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

VINCENT W. BROWN

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Q: This is an interview with Vincent W. Brown who served AID for how many years?

BROWN: Twenty -six, including the Marshall plan.

Q: When did you retire?

BROWN: December 1976.

Early Years and Education

Q: Let's start off by hearing a little bit about where you're from, where you grew up and anything about your early family life that you want to put on the record. Then we'll go to your education.

BROWN: I was born and raised in the San Francisco area of California. My parents were both born in California -one in San Francisco the other in Los Angeles. My father, who died when I was two, was a journalist. My mother was a primary school teacher in San Francisco's North Beach. I was raised modestly during the depression years of the 1930s in a suburb of San Francisco. All my summers and winter vacations after I became a teenager were with my paternal grandmother and uncle who lived in West Los Angeles. I mention this because my grandfather and grandmother were great travelers and had been to Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s. Their home was full of art objects they had purchased abroad. In 1939, before World War II they were very much in favor of strong US support for the British war effort against Hitler, and I was taken to many fund raisers by my grandmother.

Q: What about your education through high school?

BROWN: I went to public school in a small town, down the Peninsula (South San Francisco). While the school was small (junior and senior high school combined was about 500), and my graduating class was around 30 students, the quality of teaching was surprising good. In addition to the basics, the high school had strong art, drama and music departments, and my high school Latin and English teachers were outstanding. I played percussion instruments, flute, and violin. We used to go to the San Francisco Opera (for $1.00) every year during the season. I graduated from high school in December 1941, just after Pearl Harbor and our country's entry into WWII. I went to the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) for a year before joining the Navy on May 11, 1943.

World War II Years

Q: What was your experience in the military like during WWII?

BROWN: I spent the first 18 months in the Navy in various schools (some at University level) learning how to become an electronic technician trained to repair radar, underwater sound, radio and other electronic equipment. This included three months at New London, Conn. learning about radar and sonar devices specially made for submarines.

In 1944/45 I spent three war patrols on a submarine called the USS Gabilan (ss 252) in the South Pacific with patrols in the Java sea, Philippines, and Japan - off the entrance to Tokyo bay. Our submarine sunk seven ships including one cruiser, and rescued 22 of our aviators. In addition to depth charging by the Japanese on various occasions, we were shelled by our own destroyers. My navy submarine experience included my first introduction to life overseas. I spent six weeks at a primitive base at Milne Bay on the island of New Guinea waiting for transport to Brisbane, Australia. After three months at the submarine repair base in Brisbane, I joined the submarine, Gabilan. Later on, I spent two months in Perth in West Australia after the first war patrol, and in the Royal Hawaiian hotel in Honolulu after the second patrol.. I enjoyed my Navy experiences abroad thoroughly. Our boat was off the coast of Japan in 1945 when the atomic bombs were dropped, and the war in the Pacific ended soon afterwards. I was honorably discharged from the Navy in March of 1946.

Post WWII Education

Q: Tell me a bit about your educational experience after WWII.

In the fall of 1946, I returned to UCLA along with many other GIs. I was fortunate in that I had lodging at my fraternity house (Sigma Alpha Epsilon), and my Aunt and Uncle lived not far from the campus.Having the GI bill to cover tuition, and books plus a stipend of $75 a month to live on was a tremendous help. My almost three years of military service provided more than enough help to complete my undergraduate degree (Bachelor of Science) from the newly organized school of business administration, now known as UCLA's John Anderson School of Management. In addition to my academic work, I was one of the editors on the campus newspaper (The Daily Bruin), played in the marching band, worked twenty hours a week at the registrar's office, and was Vice President of my fraternity. It was a happy, busy time.

When I graduated from UCLA in the summer of 1949, along with two friends (also graduating seniors), we decided to borrow $500 each from our families, and go to Europe for six months - before settling down to our respective careers. I guess we were the avant garde of the "world travelers" who entered on the scene some years later.

Touring Europe as a Student in 1949

Q: I imagine that Europe was still in the early stages of recovery from the war. How did you find things?

My friend, Bob Arnold, and I left Los Angeles for Washington, DC by Greyhound bus in mid August, 1949. (The third member of our group, Bob Berdahl, had already left for England) After checking out Washington, DC, we headed for Montreal, Canada where we picked up a British austerity vessel headed for Birmingham England. Accommodations and food were Spartan, but we didn't mind. When we arrived in England we bought bicycles, and toured around Wales, Stratford on Avon, London, etc. for a month. The UK was still under rationing, and we were issued ration cards. Most of the damage from the German bombing raids had been cleaned up, but vacant lots in down-town areas still showed. Reconstruction was just beginning.

We then took a small ship from Harwick, England across the channel to Denmark, and bicycled across it. We stored the bicycles in Copenhagen and hitchhiked and rode trains through Sweden, Norway and back. We stayed mostly in youth hostels, and sometimes overnight in jails at no cost. Everyone was very accommodating and many shared their meager rations with us.

We then left Copenhagen for Koblenz, Germany via Bremen. We cycled down the Rhine Valley. It was devastated. In Koblenz not a building was standing, and we slept in the basement of what had once been a 15 story hotel. Everyone was very nice to us - especially since we were on bicycles as the population was. We did not find any German citizens who felt personally responsible for the war or the holocaust. In fact, many thought that the problem was not due to Hitler himself, but to the bad influence of his advisors. By this time it was early November, and we had frost on our eyelids as we cycled down the Rhine. We were anxious to see Paris, so we bought 3rd class passenger tickets on the train from Koblenz to Paris for ourselves and put our bikes in the baggage car. It was a long but pleasant trip though Luxembourg and northern France.

We fell in love with Paris immediately. We stayed in a little hotel called "Mon Reve" (My dream). There was no heat in Paris during the winter of 1949, and we almost froze to death. I remember sitting up in bed trying to keep warm, typing letters home wearing gloves and my old navy fur jacket. We liked it so much in spite of the cold that we decided to stay on and see Paris in the spring.

I signed up at the Alliance Franï¿½aise to learn French under the GI bill, and we all applied for work at the main offices of the Marshall plan which were on the Place de la Concorde in the Hotel Talleyrand. It took considerable persistence to get hired, and also for our security clearance to go through. In the interim we had time to visit the Louvre, go to the theater, concerts and opera, and see most of Paris's fabulous museums which were just beginning to be refurbished after the six years of neglect during WWII. It was cold work since none of the museums were heated. It was easy to get around since the Metro (subway) and buses were fully operational. Many Parisians still used their bicycles. Hot water was in short supply, and our hotel rooms had no showers and the toilet was down the hall. We went to the public bath twice a week to bathe. We usually had to wait in line, and took books to read as we waited our turn. All in all it was fabulous.

My first job for the US government in Paris was as a security guard, protecting NATO secrets. As a WWII veteran, I was supposedly qualified. I was very uneasy loading my "38" revolver, and unsure what I would have done if I had encountered an intruder. After a few weeks one of our guards shot himself, and they wisely decided to replace the civilian guards with U. S. marines. A wise decision, in my view.Almost immediately after the marines arrive, in the late Spring of 1950, I was hired by the Economic Cooperation Administration's regional office based in Paris (OSR). I believe Paul Porter was in charge.

The Marshall Plan Years (1950-1957)

Q: You were hired by the Marshall Plan in Paris in 1950. What aspects of the plan did you work on?

I spent a total of seven short years at the Marshall Plan's overseas headquarters of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the Office of the Special Representative (OSR), Place de la Concorde, Paris. I was hired as a Technical Assistance specialist working for the Marshall plan on technical assistance and productivity activities. The name of the agency changed over the years beginning with the Economic Cooperation Administration and its successor agencies - the International Cooperation Administration, the Mutual Security Administration, and the Foreign Operations Administration (1950-1957).

A.Technical Assistance and International Cooperation in Europe

Little did I know when I joined ECA in June 1950 that this was the beginning of a career that was to span more than a quarter of a century. My first job was Technical Assistance Specialist in the Technical Assistance section of the Industry Division, OSR, Paris. I was recruited by Scott L. Behoteguy, Deputy head of the TA Section, who went on to become a Office Director in Washington, DC and a USAID Director. Our offices were in the Hotel Talleyrand at the corner of the Rue de Rivoli and the Place de la Concorde. The U. S. Embassy to France was on the opposite corner of the Place. Our office was a large room filled with desks, chairs and telephones which were constantly ringing with calls from all over Europe. My job was to process applications for technical assistance from Southern Europe, and my co-worker, Norman Schoonover (who is retired and lives in Paris), processed applications for Northern Europe. He also went on to become a USAID Director. Our jobs were to see that the applications coming from the Marshall plan countries met the Administration's criteria for technical assistance. The criteria was pretty vague, so almost any reasonable sounding technical assistance proposal was approved. The head of the Technical Assistance Section was John T. Quinn (retired from ITT) and the Division head Mr. Gihlcrest, had been head of a chemical processing plant. Many of the professional staff at the regional office (OSR) were from the private sector or on loan from other government agencies.

In September, I was reassigned and became the Technical Assistance Specialist for OEEC Operations, and was assigned the responsibility for the development and implementation of an effective OEEC Technical Assistance program. The OEEC (Organization for European Economic Cooperation) was the international organization set up by the 17 nations receiving Marshall plan aid in order to divide it up, assign priorities between countries, do economic analysis, etc. Its headquarters was at the Chateau de la Muette near the Bois de Boulogne in Paris. Its successor agency exists today as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). While Congress approved up to 29 billion dollars, only 13 billion were spent on the Marshall Plan - all the same, a considerable sum in the '40s and '50s.

As part of this exercise the governing council of the OEEC had set up a Technical Assistance Group (TAG) to coordinate and organize this multi-country activity. My job was to work with TAG in developing an annual TA program and budget and to secure approval from OSR. I was also the focal point in OSR and principal coordinator for all OEEC Technical Assistance projects. This activity was so new that based on operating experience I was to suggest standard operating policies and procedures. The TAG consisted of representatives from the OEEC countries, and the meetings were translated into French and English. I spoke for the U. S. at most meetings.

Q: What was the thinking behind setting up the multi-national technical assistance activity within the framework of the OEEC.

BROWN: In the 10 years since WWII was started in Europe in 1939, most countries had fallen behind the US in critical technical, social and applied research fields. Both the national and multi-national TA programs at that time were designed to help the European countries close this gap. International Conferences and seminars in selected fields were held in Europe and the US. Consultant teams were provided from the US. Some of the fields we worked in were: Metallurgy, Chemistry, Banking, Marketing, Labor/Management, Productivity and Applied Research. However, the applied research was carried under the aegis of a separate subcommittee that I also monitored. I arranged for representatives from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), National Science Council (NSC), and the Department of Commerce's Office of Technical Services (OTS) to attend the research committee subcommittee meetings.

While the major theme was to develop ways of coordinating information, to avoid duplication of government financed applied research, I believe our unique US contribution to Europe was the introduction of the concept of non-profit Applied Research Organizations which were jointly financed by Universities and major private sector companies such as Stanford Research, Southwest, Batelle, etc. In the early days, these organizations were supported in good part by contracts from US government Departments and Federal agencies such as: Defense, Agriculture, Transport, etc. We fielded technical assistance teams manned by the Directors of these institutes, who went around the major European countries showing member governments, universities and industry how to set up Applied Research Institutes. As a result organizations were set up in Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands and the UK, I believe.

(I'd like to insert a parenthesis here. In 1954, a big event occurred in my life. I decided to get married to a Parisian girl, Franï¿½oise Durand. It was necessary to get permission from both my Paris and Washington offices. Franï¿½oise received a thorough going over from our Embassy security services, as did I from the French security office in retaliation. But we both passed with flying colors. We had a few anxious moments waiting for Washington's approval which finally came in a telegram signed by Harold Stassen (then Administrator of the Mutual Security Agency) which read "Permission granted for Vincent Brown to marry". We were married in a civil ceremony by a communist mayor in a suburb of Paris (Issy les Moulineaux) on April 12, 1954. I'm pleased to report that we are still married today.)

While most of the Marshall Plan activities were either finished or beginning to wind down by 1954, that year the technical assistance "transfer of know-how" section got a new lease on life. Congress passed an amendment to the foreign assistance act called the Benton/Moody amendment which called for a specific program to assist the European countries and the OEEC in improving its labor/management relations and subsequently improve its productivity. The legislation also provided the funds to go with it. Improved management/labor relations in Europe, and sharing the US experience to facilitate this improvement, was very much the focus of these activities which lasted until 1957.

One of the big activities designed to implement the Benton/Moody act (1954/55) was the establishment of a European Productivity Agency under the OEEC. By this time our little Technical Assistance section in the Industry division of OSR had grown to a full division - The Productivity and Technical Assistance Division (PTAD) was headed by Everett Bellows and Don MacPhail. A lawyer from Oregon, headed up the OEEC section, his name was Hugh Smith. He was tapped to develop the charter for the European Productivity Agency (EPA). A young officer on the PTAD staff, Eugene Abrams (who stayed on with ECA and its successor agencies and eventually became a USAID Director), was selected to write the first draft of the charter, and did the detail work with the delegates to the OEEC to bring it to fruition. At the national level, many of the bilateral programs benefitted from this legislation and created National Productivity Centers in their respective capitals. My OEEC technical assistance activities were integrated into the European Productivity Agency, and the Technical Assistance group was replaced by the OEEC Productivity and Technical Assistance Committee.

B.The European Productivity Agency

Q: Why was a European Productivity Agency needed? What was its role?

BROWN: The US initiated EPA was one more tool in the attempt to convince European businesses to adopt modern labor/management techniques, management strategies and marketing techniques. As mentioned above this work had been started bilaterally, and most European countries had already set up National Productivity Centers including Iceland. The EPA provided a forum for the Center Directors to meet, exchange information, organize inter-European teams, etc.

European management in the early "50s looked very much as it had in the depression years of the 30's. While the US had made great strides in labor management relations and in the whole area of marketing and advertising, little had changed in Europe. Initially, there was great skepticism on the part of European management, particularly, the French patronat; however, once they got into it they perceived the benefits and were eager to know more. Lasting relationships were established with private US management groups and labor unions. Under the EPA numerous international conferences, teams to the US, consultant teams, information exchange, etc. were organized.

In a broader perspective, European economists, political scientists and intellectuals in general were beginning to think about a European Common Market, a "United States of Europe". The multi-nation Coal and Steel Community had already been initiated. The OEEC's European Productivity Organization (EPA) was very much part of this thrust.

Over the 1950s the names of our aid agency changed a number of times. The ECA had become the Mutual Security Agency (MSA), which was transformed into the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), and by 1956 it was called the International Cooperation Administration (ICA), and didn't become the Agency for International Development until after President Kennedy's inauguration. I believe that initially Congress hoped that the assistance effort would disappear except for a little Latin America style "Point IV" once the main objectives of the Marshall Plan were achieved by the mid-'50s. However, by 1957, it was becoming clear that foreign assistance was not going to disappear, but would have its focus on assisting developing countries - or "less-developed countries" as they were called in those early years. As a result a more permanent and rational system of assigning personnel was instituted.

A personal anecdote which comes to mind. Bill Kontos, later USAID Director and Ambassador, who was with ICA Personnel in those days, came out in early 1957, and informed me that I had been working in Paris for seven years - far too long! I replied that I had no objections to moving , but had just not been able to bring myself to apply for a transfer.In light of my Paris office's recommendation that I be sent to a francophone country to take advantage of my fluent French, the Washington bureaucracy with its usual insight, proposed that I be sent to Liberia, an English speaking country. Fortunately, I was rescued by Don Mac Phail, the past head of the Productivity and Technical Assistance Division in Paris, who by this time had been named Deputy Mission Director in Tunisia (a francophone country). I was transferred to Tunis in September 1957 as an Assistant Program Officer.

Tunisia Right After Independence (1957-59)

Q: What was the ambiance like in Tunisia when you arrived?

BROWN: Tunisia had just won its independence from France. The situation was still tense when we arrived. French troops remained in the country. We were housed in a charming villa in a suburb of Tunis called Gammarth. In order to go to work every day we had to go through a number of road blocks manned by Tunisian soldiers. Fortunately, after about six months the French soldiers were withdrawn without major incident.

The Tunisians were very friendly, and easy to work with. Our major contact was the Planning Ministry. The French remained very much involved in the operation of the Tunisian government and many of the technical positions were filled by French civil servants until Tunisians could be trained to take over.

Q: Given the circumstances, what kind of a " development program" did the Mission run. What activities were assigned to you?

BROWN: USOM (United States Operating Mission) as it was called in those days, ran a development program of useful activities in areas in which the new Tunisian government could use help. It was not an integrated development program as we know them today. The major fields were agriculture, education, and public administration. The French were very much the number one donor with their position further reinforced by French nationals placed in operating positions within the Tunisian government ministries. We cooperated informally, but discreetly with the French, since the Tunisians were deadly serious about controlling their own destiny once they were independent. As assistant program officer I performed the usual program office duties: preparing budgets, helping design projects, preparing study missions to the US, as well as preparing reports on our aid program. In addition, I was given two additional responsibilities that I enjoyed immensely.

The first involved the launching and execution of the Work Relief Program (the first of its kind). It was designed as a field test to see if it was feasible to use "food for work" - in this case sacks of surplus US wheat.Working with the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, we developed a number of pilot projects in the field (which were later replicated throughout the country) which employed farm labor to do simple projects involving manual labor - such as terracing, dikes or small earthen dams for water spreading, improvement of local markets, simple farm to market roads connecting villages with the main roads so that the export of farm products was facilitated. The local farmers were paid in surplus food furnished by the USDA. The government put up the money for the simple tools, and paid the local supervisors, and record keepers. (I don't think we had PL 480 yet.) Tunisia is a small country, and the infrastructure in roads and communications was relatively well developed, so I visited regularly most of the rural projects, met with local organizers, etc.Reporting was simple - numbers of workers employed, kilometers of rural road improved, number of water spreading dikes installed, local markets improved, etc. I don't recall any estimates in terms of additional olive trees planted, more wheat grown, etc.; but after the first year we could see the impact of these simple activities on village life.

My second special assignment was to work with USIS to assure that our developmental activities were reported to the Tunisian people on the radio and in the local press. The USIS staff was very energetic and had good relations with their Tunisian counterparts.The Tunisians were very cooperative and our assistance effort was easily publicized and well received by the people.

Our USOM Director was a political appointee - Admiral Elliott Strauss (retired). Although Strauss was new at the development business, he was a fine individual and very intelligent. With a very experienced Don MacPhail (Bureau of the Budget and the Marshall Plan) as the Deputy the USOM ran smoothly. My direct boss and head of the Economic Analysis and Program Division, was Charles Breecher, an economist of great talent and imagination. I learned a great deal about government operations from both of them.I worked in French in all my contacts with the Tunisian administration. Even at the village level most officials spoke French; Arabic was not essential.

We loved Tunisia, but on completion of my two years there, I had been overseas about ten years, and the Agency decided that I needed a tour in Washington, DC. I had never served at headquarters, and I approached my US assignment with some trepidation. However, the US experience provided solid foundation for future overseas work - i.e. learning realistically what it takes to get things done and how to do them in the Washington setting.

Washington, DC - First Assignment to Headquarters (1960-1962)

Q: What were the first impressions you and your family had on arrival in Washington, DC? Was it difficult?

BROWN: We arrived on a Friday night, and we were put up in a apartment/hotel at the corner of Wisconsin and Connecticut. By this time we had two small boys (Chris - 3 years old - who was born in Paris and Greg - 1 year - who was born in Carthage, Tunisia). We liked the looks of the city, but we knew practically no one in Washington, DC. This was the first time that Franï¿½oise had lived in the US except for short visits on home leave. The following Monday morning I headed off for Johns Hopkins School for International Affairs, and Franï¿½oise started looking for a place for us to live. It was really tough going for Franï¿½oise. When I wasn't away at school, I was at home studying. Finally after several weeks of looking Franï¿½oise rented for us a very comfortable two bedroom apartment at Blair Towers at the corner of 16th and Eastern in Silver Springs, and then Chris started nursery school. We stayed at Blair Towers for almost three years until we were transferred overseas again. In those days Silver Spring was considered very far out from Foggy Bottom, or Lafayette Square, where the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) had its headquarters. Washington, DC was still a fairly "small town."

A.In Service Training at Johns Hopkins School for International Affairs.

Q: What did you think of the course? Was it worth the time and effort?

BROWN: During my home leave, I'd been assigned to a six months training program at the ICA Development Programming Institute headed by Dr. William T. Phillips at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University at 1906 Florida Avenue. It was a wonderful program with small classes covering the economic, social and political aspects of carrying out development programming in underdeveloped countries - I don't believe that we had yet begun to call the newly independent countries - "third world or developing countries". I still have my research paper entitled "Islands of Development -Country Selection Criteria and Feasibility". This was 35 years ago, and I don't think the check list would look too much different today except there was no section on "human rights" which is front and center these days. My paper's check list included such major headings as: "degree of self help; existence of adequate economic, institutional and human resources base; agreement of recipient to deal realistically with outstanding problems; appraisal of countries potential demonstration effect; and other factors".

In addition to instruction provided by the ICA Institute faculty, and the wonderful Johns Hopkins SAIS library, we had many guest speakers from the academic community. The concept of interdisciplinary consideration of development problems was new and terribly important, especially for those of us who had just lived through the successful European recovery where economics, business/management, and provision of the factors of production including organized labor were the keys.

B.Establishing the Asian Productivity Center (APO)

Q: How did the APO assignment come about? Whose idea was it?

BROWN: I had one more special assignment before joining the Washington headquarters staff. Because of my experience with the creation of the European Productivity Agency (EPA), I was selected by Don Mac Phail, who by then was deputy Assistant Director of ICA, to go to Japan and work with the Japan Productivity Center in creating an Asian Productivity Organization (APO). This was also to be an organization designed to help coordinate the work of and exchange information between the national productivity centers which had been created in a number of the Asian countries: Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan principally.

My consultation in Tokyo and the Far East lasted for about two and a half months. It was a long time to be away from home, but a rewarding experience. The head of the Japanese Productivity Center, Dr. Oshikawa, and my counterpart, Yugi Yamada, were both very intelligent and hard working. While Dr. Oshikawa's spoken English was limited he had an excellent command of the written word, and Yugi Yamada was fluent in both written and spoken word. Fortunately, I understood almost immediately with Yugi Yamada's help that Asia was not Europe, and the cultures, financial resources, interests, etc. of the countries and their productivity centers were not the same. As a result we designed a charter custom-tailored for the interests of South-East Asia and India in about six weeks. We then went around to the countries mentioned above to explain the draft charter. It was accepted in principal on all sides with only minor alterations in wording. The APO soon came into being located in Tokyo with some US financial help, but the Asian productivity centers made the major contributions themselves and were able to tap some funds from the private sector. I checked in the early 1990s and the APO was still in existence.

C.Settling in at the USAID Africa Bureau (September 1960) - Libya, and Nigeria Desk Officer Assignments

You started your Desk Officer assignment just before President Kennedy was elected, anhis administration took over. Did the change in administration make much of a difference in your work in the Africa Bureau?

BROWN: Yes it did. The Kennedy Administration was very interested in doing something to help Africa.

Just before John F. Kennedy was elected and early on during his Administration , I was the Officer in Charge (Desk Officer) of the Libya program which amounted to about $19 million in FY 61. Early on in the Kennedy Administration the ICA's name was changed to Agency for International Development (AID). This new name was very popular and remains today - with the letters "US" (United States) added later making the present day acronym: (USAID).

Q: $19 million seems like a lot for Libya, population one million in those days. Why was the grant assistance program so large?

BROWN: The perceived Communist threat was very large in 1960. Many were worried that the USSR would invade Europe and military installations on the perimeter were very important. In those days Libya was still an ally of the US, and we had air force bases there. Qadhafi had not yet staged his coup, and Libya was run by the Royal Family.

My desk officer duties consisted of recommending economic policy, program strategy and operations, backstopping a field staff of 100 direct-hire and contract employees, and preparing the Congressional presentation in support of the program (The congressional presentations were much less elaborate in the "60s than they are today.). I also maintained liaison with the various AID offices, State, Bureau of the Budget, and the Department of Defense.

The high spot of my short eight month tenure on the desk was an opportunity to make a month long visit to Libya and take an extensive tour with Director Berenson, a political appointee. The Fezzan province was especially interesting with "Beau Geste" style forts sitting in the middle of miles and miles of the Sahara desert. There was nothing to see but sand dunes except for an occasional oasis populated by nomads (Blue Men), tents, camels etc.. The men wore veils and daggers, and the women did the dancing in public. Our development program was relatively modest in Libya and concentrated on extension and training in the agricultural sector.

The effect of the new Kennedy Administration was not very evident (at least to me) during the first six months. However, in June of 1961 I was transferred to the Nigeria Desk and immediately felt the interest the Kennedy White House had in Africa south of the Sahara.

Q: Why was the position of Officer in Charge for Nigeria Affairs so special at that time?

BROWN: As Officer in Charge of Nigerian Affairs I was in charge of and responsible for an aid program involving a long term commitment of grants and loans of $225 million toward Nigeria's Six Year Development Plan. Joel Bernstein, was the "brilliant" Director of the Mission, and Walt Rostow who was then, Counselor for Economic Affairs under President Kennedy, took a personal interest in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Not only had Nigeria recently become an independent of the British "colonial yoke," but it had the largest population in Africa. The multi-year loan (for a dam across the Niger River) was one of the first of its type to be presented to Congress and the White House took a special interest. I used to go over to Walt Rostow's beautiful office in the Executive Mansion from time to time with Ollie Sause, who was the deputy head of the Africa Bureau, and sit in on the strategy sessions. It was an extraordinary time to be a desk officer, since it was not uncommon to receive a telephone call directly from the White House staff asking detailed questions. I backstopped the Nigeria mission's direct hire and contract employee staff of 200. They were spread out throughout Nigeria. During that period, I was responsible for preparing the visits to the US of the Nigerian Ministers of Finance, Plan and Agriculture. They were all very intelligent, sophisticated and highly educated, and had been carefully selected and trained by the British to take over and run their country. Most of them had Oxford degrees. It was a great catastrophe for the country that after the end of their third year of running the government, they were all killed in a military coup. The new military leaders had no where near the education, talent, and experience of their predecessors.

The World Bank was very much involved in the development effort, and some thirteen countries participated in a consortium designed to coordinate the enormous aid effort. While I was on the desk, we sent some 353 participants to the US for practical training during that period. I learned a great deal about economic analysis at that time, since the long term forecast was essential in making the decision to supply long term funds.

I still have vivid memories of my month long trip to Nigeria (Lagos and the three provincial capitals). I visited a number of development projects, government offices (both federal and provincial), in addition to the USAID mission. Coordination, and liaison work with other departments of AID, State, Bureau of the Budget and other US government office was an important part of the desk work in Washington. Dick Cashin was the Division chief and a big help.

The Nigeria development program in the early 1960s was in many ways a forerunner of things to come. It used University contracts very effectively (e.g. the University of Michigan group helping establish the new University of Nigeria at Enugu in Eastern Nigeria, and another contract to assist the University of Ife in Western Nigeria.) The use of direct hire AID employees was perhaps at its zenith with over two hundred direct hire employees. Many of the "new" direct hires had distinguished previous careers as Agricultural Specialists, Education, Public Health, Public Administration, Economists, Engineers, Transport Experts, etc. Their long years of practical experience in the US was invaluable to the fledgling Federal and Provincial government.

Later experience showed that it was not necessary that such a high percentage of USAID personnel be direct hire in order to carry out the jointly agreed development programs. The ideal mix was to keep the proper balance between direct hire and contract personnel. While increased use of contracts with Universities, NGOs/PVOs, Consulting firms reduced substantially the need for direct hire personnel, the effectiveness of the contractors in a development context was reduced if the USAID Director did not have a sufficient professionally qualified direct hire personnel to competently supervise the contracts. This resident staff was also necessary to work with the relevant ministries, help evaluate progress on existing programs, and guide design teams for new projects and programs. (This conclusion is developed more thoroughly in the section entitled "Lessons Learned and US Foreign Assistance - a 45 Year Perspective.")The making of long term loans for capital projects in the Agency was in its infancy. Some of the capital projects (e.g. electric power stations, irrigation systems) were 100% US financed projects (low interest rate, long term loans); and others like the huge Niger dam project were worked out as jointly financed projects with other donors, including the World Bank playing a major role.

In the late '50s/early '60s not much attention was paid to accurately setting out measurable goals, and providing the means of measuring the progress or lack of it. However, in the case of Nigeria, there was a general feeling of significant positive "development" momentum, both on the Nigerian side and the donors. The long term prognostication for successful development was favorable

What was ignored was the political side. Even though most of us were aware of the fierce rivalry between the three provinces (West, East and Northern Nigeria) and their resistance to any control or actions by the Federal government, democracy programs, decentralization, and crisis management programs didn't exist. Attempts to encourage development of the private sector were in their infancy. As the years have passed, AID has become much more sensitive to the political realities and tried to work out cooperatively development programs which take into account social and political as well as economic conditions.

A word of caution here is in order. For any successful development program, it is a question of balance. If we add a political dimension it in no way should diminish the importance of the economic and social factors i.e., stabilization agreements, capital projects, non-project assistance, private sector initiatives, community development, self-help efforts, PL 480 resources, etc. Given the diverse and dynamic nature of the developmental challenges, there is no single approach to successful development that works in all cases.

I will always be grateful for this period in my experience in the Agency. I learned a great deal about how to get things done in the US government during this time. In November 1962, I was assigned to Office of the AID representative to the Republic of the Congo (now called Zaire) as Assistant Director.

Assistant Director in Zaire* (1962-1964)*renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo as of 5/18/97

Q: I understand that there was still a civil war going on in Zaire when you arrived. What was the ambiance ?

BROWN: We (Franï¿½oise, the two boys, and I) arrived in Kinshasa in December 1962. The airport was filled with C-130 transport planes engaged in ferrying troops and supplies to Katanga to put down the rebellion lead by Moise Tshombe. We were met by Rob West, the AID Director (who was also Economic Counselor of the Embassy). He was a prominent development economist on loan from the Ford Foundation. It took us three hot and sticky hours to clear customs and head for the city.

Our early days in Kinshasa remains etched in my memory. On the way into town, we were informed that the house originally set aside for us had been given to another family, and we would be in a temporary apartment until another suitable one came on the market. Our apartment was downtown, reasonably comfortable and overlooked the local bordello which was frequented by many of the senior government officials. So we got a rather unique view of the ruling clique early on during our stay. Our refrigerator had barely enough food for our evening meal, and my wife was informed that she would have to be ready by 7 am the next morning to go to the local market to shop for food. (There was no commissary since the US Ambassador, Mr. Gullion, didn't want anyone on board who couldn't rough it.) Since there was virtually nothing on the commercial market except PL 480 powdered milk, life was very difficult until one's shipment from Ostermann Peterson arrived four months later with everything from toilet paper, to powdered milk, to canned beans, coffee, soap, etc. Once it arrived if one was missing something one could trade with our colleagues. There was a very large, well stocked, United Nations Commissary, but we were not allowed to use it. We were not moved into a full sized house for at least eight months. Survival during the first three months was indeed difficult. I don't think the Ambassador's decision not to have a commissary and to let the newcomers "rough it" added to our performances.

Actually, the basic infrastructure, streets, homes, business buildings, etc. in Kinshasa had been built for the long term, and were still in excellent shape. Unfortunately the Belgians had not judged it necessary or desirable to train an elite as the British and French had. So at independence, there were only 17 Congolese college graduates, and about 500 high school graduates (mainly priests). This was not enough to run a country larger than the US east of the Mississippi (one million square miles). Before pulling out the Belgian colonial government had stationed some 5,000 professionals in Zaire. The UN staff which was running the country when we arrived numbered 2700.

The Belgians had not considered it necessary to educate the local women, so except for a few women educated by missionaries, none could read and write. A further problem was that apart from French (and a little Flemish), there was no common language. Most of the country was made up of village states with their own individual languages or dialect - something over 300 to 400. Fortunately, many of the tribes along the Congo River (now called the Zaire River) spoke a composite language called "lingala."

Life in the early days was alleviated by the possibility of taking the ferry across the Congo River to Brazzaville. The Republic of the Congo, which had been a French colony, was well stocked with French foods and supplies. Food was very expensive, but a real treat. However, after we had been there for about six months, the two governments got into an argument and the frontiers remained closed for the rest of our stay.In spite of this rocky start, by the end of the year we were well installed and enjoying the post.

Q: What was the work like under those circumstances?

BROWN: AID Director, Rob West, had his office at the Embassy, and I had my office along with the rest of the AID contingent in a separate building not far from the Embassy.Since there was no Deputy Director, and I was the only Assistant Director, I managed the AID staff on a daily basis. Rob West was mainly interested in the economy, major aid policy matters, and very important project decisions. The offices were comfortable and well kept. The major problem was that there was a curfew at dusk, and I often had to work late at night. It was really difficult driving home in pitch black darkness hoping that I would not meet military patrols since the soldiers were often illiterate and did not understand French.

Because of the value of our multi-million dollar commodity assistance program and the counterpart (local currency) it generated, the USAID was entitled to a seat on the United Nations run Economic Planning Commission (EPC). I used to attend their meetings, when Rob West could not make it. Everyone around the table of the Commission were foreigners. The Chairman of the EPC was a UN employee from Algeria, the head of Public Works (buildings, roads, streets) was a UN employee on loan from the French department of public works, and the Governor of the Central Bank was French, etc. Due to the lack of educated citizens from Zaire, the only Zairian national at the Planning Commission meetings (sitting in the back row) was a young man who had just graduated from Louvain University in Belgium, Mr. Endele. (About ten years later he became Governor of the Central Bank). I still remember one of my instructions from Rob West was to inform the Commission that import quota's for toiletries, fountain pens, and ladies brassieres were to be sharply reduced, and quotas increased for chemicals and industrial materials needed by the local factories.I also sat on the EPC subcommittee charged with allocating the counterpart. Most of it went for keeping the road network operational.

These were exciting times. I went up to northern Zaire with the Minister of Public Works (Mr. DelVaux), a Zairian, and the UN supplied operating head of the Public Works department, Monsieur Larchet (French), to participate in a ribbon cutting ceremony for a stretch of road reopened through work financed by our counterpart funds. The event was also attended by the local chief, the local witch doctor with his crocodile hat and parrot feathers on, the local priest, and the girls in uniform from a nearby Catholic school for girls. One week later communist supported rebels roared down the road in trucks. For a while they controlled the northern part of the country. With help of Belgian paratroopers, Nigerian police, and C-130 air transport provided by the US, the uprising was put down.

I remember meeting Governor Harriman at that time, and being very impressed. He was in his mid '70s and had come out to Zaire at the request of the President to work out the peace agreement. He was very polished, dynamic, needed very little sleep, and wore out the staff assigned to work with him. The necessary agreements were drafted, negotiated, and signed in just a few days.

By my second year there, things had settled down considerably. President Kasavubu had invited Moise Tshombe back as Prime Minister and most basic facilities were operational - roads, railway and river transport. Rob West had returned to the Ford Foundation, and an experienced AID Director, Stuart Baron, replaced him. His last posting was in Cambodia.

Q: Did you get to know any of the Zairian Ministers?

BROWN: I got to know two of them fairly well. Mr. DelVaux, who was the Minister of Public Works, was one of the few educated indigenous people - perhaps in his mid forties. He had been working in Belgium at independence, and was brought back to head this technical Ministry. On special occasions, like ribbon cutting ceremonies, he would wear his dark Belgian double breasted suit made of heavy 100% wool. Needless to say he perspired profusely, but was suitably dignified. He listened to his UN technical advisors and ran his Ministry well considering the circumstances.

The Minister of Finance, Mr. Bamba, had been the leader of the Kibangist religious movement in Eastern Zaire. He knew nothing about finance or economics, but he was a fine human being. He wisely left the running of the Finance Ministry to his UN staff.

His church used the Protestant bible, and its founder, Mr. Kibangi, believed that Jesus Christ was a black African. Minister Bamba invited us to dinner several times and also to a number of his Sunday morning church services which were very simple and austere with palm fronds as decoration. Unfortunately the year after we left Zaire, the Minister was hanged for some sort of alleged plot against the government. I find it hard to believe that this mild mannered religious leader deserved such a fate.

Q: Do you have any personal anecdotes of life in Kinshasa once you were settled in?

BROWN: Actually, we were quite comfortable, and all AID/embassy housing was fenced in. Our local guard was armed with bow and arrow. However, on most nights when we returned from a party or official reception, we would have to wake him up to open the gate. While petty theft was a problem in outlying areas, local police protection was assured by the Nigerian Federal police who were excellent. Their headquarters were only two doors down the street from where we lived, and our two boys would "tricycle" down every evening to take part in the lowering of the Nigerian flag ceremony. As a result, we became quite friendly with the Nigerian Commander, and nothing was ever stolen from our house..

Our third child was born in Kinshasa at the Lovanium University hospital which was still manned by Belgian doctors and Belgian Catholic Sisters. Because of the curfew still in effect at dusk, when the time for the birth of our third child drew near, I began to study "home delivery" in case we could not drive the 12 miles to the University hospital. We also applied to Prime Minister Tshombe office for written permission to travel to the hospital at night during curfew hours should it become necessary. However, the value of such a paper was most uncertain since practically all of the soldiers patrolling were illiterate. Fortunately, one week before "Valerie" was born, the curfew was lifted. The head nurse, a Mother Superior from Belgium, who had stopped counting after her one thousandth delivery, carried out the delivery with the Belgian doctor called in to do a little stitching up. (In those days, AID did not send one's wife home to have a baby.) As it turned out the expatriate medical personnel who had stayed on at the University hospital after independence were excellent.

Q: What were the lessons learned, if any?

BROWN: Good question! Even though we all know from experience that each developing country has its own particular characteristics and set of problems, I think that Zaire was really unique, especially in 1962. Zaire was bereft of the educated indigenous talent needed to run the country. Except for the colonial rule of the Belgians, there was no history of any indigenous government except for small kingdoms in southwestern Zaire (the bas Congo), and southeastern Zaire (Katanga), and these existed a century or two prior to the takeover by Belgium. There were no dominant tribes in a national sense. Most of the country was thinly populated and ruled by village to county level leaders.

In those early years of independence, Zaire was completely run domestically by the UN staff, with the Belgians and the US having a strong say in any actions taken. I believe the US country team representing the information service (USIS), the economic/social (USAID), the military and political including the CIA, functioned well together under the leadership of the Ambassador. In the short term - the first four to five years after independence, a functioning government was restored (albeit largely expatriates), rebellions were put down, and the economy was restarted. There was an ambiance of impending prosperity down the road. Our relations with the other major donors, the Belgians, French, UN, were excellent. When Mobutu took over in a military coup, no one prognosticated 35 years of despotic rule. In fact in the early years of his regime, before he nationalized all of the major industries, the economy did relatively well.

With 20/20 hindsight, perhaps our weakest point (and our partners' also) was to have concentrated almost all of our energies in creating the stability needed to allow the economy to function, and to address the political/social needs only in "dire circumstances". Could we have done more with "democracy programs", private sector programs to encourage indigenous small businesses, education of the population, public administration training in running a free market economy?It is hard to tell?

Would a firmer hand with Mobutu made a difference when he nationalized the private sector, started siphoning off most of the national wealth, and raised the corruption in his administration to new levels? Perhaps it might have. However, our failure to crack down should be evaluated in the context of the cold war. The US response to Mobutu's dubious, undemocratic actions was governed in large measure by our competition with the USSR during the cold war years.This is a case where the political factors were dominant, and a crucial drawback to the economic and social development of Zaire - a country that should have become the richest country in all of sub-Saharan Africa . Some thirty five years later Zaire (Congo) is not just stuck at the goal line, it is substantially behind it.

Certainly democracy building programs are not easy. The current on-going experiment in a much smaller country, Haiti (with no history of democratic government and a literacy rate of under 30%), shows how difficult it is to train an effective police force, establish an effective judiciary, organize political parties, assure fair elections, keep corruption to a minimum, carry out the necessary reforms, etc.Even in those developing countries where carefully crafted stabilization programs have been worked out and cooperatively implemented with excellent results, there has been political instability- military coups, civil disorder, etc. Having highlighted the lacuna that existed in 1950s through 1980s on the political side of many development programs, one must not fall into the trap of thinking that "democracy (political action) programs" are the whole solution. It is a question of balance.

Q: Overall, how do you rate your posting in Zaire?

BROWN: While serving in Zaire was tough, in the end my family and I thoroughly enjoyed the post. We felt that our tour of duty there was stimulating and rewarding. I learned a great deal professionally.

In September of 1964, I was transferred directly to South Korea as Assistant Director for Program and Economic Policy. I was delighted to have the opportunity to work with Dr. Joel Bernstein, who had been USAID Director in Nigeria, when I was the Nigeria Desk Officer in Washington, DC.

The Republic of South Korea (1964-1967)Assistant Director for Program and Economic Policy

Q: When did you arrive in South Korea, and what was the political, economic and social climate?

BROWN: We arrived in Seoul early in the morning of October 3, 1964. Contrary to our arrival in Zaire, everything was handled very efficiently. We were through customs in minutes, and on our way to our home. Our little house was comfortably furnished and waiting for us in a gated area on one side of the UN Military Compound called South Post. As we entered our home, I was informed that I was expected at the office for a meeting. So I left Franï¿½oise and the children at home to unpack, and went directly to the office to start work. This heavy, urgent work load would continue non-stop during our three years in Korea. I never worked so hard before, nor since.

The USAID offices took up a whole building in downtown Seoul, not far from the Korean Economic Planning Bureau (EPB). (Actually the USAID office in Korea in those days was called a USOM, United States Operating Mission. But I'll use our current term for an AID mission (USAID) from here on out.)

Politically, this was a period of great internal stability. President Park Chung-Hee and his political party had been elected with a large majority. The government was firmly established with full support of the military. There was a small opposition party of no serious consequence.The potential threat from North Korea was constantly with us, and provided a strong incentive for unity. While it is no longer the case today, in the "60s Americans were still considered "blood brothers" having successfully fought together and stopped the Communists. Students were very active in those days as they are now. However, at that time the demonstrations were over issues such as whether to accept reparations from Japan or not. The spirit of team work between the Koreans and the Americans at all levels was at an all time high.

Economically, while most people were very, very poor the economy was in the early stages of an economic take-off which would remove it from the US economic aid roles after a few years. South Korea had a number of significant pluses. Most of the infrastructure damage caused by the Korean war had been repaired and modernized. The population was 98% literate in Hangul, the Korean language. This literacy made it much easier to introduce new techniques in agriculture, and made its workforce easy to train in the manufacturing sector. Korea's free market economy approach was very attractive to foreign investors, especially the US and Japan as well as a number of Western European countries. The years of supplying the US military based in Korea had taught Korean business men the importance of quality control, and complying with contract specifications and standards on a consistent basis. In 1964 the export drive started in 1960 was beginning to take off. In fact the USAID had a very talented, dynamic, "hands on", export promotion advisor, Amicus Most from New York City, who was very busy and effective in helping the budding Korean export industry grow faster.

The USAID annual program of Development Loans, Technical Assistance (consultants and participant training), significant food imports, PL 480 (Titles I, II, III, and IV), and Commodity Import Grants totaled close to $260 million a year. When this amount was added to the invisible earnings from the presence of the US military (roughly another $150 million) gave the US considerable economic leverage. In fact the USAID had a joint economic stability agreement under which the USAID jointly monitored the Korean government's economic activities on a monthly basis.

Socially, the Koreans were and continue to be an extraordinarily homogeneous group (no tribal or ethnic problems as experienced in Zaire). They were traditionally hard workers who put an extraordinary value on education whether from the rural or urban areas. There was tremendous competition to get into the local universities. They had a great sense of humor and were dubbed by those who knew them well as the "Irish of the Orient".While it tended to be a "man's society", the wives we met were well educated, and put an extraordinarily high priority on the education of their children in this very competitive society.

Q: What was the scope of your work at the USAID?

BROWN:As Assistant Director for Program and Economic Policy, I was responsible for the overall development of the aid program content and strategy. For example in 1966 the Supporting Assistance component was $66 million, PL 480 Title 1 $50 million, II & III $25 million, $5 million Technical Assistance, $120 million for Development Loans plus a won (Korean currency) budget support program for defense and development. The program office I supervised consisted of 27 Americans and 38 Koreans. The program office coordinated the preparation of program submissions and their execution by the USAID Divisions. I also served as the principal staff advisor to the Director on overall program content and execution.

On the Korean side I negotiated at the Vice Minister and Bureau Chief level on matters of program content and execution, and worked out systems of joint planning and consultation. I also accompanied the Mission Director to all of his meetings at Ministerial level. I would be at the office very early, leave late taking documents home to read, work almost every weekend. Three or four nights a week (perhaps more) I was out at official functions related to our work.

One of the most important sections in the program office was the economic policy and analysis branch headed by a Harvard development economist on loan to AID, Dr. David Cole. He and his staff of US and Korean economists monitored the Korean's economic performance and kept them on the "straight and narrow" in executing our joint economic stabilization agreement and achieving the various goals agreed to in our negotiations.

Another of Director Dr. Joel Bernstein's very innovative ideas was the creation of a "think-tank" group in the program office. The small group of staff officers was called something like "New Programs and Initiatives Section." It was headed up by Dr. Princeton Lyman who went on to become a USAID Director in Ethiopia, and US Ambassador to South Africa. The two other members were Don Cohen and Eric Chetwynd, who in later years became a USAID Director and a Office Director.When a new program initiative was being considered by the USAID, it was given to this group who worked up detailed programs, policies and operating procedures. Some of the programs developed by this office included integrated Rural Development, Export Promotion, and Family Planning.. They also were called upon to help solve problems in existing programs - for example, in Agriculture and Education. This overview of ongoing major programs was a big help in making mid-course corrections before they became a crisis. Something similar might be considered today in the larger, priority USAID missions around the world.

The Korean officials, staff and private sector managers worked extremely hard. If we sent a letter to the Planning Ministry on Friday requiring a quick, but complicated answer, they would work all weekend and more to meet the deadline. Sometimes they would rent a suite in a down town hotel, so that their professional staff could work uninterrupted.

Q: Was this hard work recognized?

BROWN: Yes it was! In addition to my regular duties, I served as Deputy Director when the Deputy Director, Roger Ernst, was away on leave, and also when Director Bernstein was away and Roger moved up to be Director. It was a challenging learning experience for which I was very grateful. I should mention that to help me with my work, the USAID recruited an excellent, experienced, Deputy Assistant Program Officer, Garnett Zimmerly, who was of great help in running the program office. He went on to be Director in the Philippines some years later where he was killed in an airplane crash during a field trip.

The long hours and devotion to the program was recognized. During my three years in Korea I was promoted to FSR-1 (about a GS 16), was decorated with the order of civil merit by the President of Korea for my contribution to Korea's economic development, and received a very laudatory merit award from AID signed by USAID Director Bernstein, and US Ambassador Winthrope Brown from the State side.

I guess the most wonderful part about the three years that I worked in Korea, was the sense of accomplishment. The economy grew spectacularly in agricultural production as well as the manufacturing sector. The increase in the standard of living of the Korean people was visible to the naked eye.

Q: We all know of South Korea's continued success both economically and as a functioning democracy. The list of countries graduating from our assistance roles is not very long. Are there some lessons to be learned here?

BROWN:Before getting into specifics, I should like to point out that by 1964, the USAID had already established itself as a major factor or force in South Korea's economic/social reconstruction period after the end of the fighting in the late "50s. Although earlier prognostications were that it would take 25 to 50 years before South Korea would be able to "go it alone," in only 15 years after the end of the fighting, the situation was beginning to change dramatically.I believe this stunning turnaround would not have taken place were it not for the US foreign assistance program.

During these years, the amounts of technical assistance including participant training, program grants, loans, and emergency food were consistent from year to year and very large. By the mid "60s South Korea was entering into the "takeoff" phase of development. Although the $150 million a year in 1964 represented a substantial reduction in aid levels over previous years, it still was a major help to the Korean economy. The commodity import program still provided much need raw materials for Korean industry.

The capital development loan program was hitting its stride. Loan financing for private petroleum refineries, chemical plants, and manufacturing industries was stimulating the economy. Public sector projects which assisted agricultural development, roads and dams were already underway. Electric power, and port rehabilitation projects were in their final phases.Almost all of these development activities were financed with a combination of grants and long term low-interest rate loans. The invisible earnings from the presence of the 50,000 or so US troops were over a $100 million a year.

Perhaps, one of the most important development tools of the "60s was the economic stabilization agreement which made the USAID a full partner with the Ministry of Plan in programming the scarce resources, monitoring the government's collection of domestic revenue, its expenditure levels, and the relative emphasis between development and consumer spending. The USAID Program Office's economic section met monthly with the Planning Commission to review the monthly statistics as well as the allocations of foreign exchange. The needed economic discipline was supplied by the USAID during these joint meetings. Had the USAID not been there, the Planning Commission might have bowed to domestic pressures for excessive government subsidies and consumer spending. Psychologically, this joint programming was palatable to the Koreans because their US colleagues were considered "blood brothers". Almost all of the civil servants we dealt with had been directly effected by the North Korean invasion and were very grateful for the US standing by their side in time of crisis. Economic stabilization agreements for major USAID programs have become more and more common in recent years. I believe the success of the agreement in South Korea, helped lead the way for more widespread adoption of this technique.

In addition to the bonding between Americans and Koreans which grew out of the Korean war, I would like to highlight two factors that greatly facilitated our joint cooperation in the development of South Korea:

Education: Literacy was about 90% in Hangul, the Korean language, and the average Korean family was ready to make great personal sacrifices to assure that their children received a good education. This made it much easier to introduce new concepts and techniques since we could use the written word as well as oral communication to present new ideas.

Stability:South Korea is about as ethnically homogeneous as a country can be. One hundred percent of the population considered themselves Koreans. The government was stable, and in full control of the country. The threat from the North was an additional reason for the population not to "rock the boat". This stability was attractive to foreign investors.

Q: It sounds very rewarding ? Did you make any lasting friendships?

BROWN: Yes. One in particular comes to mind. My primary contact in the government was the head of the Planning section in the Economic Planning Bureau. His name was Yang Yoon Se. He was about my age and also served as the personal advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister, Chang Key Young, who headed the Economic Planning Bureau. The Deputy Prime Minister was called the DPM by most of his staff and was nicknamed the "bulldozer" for his ability to get things done. We (Yang Yoon Se and I) hit it off famously and as a consequence were able to arrange/sort out informally many "difficult and delicate issues" between our respective bosses. I believe this worked in large part because of our mutual respect and trust. In later years, Yang Yoon Se went on to become Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Energy. We kept in touch and our two families renewed contact in the 1980s. By this time he had left government and represented a private Korean company, "Gold Star", in Washington, DC as their Vice President in charge of US operation. Both of his children eventually obtained their doctorates in US Universities.

During my last summer in Seoul (1997), I was asked if I would like to become a Fellow at the Harvard Center for International Development. (It was a kind of sabbatical to recharge the intellectual batteries of AID officers likely to move up into policy making positions, and to help prepare them for that step.) I accepted and AID sent me for training as a Harvard Fellow at the Center for International Affairs for an academic year beginning in September 1967.

Senior Training: Fellow at Harvard's Center for International Affairs (1967-68)

Q: Was it difficult finding lodging and getting the family installed, especially since your time in the US was for less than a year?

BROWN: We moved to Lexington, Massachusetts (a historic bedroom community near Boston), and our installation was greatly facilitated with the help of David Cole and his wife who had returned to his teaching post at Harvard that summer. Settling in quickly was necessary, since the Monday after our arrival, I started attending seminars at the Center for International Affairs, and the children started school in Lexington. The Center's program was organized and run by Dr. Benjamin Brown - (no relation).

Q: Was this a special Program offered by the Center? If so, what did it involve and who were the other participants. In short, what were the parameters?

BROWN: Under the Harvard Center for International Affair's program, Fellows were invited from around the world. We were 16 in all. Five were from the US: Lloyd Jonnes and I from AID, John Baker from State, Colonel Harold Moore from the US Army, and Colonel John Smith from the US Air Force. Other Fellows came from Canada, Egypt (UAR), France, Germany, India, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, UN (UNECA), UK, Yugoslavia. We were housed by two's in tiny offices in the top floor of the Center. My roommate was Jacques Le Compte from the French foreign office, later to become Ambassador Le Compte. The Fellows were a mixture of military officers, aid officials, foreign office types, government administrators, and research administrators. Incidentally, Henry Kissinger had his office (much larger) on the ground floor. Besides teaching, he headed up the prestigious US/Soviet joint committee of University professors which met annually - one year in the USSR and the other in the US. Little did I know then that in a few years I would have an opportunity to brief Henry Kissinger several times during my postings to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Center had several themes in which the Fellows were to be jointly briefed in seminar fashion. They included East/West relations (in a cold war context), the developing world, international politics and international economics. The Vietnam war was still very active, so this was included in our list of topics. We attended a two hour seminar three times a week on these various themes. The rest of the time we were free to do our thing. We could write a book, journal articles, take graduate classes, explore the Harvard library with direct access to the stacks, etc. Degree taking was discouraged, although Lloyd Jonnes got permission and earned a masters degree during the academic year. At the end of the year we were all required to do a research paper on a topic of our choice.

I elected to take development economics classes at Harvard's Development Economics Center. (I took classes from Drs. Wally Falcon, Carl Gotch and Gus Popenek, and car pooled with them. I also attended lectures given by Ray Vernon at the Harvard Business School. Both the seminars and the classes constituted a wonderful experience. I learned a great deal in the field of economic and social development.

The Center's seminars focused on cold war topics, international politics and development issues. The speakers were first class. We were given one or two hours of preparatory reading for each seminar. Usually the Fellows lunched with the guest speaker (usually internationally known at the top of his or her field) who lectured for about an hour. Then the seminar was opened up for questions and answers for about an hour. What a treat it was to participate in the give-and-take expressed, especially given the diverse set of backgrounds of the Fellows. It really expanded one's intellectual horizons - a thought provoking experience.

Much of program offered by the Center was designed to provide a broad based intellectual foundation for future decision makers. Almost all of the participants (Fellows) were upper middle management who had been selected for their potential to move ahead as policy makers, or decision makers - e.g. Ambassadors, Permanent Secretaries, Ministers, Mission Directors, Research Center heads, etc.

I wrote my research paper at the Center on one aspect of a country that had fascinated me for many years - Indonesia - where I would have liked to have been posted. It was entitled "Development in Indonesia: The Skilled Manpower Problem." I'm not too proud of it. Indonesia was not a country of concentration at Harvard. However, I learned a great deal about Indonesia and its problems. The discipline of doing the research and writing a paper summarizing the results was a useful exercise.As it turned out I would never be posted there.

We enjoyed being back in the United States, and Lexington was a wonderful place to live for the family. Most of our social life was with the Fellows in the Center program and their families, but we also had a chance to meet a good number of the Harvard faculty. The academic year flew by.At the end of the school year in June of 1968, I learned that I had been appointed to Pakistan as Deputy Director. Our first posting would be in Lahore, but only for a few months before moving to Pakistan's new administrative capital, Islamabad.

Pakistan (Deputy Director) (1968-1972)

Q: Who was the Director in Pakistan, and whom did you replace as Deputy Director?

BROWN: Bill Kontos was the Director when I arrived, and I replaced Dr. Ernst Stern as Deputy Director. Bill Kontos only stayed about one year after my arrival and was replaced by Joe Wheeler. Bill Kontos went on to head up the UN mission on the Gaza strip and became an Ambassador in the State Department. I had known Bill Kontos when he was deputy USAID director in Nigeria under Joel Bernstein and I was the Nigeria Desk Officer in Washington. However, we had never worked closely together.

Dr. Ernst Stern, the departing Deputy Director, and I debriefed in the Bois de Boulogne one sunny afternoon in Paris. Ernie was on his way back to Washington, DC and I was en route to Pakistan. Ernie had a brilliant career in AID, and several years later he resigned from USAID and joined the World Bank where he eventually rose to second in command.

Bill Kontos' replacement as Director in September 1969 was Joe Wheeler. Joe remained at post in Pakistan for over four years. He then went on to become Deputy Administrator of AID, and eventually was elected to the prestigious post of Chairman of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris where he served for several terms.

Q: You were only back in the United States for nine months. What did you and the family think about another overseas assignment?

BROWN: We had always enjoyed our overseas assignments, even tough ones like Zaire. The children were used to the small international schools. I was delighted to be assigned as Deputy Director to a post with a sizable aid program. Also, the Economic Development Institute at Harvard had a long association with the aid program in Pakistan, and some of the Professors who had worked in Pakistan, such as Wally Falcon and Carl Gotch, had very helpful background information to share.

Q: Why were you posted to Lahore, I thought the capital of Pakistan was Islamabad?

BROWN: When I arrived in the summer of 1968, the USAID was in transition. Several years earlier the capital of Pakistan had been transferred from Karachi to the newly created town Islamabad in the Northwestern part of the country - near Rawalpindi. Initially there was insufficient housing for the diplomatic community and aid missions to transfer to the newly created capital, so USAID headquarters were transferred to Lahore, provincial capital of the Punjab, with part of the staff left in Karachi. By 1968 the situation had changed. Most of the government ministries had been transferred to Islamabad, and the government was pressuring the US government to transfer the USAID headquarters there as well, even though housing was extremely limited.

Q: Did you stay in Lahore for long? Apart from orientation, what were your first tasks as deputy director?

BROWN: We only stayed in Lahore for the summer. After a few weeks orientation, I was assigned the task of preparing the move to Islamabad. This included working with the Pakistan government in Islamabad to find suitable office space, housing for staff, directing the administrative arrangements of the move in stages so that our very busy aid program would not be disrupted. In early Fall, as soon as the executive officer and I could find adequate housing, we moved our families to Islamabad. While the building we contracted for was being built to house the USAID, we rented temporary quarters for the USAID office.

I remember that Franï¿½oise and the children were looking forward eagerly to the move. The weather in Lahore had been, humid, dusty and 120 degrees almost every day since our arrival, and Islamabad was 15 to 20 degrees cooler. None of our personal effects, except for the air freight had been unpacked, since we knew we were to move. Even though there was not much in this administrative capital in the early days (Islamabad was declared Pakistan's official capital in 1967, although they had been working on the infrastructure since 1961), our family took to Islamabad immediately. It was well laid out with wide streets and residential neighborhoods that were well-defined as were the commercial and industrial areas.

Q: What was the size and scope of USAID Pakistan? And in this context what were your duties as Deputy Director?

BROWN: Pakistan was one of the four or five largest aid missions at the time. We administered a sizable non-project commodity import program, a PL 480 program, a large technical cooperation program, and were responsible for one of the largest portfolios of capital projects in the world. The USAID staff ("Mission personnel" as they were called in those days - approximately 190 Americans and 490 locals) were distributed between West and East Pakistan (now the independent country of Bangladesh). Provincial offices existed in Lahore, West Pakistan and in Dacca, East Pakistan (3500 miles from headquarters in Islamabad) A small contingent was continued in Karachi which remained the financial and commercial center of Pakistan. I used to go over to Dacca about once a month. Too bad they didn't have Frequent Flyer miles on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in those days.

Mastering the program was a real challenge. It took a full six months to become familiar with all the aspects - especially given the concentration during the early months on arranging for the move of the USAID from Lahore to Islamabad, and almost immediately filling in for Director Kontos during his home leave shortly after my arrival. In addition to the headquarters duties we were always traveling to visit our provincial offices. The trip to Dacca (East Pakistan) required a whole day flying across India at its widest part. Later in my stay when East Pakistan was fighting for independence India closed its borders, and we went to Dacca via Sri Lanka. The span of management control was broad. The Deputy Director supervised six Assistant Directors, one Special Assistant, one Regional Legal Advisor, five Division Chiefs and one American Secretary. We tried to keep in close communication with our staff. As a result both the Director and the Deputy Director were almost always traveling. When one was in Islamabad the other was invariably visiting East or West Pakistan. All of the staff under my supervision turned out to be highly experienced and very competent which greatly facilitated my work.

All of the technical cooperation projects, commodity assistance, capital projects, PL 480 food were carried out in close consultation with the Pakistan government. This, of course, was a very important dimension to the work, and helped assure the efficacy of the programs and projects.

Although the work had been started long before my arrival in Pakistan, I should mentioned the success that resulted from the introduction of "Mexi-Pak wheat" in West Pakistan and "IRRI rice" This demanded a tremendous effort, not only in the development of the high yield seeds, but also in teaching indigenous farmers how and when to plant these seedDuring my time in Pakistan the results of the introduction of Mexi-Pak wheat (developed in Mexico), and the IRRI rice (developed in the Philippines) were spectacular. Increases in yield of 25 to 30% for the special rice and wheat were commonplace.(The new seeds were also introduced into India with a huge success, especially in the Punjab.)

Q: You mentioned earlier that Bill Kontos was replaced by Joe Wheeler after the first year. Did this change your working relationship?

BROWN: Joe Wheeler arrived in September 1969. By that time I was very comfortable in my position as Deputy Director. Bill Kontos and I had settled down to a good working relationship and I was sorry to see him leave.

Having said that, Joe Wheeler was in a class by himself - a marvelous Director. The USAID program prospered during the time he was there. He and I got along exceptionally well. For the remaining three years that I worked for Joe, I sincerely felt that I acted as his alter ego. We understood each other very well, and I had no difficulty grasping his program goals and participating in their successful implementation. Along with my tour of duty in South Korea, these three years constituted one of the high spots of my career in AID.

Q: What was the political situation like at the end of the "60s and early "70s? I understand their was considerable turmoil.

BROWN: In November 1970 there had been a tremendous flood wiping out much of East Pakistan's rice crop. General Ayub Khan had resigned and turned over leadership to another military leader, General Yahya. Although AID and other donors made significant food donations under their disaster, the situation remained desperate in the East. The USAID through its PL 480 food program was the largest single donor.

In 1971, East Pakistan was in ferment. The local political party led by a Bengali leader named Mujibur Rahman, began calling for independence. His call had a tremendous response from the impoverished population. Over one million people showed up in downtown Dacca to hear Mujib advocate independence. The West Pakistan government responded by severe military interventions, which further inflamed the population. By September, not only was tension at boiling point between East and West Pakistan, but India leaning heavily in favor of the Bengali's drive for independence.

By the Fall of 1970, we had upped the amounts of PL 480 food going into East Pakistan and were going all over the country setting up supply depots to facilitate distribution. All economic assistance to Pakistan had been cut off except for humanitarian aid, as the repressive measures from the Central government (i.e. the West) escalated.

I still remember one of my East Pakistan field trips near Chittagong. I had spent a sleepless night on the floor of a guest house in a small town in the interior as the Pakistan army lobbed grenades over the roof into a local market. As we left the next morning for Chittagong, there were rumors of the Bengali rebels placing mines in the road. Our carryall came rapidly around a turn in the road only to see that there were a number round spots in the road about a foot or two in diameter where the asphalt had been dug up. All conversation stopped as we roared over these spots, expecting to hear an explosion as we ran over a mine at any second. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief at the next corner when we spotted the provincial road repair crew.In Dacca, there was a curfew, but we could hear shooting in the streets every night.

I was fortunate to catch one of the last commercial PIA flights out of Dacca for Islamabad before the militarily closed the airport. I slept on the airport floor the night before departure to be sure I would be there on time for the early morning flight.

In December 1971, East Pakistan succeeded and called itself BangladesAs the violence grew, 10 million East Pakistani's fled to India. India intervened in early December with its army. There were major battles in the Punjab near Lahore. While West Pakistan's air force held its own against the Indian air force, the Pak army was no match for the superior Indian forces. In 13 days the West Pakistan army was defeated. While most of the USAID and Embassy staff had been evacuated to Afghanistan, our family remained in Islamabad. We watched the bombing of Islamabad's airport by two jets fighters from India from the terrace of our home.

After the surrender, on December 20, 1971, General Yahya turned the government over to Zulfikar Bhutto, who had been the leader of the opposition party. Since Bhutto was a leader elected by the people, the government was under civilian leadership, and the obvious domination by the military had receded, our development program for Pakistan was soon reinstated and back on track.

Q: Do any other events stand out in your mind?

BROWN: Yes, one involving Henry Kissinger. I believe he had just taken over as Secretary of State a few months prior to his visit. His stopover in Islamabad was the last stop on a trip to the Far East in which he visited Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, India and Pakistan. Joe Wheeler was in the US on consultation, so as Acting Director I was elected to give Kissinger the economic/aid briefing prior to his seeing the Ministers of Plan and Finance the next day.

When he arrived at the USAID directly from the airport, he complained of stomach trouble, and after 15 or 20 minutes of briefing excused himself to go to the Embassy nurse for some medication. Winston Lord was with him. Later that evening I received a call at home advising me that Henry Kissinger had decided to spend a few days at the Government's Presidential home in the Hindu Kush mountains near the Kashmir frontier to rest up and recuperate. Winston Lord represented him on our visits to the Finance and Planning Ministers. Four days later we were asked to be at the airport to say good-by to Kissinger who had fully recovered. When I shook his hand, I asked how his health was and he replied "splendid" as he bounded up the ramp into the air force plane.

The next morning our Ambassador, Joseph Farland, called a special country team meeting at which he announced that Henry Kissinger had been to China, and had made arrangements for President Nixon to visit. The whole visit had been carried out in great secrecy so that if it had failed no one would have known. Several month earlier Ambassador Farland had gone to Palm Springs, California to see about "selling one of his coal mines". (He was a political appointee who owned a number of coal mines in West Virginia.) At the country team meeting, he explained that his personal visit to the US was a cover story. He left Pakistan, not knowing why he had been asked to set up this subterfuge. When he arrived at Los Angeles airport he was taken to Frank Sinatra's private plane and flown to Palm Springs and taken to Sinatra's estate. When he arrived, there was Henry Kissinger waiting for him, alone. Ambassador Farland was asked to set up Kissinger's secret visit to China via President Yahya. (Pakistan had had excellent relations with China since independence.)

So it was prearranged that when Kissinger arrived in Islamabad, he would pretend to be sick, and would be taken up the Pakistan president's mountain retreat to rest up and recover. Actually, early the next morning under cover of darkness he was taken in a government car to Islamabad airport. The car drove into one of the hangars where he got into a PIA 707 jet and flew to Beijing. When they came back, they landed at the US air force base in Peshawar (about 90 miles from Islamabad), and he was helicoptered back to the mountain retreat from which he publicly exited the next day. Counting the arrival and departure days, four days had elapsed. We all know, of course, that shortly after President Nixon carried out his historic visit to China.

Q: How did the aid program survive with all of this political upheaval, and the suspension of economic aid for a time?

BROWN: We were very fortunate in that the permanent civil service, both at federal and provincial level, was very understanding, and did its best to keep the various projects moving during the suspension of aid. So although there was considerable upheaval at the political level, the permanent civil service, who were quite competent, remained at their posts. The dialogue never stopped, and the aid funding that was in the pipeline was permitted to continue. Our technical cooperation consultants, teachers, extension agents, and investment advisors continued to be welcome, although most of the programs were either slowed down significantly or put on hold. As mentioned above the humanitarian assistance (e.g. PL 480 food) was never stopped.

Our aid office in Dacca converted from the East Pakistan Provincial office to USAID Dacca in Bangladesh. While the staff on the USAID side stayed about the same, there was much more of a shakeup in the civil service since many of the senior personnel serving in Dacca were from West Pakistan and had to be repatriated. Many of the replacements in Dacca were Bengali's who had been working as part of the Pakistan Federal Civil service in Islamabad. They resigned in order to return home, and serve their country.

Q: While Pakistan was one of our priority countries for many years and many positive things have happened from a development standpoint, its political record has not been outstanding. What are some of the lessons to be learned?

BROWN: Although Pakistan received only limited physical structures at independence (the colonial capital being New Delhi, which went to India), one of the most important legacies from the British was a trained civil service, and an educated elite capable of running the country. Also the basic infrastructure such as roads, irrigation systems in the Punjab, railroads and ports were already in place. English was widely spoken, and widely used, along with Urdu, in the running of the government. This heritage was an enormous help in running the newly independent country.

USAID Pakistan was blessed by a succession of talented Directors, such as Maury Williams, and Joe Wheeler who both went on to become deputy Administrators of AID, and successive Chairmen of the multi-national development assistance committee (DAC) at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in Paris.

Probably, our greatest contribution was in the field of agriculture. Tremendous efforts were made to help modernize (electrify) the irrigation system in the Punjab - Pakistan's breadbasket.Major training programs were launched and successfully carried out to train Pakistan's agricultural extension services. They would play a major role in the introduction of the Mexi-Pak wheat and the IRRI rice along with the use of fertilizer. Both of the new varieties produced spectacular increases in production - around 30 to 40% increase in yield. Major programs were introduced to help the Pakistan provincial and federal governments cope with the growing problem of salinization by convincing the farmers to dig and/or pay for the supporting drainage ditches on their land.

Pakistan had one of the largest loan portfolio's in AID. These low interest long term loans helped jump-start the chemical industries to produce fertilizers and pesticides, and many other basic factories. Commodity import programs helped provide the raw materials needed for these activities. On the technical assistance side, substantial help was provided to the Pakistani business community. Business loan programs were set up in the provinces to expand the industrial/business base beyond the port city of Karachi.

During my years in Pakistan, we were careful to jointly finance our development programNot only was there substantial Pakistani technical/management input in each project design, we insisted that they also share in the financing of the activity - largely with their payment of most of the local currency expenditures. I believe this helped assure the continued success and financing by the Pakistanis when the levels of US assistance began to decline; essentially, because they considered the projects their own.

Another breakthrough was in the area of Family Planning. Even though there was significant initial and continuing reluctance because of the Muslim orientation. a major program was started which made a good start in reaching the feminine population. While the overall progress has not been spectacular, it did demonstrate that it was possible to make some inroads in family planning in a Muslim country. For example, family planning and training for female family planning field workers was introduced - a significant breakthrough.

Rural Development represented another area of concentration. In the Northwest Frontier province (in Peshawar) a Rural Development Institute was founded. Cooperatives were encouraged for farm workers and for starting small businesses. Much progress was made in encouraging the start of small businesses in the rural areas and providing low-interest, long term loans. Prior to the small loan program, the farmer or prospective entrepreneur had to go to the "village money lender" for his loan (10 to 20% per month). When I left 1972, both the programs in West Pakistan and East Pakistan (Bangladesh) were well launched and doing well.

Q: Before we leave Pakistan, how did your wife and family like it there?

BROWN: All of us really enjoyed Pakistan, and living in Islamabad in particular. There was an excellent international school with an US curriculum. Our two sons enjoyed it. Our eldest Chris was student body president and Greg played center on the touch football team. Valerie was in primary school and we felt that her teachers were excellent. The two boys took to the culture and had a number of Pakistani friends who went to the international school. Zulfikar Bhutto's children went to the International School and our two boys were often invited over to the Bhutto's for a swim. They told us that Bhutto always found time during the day to talk to his children and bring them up to date on his political activities. Chris and Greg learned to speak Urdu.

Franï¿½oise was very busy. As the wife of the Deputy Director, she had considerable social entertainment responsibilities- i.e. preparing official lunches, dinners, and receptions. We had many official visitors to USAID/Islamabad, and when Joe Wheeler was away we would do the necessary entertaining. In addition since we were both fluent in French we were often invited to dinners at the Ambassadors. We had a beautiful new home with a rose garden that Franï¿½oise planted as well as gardeners, guards, servants. Franï¿½oise also worked with a group that helped handicapped Pakistani children. She was active in the international woman's club and participated in many joint activities with the Pakistani woman's club.

In April 1972, I was transferred next door to USAID Kabul as Deputy Director to replace Victor Skiles (who had already left). It was understood that I would replace Bart Harvey as Director in Afghanistan after his departure in late Fall.

Afghanistan (Director) (1972-1976)

Q: Afghanistan is among the 25 least developed countries of the world. What did your family think about the move?

BROWN: Our family had visited Kabul as tourists two previous times, and had enjoyed our brief visits. However, we were very happy in Pakistan. Franï¿½oise and the children were great. They were prepared to make the move cheerfully, mainly because they knew the new posting offered an opportunity for me to become a USAID Director in the late Fall.

As I mentioned earlier, I left for Kabul to take up a post as Deputy Director at the end of April, and Franï¿½oise stayed behind in Islamabad to allow the children to complete the school year. I returned to Islamabad in early June and we left on home leave returning to Kabul at the end of the summer.

Q: Was the long overlap with the outgoing Director awkward? You arrived in April and he left in late Fall.

BROWN: It was not difficult; in fact it worked out well. The outgoing Director, Bart Harvey and his wife couldn't have been more charming, and Bart did his best to introduce me to my counterparts in the Afghan government and prepare me for my duties as Director once he left. On my side I tried to be a loyal and effective Deputy Director, understanding that Bart would be fully in charge until he left. I think this approach was effective with the USAID staff, and they were spared having to deal with two management approaches simultaneously.

During this transition period I also had a chance to get to know the US Ambassador, Edward Neumann, a political appointee ex professor of political science from UCLA, who took a strong, detailed interest in the aid program. He was very supportive, and understood AID's development concerns; however, he saw the AID program very much as a tool of diplomacy. While his priorities were clearly in the political domain, he understood its potential of a successful aid program to produce a positive impact on US/Afghan relations.The deputy chief of mission was Sam Lewis, a career diplomat of great talent, who went on to become our Ambassador to Israel.

Ambassador Neumann was replaced after about a year by a career diplomat, Theodore (Ted) Eliot. Ambassador Eliot did a marvelous job. He was well liked by both the American staff and the Afghans. He and his wife (Pat) both spoke the local language (Farsi) which was a important asset. He was very supportive of the AID program. He allowed the AID Director maximum flexibility, and was always there to help out with senior levels of the Afghan government should the need arise. He left Afghanistan and retired about a year after I left in December 1976, about six months before the communist takeover. After he retired, Ambassador Eliot went on to become the Dean in charge of Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (located on the Tufts University campus in Boston).

Q: What was the size of the USAID program? Give me some idea of its composition and goals.

BROWN: The AID mission consisted of about 50 direct hire and 50 contract American employees and 300 Afghan employees. The development program involved $10 million in grants annually and an active loan portfolio of over $50 million. The capital loans were for long term (40 years and a low interest rate.) In addition, during the drought years we provided substantial amounts of PL 480 emergency food relief.

To give you some background on the conditions at the time, it is worthwhile noting that Afghanistan was identified as one of the "25 least developed countries" by UNCTAD (The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development). Estimates of yearly income averaged out to about $100 per person compared to $690 in Turkey and $900 in Brazil at that time. Fewer than 12% of all Afghans were literate and the percentage in the rural areas was much lower - for rural woman only about 6/10th of one percent. In a public health survey taken around 1972, on the average only four children survived to adulthood of an average of eight born to each woman. The infant mortality rate was over 20%, and less than two percent of the woman had ever heard of a modern family planning method.

The USAID Afghanistan projects were focused on helping the people : to grow more food; be healthier; and live better. While we still had a very active loan portfolio when I joined the mission, new bilateral loans were few and far between. We were no longer a major direct financier of large, capital projects under our program. The capital projects mantle had shifted to the World Bank (IBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). We, of course, pointed out to the Afghan government that as the major contributor to both banks , we were providing assistance indirectly for major capital projects carried out by the World Bank (IBRD) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Q: Can you be more specific about some of the major development assistance activities while you were Director from 1972 through 1976.

BROWN: I'll be glad to. First, I would like to put our position as a donor in the 1970s into perspective. The cold war was still very much with us, but our aid posture had changed from the '50s and '60s when we were major contributors to the building up of Afghanistan's basic infrastructure. Some of the larger projects included: the US financed the Kabul/Khandahar/Herat road to the Iranian border, plus a substantial part of the Kabul/Jalalabad road to the Pakistan border, and most of the costs of the road going north to the Hindu Kush mountain. The Soviet Union financed the only other major paved road in the country covering much of northern Afghanistan to its border. Afghanistan's northern frontier borders on the states of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

Another substantial US capital investment was in the Helmand Valley. In the '50s and "60s the US had made considerable investments in such things as: a dam which supplied the water to the Helmand Valley, a hydro-electric power plant, and the construction of irrigation canals, etc., not to mention a major technical assistance effort to help the Ministry of Agriculture turn desert nomads into irrigation farmers.

We also contributed to the construction of Kabul University along with the French and Germans.

By the '70s the nature of our development assistance program had changed. Major capital assistance projects were to be done by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.Any talk of balance of payments support, stabilization programs, commodity assistance, infrastructure was the domain of the World Bank (IBRD) Rep. Fortunately, the Bank's reps were excellent and easy to get along with. We had frequent opportunity to meet informally and work together.

Our program continued to be a major one for the Afghans. Its focus was on people oriented projects and programs, and technical assistance to help open new areas, as well as maximize the value of our earlier capital investments.

A principal concern from the outset, as Director, was the continued success of the Helmand-Arghandab Valley Authority project (HAVA) in the southern part of Afghanistan which literally made the desert bloom by bringing thousand of acres under irrigation (about 100,000 acres). The US had already provided to the Helmand Valley project more than one hundred million dollars over the past two decades, and this irrigated area was producing increasing amounts of wheat, corn, melons, cotton, and other valuable food and fiber crops. Our focus in 1972 was on draining the water from four large irrigated farm areas in the Helmand Province to prevent water-logging and salt build-up that was damaging crop growth. The HAVA as we called it was literally the "bread basket" of the country.

One very innovative project which went hand in hand with the Helmand Valley project was a US financed fertilizer distribution project to help build an effective fertilizer distribution network utilizing private retailers. Before its establishment fertilizer was virtually unavailable to Afghan farmers, and it was needed to take advantage of the new high-yielding varieties of wheat and corn and to increase production of cotton, grapes and other crops.

The Afghan Fertilizer company (AFC), an Afghan Government corporation, was set up in 1972, to import much needed fertilizer as well as arranging the distribution of local manufactured nitrogen fertilizer. The government corporation was a new concept for the government long used to doing everything through the Ministry of Agriculture bureaucracy which had very limited capabilities. The AFC also distributed other agricultural inputs (pesticides and seeds). To help assure its operation success the USAID financed a key technical cooperation project which provided four experienced advisers under a contract with Checchi and Company. The advisers were well selected and the project was an outstanding success. When I left Afghanistan in December 1976 there were 400 retail dealers located in every significant farming area in the country.

Our emergency food program played a vital role in 1973. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Afghanistan experienced a number of unusually dry years, and by 1973 the US, UN, Soviet Union and other governments at the request of the Afghan government, were all beginning to contribute important amounts of food to help meet the urgent needs. The crisis had reached famine proportion, and it was estimated that some 80,000 had died of hunger the preceding year before the government formally asked for help from foreign donors. Generally speaking, US assistance went to help the population south of the Hindu Kush mountain range, and the Soviet and UN supplies were distributed north of this mountain range (many peaks over 14,000 feet) which divides the country in half. Given the limited road network, much of our PL 480 food supplies were distributed by a combination of rented trucks and camel caravans (some of the caravans were as long as 100 to 200 camels). Our Assistant Director for Administration, Abe Aschanese, was a tremendous force in helping the Afghan government get organized to deliver the food quickly over almost overwhelming odds. During the "famine" years, the only area which continued to produce food was the Helmand Valley which depended on irrigation, and was instrumental in limiting the loss of life during those years.

Health services for those living in rural areas of Afghanistan were virtually non-existent. A basic health services project was established to help the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) extend health services to rural areas where 85% of the people lived. Four professional consultants were provided from the US non profit firm Management Sciences for Health, MSH (under USAID contract). The MSH team did an incredible job assisting the Ministry in planning, training, carrying out basic health field demonstrations and analyses, personnel, commodities, administration and general management. The advisors had the full confidence of the Minister and his senior staff. While small relative to the need, the million to two million dollar a year grant budget provided substantial leverage in helping get the primary health care program off the ground. One of the constant battles was to design the program so that it included women and children. Prior to this project, what little public health effort that existed, was limited to the urban area and focused on providing help to the male elements of the population.Grant money was also available to help finance simple primary health care centers around the country. A pilot effort of 50 centers were built and staffed during my stay and plans were under way to expand the effort.

Q: Given what's gone on over the last 17 or 18 years and the political chaos which continues to reign, are there any signs remaining of this highly successful Primary Health Care program carried out by MSH?

BROWN:I'm glad you asked that question! I was just reading a very recent "Afghanistan Trip Report" written by Elisabeth Kvitashvili of the Office of Food for Peace covering the period from April 23 to May 5, 1997. In Section XII. Implementing Partners: (UNICEF), she writes about UNICEF activities in Afghanistan, and I quote: "NB: I questioned UNICEF if they saw any evidence of the cold chain system put in place by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) during the 1980s as part of the AID Cross Border program. UNICEF said that in many places, Jalalabad, Ghazni for example, the MSH cold chain remained intact and functional."

Actually the first steps of introducing "cold chain" systems (necessary for preserving vaccines and other medical supplies) in the major primary health care offices was initiated by MSH when they were working with the Ministry of Health in the mid "70s. This is good example of the lasting impact of work well done, even under chaotic conditions.

One of the critical needs was to train women to serve as health care workers. The training of Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wives (ANMs) was done at a ANM school partially financed by the USAID with two nurse advisors furnished under contract from the University of California (Santa Cruz) campus. Women mid-wives were essential since cultural taboos inhibited women from seeking medical help unless female personnel were present to serve them. It was extremely difficult to get any of the educated Afghan women to live in the rural areas, so the recruits were carefully recruited from the rural areas so that they could live with their families in the rural areas near the primary health care facilities. By April 1976 100 ANMs had been graduated and were working in the field. While this project was very tiny compared to the nationwide needs, it was revolutionary and ground breaking in the male dominated culture.

In 1976 the USAID made a grant to the Afghan Family Guidance Association (AFGA) to help expand the delivery of family planning and maternal /child health services to provincial areas. This was a small private organization with links to the International Planned Parenthood Federation in London. This was a small beginning, but was indicative of opening of government thinking we were experiencing under President Dad's leadership, with Minister Khorram in charge of the Ministry of Plan.

Before leaving our aid program, I should mention the outstanding work done in the field of education by Columbia University Teachers College and the Ministry of Education. Together they revised the primary education curriculum and textbooks, especially in Farsi and Pushtu (the local Persian languages) and mathematics. Afghan educators were trained in the US and with the help of American advisors resident in Kabul completely revamped the primary education curriculum, field tested it and supervised its installation in the primary schools. The new textbooks were actually printed at the local Education Press. The learning results in the first year in mathematics were 30% quicker and better, and about 25% more effective in the local languages of Farsi and Pushtu.

At the University level, the University of Nebraska furnished a team of professors (deans) that advised primarily in the fields of agriculture, education and engineering. In addition, the Rector of the Kabul University (a wonderful US trained Afghan) could call on their experienced advice in running the University. Many of the Afghan university professors were educated in the US and contributed to a high quality of instruction in the respective departments. The President of the University of Nebraska took a personal interest in Afghanistan, and later created a Center of Afghan Studies at the University headed by Tom Goutierre, who had worked in Afghanistan on the University of Nebraska contract as an advisor to Kabul University.

I've gone on at some length about the USAID program which was in its 20th year when I arrived in Kabul. I've done so because I think it made a significant difference in the lives of the Afghan people.

Q: I understand that the USSR also served as a major donor to Afghanistan. How did the Afghan government handle the two cold-war powers?

BROWN: The government dealt with us separately. The Soviet Union was largely restricted to Afghanistan north of the Hindu Kush (a western extension of the Himalayas), and the United States and other Western donors restricted to the South. The modest UN agency activities (e.g. UNICEF, the World Food Program, etc.) were permitted to operate throughout the country, as were the World Bank and Asian Development Bank projects. Since Afghanistan was on the periphery of the Soviet Union, their Ambassador was a senior official in his government's hierarchy. Prior to his posting in Afghanistan he had been Prime Minister of Russia, and a member of the politburo. Fraternization of between our two countries' aid personnel was not encouraged by either the Afghan government, or the US or the Soviets.

Q: Was Afghanistan politically stable during your stay? Did this have an effect on your aid program.

BROWN: Basically, it was a stable period. When I first arrived, Afghanistan was still a monarchy. The heads of the various Ministries were generally well educated in one of the Western countries - France, Germany, UK and the US. Occasionally one would meet someone at Ministerial level who had done their studies in the USSR. It was rare. Most of the civil servants who were trained in the USSR were at modest management levels in the government.Most of them were unsympathetic to the communist way of life.

In the summer of 1973 the King Zahir was overthrown, and a republic was proclaimed, headed by his first cousin, Muhammad Daud, who had been Prime Minister from 1953-1963.The coup only lasted about 24 hours, and in about a week things were back to normal. The king and his family were exiled to the Isle of Capri in Italy on a generous pension.

However, during the takeover there was a lot of shooting and some lives were lost. I still remember very clearly the morning of the coup. About 7:30 in the morning of the coup we were on our way to the airport to pickup my cousin and his wife and two children who were coming for a two week visit. Before we left home, I was suspicious. Our telephone would not work, and jet planes were flying over the city. However, our chauffeur who had come to pick us up and take us to the airport explained that he thought there had been a jail break and we could go ahead with our plans.

Franï¿½oise and I and the children got in the car and started for the airport. At the first major intersection, there was a tank parked with its cannon pointed down the road in our direction. Out in front was an Army sergeant waving his AK 47 and signaling us to stop. We all got out -including the wife and children - with our hands held high in the air. The soldier looked terrified and I thought I noticed that the safety latch was off on his AK 47. Fortunately, our chauffeur had the presence of mind to explain in the local language (Pushtu) that we were on our way to the USAID compound which was nearby. He did not reveal that we were headed for the airport. He then asked, very politely, if we could be allowed to proceed to our office compound. The soldier agreed and said we were to stay off the streets. By the time we got to the USAID office most of the staff had arrived. We all stayed inside for the rest of the day with automatic weapon fire heard from time to time in the near-by streets. By late afternoon, we were able to send the staff home - one car at a time.

We later heard that the Ariana (Afghan airlines) plane our cousins were traveling on had been diverted to Tehran. Four days later they arrived on the first commercial plane to land at Kabul airport since the coup. We met them at the airport and when they came down off the ramp there were two lines of soldiers on each side with fixed bayonets. Our cousins thought it was great fun, and we had a marvelous two weeks together.

For the balance of the my stay in Afghanistan, President Daud was firmly in control and we had no feeling of political instability. In fact, the government was a bit more open to new ideas and a bit more vigorous. On the political side, the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Bahktari, was a communist. He had been educated at American University in the "50s and became one there at that time. While we were able to continue with our existing agricultural programs (albeit, reluctantly), no new projects were initiated after his arrival.

I (we) decided that it might help relations if we sent Minister Bahktari, back to the states on a short term participant training visit.We arranged for him to meet with the then Secretary of Agriculture, visit irrigation sites in the Imperial Valley, the TVA etc. He had a wonderful time, drank himself silly on weekends. When he got back, the first thing he did was to report to the Afghan nation on what he had found in the US. He described the incredibly rich narrow minority, and further explained that most American citizens were worse off than the Afghan farmers in the rural areas. He was very proud of himself. Fortunately, for us after a couple of years he made so many mistakes he was removed by President Daud for incompetence. Moral of the Story: Perhaps it was a bit naive to think that a "VIP" visit to our country would be enough to change the point of view of a dedicated communist - especially one that had never been to the USSR.President Daud's appointment as Minister of Plan, Mr. Khorram was excellent. Within the limits of the local political realities, he did his best to move things along. We got along very well. Unfortunately, a year after I left, Minister Khorram was assassinated in front of the Planning Ministry offices. In April of 1978, about six months later, President Daud was killed during a violent coup d'etat. The new rulers organized a "Revolutionary Council, suspended the constitution and initiated a program of "scientific socialism".

Unfortunately, much of the good work done during President Daud's reign was lost when the Revolutionary Council took over.

Q: You were in Afghanistan for almost five years as Director. How do you rate this posting in your long career with AID?

BROWN: On the one hand, Afghanistan was one of the most difficult and challenging assignments of my career, on the other it was also one of the most rewarding. The Afghans, on the social side, were very "stand-offish" for the first year. We gradually made a number of close Afghan friends. Our two boys loved it. They learned Farsi and were often invited out into the country to visit with Afghan families.

Understanding the decision-making dynamics in Afghanistan was very demanding because decisions often depended on tribal politics in the different regions, and within the government structure who would benefit if a certain project was approved. Most of the projects were well appreciated and were moving ahead - albeit slowly.

I remember one case where we had had an enthusiastic reception from the Governors of Herat and Khandahar and local leaders to a proposal for a Rural Development Project emphasizing village self-help. To help get it started we proposed most of the AID financing to be on a grant basis including a portion of the local financing. Most of the governments contribution was to be in the value of the local labor furnished in the villages. Months went by and the Project Agreement was not signed. The Minister of Plan indicated that although he supported the project, he was helpless to get it approved at cabinet level. Washington was about to deobligate the money. I had recently hired as my "cultural advisor", an ex-peace corps volunteer (Marti Kumorek), who spoke Farsi fluently and had many contacts in the Afghan community on local contracl asked Marti to look into the matter informally, and he found out that the opposition was purely political. Certain members of the Cabinet did not want the Governors of Herat and Khandahar to benefit from the project. Once I knew this, I was able to go to Ambassador Eliot explain the situation. He was very helpful and spoke to President Daud, who sorted it all out. Shortly afterward, the project agreement was signed. On a number of occasions after that when the government was not reacting "logically", Marti was able to determine the reason, and help us work out a strategy to get the project or new policy approved.

In the Fall of 1976, I received an offer of a position with a five country African Development Organization, "le Conseil de l'Entente", in Abidjan as a Development Counselor in charge of their loan and grant portfolio with the English-speaking donors. I was needed in Abidjan by January 1977. So I decided to retire from the Agency for International Development in the month of December 1976.

Early Retirement (December 1976)

Q: What made you want to retire so soon? You must have been in your early '50s when you retired.

BROWN: My reasons for retiring were multi-faceted. I was fifty two years old and could have stayed with the Agency for another 10 years or so. With twenty/twenty hindsight, I think one of the principal reasons was that in my over a quarter of a century with AID the development business had become increasingly bureaucratic, complicated and difficult - e.g., the design, approval, and operation and evaluation of projects and programs.

On the one hand AID, as it learned more about the development process, was more and more sophisticated in its demands, e.g. AID was interested in participating in multi-year development/stabilization plans with sophisticated evaluation and other measurement requirements. On the other hand, levels of assistance were being sharply reduced, particularly the levels of its bilateral aid programs. In a number of countries, we were no longer the major donor.

AID insisted on increasing the self-help efforts of recipients. Not a bad idea. However, this was happening, in many cases, while we were turning over the capital, non project and commodity assistance to multi-national organizations and other donors. As our aid leverage was reduced, our program demands in the developing countries had become much more complex and time consuming .

Q: Was there really a change in the way you did business over the years?

BROWN: Yes, and it was significant. When I first joined the Marshall Plan in 1950, I worked at the Marshall Plan's European headquarters in Paris (ORS), I remember writing up a technical assistance project for $1.5 million to help facilitate the immigration of German, Austrian and Italian refugees to Latin America using the International Labor Organization (ILO) as the executing Agency on one page and a half. Approval took all of one week. The project was successfully executed by the ILO in a minimum amount of time and cost.

Some of the changes in the way we do our development business were indeed necessary. For example, requiring project proposals to include measurable goals, and requiring evaluation of project performance was very useful. Detailed implementation plans and evaluation plans were only sporadically required in the "50s and "60s. However, these reasonable steps turned out to be insufficient. During the Vietnam war years, the political and military expediencies which led to abuses in executing AID managed development programs, led to a number of additional, onerous, paper and reporting requirements. Unfortunately, because of Congressional pressures many of these requirements were applied world wide. While some of them might well have been necessary in the Vietnam case, there was no reason to add the resulting administrative burden to the remaining 90% of the USAIDs which had not experienced the Vietnam abuses. Further, all of these additional administrative burdens and restrictions were coming at a time when the US aid programs were being substantially reduced in size. As mentioned above, at the same time that we were requiring overall multi year development and economic stabilization plans as a condition for our assistance, our total aid efforts to the developing countries were diminishing. In addition, the capital projects component had been spun off to such organizations as the World Bank(IBRD), and the Asian Development Bank.

Was financial remuneration a consideration in your decision to retire?

BROWN: I don't think it was a major consideration, but in real terms my salary as an FSR-1 (the highest rank) adjusted for inflation had decreased in value since 1964 due to salary caps by Congress. In addition, I was reminded in 1976 by the AID Administrator that as a Director (a political appointee of the President), I could be removed at anytime; and should this happen, I would not automatically be reinstated into the career service. It looked like a form letter that went to all executive appointees. While I wasn't unduly worried, this kind of correspondence did little to increase my desire to hang on; rather it encouraged me to retire at the first opportunity.

Would I be able to afford to send my children through university if I remained with AID was another consideration? Fortunately, counting my military service, I had almost 30 years of Federal government service, all of which applied toward my retirement annuity. As a Foreign Service officer, I became eligible at 50 years of age and twenty years of service. I was aware that after my retirement, I would be able to draw my pension, plus my salary in the private sector, e.g. amounts earned as a contract employee in private sector consulting firm. In addition, if I spent adequate time working in the private sector and paying my share of social security, I would be eligible for Social Security payments at the age of 65 in addition to my State Department annuity.

Post-AID Years

Q: I know that your work after retiring from AID continued in the international field. Could you tell a little bit about that experience?

BROWN: I remained in internationally related work for the next 15 years. Essentially it was in three phases: 1) my service with the Entente Fund based in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), a little less than 2 years; 2) a position as head of the International Department for my church based in Boston, 4 years; and 3) work as an management member and team leader on evaluation and project design teams and as contract manager for contracts carried out by consulting firms working with AID, 10 years.

Q: What was it like working for the Entente Fund , I understand that your headquarters were in Abidjan.

BROWN: The Entente fund was an inter-governmental organization composed of five sub-Saharan African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), Togo, and Niger which had banded together to facilitate their economic cooperation, and to a lesser degree political cooperation in areas of common interest. The Secretary General of the Entente Fund, was Paul Kaya, from Senegal, who had his doctorate in statistics from the Sorbonne in France. He was a brilliant man, and very personable. His Board of Directors were the Presidents of the five countries. He had a very small staff and a comfortable office in downtown Abidjan. All five of the Entente Fund countries had contributed to a common fund which earned interest. The operating expenses of the secretariat were financed from interest earned by the fund. Most of the projects were paid for by direct additional assessments to the country(s) participating in the development project.All of Dr. Kaya's development advisors (4) were expatriates. His main advisor/managers came from the French technical assistance program (3) (mainly in public administration, agriculture and finance). They were responsible for the multi-country projects financed by the French government and any other francophone country. I was responsible for the USAID financed multi-country projects in the private sector, and agriculture, as well as any other projects financed by English speaking countries. The Entente Fund's USAID portfolio was about $10 million. Within the Entente fund, the operational language was French, so I worked in French. As part of my duties, I recruited the American contract personnel, wrote their contracts, and purchased whatever material and supplies were needed using letters of credit. I traveled to the five countries to monitor the progress of our projects. My many years in AID help immeasurably in doing this, since all of the financial documentation had to meet AID standards and procedures as well as the Entente fund requirements.

The original Entente Fund advisor I replaced was also a retired AID employee. His name was Bob Minges and he had been a Mission Director. My USAID contact office in Abidjan was REDSO/West. Miles Wedeman was the REDSO Director at that time.

After almost two years in Abidjan, I was asked to take up a position as head of the International Department of my church and I accepted.

Q: What was your mandate as head of the International Department Head of your church (1978-1982)?

BROWN: By way of background I should mention that The First Church of Christ, Scientist in Boston Massachusetts was founded in America at the end of the 19th century. It publishes the Christian Science Monitor, a daily newspaper known around the world. While most of its members live in the US, a number of churches had been established abroad - in about 50 countries around the world. The International Department was organized in the late 1960s because our church's headquarters staff had little or no knowledge of the different cultural settings and the needs of the congregations abroad. The mandate of my department was to help the staff in understanding the particular requirements of our overseas churches, and how to communicate with them more effectively. At headquarters, I managed four staffers each specializing in a specific region, i.e. Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa. In addition there were four overseas representatives under my supervision - one representative for each continent. They were based overseas, and visited the churches and societies in the countries in their areas. It was a fascinating job. After several years, the Board of Directors decided that the church's line departments should deal directly with overseas churches rather than a staff office, so I stayed on an extra year to dissolve the international department and integrate its work into the line departments.

We lived in Lexington, Massachusetts and loved it. Our daughter Valerie was in high school, our second son Greg was at Occidental College in Southern California, and our oldest son Chris was working on his doctorate in economics at the Fletcher School for Law and Diplomacy based on the Tufts Campus in the Boston area.

When my work at the church was drawing to an end, I took a one day course on "how to become a consultant". It turned out to be very helpful. One of the pieces of advice was to contact your previous employer about consulting work, if your work experience had been good. There was a good chance that he might need some "short term" help

When I retired from the Agency for International Development we were on excellent terms. So, I went back to Washington, DC to see if the Agency might need some help. I presented my curriculum vitae to a number of Consulting firms which were providing services to AID and was soon hired.

Q: What was your consulting experience like? I see you did it for 10 years, mainly in Africa.? (1983-1993)

BROWN: It was hard at first. Some assignments were back to back so I was away from home two to three months at a time.My first job was an assessment of the REDSO/West project to provide assistance to ECOWAS (The Economic Community for West African States) which had offices in Lagos, Nigeria and Lome, Togo. Next I was hired to manage a project whose job was to inventory, assess, and recommend closer coordination in the agricultural research efforts of the West African states. We worked with the Research departments of the West African states, as well as the principal donors: France, UK, UN, FAO, etc. I spent a considerable amount of time in Senegal and Mali working with the African secretariat set up to coordinate the work. After that I served as management member and team leader on a number of evaluations of the Child Survival Primary Health Care projects in Africa being carried out in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO) by the Center for Diseases Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. I also was involved in the design and evaluation of a number of Family Planning projects (bilateral and regional), worldwide and in Africa. In the early '90s I was project coordinator (under contract) of a small group of specialists which provided logistic support for the AID regional office dealing with the university community at large, and more specifically with the Association of Universities, mainly in the South which serve the African American Community. These universities had been very active in carrying out research in field of agriculture. We organized and managed a number of seminars for AID bringing together representatives of the university community committed to helping developing countries.

Q: As an ex USAID Director, was it hard not being in charge, or having others to carry out the work for you?

BROWN: Actually, I found certain aspects easier. When one directs a large USAID, there are a myriad of decisions to be taken from administration to program, to policy on many activities - technical assistance, participant training, capital projects, commodity assistance, loans and grants, joint financing, personnel management, annual budgets, evaluations, relations with the Embassy, Country Team, other donors, international organizations, bilateral donors, etc. The amount of time available to spend on any one subject has to be budgeted, prioritized and shared.

When one is consulting, the assignment is usually limited to designing a single project, or evaluating an existing project or program. While the project or program may be very complex and sometimes involving a worldwide project, the design or assessment is usually a team effort with several weeks to visit the site(s), interview the practitioners and recipients, and write the report. One can concentrate ones intellectual effort on a specific target. While this may require a significant effort over a limited period of time, the objectives of the mission, or terms of reference are usually well defined.

Q: Any observations you'd like to make as one who was often a Team Leader charged with producing the final report? For example, the challenge of making the evaluation recommendations or project design practical, useful and reasonably user friendly.

BROWN: I understand what you mean. Too often one hears of "evaluation" reports languishing in the bottom drawer of the host country or USAID officer's desk.

I found that the Team Leader's job was two fold: first, to assure that the evaluation was carried out effectively including the development of sensible recommendations for improvement, and second, presenting the conclusions in such a way that they could be acted on and the hurdles slowing the progress of a project overcome. While not always easy, the least difficult part in evaluating a project or program was to come up with sensible recommendations and /or conclusions to improve project performance, break-up long jams, solve serious problems, etc. The hardest part was getting the recommendations, first, accepted and then implemented. It was in no one's interest to be highly critical without suggesting solutions, or to write up "theoretically correct" answers to problems that were beyond the resources and/or capacities of the those responsible for the project to carry out. In addition to making positive recommendations for improvement, another important aspect of the evaluation team's job was to help those charged with executing the project to "bite-the -bullet", and take the hard decisions necessary to move the project forward. Of course, no two project evaluations or project design assignments were alike. All of these aspects made the consulting work challenging and rewarding.

Another significant plus for me in working with private consulting firms servicing USAID and its host countries, and in managing AID financed contracts into the early '90s was that it allowed me to keep up to date with the evolution of AID's development/performance based policies and operating procedures. These experiences, plus a quarter of a century of work as an AID manager, provide the foundation or backdrop for the observations which follow.

Lessons learned and US foreign assistance - a 45 year perspective

The following are a summary of my views on the success of the foreign assistance program and lessons learned based on my experiences as a Technical Assistance Specialist working with the OEEC, Washington Desk Officer, Program Officer in the field, USAID Director, and Management Consultant/Evaluation Team Leader from 1950 to the present. My field experience was mainly in Europe, Africa, the Far East and South East Asia.

Q: Did foreign assistance in the short run and the long run make a difference?

BROWN: Yes, I believe it made a significant difference worldwide. The Marshall Plan, of course, was a resounding success, and saved literally millions of lives. However, most of my comments below deal with the effect of foreign assistance on the developing, or third world countries. Even the most ardent critics would have to admit that US foreign assistance, especially the emergency food and related assistance has saved literally thousands of lives in countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Afghanistan, India, Pakistan, Ecuador, Guatemala, Bangladesh (to name a few) from life threatening natural disasters - earthquakes, floods, lack of rain, civil wars, etc. In addition, we have eradicated some diseases like polio, reduced the incidence of others such as measles and other communicable diseases, and brought fertility rates down in all parts of the world, even in countries like Haiti and Bangladesh where there has been little economic growth.

One might ask, "At what cost to the US taxpayer"? As AID Administrator after Administrator over the years have tried to explain to Congress and the American Public, almost all of the US foreign assistance moneys expended to buy surplus food (wheat, edible oil, rice, etc.), vitally needed equipment, expert help, transport, build roads and dams, reconstruct ports have been spent in the United States because of the stringent "buy American" policy, i.e., be it materials, equipment, or contract services.Therefore, it can be argued that in addition to the clear benefit to the developing countries receiving our foreign assistance, the aid program has been good for the US economy, created jobs, etc.

In the longer term, definitely South Korea would not have made it economically in near record time, if it had not been for our economic and technical support. South Korea is also an important trading partner. Argentina, Chili and Brazil received substantial help from the US before going off of the USAID roles for all practical purposes. Pakistan (at least up until recently) and Bangladesh, while still AID recipient countries, both received tremendous boosts in the production of food from the USAID program, not to mention improvements in public administration, public health, education, and private sector development, infrastructure maintenance, etc.

While there has been some progress in the area of family planning., generally speaking we have been less successful in promoting this activity. The population growth in most developing countries has been well over 2.5% to 3.0%, which means that populations have doubled in 20 years or less. In countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh over the last 30 years many of the gains from increased agricultural/food production have been characterized by temporary food surpluses, only to be wiped out over the years by population increases.

Generally speaking, while the funding levels for AID have gone down dramatically over the last several years, in the '90s the USAID Director has had at his disposal an impressive array of development tools ranging from the traditional help in the fields of agriculture, education, industry, infrastructure, to activities such as stabilization programs, long term low interest rate loans, PL 480 foods, democracy programs, crisis management, rural development and small farmer credit, evaluation techniques, etc. In the '90s, some USAID programs are assisting the developing countries become more efficient (and catch up) in the use of new technologies, e.g., the world of computers, electronically assisted management systems, etc.

To sum up, US foreign assistance has made an important difference for millions throughout the world over the last 50 years, and continues to demonstrate its effectiveness in both the short and long term.

Q: How has Program Management changed over the years? Any advice based on your experience?

BROWN: USAID's have gone from staffing composed almost entirely of direct-hire employees in the "60s, to most USAID services carried out largely by contract employees supervised by a minimal number of direct-hire generalists. As mentioned earlier, Nigeria was a proving ground for the use of university contracts and other contracts to provide technical and other developmental services. Its success helped lead the way for sharp reductions in direct hire employees on AID projects. However, in the late '80s and '90s AID has been forced to go to the extreme of contracting out most jobs, and severely limiting the number of direct-hire career employees left to administer the contracts. This understaffing has led to cases where USAIDs have not always been able to monitor and guide its contractors sufficiently, thus leading to crises which might have been avoided given adequate staffing.

In the '70s USAID staffing was much better balanced between contract and direct hire staff.The USAID Director in a major aid mission, apart from the basic direct hire support staff, would have resident qualified professional personnel in the major fields of development activity - e.g., agriculture/environment, engineering/capital development, education, public administration, management systems, private sector development, public health including family planning and emergency programs (including food). These direct hire professional skills made the monitoring and use of contracts (Universities, NGOs/PVOs, consulting firms, etc.) more effective.

Of course, not every USAID has major programs in all of these fields. In a smaller USAID mission the Director, in addition to his generalists, should be able to call on regional technical support services for expertise in the areas mentioned above - perhaps something along the lines of those supplied for Africa by REDSO/West in Abidjan and REDSO/East in Nairobi.

It would not take a major increase in resources to redress this staffing imbalance and re-approach the staffing that many USAID Directors in major countries had in the 1970s. If such an increase were to be carried out and a select number of professional direct hire staff added in the major USAID missions, it would assure better program monitoring, project design, and promote more effectively sustained contact and continuity with the host government's self-help activities. Continuity and experience are important in a USAID. The "know-how" and experience demonstrated by career oriented direct-hire employees is much harder to assure under contract financed activities in which the personnel tend to rotate each time a contract is renewed. It might, in the longer run, prove more cost effective to supply these skills through direct-hires than by contracts.

In making the above suggestion, I am well aware that "OE" (Operating Expenditure) funds are much harder to come by than "Program Funds" which are used for contracts. This is a time of "smaller government", etc. To sum up, my premise is that the few additional professional direct-hires in the key development fields for each major USAID mission would actually save money overall by more effective use of Program Funds even if a small increase in OE funds were required.

So what about the future? Certainly, the moral, economic, social and security reasons for helping the developing world progress remain today, just as they did forty to fifty years ago. The end of the cold war has not diminished this global need. Over 80% of the world's population is in the third world.

The Agency for International Development (AID) has developed over the years an impressive "know-how" - an array of projects, programs, implementation and evaluation techniques. This kit of tools, properly applied, along with adequate resources, can rise to the developmental challenges, and continue to move the third world countries forward.

Having reaffirmed my conviction in the Agency's ability to make a difference and help meet a serious global need, there are still some serious hurdles and pitfalls to overcome. I believe that AID, along with the rest of the donors in the development community, is a relatively novice in designing programs to reduce or avoid social/ethnic and political instability. More applied research, pilot projects and programs are needed in this area.

As mentioned above, as we assist, push and cajole the developing countries to move toward efficient free market economies (private sector programs, economic stabilization agreements, mullet-donor consortiums, etc.), there is a dire need to be able to determine more accurately the domestic social, and political climate, be better informed on the do's and don'ts, the 'what works and what doesn't'.

A word of caution is in order. For any successful development program it is a question of balance. If we add a political dimension, it should in no way diminish the importance of the economic and social factors i.e., stabilization agreements, capital projects, non-project assistance, private sector initiatives, community development, self-help efforts, PL 480 resources, etc. Given the diverse and dynamic nature of developmental challenges, there is no single approach to successful development - unfortunately there is no easy panacea.

To a degree, AID has been hampered over the years by focusing on one dimensional approaches to enhance social and economic development rather than mullet-faceted approaches. In the "50s, the hope was that technical assistance (transfer of know-how) alone would do the job. Then in the "60s there was a focus on capital development projects. Capital development officers and programs were prioritized to the detriment of the technical assistance efforts. Again in the "70s and "80s, private sector initiatives were the "rage", and private sector officers replaced capital development officers. In the '90s, the Agency's strong emphasis appears to be on democracy programs/community development, crisis management, etc., which has led to the diminution of private sector initiatives and staff.

As already stated, experience has shown that there is no quick "one dimensional panacea".When program elements are interrelated and a multi-faceted approach is used, together they often produce synergistic results. To give one example: If one improves agricultural production, in addition to growing more product per acre, to sustain and build on this success, one also needs to consider farm to market transport, available markets, export as well as domestic demand, continued availability of foreign exchange for imports of fertilizers, pesticides and equipment, as well as agricultural credit, coops for small farmers, etc. etc.

One of the most dramatic cases of what can happen when only one factor is addressed in an economy occurred in the early days of the Marshall Plan in Turkey (late 1940s until early '50s) Dr. Elmer Starch, who was the head of the Agriculture Division of the aid mission in Turkey during this period told me the following. (Dr. Starch went on to head Agricultural Development programs for both AID and the World Bank.)

The US mission's agricultural extension agents working with the Turkish Agricultural Ministry were very successful in introducing new wheat seeds, plus fertilizers, pesticides and better farming technics, etc. They a achieved a 50% increase in production in a remarkably short time. However, during the early years, much of the increase in wheat production rotted at the farms. The farmers had out-produced local demand, and no transport or marketing system was available to get the grain to the urban areas, and when this problem was solved even the urban demand was saturated. Wheat exports in the short term were not possible, since the Turkish ports were not constructed to handle the export of grain, even though there was a demand overseas. It took several years to solve these problems. Fortunately, during the Marshall plan, US foreign assistance was available to help Turkey meet these multi-faceted challenges.

There is another aspect which should be considered in achieving a successful country development program. It is one that both helps and hinders the putting together of the "perfect" assistance package. Most major country assistance programs are made up of a "collage" of different donors, depending upon the circumstances, from the UN (and its subsidiaries UNICEF, World Food Program, etc.), the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, to the interested bilateral donor countries. The mix of assistance in the aid package often depends on the interests of the various donor countries making up the consortium. Also, any program to be successful must take into account the realities of the host country's ability (desire) to do its share of self-help, plus the economic, social and political effects of the programs proposed in both the short and long term. In a number of third world countries, through the use of host country sponsored donor assistance committees, AID has shown considerable creativity in getting interested donors to contribute the maximum in those areas they have been interested. Then the US assistance funds could be used to finance help in critical areas not covered by other donor financing.

Perhaps, one of the important lessons here is that in planning future development programs for countries like Zaire, Haiti, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola, Afghanistan, etc., equal consideration (repeat equal not preponderant) should be given to political as well as economic development aspects of these programs. The skills of political scientists, anthropologists, educators, sociologists should be called upon and given equal standing with the economists, financial experts, engineers, technicians, and management specialists.

Last, but not least, we need to design these programs so that the progress, or lack of it can be measured/evaluated , and the necessary corrective measures taken. Evaluation reports should always be followed up to assure that the pertinent recommendations are carried out.As one who has been the team leader on a number of evaluation teams, 50% of the job is determining what is needed, and the other 50% of the "successful" evaluation is in convincing the decision makers to carry out the team's recommendation. Experience has shown that although evaluations are necessary, they costs money, and are easier said than done.

To sum up, there is no single "magic wand", or theme which will handle all development problems. Life is more complicated than that. It is a question of achieving the proper balance between the relevant inputs so that the individual country being helped, can move ahead with all the bases covered - economic, social, and political.

Q: Were the Emergency Assistance Programs/Disaster Response activities of the Agency effective? What are some of the lessons learned?

BROWN: In all of the developing countries I served in we had occasion to use PL 480 based programs both for emergency feeding programs connected with natural disasters (earthquakes, droughts, floods, civil disorders disrupting agricultural production). Also, the $25,000 available at the Ambassador's discretion in emergencies has enabled the USAID to respond quickly. While very helpful, the $25,000 used to meet today's emergencies is the same amount that was available when I retired from AID in 1976. The ceiling for this kind of quick action should be raised at least to $100,000 - to keep up with inflation if nothing else.

PL 480 Titles I, II and III programs have also provided much needed resources for a host of emergency and development based activities. Sales of PL 480 commodities have produced counterpart funds which could later be used for a whole gamut of emergency and develop based activities. These programs have added greatly to the kit of humanitarian and economic assistance tools available to the USAID Director. They have been very used very successfully and innovatively over the years.

One of the areas of difficulty that still exists, I gather, is the time lag between the quick response in emergencies and the transition period after the immediate crisis has past. To design and start the implementation of a development project can easily take from 18 months minimum to several years. This has often created a hiatus between the end of the short term emergency assistance and the urgent need for follow-on projects to help the rural or urban area get on its feet again, e.g., rebuild and recommence production.

While I have not been directly involved, I've been impressed by the recent activities of the Office of Transition Initiatives in the Bureau for Humanitarian Response. This is a small office of senior officers who have the mandate to ferret out projects, during times of crisis when timing is urgent, and assist in overcoming the bureaucratic hurdles and red tape in their approval and implementation. I understand this office was very helpful in the case of Haiti in moving certain critical projects which were needed to support the fledgling democracy through the approval process in record time. With the full support of the Administrator, this office has been able to help move selected projects through the Agency and gain quick approval and implementation.

I should mention one danger with feeding programs is that they take on a life of their own. That they are not just their during the "emergency", but they become straight feeding programs year after year.In the early years in Tunisia, we tried very hard to relate our programs to developmental improvements. For example, our food for work program produced simple farm to market roads, simple rock dams/dikes to slow the run off water during the rainy season, terracing to keep the arable land from being swept away with each downpour. In more recent years, I've noted the use of food in Maternal/Child/Health (MCH) programs to get mothers to participate in vaccination, deworming, family planning programs, etc.. The public health impact of these programs has been to reduce basic malnutrition in the population.

The following comment is in no way designed to take away from the wonderful work done by PVOs in the past, and the much needed work they are doing today. The following suggestion is much more in the spirit of how can we improve the use of an important aid input - food.

In almost all of the emerging countries in which I've worked (Tunisia, Zaire, South Korea, Pakistan, Afghanistan, etc.) and many others I've visited, the Private Voluntary Organizations (Catholic Relief, Church World Services, CARE, etc.) have been helping meet feeding requirements with USAID paying for much of the cost of their operations in food and funding. However, it seems to me that their modus operandi has changed very little in thirty seven years - since the 1960s. While the major PVOs seem to have really mastered the logistics side very well, there may have been a tendency to rest on their laurels and do the same feeding programs over and over. Contract awards have become fairly automatic and routine over the years, and they are not necessarily based on competition.

As we go into the 21st century, it might be wise to seriously reexamine our feeding programs around the world to be sure that they are using the food to provide ways to help the clients get off of welfare, or improve the level of health so that they are more productive, or learn about family planning so that rate of increase in population is reduced, etc. Currently, there are examples of very creative, developmental uses of food for these purposes, but they appear to be in the minority.

Looking ahead, one idea that might be explored is to not only have "feeding" contracts require a developmental dimension, but to have them competed - even if just amongst PVOs. To sum up, I think the Agency can be very proud of its track record of success in the rapid deployment of assistance. The Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) is well run, focused, and not tied up in "red tape" as the other parts of AID. The Agency has a well documented history of almost always being the first one to respond to a disaster, and in being the one whose presence always makes a significant difference in lives saved. Given the success of this activity AID should continue to encourage USAIDs to take the disaster relief function seriously, and to offer training to mission disaster relief officers who have never done the job before.

Q: What do you think of the recent emphasis on conflict resolution and the installation of "democracy/ decentralization programs". Have they been effective?

BROWN: I agree fully that there is a need for these kinds of programs. As mentioned in some detail above in discussing some of our shortcomings in Zaire, and Nigeria programs, until recently the Agency had done very little to take into account the extremely volatile political climates in many of the countries in the design of the country development program.

It is hard to evaluate how effective they have been to date. Where they have been used as an excuse for eliminating or severely reducing the economic, social, environmental, private sector, economic stabilization programs found in most major development programs, the overall long term effect may have been counterproductive. As stated earlier, it is rather a question of finding the right balance of inputs needed for the host country to move ahead. The exact mix will, of course, vary country by country according to the interlocking economic, social, and political factors.

One aspect this area of "political thrust", is the absolute need for the USAID Director to be a team player. In my judgment, if the cooperation on the country team under the leadership of the Ambassador is effective, USAID resources can be effectively blended into the effort to establish the emerging country on a stable footing. To put it another way, the economic development effort should not be judged as independent from the political, but as a very important part of the overall team effort in which political stability is also one of the requirements for economic and social development.

Q: AID is always hoping that more countries, sooner rather than later, will be graduating from the AID roles. What about the past and future record?

BROWN: In the recent past many countries have been taken off AID roles - perhaps 20 to 30. However, it is not clear how many of those recent alumni who left "school" really graduated. Countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Chili, Brazil, Mexico, etc. do appear to have turned the corner. The record shows that as these countries have graduated and grown economically, they have shown themselves to be better trading partners for the US.

Looking at the question regionally, it would appear that Europe (leaving aside the old USSR) , Japan, the Far East, South East Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean/South America have made it, or are moving in the right direction with occasional exceptions here and there. It is perhaps of interest that most people visiting Vietnam today can't help observe how much more dynamic the South is compared to North. It would appear that the US foreign assistance efforts to strengthen the economy of the South were successful and the benefits continue today,

The remaining continent with extreme economic/social/political problems requiring sustained long term assistance is Africa - especially sub-Saharan Africa. Economic and social progress appears to be moving backwards rather than forward. Any serious attempt to help the African continent sort out its problems will need to be flexible and innovative. It should not only include democracy building and crisis management, but long term help in education is crucial. US foreign assistance (along with other national and international donors) should also include private sector development programs, family planning and primary health care. In addition, as production increases, there will be a need for infrastructure inputs of major proportion for inter-country roads, farm to market roads, port facilities, communications, electric power and other forms of energy, etc. It is not likely that any country will graduate in the immediate future - 25 to 50 years is a more reasonable time frame. Apart from South Africa, which is a special case, given proper support, countries like Zimbabwe and the Ivory Coast, where modernization is already under way, might be able to turn the corner and graduate in the next fifteen to twenty five years.

Q: What has been the effect of the interaction of US political security interests and evolving development strategy over the years? Was it mutually supporting or compromising to development efforts?

BROWN: There is no precise, statistical answer to this question. Certainly most of those countries which received substantial economic/humanitarian assistance because of the cold war, were benefitted. However, the strategic interests have always had a significant impact on the results of the aid agency. For example, the Vietnam war consumed a lion's share of the foreign assistance resources for 17 or 18 years, taking away from other developing countries much needed technical and material assistance.

Ever since the signing of the Israel/Egypt peace agreement some 60 to 70% of the AID budget has gone to those two countries, of the 30 or 40% remaining, most of the balance has gone by priority to assist "cold war" and post-cold war countries. The enormous needs for our neighbors to the South and for the African continent have been second or third priority. While it makes sense to link US assistance to our national security goals and concerns, on balance the need to provide assistance for essentially political/strategic purposes has not always led to the best use of our funds from an economic/social development perspective.

Now that the cold war is over the criteria for allocation of resources should be carefully reviewed and new criteria and priorities developed to meet the new situation. President Clinton often refers to getting our nation ready for the 21st Century. The US foreign assistance strategy, priorities and estimates of resources required need to be overhauled in light of the new world situation.

Q: What do you think is the most urgent problem facing developing countries today?

BROWN: I'm convinced that it is getting their population growth under control - especially in Africa. I realize that this is a politically charged subject both in the US and in the developing world, but the I believe the seriousness of the problem is indisputable. Most developing countries whether in Africa, Asia or South America have populations that are doubling every twenty years or so. Even in the few developing countries with increases in agricultural and industrial production which match their population's annual increase, there is little or no hope that they will be able to keep up with increased demand for food; the infrastructure needs for their populations in the fields of: transport (buses, trains, internal airlines, major roads, farm to market roads, etc.); public health - hospitals, primary health care facilities, vaccination programs, public health information programs; and education: overcrowded (sometimes non-existent) primary schools, limited secondary education not to mention increased demand for higher education geared to modern times. The population age profile in most of the LDCs shows that more than 50% of the people are under 15 or 16 years of age.

Looking to the 21st Century , the outlook is grim, particularly for Africa. With the rapid growth in communications, technology and the transport of hi tech/mechanized factories to the third world countries, the demand for manual, unskilled labor is diminishing rapidly. In many third world countries even in the field of agriculture, many hi tech solutions are being applied. While the need for skilled workers in LDCs on the increase, the demand for unskilled services is declining rapidly. Increases in productivity, and production are helpful, they are no match for the dramatic increase in the LDC populations.

Drastic action is needed: leaders of the developing world need to be aware of the sinister economic, social, and political implications of run-away populations if they aren't checked. It is in the interest of the developed world to help solve this problem. While there are a number of good examples of economic progress in Asia, and Latin America, the probability is that these economic advances will be wiped out on a per capita income basis by the unbridled population growth in these countries. Just think what would have happened in China, if they had not controlled their growth rate. If they had not adopted very stringent measures, China would have a population of 3 billion Chinese today instead of 1.5 billion.The technology for controlling the population problem is available: contraceptives, extended breast feeding, morning after pills, lowering of child mortality, condoms, etc. The crux of the problem lies in the cultural and social perception of family planning (birth control) - not only in the LDCs, but in the US as well. It is the political difficulties and scarce resources, rather than the technical know-how which is slowing down the worldwide reduction of the population.

Q: I understand the seriousness of the population problem, but what can one government Agency (USAID, for example) realistically do about it? The political, social and religious obstacles to utilizing the full range of technical solutions you mentioned are enormous.

BROWN: That's right! The hurdles are extremely high, but so are the stakes for the world (including the US), especially if the population in the developing world continues to double every 20 years.I don't think there is any quick fix. However, the developed world can and needs to do more to help now. More financial and skilled resources as well as equipment and supplies are needed to solve this problem, preferably with a minimum of strings attached to their use.

Step by step progress can be made if the global and national implications of this problem continue to be brought to the attention of the leaders of third world countries, as well as the leaders of the developed world including the US. For example, although in general the male dominated Muslim world tends to be against family planning (birth control), in Egypt a number of the Muslim clerical leaders have supported it - especially those from the urban areas. Perhaps they could be enlisted to help convince Mullahs and Imams from other countries. In the early '70s, our USAID mission sent a team of Afghan Mullahs (priests) to Cairo, to meet with their counterparts and discuss family planning and its compatibility with Islam. We got mixed results. The better educated Afghan Muslim mullahs from the urban areas endorsed family planning, and those from the rural areas (generally the least educated) were against it.

Several years ago, under one of the AID family planning projects, the leaders in Nigeria, received a candid briefing about the damaging economic and social impact of their country's "three percent plus" population growth rate. As a result, the leaders were brought around to support a vigorous contraceptive and condom program which included television advertising on prime time television.

Even in developing countries with strong religious and social mores against use of contraceptives (birth control), there are measures that can be taken such as extending the breast feeding time of mother's and their children. This not only leads to healthier mothers and babies, it delays pregnancies and as a consequence leads to fewer children.Over time, significant progress in slowing the population growth in the developing world, would diminish significantly the population pressures - ergo, lower the need for developmental and emergency food assistance.

Q: You served over ten years of your career in Africa? Many African countries seem to be lagging behind the rest of the developing world. Would you like to comment?

BROWN:The sub-Saharan countries are generally starting way behind the goal line. Most of the infrastructure is limited - i.e., sea ports are inadequate, there is a shortage of roads, especially between African countries, and the few railroads that exist link the seacoast with the interior, but not between countries. Perhaps more important is the lacuna in the field of education - literacy rates continue to be less than 50% in many countries. There are a critical lack of educational facilities for the burgeoning population, not to mention lack of primary health care facilities. Illiteracy is a big problem, in teaching new techniques and technology. In addition, electric power and telephone facilities are clearly antiquated and inadequate. Many of the sub-Saharan countries were colonized late in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and the colonial powers really did not get around to installing adequate road systems, ports, railroads, etc., before independence was granted by after World War II.

To put it candidly, over the last twenty five years, African leadership has not always been up to the task of managing their countries limited resources, and corruption has been and continues to be a major problem. Mobutu's corrupt, 35 year reign in Zaire which just ended, is a case. As, natural resource wise, the richest country in sub-Saharan Africa, Zaire is an extreme case in point. Based on its wonderful natural resource base, Zaire should be one of the riches countries in Africa. Today, it is one of the poorest. It is not clear that life will be better under the new leader, Kabila, who is a known Marxist.

The socialist orientation in many LDCs has been bad for their development. Government enterprises, or collective farms have been notoriously inefficient. This tendency of many a less developed area leader to resist a market oriented development strategies has further delayed development of their economies, and in a number of cases led to their downfall.

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, inherited a relatively well developed country with a significant number of trained Nigerian civil servants, and excellent in-country training facilities. However, shortly after independence the military assassinated the British trained Oxford/Cambridge Nigerian leadership (the whole cabinet). Since then, military, and short lived civilian governments, have not been up to the task of governing their country. In spite of a vigorous, relatively well educated population, Nigeria has missed many opportunities to move ahead, and seems to be embroiled in yet another political turmoil (i.e. read quest for power).

Q: You described the problems fairly succinctly, but what's the solution(s)? Any ideas?

BROWN: An additional comment or two on the problem and then I'll address one approach to finding a solution. On the positive side, I think that donors in the last 10 to 15 years have become much more sophisticated, and are much more adept in combining the economic, social and political realities in the development of practical development plans with benchmarks built in to enable the recipient country and the donors to monitor the progress. Also, success is no longer measured simply by the amount of increase in GNP, other factors such as civil liberties, environmental effects, child labor, etc. have become part of the equation in evaluating the success of a program. With computers, improved satellite communications, it's easier to design, modify and monitor these factors for agreed upon development plans.

In recent years USAID has become much more skilled in using its inputs as a catalyst to raise other contributions and help obtain the internal reforms necessary for economic development. However, all of this has come at a time of diminishing foreign aid. Also, our annual contribution arrears to vital international organizations such as the UN (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, etc.), IBRD and IMF has severely limited our leverage. The last time I looked at our per capita aid contribution worldwide, the US had slipped from the top 10 to 23rd in world. More and more of our limited development related resources are earmarked in advance to two or three countries. For example, about two thirds of our AID's development budget goes to Egypt and Israel. Russia and the newly independent states of what was formerly the USSR represent new high priority claims on resources. The little that is left is divided up between Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Central and South America. Africa (apart from assistance to the Republic of South Africa) appears to have been given the lowest priority.

I understand that it is going to be a " very, very hard sell, for the Administration to convince Congress to vote larger foreign assistance for developing countries, particularly at a time when our attention has been distracted by peace-keeping exercises such as: Haiti, Bosnia, and Somalia, to name a few. Also US public sentiment seems to be at an all time low in the support of using tax-dollars for domestic welfare programs, not to mention assistance for those "strangers" in foreign countries who don't have a vote.

I don't have any magic wand to wave and solve this vital and growing critical gap between the developed and developing world, especially on the African continent. As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Marshall and contemplate its Legacy, we can perhaps hope and pray that:

"Just as the US (Executive Branch, Congress and the average citizen), after World War II (1947), committed an important share of its GNP to help Europe get back on its feet; perhaps we can persuade the "have" nations (US, Canada, Europe, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, etc.) to make an multi-national, all out effort to assist the "have not" nations. While any such long term program would require the support of the people of the developed countries, given the right leadership this could be done. Together, the developed countries certainly have the human, financial and material resources to solve this problem, if they are so minded."

Impossible! No. Will it be easy? No. However, as the world gets smaller and smaller and smaller, and international trade, and environmental considerations in the LDCs become paramount to our own well-being as well as to the other developed countries, it should be possible to make a "self-interest" argument. For example, one could point out that in helping the third world become good trading partners such as Japan, South Korea, Mexico, the benefits from increased trade far outweigh the costs of the economic and humanitarian assistance. In addition, China, Indonesia, India, and Vietnam, are waiting in the wings, waiting to play their roles as major players on the international export scene.

We will have to become more creative, flexible and knowledgeable as we work out our strategies to help the third world. While this may sound like heresy, it may be that "benevolent dictators" devoted to free market economies will be more effective in some cases, than insisting on full fledged democracies before economic development takes place - look at Singapore and its single party, or Hong Kong under British tutelage. Immediate adoption of "free market economies", with minimal but progressive steps towards full civil liberties" may be a better formula in some cases.

Q And who is to do all of this "educating"?

BROWN: It should be a bipartisan effort which includes a strong input from our academic community, especially those colleges and universities which participated over the last 35 years in the world-wide development effort. AID is very much in touch with these academic institutions. During the Kennedy years, executive branch staffers worked closely with AID, Peace Corps, USIS, State to establish and move the administration's outreach programs abroad. Congress went along with these initiatives. However, in the '90s Congressional staffers and subcommittees would have to be involved at an early stage.

One way to get started would be for the Secretary of State, on the proposal of the AID Administrator, would ask the President to initiate a "prestigious task force" (with adequate support staff) to draft a joint bipartisan proposal involving the executive branch, congressional staff, congressmen and women, known leaders form the academic and business communities, etc.). They would be given a year to produce a program and budget (both domestic and international in character) to begin implementation in the 21st century.There might be a need for a subcommittee for Africa. Informal contact would, of course, be maintained with other potential donors, to assure that Committee recommendations were realistic in an international context as well as in the US domestic scene.

My "best of all worlds timing" for the above approach is urgent. The US and its partners should be ready to move ahead and start implementation of a reinvigorated aid program to help the developing world by the end of the twentieth century. Implementing such a timetable would be difficult to say the least. However, it is well worth it from the US and developed countries points of view: As mentioned earlier, this action is needed not only from a humanitarian standpoint, but also from an economic, political and social points of view.

Q: Before we close, I would like to conclude with a question about your wife and family. Did they like overseas life and were the hardships worthwhile? For example, would they do it over again willingly?

BROWN: We asked our three children at a family reunion several years ago, if we could do it over again, would they have preferred being raised in the US and having attended school here. The two boys (Chris and Greg) graduated from Kabul International School, and Valerie finished seventh grade at the French school in Abidjan. They were unanimous in saying they enjoyed their upbringing abroad, their friends in the international community and had wonderful memories of those formative years. Two of our three children live and work abroad today.

Our oldest son and his wife joined AID as management interns when they completed their advanced degrees at Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. They are now assigned to the USAID in Haiti.Our second son is married and works in Singapore as a senior buyer for Darden Restaurants (Olive Garden and Red Lobster Restaurants). He travels all over South East Asia. Our daughter works in San Francisco for Levi Strauss, but would love an overseas assignment. All three read, write and speak French fluently. The two boys speak Farsi (Persian), and a fair amount of Urdu. Our son in Haiti has picked up Creole, and our son in Singapore is learning Mandarin.

Franï¿½oise, my wife and co-worker for all those years abroad, says she has wonderful memories from our different assignments in Africa, Asia and the subcontinent. We still have many friends from AID and State as well as from the countries in which we served. Yes, we would be willing to do it over again.

Having said this we have enjoyed living in the US for the last 20 years - in New England, the Washington, DC area and now California. We both agreed there is no place like the U.S., our home.

End of interview