exalting position in the Department should be available to guys like that. The presumption of them, the clear message being. The Democrats were in. My record had been with the Republicans. I don't know what their final judgment would have been, but they would have felt some obligation to see me right after Amman, but the Democrats didn't. They're the new leadership at State. Warren Christopher, who I suspected had already died at that point, anyway kept moving, but only minimally. He came out. There were a couple of visits by Christopher, too. There was a man who you would not want to have a beer with and as far as I knew he never noticed me at all. There was no resource to call on and they were treating some people very shabbily. One of the techniques they were sort of humiliating people out at that point because obviously people wanted to stay, they wanted to shed them and they can't do it legally. One of the techniques was to send you down to Freedom of Information or off to the historian's office. There was an officer named Jack Moreska who preceded me in EUR, he was the political guy in RPM and had been well thought of for a long time, who was in this situation and said he wouldn't go down to Freedom of Information. They gave him an ultimatum and he resigned. Some of the people went and stayed around for awhile and then resigned, but that was not a happy process for me. I knew I was going to have to walk the halls for a while and didn't want to do that. I was probably overly pessimistic about my prospects at that time and I'd also had the experience of talking to people like Nick Veliotes, who had come through as a visitor with the previous assistant secretary ambassador in Egypt. During one lunch he discoursed on the theme that they screw everybody in the end, using Art Hartman and himself as examples. I always viewed the State Department, the Foreign Service bureaucracy, the personnel system in any case is an adversary, as it always had been. They were the people who were trying to keep you from getting the job that someone wanted you in, and that you wanted to have. They were people to avoid. I mean the last thing you wanted was to go before a panel without it all having been wired ahead of time. God knows what they'd do. After mid-career I never did, I never thankfully had to be paneled in anything where they were actually going to decide my fate in panel, but I was suddenly naked and alone on the process. I had been offered a chair at the Air Force Academy for a lot of money and my wife wanted to go home, was tired of moving, so I made the decision to retire. I did in fact retire three months after I was legally entitled to. I was 50 in 1993; somewhat before they started paying $25,000 to encourage people to do what I did for free. As I say, I think I was overly pessimistic about that. I could have probably stayed in and it turned out that they had purged too many senior officers, the State Department personnel system by definition never doing things right. So, they ran short in the late '80s and were bringing people back in on new contracts and so forth to try and make up the gap. Also, they ran short of junior officers, ran short of everybody, just absolutely.

Q: Right now, we're talking at the Foreign Service Institute, and they have courses of 100 junior officers coming in one after the other to make up for the shortages that resulted from the cuts.

HARRISON: Absolutely bizarre and it's been true I think, one of my abiding memories of the Foreign Service is that they never got it right. They always had all these intelligent people. There was a constant stream of panels, advisory boards, from my first day in the Foreign Service to my last they were always tinkering with the system. It never was right. I used to tell junior officers at the end of my career about the beginning when they asked you what you wanted to do, you'd tell them and you'd get your assignment. Then the bidding process came in, supposedly to address the inequities of the system. What it actually grew into was this great body of theology. I remember the first bidding instruction cables which were a page and a half long and the last ones which were 50 pages long, by which time the whole science of bidding had grown up on how you could game the bidding system and everybody gaming like crazy. It had absolutely no impact on what it had been designed to address and that is, that some people were more equal in this system than others. Some could avoid all this nasty requirement and get their assignments wired, and some had to go through the system and that usually it was the best that got to avoid it, and the mediocre that had to go through it, and that any leveling system that you put into place was going to be avoided with equal efficiency.

How much I told them I long for the old days when you didn't have to spend a year in maneuvering to get reassigned as you had to do, as these poor people have to do. Looking at the whole assignment sheet and never knowing which assignments were real and which were simply pro forma because somebody was already slated for that job by the system, but that simply was an informal, rather than formal process. And how, if you wanted to bid for jobs like deputy in Jerusalem, because you knew that there were going to be 50 or 60 bidders on that job that were better qualified than you, but you needed an out of area job and didn't want to go out of area. So you bid on something you knew you weren't going to get and you embed the bid you want and all sorts of bids that have something defective about them. It's just an incredibly baroque process, but it is not productive of anything except a lot of wasted time by people who should be doing other things in my view. I was also, I think I should record for posterity, always given the impression from my first day on the Foreign Service to my last day that I was superfluous, somehow an encumbrance on the system. I was told as a junior officer that now they tell junior officers they will never achieve anything. It is sort of a regular part of their briefing, that they'll never go anywhere and it'll be years before you have any responsibility, if then. I was told I wanted to be a political officer, too many of those. I wanted to be in European affairs, got too many of those guys. I was male and white, too many of those people. I had an embassy and therefore, too many of those old ambassadors running around. At every stage I was given the impression by the system that the bestowing on me of a job was actually a favor that the system was doing because for some unexplained reason I was their responsibility and that if I wanted a good job I was on my own to get it. I remember reading with great envy Kennan's memoirs about how he had been brought in by this wise old man who oversaw all the junior people and told that his future was determined. He was going to be sent to Latvia for Russian training and he was going to become a Russian specialist and in the fullness of time he was going to emerge as a leading figure in the State Department. All of this was foretold him and then done.

Nothing like that existed in my time and I'm sure exists even less now. It was all haphazard. I always felt that every new job was like applying for a new job. If you were to go from IBM to Compaq you were in the same industry, but you better treat it like a job application. You better use whatever contacts you had, you better ask for anything that you wanted and don't let the system do it. Go ask people, don't mind being rebuffed if that's necessary. I was rebuffed a good deal before I built a reputation in the business, but treat it like it's a new job every time which is what you have to do. The result of that is that the old sense of continuity in the career, the sense that there's an organization which has an interest in you as a loyal member and shows loyalty to you, all that has evaporated. There is none of it, part of it because I think there was such an effort to bring political people in at more and more junior levels, part of because there was this awful leveling movement, this half brain social notion that everybody in the State Department should be equal, that we had to show GS employees that they had equal access to high jobs in the Department - which has been carried on and even strengthened by the current secretary, to the point that the designation of Foreign Service Officer is all but disappeared for any practical purpose. I think it has destroyed an organization, which at one time was elite, thought by itself to be elite and in fact elite. If you're going to send people off to pestholes to do meaningless jobs of showing the flag for the good old U.S. of A. you had damn well better tell them that they're an elite or they're not going to be willing to do it.

Q: What year did you retire in?

HARRISON: '93.

Q: '93. So, you went, I mean just to complete it.

HARRISON: I went to the Air Force Academy as the John M. Molen professor of strategic studies, for a year and then I launched a business enterprise and again came into contact with the Jordanians including the current king who had set up some deals for my company. We produced security vehicles. In fact, I am the only Foreign Service officer who ever retired and actually produced something other than advice. We actually had a manufacturing concern which we built to $2 million, $2 ï¿½ million annual gross and on which I lost my shirt. It was awful, leaving me in 2000 in desperate need of peddling my skills, such as they are, which I did in Washington because that's the only place where they were appreciated and was very fortunate to be hired by Ashland Defense University and their fledgling Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies as Dean in which having a Ph.D. did not hurt. I did mention, I think, my year of leave without pay I took to complete my Ph.D. and lot of "all but dissertation" Foreign Service Officers, but we, my wife and I made the decision to take a year out to complete it and it stood me in very good stead. I've been there for now 18 months and will probably be leaving now that some of the financial pressure has been relieved and go back to our home in Colorado where I again have been offered a job by the Air Force Academy and which has at three points in my career been home to me. The people I met there when I was originally was there in the '70s are much more profoundly part of my wider intellectual family and professional family even though my contact with them was much briefer than my Foreign Service colleagues are or ever were. I think in general there are several Foreign Service Officers I've met for whom I have a lot of admiration and many whose talent I am in awe of, very talented people. In general I think it is a more cohesive community and a more admirable one, the military, than in our business, and certainly it has proven to me. I've become an old hand at the Air Force Academy if I do go back in the spring it will be 26 years since the first time I came there and 12 years since the second time. In terms of loyalty, the guy hiring me now is a cadet I taught my first year at the academy. I taught him political philosophy and he must remember. He's having me back. In many ways that whole experience has been much more satisfying to me and professionally fulfilling. I have a great admiration for cadets, some of whom are skuzzy people, and many of whom, 20% now are brought in on athletic scholarships, a great scandal, but the best of whom are as good as anybody will ever be, both morally and intellectually. Absolutely outstanding people and it's been a great pleasure to see them, some of them rise in ranks and it gives me great confidence in our military for whom I have great respect. I think it is the mainstay of the country. I only wish that the State Department had some of the same qualities as the military services do.

In fact, one of my acts in departing was to write a letter to, which I will make the epitaph of my presentation to you, to the State Department Bulletin. I have been with a friend of mine who just received in the mail a plaque, a wooden thing with a brass plate commemorating his 37 years as a Foreign Service Officer. There was a letter accompanying it from somebody in the bureaucracy somewhere an assistant to somebody. It just showed up unannounced. In my letter I said that it was the sort of thing that would be given to you by the Kiwanis for helping with the paper drive. In this case the years of service were misstated. It was one of the standard texts, fill in the blank things with his name which they got right. His years of service they got wrong. I talked to another friend who had gotten a similar plaque after 28 years, but it had come apart in the mail. The brass piece was loose so he had put felt on the back and he was using the brass piece as a coaster. I said in my letter that it put me in mind of the many retirement ceremonies that I'd been to for military officers, no matter their rank, which had always been elaborate procedures of validating service. You've probably been to them. I think everybody's been. The military does this very well. For senior officers they all but throw the wife on the funeral pyre. A colleague now, Admiral Ziegler, a two star admiral, they brought an Aegis cruiser down to Tampa for his retirement ceremony because he had been a commander of one. My retirement ceremony consisted of handing my security badge to the guard as I left the building for the last time and I said that the contrast shows the way the Pentagon treats their departing officers, shows the respect with which they hold them. I said at the end of that letter so does the way the State Department handles this. I absolutely believe this as the result of my experience. The activity is wonderful and the people I have met in my career and worked with and the situations I have been in and the places where I have brushed up against history are irreplaceable. I'm happy and fortunate to have had the opportunity and only wish I had been able to have it without the necessity of being associated with the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, all right, then we'll stop at that point. Great.

End of interview