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

G. EUGENE MARTIN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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Q: Today is September 21, 1999. This is an interview with G. Eugene Martin. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Well Gene, we'll start at sort of the beginning. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

MARTIN: I was born in Indianapolis, actually Speedway, Indiana, which is right next to the racetrack outside of Indianapolis, during the war, in 1943. My parents were missionaries in India, and they had returned in 1941, just at the beginning of the war, for furlough back in the States. Caught in the States and not able to go back to India during the war, my father took a church in Indianapolis. We were living there when I was born.

Q: What denomination was your father?

MARTIN: He was American Baptist.

Q: Yes. Where had they been working in India?

MARTIN: They were in what is now Andhra Pradesh, then it was called Hyderabad. It was about 180 miles north of Madras (now Chennai), on the east coast of India. My parents were third generation missionaries in the same area of India so that essentially was "home." My great grandfather had started the work in that town. I guess this is how I became interested in foreign affairs.

Q: Yes. Well, what was it like growing up in Speedway?

MARTIN: Well, I didn't really grow up there. We left when I was six weeks old and moved to Kansas to my maternal uncle's house because my father was preparing to go back to India before the war was over. He went back in early '44, but women and children were not allowed to go. So my mother, elder brother and I moved to Kansas to stay with her brother on the farm until the end of the war.

Q: So, well, I mean, you were pretty young. By the time you started being at the age where you remembered things, where were you?

MARTIN: We went out to India when I was two on an empty troop ship going out to pick up the troops from the CBI (China-Burma-India) theater. The troop ship docked in Bombay, father met us there, and we took the train home.

Q: Yes. Where was home?

MARTIN: Home was, at that time, a small town in India called Kanigiri, where we lived for a few years. That was where I have my first memories.

Q: Yes. What do you recall first memories? Sort of family life or?

MARTIN: I guess the most vivid one is when I found some red chilies out on the back porch one day. Not knowing what they were, I popped several in my mouth. I instantly found out what red chilies were all about. I probably ate a whole stalk of bananas to moderate the heat.

Q: Well, that's down in the chili belt, isn't it?

MARTIN: Well, the hot Madrasi curry is famous in that area.

Q: Where did you start going to school by the time you were put into kindergarten or whatever?

MARTIN: My mother taught my elder brother and me initially, using the Calvert course, the famous correspondence school out of Baltimore.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: I studied in the Calvert system from kindergarten through third grade, my brother and I in the class taught by my mother.

Q: How old was your brother?

MARTIN: He's about a year and a half older than I am.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: My mother was the teacher, and a strict disciplinarian. She kept the distinction that she was the teacher in the classroom and not mother, so we had to behave, sit properly, and not look for motherly attention. That was for about three years. We went back to the States in 1950 for furlough and spent a year in Ohio, where I went to fourth grade. In 1951, we returned to India and entered boarding school in Kodaikanal, one of the boarding schools in the hills of South India.

Q: Yes. Well, as a very young kid, what were you getting from your parents, and your own observations, about the part of India you were in?

MARTIN: Well, I was aware of what was going on, albeit at a child's level of comprehension. I remember when Gandhi was assassinated. I remember the emotion that overwhelmed the populace, both Indian as well as foreign. I remember independence. We didn't have a radio and TV was many years away from India at that point. But we had newspapers and magazines, and occasionally a radio notice would tell us what was going on in the world. One of the other missionaries had a radio which we heard occasionally. I remember listening to that, or watching and reading about independence, political movements, Gandhi, and so forth. I was very young, only six or seven, but it left an impression.

Q: Yes. The great separation between the Muslims and the Hindus and all didn't take place down there, did it?

MARTIN: That was mainly in the north. However, Hyderabad was still ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad, the local maharajah, who was Muslim as was a large percentage of his populace. Quite a number of families did leave for Pakistan during partition. I don't remember that too vividly myself because there were not many Muslims in our particular area.

Q: Did you have an ayah?

MARTIN: Oh, well, not really. Peter was our cook, his wife Deenama helped with the cleaning, and a gardener cared for the garden. My brother and I ran around in short pants and bare feet, and climbed trees, and played with the cook's son, George, who was our best friend. We had just a normal childhood.

Q: Yes. What about language? Where you picking up any language?

MARTIN: One of my proudest moments was helping my father find the right Telugu word for "chimney" for one of his sermons. I can't remember why he was speaking about chimneys, but I knew the word instantly, and he had not learned that in his language class. I was quite fluent, with an eight-to-ten-year-old's vocabulary, in Telugu, which was the language spoken in the area.

Q: How old were you when you went to boarding school?

MARTIN: I had just turned eight, on the ship coming back from the States in 1951. My mother felt that she had taught us as much as she could at that stage, so we went off to boarding school in Kodai, as it was called, a hill station.

Q: What was the boarding school like?

MARTIN: Missionaries started it in 1902. They recently celebrated their centennial. There were probably about 100 students, mostly missionary kids but quite a wide variety of children - oil company dependents from the Middle East, missionary and business children from all over India as well as from Burma and Thailand, and even a few from East Asia. Most were American, a few Europeans and Asians, almost no Indians in those days. One of my brother's roommates was a Thai who became a well-known banker in Bangkok.

Q: Well, while you were at the school, was there sort of the old...things must have been changing quite a bit as things became more Indian rather than, you know, sort of, the rajah had gone and all. I mean were you feeling that as this school _____?

MARTIN: A little, but not too much. I was there from 1951 to '56. I finished eighth grade and then came back to the States for high school. But yes, there was some change, but Kodai was really in a kind of a time warp. There were many retired British civil servants, quite a few Anglo-Indians who lived up there. It had very much of a British feel to it cottages, English gardens, country walks, the Anglican church, and so on. It was quite isolated from the rest of the country in many ways. But over the five years I was there, I did notice an increasing number of Indians building and owning houses in Kodai.

Q: How about your teachers? Were there any Indians within the teaching ranks?

MARTIN: Not really. I think there may have been a couple, who may have taught Indian history, but I recall most of them were foreigners. We had a number of Europeans who had come from Europe either during or after the war and stayed on - a Czech, a Pole, who was a musician, a number of other people who were quite interesting. They helped broaden our perspective of the world.

Q: Did you feel sort of plugged in to what else was happening in India, or was it pretty isolated?

MARTIN: It was pretty isolated! There really wasn't much contact with the rest of the country and world. We had our sports, activities and social events. We were fairly self-contained.

Q: Well then, you went back. You were how old? Had you finished eighth grade?

MARTIN: I had just turned 13. Let me here comment that while I was in India I had my first contact with the Foreign Service. We used to go into the consulate in Madras for passport services or to register. That was my first recollection of the Foreign Service of the State Department. It made a big impression on me because I always awed when I went into the consulate. I was eager to talk to the people who were issuing the passports. I guess that stuck with me through the years because later on, when I was thinking of a career, the memories kept coming back to me.

Q: Yes. Did you get to travel around much or?

MARTIN: We did some, not a lot. Before we left India my parents took my brother and me to New Delhi so that we could see the sights, something we always wanted to do. It was quite an excursion by third class coach on the train, but that was an experience, in itself, with hard seats, coal smoke coming in the open windows, beggars reaching hands through the windows at stations. But we didn't get to Kashmir, as we wanted to; we didn't get to Dehar Dun; lots of places in India we would have liked to have visited, but did not.

Q: Did you get any feel at that time...I mean, well, actually in retrospect, of course...about the impact of missionaries, in particular, that part of southern India?

MARTIN: Despite coming from a long line of missionaries, three generations since my great grandfather opened the mission station in 1866, I had fairly strong feelings, as did my parents, that the time of the foreign missionary was coming to an end. It was time for the Indian church to be run, controlled and manned by the Indian Christians. Christians are a very small minority in Hindu India, of course.

The big mission hospital in our town was probably the only one in over a hundred miles, over Indian country roads. My mother was deeply involved in education. The mission ran quite an extensive mission school system, from kindergarten through high school and teachers' training school. She also was active in evangelism, preaching, as she said, the gospel first and family planning second. She felt strongly about family planning as she saw the problems caused by unrestrained population growth and the resulting perpetuation of rural poverty and disease. And in her spare time she literally pitched in and personally supervised construction on school buildingdorms, classrooms, and offices.

Q: Did you get any feel for Baptist versus Anglican versus Catholic versus, and I mean all of these inter Nicene Christian conflicts?

MARTIN: Early in the century missionaries adopted a policy that might be called "divide and conquer." They carved up India, not extraterritorially, but ecclesiastically. The Baptist in our area, the Episcopalians further south, the Presbyterians over on the Bombay side, etc. Occasionally, again toward the end of my time in India, we had a number of what we called itinerant missionaries come through and hold services. My parents always looked a little bit askance at them, perhaps being conservative in the sense that this is our turf, don't come in it.

Q: We'd own it.

MARTIN: I think the important thing was an increasing sense that, as a very small minority, Christian churches in India needed to work ecumenically. If they fought among themselves, proselytizing was going to be even more difficult.

Q: Did you have any feeling for the impact of the missionaries?

MARTIN: I think the missionaries provided a tremendous service in terms of education, in terms of medical services, and to a degree, in infrastructure. My mother built many school buildings, personally out there supervising in the sun, walking up and down the planks, and making sure they did it right. Going back four generations, my great grandfather, who was an engineer by training, was hired by the British colonial government to build part of the Buckingham Canal, a coastal waterway, to help relieve a famine in the 1870s. He supervised the building of five or ten miles of the canal, feeding and paying several thousand workers. That was a physical infrastructure improvement, which is still in use. In general, however, missionary schools, hospitals and social contributions helped India modernize. And most of their work was in rural areas or small towns, which still lag behind urban centers.

Q: In a way, it's off to one side, but how long did your parents continue to be active missionaries?

MARTIN: My father died and is buried in the same Indian town in which he had been born and married, in 1966, the year I joined the Foreign Service. My mother stayed on and finished her term in 1971. They had been there about 40 years.

Q: Oh boy! Well, then, taking you back - you're about 13, and you're back to where? Ohio?

MARTIN: When I left India to go to school in the U.S., I was just thirteen. My parents took my brother and me by train to Bombay. We entered the airport terminal, the first time we'd ever been in an airport terminal, boarded a Super Constellation with "TWA" marked on the sides in big letters, and waved goodbye to our parents, India and childhood. We took off on our very first plane flight, and flew for 48 hours, including 8 stops, all the way to New York City. It was quite an adventure for a 13-year-old and his older brother. In New York, our uncle and aunt met us as our parents had arranged for them to be our guardians when we were in the States. We went to Washington D.C. to see a cousin, which was the first time we'd been to Washington, to Williamsburg to learn a little American history, and finally to Pittsburgh where they lived. I still clearly remember that trip. After a few weeks, they took us to our boarding school in New Jersey, where we went to school.

Q: While you were in India, were you getting much in the way of Americanization, you know, American history, states, capitals, and that sort of thing?

MARTIN: W studied U.S. history and society in seventh and eighth grade social studies. I had a social studies teacher in the eighth grade, who was from the town of Corn, Oklahoma. We were studying Indians, and I decided to report on an Indian tribe. I researched the subject but had no idea how to pronounce the tribe's name. So I began my oral report by saying, "My report is on the See-ox Indians." I thought the teacher would fall out of his chair. Once he set me straight about how to pronounce the Sioux [pronounced Sue], we moved on. We learned the U.S. capitals and states, more than we did the geography and history of India unfortunately.

Q: Yes. Well now...what was the name of the boarding school and how long were you there? From when to when?

MARTIN: In New Jersey, the boarding school was the Peddie School, in Hightstown, Exit 8 of and within earshot of the Turnpike. I was there for my four years of high school, graduating in 1960. This is the school to which Walter Annenberg gave a major donation a few years ago.

Q: What was Peddie like?

MARTIN: Its one disadvantage was being a boys' school. I wanted to become American quickly so I started listening to popular music, dated a local girl and started playing football. My football career started embarrassingly when I ran onto the field the first day with my fiber helmet on backward, to the bemusement of the coach. Thankfully he turned my helmet around and showed me how to play football, which I did for four years.

Q: What studies? What were you interested in?

MARTIN: In high school I was quite interested in mathematics. I did well in maths, but I also liked history and sciences. I had an excellent English teacher who gave us several contemporary authors to read. I particularly remember Salinger and The Catcher in the Rye and Franny and Zooey. It was a good experience.

In terms of external influences, one thing I did volunteer for was the Civilian Ground Observer Corps. It was part of the New Jersey Civil Defense system. Our job was to watch for Soviet bombers. We had a little hut on the roof of the tallest building on campus from which we watched the skies. Several of us organized the club. It was fun as we thought we were part of a secret national defense network. We would go up there in the evenings with binoculars, and if we saw a plane, we would call the National Guard headquarters to report the type of plane, its direction and any other information we could see. That was all quite exciting. We never did see any Russian Bears or Bison bombers go over, but that was my first brush with national security matters. But when the jets came in, about 1957 I guess, and the 707s began to fly, we lost track because the airplanes flew too high and fast. I think they were long gone before we saw them.

Q: Was Peddie denominational?

MARTIN: It was Baptist originally, which was one of the main reasons we went there, because they gave my parents a good discount. We were both on work scholarships, which involved waiting tables in the dining room.

MARTIN: We had to work for it, but they gave them a good deal.

Q: Was Peddie...were they trying to sort of break the mold of the old fashioned prep school, where beds were made for you and, you know? I mean, did you feel that you were being prepared sort of for an upper class role, or?

MARTIN: No, I don't think so. I mean we basically had to work. Every morning we had a work time. The entire student body was assigned different jobs to clean up the campus. The first years I washed blackboards in the classrooms. In later years, my particular detail was to clean the chapel. Soon I was put in charge of the detail and so I was out there supervising the brass polishing, leaf raking, vacuuming, sweeping, etc. I felt it was a useful and educational experience for everybody to do something for the community. Many of my schoolmates were from what I would call privileged homes and had never done much of manual labor or chores.

Q: It makes good sense. Did you have any feel for where you wanted to go after that, or what you wanted to do while you were?

MARTIN: Not really. I didn't have much of a sense of what I wanted to do other than go to college since that is what a preparatory school is for. I did seriously consider applying for the Naval Academy during my junior year as I was quite interested in national security issues. I liked the navy and was interested in doing things overseas, seeing the world as you work. I researched how to apply for the Academy but never pursued it because 1) I didn't know any congressmen to appoint me, and [2] I had no connections to find one.

Q: So what did you do?

MARTIN: I applied to several colleges and was accepted by and decided to go to Kalamazoo College in Michigan. My brother the year before had gone on to the College of Wooster in Ohio.

Q: Well, what particularly attracted you towards Kalamazoo?

MARTIN: It is a small school, which I wanted and it was coed, a big factor! Peddie is now coed, but in those days it was not. We used to have weekend dances periodically with Saint Mary's and other girls schools but social life was rather limited.

My parents had come home on furlough for my brother's graduation in 1959 and rented a house, owned by the mission for missionaries on furlough, in Wooster, Ohio. Since I had not seen them for three years, I spent the summer there, then went back to Peddie for my senior year. I applied to Wooster, but decided it was time to break away from big brother and launch out on my own.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: So I particularly chose to go to Kalamazoo.

Q: Yes. You were at Kalamazoo from when to when?

MARTIN: I was there from '60 to '64.

Q: What was Kalamazoo like in the early '60s?

MARTIN: Small school, about 850 or 900 students at the time. They had a beautiful campus and a good academic reputation. While I was there the college initiated a foreign study program. It started my freshman year as a summer study program. My sophomore year the college introduced an innovative four-quarter system. Students attended year round on different schedules, including a two-quarter foreign study program, even for people who didn't speak foreign languages fluently. There were two sites in France and a site in Germany, Spain, Peru, Sierra Leone and England so people had a selection depending on one's language capabilities. French majors went to the University of Caen in Normandy while those who were not quite as fluent went to the university or the American Institute in Aix-en-Provence.

Q: Did you take a year or a couple semesters abroad?

MARTIN: I went to American Institute in Aix-en-Provence, France for two quarters of my junior year, from September until March. Because of Kalamazoo's quarter system, the academic calendar didn't mesh with the Institute's semester system, so we finished studying in January. During our time in Aix, we studied how to drink wine, sit at cafes and drink "cafï¿½ au lait," and other educational subjects, including improving our French.

When we arrived in September, three of us were assigned to live with a family outside of town. Since we needed transportation to and from school and town, we all bought motor scooters. On weekends we "scooted" all over southern France on our scooters and saw quite a bit of southern France. During our Christmas break, we went to Italy by scooter. I've never been so cold in my life, riding in snow one day, but we had a great vacation. We visited Genoa, Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome and Pisa before spending New Year's Eve in San Remo on the Italian Rivera on the way home.

Q: What were your impressions of France in those times?

Southern France is quite different from Paris. Aix was a good place to leisurely immerse oneself in the culture and language and to visit historical sights. My French did not improve significantly but it was an enjoyable eight months. Since we ended our studies in January and were not scheduled to begin classes in Kalamazoo until late March, we had about 10 weeks to travel, which gave us an opportunity to see other parts of Europe. Winter is not the best time of year to travel around Europe, but well worth it. Incidentally, we sold our scooters in Aix before leaving and bought Eurail Passes.

Q: And still, Europe was relatively cheap in those days.

MARTIN: Indeed, it was! Europe On Five Dollars a Day was the popular book. And it worked; you could do it!

Q: Well, did this sort of fix in your mind you have to get out if you want to travel?

MARTIN: I think so. It reminded me how much I like living overseas and doing things in different culture.

Q: What was your major when you were at Kalamazoo?

MARTIN: My major at Kalamazoo was political science with a minor in economics and a good number of history courses. I soon fell under the influence of Dr. Wen Chao Chen, a Chinese professor of political science. Dr. Chen had wonderful stories about serving with the U.S. Army during the war in western China in addition to being a great teacher. He awakened my fascination with China. That is how I developed an interest in China!

Q: Feel any nostalgia for India?

MARTIN: I do. I've been back a few times, but I guess I'm still more fascinated with China. The difference between the two is really quite dramatic, and I enjoy comparing and contrasting the two.

Q: Well, then, you graduated in '64.

MARTIN: Correct.

Q: So what...what did you do?

MARTIN: I had applied to graduate school. Because of Dr. Chen, I was mainly interested in China. So I applied to the University of Washington in Seattle for their Asian or Chinese program because I really wanted to learn Chinese. But the money ran out, and I did not have enough money, even to go to a state school, although tuition for out-of-state students was not that cheap.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: I went to the Maxwell School at Syracuse University in International Relations. They did not offer Chinese or an Asian focus, but it was a good program. I was able to attend Syracuse as I was hired into the resident advisor program, which covered most of my fees. I was a resident advisor in an undergraduate dormitory for one year. The second year they made me a dormitory director. I was in charge of a whole dorm, which kept me busy, since it was also the football team dorm. That made it quite an experience. During football season it was not a problem because the coaches would circulate among them with big whips and corral them into their rooms. After football season it did get a little bit rambunctious occasionally, but actually they were generally a good group. I got to know several of the people who went on to pro ball, like Larry Csonka. Most of them were quite decent people...just big! And we lost several phone booths and a few phones they ripped off the wall.

As I approached my second year, I wondered what I was going to do with a political science/international relations major with an emphasis on trade and as much East Asia as I could. One of my professors had been a China officer in the Foreign Service but unfortunately had been targeted by McCarthy. He was a good professor but a bitter man over his ruined career. Understandably, he did not encourage me to go into the Foreign Service. Jerry Mangone, the Dean of Maxwell School and a number of other people encouraged me to look at the Foreign Service. The choice really was to go on for a doctorate in political science international relations or the Foreign Service. I saw a notice for the Foreign Service exam, and I thought, "Well, I would go overseas. Let's give this a try." So I took the written exam in December 1965 and passed, then went on to the oral exam.

I vividly recall the oral exam. It was a panel three officers who asked me the usual panoply of questions: culture, history, political science, international relations, trade, art, literature, etc. I answered the best I could over about three hours, which was about the standard length in those days. I then left the room and waited and waited and waited. I began to get worried before they called me back into the room. Some of the questions they had asked were, "What are your recreational activities? What games do you play?" and "What to you read?" and so forth. When they called me in, they said, "We had a long discussion about you because we weren't quite sure that you were the right temperament for the Foreign Service. We thought you were too introverted, that you perhaps didn't have the outgoing personality that we need in the Foreign Service." And, had I considered joining the CIA.

I was taken aback by that, and said, "Well, frankly no! And I don't think that I would particularly like to do that, so I would prefer to join the Foreign Service." They said, "Oh, good! We just wanted to ask you. Given your preference, we will accept you." So they passed me although at the time it seemed like a qualified acceptance. Nevertheless, it was an acceptance, which made me very happy!

I continued to work on my master's degree the spring of 1966 while my security and medical clearances were processed. The State Department called for me to join the August 1966 entry class, which made it impossible to complete my thesis. I decided to join the Foreign Service before I finished my degree.

Q: Well, you came in in '66. What was your class like?

MARTIN: There were 65 officers in my August class. The June class, our class, and I think the October class, were all quite large. A lot of it was because of the need to feed Vietnam. Almost all the officers in the class ahead of ours went to Vietnam, to CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support). Maybe a third of our class went to Vietnam.

Q: What was the consistency of your class? Males, females, race?

MARTIN: The classes were not very representative or diverse in those days. We had six women in a class of 65; two of who, I think, were USIS (United States Information Service). Two them did not complete the course, one got married, and one resigned during the A100 course. In terms of racial composition, it was pretty white.

Q: What was your impression of the course in the Foreign Service that you got from the A100 course?

MARTIN: Well, I was keen and eager and filled with idealism, so I enjoyed it. The content of the course varied, of course, like all courses do. Some were good, some were memorable, some were not, but generally it was a good orientation course. When the course ended, the consular course did not start immediately, so I was assigned to the Operations Center for about a month. I found this valuable because it gave me an excellent overview of the department right from the start. Working in the editor's shop compiling the Secretary's Morning Summary, as well as occasionally serving as the Assistant Watch Officer (AWO) gave me a chance to see all the cables that were coming in as well as the steady flow of information in and out of the Department. Our operations center seems antiquated compared to today's. I was impressed as a new recruit.

Q: What was your attitude and the attitude of those in the class about Vietnam? Now this is '66.

MARTIN: I think most people did not have any problems with the policy, that they thought that this was something that needed to be done, and there was not much discussion.

Q: Were you asking for China or anything like that when you got there, or how did it work out?

MARTIN: One of the first tests new officers are given is the Modern Language Aptitude Test (the MLAT), which we took about the third day. I was not feeling well; maybe coming down with a cold that day so didn't do well. I think I got a score of 59 or so. When my JOT (Junior Officer Training) counselor asked what I wanted to do, I said, "I want to learn Chinese and eventually work in China." Looking at my score, he said, "Well...I don't know. You know, that's a hard language! Your score is not very high, and normally you need to have at least a 70 or a 65 before we can consider you."

I said, "I know it is a hard language, but desire, dedication and hard work should count for something." He replied, "Yes, yes. Don't call us, we'll call you." Or something like that. I left somewhat discouraged.

A few weeks later, we received our assignments. I had told them, "I'm single, young and healthy. Send me where you want Uncle Sam. I'm here to serve. Give me a hardship post." My rationale was to get a hardship post before I get married and have a family. I expected to go to Africa or some other difficult post. When we received our assignments, I was assigned to Hong Kong. I thought all my colleagues were going to knife me. Those who wanted to go to Hong Kong, or someplace like that, ended up going to the usual "winners," the Ouagadougous, or the Fort-Lamys. I was delighted to be going to Hong Kong.

However, the second part of the assignment involved French language training before going to Hong Kong. I thought, "Hmm? All these rumors about the Foreign Service assignment system are true. This doesn't make any sense!"

When I asked why, my counselor said, "Because you're not at a 3-3 level to get off probation in French. I had about a 2.

I decided it didn't make a lot of sense, but Hong Kong was not too bad at the end of the rainbow. I went to work in the OP center, waiting for the consular course to begin when I had a call one day from JOT saying my assignment had been changed.

I thought, "Oh, no! Now what! Where am I going? I'm off to Africa, or wherever."

"You're not going to take French. You're still going to Hong Kong, but we're going to give you Cantonese."

I paused, then said, "Cantonese?"

"Yes. You did want Chinese, didn't you?"

"But I meant Mandarin."

"Look! Do you want it or don't you?"

I made a quick decision, "I'll take it! I'll take it!" One leg up is better than none at all!

So that was my assignment. After the consular course, I was to go to Hong Kong in early December and start six months of Cantonese. I thought, "Well, okay. We'll start where we can start." And that's what I did. I got there just before Christmas, lived at the Mandarin Hotel in Hong Kong for almost a month, which was not too bad at $30 a day in those days, and started Cantonese language training in January 1967.

Q: You're the first person I've known who took Cantonese. This must have been a very small program.

MARTIN: It was a special program the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) contracted for at the Yale-in-China program at the Chinese University's New Asia College campus in Hung Hom, Kowloon. Only three of us studied Cantonese in this program. Sydney Goldsmith was the first, Joseph Moyle was the second, and I was the third.

It was an experimental program which was not continued after I finished. We all did quite well but FSI subsequently started teaching Cantonese at FSI in Washington.

Q: Was Cantonese the language of Hong Kong?

MARTIN: It is, and in much of South China - most of Guangdong Province, parts of Guangxi and Hainan Provinceas well as many of the overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.

The classes were very difficult. It was a six month course. We were in individual classes, just me and the teacher. The first three months were hell without another student to compare my progress against. But once I began to get the hang of it, it was much more satisfying because I could go as fast as I wanted or could. In the end, I ended up with a 2 level in spoken Cantonese, which was satisfying.

Q: Oh, yes. Were you also learning to read?

MARTIN: A little, yes during the last two or three months. The emphasis was on spoken, I think mainly because of the consular work in Hong Kong, and also because I was assigned as a rotational officer during my two year tour. My assigned rotation was to be: first six months Cantonese, the second six months consular, then the economic section and finally the political section. Unfortunately, rotational programs tended to run out of money after awhile. I finished the language training, did my six months in consular, and had just moved into the economic section two weeks before the money ran out and the program was terminated. Otherwise, I would have been "trapped" in the consular section for an extra year. My Cantonese proved useful for consular interviews in Hong Kong as well as my next post in Rangoon and, years later, in Guangzhou. It is an enjoyable language to have, especially for ordering good Chinese food.

Q: Let's talk about the overall operations of our consulate general in Hong Kong. What was your impression of the people there, the consul general, and others?

MARTIN: Well, it was quite impressive. The consul general was Ed Rice, who was a well-known and well-respected China officer with a wealth of knowledge and experience. The deputy principal officer in Hong Kong in 1966 was Allen Whiting, a China scholar and professor at University of Michigan. He had been given a limited appointment, as I understand it, in the Foreign Service. He was in INR before coming to Hong Kong. He was very solid in terms of his China expertise. And this, you must remember, was in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, so it was really an exciting time in Hong Kong. The political section had some strong officers: Nick Platt, Dick Nethercut, Charlie Hill, Burt Levin and Curt Kamman, who had studied Mongolian and along with Stapleton Roy, hoped, in vain ultimately, for a Mongolian assignment.

The economic section, which I moved to in January '68, my second year, was headed by Dwight Scarbrough. He did not have a China background. He had one of those "golden" Foreign Service careers that we all thought we would get when we joined. He was a COCOM (Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls) expert. He joined the Foreign Service in '39 and after a one year assignment to Panama, spent the rest of his career in London, Paris, and Rome. He was finally sent to Hong Kong under Kissinger's Global Outlook Program (GLOP) where he ended his career. Dwight's COCOM experience was useful in HK during that period as we still had rigorous trade sanctions against trade with China. The China specialists in the economic section included Al Harding, who had been on the Dixie Mission to the Chinese Communist outpost in Yenan during the war, Gerry Monroe and Bob Sardinas. It was a good section in which to start my professional career.

Q: Tell me about consular work, what all six of the vice-consuls in Hong Kong got to deal with a major problem - and that is, that the Chinese want to go to the United States.

MARTIN: They certainly do. It was a factory, but not as cold and impersonal a factory as now. In those days, it was quite civilized and more even paced. Applicant numbers have grown phenomenally since then. In my days, we had applicants come in and sit down in our offices across the desk from us - no windows with bulletproof glass and stand up, 30-second interviews. People would come in, sit in the waiting room until called, then sit across the desk from you to be interviewed. I was in the non-immigrant visa section, so interviewed students and tourists. Three officers worked in the NIV unit - Dick Schenck, a well experienced consular officer, Gordon Powers, and me when I replaced the other Cantonese speaker, Joe Moyle. It was am amicable group

But when you don't have a window between you and the applicant sitting across the desk from you, difficult situations occasionally arose. I remember one particular woman's application was refused and the vice consul said, "I'm sorry, you can't go. Please leave."

"Well, I'm not going to leave."

"Please the interview is over. You need to leave."

He got up to signify it was time to leave, but she fell to the floor and wrapped her legs around the leg of the desk. So the guards were called, and ended up dragging this woman across the floor, along with the desk which she refused to release. It was quite an unforgettable scene.

Q: Was there much of a problem with fraud?

MARTIN: There was a tremendous problem with fraud. The Hong Kong consulate had done a study a year of two earlier on visa fraud. They concluded that the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire was probably the biggest boom to Chinese immigration. Every Chinese in the States at that time said, "I was born here, but my birth certificate and records were burned in the city hall fire." The study calculated that if all the claims were true. every Chinese woman in the U.S. would have had 600 sons; no daughters, just 600 sons.

Thus began the practice of buying paper names. The Chinese resident in the U.S. would return to China after a few years with American documentation. Upon his return to the U.S., since immigration quotas were based on family ties, he would tell immigration he had married and had four sons, no daughters. He would then contact his home village, usually one of the four districts of southern Guangdong, and say that in addition to the one of two sons he may have had, he now had two or three visa slots to sell. These slots were then sold off to the highest bidder. And "Mr. Lee" would pick up two or three other children, all now named Lee, even though their original family names might be Wong, Chen or something else. These people would subsequently go to the States as beneficiaries of the new "father" and upon returning to China, would keep the cycle going. Over the years, INS periodically had amnesty campaigns when people were urged to admit to their fraudulent identity so as to regularize their status. Many never did.

Another trick for applicants was to enroll in visa tutoring schools to memorize details about their fraudulent identity. During visa interviews, we each had a fairly standard sequence of questions:

"What is your name?"

"My name is Wong."

"When were you born?"

"I was born in 1932."

"Where were you born?"

"I was born in Toisan district."

After a while we decide to mix the order of the questions. So we'd ask, "Where were you born?"

"My name is Wong."

"What district were you born in?"

"Nineteen thirty-two."

"Good-bye!"

It shortened the interviews considerably. But fraud continued to be a tremendous problem.

Q: Yes. One of the problems that happens sometimes is that, particularly for young officers, they're not used to being lied to. I mean American kids normally don't have people looking you straight in the eye and lying to you. Often this affects people; makes you cynical.

MARTIN: It is hard not to become cynical doing visa work, then and now. It didn't bother me so much as I realized many of the applicants were desperate to immigrate, or go to school in the US to improve their lives. So I could rationalize their doing whatever was necessary to get a visa. The one thing that did bother me, given my background as a missionary kid, were the missionaries coming in and, if I may use a visa term, kowtowing for their candidates, members of their congregation, or somebody that they wanted to send, a friend, or what have you. And they would often, shall we say, stretch the truth a little. That was somewhat discouraging to me.

The other side of the story, of course, was the temptations for young, impressionable junior officers. Suddenly they were the most popular people in the consulate. They would be entertained to lavish Chinese dinners. They would be taken out on boats, on junk trips around the island, out in the harbor, all very impressive and enjoyable. They would be taken to wealthy people's homes for dinners and for entertainment. Sometimes it was difficult to keep them focused on what was right and wrong. And it's still a problem!

Q: On the economic side, one of the big things, of course, in Hong Kong was to make sure that Communist Chinese goods didn't end up in the United States.

MARTIN: That's right.

Q: This was big stuff in those days!

MARTIN: It was indeed. This was the foreign asset control operation, in which, when I moved to the economic section, I was involved. We had a Treasury representative who was the gatekeeper on all this. Everybody had to have the HK Government issued comprehensive Certificate of Origin (CCO), and nobody would dare go into the China resources shop. Occasionally we'd catch consular people gazing fondly in the window, but most people resisted the temptation; not all, but most did. And you had to be very careful about when you bought Chinese type products, to make sure that they had a CCO that said, "Made in Hong Kong."

Q: Yes, I would imagine that there was a pretty good trade in loaned certificates.

MARTIN: The Hong Kong government controlled the CCOs very well because they realized that this was the butter on their bread. If there was any diminution of the validity of the certificates, it could have a tremendously adverse affect on Hong Kong's trade. The U.S. was a big market for Hong Kong.

Q: Were there any reverberations of our work in Vietnam at that time?

MARTIN: Hong Kong was a big R&R destination for troops in Vietnam. We had a lot of soldiers in for several days, considerable air traffic and a steady series of ship visits. China criticized the colony's role in the war but never tried to stop or impede it as far as I know. The economic benefits to the colony were significant.

Q: Were you at all plugged into the China watchers?

MARTIN: To a degree, yes; more so my second tour in Hong Kong. The first tour, I was in the economic section. Consulate sections have been reconfigured several times over the decades I've been involved. Either they had an economic and a political section with both a Hong Kong and a China-oriented subsection, or they had a China watching section and a Hong Kong section, separating economic-political on one side and economic-political for China on the other. When I was there, the economic section did economics, labor and trade, both Hong Kong and China, and the political section did both Hong Kong and China politically. Neither way was perfect, but it generally worked. I was involved in various aspects of trade with China.

Q: How about...were you getting any feel for what was going on in the Cultural Revolution?

MARTIN: Very much so. The Cultural Revolution heavily influenced Hong Kong. We can spend a lot of time on this one if you like.

Q: I'll tell you one reason I'm interested. Yesterday I was interviewing the head of INR about the same time you were here, Tom Hughes. He was talking about Alan Whiting, when he was his China man in INR; I'm not sure before or just after.

MARTIN: I think he came to Hong Kong from INR.

Q: And he felt that, looking in retrospect, he was "the" expert on China attacking, or China crosses the Yalu, I think, was the name of the book.

MARTIN: It is a famous book.

Q: And that he was always telling Dean Rusk, "You have to watch China." And Rusk was inordinately nervous about China moving into Vietnam, when actually China was up to its neck in the Cultural Revolution.

MARTIN: It certainly was. It was not moving anywhere.

Q: It was not going to go anywhere. He felt that this wasn't a good influence, and Hughes takes some responsibility for sort of turning this over to Whiting, a play to Rusk's sensibility. So let's talk about that - what you were getting about the Cultural Revolution, particularly at that time.

MARTIN: It was the issue of the day, of course. Even those of us in the visa section were swept up by it. Alan probably worked most closely with Syd Goldsmith, who was in political section at the time, and was an active and creative officer. When I got there in the fall of '66, the Cultural Revolution had already begun in the mainland. The previous fall, Macau had exploded when the Red Guards came in. They literally papered over the British consulate with da zi bao, (big character posters) and generally bringing the colony to a standstill. Going to Macau at that time, one could see the entire wall of the consulate totally papered over. You couldn't see anything of the building because of the paper. The Hong Kong authorities followed Macau developments with a great deal of concern as they saw the role played by schools and labor unions. Leftist unions, Communist run schools, and Communist businesses and organizations in Hong Kong, which were numerous, were beginning to get more engaged because they too saw that they had to be more ideological and active. It was important politically for them to do what their comrades across the border were doing in southern China. It was a terribly turbulent, terribly disruptive period throughout China, as you know. When the Portuguese authorities in Macau were attacked, they, as I understand it, told the Chinese, "Okay. If you want to run it, it's yours. We are going to pack up, and go home. We don't need this."

And the Chinese said, "No, no. It's not time yet. The time is not ripe. We need you to stay on." And they forced the red guards to back off a bit later in '67. So the Portuguese were told, "You still have to run it." But basically the Chinese were operating behind the scenes.

In Hong Kong, the leftist "disturbances" started in April or May of '67, as I recall. The pretext was a labor dispute at the Star Ferry Boat Company. The leftist union, which employed or controlled most of the workers, went on strike. The management gave them a deadline to come back to work, or they'd be fired. When they did not come back to work and were fired, they set up picket lines against the Star Ferry. In a sense this had started the summer before, in June of '66, before I got there, when the Star Ferry increased fares from Hong Kong five cents to ten cents. Leftist unions were active in instigating the resulting riots. I think they began to feel they had the power to push the company around, for political as well as economic reasons.

Q: You might explain the reason why the Star Ferry was so important.

MARTIN: In 1966, before the cross-harbor tunnels were built, ferries were the only way to get across the harbor between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. You had the vehicle ferry for motor vehicles and the Star Ferry Co. for commuters and other passengers. By stopping the Star Ferries, the leftist felt they could shut the colony down.

They came close. I was going to language school across the harbor in Kowloon. Every morning I had to take the ferry across the harbor. When they went on strike, I sometimes had a difficult time getting to school. But the company quickly used strikebreakers or management staff to run the ferries on a skeleton basis. Also, rightist, the pro-KMT (Kuomintang-Chinese Nationalist Party), pro-Taiwan unions, came in to fill the jobs of leftist workers on strike. That obviously caused friction and some conflict between the two unions, often for political as much as for economic reasons. It was dicey for a while as to whether or not the unions were going to shut down the colony. Other leftist unions called for general strikes in support of the ferry workers as well as strikes against other transport companies. None of them succeeded because the government quickly clamped down on the unions. Failing to shut down the colony with strikes and many being fired, the leftists began to plant bombs around everything. On the Star Ferry, you'd find little paper bags in a corner. Some of them were just bogus - one had a snake in it; others had manure, others had just some wires. But some were real. Several members of the bomb squad were killed trying to defuse bombs on ferries, on corners of buildings, on sidewalks, and so forth. So it got rather tense for a while. People were skittish about things left on the sidewalk. It's similar to what we have now in many places of the world where you've got to be careful of bombs and incendiary devices.

The consulate was very much involved, working with the Hong Kong government, trying to analyze what was going to happen, whether or not the Red Guards were going to come pouring over the border. Gurkha forces were stationed along the Shenzhen River, guarding the border between China and Hong Kong. They were to make sure that there wasn't going to be a frontal assault, that there wouldn't be Red Guards coming across. The highest level of concern was probably the summer of '67, when the Cultural Revolution was at its heights in China. After that, either by intuition, or by actual messages, and I don't know, the British learned Zhou En-lai or the foreign ministry had put the clamps on, and the Red Guards were not going to be allowed to pour into HK. Zhou En-lai reportedly decided Hong Kong was not to be overrun, not to be taken over.

At that point, the British took off the gloves and went after the Communist leadership in HK. They detained or locked up many of the trade union people and school leaders as well as the NCNA (New China News Agency) people, many of whom I subsequently got to know on my second tour in Hong Kong. They incarcerated them, without trial, without any kind of legal process. They just detained them, some for up to a year or more. They raided trade union headquarters, which had been barricaded, sabotaged, booby-trapped. When police tried to go up narrow stairways to the second and third floors union officers in these tenement houses in Hong Kong, spears, iron bars, chemicals, explosives tumbled down on them. It was a messy business, but the government rounded up the leaders and pretty well had diffused the crisis by the fall of '67.

Q: Were you getting from your China watcher colleagues a feel for the chaos that was happening in China itself?

MARTIN: Yes, very much so. Hong Kong's advantage in those days, and for many years, is that people will talk to you in Hong Kong more than in China. When the U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) and the embassy opened in China; the difference became evident, that people in China were and remain reluctant to talk. The people in Hong Kong were much more willing. Refugees coming out of China or long time Hong Kong residents, who had still family members that they could keep in touch with in China, were more willing to talk. And some of the stories were horrendous.

Q: Well, what was sort of the feeling that you were getting from, particularly those who were talking to those people? What was this thing all about?

MARTIN: It soon became evident China was in chaos and central controls had broken down. It seemed Mao and the Gang of Four were trying to shake up the system, but it wasn't clear what their intent was, what the goal was. A lot of times it just seemed like anarchy with nobody in charge. This was such a difference from the way it had been before. Since 1950 everything had been tightly controlled. Even during the "Great Leap Forward," the Party maintained control. This was really very different as the Party itself was under attack from the Red Guards. Everybody was following this as closely as they could, but I'm not sure we ever really fully understood what was happening in China at the time.

Going back to your question about Alan and Dean Rusk, I think the threat was that the internal chaos in China could have resulted in the spread of Cultural Revolution fervor across China's border into Hong Kong, Vietnam, Laos or Burma.

Q: Well, you left there what, '69?

MARTIN: I left in December of 1968.

Q: Sixty-eight. Was there the feeling that, you know, you still wanted to be a China hand and all?

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: Well, was it a feeling that you'd ever go to China?

MARTIN: I was hopeful that eventually it would be possible. I still found dealing with China fascinating. I tried to finish my master's degree by working on a thesis, but never did complete it because I was involved in all that was going on in Hong Kong and China. I used my Cantonese and spent a lot of time out in the street following events. During the last year of my tour (1968), I was in the economic section following Hong Kong economic and labor issues.

Q: Were you precluded from talking to the leftist unions?

MARTIN: At that time, pretty much so. They wouldn't talk to us as most were dominated by radicals during the Cultural Revolution and were eager to prove they were as "red" as anyone else.

Q: What about other unions, center or rightist? How did we see them? Were they political or were they real unions?

MARTIN: Very few real unions. There was not much of a union movement in HK except for political reasons. The rightist unions were pro KMT, the leftist were pro-China, and there wasn't much in between. There were a few associations that tried to provide some services or benefits to workers, but very little. Hong Kong has never had a strong free union movement, and the government hasn't really encouraged or allowed it.

Q: As you were dealing with the unions, were you getting any support from American AFL-CIO representatives, who were always very interested in union activity?

MARTIN: Not at that time. I have no recollection that they really were in HK or involved at all.

I also was involved in the commercial side of things. I was tangentially involved in the founding of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong has become a very successful organization. I worked with the commercial section (then still part of the State Department) with quite a number of American businesses in my economic role

Q: How was the American business climate at that time?

MARTIN: During the Cultural Revolution, 1967, I would say, it was quite a nervous time, in terms of whether or not they would be able to maintain their presence there, and what would happen if there was the hoards coming across the border, and so forth. The old timers (and historians) were dusting off old World War II memories of foreigners' internment in Stanley Prison during the Japanese invasion. As the war proved, people realized Hong Kong is indefensible from an invasion from China. But by late '67, people were fairly satisfied that HK was going to continue, and their (business) survival was not going to be a problem. In early 1967, real estate prices plunged. It was a buyer's market. We had some British friends, who "begged, borrowed, or stole" every cent they could and bought a couple of apartment houses on top of Victoria Peak. We've been clipping coupons ever since. They got them for a song practically. It certainly changed a few years later.

Q: Well, then, in late '68 you left. Where'd you go?

MARTIN: We went on home leave and then were transferred to Burma.Assignments in those days were very different from today's open assignment system. Then they were made by Personnel in Washington the officer was informed, often at the last minute.

One day in mid-1968, out of the blue, I received a carbon copy of a letter Personnel had written to my draft board. My draft board, had written the Department, saying, "We here in western Michigan are running out of strong, able, young men. Where is Gene Martin? We'd kind of like to find him!" So the Department went through their BC (before computer) filing system and found that Gene Martin was yes! Lo and behold! In Hong Kong and was due for reassignment in December of 1968. I, in good Foreign Service tradition of course, had asked to extend my tour in Hong Kong since, having taken six months to learn Cantonese, had not put in two years' of service to the taxpayer, needed to improve my language capabilities, etc. All I got was a big horselaugh out of my request, since in those days there were probably 40 people waiting for my job in non-hardship post HK. Still the case no doubt.

So Personnel looked around, and said, "Well, let's see. He's leaving December. We've got to find an assignment for him." And they found me an assignment and wrote back to my draft board that Gene Martin was a vice-consul at the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong and was about to be assigned as the vice-consul in Rangoon, Burma. I guess that impressed the western Michigan draft board members. They probably looked at the letter after consulting the map and said, "Well, that's over by Vietnam. He's probably in the war already. So give him a deferment."

That was my first, and only notice, that I was going to be assigned to Burma as the vice consul. It just arrived in the mail. As it turned out, that was probably the longest notice I ever had about an assignment. It came almost six months before I was due to transfer, or six months before I was due to arrive in Burma, certainly. So I went on home leave and out to Burma. But first I had to break the news to my wife whom I had married half way through my assignment in HK.

Q: Yes. Where did you meet your wife?

MARTIN: I met her here when I was in A100. Two of the six women officers in our Foreign Service officers' class rented a five person apartment on Courthouse Road in Rosslyn. My wife was a college classmate with one and had just started teaching at Fairfax High School. So she moved into the apartment. Coincidentally, no doubt, about two weeks after the A100 bio list came out, all the bachelors were invited to a party at that house. The old phrase about shooting fish in a barrel comes to mind.

We dated for a while, and then I went off to Hong Kong. Being a teacher with the summer off, she decided to visit her former roommate, who had been assigned to Taipei. So she and some other friends visited Japan and Taipei, and since Hong Kong was just down the block, she swung by Hong Kong. We had a fast and furious courtship.

Q: What was her background?

MARTIN: She was a Spanish teacher. After Mills College in Oakland, she received a master's from Middlebury in Spanish by studying in Madrid. She taught Spanish at Kent State before moving to Washington where we met.

Q: So you went to Burma. You were in Burma from when to when?

MARTIN: We were in Burma from March 1969 until July 1971.

Q: What was the politico-economic situation in Burma at this time?

MARTIN: Dismal like it is now. Those are the good bad old days! Ne Win was back in power, having taken over in '62 from U Nu who was imprisoned until released and allowed to go into exile in Thailand.

The embassy was very small. We still had an USAID (U. S. Agency for International Development) mission, finishing university buildings and some infrastructure projects, mostly water. We had a small military equipment delivery team (MEDT), which is like a junior JUSMAG (Joint United States Military Advisory Group), still delivering military equipment, which had been paid for and was in the pipeline, but nothing new. The relations were not very warm; they were pretty strained. Burma was a very difficult place in which to operate.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

MARTIN: The ambassador was Arthur Hummel, Jr. on his first ambassadorial tour. Don Rinard was the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) succeeded subsequently by Ben Fleck.

Q: Yes. Well now, what were you doing there?

MARTIN: I was THE consular officer, a full two-year assignment. It was a one-man consular post. I had two FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) working with me. My predecessor, Scott Butcher, was still there when I arrived as he did not have a definite onward assignment. He was waiting to pack out of the house in which we were to live, so we lived in the hotel for abut a month. Finally, he got a message saying that, yes; they had found him an assignment - next door to Burma, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. As a reward, I guess, for his hardship tour in Burma.

Q: It was a consulate general at that time, yes.

MARTIN: It was a consulate general, in what was then East Pakistan.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: Anyway, he was happy to get the assignment. Subsequently, the evacuation and the civil war in Dhaka was a rather difficult period. But he was finally able to pack out and leave, and we moved into the house. During his two year assignment as the consular officer, Scott had issued, I think, a total of 200 visas. Unfortunately, about the time I arrived, the Bureau of Consular Affairs was asked by the Department of Labor to open what they called the Schedule C, a pre-certification of certain jobs which were in short supply in the United States. On this list, which was a fairly lengthy list of all sorts of things such as sheepherders (for the Basques probably) were two jobs which struck a chord in Burma. One was dressmaker and the other was automobile mechanic. Well, in Burma, since the last legitimately imported car was in about 1949, automobile mechanics were prevalent , particularly in the Chinese community. They all knew how to repair cars because they had to keep them running, usually with home made spare parts, spit and bailing wire. So almost every man could claim to be an automobile mechanic. And they came into the consular section with some of the most elaborate certificates from Oo Soo Lin's Automobile Mechanic Training School - all bogus, of course.

And the women, since there was little clothing to buy in the economy, had to buy material and learn to sew clothes. So they, of course, came in with certificates from Daw Fay Tsin's Sewing Class "proving" they were trained seamstresses. Therefore, I issued a lot of visas, mostly to Chinese, some Indians, very few Burmese, a few of the hill tribe minorities. In total numbers, the number of visas I issued was minuscule compared to what Hong Kong or Manila issue now. But I issued somewhere around 2,000 visas in the two years I was there - which was not a lot, but a lot more than the 200 my predecessor did! So I had a busy tour.

In addition, as the only consular officer, I was also a section head, which was nice. I attended all the country team meetings and was aware of what all the other sections were doing. I was also the post language officer, the protocol officer, and all the other things that nobody else wanted to do. It was good experience as I had much more exposure than most of my other junior officer colleagues. We were invited to all the national day receptions, which became rather tiresome, often with two or three a night. However, that was one of the few times we had contact with Burmese officials because the government was aloof, suspicious of foreign diplomats and difficult to approach. The isolated diplomatic corps had its own way of handling the receptions. You would see exactly the same people at each, so you'd say, "How have you been since I saw you half an hour ago at the other reception?" Or even more fun, you'd start a scurrilous rumor as you walked in the door saying, "Did you hear that so and so is doing such and such?" And you'd wait until you were about to leave an hour or so later, and you would see how this rumor had been contorted by being passed from lip to lip. It was the kind of games people played when there was little contact with reality.

Burma had a very unusual diplomatic corps in those days because it was totally nonaligned. In fact, it was so nonaligned it dropped out of the nonaligned movement, and became totally neutral. Therefore everybody was there. We had the East and West Germans, North and South Vietnamese, North and South Koreans, and I think everybody else, except the Nationalists from Taiwan. It made for some interesting receptions. Art Hummel used to say that the North Koreans always looked like they were wearing trench coats, even in that hot steamy tropical weather. Whether they were wearing them or not, they looked like it, and at receptions they would hunker down in a corner, all clustered together, as if they were, I'm sure, afraid to separate.

The East Germans were more sociable. My wife was talking amiably with a young lady, when somebody came up and whispered in the young lady's ear, and she said, "Oh, excuse me, I'm not supposed to talk to you." She pulled away saying she was from East Germany. My wife said, "We were having a nice conversation."

The Chinese were there, of course, and at that time we were just beginning to have some contact with the Chinese. It was allowed to smile and talk to them, but we couldn't have any substantive conversation, just be polite.

Q: Well, when you went to these receptions, were you and the other members of the embassy sort of given instructions to find out something, or was it pretty much pro forma?

MARTIN: It varied, depends on the circumstances and the reception. Occasionally during country team meetings the ambassador or DCM would mention that certain things were rumored or known to be happening so we would try to find out. It was good training, for we all had a chance to go around and try to buttonhole what Burmese officials showed up, and try to get information. They were pretty close mouthed and didn't say much.

Officials would never come to your house for a function, and they would almost never go out with you because they had to fill out reams and reams of paper, as to where they went, why they went, what they said, who said what to them, etc. A few I dealt with officially told me it was just too much trouble and too painful for them to meet socially. It wasn't anything personal, but the system prevented them from doing it. The receptions were really about the only time we had a chance to talk to officials. I had relatively regular contact with consular and protocol officials in the Foreign Ministry, occasionally even in their offices.

Q: How did Art Hummel run the embassy, and what was your impression of what he was imparting?

MARTIN: I thought he was very good. He was hands-on, but allowed officers to run their own sections. He was not domineering. He ran a collegial mission, and I admired him. He was my first ambassador and remains one of my favorite.

Q: Were you picking up any reflections there about the Vietnam War because the Tet Offensive had occurred in '68? We had the Nixon administration in and all that. Was that impacting at all?

MARTIN: As far as I recall, Vietnam did not impact very much on Burma policy. Actually there wasn't much policy. It was basically a holding action. We didn't have a lot of initiatives. Yes, Vietnam was something that we watched with interest. Thailand was a big country between the two, providing a good deal of separation. Occasionally, in my particular consular role, the war would reach our borders. One time we learned about an American who had been incarcerated in Moulmein, down on the panhandle of Burma along the Thai border near Three Pagoda Pass.

This was several weeks after he'd been not only arrested, but also tried and sentenced. We protested since the consular convention required the Burmese to inform us within a matter of days if not hours. It turned out the American was a GI (enlisted person of the U.S. armed forces), who had gone AWOL (Absent Without Leave) in Vietnam, had walked across Cambodia, across Thailand, and into Burma. I don't know how far he planned to walk! Maybe on his way back to Europe! He had reached Burma before he was picked up. The Burmese finally released him to our Defense Attaches who sent him back, where I don't know. I assume the Army stockade was probably more comfortable than a Burmese prison. The only other direct contact I had with Vietnam during my Burma tour was Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker's over flights to Nepal to visit his bride, Ambassador Carol Laise. The honeymoon flights would go back and forth; and we'd nearly always get their flight clearance request about 10 or 12. Somehow the Burmese would give the clearance in the middle of the night. Perhaps they wanted to support honeymoons.

Q: How about the students. I mean were they pretty well kept under the -

MARTIN: Very much so. On occasion they would protest, and the government would just either close the universities and send them all home, or arrest them. There was no messing around. This all came out, of course, in 1989, when they massacred National League for Democracy (NLD) protesters in the streets, right in front of the embassy.

Q: What about...was golf at all an entrï¿½e?

MARTIN: Only slightly. We did join the Rangoon Golf Club, which had the "hards" and the "browns", the terms we used for the fairways and the greens, at least during the dry season. In the wet season, it was in the swamps. But few, very little contact was possible with officials. The golf course was managed and controlled by the military, as was almost everything. The only real contact with the military was through our defense attachï¿½s, who played tennis with several of their contacts and would include others from the Embassy in the tennis matches. That was about the only social contact, almost totally non-substantive.

Q: Well, you must have felt like you were sort of out of this world?

MARTIN: Very much so, very much so. It was very isolated. I often said the Burmese government would have preferred to adopt the title of an old movie, "Stop the World. I Want to Get Off."

Q: Was there any feeling of "so what are we doing here?"

MARTIN: Occasionally. But I was busy enough with my visa applicants, and others in the Embassy found enough to keep their interest. We tried to keep up with the civil conflicts between the government and non-Burman minorities in the north, follow the continued economic denigration of the economy under the "Burmese Way to Socialism" (easy as it was all down hill), and the turgid policies of the military run government. Art Hummel, being a China specialist, also was much interested in what China was doing vis-ï¿½-vis Burma. Still, it was the Cultural Revolution, and China's foreign relations could hardly be considered normal. There were a couple of efforts by Chinese activists to stir things up in the Chinese community, which the Burmese stomped on pretty hard. The Chinese embassy remained remote behind their red walled compound, and we never saw much of them except at receptions.

Q: What did your wife think of this peculiar world?

MARTIN: She thought it was very strange. Quite different from Cleveland. Hong Kong had been enjoyable and when we were assigned to Burma, I told her I would take her "skiing in Austria...on the way to Rangoon." (the later phrase solto voce), but...well...it was difficult. But our first child was born while we were in Rangoon, so we were busy young parents.

Q: How about drugs? Because we did develop a certain amount of country narcotics cooperation with the Burmese, but were drugs an issue at all?

MARTIN: Not really, although there was some concern about it while I was in Burma. I subsequently did get involved in our anti drug cooperation.

While we couldn't see much of the government officials, we did have good contact with what I would call the former business community. When the military took over under Ne Win in 1962, they nationalized everything. I joined the Rotary Club. As you know, one joins rotary clubs as a representative of different sectors of business. You have manufacturing, import/export, hotels, rice milling in tropical countries, and so forth. Since all private enterprise had been nationalized, the Rangoon Rotary Club consisted of former import/export, former manufacturing, former hotels. Most of the Rotarians were Chinese and Indian since they had controlled much of the economy. The lunch meetings went on forever because they had nothing to do. They would meet Wednesday noon at the old Strand Hotel for a leisurely lunch. I had to leave after an hour and a half or so, but they would go on half the afternoon. It was an interesting entrï¿½e into the society because you did pick up a good deal of information about what was going on, what it was like to be in the Chinese community, what it was like to be in the Indian community, minorities the Burmese government was trying to push out as fast as possible. They nationalized all their businesses. They encouraged them to repatriate to their "native" countries although many had lived in Burma for generations.

The Chinese had a very difficult position because most of them were not pro-Communist. They did not want to go to the mainland, certainly in the middle of the Cultural Revolution, and very few of them had gainful employment. This is why I had a lot of visa business. With Schedule C, many people were able to immigrate to the States.

Q: Well, how would you check on their qualifications with all those fraudulent certificates? What would you do?

MARTIN: I would give them a test occasionally, have them come out and show me a car, or look at my car - I never had them work on my car - but I would see if they knew something about cars, give them some questions as to what would you do in such and such a case, and so forth. We were quite concerned, of course, about Communist agent infiltration, and we checked this as best we can. A major problem in Burma is names. As you may know, the Burmese do not have any surnames; there are no family names; everybody has a given name. One has no idea who is related to whom. The Chinese often Burmanized their names to avoid government or Burman discrimination. It became something of a concern as to exactly who was getting visas, and who wasn't. We tried to check backgrounds and relationships as best we could but it was far from ideal.

Q: Were you picking up anything about these insurgent groups, the Red Flags, or White Flags, and the tribal groups, and all that?

MARTIN: Absolutely! The variegated insurgencies, or as some people would say, "Everybody in hills are revolting!" And it was just about that. We had the Red Flag and the White Flag Communist groups; we had the Burma Communist Party; we had the people in Pegu, who were left over from the old Moscow oriented Communist Party, the BCP (Burma Communist Party) which was pro-Chinese. And that was just the communists, not including the ethnic minorities that wanted independence from Rangoon. The security situation was very bad, not as bad as it had been back in 19448 (around the time of independence, when insurgents were at the gates of the city), but there were lots of parts of the country to which one could not travel. The government controlled where the diplomatic corps could visit and did not allow us to go very many places.

Q: Mandalay - was this an area to go to?

MARTIN: Yes, we had a consulate still in Mandalay in those days. We'd go there. We'd go to Pagan, the old capital with the many pagodas; we could go to Pegu, which was a city fairly near to Rangoon; and we'd go to some of the hill stations, like Maymyo and Taunggyi and Kalaw, and so forth, basically the tourist sights, but not much beyond that. We could not get to the north of Burma. In fact, it was kind of funny, because when I was in Rangoon, we always wanted to try to get up near the China border, and the government would say, "No! No! Very dangerous! You know, Chinese Communists," and so forth. Years later I got there from the Chinese side. I stood on the border looking into Burma from the Chinese side, and thought, "This is a strange world. Times do change." [Laughter]

Q: [Laughter] What would a consulate be doing in Mandalay? I mean was it a one-man -

MARTIN: It was a one-man listening post more than anything else. In addition to showing the flag, the consul did some consular work and reported on what was happening in that part of the country. The consulate was one of five worldwide subsequently closed by the State Department for budgetary reasons, and then Congress said, "No, you have to reopen them all." So we tried to reopen Mandalay, but the Burmese said, "No!" So we no longer have a consulate there; still have the building, but no presence." But the Chinese have a consulate in Mandalay.

Life in Burma was not bad for a 25% hardship post although one had to bring in almost everything from abroad. The Embassy had a small commissary and we could use the attachï¿½ airplane, an old DC-3, to fly to and from Bangkok.

Q: Well, your wife had a baby. Did she have it in Burma?

MARTIN: No! He was born in Bangkok. A Sri Lankan diplomat friend of had a baby in Rangoon General Hospital, and that was really a sobering occasion! One had to bring everything except perhaps the bed frame and they probably should have brought that. Literally, they provided the mattress, sheets, bandages, medications, food, water, and everything else. It was pretty grim. The medical situation was extremely poor.

Q: Yes. Well, I guess you were ready for a little more bright lights or something by this time, in '71.

MARTIN: My two year assignment was up in March 1971. My successor had been named, but failed the physical, and so had to break his assignment. Art Hummel said, "I'm not going let you go until I have a contact replacement. You know that old story! But as the only consular officer, I understood his position. So I hung on; and the next person assigned resigned, refused to take the post, or something. Finally in late June they did get another candidate, who happened to be named Jimmy Carter. He did come out and replaced me.

In the meanwhile, I had had a difficult case in which I had to fire one of my FSNs caught engaged in fraudulent activities. She was substituting application documents that she would mark up at home, advancing people's priority date on the waiting list. To cover herself, she told applicants, especially in the Chinese community, that I was on the take. She said the cost was high because I was corrupt. Embassy colleagues heard the rumors in the community initially and we worked together to get evidence against her. We suspended the FSN and finally were able to break a couple of families by threatening them with permanent exclusion from the U.S. until they confessed to the scheme. We fired the FSN, which was too bad because she was a good worker and had been there 15 years. Two more years she would have been eligible for a special immigrant visa.

Q: Yes. Well, did the government interfere? I mean were people coming in and saying, you know, "I'm U Nu's cousin, and I want a visa," and that sort of thing?

MARTIN: Anyone leaving the country had to get an exit permit. They often had to give all their earthly possessions to the government official handling exit permits, pay bribes, or sell their goods and give the bribes to the official. Others were not allowed to leave at all. I had a young lawyer friend, who couldn't get permission to leave Burma. He had sent his wife out a couple years earlier, and he wanted to get out. He finally walking out to Thailand through the Three Pagoda Pass, along the route of the old Japanese death railway built by POWs during the war.

Q: Did you ever run across Aung San Suu Kyi?

MARTIN: No as she was not in the country at the time. She was in London. But we went to her father's mausoleum every year during the Martyr's Day commemoration. All the military brass turned out for the wreath laying ceremony since Aung San, her father, was the hero of Burmese independence. The event was attended by the entire diplomatic corps.

Q: Was there any feeling, by the time you'd left, of optimism, that maybe Burma might turn a corner or do something?

MARTIN: There was, I think, a sense of perhaps things were going to get a little bit better. Ne Win still was very much the power behind the scenes but hardly anybody ever saw him. In fact, the ambassador, I think, saw him once when he came and once when he left, and that was it. The Burmese people rarely saw the old man although occasionally he would show up at the Inya Lake Hotel and bust up the place when he didn't like the music or something. The military, through the Military Intelligence Service, kept a tight control of everything. Many of us thought it could not last forever since the economy and the people's standard of living was worsening. But I guess as Buddhists, the society was willing to put up with difficulties perhaps more patiently than most. Burmese are such wonderful people, warm, hospitable, lovely people. The regime is so awful one wonders how it is able to get the soldiers to be so brutal.

Q: As we talk today, it's still essentially under the same situation in '99.

MARTIN: Despite Aung San Ssu Kyi and the democracy movement which gave us all hope in the late 1980s, little has changed. People's power, initiated in the Philippines in 1986, was tried in Burma with very tragic results.

Q: Yes, slaughter in the streets.

MARTIN: It was.

Q: I take it the feeling wasn't really ideology. Was it control, power?

MARTIN: I think so. They had all this propaganda about the Burmese way to socialism and the Working People's Party, and so forth. And it just got worse and worse. Burma used to be a wealthy and productive country. In 1939, they were the world's largest rice exporter. When we were there, they were importing rice to feed the people. It was really a tragic situation and could have been so much better.

Q: Well, in '71 whither?

MARTIN: In '71 we returned to Washington after four and a half years. Initially, I was assigned to INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research), but because of my delayed departure, INR couldn't wait for me. I was supposed to go into the China watch in INR, which would have been ideal. When I finally left in July, I was assigned to the Cultural Affairs (CU) office. That assignment did not excite me very much because I was a political cone officer who had not yet had a political assignment. I was concerned about promotions in the cone without political experience. When I reached the Department, I learned the Burma desk officer position was available. The incumbent left, and his replacement couldn't take the job for some reason. I thought this was an ideal assignment since I had just left Burma and it was considered a good political job. The ambassador wanted me, the assistant secretary wanted me, and the country director wanted me in the position but CU said, "No." After some discussion, finally their answer was, "Well, if you can find us a warm body who'll come here, we'll let you go." So I went looking for warm bodies. I found a young man, whose name I can't remember anymore, who was willing to go anywhere but Vietnam in those days. He was delighted to take my CU position and I went to the Burma desk, which turned out to be very good.

Q: You were in the Burma desk from '71 to -

MARTIN: I was there from '71 to '73.

Q: What would you do? I mean we just talked about a sort of a nullity in diplomatic relations with this country and normally you'd have a lot of visits and things like that, but this doesn't seem to be an active desk.

MARTIN: Well, if we didn't find God, we found drugs and ended up rather busy. Because of President Nixon's new focus on drugs, within the year after I left Rangoon I returned to have initial discussions with the Burmese government on a counter narcotics cooperation program. I joined the ambassador and members of the country team, came up with a basic plan as to how we might cooperate on trying to do something about all the opium that was being grown in the hill states and converted to heroin before being trafficked out through Thailand. That was quite an exciting and interesting period.

Q: What sparked this drug offensive?

MARTIN: It was a Nixon administration concern about what was happening in terms of narcotics here in this country. Heroin was the big issue then. It was not cocaine. Things have come around again, but the concern was over the use of heroin in those days. It was injected; it was before AIDS [Autoimmune Deficiency Syndrome], of course. When AIDS came around, heroin use dropped off considerably.

Q: AIDS being a sexually transmitted disease.

MARTIN: Yes but also through sharing needles to shoot up heroin. And heroin in those days was injected, so you had all the needle marks. That's how you told a heroin addict. But now it's so pure that they can snort it or inhale it. Then the purity was only 5-10% pure, not high enough to get a good high without injecting it. After AIDS became widespread, people stopped using heroin and switched to cocaine.

But at that point, heroin was the big threat, and most of it came from Burma. The Nixon administration decided we needed to do something about heroin and about Burma. We started discussing how we could cooperate to cut back on the opium production.

Q: What bureau within the department was the narcotics center?

MARTIN: They established an office called S/NM under the Secretary's office, a Narcotics Matters office. Nelson Gross, a New Jersey politician who subsequently had legal trouble, was the coordinator. He had a small office with whom we in EAP worked. This small office subsequently became a bureau, International Narcotics Matters (INM) and with the combination of transnational crime issues, International Narcotics and Legal Affairs (INL).

Q: Did this come up all of a sudden, or did somebody else in coming on say we're going after drugs now?

MARTIN: No, as I recall, President Nixon came to the department in the late summer or fall of '71 and gave a counter narcotics speech, saying, "We need to initiate a new program here to go after narcotics." And that was, as I recall, the start of it. People at the White House, with whom we worked on the drug issue, later turned out to be the Watergate "plumbers," but that was a different job that they had.

Q: Well, now, when you got to it, can you go through sort of the process of what you were...I mean, all of a sudden you're supposed to do something. Here's Burma. The place has been stiff-arming every move we try to make in any substantive thing. Was the thinking maybe we can do something, and then, what you do?

MARTIN: I think the question was "How do you address this question?" The Burmese' immediate reaction was that opium growing areas were outside the government's control. It's dominated by the various multi-colored insurgencies, ethnic or Communist, and it would be very difficult to do anything about all the opium fields up there. So the solution to that was spraying, which you do remotely, from the air. You can try to avoid being on the ground because you couldn't really get into most of these places, which are really quite remote. So the idea of using aerial sprayers - helicopters and light planes - to spray chemicals on the opium fields was formulated. That was basically what we helped the Burmese government do for a number of years.

Q: Well, when you went out there, had there been a problem in getting to the Burmese government?

MARTIN: On this subject, yes. We'd had some initial discussions on it, but this was the first serious bilateral dialogue with them. I went out to represent the department, and the embassy participated in an exchange of views on how to approach the issue. Subsequently, after I left the desk, the terms were worked out.

Q: Who was the contact area within the Burmese government?

MARTIN: I can't remember who it was but I assume it was one of the Colonels or Brigadiers in MIS who were the main interlocutors with foreign diplomats.

Q: Was this a sullen job, or were they ready?

MARTIN: I think they saw an advantage to this. For their own reasons, they may have seen this as a means of cutting off the money flow for the insurgencies. Subsequently, there were reports that the government used the helicopters for non-narcotics purposes, to move troops and to drop bombs out the side door onto insurgent concentrations. I think they probably saw the program as a means of enhancing their counter insurgency efforts.

Q: Was there any residue feeling about, from World War II, Merrill's Marauders and the Chindits along the Burma Road?

MARTIN: Burma is a very interesting country. It's really a bifurcated country in many ways because you have the Burmans, the flatlanders if you will, in the delta and the Irrawaddy River plain, and then you have all the hill tribes around the perimeter. Merrill's Marauders, the Burma Road, Stillwell and all that were mostly in the tribal areas of the Kachins, Shans, Chins, and so forth, and not very much with the Burmans. In fact, Aung San, Ne Win and other anti-British nationalists went to Japan for training and collaborated with the Japanese during the occupation. After the war, the British tried to come back in and never could, and so they separated from India, and gained independence fairly early on after the war. These leaders were not anti-Japanese.

Q: After two years on the Burma desk, you're now a narcotics expert. Right?

MARTIN: Well, of sorts. Finally I succeeded in getting Chinese language training. I went to FSI in the summer of 1973 to begin two years of full time language study.

Q: What was your impression? I'm always interested in language teaching and how it seemed to work.

MARTIN: To put a nice tone on it, it was, shall we say, a traditional Chinese method of teaching - beat the student down and get him to learn through negative criticism. It took a great deal of patience, understanding, and tolerance to put up with it. It was very different than what most of us had gone through our university educational system, little positive reinforcement, a lot of negative comments. It was stressful. In the end, I think we all came out of it okay. We survived and developed a good camaraderie among ourselves. The first year was here at FSI, back in the old Key Boulevard Building, and then off to Taiwan for the second year. That was in 1974.

Q: I'd assume, obviously, this is Mandarin.

MARTIN: This was Mandarin, yes. And despite the teachers clapping their hands over their ears at my Cantonese tones, they put up with me.

Q: Was there any carryover?

MARTIN: Mostly confusion at first because they're similar in sound, but often quite different in meaning. Cantonese has seven tones, Mandarin has four, and it's difficult to distinguish the "ho's" and the "how's" and so forth. It can be confusing. I still get mixed up sometimes.

Q: So your training in Taiwan, where was that?

MARTIN: At the Embassy (FSI) language school in Taichung. It is 90 miles south of Taipei, in the middle of the island on the west coast. I was there a year, from the summer of 1974 until summer 1975

Q: This was after the opening of China, wasn't it?

MARTIN: Yes, this was after the Kissinger and Nixon trips to China. USLO (United States Liaison Office) was already in business in Beijing.

Q: Well, this must have been rather exhilarating, wasn't it?

MARTIN: It certainly was! I figured my timing was good.

Q: When you were on Taiwan, was this a difficult time to be an American diplomat there?

MARTIN: Not yet, really, because we still had the embassy in Taipei. The Republic of China (ROC) government was more concerned than they had been, but there was no indication that the Nixon administration was going to move ahead with normalization. Chiang Kai-shek was on his last legs and, in fact, died while I there that year. That was a big watershed for the Taiwan government, for the KMT, because now that the generalissimo was gone, now what would they do. They buried him in a "temporary" grave until their return to the mainland. He is still there and no one talks about going back to the mainland except perhaps for business investment, to visit relatives or for tourism. His son, CCK (Chiang Ching-kuo) took over, but they were aware the stable relationship with the U.S. was changing. The end of the Vietnam War, fears of U.S. withdrawal from East Asia, Nixon's resignation, all caused a sense of insecurity and uncertainty about the future.

Q: Did you find you were picking up much about China, and particularly Mainland China, from your instructors while you were on Taiwan?

MARTIN: Most of them did not know anything about the mainland, except from their own experiences many years before, during the '30s and '40s. As young people, they would have moved to Taiwan, although a couple of the teachers were Taiwanese. We did begin to receive more mainland materials for those assigned to Beijing: simplified characters, mainland place names, and so forth. This was all new for the teachers; something they weren't quite sure about. But we students were reading and studying seriously because we consider this was a chance of a lifetime as the mainland was at last opening up.

Q: Did you get any feel for the situation, say, how Chang Kai-shek's son was being accepted and all that?

MARTIN: We watched that fairly closely. The passing of the mantle to him was all pretty well prearranged, and the KMT still had very strong control. Marshal law was still in effect so there was no public opposition. Taiwanization was increasing, however, and CCK certainly accelerated that process under his period of rule.

Q: Was the feeling that Mainland China might invade Taiwan prevalent at all?

MARTIN: Not really, because in those days, it was still the tail end of the Cultural Revolution, and the mainland was still in chaos. People in Taiwan were, I think, less concerned at that point than they may have been five or six years before that, when the Red Guards were on the ascendancy. I think people felt that this maybe was a time when things were going to settle down a bit, and China had a lot of internal housekeeping to take care of before they got themselves together.

Q: Was Taiwan going through a real economic boom?

MARTIN: It was. They were doing very well, but not as well as they did subsequently. After US normalization with the PRC, they had an economic and confidence dip for a couple years, but then they really took off, both economically and politically. Taiwan has changed tremendously.

Q: While you were taking Chinese, did you know where you were going to go?

MARTIN: I had an onward assignment back to Hong Kong. I had the feeling my career was going in circles.

Q: Was your wife learning Chinese?

MARTIN: She was doing some, through the spouse's course at the language school but we had our second child in Taiwan so she was preoccupied.

Q: Well, then you went back to Hong Kong?

MARTIN: Back to Hong Kong in the summer of 1975 until 1978 after I finished my second year of Mandarin Chinese language training at Taichung. I was assigned to the political section, but in a rather unique role. I was in what was called the Publications Procurement Office (PPO), as well as the Press Monitoring Unit (PMU), which had, at one point, almost been a USIS function. It was fun because it gave me some different experiences and an opportunity to use my Chinese, daily. The PMU translated Chinese press periodicals. Its staff of about 25 Chinese employees translated key articles from mainland media and publications obtained by the PPO, for subscribers throughout the US government. The office was later run by the NTIS (National Technical Information Service), under the CIA, which does translations throughout the world

In those days, mainland publications and newspapers were very hard to get. We were able to subscribe to the open press, the Red Flag party journal, and other publications like that. When possible, we would try to buy other publications, which were not available to foreigners. Travelers from China would bring out newspapers, or they would bed smuggled across the border, and people would contact the Publications Procurement Office to buy them. We would try to buy whatever internal ("neibu", for internal use only) documents and publications we could from China. There was a great deal of interest among U.S. government agencies for all sorts of publications because there was so little information available as to exactly what was going on. Much of the information we obtained was about the Cultural Revolution, which was still going on, albeit winding down at that point.

Q: Were you able to tap into some of the friendly or quasi-friendly embassies in Beijing, such as the Brits, the French, the Yugoslavs, and others? Was that a source?

MARTIN: It was to a degree, but even there, they were just coming back after the Cultural Revolution. You remember the beginning of the Cultural Revolution when the British embassy had been basically sacked, and the Red Guards had run through the embassy. So most of the embassies, most of the diplomatic missions, in Beijing were, as I recall, operating on skeleton staff. But by '75, they were beginning to come back, and they were getting back to more normal business.

But Beijing was a very difficult place to operate in terms of finding materials. You could read the People's Daily, and you could listen to the Beijing radio, but that would be about it. Most of the publications of any interest were neibu, available only to Chinese cadre and Communist Party members, of which there were several tens of millions. But foreigners had a hard time getting such publications and people were reluctant to talk. So Hong Kong still provided a very useful function. We, of course, by that time, did have our U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) in Beijing, following the Nixon visit. We had colleagues up there, who were able to begin to get some information, begin to make some contacts with people whom they could talk to.

Q: Well, what was your reading, I mean, you were getting yourself, but also from your colleagues who were working on China, about the situation in China when you arrived in '75?

MARTIN: At the end of the Cultural Revolution, we were seeing the beginnings of internal fractionalization between the Gang of Four, Mao's wife Jiang Qing and others, who were leading the Red Guard attacks, and the rest of the people, such as Deng Xiaoping, who had come back again. Mao was just about on his last legs. So there was a great struggle back and forth. This was apparent within the publications that we were translating. So we were able to determine that there was going to be a change as soon as Mao died.

Zhou En-lai died first in early 1976, and there was a great outpouring of grief in Hong Kong. I think that was really quite genuine because many people in Hong Kong saw Zhou En-lai as the one who prevented Hong Kong from being overrun in the Cultural Revolution. Shortly after that, when Mao died in September, the grief people expressed seemed much more pro forma, not really genuine in my view. There was a great to-do, official grief, by all the pro-communist schools, businesses, labor unions, and so forth, coming forth, and issuing condolences, and bowing, and having their ceremonies. But it was nothing like the personal sense of loss that happened when Zhou En-lai died.

Q: Who was our consul general at that time?

MARTIN: It was Chuck Cross, and Norm Getsinger was the deputy.

Q: Did you sense any concern in our consulate general in Hong Kong, which had been sort of the center of Chinese watching and all, and all of a sudden we're developing a liaison office but essentially an embassy - in Beijing. This must have been a time of wondering where are we going and what are we going to do.

MARTIN: There was very much of that. There was a sense that, as USLO was established and got off the ground and started operating, as things began to loosen up a bit in China, as people were able to move around more or really just be there to watch, that Hong Kong was being replaced. It took, I would say, probably close to a decade before this was sorted out.

I think the two posts have very different strengths. One is that people are more readily accessible in Hong Kong; they're willing to talk in Hong Kong, whereas in China, still, I think, the people tend to be more circumspect as to what they say. This, obviously, is breaking down as China opens up and has opened up over the years, and we have opened more posts there. We have four consulates and the embassy; so we have a nationwide presence. But I think Hong Kong for many years still provided a very important resource.

Q: Could you travel into China from Hong Kong?

MARTIN: This was the big change during my second assignment to Hong Kong - that China opening, and for the first time, those of us who were assigned in Hong Kong had a chance to travel into China. There was a long waiting list. Just about everybody in the consulate wanted to go, and one's place in the list was based pretty much on seniority. The consul general was the first to go in, then the deputy, the section chiefs, and on down the pecking order. My turn finally came in 1977, and my wife and I spent two weeks in China in September and October.

Q: What was your impression? I mean here you'd been watching this thing through a telescope for so long. When you got there what were your impressions?

MARTIN: It was a terrific eye-opener. I think the most vivid recollection I have of my thoughts when I was there, was the poverty of the place. The place was in shambles. Of course, you have to realize that they were just coming off of about 11 years of Cultural Revolution chaos. The infrastructure was in shambles, and the people were extremely, extremely poor. I had the sense that in the U.S. everybody had talked about what a great country China was, and how rich and so forth it is; but on the ground, it was an extremely hard life; it was difficult to see how people could survive. Visually, I had a sense of monochrome, everything was blues and grays. In those days, they were still wearing their Mao jackets, if you will, or the blue tunics, men and women, and everything was severe. But this was still the end of the Cultural Revolution, and the Gang of Four had just been arrested, and so the political line was, "Everything was the fault of the Gang of Four." People didn't talk about Mao but held the Gang of Four responsible for all the chaos of the last decade.

Our visit was fascinating because it gave us a chance to travel to several places in China during those two weeks. We first went by train through Hong Kong's New Territories up to the border, got off the train, walked across the little border bridge at Lo Wu, then went through the immigration procedures on the other side, had lunch at the train station, got on the 2:00 p.m. train and rode it into Guangzhou. In Guangzhou we transferred to the night train to Beijing. That trip, as I recall, took about 36 hours, that night, all the next day and into Beijing the second morning.

That was an interesting train ride because it gave us a chance to see the countryside as we passed through. Again, very poor and very hard place for people to live. We also had a little contact with the Chinese on the train; although here again, they vigorously segregated the foreigners. As we got on the train in Guangzhou to go to Beijing, we were assigned to a compartment on the train. We walked in, and found two military officers. It was hard to tell rank in those days because uniforms had no insignia or symbols of rank on their uniforms. The only difference was officers uniforms had pockets. The officers were moved to another compartment within five minutes. In their place, a French couple joined us. In Beijing we met and stayed with colleagues working at the USLO in their diplomatic compound apartment. We spent our time traveling around looking at the sights in Beijing, talking to our colleagues at the liaison office. Our timing was perfect as we were there the end of September in 1977, and October 1 was National Day. We were lucky to be able to observe the national day celebrations on Tiananmen, thanks to our USLO friends. That was quite a show in 1977, the twenty-eighth anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic. We sat in the bleachers, below the wall, in front of the Forbidden City, next to the Gate of Eternal Peace, the Tiananmen Gate. All the leadership was up on the gate, as they traditionally are. The diplomatic corps was in the bleachers in the front of the wall, and in front of us stretched the Tiananmen Square filling with people.

I'm not a very good judge of crowds when you get over a million but it was an enormous crowd, probably the largest assemblage I've ever seen. The crowd was divided into various groups of activities. For instance, one circle of people consisted of a minority group doing cultural dances; others had acrobats, magicians, singers, banners, etc. All sorts of different activities. Then came the parade past the front of the reviewing stand. It was not very military, as I recall, mostly labor groups, schools, cultural groups, and so forth. This went on all afternoon. It was a beautiful October day, nice clear weather, and comfortable temperature. After dark we had a fireworks show like I'd never seen. The Chinese, of course, having invented it, knew fireworks; and it was quite a show. Beyond the fireworks, they picked up a trick, according to one of my colleagues, from Nazi Germany in the '30s. They positioned spotlights around the city perimeter, and aimed them at one spot over the square, forming what was called a dome of light right over the square. So you had all these beams of light centered over the square, with fireworks bursting all around them. It was really quite dramatic! Our first visit to Beijing was a unique experience, being there for the national day celebration.

From Beijing, took a train south to Nanjing, the old Nationalist capital. The trip was overnight so we did not see much of the countryside nor have any contact with Chinese passengers on the train. In Nanjing we stayed at a foreigners only guesthouse and wandered around looking at the sights, walked around the university, went to see the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum outside of town, Ming Dynasty tombs, and other sights. We were there just a day or two, just to see a different and historical part of the country. Of course, in those days foreigners did not wander around alone. One had a China travel agency guide to help you and also to make sure you were under control. They provided a rental car and guide, or chaperone who was like a shadow.

Q: When you were in Nanjing, was there any reference made to the Japanese atrocities that occurred in that city?

MARTIN: Our guide, who was really our only contact, talked about the war, and the fall of Nanjing, but not nearly as vividly as subsequent revelations in the recent book, The Rape of Nanking. The city was really very nice. It reminded me of a university town which it is. It is much smaller than Beijing and the other major cities of China. It seemed more laid back.

From there, we then took the train to Suzhou, which was the old cultural capital down the river toward Shanghai, and we spent a day there. We played tourist, visiting the old houses, elaborate gardens, and artwork. It was a lovely city, which, I gather, is not nearly as nice now as it used to be.

Then we went on into Shanghai where we spent a couple days, staying at the old Peace Hotel, down along the Bund. In those days, Shanghai was nothing like what it is now. It's changed so dramatically with modernization. In those days, it was still pretty depressing, pretty old; and the only "modern" buildings were those built in colonial days along the Bund. Most of the rest of the city was in pretty decrepit condition. We did have a chance to wander a little bit, we thought, on our own; although I'm sure that we were not totally out of sight of our minders. In those days, it was hard to get lost or disappear because the rare foreigners stood out in the all-Chinese crowd. We went to the old, what used to be called, the Chinese City in Shanghai, which was originally a circular walled city and wandered through the back allies of that, which was interesting. The Peace Hotel was a throwback to the old Shanghai of the '30s with a three-piece combo in the lobby playing pre-war songs from the '30s.

After Shanghai, we took a train then to Hangzhou, where the famous West Lake was a tourist mecca for centuries before Nixon visited in 1972. That was just sightseeing. We spent a day on the lake, which was very pleasant. Returning to Shanghai by train, we then flew back to Guangzhou instead of taking the train, which would have been a lengthy trip and we were near the end of our two-week trip. In Guangzhou we spent the night at the famous Dongfang Hotel, affectionately known by colleagues who opened our consulate in the hotel as "the Fang." The Dongfang (Orient) Hotel was right next to the Canton Trade Fair Exhibition Hall. The semi-annual trade fair was for years China's one big window on the world, where all the foreign buyers could come in and buy Chinese products. This was just when China was beginning to open up, when we were beginning to allow some trade with China; and so we had Americans coming in and buying the cheap products China had to sell in those days.

Q: It was very much replicating what had happened during the eighteenth century, when Canton was, where you had your factories along the river, and that was it. They couldn't go out; they couldn't do it.

MARTIN: Exactly the same thought process. Foreigners were allowed into the country only in a limited way, for a limited time and in a carefully controlled area. It was very much the old way. In so many ways, the Chinese attitude toward foreigners is just a continuation of the traditional Chinese attempt to manage relationships. In the old days, they had the Bureau for Handling Barbarian Affairs, which became the Foreign Ministry. The name sounds a little bit nicer but it basically seems to have the same function and attitude.

I must say, when we came back across the border into Hong Kong, there was kind of a - I won't say the sky was clearer or the air cleaner because Hong Kong's air wasn't all that much better than it is now - but there was a sense that you had really crossed a border, and that there was quite a difference. After two weeks, China had become quite depressing.

Q: You and your colleagues, dedicating certainly a huge chunk of your life to this, and as you're sitting there, things are beginning to open up. What was the conversation like about whither China, whither U.S.-China relations? What were you thinking about this?

MARTIN: We were very optimistic. Now that the Cultural Revolution was over, the Gang of Four and other radicals arrested, we were hopeful that China would get over this fit and come back into the world as it started to during the early '50s. Right after the PRC (People's Republic of China) was established, China really was quite active internationally. You had the Bandung Conference, you had Zhou En-lai out making the rounds to everybody, beginning to play a role in the nonaligned movement. But the Cultural Revolution was such a seizure that they went through that they essentially closed their doors and disappeared from the international scene.

So it was a hopeful time when things began to come back. Hong Kong was much more at ease with what was going on. We had a chance to have more contact with the people in the New China News Agency and the other Communist organizations in Hong Kong for the first time. The cadre would both come to functions that we sponsored as well as meet with us privately. They certainly didn't tell us any secrets, but there was contact. There was a chance to have a dialogue and discussion. So this was quite an exciting time.

Q: What about a concern about China's expansionist power? Was this the time when they had a brief but rather bloody little war with Vietnam?

MARTIN: That was in '79, shortly after I left. When I was still in HK, no because they were just getting back on their feet domestically, and there were no indications they were moving out from that. The Vietnam War had just ended two years before that and so things had not developed to that stage.

Q: While you were looking at things, did the Soviet Union play any role in what we were looking at and concerned about?

MARTIN: Not particularly. The Soviets were always trying to poke around in Hong Kong, as I recall, to try to get a presence there, and the British Hong Kong government was very careful not to allow them in, and the Chinese were not anxious to have the Soviets in there as well. In those days, there was still a strong antipathy between the two of them, and so the Soviets were not very much in evidence in Hong Kong. They had a passenger ship that sailed between Hong Kong and Vladivostok. But that was about their only visible presence.

Q: In your political section, was anybody looking at Hong Kong itself and the political elements there?

MARTIN: Yes. After my first year in PMO/PPO (Press Monitoring Office/Publications Procurement Office), I shifted back to the regular political section if you will, although my previous job was part of the section, and I took over the external unit chief position. That was an interesting time because it was a time when China was beginning to reestablish contacts with the rest of the world, and so it was a time when we had a lot more dialogue with other consular missions in Hong Kong as well as with the NCNA and the Chinese representatives.

Q: I'm thinking about the relationship between the embassy, because particularly, we're trying to figure out what's going on in this country, and the academic world, American, but British, French, and others, because they must have all been thirsting to get in and start doing their thing from a...not...and really looking at this; must have been rather active time.

MARTIN: It was an active time. There was a bit of frustration because I think China was opening, but slowly; and I think a lot of the academics still were located in Hong Kong and didn't have much of a chance to go into China, perhaps for brief visits, but not to study for any length of time. The University Services Center was very active. It was an organization, funded by a number of universities, that provided a library and research facilities for scholars to come and work out of Hong Kong. There were still a large number of people coming out of China, or had come out of China recently, or had reestablished contact with relatives in China, that these researchers could talk to. That was the time when they did a lot of work on what the Cultural Revolution had been like, and what had gone on, and so forth. Researchers had general information which they'd been able to discover all along the way, but had not really been able to get to the depth they wanted. Once the Cultural Revolution ended, people were willing to speak a little bit more freely.

Q: Well, I mean, obviously, you had been looking at this and getting the feel for it, but did the enormity of what this had done to the Chinese individuals begin to percolate back to you? Only recently have I read accounts in English of individuals writing about, you know, what happened to them, and it's just appalling.

MARTIN: Oh, it was a national trauma. There was no question about it. People were traumatized and families were ripped asunder. Traditional cultural and family relationships had changed totally. People were unwilling to have any confidence in each other - spouse-to-spouse, parents to children, friend to friend. It was a very difficult time, and I think China is still working its way through all that. We were aware of what was going on in general from the stories and reports we received but the enormity of it was not known until years later.

Q: What about with the local Chinese? I'm talking about sort of the normal of people you'd talked to - business people, professionals, and all this - in Hong Kong. Were they gearing themselves up to get the British out of Hong Kong when the reversion came about?

MARTIN: No, because that was something long before reversion. In 1977,1997 was a long way away. It was 20 years, which is forever. People had, obviously, left Hong Kong in 1966 during the Cultural Revolution when they thought that the Red Guards were going to come across the border, and so the property prices were at the pits, and people were leaving, and the consular visa section was very active for visa applicants, and so forth. But that had dropped off, and Hong Kong was, once again, the window on China; everybody was there; people were looking forward to the time when it would be possible to do business with China or in China. But in China was still down the road several years. Businesses were locating themselves in Hong Kong and working out of there, hoping to be able to go across the border. It wasn't very many years after that when the big shift came and almost all the manufacturing in Hong Kong moved across the border. But that was still a couple years away.

Q: Were you getting any feel for the new Chinese leadership after Mao, after Zhou En-lai?

MARTIN: Not so new, because Deng Xiaoping was the key person that came back for his second coming, his second return. That gave everybody a sense of confidence. Hua Guofeng, who had been designated by Mao as his successor, was technically the premier, but was not expected to last very long, and did not. But again, Deng didn't last all that long himself, and then he came back; and then a short time after that, he was back in internal exile again, until '78, when he came back for good. That was a very uncertain period. It was not clear as to which side was going to win out, because the radicals still had some influence, certainly within the Communist cadre. It was back and forth for a while, and it wasn't until about '78 that it began to clarify, when Deng came back for the third and last time.

Q: Were you seeing any cracks at the time in - I don't know how you'd best describe it except to say that - the belief in the Communist theology? Because today, I mean, this is very much a concern that the Chinese...I mean, there may be three or four people in China who believe in the Communist ideology. But, you know, it was being taught, and slogans, and all that. But was this something we were looking at?

MARTIN: We wondered about it, but it certainly was not something that people would talk about. There was no sense that the masses would say, "Given all the things that the Communists have put us through, this is a disaster. Let's get rid of it," or, "We have lost confidence in the government." People would not talk that freely, even in Hong Kong. We were quite aware, given the traumatic experience that they had gone through over the last 12 years of the Cultural Revolution, that people, particularly intellectuals, must have some qualms about the system, and the ideology. There were obviously indications that something was not working right. But the sense, particularly at the end of my tour in '78, was that with Deng coming back, things were on the up, things were going to get better, they had gotten over this seizure, and they now had a chance to move ahead, and progress would be possible. People were more optimistic again.

Q: When one was talking about progress in your minds at that time, was it more in...sort of on economic terms rather than on freedom of expression, or you know, political, or social terms, or what was -

MARTIN: I would say it wasn't even quite that well developed. We were talking about China essentially going back to a sort of status quo, status quo before the Cultural Revolution. A government was governing, there wasn't chaos in the streets, and institutions were functioning again. This is what people were hoping for. Nobody predicted that within a couple of years there would be this tremendous economic boom. I certainly don't remember that because there were no indications that early that they were going to make that kind of radical change. The big change came after Deng returned to power in 1978. The Party Congress, I think it was in the fall of '78, was the one that really launched that road, but this was fairly new.

Q: What about Taiwan? Was that something that wasn't your business, or you didn't deal with it?

MARTIN: I can't say we in Hong Kong spent much time worrying about Taiwan. Nixon and Kissinger had deftly established all but official relations with the PRC while maintaining formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The US Liaison Office (USLO) in Beijing was functioning as an embassy in all but name and Taiwan representatives in Hong Kong still seemed to be holding their own, particularly since the communists were in such bad odor after their rioting. Communist schools, unions and businesses had been in the forefront of demonstrations and riots orchestrated by the New China News Agency (NCNA) operatives and Red Guard wannabees. Pro-Taiwan unions had stepped in to replace striking leftist workers, gaining public support. Taiwan reps held big elaborate parties on the tenth of October for their National Day, they would fly the Republic of China flag, and so forth. On the first of October, the city was festooned with Chinese (i.e., mainland) flags; on the tenth of October, there were almost as many Taiwan flags. This was a sort of rivalry that went on, but there was never any indication that there was going to be a big shift. Taiwan was not really on our scope in Hong Kong at that point.

Q: What policy guidance or information were you getting back from Washington, from the desk and other persons involved with China?

MARTIN: They were obviously looking at how USLO was operating. We in the Consulate and USLO had these negotiations, or discussions, back and forth as to how we would share the load, how we would share the responsibility; and it was an effort to try to divide the pie in such a way that they would do what was easy for them to do, but we would also continue to do things in Hong Kong that were available to us. Information was more readily available to us, whereas they had the opportunity to actually work with the ministries and meet the people in the government. That was essentially how the work was divided. I think that the sense was that eventually Beijing would reinstate itself as sort of the embassy, rather than having Hong Kong as the embassy in exile. Once you had an office open there, the movement was to begin to use that as the main point. This caused some heartburn by some people in Hong Kong. Obviously, you have some competition, but that's okay, and I think it worked out all right.

Q: What about Tibet? The Chinese occupation of Tibet, was that of concern to us?

MARTIN: It was not a live issue. Obviously, it was an issue that we knew about and were aware of, but there was almost no information out of Tibet as to what was happening there. The Dalai Lama, of course, had left in '59; and that was now almost what, eighteen years previously; and it was not really a front burner issue.

Q: Well then, in '78 you left.

MARTIN: Seventy-eight, I was inveigled by Roger Sullivan to go back to Taiwan, part of my cyclical career. He said that he was going back as DCM and wanted to know if I would come join him there. I said I had just been in Taiwan three years previously, but yes, it would fun because Roger was, at that point, the deputy in Hong Kong and would be DCM in Taipei. So I agreed to move there in the summer of '78, about one month after Roger left for Washington. Roger headed back to Washington to be Deputy Assistant Secretary in the EAP (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs), and I moved to Taipei. Len Unger was the ambassador at the embassy, and Bill Brown succeeded Roger as the deputy.

Q: Was there any concern, sort of career wise, at this point, of saying, "Maybe I better not get too tainted with Taiwan?" I'm just thinking of the analogy of Israel; and if you're an Arabist, at one point, it wasn't a good idea to have served in Israel.

MARTIN: Yes, but at this point, the embassy was still in Taipei as we still had full, normal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. It was considered to be China, as part of greater China, as it is, and we didn't discriminate. No at that point, Beijing was where everybody really wanted to go, as it was new and more exciting than Taiwan where we had had diplomatic relations for a long time.

Q: You wouldn't feel that too much service in Taiwan would taint you? I mean there wasn't that feeling?

MARTIN: Not really. There was a sense that you could do both, mainly because Beijing had not officially opened an embassy and Taiwan was still there. But we knew that the trend was toward Beijing. As to being tainted, that was not a major consideration, at least for me.

Q: Looking at sort of a career type thing, were you noticing, because of the Nixon trip and the beginning of things, a new surge in China careerists? Young people coming up. Was there a new sort of cadre moving up?

MARTIN: Yes; and this is true all across the country. The number of schools that were offering Chinese language training, China area studies, or Chinese studies was growing very rapidly. At one point, I think they surpassed the Japanese cadre and more schools were offering Chinese. Everybody was taken up by this, certainly after the Nixon visit. The beginning of relations with China came after a long period, from 1950 to the Nixon visit, in which there was almost no contact with China. Now it was acceptable to buy Chinese publications. The FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) didn't come and check on you if you subscribed to People's Daily, or the Beijing Review, the Peking Review in those days. So there was a great deal of interest. It started with ping pong diplomacy. Now people could travel to China. There were more students who were going to China to take tours; very few students were actually studying there, but professors could go, there were return visits by Chinese delegations, and so forth. There was a great deal of interest in China, and those of us in Hong Kong who were able to travel to China really had a sense of this is where things were going to start taking place.

Q: When you came back to Taiwan - you were in Taiwan from '78 to when?

MARTIN: I was in Taiwan from 1978 to 1979, just a little over a year.

Q: Did you sense a different mood there than you had been there before?

MARTIN: Not really. It was very much the same because nothing much had changed. There was a little bit more easing of marshal law. Chiang Ching-kuo (CCK) had become president after his father had died and had relaxed the more draconian aspects of martial law. Taiwan was also doing quite well economically, so there was a sense of stability and calm. In fact, the confidence was quite high because they were having national elections in December of 1978, in which for the first time they were going to have relatively open elections. This was the first time the KMT had allowed the opposition to run without a great deal of interference.

So most of the summer and the fall after we got there I spent traveling and talking to people and following the upcoming election. I dealt with the opposition. It was not a party, as they were not allowed to organize as one. Rather, the opposition called themselves "wu-dang-wu-pai" which meant "no party," no affiliation" running as "none of the above." They were running as "not KMT." The opposition was composed of quite lively, exciting and intellectually stimulating people.

There were still a few people beyond the pale, a few who pushed the envelope a little bit too much and got thrown in jail. A number of dissidents, as some were called, were in jail; a couple went into exile to avoid jail. One oppositionist was married to an American woman who came to see us quite frequently after her husband was incarcerated. These were the things that were going on that fall. It was really quite exciting, and there was a lot of stimulation.

Q: Was there a divide as this political thing between the Chinese mainlanders and the Taiwanese?

MARTIN: There were still communal differences, yes, friction. The mainlanders versus the Taiwanese division was really quite stark. The gap was still quite deep. The mainlanders were very much in charge and dictated most social issues. Linguistically, everything had to be in Mandarin, it could not be Taiwanese. The schools were all taught in Mandarin. Students were required to speak Mandarin in the school rather than Taiwanese. Of course, as soon as they went home or at recess, they all spoke Taiwanese. And more and more, you could see the integration of the two, as it had been almost thirty years since the KMT moved to Taiwan. The second, or almost the third generation was beginning to become more and more integrated. The young people and the young students, even though they may come from mainland families, were able to speak Taiwanese; and they were able to communicate and had friends in the Taiwanese community. So the differences were breaking down.

Q: What was your impression of the politicians of the KMT? Were they beginning to just get out of it, or were they hanging on?

MARTIN: They were the establishment, the Old Guard, if you will. They were not very progressive. They wanted to continue to run things as they always had. They had allowed the opposition to run, so this was the first time that they would really have an election. Most new ideas, most interesting comments, and contacts were with the opposition or the Taiwanese. There were Taiwanese in the KMT as well but did not have control over policy. The interesting people we talked to were mostly in the opposition.

Q: What about the business community?

MARTIN: Taiwan's business community was still very much pro-KMT. They didn't want to rock the boat. They were doing quite well. They thought the opposition might mess things up. The KMT and mainlanders had given Taiwanese entrepreneurs the opportunity to establish major companies, so they were willing to pretty much support the KMT.

Q: During this time, any problem with Quemoy and Matsu and all that?

MARTIN: Not that I remember. When I was in Taipei, one change was that embassy people were no longer permitted to go to Quemoy and Matsu. In previous years, we were allowed to take the free trips to the island arranged by the Taiwan armed forces or government people. This had changed when we opened the Liaison Office in Beijing. We no longer did that sort of thing, sticking our finger in the mainland's eye by going there. So that had pretty much dried up.

Q: Your job was what?

MARTIN: I was the deputy political counselor in the political section. We had, I think, about six people in the section, a fairly large section. Mark Pratt was the political counselor, Bill Brown was DCM, and Unger was the ambassador. A frustrating thing to me was getting out of the office. When I got there in the summer of '78, I said, "With this many people in the political section, we should have somebody out on the road almost every week. You can take day trips; you can take overnight trips and be back, but we should be out." Unfortunately the system worked against me. There was so much going on in the embassy in terms of reports, and paperwork, and meetings, and so forth, that it was very difficult to get out. I thought this was a real drawback. We should have had people out talking to people, walking around, moving around, visiting places, to see what was really going on. This is, I think, too often the case in so many embassies - you tend to get bogged down in bureaucracy rather than getting out and doing what I think we should be doing.

Q: What was your big job, other than reporting what was going on? Were we doing quite a bit of handholding of the government; say, you know, we still love you despite the fact that we're opening up to China?

MARTIN: There was a good bit of that. The Liaison Office was in Beijing; we still had the embassy in Taipei; and yes, that there was not going to be a big abandonment. Of course, that came along very shortly.

Q: The Carter administration came in in '76. Was that causing concern, do you think?

MARTIN: No, I don't think so particularly. Taiwan was nervous, obviously, as soon as Nixon went to China and we opened the USLO. That was a big shock, or the "shokku" as the Japanese call it. But they had gotten over that. They were uneasy as to why we were still playing both sides here. I'm convinced that they saw the handwriting on the wall, and that we moving in that direction; but there was no indication that it was going to be sudden, or that it was going to be abrupt. I think that they were expecting that it would be maybe a year, maybe two years, down the road before we would make any major move. I think the decision in late '78 was a big shock.

Q: Yes. Were you there at the time?

MARTIN: Oh, I was indeed.

Q: How did that go?

MARTIN: The Carter shokku, normalization, "zheng chang hua" as they call it in Chinese, was a shock. One criticism I would have, although I don't disagree with the idea of normalization (which I think was time), was the way it was handled. It was handled totally without any regard to Taiwan. This may have been held in very restricted channels, but as far as I can tell, there was really no consultation with the ambassador or the DCM from Washington. Now Bill Brown or Len Unger may have a different story on this, but at my level as deputy political counselor, which I suppose you'd expect I would have seen a good bit, if not everything, was that there was really no consultation, no consideration of what was happening in Taiwan. I think the timing of the normalization was totally driven by the agreement or the negotiations of Deng Xiaoping. The regrettable result of this was that we torpedoed the elections in Taiwan. If they had been able to go through, or if we had initiated normalization two or three months later, Taiwan would have probably been ahead by three to four or five years in its democratic development because, when the announcement was made, they canceled the elections, and no elections were held for a couple years after that. I think that this was a big setback, yes! A big setback and an obstacle to the development of Taiwan, and I don't think it was necessary. The China watcher in me asks the question, "Did Deng realize this?" Did Deng say, "Well, let's push ahead at this point?" Did the Chinese say, "Let's push ahead and have normalization; we have to have it this year," because they were aware of what was going on in Taiwan? I can't but believe that they did not know what was coming up in Taiwan, and that further economic or further democratic development in Taiwan was not in the mainland's interest! That's just my supposition or theory. In any case, the sequence of normalization was quite dramatic. Washington had made the decision that they were going to normalize. They decided to inform us that it was coming the next morning. The night they informed us was the night of the American Chamber of Commerce's Christmas ball.

The ambassador and most of us were at the AmCham ball. The duty officer, one of my colleagues, got a call from the State Department Operations Center, saying that (National Security Advisor) Brzezinski needed to talk to the ambassador immediately!

"Well, he's at the Am Cham ball. He's not available."

"Well, you have to go get him!"

So he went to get him. The ambassador said later he had a sense that something big was coming. So he went to the embassy, to the secure phone line, and called Washington. Brzezinski told him that at ten o'clock that evening Washington time - ten o'clock the next morning our time - the president was going to announce the normalization of relations with China. The ambassador was instructed to get a hold of the president, CCK, and advise him in advance.

Well, this was now about eleven or twelve o'clock at night, and so the ambassador said, "I will have a very difficult time reaching him at this hour of the night!"

Brzezinski said, "Well, you have to do it, because it's on track, and the engine's running."

So the ambassador called the president's aide and said that he had an important message that he needed to deliver tonight.

The aide said, "Come on!" It's something like twelve or one o'clock in the morning at this point, and the president had gone to bed, and I don't want go in and waken him.

The ambassador insisted, saying he really did need to see him tonight.

So the aide was a bit miffed about this, but finally was persuaded to go and wake the president. The ambassador called on the president at 2 AM, and informed him of the decision. Well, needless to say, the president did not go back to bed thereafterather, he began to gather his senior advisors. The fire alarm went off, and everybody rushed to the lifeboat stations. The political counselor, saying that we were going to have a meeting in the embassy of the country team, and everybody needed to be there, called me about six o'clock the next morning. So we all raced downtown. He wouldn't tell me what it was over the phone, but I had a sense that something big was coming. So we all went down to the embassy where the ambassador informed us what was happening. We decided to man the barricades because we figured that this was going to be a big crisis.

About seven or eight o'clock in the morning, Taiwan TV came on and announced that there was going to be a big development, asked everybody to be calm, and to maintain order et cetera. At nine o'clock, President CCK came on and made the announcement, explained to people what's going on, and the police were on alert, the military was on alert, et cetera. At ten o'clock, (that was before CNN so we didn't have live coverage, but we did have a radio link to Washington), we heard the announcement of Carter's decision.

It wasn't very long after that that the first crowds appeared at our gates protesting this perfidious act, and betrayal. Thereafter, we were all in the embassy from about seven that morning until at least midnight, at which point we set up duty shifts and sent people home to get some sleep. I went home initially, and then went to the Taiwan Defense Command (TDC).

Q: How could you go home?

MARTIN: We were able to get out through the gates. The police had pretty well manned the gates and allowed us out. That was the first time. After that, it was sealed off pretty tightly. The crowds grew larger and larger. They overwhelmed the police, or the police didn't control them or let them cover the gates, and so it was very difficult to get in and out. So a number of people were in the embassy for quite a lengthy period of time. I went home mid-evening and got some sleep, then went to the Taiwan Defense Command, the military joint command, met and talked to people there, and communicated both with Washington as well as the embassy. And then early in the morning, I can't remember what time it was, maybe five o'clock, we wanted to relieve people in the embassy. So I was smuggled back into the embassy in the back seat of a police car, sort of crouching down on the floorboards, and got into the embassy that way, and other people were able to get out. But that was about the last time we were able to have a change of shifts.

I think it was the second day after that that things got worse. The marines were ready for action; they had their flack jackets on, and everybody was concerned about not firing anything, not shooting anybody. So the marines were under close orders not to initiate anything. Well, sometime, later that day, the crowd had become quite surly outside, and they came over the wall! And so a few people came over the wall, and broke into what was then the mailroom, one of the annex buildings of the embassy. At that point the marines fired the riot control powder. That was not a good development because we were crying over our mail for the next several weeks. Every time you opened a letter, you'd have the dust flying around, and we had a lot of tears over the mail. But that flushed the people back over the wall. That was the last time we had an entry because at the point, the Chinese police did step in, and they put up barricades around the chancery so the crowds could not get in close enough.

Do you think that part of the reason for holding this under the hat was the fear, in Washington, the fear of leaks; that if it had been leaked, what remained of the old China lobby would have weighed in in Congress, and it would have been much more difficult?

MARTIN: Oh, I think absolutely so. There's no question in my mind that that was the reason. My understanding, subsequently, was that the people in the know were limited to maybe five people. I think about five people in total knew, including the NSC (National Security Council) and the Department. This, I think, caused a lot of problems with DOD (Department of Defense) as well because the military was really quite upset by this. They had an extensive relationship with the Taiwan military personnel and the joint defense command was there. So I think that really it was a matter of sensitivity, of preventing leaks, and they were very successful in that. I must say, it did not leak! I think anybody who has worked in the government knows that the more people you have, the more chance you have of leaks.

I think that if it had leaked, if it had gotten out, the Taiwan lobby and the opponents of China in Congress would have made a big to-do of it. It would have been much more difficult. But it would have been nice if we'd known a little bit about it.

Q: There must have been a very difficult period thereafter, figuring out what you were going to be doing!

MARTIN: The next thing was the decision to send Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher to Taiwan to discuss the issue, to explain the rationale, and what we were going to do for Taiwan to preserve their status. So we prepared for him to come. We were busy doing briefing papers, all the usual things. The ambassador and everybody else went off to the airport to welcome him. This was quite the night!

The security officer was concerned, given the riots, the crowds and the demonstrators outside the embassy, about what was going to happen at the airport. He had gone over repeatedly with the various security agencies of the government exactly what the drill was going to be, what security provisions had been laid on, what sort of arrangements there were, et cetera. Everybody had assured him that everything was taken care of, and it was - not quite the way he expected it! They got to the airport, the plane landed, Christopher and his delegation got out and got in the cars. He was welcomed by Fred Chien, the chief of protocol at the time (and subsequently the head of the Taiwan office here); at the bottom of the stairs and escorted to the side of the car. As they were getting into the car, the ambassador and Christopher got in the back of the ambassador's car; and the security officer said to Fred Chien, "Why don't you join them in the car right behind."

He said, "No! No! I have my own car."

And as they got in the motorcade and the motorcade started to leave the side of the plane on the tarmac, the security officer noticed Fred Chien getting into his car and going the other direction.

And he said, "Oooohh, noooo!"

Well, it was "Oh, no!" because it was all a big setup. As soon as they came out of the gate of the airport, they were met by this howling mob outside, lined up on both sides of the streets, which instantly blocked the road. They had lots of flags they were all waving, and started pounding on the car with flag poles, dumping, throwing eggs and rotten vegetables and other things, probably, on the cars, actually jumping on the hood, and bouncing up and down, and so forth. So it was really quite a demonstration! At one point, they were able to break the window with a flagpole, and ram it through, hitting the ambassador's glasses on the side of the head, and knocked the glasses off. I think maybe it hit him a little bit, but did not injure him. Nevertheless, they were really kind of beaten on. Finally, they were able to open up a way through the crowd, and the limousine shot out.

At this juncture, I was at the embassy, still, wrapping up the last briefing books, and was about to leave for the hotel when I had a call from the Taiwan Defense Command, saying that this had happened at the airport. About two milliseconds, nanoseconds later, the Op Center (Operations Center) in Washington called saying, "What is going on! We understand there's been a demonstration, and that the car has lost radio contact, and we don't know where he is!" For a few minutes there we had a rather nervous time because we didn't know what had happened. We'd had no contact with the car. I think they'd broken off the antenna or something from their limousine, and so we had no idea where the deputy secretary and the ambassador were. Fortunately, they were able to get through the crowd and make their way up the mountain, up Yangmingshan Mountain to the ambassador's summer residence. From there they were able to use the phone to call in and say that they were okay. But it was about 20 or 30 minutes before anybody knew where they were.

Q: Well, isn't this a risky thing? I mean it sounds like a setup.

MARTIN: Oh, absolutely! It was perfectly orchestrated.

Q: But you know, once you turn something loose, you can have a dead ambassador and a dead...

MARTIN: Deputy secretary.

Q: Deputy Secretary of State.

MARTIN: You certainly could.

Q: All right. And that would have just ended it.

MARTIN: Yes.

Q: What was the thinking?

MARTIN: The thinking was to demonstrate their opposition to this policy. The thinking also, I think, was that they could control it. Whether they did or not, I don't know.

Q: Doesn't sound like they did!

MARTIN: It sounds like they went a little further than they expected to. I think they were supposed to demonstrate, and maybe throw things on the car, and so forth. But you know, jumping up and down on the hood, and ramming flagpoles through the windows was, I think, a little beyond the scenario. I don't know! Whether or not that was enough to get the police - who were there (but far outnumbered by the crowd) enough room, enough motivation to push the crowd back so the car could get out at the last minute? I don't know! I was not there, and I can't say. Needless to say, I was on the phone with the Op Center for some time, trying to feed them whatever information I had, which wasn't an awful lot.

Q: Well then, what happened after?

MARTIN: Well, they went up on the hill and then eventually made their way back down the hill to the hotel, the Grand Hotel in Taipei, with a police escort. The message that we sent immediately to the government was, "We need full guarantees that this is not going to happen again, or Christopher's would turn around and go right back! He is not going to talk to the government!" Well, the next morning the city and the hotel itself was surrounded by troops, so that was fully guarded; and the road all the way from the hotel to the presidential palace was lined about every hundred feet by soldiers. So they turned out the troops, and they made the point that they were not going to have any more demonstrations, and it worked. There were no further untoward incidents. But that certainly did color the entire trip by Christopher, and that did not help.

Q: Well then, how did things work? From your perspective, did you see this? Did you feel that our people in Washington had done their homework in figuring out how to set up an organization, or were you left in limbo for a while?

MARTIN: "Limbo" isn't exactly the right word! "Twilight zone" was the word that I used. But that came later. Len Unger had to leave before the end of the year. He packed up very quickly; he just picked up his suitcase, I think, and essentially left. Because this was just before Christmas, Christmas was not celebrated that year, as I recall, not very heartily. He had to leave before the end of the year because 1 January was the official start of relations with China. But the embassy was not going to open in Beijing until the first of March. So we had that two month period in which to come up with the arrangements.

It was quite obvious that nothing really had been worked out as to exactly what the status was going to be in Taiwan. USLO in Beijing was on track to convert itself into an embassy on the first of March, but nothing really was sure as to what we were going to do in Taipei. We began to fish around to figure out what we were going to do. Congress, of course, at this point, was very much in the act; and they started their hearings right after the first of the year; and they were going to take action, which eventually came out with the Taiwan Relations Act.

Len Unger, the ambassador, left the end of December; Bill Brown became chargï¿½. After the first of January, he wasn't chargï¿½. He was sort of in charge. We weren't quite sure what to call him, but we still were respectful to him, of course. We then kept getting messages from Washington, saying, "We're working on this. It's going to be set up. We will have some sort of unofficial relationship, and so forth. Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it."

Well, we did worry about it; and time went on. We went through the weeks of January. Then we got into February, and things were getting pretty dicey because 1 March was looming as the absolute end of the line. We figured that if we didn't know by mid-February, we had to start pulling people out. We could start evacuating people because we didn't want to be in a situation where we had no diplomatic privileges, we had no guarantee, and we had no immunities.

So about the fourteenth, and I can't remember if it was actually Valentine's Day or a day or two before, we decided we had not heard anything from Washington, so we ought to call. So we called Washington! We called the EAP front office, and phone rang and rang and rang. Nobody answered. So then we called the Taiwan desk, and it rang and rang and rang. Nobody answered. We were getting worried as to what was happening, so we finally - what we should have done initially - called the Op Center, and fortunately somebody answered.

And they said, "There's a 14-inch snowfall in Washington, and nobody's at work, except those of us who got stuck in the Op Center!" And so nothing had been done.

We said, "Well, we're going to have to start evacuating, pulling people out."

At that point, Washington did get back to us and said, "No!"

We had been talking to the Taiwan authorities as well; and they said that they were going to continue our immunities after the first of March, so not to worry about it. They didn't want us to pull out either.

By that time we had packed up most of our stuff in the chancery. We decided that we had to pull out of the chancery; we could not remain in the chancery building because of the symbolism. We then made arrangements to lease, or to continue the lease, on the old MAAG building on the other side of town, and that we would use that as the office building for the unofficial entity, although we didn't know what it was going to be called. It came out with a number of different names, none of which lasted very long. We moved most of our furniture into those buildings. We had designated which offices we were going to use, which rooms we were going to use for what sections, and so forth; but we weren't allowed to set up the offices because this would be premature. So we were able to move the furniture in, my furniture was all moved into "x" room, but we could not arrange the furniture. We just had to pile it in the middle of the room. Why? I don't understand!

Q: That still says, "Peculiar to me!"

MARTIN: This was a degree of political correctness or something! You could not set up; you could not set up your desk; you could not set up, I guess...did we have computers? I don't think we had computers in those days. You couldn't do anything. You couldn't put rugs on the floor, hang pictures on the wall, anything; just had to leave things piled up in the room. We didn't know whether we were going to last or not. So the last week at the embassy was really quite farcical because we were sitting on one desk chair and typing on cardboard packing boxes. That was the only furniture left in the embassy. On 28 February, we all walked out of the building; had a ceremony lowering the flag on the flagpole in the front yard, locked the door, and walked out; and we've never been back as far as I can tell. So we walked out - to what? Twilight Zone!

And we didn't know what we were going to do! So we all went home. We had worked out some arrangements for communications and had set up, I think, a communication channel through the Taiwan Defense Command, which at that point I, as the deputy in political division, had been very much involved in helping to close down the Taiwan Defense Command because the military were moving out of there too. They were given a slightly longer period to transition out, so they were able to still have their communication setup there. So we used that.

The telegraphic address was not AmEmbassy Taipei; it was "Bill Brown, Taipei." That was the address.

To keep in touch with each other, Bill kindly said we would have country team meetings in his house every morning. So every morning we would all trundle up to his house. His wife Helen, who was a wonderful cook, would come up with all these wonderful pastries and breakfast delicacies, we would sit there and talk and have snacks all around. That went on for an hour or two each weekday morning. Then the political section would adjourn to Mark Pratt's house for our political section meetings and work. Mark, fortunately, was also a gourmet cook, in both Chinese and French cuisines, as well as having probably the best wine cellar in Taipei. He brought cases and cases of wine from France, and so we had a wonderful time in the political section eating and drinking our way through the afternoon. We would do reporting, and we'd write reports, and we'd talk about what we learned from people we'd talk to, and so forth. That's how we continued work.

Q: Did you find people were giving you the stiff arm?

MARTIN: Many of them did, yes. It was very difficult to talk to people; but there were others who still would talk to us, people we'd known before.

Q: What were you saying? You'd say, "We're going to work this out."

MARTIN: We did. We said that we felt we would be able to continue to have a relationship with Taiwan even though we had opened diplomatic relations with China; but it was a very hard sell. People just did not believe us! They thought we were basically going to pull out and abandon them. But I said, "Look at the papers. Look at what the news reports are, and Congress obviously is not going to have all of us pull out and have no representation here at all, and they're working on something."

So for six weeks, from the first of March until about the middle of April, we were literally in Twilight Zone. We didn't know what to expect. We were very cautious about driving. We were very circumspect about where we drove; how much we drove; tried to make sure that our families did not drive, certainly out of Taipei; didn't get into any difficulty; because we did not know what sort of immunities we might have, if any. There we were, just floating!

Q: Was the government talking to you?

MARTIN: They were. They were talking to us. They were, you know, obviously following what was happening in Washington from their representatives in Washington, who were also going through a similar sort of situation. One of the big things, as I recall, was what to do with the embassy property in Washington, particularly Twin Oaks, which is the wonderful residence of the Chinese ambassadors from early in the 20th century behind Mount Saint Albans, on the other side of the cathedral, on beautiful grounds. That was a big to-do on the mainland because PRC said, "That should come to us." They wanted it too. Taiwan, with some help from its friends here, sold it for a dollar to a private American group, the Friends of Free China Association, an organization which was setup to prevent the PRC from getting it. And so that has remained in their hands and the unofficial Taiwan representatives are able to use it. The Chinese were not happy about that all.

Q: Was their concern on Taiwan that this might precipitate a military move?

MARTIN: There was some concern, yes; they thought that maybe. But at the same time, I think they saw that the Chinese had won out on this one, and that with diplomatic relations they were not going to take any actions that would jeopardize that. They thought maybe there might be some action in Quemoy or Matsu, but nothing developed.

Q: Was there any sort of defections or anything else?

MARTIN: There were people who took money out. A number of people used their visas to the States to take trips that were open ended. There was a lot of insecurity. The economic situation worsened. A lot of people pulled in investments, sold property. Many were concerned and nervous. So it was a shaky period.

Q: Were you personally involved in any of the negotiations, or was this strictly a Washington deal?

MARTIN: It was pretty much a Washington deal because they were working mainly with Congress, and Congress was, basically, rewriting everything the administration had sent them in terms of what sort of follow-on arrangement there would be. It was very clear that Congress was going to write the Taiwan Relations Act and put a lot of teeth into it that the administration had not asked for.

Q: Was there any sort of off channel, or whatever you'd want to call it, sub-rosa consultation with Congress with what is now whatever your limbo organization was, saying, "What do you need?" or anything like that?

MARTIN: Not that I know of. There may have been. I don't know. Len Unger, of course, had come back to Washington. My guess is that he probably had some discussions here, but I don't know that.

Q: How did you send telegrams back, and what did you do?

MARTIN: From Bill Brown, Taipei! The military, as I recall (I'm forgetting my timing exactly), but I think the military was there until about the first of May. By that time, the Taiwan Relations Act was passed by mid April. We then were able to move in and arrange our offices and set up our communications ourselves, so we, by that time, had our own communication channels, and we were able to handle our own communications.

Q: What was your mood, and others', towards the Carter administration putting this together?

MARTIN: We were not very pleased with the way it was handled, but I think most of us agreed that the decision was a correct one. We would've much preferred to have a much more orderly, thoughtful and planned transfer of relations. It' would have been all right if they had gone ahead and normalized, but, preferably, with some consultation with us on timing. Again, as I say, my main disappointment was that they caused the scrubbing of the elections, which I think was a big setback. But despite that, I think the idea was right; the decision was correct, but the implementation was poor.

Q: Well, all of you knew this was a shoe that was going to be dropped at some point.

MARTIN: Eventually, of course. When Roger Sullivan "enticed" me to come to Taiwan, I use that word, you know, somewhat facetiously; but he did. I liked working with Roger, and it would have been fun, but Bill was good too. But everybody who had been there since the Nixon visit, was saying, "Oh, Taiwan's just the place to be because you're going be there during normalization, and it'll be a very exciting time." Well, I made it!

It was exciting, but not quite in a way that people wanted. But people did expect it. We just didn't know when it was going to be. People came and went, and nothing had happened in so many years. Nixon went to Beijing in the early 1970s? So it was six, seven years.

Q: Yes. How about within our military? Because our military usually is not up to the nuances of diplomatic stuff, this must have annoyed, or angered them?

MARTIN: Angered is a better word! They were livid. I think that is not too strongly put. They were very unhappy. They had established relations, which they'd had for really decades, with the Taiwan military. They thought that this was betrayal; they thought this was just total treason, basically; that we had given up. They pledged, "We will never work with the communist military. We will always be friends with our Taiwan brother," blah, blah, you know, on and on, this sort of thing. It was not very long after that that they found it was possible to establish contacts with the mainland military.

Q: How about with the professional diplomats of the foreign ministry? Were you able to have rational talks with them?

MARTIN: Ah...we did. They understood it. They were obviously not pleased. They were very unhappy, in fact. But I think they, too, had seen it coming; and they were mainly interested in trying to make sure that we worked out an arrangement which was going to be beneficial to both sides. I think we were able to do that.

Q: Were you getting any feel for the very formidable network that developed and exists today, of the Chinese business community in the United States? It's probably, in a more subtle way, as powerful as maybe the Greek and the Israeli lobbies. Was that in existence already? I mean was that working on the Taiwan Relations Act at all?

MARTIN: The Taiwan business community?

Q: Yes, the Taiwan business.

MARTIN: Well, I'm not sure I would agree that it was the Taiwan business community that was in the forefront of that. It was more the political operatives.

Q: Kuomintang.

MARTIN: They had a very strong intelligence organization here, and they had a very strong KMT organization here, in the Chinese community; and they also had a lot of friends - the Committee of One Million, which was far less than one million by that time, but it was still quite influential in Congress. They had a lot of friends who were willing to listen and to do what they asked and make suggestions. So they were quite involved in making suggestions for the Taiwan Relations Act in Congress.

Q: When you received a text of the Taiwan Relations Act, one, was there an owner's manual that came along with it, or the equivalent thereof? I mean somebody from Washington came out, said, "This is what this means;" because often when you get an act, there's an awful lot of Interpretations. I mean, there's been a lot of debate; and they say, "Well, this how it's going to work and all. So when you get it, you really have to have somebody explain it to you."

MARTIN: Yes, there was a lot of that! We did not have anybody come out from Washington on that aspect of it. We did have visitors in other aspects, but we had also the legislative history that came out, and all the debates in Congress, and that was quite extensive. So we had a lot of the background that went into the legislation which was very helpful. But obviously, there were parts in the Taiwan Relations Act that the administration did not like; and this caused some problems, and has caused problems over the years. But I think, yes, it took a good deal of reading and interpreting to figure out exactly what was meant and what we were expected to do.

Q: Was this in a way, sort of a joint effort where you and your interlocutors in the Taiwan government sat down and say, "Well, those #$&*@ over in Washington, to put this together, this is how we're going to work it out, you know. I mean they leave all of us with a mess."

MARTIN: There obviously were some local arrangements made. The most ominous I think was that we could not meet in official government buildings. So we could not go to the foreign ministry to meet with counterparts. Officials could not come to our offices. So we had to find good restaurants. It being Taiwan it was fine as there were lots of them, but it didn't help the waistline.

But until we set up our counterpart organizations it was awkward. They had more of a difficulty because they were being forced to set up what was then called CCNAA (Coordination Council for North American Affairs), which was a mouthful. The administration said the words "China" or "Taiwan" could not be used in the name. They had to come up with the counterpart of AIT (American Institute in Taiwan). They had to set up an organization because we could not come to their foreign ministry or government offices to meet them, nor could they come to see us; so they had to have this cutout, if you will, the CCNAA, like we had the AIT on our side.

This was an awkward situation. They said, "Why do we have to do this?"

And we'd say, "Well, because it has to be unofficial." We had to lead them through all this process, and it was very difficult. They were, I won't say surly, but they were less than fully comprehending as to why we were forcing them to do that. That was a difficult time.

Q: I imagine that an awful lot of your time after this was in putting together the structure?

MARTIN: Very much so. One of the fun things, one of the issues was, we don't have an embassy. We have this, whatever this new, unique creature is called, an unofficial entity, AIT (American Institute in Taiwan). What do we call ourselves? Okay. We have a name now, and Congress came up with the name "American Institute in Taiwan." I don't know whose creation that was, but it was okay. It was certainly easier than Coordinating Council for North American Affairs, which Taiwan came up with! Fortunately, now we've gotten away from that, and they are called TECRO (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office), which makes a lot more sense.

But what do we call ourselves internally? We can't have an ambassador, so we'll have a Director. We can't have a DCM, so we'll call him a Deputy Director. That's fairly easy. Now! Political section, you can't have a political counselor; you can't have a political officer because this is an unofficial entity; so what do we call ourselves? Economics? Well, Taiwan Relations Act said we could have economic and cultural relations with Taiwan people, so that's okay. So we can have an Economic Chief. We won't call him section head or counselor; we'll call him a chief. So we have an Economic Section, and an Economic Chief. All right. We can't have a Consular Section, because that is a diplomatic term, so what do you call consular functions? So we came up with Travel Services. Okay, not too bad, and you have a Travel Services Chief. Administration? Well, administration, that's okay. You know, everybody has administration. All right. We can't have a U.S. Information Service, so what do we call USIS? So we came up with the Information Section. Okay. That's all right. Okay. The one remaining problem was the Political Section. What do we call the Political Section? I feel some sense of propriety that Mark Pratt and I worked this out together, being the titular head of titles. We came up with the General Affairs Section, which was basically plagiarized from our Japanese colleagues who had set up an unofficial entity a few years earlier after Japan normalized with the mainland. We studied them, and use them as one of the models that we emulated. So we came up with General Affairs Section. Then people said, "Look, everybody's going to think you're the GSO!" Well, no in Chinese we'd worked it out in such a way that it didn't come out to be General Services Officer. So it was General Affairs, which, of course, immediately became the GAS station. And so we had the GAS station, the economic section, and so forth; but it was kind of fun. It's worked out. I mean people still chuckle about General Affairs.

Q: What did you call yourselves when you went somewhere?

MARTIN: AIT officers, AIT representatives, or I'm from AIT, or something like that.

Q: Did you find you had to almost reestablish your contacts?

MARTIN: No, most of them stayed with us. That was not a problem. A lot of what I did as a deputy political counselor previously, in addition to the election, which was related to the election in many ways, was the political development. I also dealt with the opposition, with the non-party people running for election, and with human rights. I was involved with the human rights community, and one of leaders of the human rights movement there was the Presbyterian Church. So I dealt with that group of people, who were trying to broaden the envelope within the Taiwan political system.

Q: Of course, this was the Carter administration when it was new. It's now amalgamated into all our policies.

MARTIN: Right.

Q: But it was pretty...during part of this time or during all of this time, I was up in South Korea. We subscribed to the idea human rights is a good thing. But with a formidable North Korean army sitting within 30 miles of where we were sitting, human rights went kind of far down the priority list, and we didn't know people messing around too much with it. How did you all feel about this?

MARTIN: In Taiwan, it was not much of an issue after normalization. But this had been a big issue before normalization because as we were leading up to the December elections, the broadening of political rights, broadening of political opportunities, including human rights. It was a big issue that we were pushing. We had many discussions with officials about political prisoners, opposition activists who had been arrested, sent into exile, etc. These were the key issues in our dialogue. Again, the church was very much in the forefront because the Presbyterian Church was a Taiwanese church. There were few mainlanders who were Presbyterian. I don't know why the denomination sorted out that way. It's just that Presbyterian missionaries went to Taiwan, as they did to Korea, of course. And it's a very active church, as it is in Korea. I found it an interesting area to work, not only being Presbyterian myself, but also because the people were impressive. So that was a big issue before the election. After normalization, it was still an issue, but not a big one.

Q: Well, a lot of it had disappeared.

MARTIN: It didn't.

Q: It didn't disappear, but why would it diminish?

MARTIN: Mainly because we had other things we were working out. There was no election coming up. The government clamped down again on opposition activities. We still made representations, but I think it was less. I won't say less fervor, but probably less effect than we had before.

Q. Was there concern about KMT intelligence organizations in the United States at that time?

MARTIN: There was because the KMT was known to be quite active in the Chinese communities in the U.S. One opposition writer who wrote an uncomplimentary article on the Chiang family was murdered in California.

Q: Was that during your watch?

MARTIN: Yes. We were increasingly concerned about secret societies, or the gangster gangs, mafia if you will, like the Green Bamboo Gang which was implicated in this murder, as being an arm of the intelligence services, or working on contract, if not regularly, for government representatives. This was a big concern, and Steve Solarz was very much involved in watching all this. He was a strong advocate of Taiwan human rights for many years, and I think, quite helpful on the issue

Q: You say you left Taiwan in 1979?

MARTIN: In April, about the time the Taiwan Relations Act was passed, a delegation came out from Washington from Personnel to explain the TRA and tell us about AIT. Most of us were quite uncertain what normalization, AIT's unofficial status and our assignments meant in career terms. Ron Palmer and a friend of mine, Pat Wardlaw, who was in Personnel at that time, came out to assuage us and say, "Everything's going to be taken care of. You're all going to be okay.

Q: That scared the life out of you!

MARTIN: And then some! It was like the old joke - We're here to help you. We're from the government. We're from Personnel. We're here to help you.

But many of us were not convinced, because given the record up to that point - the lack of information, the lack of any planning, the lack of any precedents - made it quite apparent that they were running it by the seat of their pants. They didn't have a clue as to who we were, what we were going do, because fairly early on, it was decided that we had to resign from the Foreign Service. "Well, now! Just a minute there, Ambassador Palmer! What do you mean, 'resign' from the Foreign Service? What does this mean in terms of differentials, in terms of pay, in terms of retirement, in terms of service credit, etc., etc.? They did not know! So my wife and I made a decision that we would not stay on long. Several of us decided to take the option of transferring. We therefore went back to Washington the summer of '79.

Q: You given that option?

MARTIN: Yes, it was a totally voluntary thing because the Department did not believe it could force anyone to resign. The system did work out in time, but it took me almost a year to get my pay records straightened out, even for that short time that I was with AIT. So it was a mess in the beginning.

Q: But there was no assurance! There was not a very good track record, not just Personnel but the whole apparatus of being very responsive to these things.

MARTIN: That's true, yes.

Q: So we're in 1979 and you had left AIT. What were you doing?

MARTIN: I came back to the line, the Secretariat Staff (S/S-S).

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Q: Today is December 15, 2000. There has been a hiatus where Gene was off, called back to serve as DCM in Beijing. But now we're picking this up again, and we're going back to 1979. You went to S/S. What type of work were you doing? Could you describe what S/S or S/S-S was doing at that time because the roles sometimes change around, and then what you were doing?

MARTIN: At that time, S/S was still in the throes of having been built up during the Kissinger era, when S/S became really the private staffing organization for the Secretary. What I came into was S/S-S, the Secretariat Staff, which essentially was responsible for handling paper from the department to the Seventh Floor Principals, as well as staffing the secretary's overseas trips, of which there were many.

Q: Well now, the secretary at this point was...

MARTIN: This was during the Carter Administration. The secretary was Cyrus Vance and Warren Christopher was deputy secretary. I came in during the summer of '79, just before the Iran hostage crisis. Having just come out of Taiwan and the normalization process, I went into the officer position on the team handling East Asia, refugees and politico-military affairs. But East Asia generally kept me fairly well occupied.

Q: This was about three years after Kissinger had left. Was there a change in the attitude of the department, how it operated, from what you were getting from older hands? Under Cyrus Vance, was it different?

MARTIN: I think it was lower key, the pressure was less, and there was a less frantic pace than it had been under Kissinger. I had only been in the department under Kissinger when I was on the Burma desk previously but had been quite removed from the seventh floor. Kissinger did not spend a great deal of time on Burmese affairs, as you can imagine.

But I think that the staffing was still there, and the traditions and procedures put in place during the Kissinger era basically continued. I think in subsequent years this has changed. I was responsible for East Asia, primarily; but we also took turns working the secretary's overseas trips. It did not necessarily mean that you would go only to your geographical bureau. You would go on whatever trip was scheduled on a rotational basis.

My first trip was to Panama for Vance's signing of the Panama Canal Treaty, which had been a big political battle on the Hill. In many ways, it was similar to the PNTR (Permanent Normal Trade Relations) battle this year for China.

Q: Would you explain what that means?

MARTIN: The granting of permanent normal trading relations, or what previously was called MFN (Most Favored Nation) status to China after we reached an agreement on PRC accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The battle, or the all court press this year was really reminiscent in my mind of the effort that was put on by the Carter administration to ratify the Panama Canal Treaty, which was very controversial.

Q: Was the fact that it was signed in Panama, and then Vance went down there, apparently to avoid getting the president too exposed back home, do you think?

MARTIN: Actually, as it turned out, I was the advance team, as the Secretariat was called. The advance team went first to work out the details of the secretary's schedule with the Embassy, and then a second team came in with the secretary on the airplane. The two Secretariat teams supported the secretary with paper, communications, staffing, such as preparing Memoranda of Conversations, cables, etc. I went down and spent a day or two getting ready for the visit, then got word that he had to cancel his trip because of Afghanistan. So he never came. I had an extra day in Panama to do a little sightseeing, see the canal do some shopping, and then turn around and come home. So that was my first trip with the Secretariat, which turned out to be a dry hole.

Q: What was the Panamanian reaction. Did they understand that Afghanistan was a big deal?

MARTIN: I think they understood that, mainly because they already had the agreement on the treaty and they had gotten what they wanted, which was the canal; and so whether or not Vance came or not, it didn't make any difference.

The second trip I took was to Europe when Vance was going to Bonn and to a number of other places for a whole series of meetings, nothing particular in my recollection. Again, I advanced the trip, first to Bonn, and then to Rome, and then to London. And that was the usual frantic pace that the secretary's visits usually cause, which has gotten only worse since then. The "baggage" that goes along with any secretary when he or she travels these days is quite significant. That was an advance trip, which again, was fun in many ways, seeing different parts of the world in which I had not served, having an opportunity to go and spend a couple of days in each place. It generally worked out pretty well.

Q: Was there an entourage that always went with Vance, for example, or was it sort of a mix?

MARTIN: It was a mixed gang. The regional bureau representatives would go along, obviously, doing whatever, depending on where he's going; and then Secretariat staffers and a Deputy Executive Secretary would go along on the trip to try to run the administrative side of it. In many ways Vance was quite low-key. He didn't do as much traveling as Henry Kissinger had done.

Q: Who was the head of the Secretariat?

MARTIN: The executive secretary at the time was Peter Tarnoff. The Director of the S/S-S was Art Hughes. I was only there less than a year. I'd come back in the summer of '79 from Taiwan, and in February of 1980, I moved over to be the special assistant to the Deputy Secretary, which was Warren Christopher.

Q: Yes. Well now, what was Warren Christopher like to work for?

MARTIN: Privately, he was a wonderful person. He's a really very warm, engaging, humorous person. Publicly, however, he had a totally different image. He was a lawyer's lawyer. He kept everything extremely close to his chest. While he treated his staff well and was personable, he did not share a great deal of the information. He tended to keep his own counsel. Often we would have to ask him about an issue. If you asked, he would then tell you what he was thinking, all that was going on; but he did not volunteer it. But we had a good group of people working in that office, and it was very enjoyable.

Q: What was your role in that particular staff?

MARTIN: My role was to make sure he was aware of what was going on in the building; that he was fully briefed; that when he was having meetings or when he was asked to have meetings, he had all the information he needed to make the decision; and that he had the necessary papers to be able to conduct a meeting. I was also responsible for making sure the bureau for which I was responsible knew what his thinking was, and also to try to be able to run interference when necessary to get things done.

Q: Did you find at his level that the hostage situation in our embassy in Tehran pretty well tied everything up, or was it business as usual?

MARTIN: For the first few months it was more business as usual; but as the hostage situation dragged on, he became increasingly wrapped up in it. By the end of my tour there, he was spending almost all of his time on the hostage negotiations because he was the designated negotiator and had the responsibility for the talks. But before his almost total focus on the hostages, he was engaged in pretty much a full range of the Department's activities. Desert One, the hostage rescue attempt that failed so dramatically and tragically in Iran, made him the key person in the crisis.

During the first few months of the hostage negotiation, there was a great deal of pressure for the U.S. to try to do something, to try to rescue the hostages. There were diverse ideas and suggestions floating around. Ross Perot and EDS (Electronic Data Systems) was quite successful in getting some of his employees out of Tehran. There was a great deal of to-ing and fro-ing as to whether it was possible, whether we could do it. The military was anxious to do it, to prove it could be done. So the mission group was cobbled together, a joint command as all the services wanted to participate. There's been a lot written about this, so I don't need to go into a lot of detail. From my perspective, it was an effort to make sure that we notified allies, that we were able to keep everybody aware of what's going on without letting anybody know what we were going to do, which is sometimes difficult.

What happened, as everybody knows, was that we went in one night for the rescue attempt, and something went badly wrong, and one of the helicopters collided with the fuel carrying C-130 causing a big explosion which killed a lot of people and prevented others from getting out on the other aircraft.

Christopher had been involved in a long series of White House meetings at the National Security Council for several weeks. We were aware, I won't say totally, but in general terms, as to what was being planned, but we did not have all the details, which were closely held. The night of the event, we spent the whole night in the office at least until about four in the morning, waiting to hear whether the rescue was successful. When the tragedy occurred, we were there trying to pick up the pieces. It was a long night but a dramatic, memorable time.

Q: While you were working with Christopher, which was after we had normalized relations with Mainland China, was much coming out of this?

MARTIN: Oh, I think so. At that time, it was still very much a rapturous time of relations, despite the difficulties with AIT and the Taiwan Relations Act, which had been taken care of in the spring. By the next year, things had pretty well settled down. Taiwan was not collapsing; its economy had recovered somewhat, and it looked as though they were going to be able to regain their feet and maintain their balance. Deng Xiaoping had visited the States, the summer or '79 and there were as series of visitor exchanges.

One particular visit, which remember, was General Yang Shangkun, who was one of the old cadre, one of the old military leaders in China, came for a visit. He was having meetings in Christopher's office, mostly with Christopher, but also with the other people; and these went on for several days. I was involved in orchestrating and helping arrange it. At one point, the talks broke for a rest stop, or a pit stop, and Yang, who was at that time probably in his late 70s (still middle-aged in Chinese terms), had to go to the bathroom. So he got up, but kept talking with some other members of the American delegation as they walked out of the room and down the hall. Vivian Chang, who was our interpreter, was walking right alongside of them to interpret. They walked into the men's room, relieved themselves, and came back out, all still talking, and Vivian still translating.

It was rather humorous. A couple of us tried to flag her down as she went into the men's room, but nobody else seemed to notice. Obviously, they were well focused on the discussion. The exchanges at that time were good as we were beginning to establish some basis for the various agreements that we have with China in science and education, exchange agreements, and things like this. So there was a good deal of back and forth. Christopher was not involved a great deal, except as the protocolary host to senior Chinese leaders.

Q: Well, while you were in Christopher's office, did you get any feeling about the role of the National Security Advisor, Brzezinski, whether there was a feeling of either competition or being left out as there had been during Kissinger's time as National Security Advisor?

MARTIN: No, it wasn't the same personalities. Vance was lower key, and seemed not to play the power games. Brzezinski played the National Security Advisor role to the hilt, but I think Vance was able to hold his own. It was Desert One, the rescue mission, however, that caused Vance to resign. He disagreed with the policy to go in, and he decided that he could not continue as Secretary.

Q: What was the disagreement over?

MARTIN: I think the disagreement was whether or not it would be successful; whether the risk of the hostages being killed was greater than a possible success. I haven't read his memoirs, but that was my understanding of it at the time.

Q: I've talked to some of the hostages and to a person, they thanked God it didn't come off, because they said, "I don't think I'd be here yet."

MARTIN: A lot of the people that I've talked to subsequently felt that way too. There was a possibility! You sometimes have to take these chances. But I think that Vance felt strongly that this was not going to succeed, and unfortunately, it did not. So, in the end, the administration turned to negotiations; and Christopher spent the next seven or eight months, negotiating with the Iranians in various places. Some sessions were lengthy; some were quick trips out and back.

Q: Did you get involved in that?

MARTIN: I did not because another of his special assistants handled the Mid East. They went with him for the negotiation sessions. The legal advisor's office was represented, as well as the NSC and a number of other offices.

Q: What impression of President Carter and his handling of foreign affairs that you were picking up in the higher reaches of the Department?

MARTIN: I think the sense was that the hostage crisis was something that nobody would have been able to handle better, that it was a difficult situation. I was not an expert on Iran by any means, nor am I now, and I don't think I could have second-guessed Iranian policy. I recall was a lot of criticism of him, which partly was the reason for trying the rescue attempt. In the end, it just came down to hammering out a negotiated settlement.

Frankly, I think Reagan's stance, when he was elected, that, "I want those people freed, or there will be repercussions" helped move the negotiations to conclusion. The Iranians, of course, waited until the very last minute to release them, just as the inauguration was going on; but I think Reagan's taking office at that point was what really put the final chapter on it.

Christopher had reached the agreement prior to that during several trips to Algeria. I remember one time he expected to be gone for two days, then stayed two weeks. He told us he had only taken a couple changes of clothes, expecting to only be there a couple of days, and the two days dragged on and on and on. He ended up spending a lot of time washing out his clothes in the sink at the hotel, and extra items. But the president in Algeria took good care of the delegations as they were talking. When Christopher came back from one of these long sessions in Algiers, he brought back a couple of cases of wine that the president had given him; a case from the "La Rï¿½serve du Prï¿½sident." He opened it in the office with the staff. It was probably the worst wine I've ever had! It was just awful! I think we could taste the sand of the desert in it still. I can guess why it was the president's reserve - he reserved it to give to other people and kept the best to drink himself!

Q: Algeria, of course, used to be a premier wine growing country.

MARTIN: Indeed! And many Algerian wines still are quite good, but this was not one of them! So after that I think the cases probably moldered away in the back room until they were poured out or given away. It was not good wine.

Q: During the time you were with Christopher, did any Asian issues of particular importance come up?

MARTIN: Human rights was a big issue at that time, of course. Under Carter, human rights became one of the key principles of our foreign policy. That was quite a dramatic change for a lot of the traditionalists, who felt you shouldn't worry about human rights in foreign policy. You should look at international relations in real politic terms - power structure, balance of power, force advancement, and so forth. Patricia Derian, who was the assistant secretary for Human Rights Affairs and a dynamic advocate of human rights. One of Warren Christopher's more difficult jobs, at least in my area of the world, was refereeing (I think is the best word) or, basically, being the body block, between Pat and East Asia Assistant Secretary Dick Holbrooke, who did not like each other, or at least did not act as though they liked each other, and had diametrically opposed views on human rights and policy toward Asia, particularly Korea, the Philippines, China to a degree, Taiwan.

Q: There were a lot of problems. I had just left Korea, and our feeling was that's all very nice, but they don't have a massive army thirty miles away.

MARTIN: Right. Well, in retrospect, you look back at the famous Kim Dae Jung issue - the time he was captured by the KCIA in Japan, smuggled back to Korea, and sentenced to death. All those issues were major, major concerns. It is interesting to look back now that Kim is president of the ROK.

Q: Well, did you find yourself sort of brought in on the China, I mean not just China, but the Asian Affairs thing more, or were you sort of a jack-of-all-trades?

MARTIN: No, I was brought in on the Asian issues. I was responsible for East Asia, politico-military affairs, and refugees, a similar portfolio that I had in the Secretariat.

Q: Were you seeing problems with the Philippines at this point? I'm thinking about the Marcos regime. Was this getting kind of a bit smelly?

MARTIN: It was getting smelly at that time, yes indeed! Imelda was beginning to come into her own at that point. It was not quite the corrupt autocracy that it became in subsequent years. But about '79 80, by '80, yes, it was really beginning to impact. Filipino exiles overseas were beginning to organize, get a hearing on the Hill, and some attention in the press. This was beginning to get more attention on the seventh floor. I don't remember whether the secretary or the deputy secretary ever visited the Philippines at that point, but I don't remember any such trips during the year I was with Christopher.

Q: How about China? This has been your area. We now had diplomatic relations with Mainland China versus Taiwan. From your point of view, how were things developing after we'd recognized one and de-recognized the other? You were there at the beginning of things.

MARTIN: I think it was working. But after the Shanghai communiquï¿½ in 1972 during Nixon's visit, and then the normalization agreement, the second communiquï¿½, the Chinese began to push hard about arms sales to Taiwan, because with the Taiwan Relations Act and the severance of relations, Congress insisted and the administration agreed to provide quite a number of arms to Taiwan. There was a lot of pressure from China to reduce our arms sales. This was working its way through the system in 198081, finally resulting in the 1982 communiquï¿½. In that agreement, we agreed to limit arms sales, to not increase arms sales qualitatively or quantitatively beyond the level they had been at normalization. Since then, of course, the "basket" has been stretched far beyond all recognition in both measures.

Q: Were you seeing the Taiwanese lobbying? Its influence, was it pretty obvious?

MARTIN: It's always been fairly obvious. After Carter surprised everyone with recognition, the real lobbying, began in Congress on the Taiwan Relations Act. After the TRA gave Taiwan a sense of insurance, the lobbying continued; but the fact that Taiwan did not crumble, that the Chinese did not invade, and that our relationship with both China and Taiwan continued to develop took much of the wind out of the sails of the lobby. And the public rapture with China perhaps weakened the lobby's effectiveness and visibility. We didn't have that much of a problem, at least from my perspective, in terms of policy toward China.

Q: Were we seeing a rapid influx of Mainland Chinese students into the United States at this point?

MARTIN: Just the beginning. They didn't really begin until about 1982 when the PRC government began to send state sponsored students to the U.S.

Q: Well, I'm told there are something like 200,000 right now!

MARTIN: We have about 59,000 here at any one time still in student status. Many never went back after '89. I think that's where you get the 200,000 figure. Many of them are children of leading Communist officials, so the fact they didn't go back because of political persecution doesn't really have much validity. But students from China are the largest student contingent here from any foreign country.

Q: Were you getting any feedback from people in the East Asian Bureau about developments? Working with both Mainland China and Taiwan, were we able to balance these two?

MARTIN: I think so. I think everybody felt, despite initial misgivings or concerns, that the normalization seemed to have worked. The Taiwan Relations Act probably went a little bit further than some of us China people would have liked because it really boxed us in more than it would have been useful to have. Generally, however, it was working and things seemed to stabilize. Taiwan was beginning to make its first steps toward political reform domestically. Chiang Ching-kuo was taking some steps, which initially seemed to be quite risky, but he eventually abolished marshal law. He eventually opened up the political system, which has continued to help stabilize Taiwan and get it to where it is now. I think, at that time, it looked destabilizing and uncertain. Everybody was quite a concerned, but I think by '80, or the middle of '80, it looked as though it was coming along okay. Of course, we had the election that year; China was an issue, but it wasn't a big issue. Reagan came in with a very strong position on Taiwan.

Q: There was disquiet when Reagan became a candidate because he had been the governor of California, and California had been a center of the China lobby. When he was nominated, there must have been a certain amount of holding one's breath on the part of the China hands, just because this could upset an apple cart.

MARTIN: Right, very much so. I mean they were fairly concerned, and the comments he made during his campaign did cause people wonder what would happen. He talked about giving Taiwan the recognition it really deserved. He felt Taiwan really was a separate entity; and he made other comments, which could have thrown a wrench into the work. But like so many other candidates, once elected, they suddenly realize that they don't have a clear plate on which they can do what they want.And I think their policies, while perhaps less friendly toward China initially, ended up about pretty much on the right track.

Q: The election, the new administration, the Reagan administration took over on 20 January 1981, and there you are as the assistant to a political appointee, Warren Christopher. What happened to you?

MARTIN: Well, let me go back a step. After Vance resigned, Ed Muskie became the Secretary. He was good, I thought, in terms of a bridge secretary at the end of the Carter administration. He had no great ambitions beyond that. I think he was a good man for the job at that juncture. He was able to run the department, run the rest of the world in terms of foreign policy while Christopher was so engaged on the hostage negotiations. I remember one of the things he said. I was sitting one night in my office waiting for a meeting to start when he came in and sat down across the desk from me. We chatted and he asked me how I like being a special assistant to Chris.

I said, "I like it as I feel I can be helpful to Chris on key issues."

His comment was, "In a way, we're all special assistants to the big guy," I thought that was a good perspective on our role in the administration, and, in my mind, summed up his whole attitude: that he was there to serve, to do what he could, but realized his position in the staffing pattern was to serve the President and his policies. He was an amiable, pleasant fellow without pretensions.

I enjoyed my year with Warren Christopher. Again his "private" personality was warm, and pleasant; but his public image was aloof and even cold. A couple of times I urged him to drop down in his private elevator to the fifth floor or the fourth floor of the department, and walk up and down the hall. I said, "Take 20 minutes; it's not going take more than that. Walk into offices and meet people, and say, 'Thanks for what you're doing.' You'd make a tremendous difference to the morale in this building." But he never did it. It was not his style. He wasn't that kind of an outgoing, kind of guy. He was friendly privately, but not publicly. Perhaps it was shyness.

Q: Well, I had the same experience. I had George Kennan as ambassador, and it took me about a year to get him to come to the consular section. It was in a rather small embassy, he was on the fourth floor, and I was on the first floor. I always thought it'd be nice to come on in and say howdy. It took almost an act of God to get him down. I mean it was funny. He was a very nice man, and he was obviously a great intellect and of all that, but that inability to do a very simple thing. It's amazing!

MARTIN: I tried the same thing with Chris. I said, "Instead of eating in your office," which he often did, "or going up to the eighth floor, go down to the cafeteria and eat down there once in awhile." Again, it was something that was not appealing, appetizing to him. It's a different approach. It's not a good or bad, but I think in terms of morale, it would have made a big difference to the worker bees down in the rest of the building.

Q: Well then, what happens? You have a new administration coming in.

MARTIN: Right. Well, first I wanted to get a Congressional fellowship. I wanted to go up on the Hill and learn something about Congress. So I was lobbying for that, and by the end of the year, of 1980, I had secured a Congressional Fellowship for the following fall. So I needed a six or eight month bridge assignment. Christopher didn't actually leave office on January 20th because he was still in Algeria welcoming the hostages off the plane. So he was given dispensation for two days to be able to come back and then clean out his office, although he'd moved a lot of stuff by that time.

I initially thought I could stay in "D" with the new Deputy Secretary until I started my fellowship in the late summer. General Alexander Haig had been nominated as secretary, and Judge William Clarke, Reagan's special assistant from the governor's office in Sacramento, had been appointed as deputy secretary. Clarke came on board as Haig completed his three grueling days of confirmation hearings. The committee had gone through every iota of information that anybody could think of, from the most detailed to Haig's view of the grand scheme of the world. Haig's three briefing books were each about six inches thick, and I think they had studied them all. Haig, of course, was confirmed; and those briefing books, copies of them at least, were passed down to Judge Clarke for his use, to prepare himself for his confirmation hearings. He came in as a novice to Foreign Affairs. He had no experience, interest or background in international issues. So there was a bit of a dilemma as to how he was going to prepare for his confirmation hearings.

Meanwhile, all but one of the other staff assistants had left. The other career person and I were still there. One of the other career people had transferred at the beginning of the year, or at end of December, so we were down one; and the three political Schedule C assistants all left with Christopher, so we were down to just the two of us; and he was about to leave in March or in February. So there were just us two FSOs and the secretarial staff in the deputy's office.

When Clarke came in, he initially said, "Well you can stay on, and we can work together on this until we get settled." David Abshire took the lead coaching Clarke for his confirmation hearings. They worked long hard hours, very assiduously, but soon realized they were never going be able to bring him up to full speed by the time of the hearing. They certainly could not equal the Haig performance, Haig, of course, being quite the master of all sorts of details in foreign policy.

So what they decided to do was for Clarke, when he was asked a question, to say, "Well, I really do not have a position on that;" or "I don't really know about that, so I don't have an answer," or "I don't have a position. I don't know." So that is how the hearing went. It was really quite uncomfortable.

Q: Were you there?

MARTIN: Oh, yes! I was there. We went up together. I think he did all right, but he just did not have a handle.

Q: Well, was the questioning hostile, or was it what you'd call sort of the normal probing of somebody who's the number two position in State Department?

MARTIN: It was probing. It depended on the party of the questioner, of course. The Republicans were generally fairly friendly and calm; but even they, after a while, began to get a little bit concerned about his lack of any knowledge. They asked him what he read.

And he said, "Well, Newsweek and Time occasionally."

"And how often?"

"Well, maybe once a month or so."

"What other magazines did you read?"

"Well, I didn't really read magazines."

You know, and, "What books did you read?"

"I don't read many books."

It was very difficult, it was laborious; and for a while, people probed, but when they got nothing back, they finally gave up.

The hearing was about three hours long, as I recall. It wasn't ominous; it was just difficult. As we were riding back to the Department in the car, he turned to me and said, "Well Gene, how do you think I did?" This put me in a bit of a quandary as to how I could answer, since I was really quite discomforted by the whole event. So I made a comment, which I thought was a safe one when I made it, that, "Well, it'd be like me trying to pass the bar exam after two weeks of cramming." As soon as I said it, I remembered he had failed one portion of the California bar at least twice.

I don't know whether that ruined my relationship with him or not. Nevertheless, I offered to stay on for six months, if he wanted me to, to help him get settled and to staff the office. He decided he really did not need any staff assistants, that he would be able to operate with the secretarial staff, and drop (phone) lines he installed on his phone. If he had a question about Asia, he could push the button and call the Assistant Secretary for East Asian Affairs; if he had a question about Africa, the AF Assistant Secretary; or the legal advisor about legal matters, and so forth. He said he didn't really need anybody to interfere, or run interference between him and the bureaus. I realized at that point that there wasn't much of a role for me there, and so it was time to move on.

Q: Did he show any sort of intellectual curiosity or engagement in foreign policy when you were trying to bring him up to speed?

MARTIN: Not very much. It was totally alien to him and totally, if I may say "foreign."

He had no experience, he had no native interest in it, and his background was as a rancher and as a California staffer. He wasn't a politician. He was a judge; he was a Supreme Court Justice in California. Basically, he was there because he was a close, long time friend of Reagan.

Q: Did you get any feeling from other people about why he was put there?

MARTIN: The scuttlebutt around was that he was there to watch Haig. He to keep an eye on Haig and make sure he didn't get out of line in terms of the White House.

Q: Haig was considered by the Reaganites to be running away with the ball in a way, and it didn't take them too long, about a year, to get him.

MARTIN: Right after the Hilton shooting. The "I am in charge!" comment was the final straw, and then they got him. By that time, after Haig left, Clarke moved over to White House and became National Security Advisor.

Q: I remember I used to shudder at the thought of Judge Clarke waking Ronald Reagan and the two of them deciding the fate of the world. What can I say!

MARTIN: Judge Clarke was a nice fellow in many ways with an engaging personally, but absolutely no relationship to or interest in foreign affairs. He was totally out of place; it was a wrong appointment, but that was not why he was there. He was not there as a foreign policy expert. But it was an interesting experience for me. I was with him for about a month. He then asked me, since he decided he didn't need me, or any staff assistant, where I would like to go. I said, "I'm going to the Hill," in August and I need something in between. So he talked to Dick Fairbanks, who was the assistant secretary for Congressional Relations; and Dick took me on for six months as a Legislative Management officer in H (Bureau of Legislative Affairs), which was good. It was a good introduction to the Hill.

Q: Well, what were you doing as a Legislative Management officer?

MARTIN: Again, my East Asia portfolio stuck with me. I continued to do East Asia, East Asia politico-military affairs, security assistance, refugees, any number of these things. These are the things I continued to follow.

Q: Well, one of the things I've heard, I still hear it today, is that the State Department handles Congressional Relations very badly, and one of the complaints being when people on the Hill call up the State Department to get information and they don't get a response -

MARTIN: That's very true. I'll give you an example. When I was, subsequently, a fellow on the Hill, working for David Pryor from Arkansas (who was a wonderful man), I had two examples.

One, we needed some information from the State Department about something. I would call down. Even though as I was a State officer on a fellowship, I had to call H, Congressional Relations. I could not call the desk directly to talk to people who would know the issue. We would call H, but would hardly ever, get the Legislative Management officer directly. He was always out, or on another call, or not around; so it would sometimes take two, maybe three days, before he would return the call; sometimes you'd call a couple of times. So it'd take a day or so, a couple days to even get a hold of somebody. Then you would tell him what your issue was, what you want. Say you wanted a briefing on such and such an issue. He then had to go to the regional bureau, or the functional bureau, and find the right person to do it, and then would call back to arrange it; and all this, generally, took about a week.

The contrast I use, the military could be equally good, is the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). You would call the CIA Congressional Relations office. You almost always got a call back the same day if you didn't get the person right away, and the answer usually would be, "When would you like it?"

"Well, as soon as possible."

"Would eight o'clock tomorrow morning be good?"

"What level classification?"

"What would you like, mimeographs? Charts? Maps? Whatever you want."

There's no comparison. Their responsiveness was terrific, and the lack of responsiveness from the State Department was embarrassing for me.

Q: Well, tell me. You know, this seems to be endemic. I mean we're talking now in the '80s, but this goes back to what's the problem? Let's talk about at that time. What was the problem? And why do these State Departments seem incapable of doing this? This is not a minor matter because it has to do with the attitude of Congress regarding the Department's appropriation.

MARTIN: I believe there are a number of things. Let's look at those days, rather than now, because now I think it's changed again. Now H is essentially a staff office for the secretary. The secretary is the only one really who is allowed to talk on the Hill and to have any contact.

Q: I'm told it's held so tightly that it's almost worse!

MARTIN: That's right. It is worse. In that day, I think, basically, the concern was that you needed to have some political control over the career people, who could go running off to the Hill and talk out of school. I think, once again, this is one of the friction points between the career officers and political appointees in the State Department. George Shultz is my favorite Secretary of State, not because of his policies, some of which I thought were wrong, but because he used the career service well and drew upon them. As a result, there were fewer leaks, fewer people undercutting him than in administrations where political appointees tried to keep everything close to their chest and not share information with the career officers. Then people who are cut out feel no identification or loyalty to the policies of the administration and are more apt to leak what they do know. I think problems arise when substantive officers are not consulted, valued and trusted, causing them to go up to the Hill and talk to staffers. You do need to have some coordination. You need to have some direction in terms of guidance, in terms of how one is supposed to approach the Hill. You don't just have everybody running up there, but that can be done easily.

The other problem I see is more inbred in the Foreign Service culture. That is, we're the experts - don't bother us; we do foreign policy; leave us alone because we know what is best. Unfortunately, this attitude remains and it is death to us because we are killing ourselves. We have not learned Congress is our constituency and if we want a budget, we need to work the Hill. We have to be responsive to Congressional queries, no matter how off the wall or illogical.

Q: Yes, yes. You're right. I come out of the consular culture, and we had very strict instructions. If you get a congressional letter, you have three days to answer it. If you couldn't give a full answer, you gave an interim answer; but you bloody well better get an answer out as soon as you could, and we used to hump. I also found it very handy because it allowed me to take the temperature of what my section was doing. If I'd get a congressional letter, I would go and talk to the officer and find out if they are making bad decisions or something like this. It made us responsive!

MARTIN: Right. You have to be responsive but I also think the Department has to trust its people to go up and do the schmoozing with the staff. Unless you go up and schmooze with the staff, you don't get anything. And Congressional staff are the ones who, if they don't make the decisions, they certainly have an influence on how the decisions are made/

Q: Well, of course they're handling most of the questions. They're handling the work.

MARTIN: Absolutely. All those congressional letters on consular matters that the Member never sees. When I worked for David Pryor, he had a whole separate section that did correspondence, and they operated almost independently of everybody else.

Q: Information goes to the staff, gets digested and comes out as legislation or hearings. Being responsive to staff is a very good way to influence policy if you can do it quickly.

MARTIN: The draft resolutions or Dear Colleague letters that come around for people to sign on as cosponsors are created and routed around by the staffs. Then you have the AA (Administrative Assistant) or the LA (Legislative Assistant) come up to a member and say, "You ought to sign on to this, because Joe Blow's on it, and we've talked about it, and we worked it out, and this is something you should do."

Q: Well, did you see in H, at the time you were there, any attempt to sort of make this better? I mean the response better?

MARTIN: No.

Q: Or was it a hostile -

MARTIN: It was quite a dichotomy between the political people in the front office of H and the career people in the back. We had one deputy, one DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary), who was a career person. There's always one H career slot. But the others were Hill staffers who had come down and been appointed as deputy assistant secretaries in H. Dick Fairbanks was a knowledgeable person, who'd been around town as a lawyer and also as a congressional lobbyist, and he spent a lot of his time on the Hill and a lot of time at the White House.

Q: I would have thought that that type of person would say, "Come on fellas. Get on the stick and make your responses and all."

MARTIN: No, they didn't. There was no effort to change that. In fact, I would say that there was really a little bit more of a suspicion, at least in the first year when I was there, in terms of trying to make sure that the career people didn't do things that were contrary to the new administration's policies. Any new administration coming is going to have suspicions about the career people who worked fro the previous administration and may not be loyal to the new.

Q: Well, the Reagan administration probably came in with a little heavier burden. Reagan was an unknown quantity, not a Washington insider, but he had been considered to be way out in right field, and not a very knowledgeable person on foreign affairs.

MARTIN: That was a bit of a problem. But Dick Fairbanks, I thought, did a good job, and he tried to use the people as best he could. I was there only about six months, so I didn't really get into the office politics. I spent a lot of time on Security Assistance matters, not too much on China. There were a few issues with the Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Relations Committees but I dealt mainly with the Foreign Operations subcommittees of Appropriations on Security Assistance management.

Q: Did you get involved in Taiwanese arms?

MARTIN: Yes, sure.

Q: What was the status at that point?

MARTIN: At that point, we were talking about tanks and beginning to see whether or not we wanted to give Taiwan a new generation fighter aircraft. The final decision was not to sell them F-16s, but to allow the companies to help them develop their own indigenous fighter, which they finally did with a lot of help from General Dynamics and others. There were a lot of component parts that were included; and they broke it up into little baskets so that it did not look like one complete set, but once you put all the puzzle together, it's all pretty much the same.

Q: How about arms to Israel and all that? Did that cross your desk?

MARTIN: It did some, but not a lot because that was pretty much done by the NEA (Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs) people, and that is a whole different category of assistance.

Q: Well, now, you served on the Hill from '81-82. Tell me whom you worked with and something about your experience.

MARTIN: The Congressional Fellow Program, a very good one sponsored by the American Political Science Association (APSA), starts by the fellows spending six weeks at Johns Hopkins' School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), studying with Fred Holborn, who is the real congressional guru. He is probably retired now, but he was quite the well-known scholar of congressional affairs. It was really quite a decompressing time. Because after working first for Christopher, which was fairly long hours, and then in H, which was fairly time consuming as well, particularly doing hearings, and legislative markups, to go from that kind of high pressured job to eight hours a week was difficult.

We had two four-hour sessions, usually in the evenings; and it was very enjoyable, because it gave you a chance to read, (you didn't have to study), a chance to go up on the Hill and learn what was going on. So it was a very good introduction. The course was good because you met a wide range of people who are APSA scholars. The fellows' class included people from all different departments - HHS (Health and Human Services), HEW (Health, Education, and Welfare) in those days, FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) and so forth. We also had journalists, and medical practitioners from outside the government, who were coming through different programs to be part of the fellowship program. So we had quite a wide variety of people with whom we were studying. It was a good mix.

But at the end of those six weeks, one had to go to the Hill and find one's own billet; find a place to work the rest of the year. Those of us who'd been in the Foreign Service and were used to bidding for the next job and getting assigned by lobbying the bureaus or offices, had to come up with a resume and to interview for position It was kind of fun although a change of pace.

I went around the Hill and talked to a lot of different people, some of whom I'd met before when I was in H, I finally was offered a position by Senator David Pryor from Arkansas. I had never been to Arkansas, knew almost nothing about Arkansas or issues in which Pryor was involved, and so signed on in his office. One of the things that I was involved in right away was the whole question about our nerve gas, about chemical weapons, because the Pine Bluff Arsenal was where they manufactured and stored many of the chemical weapons.

Pryor was very much opposed to that. He was opposed to developing chemical weapons. The Reagan administration, of course, was in favor of if not developing, at least maintaining the stockpiles. So I spent quite a bit of time involved in the issue with the Defense Department, which was something new.

Q: How would you get information on nerve gas and policies?

MARTIN: One talked to the Defense Department and the chemical weapons branches of the army. I never did go down to Pine Bluffs, but we arranged for people come testify. We'd get information from the agency or from the Defense Department on what their assessments were of what the Soviets were doing. Based upon that, we arranged for hearings then drafted different kinds of legislation. That was what David Pryor was pushing - not only a stop on production of chemical weapons, but also a way of trying to reduce the stockpile. He was involved in the "anti" side of the issue. So we had a lot to do with people like Dr. Mendelssohn, who was quite involved with the anti-chemical weapon activists, Physicians Against Nuclear Weapons, (something like that), and various other activist groups involved in the anti-chemical weapons programs.

Q: Where did Pryor fit in the political spectrum in Congress?

MARTIN: Somewhere in the middle. He was conservative fiscally; had held just about every job in Arkansas - state legislator, state senator, two-term governor, congressman from Arkansas, and now two-term senator. He was well respected, solid, low-key, but quite effective. He spent a lot of his time on the Agriculture Committee as well. That was another new area in which I was involved.

Q: Were you making an effort, just because you worked for Pryor, to stay away from State Department matters for the most part?

MARTIN: I had the foreign policy account. Since I was only going be there for six months, they didn't give me it all the work, all the responsibility. One of the legislative assistants, an LA, had the foreign policy account, but he gave a lot of that to me to do. Whenever they had a question about foreign affairs, they called on me to write something, or to research it, or to talk to people, or to talk to the senator, or sit in on meetings, and what have you. So I felt as though I was really a part of staff. Some of my other Congressional Fellow colleagues were not as much included. I was quite lucky in that respect for others were used more as interns; an extra pair of hands, doing either research on their own, which was never read, or doing miscellaneous jobs. The only time I felt a little bit out of it was when I arrived in Pryor's office and they had no room for me. They had to find a place for me so the senator arranged for one end of the hall in the Russell Senate Office Building where the hallway was partitioned off and a desk and phone put in there. I was essentially sitting at the end of the hall, just down the hall from the men's room! But it was fine because I had more space than I think everybody else in the office had. Most Hill offices are overcrowded so I felt lucky in a spacious area. And I had the end-of-the hall- window with a nice view which most staffers did not. I moved subsequently into a better office, but that first arrangement was quite satisfactory. Il enjoyed my time with Pryor as it gave me a chance to do a lot of networking between the various Members' staffs.

Q: What was your impression of, did you get at all involved in the Foreign Relations Committee staff?

MARTIN: I did some, but mostly on the House side. Dante Fascell was something of a kindred spirit with Pryor. They often worked together on issues. Ivo Spalatin's, the director of the Security Affairs Subcommittee, was also working on the chemical weapons issue so I spent quite a bit of time down there working with him, as well as some staffers on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Although since Pryor was not on Senate Foreign Relations, he didn't have a lot of clout.

Q: Personally, how did you feel about our stance on chemical weapons and what we were doing at that time?

MARTIN: I was quite persuaded that we had far more than we ever needed, than we'd ever even dare to use. The uncontrollability of chemical weapons made them a totally impractical weapon in the sense that you could never control the fallout. You'd never know which way the winds are going to blow, and you didn't know what the result would be. So I was fully in support of his position - let's get rid of this stuff as soon as you can. The drums or canisters leaked, as they were unstable after being stored for long periods of time. They were difficult to control. Pine Bluffs could have been wiped out if the stored chemicals escaped from their containers.

Q: Did you get the feeling that there was a strong lobby to keep doing this, or was it just inertia?

MARTIN: No, I don't think there was an active lobby for chemical weapons. There were some advocates, certainly, among the new Reagan administration people when they came in. There was a sense that we really needed to build up our stockpiles, that there was a gap, that the Russians were ahead of us. There was a lot of misinformation. I had the sense that even in the military, the army, people did not like this stuff. The chemical warfare people knew how to do their job but they themselves would tell you frankly that this stuff's pretty difficult to use, to store, to transport. The Reagan administration came up with a new plan to develop a new generation of chemical weapons with two inert elements encapsulated separately in a shell. When the shell was fired, an explosive charge would break the seal between the two and permit the components to mix to form a lethal agent. The agent would then be released over the target. It was like the neutron bomb warhead. Anyway, it was a messy business, and I had no problem supporting Pryor's opposition to the existing stockpile and creation of new binary agents.

Q: Did you have another bit of time on the House side?

MARTIN: Yes but first of all, Pryor had a good sense of humor. He was the most decent senator I met - and I have met a good number of them. He was self-deprecating, personable, down to earth; not your typical arrogant senator. He had a sign on his desk that said, "My name is not Richard," distinguishing himself from the movie actor, Richard Pryor, who was quite well known for excesses in different ways.

Pryor also gave me a treat by taking me down to Arkansas with him while I worked for him. It was my first, and thus far, only visit to that great state of Arkansas. We first went to Little Rock, visited with his office there, then drove south to his hometown of Camden to visit his mother. That's a nice little southern town, just a few miles east of Texarkana. All these places was new to me! He had a couple of TV interviews there; and as we were walking out of the studio, he stopped and talked with an older man dressed in dirty blue jeans, an old sports shirt and a jacket. As we walked on, he said, "Gene, do you know who that was?"

I said, "No. I don't have a clue!"

He said, "He's probably the richest man in Arkansas. He's got more money than Tyson does! He owns half of the oil wells down here. That's the kind of people that live in this area."

After Camden we went back to Little Rock. The next day we went to something called the Gillette Coon Supper. This was a unique experience for me, because it was what I would call down-home politics. It was something that this bright-eyed FSO (Foreign Service Officer) had never seen. We FSOs pride ourselves in understanding the political dynamics of foreigners and how politics work in abroad, but we often don't do a lot of political analysis of our own system in the U.S. So, it was great fun to see politics at the local level. Gillette, Arkansas is a little town on the east side of Arkansas, near the Mississippi River, which has about, I think, 900 and some residents. Every year, since the end of World War II, to raise money for the football team, they have a big Raccoon Supper. It is held in the town gym. Along one side is a raised platform with the football team on one side, the homecoming queen and her court on the other, and an MC and a local rock band in the middle. The rest of the gymnasium was filled with long tables at which people ate. Out back, the men of the town had big stew pots for cooking the raccoon.

Once everyone was seated, they brought in the stewed coon meat. One could have ham instead. I tried a little of both, and since the ham was so bad, I had seconds on the coon! But the point of the evening was politics, not the coon. Practically everybody who was in politics was there, along with a lot of people who wanted to take their places. They were all working the crowd! There were about a thousand people in the gym, all just having a good time. It was lots of fun and a memorable occasion.

Q: Did you run across a gentleman named Bill Clinton?

MARTIN: No. He was not there for some reason. I never did find out why. But he was governor at the time, and he did not come. I guess he was probably on his second term and probably didn't figure he needed to politic anymore. It's a little bit strange. But having been to the event, I could understand some of Clinton's behavior better.

Q: Where did you go after Pryor?

MARTIN: I started with Pryor around the end of October after I finished with SAIS, and I was there until I moved to the House side in February 1982. In between, about the end of January, I was involved with a Congressional Fellows delegation to Ottawa. We went to Parliament and met a number of MPs and staffers, the US Embassy and political activists. It was an exchange program APSA arranged with our counterparts, the Parliamentary Fellows, who we hosted when they came to Washington in the Spring. It was my first and only visit to Ottawa, which was an attractive, if cold city in January. We met with Joe Clark, leader of the opposition and sat in on a question session of the Parliament. I quickly learned the Canadians know much more about the U.S. than we do about them.

In early February I moved over to the House and went to work with Silvio O. Conte, the Republican congressman from western Massachusetts. At that time, he was the second ranking minority member on the Appropriations. He was colorful, totally wild man with a unique personality. With a good Italian background, he had expressive hands, face and body, and cut quite a wide swath in the House by being very active and outspoken. I didn't get to know him as well as I got to know Pryor, because he was involved in a lot of different things, not much in foreign affairs. I spent a lot of my time doing research, working on a number of issues for him.

Q: What were the interests of western Massachusetts?

MARTIN: Domestic issues - education, infrastructure; pork barrel if you will, getting money for schools, for highways, and for other programs and projects which would benefit the constituency. I was not involved with most of what Congressman Conte focused on. I spent most of my time on issues related to the Foreign Operations Subcommittee of the Appropriation Committee on which he sat. I worked on foreign affairs matters since Foreign Operations funded the State Department budget. So I was involved with budget representatives from State, with the Congressional Relations liaison officers at the Department. I looked at various budget issues, gave him proposals, suggestions and papers on issues in which he was interested, questions he should ask during the hearings.

Q: While you were working with the Foreign Operations subcommittee, what was the perspective of the Congressional staff regarding the State Department?

MARTIN: Not very much, other than they found that State was not very forthcoming on information, or very persuasive in persuading them on needs and programs. They felt State was not a good spokesman for itself. People who came up to the Hill to testify or consult did not have a lot of the answers; and so they'd have to go back and send replies to the Congressman's queries after determining the answers. They did not seem as prepared as they should have been.

Q: We are now in the summer of 1982. Where were you?

MARTIN: The summer of '82 I came off the Hill, where I'd been a congressional fellow, and was assigned to the Office of Personnel. I was the untenured FS-04 and FSO-3 political officers' Career Development Officer (CDO); career "mangler" some people called it. I was in Personnel until the spring of '84, not quite two years.

Q: Explain what "tenured" and "untenured" meant?

MARTIN: In those days, the junior officers entered the Foreign Service as essentially "probationary officers and were not given tenure (permanent career status) until they had served for a few years. Most came in at the O-6 or O-5 level and then were tenured at the four level. They would be promoted automatically once; then had to compete for the second promotion. If they received the second promotion, they could be recommended for tenure, somewhat like academia. But many people did not make the tenure the first round, and so they had a second and sometimes a special third review. If they still didn't get tenure, then they were selected out, i.e., fired from the Service.

My "clients" were all political cone officers, those who had entered or been assigned to that specialty function. They were a mixture of newly tenured O-4 officers, and O-3 officers in the political cone.

Q: So you wouldn't have anything to do with somebody being tenured or not?

MARTIN: No. The Junior Officer Division (of Personnel) handled that. When officers entered the Foreign Service, they were handled by the Junior Officer Division. Once they were tenured, then they came over to me if they were political officers. If they were economic cone officers, they were to their respective cone counselors - economic counselor, admin counselor, consular counselor, and so forth.

Q: What did you do?

MARTIN: Basically, my job was to help them find their next assignments. I saw myself as their advocate, their representative in "court." Assignments in Personnel were, and still are, made in assignment panels. During the busiest assignment season, November through approximately April, interfunctional and conal panels meet weekly. During my tour in PER, the panels were composed of us Career Development Officers (CDOs), Assignment Officers (AOs), who represented the needs, and wishes, of the bureau, and PER front office managers. The process was often a competition between the CDOs and AOs. The AOs fought to get officers the bureaus wanted into specific positions while we CDOs supported our clients for jobs for which they had bid in the open bidding process. Our job was to assist our individual officers get jobs that 1) they wanted, 2) that would be good for their career, and 3) that fit their experience and their interests.

Q. It all boils down to the same thing - the assignment is the most important thing in one's career. Some assignments enhance a career, some don't. Some people really aren't up to the process. A good officer, somebody who's really going to go places, is no problem. You fight to get that person in the right job. The real problems come when you have a mediocre to poor officer?

MARTIN: The Office of Personnel or Central Personnel had a wonderful saying, which was, "Everybody has to be someplace." So we tried to find a slot where we could put everybody. And the mediocre officers were more difficult. As you say, the smartest, or at least the most capable, officers didn't have a problem. The bureaus sought them. Often bureaus fought over a well-regarded officer, and so he or she pretty much had a pick of where they wanted to go. The less well known officer, (I would not say mediocre), the person who was trying to get into a different bureau, or a person who did not have as sterling a record, or reputation sometimes had to fight for it. This is where my role was important, because I would be able to recommend jobs to them that I thought were suited to their talents and to their experience; and also to what I thought was useful for their career. I was also able to recommend people to the bureaus; encourage officers to go up and see certain people in the bureau. Again, it was not what was traditionally called "the Old Boy network" in the sense where you have assignments made in the dark or through special connections. But I think that, generally, knowing people in the bureau, knowing people in the different areas of the department, I was able to encourage people to go and see the right people, and sometimes that helped get people the assignments.

In many ways I felt this was a good job. I found it interesting because I was helping people. I was really the only one who could go to bat for an individual officer. I could recommend him to the bureau; I could recommend him to the assignment officers; and I could, you know, persuade people that this particular person, even though he may not have had exact experience, or may not have the reputation that people knew, or somebody else was competing for the job, that he was someone that they should have a go at. And I think in many cases that was helpful. It's been satisfying over the years. A lot of people have come back to me, as I run into them at various places, and say, "You know, you assigned me to such and such a job," or "You helped me get such and such a job," and "You helped me go to such and such a post, and it really has made a big difference!" So that's satisfying.

Q: Was part of your job to sit down and go over the record with a person and to level with them about how they appeared and what they might do to change, to re-present themselves?

MARTIN: Oh, absolutely! That was very much a part of the job. You had to be frank with people. I tried to be open with them. I said, "These are your weaknesses. These are the areas where you're strong. These are areas where you ought to focus your attention. Your language is not good, or your writing skills are poor." We had access to all their personnel files, so we were able to see areas for improvement, areas in which, perhaps, they had been marked down for not being as competent as they should be. I think this was helpful in many ways because a lot of the counselors, I felt, did not do that. They, basically, did a paper transaction. They didn't deal with the people. In those days it was more difficult than now because you didn't have email, you didn't have Internet, you didn't have various ways of communicating with people. You had to communicate by cable or by telephone, in notes. Less than 20 years ago, phone communications around the world were not what they are now, and it's amazing the difference that's happened. So getting in touch with people was difficult.

The assignment cycle started in December. From summer until early December, each counselor got our list of all clients, as we called them, and a list of all the open positions. We had to send the list of positions open for bidding to our clients. We had to send a form letter to each telling them how to bid, what to do, how the open assignment list worked; how to submit bids, etc. Then we had to watch the promotion lists, which came out in September or October - people were added to my list while others were deleted as they got promoted beyond O-3 into the O-2 level; So one had a lot of change in those few months before the panels began. Then around the first week of December, the panels began to meet to assign people. Again, I won't say the best and the brightest, but the best known or the most well known people tended to be assigned right off the top. The key positions for the staff assistants on the seventh floor, the special assistants to various key principals of the department tended to be assigned first.

Q: Being the staff assistant to somebody fairly high up in the Department of State is often the way people become ambassadors.

MARTIN: True.

Q: How were those handled? Was that almost off the system?

MARTIN: Essentially, it was off. The betrothal was made off the system. Personnel signed the marriage license. In a sense, yes, they were hand picked. People lobbied on their own through contacts or through interviews. They met with the principals. They got the offer of the job; and since they were what we call key positions, they were pretty much assigned automatically.

Personnel seldom contested a key position request. One had to have pretty good reasons. Occasionally we did. We'd get somebody who had, say, been in the department for longer than he was allowed. In those days there was eight years. Some people would want to stay nine, ten, eleven, twelve years in the department without going overseas. They were well known on the seventh floor, well known by the principals; and so they were asked to be the special assistant. And that's when then we would turn to the Director General, or the deputy DG, to go to the principal and say, "Look! This guy is 'Foreign Service,' and he doesn't have a lot of foreign in his service." We'd try to get people to go overseas, and occasionally we would convince the principal and the officer that it would be in his best interest to go overseas.

But often the super stars were in their own world. People like my classmate in A100, Jerry Bremer [L. Paul Bremer III], who, I think, had two overseas assignments until he went out as an ambassador to the Netherlands. He had one foreign assignment as a junior officer and one as a rotational officer. But having worked for Henry Kissinger for several years, he moved up the scale. There's nothing wrong with that in a sense, but it is a second track, a fast track.

Q: Any system has a bypass system.

MARTIN: A bypass system, right. Personnel had been criticized so much over the years; rightly so in many ways. I think much of it is because the system is changed so often - the procedures, the ways people are promoted, the precepts for promotion. There's not much consistency or continuity; and the people tend to be disadvantaged, unless you're really one of the best and the brightest.

Q: The trouble is, promises are made in full honesty but the system changes. And the promises fall by the wayside.

MARTIN: And you have different requirements put in at different times. When I was in Personnel, they had what they called the mid-career course. This was for people who had been tenured to go to a mid-career training course to learn about political reporting, operating overseas, to learn about various other components of the Foreign Service in preparation for more senior responsibilities. Most of the people felt that this was just a sidetrack - that this was a side step really - and it was not career enhancing. So they fought it arduously. One of my jobs was to make people as willing as possible to go into this course, which they had to do. We were slam-dunking people into the course because they were required to take the course. But there was a lot of maneuvering back and forth. They'd say, "Well, I'll take it later," or "I won't take it now. I've got do this, that, and the other thing." It got complicated.

Training is always difficult in the Foreign Service. I often felt that the Foreign Service should have certain requirements for training, which either would extend your time in class to be able to be promoted, or would give you advantages - give you a leg up, points if you will - toward promotion. But that's never happened. They talk a lot about training, but they never really put any substance behind it.

In sum, I enjoyed my personnel job. I found it interesting and worthwhile.

Q: Did you have any problem with the political cone as such, because when you enter the Foreign Service, you're told this is the place to be for advancement? Sometimes there are too many.

MARTIN: It's like the old That Was The Week That Was joke about the man who came to the RAF (Royal Air Force) and said, "Please, sir. I'd like to join the few." And the recruiter said, "I'm sorry. There are far too many!"

That was the case with political cone officers. We had lots of people hammering on the door to get into the political cone, which was always oversubscribed. So most of them did not get into the political cone. And there were many in the political cone who frankly didn't belong there. They had come in under a previous system or a previous procedure. They initially came in "unconed" as generalists. Subsequently, people were recruited on a functional basis, then management changed the system to taking in people unconed. So we had this diversity of officers with whom we dealt. Some had been coned when they came in, some were fighting to be coned, and so forth. Frankly, I think the cone system is not a good system as it tends to pigeonhole people. It puts people into a specific narrow specialty. As I found, once one gets to the senior officer level, if you didn't have experience I various aspects of the Foreign Service, it was much more difficult to manage a large embassy.

Q: In Personnel at that time was there much in the way of sitting around discussing the theory and practice of Personnel, and where are we going, and trying to come up with an ideal system? Or was it pretty much finding yourself stuffing slots?

MARTIN: There was a policy office in Personnel that did that and the front office in the DGs office tended to ruminate a lot about how we could do it better, or how to change the system. But those of us who were career counselors were pretty fully occupied. I can't remember the numbers I had. I had probably over a 100, maybe 150 officers that I was responsible for assigning. And I would say by early February, I had probably assigned 670 percent of those. Those were the easy ones. The last 10 percent were always the most difficult.

Q: At that time, how did they resolve the last 10 percent? We're talking about the hard-to-place people.

MARTIN: Correct.

Q: Often because of reputation or lack thereof.

MARTIN: Yes, reputation is very important in the Foreign Service. I can't say it's bad, because, frankly, on the EER (Employee Evaluation Report) forms, being what they are, everybody says they walk on water. A rating officer can't say anything derogatory at all, which makes them much less useful. But I found it interesting. Looking at an officer's file, after two or three years of EER from different officers in different jobs and often different posts; and it's amazing the leitmotif that runs through it, a trend. There is a common thread that runs through an officer's file. One can see where the person's weaknesses are and virtually where his strengths are. It is very interesting. That's why the personnel file does work in many ways.

So the last 10 percent of my clients were difficult to assign. Many were given secondary jobs. Many of them were left behind. If there was a personality problem, they were temporarily assigned back to the Department where they were less of a problem than having them overseas and having to curtail assignments. Many of them ended up at the end of the cycle still unassigned.

Q: Well, did you run across sex discrimination, racial discrimination, this sort of thing.

MARTIN: My time in personnel was a little before that time. In 1982-84, the wave had not really broken over us. We were aware of it certainly, and we worked carefully to make sure we gave everyone equal treatment. I had quite a number of women and quite a number of minorities on my client list, and I took care to them.

Let me tell you one story that I still remember. One of my clients was an O-3 officer in Policy Planning. I sent him the open assignment process notice but he never responded with a bid list. So I called him one day and said, "By the way, Alan, you have not bid."

And he said, "Well, I don't really think I need to."

And I said, "That's kind of interesting, but you are on my list. You do need to bid for an onward assignment."

He said, "You know I'm an O-3 holding down an O-1 job in Policy Planning."

And I said, "Good for you. That's interesting, but don't you think you need to bid? Are you going to be able to do something on your own?"

He said, "I think so because I am about to be appointed to the UN as an ambassador." And the next week Alan Keyes was appointed to the UN as one of the ambassadors. That was an easy assignment. I did not have to do anything. Every time I see his face on the TV, running for president, senator or what have you, I think about the time that I didn't have to help him get a job. It was kind of funny.

So we had people who were difficult and people who were easy. Another satisfying part of the job, I think, was actually trying to persuade people that when they didn't get their first, second, or even third choice, that there were other jobs out there which were good for them. Many of them were able to look at other positions and find things which were career advancing.

Q: There is a leitmotif that runs through these histories of people who came into the older Foreign Service, where they were just sort of assigned. They'd say, "You know, I was assigned as GSO (General Services Officer) to Niger. I screamed and yelled but it was the best thing that ever happened to me." These were people who later became ambassadors or did well in their careers, but they had picked up expertise, abilities that they wouldn't have gotten elsewhere. Sometimes one thinks officers all want to go to Paris, particularly at the middle level where you're kind of lost.

MARTIN: I think Paris and many European posts (having never served there, I can say this with great expertise), but my impression is that until you're at the FSO-01 level you don't have much responsibility. You don't have much direct role with actual policy; you're dealing with one small minority party and probably one particular aspect of the economy that the big cheeses don't want to handle. And so in a sense, you are a small fish in big post. I think smaller posts give you broader experience.

I remember one of the many studies that had been done over the years - presented, commended, shelved, and never looked at again - talked about how people ought to have certain requirements to get to Senior Service, That they ought to have an admin job, an economic job as a political officer, maybe a cultural job. I think this was a wonderful idea - the idea that one should have to punch certain tickets before one can get in the Senior Service, Including a certain number of training courses, and so forth. It was never instituted because it takes people out of the mainstream, takes them out of the main track that they're trying to promote; and so these people tended to focus on the direct impact on their career. In addition, until Secretary Powell provided adequate resources, the shortage of personnel prevented needed training opportunities.

Q: When I was dealing with the counselor side, we had to be careful, because we tended to say if somebody had a real personality problem or something, "We can't send them to a small post," and pretty soon we're getting screams from London or our Canadian posts, "Why are you sending these people to us?" We were sending them to a big post, and idea was that we buried problem officers in a large pond.. But after a certain point, you reach a critical mass; and you're getting an awful lot of problem cases in Paris, and London, and that sort of thing.

MARTIN: Or you get the less-than-strong officers or weak officers in mid-level management positions, particularly in the consular sections. You get people who are heading the NIV (Non-immigrant Visa), or the IV (Immigrant Visa) Unit, or the Citizen Services Unit; and that gets very tricky because then you get people who you can't rely on and who are supposed to be the mentors for the junior officers below them; and then you have real problems! Looking at my experiences in Hong Kong, and in Taiwan, and in Manila, this was certainly a problem.

Q: One of the advantages, or at least perceived advantage, to having a job in Personnel, you get to arrange your own onward assignment.

MARTIN: Lobbying on your own

Q: Where did you go in 1984?

MARTIN: In the spring of' 84, I was approached by Will Itoh [William Itoh], who went on to be ambassador in Thailand, to see if I was interested in taking his job as the special assistant in the EAP (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs) front office. I thought that would be a good job and decided to go for it. Even though the offer came in March, before the end of my tour in Personnel, I decided to take it because most of my assignments had already been made by then. But the PER front office was not anxious to let me go; it was a bit of an arm wrestle between EAP and Personnel. But it being a key position, EAP won. So in March I moved up to the EAP front office.

Q: Who was the head of East Asian Pacific Affairs?

MARTIN: Paul Wolfowitz was the Assistant Secretary at the time. My job was to make things in the bureau run smoothly so as to make it easier for him to make the decisions he needed, to have the papers he needed, to make arrangements for trips that he took. Basically to ride herd on the rest of the bureau to make sure that things were operating the way he wanted it. He was a brilliant man who learned the East Asian account very, very quickly.

Q: What was his background?

MARTIN: He was an academic, came from Cornell, had come to Washington as a sort of strategic planner or strategic thinker, a Jacksonian Democrat in that sense. At the time he was still a Democrat although he since may have become a Republican. He was quite conservative, but also much tuned in to strategic issues. He had been the Director of Policy Planning before that and took over the East Asian account really with very little experience or contact with East Asian Affairs. As a quick study, he learned the issues quickly and did very well.

Q: Had he just taken the job?

MARTIN: No, he'd been in the position for about a year. He knew the account and was up to speed.

Q: You were there from '84 to when?

MARTIN: I was there from March 1984 until July 1985, about a year and a quarter.

Q: What were some of the issues in which you were involved?

MARTIN: China obviously was a big issue. This was right after the '82 Communiquï¿½ with China.

Q: What was the '82 Communiquï¿½?

MARTIN: This was the one about arms sales to Taiwan. This was also, the first Reagan administration; and we were still trying to sort our way through China policy at that time. The '82 Communiquï¿½ had been done during Secretary Alexander Haig's term. When George Shultz came in as secretary, there was some difference of opinion, so we were trying to sort out exactly what our policy was going to be regarding China and Taiwan. Subsequent issues included Japan trade issues and Korean human rights, especially regarding Kim Dae Jung. Southeast Asia was a little less troublesome except for the Philippines. We were coming up on the end of the Marcos era, and that took an awful lot of time as it was increasingly apparent by '84 that Marcos was on the skids and our policy needed attention. Benigno Aquino went back to the Philippines from his U.S. informal exile and was assassinated at the airport. So most of our effort was spent on the Philippines, China, Japan trade, Korean Peninsula, and South East Asia in general. The rest of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) was doing okay. In New Zealand, we had the problem with David Lange, who was elected to be Prime Minister and immediately turned off any nuclear cooperation with the U.S. and banned nuclear ships. As a result, our security relationship with ANZUS (Australia-New Zealand-United States) was curtailed, becoming just an Australian-U.S. relationship.

Q: From your perspective, were most of these issues pretty well handled at the Assistant Secretary level as opposed to being kicked up to Shultz or his immediate deputies?

MARTIN: I think so. EAP was quite strong in those days, and Wolfowitz was an activist. Shultz, of course, did participate in the ASEAN meetings, the annual ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference (ASEAN-PMC). This was before APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), so there was no APEC forum to attend. So the ASEAN-PMC was the main multilateral session. Shultz did visit China somewhat later, but he made a point of attending the annual ASEAN meeting, then stopped in other places.

Q: How did you feel about the National Security Council at that time on Asian matters?

MARTIN: It was quite good, actually. Wolfowitz had organized what they called the Monday Afternoon Group. NSC, CIA, ISA (International Security Affairs) from the Defense Department, and State INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) people handling East Asia would get together in Wolfowitz's office to discuss key issues that were coming up. It was a useful forum because it was an informal, but effective coordination mechanism. The participants knew each other well so were able to hammer out bureaucratic or personal differences of opinion and come to a consensus.

Q: By this time, would you say some of the initial rough edges of the Reagan first term been worn down

MARTIN: I thought Shultz was an excellent Secretary of State. He was engaged and his attitude was that he would use the State Department and draw upon the expertise and the talents in the State Department. I think this made him an effective secretary. I disagreed with many ways of his (and Reagan's) policies, but he was open to ideas and suggestions and options from career people below, unlike so many other secretaries, before and since. Career people felt as though they were participating I policy formulation, contributing, and having an impact on policy. And I think they did.

Shultz would have weekend seminars on Saturday morning with academics, government specialists, and outside experts on specific issues. They were not bull sessions, but seminars. Being an academic himself, he loved seminars; and there was a great deal of to and fro, back and forth, kicking ideas around. You'd have a mix of people with a wide diversity of opinions; so there was a good deal of intellectual stimulation, which I think was good.

Q: An area that was always the center of your interests, I would assume, would be the two-China relationship. How was that being played? Did you have any role in this during this '885 period?

MARTIN: Our role was mainly as an observer and a participant in the sense of sort of making sure that things were working as they were decided. I can't say that I was the one who made policy!

I accompanied Paul on his trip to China in the summer of '84 for what was a good visit, and participated in his meetings with Chinese leaders. It gave me a chance to learn about what was going on in China from high-level interlocutors. I hadn't been in China for several years at that point, so it was good to get back and update my information.

Q: Whither China at that point? Where was it going?

MARTIN: At that time, Deng had come back in power certainly. The reforms were taking effect. The changes were really quite dramatic! Deng had returned to power in '78 and had launched his economic reforms. The countryside was really becoming quite prosperous. The cities were less advanced, I think, than the countryside, but the country as a whole had a lot more optimism. They were beginning to build; they were beginning to be more open to the outside. That era was probably one of the more optimistic in the last several decades. This, of course, all ended in '89 with Tiananmen.

But in 1984 it was quite positive. Everybody was looking forward to Reagan's visit in his second term and we were already starting to plan for that. Shultz went to China in 1986. So I think that there was a fairly good feeling that bilateral relations were moving the right direction.

Q: How about Taiwan? What was happening there at that time?

MARTIN: On Taiwan, they had made considerable progress as well. Of course, in '79 when we normalized with the Mainland, Taiwan went through a crisis. But they had turned around. Their economy was doing much better. They had relaxed some of the marshal law restrictions and soon ended the decades long martial law and moved toward democracy. So Taiwan was beginning to look quite stable. This was only about two, three years after the '82 Communiquï¿½. I think the idea that we were not going to enhance our arms sales to Taiwan arms was the common belief in Beijing, resulting in their willingness to improve relations with us.

Q: Was there any concern in the bureau that we'd come up with this elaborate arrangement for dealing with Taiwan that prevented senior officials from visiting look around and have face-to-face meetings?

MARTIN: It did. But I think there were enough ways to meet with Taiwan authorities when they came here, or in other places. We had the AIT Washington office here; and whenever Taiwan people came over here, there were ways in which the State people could go over and meet with them. They didn't come into the State Department building. There was a sort of a fence around the building, but there were no restrictions on the number of people who'd go and talk with them, even at the assistant secretary level. Obviously, Shultz or other principals didn't, but they had worked out the arrangements in such a way in the previous five years that we were able to make it work. I remember Double Ten (anniversary of Republic of China) parties at the Four Seasons Hotel in Georgetown, which were attended by everybody. In those days, Taiwan's unofficial office in the U.S. was called CCNAA (Coordination Council for North American Affairs), a rather awkward name and almost unintelligible acronym. Rather senior officials attended the Double Ten receptions, unofficially of course. The fiction was there, but the work went on.

Q: How about the Philippine situation? I mean here you had a problem of Marcos getting worse and worse, and his wife had what was considered a fairly close relationship with the president or the first lady. I'm talking about Ronald Reagan and Nancy Reagan. But the handwriting was on the wall, so how do you prepare the president for this?

MARTIN: That was a long and arduous effort, and a fascinating one to be involved in, to watch. I didn't have any Philippine experience, so I couldn't be directly involved, but I was included in all the discussions that were going on. I give a lot of credit to first, John Maisto, who was the country director for Philippine Affairs. He had served in the Philippines, was married to a Filipina, and, in my perspective, he was the one that realized that there had to be a change of policy toward Marcos. And so he began working quietly, but effectively, within the bureau - first persuading the front office of this, including Paul Wolfowitz, who then escalated it (with John's help) up the ranks of the State Department, to the secretary, and finally to convince Shultz of the need for a change; and then they all went to work on the president. I think that was very effective, very well done. Everybody was included - the CIA, DOD. The Monday afternoon informal, the EAP informal, was a very good mechanism for discussing these problems. There were a lot of differences. There was a lot of feeling that we couldn't just let Marcos go. The military, the security side of the house, naturally was concerned about the bases if we cut off Marcos. Marcos played this beautifully of course saying "You have support me, or we'll kick you out of the bases." So Clark (AFB) and Subic (Naval Base) became hostages to Marcos, in keeping the U.S. behind him. It went right up to the very end. I think it was finally Shultz and the NSC, going to Senator Laxalt, and getting Laxalt finally to push Reagan over the edge. Laxalt was a Senator from Nevada and a close friend of the Reagans who finally persuaded him that Marcos had to go. It was a fascinating time to watch how our policy was slowly, slowly eroded or changed into what turned out to be the right policy.

Q: But certainly at the working level while you were there, the idea was that Marcos just couldn't keep going.

MARTIN: Correct. At the desk level, that became very apparent, particularly after Aquino was assassinated. That was sort of the final straw, if you will, that broke the back. People realized that this was only going to get worse, and that the bases could not be held hostages. If we had continued to support Marcos, the bases would have been threatened in any case by an increased Communist insurgency, by the increased division within the country. The political opposition was focusing on our role supporting Marcos, and that became a negative. I think once supporting Marcos became a liability to our longer term, more important interests, people began to argue persuasively that it was time to have a change.

Q: Turning to Korea, was there a concern about war there at that point?

MARTIN: Oh yes, there was indeed! I can't remember precisely the details in that because I'm not a Korean expert, and so I don't recall all the details. But Kim Dae Jung had come back, was in jail, had been out of jail, was trying to run for various offices, and I think that there was considerable concern.

North Korea was still the hermit kingdom, still the great unknown. Nobody knew what was going to happen. Kim Il Sung was still very much alive. His son Kim Jung Il was known as a playboy, with luxury cars, lots of liquor. Nobody knew what kind of a crazy situation was going on there. So the recent changes have been phenomenal, amazing to watch!

Q: How did Paul Wolfowitz operate?

MARTIN: He was very much of a thinker, an intellectual ,an academic. He loved to have discussions, to have different perspectives; to hear different options. He was not a very good manager; he did not handle paper flow well. One example of that was that his desk was always piled with papers. Paul's secretary, Mary Ann Cote (now Rich), my secretary Penny O'Brien and were always trying to make sure we could find the papers that we gave him. One night Mary Ann came to me and said, "Gene, I just have no place to put all this paper! We don't have enough space in the safe to lock up all these classified papers at the end of the day." This was about eight o'clock or so. His desk was still piled high, all the safes were stuffed with paper; we couldn't get anymore in. She took armloads of papers out of the safe everyday, put them on his desk, then put them back in the safe at night.

So tried to decide what to do. Do we just throw all this away? What else can we do? We decided the best option was to send it back to the desk from whence it came. The problem was that he would get a memo, look it, then write marginal notes asking good, perceptive questions on the issue. He'd say, "What about this other point," "Have you thought about this?" "Did you look at this article?" "Did you hear this opinion?" and he would send it back to the desk. They would then research all this and send back another paper on top of the original with answers to his questions. When he had a chance to get to them, which was not often right away because he always had meetings and other things, he would sometimes make additional notes on the top of that paper. So these decision memos were often difficult to get through, get the decisions made, because he was always thinking of other aspects of these, which was good, but at some point you have to stop and decide.

Q: Best is the enemy of the good anyway.

MARTIN: Absolutely! So, I made the decision, and I'm still reminded of it by some of my colleagues, to send these memos back to the desk with a note saying, "Look at this. Paul's not had a chance to read all this, and if there's a change, if it's still pertinent, if it's still relevant, send it back up, and we'll give it to him again."

Well, the howls that came from the desks were very loud. People said, "Here we've done all this work, and he hasn't even looked at it. Why do you give us all these taskers to write papers which are a worthless spending of time and paper?" But it did clear off the desk. Most of the memos came back and Paul had not missed them. He had read each paper, and I think he'd internalized it.

Q: Yes, so really it had gone in there.

MARTIN: It had gone in there. In many of the cases we had to go in and hold his feet to the fire, if you will, to decide on something. "What are you going to do? Are you going to sign this, or not? It was an interesting process.

We had some good deputies. Bill Brown was there, and John Monjo, Jim Lilley, and others who came and went at different times. But those were the three principal DASs (Deputy Assistant Secretaries), and they were all strong and active.

Q: Whither did you go in '85?

MARTIN: Usually, the special assistant job was only a year. Most people burned out at that point. It was a long-hours job!

Q: What does this type of job do family wise?

MARTIN: It was hard family life, because it was generally a six-thirty to nine job, basically, about an 18-hour job. And some weekends, and some trips - not a lot, but some. But we put up with it. It was longer hours than it had been when I worked for the Deputy Secretary, for Warren Christopher, because he was methodical. As I said earlier, one could almost set your clock by Chris. He'd be in at seven, and he'd leave at seven. He got his work done, and he had a clean desk, and he really moved paper! Paul Wolfowitz's successor in the EAP, Gaston Sigur, who had been in the NSC when I was there and then came over to State after Paul, also was a paper mover. A paper barely hit his desk before it was in the out-box! It was a different style of operating. Many academics I have met are this way; they tend to ruminate on decisions, and to take longer to make a decision.

But by '85, I had arranged to go on down to the China desk and take the job as the deputy director for political affairs. At that time, the desk had a director, a deputy director, and two other deputies, one for economic, one for political affairs. And so I became a deputy for political affairs. I was on the desk from '887, for two years.

Q: What were the political issues?

MARTIN: The issues have changed considerably in recent years, but some remain the samTaiwan, human rights. Trade was less of an issue than it is now, because we didn't have as much trade. We obviously had the annual MFN discussion and debate in Congress, but even at that early stage it pretty much went well. It was before Tiananmen, so the yearly determination and Congressional response under the Jackson-Vanik bill was not nearly as contentious. MFN went through quickly. The major difference, I think, was that at that point, the U.S. had a security relationship with China in a sense. Since the cold war was still "on,", we were still playing China off against the Soviet Union. We actually had military-military relations. We had agreed to sell avionic components for the F-5 fighter that was very much in the works. So there were a number of politico-military relationships to manage.

Q: What sort of information were you getting from CIA, military, and from our own embassy and all about what's going on in China?

MARTIN: China is always opaque. It's difficult to get information about China. At that point, it was beginning to change. Hong Kong traditionally was the window on China, and it was easier to get more information on China in Hong Kong than one ever could in the mainland because people would come out of China and feel more comfortable meeting with foreigners. Even Party cadre, government officials would come out to Hong Kong occasionally, and if you could meet with them, they would tell you more than they would tell you back home. But by the mid-1980s things were beginning to open up in China. The good relations with the U.S., I think, helped people feel more confident about talking to us to explain the situation after the change, explain decision making, explain factions within the government, to give us a little bit more of an insight on how decisions are reached, what different interest groups were pushing. A lot of it was economics because the reforms were focused on agricultural and industrial reform. The military was still the fourth modernization. They were the ones at the bottom of the heap, and so the military was not getting a lot of attention or resources from the government. And the Taiwan issue was not a very live one. It was there, there was no question about it, but it was not in the forefront.

There was a general feeling that things were getting better in China, that they were making slow progress to a more open society. There was more of a dialogue with the foreign ministry and diplomats abroad in terms of things that we were doing. The relations with the Chinese embassy here were good. The desk had close relations with them, and we dealt with them on an amicable way. So in a sense, there was a sense that things were improving, things were getting better, and so forth.

Q: How did you find the Chinese embassy dealing, say, with the Washington political system? In many ways the State Department's not the real player; it's more Congress and the media.

MARTIN: Oh, it's disastrous. It's always been disastrous. Their idea of congressional relations is to go up and hammer on the table and say, "You can't do that because it would hurt the feelings of the Chinese people." The usual answer, in substance if not words, was, "Yea? Get out of my house!" I also think they did not fully understand how the system works. They thought the State Department and President determined U.S. policy and could bring Congress into line. So Congressional resolutions were seen as evidence the U.S. government (i.e., the executive branch) was not being honest with them and really wanted to double deal, especially on Taiwan. But they've improved recently. They are certainly more active, and more knowledgeable, but I still think that they have difficulty understanding the USG is not a monolithic system. That is what they are used to at home as the National People's Congress (NPC) is still essentially a rubber stamp for what the Party and government want. But even their system is changing and the NPC is somewhat more autonomous of the Party and government than before.

Q: How did the Chinese embassy compare with the Taiwanese ability to operate in Washington?

MARTIN: They're masters! The Israelis and the Taiwanese are probably the unsurpassed masters at this. The mainland Chinese have never been able to match Taiwan's representatives. So I think they had a problem. But again, the public attitude on China in those days was still positive, the good feelings from normalization of relations and the growing trade, business dealings and academic exchanges affected policy. So the embassy was able to have a pretty good PR program.

Q: Were you seeing the massive influx of Chinese students, coming to the United States at graduate level and many of them returning, as making a change? Was this positive? How were we viewing this?

MARTIN: Oh, it was, very much so. Starting about 19882, they began to send a lot of scholars, government students, government sponsored students to the U.S. for graduate work. By '886, they were beginning to allow more and more students come privately, at their own expense, not sponsored by the state. When the state sponsored students here, it had a pretty good tight lease on them, and most of them returned. Not all did, but most went back, because of family, the bond they had put down as a surety, their old job waiting for them, etc. Subsequently, many found their return to their old jobs didn't work out, because once they'd been overseas, many were unwilling or unable to fit back into the old bureaucracy. Once you've been to Boston or San Francisco and studied at the best universities in the world, how do you go home again?

There were many frustrations for these scholars who went back to China, back into their old state sector jobs. They returned with new ideas, which were not welcomed by the people who didn't go to overseas; they came back with expectations and an awareness of how you can do things in the States; and even in those days, had learned to use computers, and many Chinese offices had little electricity, much less computers! And so there was a great deal of dissatisfaction among returned students but generally, the idea of people coming and studying in the States and then going back was a very positive one.

Q: Did you run across any of these? Early on there were always people who sought asylum - I always think of the tennis star. I would think this would have been a burr under your saddle all the time.

MARTIN: Oh, we had these hiccups. Hu Na, the tennis star who defected on the West Coast, caused heartburn. But these things were just bumps in the road and generally didn't last long. I think the Chinese realized the risk they were taking sending people out of China but decided the payoff was worth it.

Q: Was there concern about the Mainland Chinese, their operatives, intelligence operatives working in the United States?

MARTIN: The one that really got everybody's attention was Larry Wu-tai Chin, a FBIS and CIA translator for many years, who turned out to be a long-term mole. He was arrested but hung himself in jail before trial. That obviously caused a big stir so everybody was immediately looking around for other spies. I remember having met with Larry when he came to the desk. I talked to him a number of times. He was very effective. The Chin case put everybody's teeth on edge. We spent a great deal of time with the FBI counterintelligence office, talking with them, dealing with them, looking at various Chinese that had come on trips, come on delegations, and so forth. Yes, so there was obviously considerable attention to intelligence issues

Q: What about Taiwan? In your work, what was happening in Taiwan?

MARTIN: Taiwan, again, was continuing to loosen up, continuing to democratize its system. Chiang Ching-kuo died about that time and a new generation of leadership moved in. Mt office was situated in a short hall between the China desk suite of offices and the Taiwan coordination office, part of the bureau's regional affairs office. As these two offices were side by side and my office was in between, I considered myself as being in the Taiwan Strait, the guard between the two sides. We had a lot to do with the Taiwan coordinating staff, making sure that we coordinated with them and with AIT's Washington office across the river in Arlington.

Q: Was there concern about the growing democratization of Taiwan? As long as you have a nice solid authoritarian regime on Taiwan, it's fairly easy to dismiss them and to say, "Well, you know, we got one here and one there, and now one's bigger than the other, so we'll pick the bigger one as our thing." But when you have one who's all a sudden becoming more like us, it's hard.

MARTIN: That was a dilemma! It's become more of a dilemma. In those days, it was still at the early stages, so there wasn't quite as much democracy to brag about. But the trend was evident. There was, I think, a lot of discomfort in the mainland about this because they saw this change, but still, the KMT was in power. The KMT had been in power since Chang Kai-shek came to power in the late '20s. So there wasn't a lot of change, but there was a liberalization, a general relaxation of the political system in Taiwan. We saw this as a potential problem for the future, but it was not an issue at that point.

Q: Yes. Were you feeling pressure from... say Texas and all to sell more planes? I mean congressional pressure on, you know, arm sales, particularly to Taiwan, but also to Mainland China now?

MARTIN: Well, the Mainland China sale was basically the avionic upgrade of the F-5, which never really got very far, but it did go through. We dealt with the Rolls Royce Spey Engine, which the British were selling. We had lots of discussions about how it would be used, whether or not it could be reverse engineered and then they could start manufacturing it themselves, and what it would do for the fighters that they were going to put it in. The Chinese had a lot of problems with that. That engine had a lot of potential, but the problems were even greater because the engine was of a configuration that they would have to basically modify the entire fuselage to be able to fit the engine into it. Basically, they would have had to rebuild the plane! So, even though on the outside there were occasionally potshots by the Washington Times and conservatives who were worried about this sort of thing, in reality, the more you got into it, the more problems they had. Frankly, looking at the Chinese arms industry, defense industry, in terms of their technology, their machine tools, their metallurgy, and so forth, they were no where near a level that could have manufactured that engine. They've improved a lot since those days, but this was early on. You must remember, this was only a decade after the end of the Cultural Revolution. They had to rebuild their manufacturing base in those ten years. In the last ten, fifteen years, they have certainly progressed much faster.

I think the issue with Taiwan really was an issue on arms sales. It always was an issue even after the '82 Communiquï¿½. The bucket, which we said was not going to expand, didn't expand, but it was very elastic. The bucket tended to grow, even though it may not have expanded. The main issue at the time was the agreement to let Taiwan build an IDF (Indigenous Defense Fighter), which, some people, said was essentially an F-16. General Dynamics gave Taiwan considerable assistance with plans, designs, and so forth, but we insisted the IDF was Taiwan's own fighter. Again, you play the show game.

Q: What about the relationship between China and the Soviet Union? This is still the Soviet Union at this point.

MARTIN: The triangular relationship still pertained. China didn't have very good relations with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev had come into power at that point and the Chinese were concerned about what Gorbachev was doing domestically in terms of relaxation of political control, "perestroika" (restructuring) and "glasnost" (openness), and worried about what that was going to mean. But since they didn't have close relations with the Soviet Union, the three way "card game" we were playing with them was not as active. Moscow was mired down in Afghanistan, and it didn't have much of a role outside. There were still concerns in Eastern Europe, of course, but I think generally that was not an issue with which we dealt.

Q: Did people who were in the Chinese embassy come over and talk about what's happening in the Soviet Union? I mean was it that type of relationship where they could get much information?

MARTIN: Not really. They've never been very good about talking about a third country. Occasionally they do, particularly more recently. My experience in Beijing was that we held more "tour d'horizon" (general survey) discussions on what was happening in the Middle East; what their views were on South Africa; how they felt about what was happening in Korea; their relations with Vietnam, India, etc. So we did have regional discussions, but that was not really the case when I was on the desk.

Q: At that time, and speaking of Korea, were we using the Chinese to figure out what was happening?

MARTIN: We didn't get much from them on that. No, they were careful about not saying very much about North Korea. That was still their special relationship, not quite the old "lips and teeth" but still unique. I think by the mid-1980s they had begun to drift away from the DPRK as China focused on its economic development and growing relationship with the U.S..

Q: Then, in '87, it sounds like you're about ready to get out in the real world again.

MARTIN: Yes. I had been back in Washington for eight years, had had seven jobs in those eight years, and felt it was about time to get back into the world again. I had decided to bid on the political section chief job Hong Kong, for my third assignment to what was still a British colony. I figured three times would be even luckier than two. The Consul General, Don Anderson, was anxious to have me come out and join him but the inspectors got there first. The inspectors said, "Wait a minute, now. You've got this huge consulate general in Hong Kong, which used to be the embassy in exile, and you've got all these China types here doing analysis and reporting on China. At the same time, you've got this growing embassy in Beijing, which is doing exactly the same thing. Isn't this a little too much duplication? You need to cut two of the four political positions and combine them with the economic section."

The Consulate agreed with the inspectors. If I had gone to post and the sections had remained separate, I would have been the chief of one little Indian. That didn't appeal to me very much. Don said he really couldn't see keeping it separate and so they integrated the two as the economic-political section. Since the economic chief had only been there a year, she became the head of the combined section. So there was no job for me. Thus I looked around to see where I could go. The politico-military job in Manila was coming open, I bid on it and was assigned.

Q: So you were in Manila from?

MARTIN: I was in Manila from 1987 to 1990.

Q: Well, this was a fascinating period!

MARTIN: It was a fascinating period, indeed!

Q: What was the situation '87, when you arrived there?

MARTIN: Well, I missed all the fun with Marcos. That was '86. The election the end of '85, the people power effort in 1986, and the election of Cory (Corazon) Aquino and assumption of power in February of '86, and Marcos's departure for Hawaii. So I missed all that. I was there for a whole different kind of turbulent period.

Q. Had you had previous Philippine experience?

MARTIN: No. No experience in the Philippines at all. In fact, most of my career had been on China, Chinese language study, and so forth, except for my second tour, which was in Rangoon. That was really my only Southeast Asian experience. In many ways, I was happy to add to my portfolio, to be able to have some additional Philippine experience.

Q: Before you went out, what were you picking up about what was going on in the Philippines after the fall of Marco? What was your picture of the Philippines?

MARTIN: I had been involved, as Paul Wolfowitz's special assistant in EAP in '885, in the beginnings of the change in policy in the Reagan administration toward Marcos. I knew John Mike Maisto, who was the director of the Philippine desk at the time, and we worked closely with him trying to influence the policy. It really started with John Maisto and the desk. John had been in the Philippines at least once, if not twice, I think; married to a Filipina; and really was the once who had come to the conclusion that policy had to change in the Philippines. By '884 the situation had gotten desperate, particularly with Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino's assassination. So he began to work, first within the bureau, and then within the department, and finally on an interagency basis to influence the NSC, and then ultimately the president, that it was time to begin to push Marcos for some changes. I think he realized at that point that changes were not going to be possible under Marcos or Imelda, and so it was a time to shift our support from the Marcoses to the opposition.

So when I arrived in the Philippines, even though I had subsequently been dealing with China for two years from the desk, I still was fairly up to date with what was happening in the Philippines.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

MARTIN: At that time, the ambassador was just changing. It had been Steve Bosworth, who had been there through the coup of 1986, the change in government, Marcos evacuation to Honolulu, Cory Aquino's coming to power, and so forth. When I arrived, he had just left, and Phil Kaplan was the chargï¿½ d'Affaires. But he was there two or three weeks before he left. Ken Quinn, formerly of the Secretariat in the Department, came as DCM and Nicholas Platt arrived as the ambassador. We all arrived about the same time, in July or August 1987. I was the politico-military officer within the political section. The position was, in a sense, somewhat separate from the straight political hierarchy in the section. While there was a political counselor and a deputy, my position was somewhat coequal with the deputy and I reported primarily to the political counselor, and through him to the ambassador.

Q: Who was the political counselor?

MARTIN: The political counselor was John Yates, who was an African, not an Asian hand, but had been assigned to the Philippines for family reasons. He was a very competent officer; he had been an ambassador in Cape Verde previously and went back, subsequently, to be an ambassador in Africa.

Q: I would think that sometimes the politico-military position is interesting but I would imagine the whole politico-military connection with the Philippines was really our driving force, wasn't it?

MARTIN: It was. I often used to say I had the best job in the embassy, except perhaps DCM and ambassador, and maybe even better than theirs in the sense that I didn't have all the responsibilities they had. It was also the job that I think everybody else wanted a piece of. I really enjoyed the job, mainly because it gave me an opportunity to get involved in so many aspects of a bilateral relationship. It was the dominant aspect, dominant factor in our relationship. In fact, it was the overwhelming relationship, and the one that I think really tilted the relationship totally out of balance. The security relationship, with the bases in the Philippines, which I was responsible for, really was the key operative aspect of our relationship with the Philippines, with all the benefits and most of the problems.

Q: The name of the game was bases, wasn't it?

MARTIN: Correct.

Q: What was the atmosphere regarding the bases - within the new Aquino government, the legislature, in the military, and the public in general?

MARTIN: Well, it was the most active political issue within the Philippine body politic. And it was the issue which constantly came up in all our discussions. Whether it was the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) program, whether it was the USIS Public Diplomacy (which was not yet called that) programs in those days, whether it was the economic or trade aspects of our relationship, somehow or another, the discussion was always related back to the bases, particularly by the Philippine pundits, the opinion makers, and the public.

The bases were very controversial issues. As you know, the bases had changed after independence in 1945. We had, frankly, twisted arms to the point where the Filipinos, having lost everything in World War II, were forced to allow us to maintain our military presence there. Over the years, the military raison d'ï¿½tre for our being in the Philippines changed with the political climate. Initially, of course, the bases were there to maintain our presence in the region. Subsequently, the bases became part of the circle of containment around China which we established after the Korean War began. Subsequently, our military forces became important in efforts to assist the Philippines put down their internal subversion, the insurrection by the Communists. Then when Vietnam picked up, the Philippines became a critical base of support for the war effort. And so over the years, the importance of the bases changed depending on what our policies and our strategic interests were in the region, which is natural and not surprising.

The Filipinos began to feel more and more concerned that 1) the bases were not in their interests because it didn't really provide much to them. 2) they were concerned the bases were going to bring the Philippines into a conflict of which they were not a part, Vietnam being one of the major ones. Marcos, of course, played this very adeptly. Politically he used the bases as hostage, in a sense as ransom, to be able to get further aid and support by the U.S. government. The U.S. was unwilling to really confront Marcos on human rights or his domestic policies, mainly because of the bases.

When Aquino took power, she was somewhat ambivalent because her husband, Ninoy Aquino, had come out of the political world of the Philippines, and had made some statements over the years that the bases were not really beneficial to the Philippines, that the U.S. needed to really pay more for the bases, and be able to use them more to the Philippine benefit. The Aquino administration initially criticized the bases, but she realized quickly that she depended heavily on U.S. support, and so did not say very much when she came into power.

The status of the bases, of course, had changed over the years. Initially they had been U.S. bases on Philippine soil. By the mid '50s, this had become untenable; and so, I think, in '57 or '58 the new base treaty, under the Mutual Defense Agreement, changed the bases to Philippine bases in name, that the Philippines were the sovereign commanders of the bases, and the U.S. was there at their behest, subordinate to the Philippine base commander. In reality, of course, this was all a fiction. Nobody was really fooled by this in any way.

Q: When you arrived there, what did you see? I mean what were you doing?

MARTIN: My job was liaison between the embassy and the bases. I dealt with the base commanders. I dealt with the politico-military officers on the base. I was the co-chair of the joint US-RP Criminal Justice Implementation Committee (CJIC) dealing with cases involving the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement). It was a joint committee between the Philippine Justice Department, the embassy, the local prosecutors (called fiscals) and the bases' politico-military officers and others who were responsible for the behavior of personnel.

This was a very controversial issue because Philippines opponents of the bases criticized them as places where Americans service personnel could get away with criminal acts. Soldiers could escape to the bases after committing rape, murder, mayhem, what have you, in town and the U.S. would always protect them from any Philippine jurisdiction over them. This was a constant controversy. There were in some cases bad troops who did terrible things within the community. On the other hand, there were also a number of Filipinos who were more than willing to take advantage and claim robbery, chaos, breaking up bars, attacks on women, and so forth, which I think were based upon a desire to get money. So we had a steady stream of cases to consider at our monthly CJIC meetings.

Secondly, I was responsible for maintaining a close liaison between the bases and the embassy, particularly the ambassador. The admiral in command of the Subic Naval Base was considered the representative of the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Forces (CINCPAC) and maintained a small office and a representative, in the embassy. The commander of the 13th Air Force at Clark Air Base was also base commander. The Defense Attachï¿½ Office was involved in base and pol-mil issues as, more tangentially, was the commanding general of the JUSMAG. I was the one to coordinate with these offices and various other people who were interested in aspects of our security relationship, to make sure that we tried to keep on top of it, and that the policy was coordinated.

Q: Of the bases at that time, one thinks of Clark being an air force base, a major air force base. Subic Bay was more than just a port

MARTIN: Subic had many parts. There was the Subic Bay Naval Base, Cubi Point Naval Air Station, the Marine Corps detachment, the ship repair facility, the logistics facility, the munitions depot, and others. In addition there was San Miguel, which was a naval communications station a few miles north of Subic, a separate base.

Clark was the air force base in which the Thirteenth Air Force was based. The 13th Air Force was affiliated with air bases across the Pacific - in Japan, Korea and Alaska.

In addition, Camp John Hay was the MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) recreational facility in the hill station of Baguio, which was run by the air force, but for all the service personnel.

Q: How about the army? Did they have much of a presence there?

MARTIN: Army had almost no presence. The Army had a small unit detachment as liaison at Clark working on training exercises. The Philippines was used extensively for training - marines from Okinawa and the Special Forces from Korea and Okinawa, live fire naval exercises near Subic and Special Operations training flights. There were large training areas attached to the bases. Camp Magsaysay, a Philippine Army base, was used for joint training with Philippine troops. A major annual joint exercise was "Balikatan," which sometimes included 2,000 to 3,000 U.S. troops plus Philippine counterparts.

In addition to that, attached to Clark was the Crow Valley Bombing Range, which did exercises almost on the scale that you had out in Nevada. There was an air force red flag exercise called "Cope Thunder" that would involve U.S. aircraft from Japan, Korea, and the continental U.S. itself, as well as allies from Singapore and Thailand, Australia, sometimes New Zealand, all to practice on the bombing range. It was really very sophisticated and quite a well-developed program, the only one in the region at that time that allowed for allied cooperation and allied joint use.

That was facilitated by Camp O'Donnell, north of Clark, which was another training area, but they ran the software programs for the bombing range. They set up the programs, the running tracks, and monitored each plane's performance.

There was Wallace Air Station near San Fernando on the Lingayen Gulf, which was where U.S. troops landed on Luzon Island after Leyte in 1944, to recapture Manila. Wallace was an air force radar station, as well as a Voice of America (VOA) antenna field. So all together there were six different premises, different locations, in which we had American military personnel.

Q: What was your impression at that time of the Air Force and Navy view of the political-military situation in the Philippines?

MARTIN: It was really quite a different response between the two services, mainly because of the different communities in which they were located. CINCPAC REP PHIL (Representative of the Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, in the Philippines), was the Navy admiral at Subic. Subic and its neighboring town, Olongapo, had a very different relationship than Clark and its host community of Angeles.

Subic was on the coast and surrounded by mountains. The city of Olongapo, which was just outside the gates, had a rather disreputable reputation. The ribald opening scene from the movie An Officer and a Gentleman was very realistic. Originally Olongapo was part of the base and the whole area within the bowl of the mountains on the coast, was run by the U.S. Navy base commander. Subsequently, the town of Olongapo was separated from the base, which in turn became (in name) a Philippine naval base when we turned it over to Philippine government control. Subic was quite isolated, because of the mountains and the coast . The Navy also had a better relationship with the local community, in part because Olongapo was firmly under the control of the Gordon family who held the mayorship for many decades..

Angeles and Clark was a totally different situation! Angeles, in the province of Pampanga, was the crossroads of Luzon. It was located in the middle of the broad plain that ran north and south, from Manila to Lingayen Gulf, between the mountain ranges. Being the crossroads, there was constant movement of people - north, south, east, west. Pampanga was also the area where the Huk Rebellion started after World War II. These were guerillas who had fought the Japanese, often with U.S. support; and when the Philippines gained its independence, the Huks rebelled. They felt that both the Americans and the Filipinos had betrayed promises of land reform. So it was the hotbed, or the heartland if you will, of insurgency, of rebellion, of leftist activity. Therefore, there was a confrontational relationship between the base commander at Clark and the community. The local government officials were under public pressures to try to squeeze everything they could out of the base while not restricting political activists demonstrating against the US presence. In addition, the base had a serious problem of pilfering and theft by people in the community, everything from diversion of PX and commissary goods to robbery of homes and vehicles. So it became a lot more "us against them, circle the wagons, build the wall higher, they're coming over the wall" mentality at Clark. While I was there, an eight-foot rebar and cinder block wall replaced the old mesh fence, which had essentially been stolen. And still the townspeople came over, or under.

Previous incarnations of military bases in Asia were similar, I think. After World War II, the bases in Japan often fought to keep the local people out from scavenging on the base. Korea was the same way after the Korean War. The bases often had a confrontational relationship with communities whose level of economic development was lower. I understand in recent years it's reversed in many places, Japan and perhaps Korea, where the American personnel are poorer than people in neighboring communities.

The rip off factor at Subic was not so much of a problem. But they had a much better perimeter of defense, and a much better guard force. They used the Negritos, diminutive aboriginal people, as part of the jungle defense force. Most of the remaining jungle in the Philippines was, at that time, around Subic. Average Filipinos from neighboring communities were afraid to penetrate the base through the jungle because of their fear of the Negritos who knew how to live and fight in the jungle. So Subic was able to protect themselves on the three sides that did not face the sea.

In general, living was much less pleasant in Clark than it was in Subic.

Q: How did you find your role? I mean would you try to mollify, or what would you do?

MARTIN: I worked with the base commanders and their staff to try to find ways in which they could maintain a dialogue with the local community, with the leaders, with the mayors, with others in the community around them; worked with the civil affairs people on the staff to try to develop civil affairs programs. I went on a couple exercises that included a civil action component, usually free medical or dental treatment of civilians in the villages around the province or near the exercise area.

The civil affairs units also had a fairly lively outreach program of holding discussions in the schools and in community organizations to find ways the community and the bases could work together. They were fairly effective, and I think that that did help the situation. Not surprisingly, they had a more difficult time in Clark and Angeles than they did in Subic.

Q: Well were you sort of continually on call when there was an alleged rape, or a shooting, or something like that? Would that bring you into the action?

MARTIN: I would hear about that, yes, particularly if there was any kind of a dustup like that in town. Part of the problem when I was there was security was bad. The Communist Party's military wing, the New People's Army (NPA) was very much at a high point. They had built up considerably in the latter Marcos years, and when Cory came in, they laid back for a while; but by the '88-89 timeframe, they had gone back on the offensive. Security around the bases was increasingly a concern, as it was in Manila for the embassy. We also had reports that base personnel were being targeted, that the NPA was going to take action in the neighborhood, and so forth.

I dealt a lot with the base security people, with NCIS (U.S. Naval Criminal Investigative Service) at the navy side, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI). They were responsible for base security and personnel security, a constant problem. At the same time, I dealt with a lot of the people in the embassy who had the similar concerns. Our own security personnel, Diplomatic Security, had liaison with the base security people. The intelligence agencies had their own liaison. The Defense attachï¿½ felt that he had a role as well, being part of the intelligence agencies, and so forth.

We had country team meetings, which was usually a very full room when everyone came. The embassy in Manila was one of the few, that I've been in at least, that had a helicopter pad on the grounds (somewhat like Saigon, I guess, in a different sort of way). The base commanders, the Air Force general, and the Navy admiral would fly in every Tuesday morning, I think it was, for country team meeting on their helicopters, They would jockey to arrive first to get on the cement pad rather than have to land on the lawn. The JUSMAG commander, an Army Major General during my tour drove in since he lived in Manila. So we had three flag-rank officers sitting at the table, plus their staff sitting in back benches, at least some of them, and then all the country team members. Once, as we went around the table, I counted 13 agency heads or section heads who spoke about various aspects of their work. And I was involved in 11 of the 13 subjects that were raised at that table. In a sense, I had a handle, I had a role in almost everything that was going on in that embassy, which made the job fun. I often said, "Everybody wants to get involved in the bases issue, no matter what they do, what they're all responsible for, they all want to have a piece of the action with the bases, because this was the one issue that got the attention.

Q: Did you have much contact on the Philippine side with the military or the civilian officials?

MARTIN: My primary contacts were with the Philippine military, the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines), the National Security Agency, their intelligence agency as well as the Department of National Defense (DND) and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). I also dealt with Presidential Assistants at the palace, Malacaï¿½ang.

Again, as I say, it was a great job because I was involved in so many aspects of our bilateral relationship, and I had good contacts, I remember. It was particularly nice, because when I was there, Fidel "Eddie" Ramos was the Secretary of Defense, having just retired from the Philippine Constabulary. Actually, he was still the AFP Chief of Staff when I first knew him, and then became Secretary of National Defense (SND) while I was there. When I returned for my second tour six years later, I walked in, and Ramos said, "Gene! Welcome back! Nice to have you back!" At that point, he was the president. So it was kind of fun. I was delighted to have had the Pol-Mil job during my first tour as when I came back as DCM for my second tour, I had contacts and entree all across the government, from the president all the way through.

Q: Was there a significant political group within the Philippine political spectrum, that made their money by attacking the American bases and American presence?

MARTIN: I'm not sure they made their money, but they certainly made their political reputation. Their "raison d'ï¿½tre" was to criticize the bases. The leftist, or at least the so-called leftists, the nationalist politicians, the Taï¿½adas, the Tolentinos, and others were well known for their nationalistic stances, and spent much of their time criticizing the U.S., U.S. policy, and specifically, the bases.

Part of the problem was that the security relationship and the bases had unbalanced our bilateral relations. We have a love-hate relationship with the Philippines given our history over the last hundred years. We had come in initially to liberate the country from Spanish colonialism, then essentially kidnapped their independence movement, betrayed it, took it over, and became the new colonial master. We fought a very bloody, insurgent war for three years - a rebellion between people who wanted independence and those of us who wanted to make the Philippines a colony - and this legacy continues. So there are nationalists who don't particularly appreciate the U.S. role either as a colonialist, or subsequently as an ally. After the war, they felt we had preserved our influence, preserved our positions of control in the Philippines economically, politically, militarily in such a way that the Philippines really was not very independent. I tend to agree with much of what they said, but obviously, not to the extent that they did, mainly because I think they were using this as a means to heighten their own political stature and be able to help themselves politically and to hold onto power. Many had been in or still had relatives, property, bank accounts and doctors in the U.S. which they didn't have a problem maintaining.

There was also the Communist movement, which during the Marcos years had co-opted much of the nationalists' rhetoric. Many of the nationalists appeared to be affiliated with or at least work in parallel with the communists who were still engaged in an active insurgency against the government. In the sense that they were able to feed off of each other, and many of the nationalists felt that the NPA attacks against U.S. interests were in their own interests.

Q: How serious did we consider the NPA?

MARTIN: At that time, we considered it very seriously because, while estimates of NPA strength varied anywhere from 10,000 to 50,000 or more, there were large areas of the country where we could not go or where the civil government in the Philippines really did not maintain control. The military was not very effective in terms of being able to handle the insurgency. The Philippine Constabulary (PC), a paramilitary national police force, was a U.S. colonial successor to the "Guardia Civil" (the Civil Guard) of the Spanish era. The PC was responsible for local security, but they too were unable to maintain the government presence in many areas. Corruption was rife; poverty was widespread; education was deteriorating; so government services were not effective or evident. Corruption was perhaps the biggest problem since the lack of justice or of legal recourse for people who had problems forced them to turn to alternative means of redress. And the NPA was all too willing to provide revolutionary justice to abusive landlords or local officials. It all fit the traditional pattern in which insurgencies and the Communists were able to benefit.

Q: Was there the feeling, when you were there at that point, that the clock was ticking; that these bases wouldn't be there much longer, or not?

MARTIN: I thought so. I thought, initially, that it was just a matter of time. Many people felt that we could continue to renew the base agreement and keep it going, that this was something that was in our vital interest to keep. The navy always swore that without Subic, they might as well fold their tents and go back to San Diego - well, maybe Pearl Harbor; that they wouldn't really be able maintain a forward deployed presence in the region. The air force said that they wouldn't be able to continue to provide security throughout the region; that our presence both in the Philippines and Taiwan (or around Taiwan), Korea and Japan would be affected if they didn't have Clark. They used Clark for throughput to Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean and on to the Middle East. So it was a critical base. It was a very important base that had a lot of traffic going through it, even after Vietnam was over. I think basically no one was willing, or forced, to consider alternatives. Most insisted that we had to keep what we had, and couldn't change. Subsequently, of course, we learned that we could!

Q: Was the embassy seen by the military commanders as being a little too soft, or seen not as the enemy...but not that effective, or not?

MARTIN: There's always a little bit of that, I think, in any chain of command. The bases, of course, reported back to Honolulu to the CINCPAC, the Air Force to PACAF (Pacific Air Forces), the Navy to CINCPACFLEET. The embassy leadership - I give the ambassador and the DCM great credit for this - worked closely with the base commanders. We kept in close touch. The military commanders were always included in decision-making. The phone lines were used regularly. Yes, there were differences of opinion, of course, but I think generally we hashed it out pretty well, and despite different perspectives, I don't recall major disagreements. One way to judge this is to look at the '89 coup attempt, seven days in December. Good Embassy-base relations proved themselves on that occasion.

The other side of the job, of course, was managing the political relationship with the Philippines. The Philippines was in a period of great political instability at the time. We used to joke that the Philippines had a "coup-of-the-month" problem. During the three years that I was there, there were seven coup attempts. Some of them were farcical. It was almost like Bill Sullivan's comments about Laotian coups at one point, in which he described Laos as a Gilbert and Sullivan opera which was yet to be written. But the Philippine coup attempts were in some ways humorous, in other cases, very serious.

The first one happened in early September 1987 a few weeks after I arrived. It was the so-called Manila hotel coup attempt. In fact, Ambassador (Nicholas) Platt had been there all of about two weeks, and had not established many contacts in the government. The military, which felt they had been the main factor in the overthrow of Marcos, resented that they did not get better treatment after the Aquino administration took power. They felt that they had been short changed on benefits). The Young Officers' Union (YOU) and the Rebolusyonaryong Alyansang MakabansReform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM)) as they call themselvewere dissident groups of young officers in the Philippine Armed Forces who felt that they should have gotten political power; that they should have been able to establish a junta, or at least a military controlled government after Marcos was overthrown. So they began a series of disturbances, a series of actions, which destabilized the government. That of course made the problem even worse. The government couldn't rule effectively because of constantly watching over its shoulder for what the military was thinking or doing. None of the coup attempts succeeded because the majority of the AFP refused to go along with the rebels, but the instability persisted throughout Cory Aquino's administration.

The first attempt was within a couple weeks after the ambassador, DCM Ken Quinn and I arrived, and we had to sort out what we could do, who to call, what our relationships were. The initial attempt ended within a couple of days so was not a serious threat. We were not directly involved other than making public statements, supporting the Aquino administration, and also working with the Defense Department, Chief of Staff Ramos at that time, to make sure the coup did not spread to other AFP units.

Subsequently, there were a number of other coup attempts by politicians in league with the dissident military officers. The Manila Hotel coup involved former (Marcos') prime minister, Tolentino, who barricaded himself up in the Manila Hotel with a small group of armed men, proclaimed that he was going to take over the government, and that he was going to be the new prime minister. The farce faded within a matter of hours, further reducing the reputation of former Marcos cronies. But the instability, political and economic, that this caused continued to reverberate through this society. At the same time, we had the NPA active around the country and the Moro Islamic insurgency in Mindanao. So it was quite an unstable period for the whole Philippines.

The most serious coup attempt and the one that affected us almost directly was in December '89. The same group of young officers who opposed the Aquino government started this again. This became very serious because they were better organized than in previous attempts, had broader support in various branches of the AFP and seemed more determined to actually fight instead of the usual bluster. Air Force rebels seized Villamor Air Base in Manila; Army units took control of Camp Emilio Aguinaldo, the General Headquarters of the AFP and DND in Manila; and dissidents took over Mactan Air Base in Cebu. The plotters had units positioned around the city preparing to move against the palace and other government buildings. Dissident pilots flew a couple of airplanes on what looked like bombing runs on the palace, albeit without serious damage. That was one of the main reasons the U.S. decided to intervene by having phantoms from Clark Air Base fly over the city at low altitude to buzz the air field, and make it clear that any of the Philippine air force planes that tried to get off the ground to bomb the palace or any place else would be attacked. They never had to fire but their presence over the city and threat that they would take action was a turning point, allowing the president, loyal forces, and Secretary of Defense Ramos to put the cork back in the bottle.

Q: Were you involved in the group that was making the decision to put the Phantoms -

MARTIN: I was. We were all in it. The coup lasted about seven days as I recall, 1 December through 7 December 1989. Most of the section chiefs of the missiopolitical, economic, security, military, intelligence, consular - were all in the embassy working in the front office. After the original '87 coup attempt, we had established a small crisis center attached to the front office. It was like a Task Force Center in the Operations Center at the department, where you had phone banks, maps, radios, and so forth, so that we could maintain good communications with other embassy personnel around the city. The set up proved to be very effective. We also had a military team with a satellite phone so we could keep in direct touch with the bases, CINCPAC and Washington.

One issue we had not anticipated was the need to work out ways in which senior leaders in the embassy spelled each other; that they all didn't have to stay the whole time. Certain senior members of the staff felt they were indispensable, and of course, had to stay there 24 hours a day for five or seven days. After while they became obstacles to getting things done, to clear thinking. Fortunately, the ambassador and the DCM made the decision that they themselves would spell each other - the ambassador and DCM would rotate and not be there both at the same time - so we were able to get lower ranking people to go home and sleep. The spouses worked with the ambassador's wife in bringing food to the embassy so that we could eat.

But it got a bit hairy around town because we didn't know where the rebellious troops were. They took over apartment buildings and the Hotel Inter-Continental in the Makati business district. There were many American and other tourists in the hotel, and we were concerned about getting them out. There was firing from tall buildings within Makati. The Canadian embassy in Makati kept us informed of what was happening.

Many of us lived in the villages in the vicinity of Makati. Getting to and from work became increasingly a problem. We took armored vehicles to go to work, and I remember coming up the highway, and there was a rebel machine gun nest up the road. We never knew quite where it was, and so we tried to come over the bridge without lights, and then duck into the gate of the community there without being seen. Fortunately we did.

Anyway, the coup went on and on over several days. The government initiated plans to retake the Makati business district. We got word of that early in the morning. I had gone home to sleep, and was called at five o'clock saying that "You need to evacuate to the embassy compound along the water front by five-thirty because the Philippine marines are going to attack the business district from inside your village. They expected heavy artillery fire from the rebels across the highway between the business district and the community.

We woke our two daughters and said we had to leave in thirty minutes. One was ready in about ten minutes, but the other said, "Oh, I have to wash my hair! I need to get my clothes! I want to get all my things together!"

We said, "You can take one small suitcase. You decide what you're going to need."

"Well, I can't decide. I have to take all my clothes!"

Different personality! But we all left, not knowing whether or not we'd come back to a house, or to a burnt out shell. As it turned out, the battle did not develop. There was some firing, but nothing major.

The flight by the Phantoms was useful but came after a long discussion. We weren't sure whether we needed the planes or whether loyal Philippine air force (PAF) commanders could prevent rebel pilots from flying. A couple of PAF planes had taken off. One tried to do a run on the palace, not very effectively. One of them crashed at the Sangley Air Base, on the south side of Manila Bay. There was no indication that the U.S. shot it down, although there were rumors that we had. It turned out that it had been shot down by one of the airplanes from the Philippine Air Force. The debate on whether or not we'd fly the Phantoms was done over the phone with the base commanders, backed with Washington with then General Colin Powell at the White House at the time. President Bush was in the air on his way to Europe on a plane so Vice President Quayle was the one who, in consultation with Bush ion Air Force 1, actually gave the instruction, "Go ahead and have the planes fly."

Q: How did that coup end?

MARTIN: The coup ended when the rebellious soldiers gave up. One of the leaders of the coup attempt was then Colonel Gregorio Honasan, who had been one of the Young Turks that helped overthrow Marcos. He then became a leader of the RAM group in the military contesting the Aquino administration's hold on power.

It's kind of funny. He went missing after one of the earlier coups, and, in a Philippine sense, nobody knew where he was, In reality, our military attachï¿½s seemed to have a pretty easy time meeting with him in safe houses, all within the same village that I lived in, in one of the gated communities. So Honasan was in hiding, on the run, but for some reason the Philippine military or the police were unable to find him - a typical Philippine operation in many ways.

He was directly involved in the '89 coup. He was captured when it ended and imprisoned on a navy ship half a mile out in Manila Bay. He was there for, I guess, about a week or so before he escaped one night. A boat came alongside, he was able to get in the boat, and disappeared again. The farcical nature of the situation continued.

The coup attempt, however had been fairly serious. Nearly 100 people were killed. There actually were some street battles between the rebellious troops and the loyalist troops. They moved tanks. They set up machine gun nests, as I mentioned. Nevertheless, despite all the fireworks and all the maneuvering, the fighting was what the Filipinos called "acoustical" warfare. In the midst of all the smoke and noise, the idea was that if you had to shoot, you shot up in the air rather than shooting at somebody. The soldiers on both sides knew each other so did not want to kill their fellows. So the number of fatalities was probably lower than it might have been in other places.

Q: Did we have connections with the coup and the loyalist forces?

MARTIN: I think we had a pretty good line on most of them. The Defense attachï¿½s tended to have good connections with some of the rebellious troops, or at least sympathizers so had information on their thinking if not plans. This helped us understand where they were coming from, but it didn't help us a great deal in being able to persuade them to put down their arms.

Q: What were they after?

MARTIN: Essentially, they wanted to overthrow the Aquino administration because they felt that she was not doing a good job, that the country was unstable, economically the nation was not doing well, and a change in government was needed. What they would have done if they had won really was not clear at all. It was very vague.

Q: What was your impression of the Aquino government?

MARTIN: My impression was that it was well intentioned. President Aquino was a charismatic person, eager to reestablish democracy in the Philippines, to eliminate the bad influences that the Marcos had engendered - the crony capitalism, human rights abuses, corruption and politicalization of the military. I'm not sure she had the vision or the ability to do that. She said that she was just an ordinary housewife, which she had been. She was certainly smart, she had good leadership qualities, but she didn't really have the support of the people who after overthrowing Marcos, returned to their usual fractious selves and refused to compromise their interests for the greater, national good.. She was unable to overcome her "class background," if I can use that term. She came from an oligarchic family - landowners in Pampanga and Tarlac where her family had a large hacienda estate. I felt that when she first came to power, the way she did come to power with overwhelming support, what was called People's Power, that she could have had carte blanche to make major changes. She could have done just about anything. If she had been able to rise above her origins, and been able to initiate effective land reform, to mandate the breaking up of the large land estates, she could have made a much more successful start than she did. She couldn't do that. She was unwilling or unable to do it. I think more unable to do that. Part was her family's pressure on her; part was her determination not to rule by decree as Marcos had. Rather, she turned to the Congress which was both parochial and controlled by oligarchic interests

She was also very conservative in her views, with a strong Catholic background. The church had been critical in overthrowing the Marcoses; and I think that Cory was beholding to the church, which, of course, is one of the most conservative Catholic churches in the world. She did not touch population control, which was desperately needed in the Philippines, and a number of other issues which I think would have been helpful.

Q: Were there any other developments that we should cover?

MARTIN: The assassination of Nick Rowe was a major event in which I was involved. James "Nick" Rowe was an army hero who had been a POW (Prisoner of War) in Vietnam something like six or seven years. Having survived that in remarkably good mental shape, he was assigned as the head of the ground forces unit in the army section of JUSMAG in the Philippines.

I worked closely with JUSMAG, basically on the training and the foreign military sales program, handling our support program to the Philippine Armed Forces. JUSMAG was on the other side of Metropolitan Manila, in Quezon City. They had quite a presence when I was there initially. A two-star general was the commander of about 25 or so military personnel from all services, including the Coast Guard, which managed the military support programs to the Philippine Armed Forces. They were in a Dodge City-like base, or compound in Quezon City, just down the road from a Philippine TV (television) station - I think it was Channel Five. In the first coup I experienced back in '87, I happened to be visiting JUSMAG with Karl Jackson, who was the deputy in ISA at that time, when the rebel soldiers tried to get into the TV station so as to capture the airwaves and broadcast their demands. In typical third world coup attempts, you try to control the media by taking over the TV and radio stations to get your message out to the populace, saying, "We're in charge!" So we were in the JUSMAG compound; and the rebel troops came down the street with their armored personnel carriers while loyal troops were in the TV compound across the street firing at the armored personnel carriers, shooting at their tires, and so forth. One of the rebel APCs (Armored Personnel Carriers) fired a RPG (Rocket Propelled Grenade) at the gate of the TV station so they could get in. Unfortunately, the shell landed about 50 feet from where we were in a JUSMAG office! Karl and I still laugh that we both got rug burns on our noses as we dove under the desks. We call each other "foxhole buddies" because it really felt like the front lines. The whole building shook as the round went off. That was probably the closest I had come to an actual battle situation at that point!

JUSMAG was in Quezon City because, like some many other US agencies, wanted to be separated from the embassy. You asked earlier about difference of opinion, difference in outlook in the US mission. JUSMAG did have a different outlook from the embassy. They wanted to be considered a separate military command, just like the two bases with a stovepipe reporting system back to DOD. They felt they had a different mission and approach to the AFP and so a better "feel" for the country. They lived on the economy in the Quezon City area, had their own JUSMAG Club where they entertained and met with their Philippine military counterparts, many of whom were members of the club which gave them access to commissary and PX food and drink. They preferred to operate on their own with minimal coordination with the embassy. It took the general a long time to drive across the city to and from the embassy for country team meetings since he did not have the helicopters the base commanders used. So I used to spend a great deal of time on the road traveling back and forth between the embassy and JUSMAG because I wanted to keep close contact with them. I was out at their headquarters probably at least a couple times a week, keeping in touch.

One of the officers I liked best and worked closely with was Nick Rowe, the ground forces unit chief. The Philippine army has a lion's share of the troops, the numbers, and the influence. Most of the supplies and arms we provided under the Philippine assistance program was for the ground forces. Our support included APCs, trucks, firearms of various types, ammunition, etc. We gave the navy and the air force much less. The Philippine Constabulary (PC) was a paramilitary ground force so received equipment similar to that of the army.

So Nick Rowe and I worked closely together. I was terribly shocked one morning, after having met with him the previous afternoon, when I came to work and found that he'd been assassinated on his way to work! He was security conscious very careful. He had been in Vietnam, was a POW for many years and survived, had written a good, well-selling book about his experiences in Vietnam and as a POW; and he knew how to take care of himself. He changed his commuting route and times, he would sit on the left side of the car instead of the right side in the back seat, and was attentive to what was going on around him.

We had had recent incidences of NPA threats against American personnel, so we had "armor plated" the cars. We didn't have the money or the capability to be able to get fully armored cars imported right away, so they'd put in about three-quarters of an inch to an inch thick Plexiglas all around the car. Then they put it on the vehicles' side windows, the back window, everything, including a windshield. But when they put it on, they couldn't seal it tightly; and between the side window and the back window, there was a gap of about no more than an inch between the plates.

As Nick's car came down the road and entered the traffic circle before turning down the road to the JUSMAG compound, the assassins were waiting for him. As he came around the circle, he had to slow down. The assassins pulled up in a car beside him, and three or four people opened up with automatic weapons on the side of the car. Almost all the bullets hit the Plexiglas, so nothing happened. One bullet, however, got through that little space between the Plexiglas, ricocheted around and hit Nick in the head, killing him.

The driver was shook and wounded, but not killed so able to drive to the compound. Nick was quickly taken to the hospital, but died, I think, on the way to the hospital. What a tremendous shock within the embassy. There was a great deal of turmoil, as to what this meant, whether it was the beginning of an onslaught against the rest of us. I volunteered to organize a memorial service the next day for him, which we did in the ballroom of the embassy. It was a difficult task, but a worthwhile effort on my part to do this since we worked closely together.

We all took a great deal of care as to where we traveled during those days. We were nervous. And I did a lot of traveling because I was going out to JUSMAG regularly. I was going to the bases, to Clark and Subic; and much of the area was, as we used to say, sort of like going through Indian country. My wife Joyce and I usually would go with our family, with our daughters. Joyce would drive with one of the daughters in the front seat and I would hunker down in the back seat with the darkened windows on the car. We figured, maybe rationalizing, that Filipinos, being somewhat macho, probably wouldn't shoot a woman, as readily at least as they would a man. So I would slouch down in the back seat, and she would drive all the way to Subic and up to Clark. It made life a little bit tense.

Q: Was that the only attack on Americans, you know, per se?

MARTIN: No! A few months later there were, I think, three air force personnel in Clark killed one evening as they came back from town. They had been out to a restaurant or a bar and when they came out, they were gunned down. That got everybody's attention. Clark was closed off for a long time and Americans were prohibited from going into town. That of course caused great unhappiness in Angeles because the economy was hurt because there wasn't any spending. Subic also closed its base. There were all sorts of intelligence reports or rumors that there were what they called NPA "sparrow squads" (death squads, so called for their small size and great mobility) out and about in both Angeles and Olongapo, looking for American airmen and sailors to hit. There were a couple of incidents where people were fired on, around Subic, but nobody was killed. In the base towns as well as Manila, it was very touchy. We were careful as to where we went.

Q: Was it difficult? I mean I would think when you'd get a naval vessel, particularly an air craft carrier task force coming in, you're talking about 5,000 people or so, young men, poured into the town who've been out for a long time. I mean did the navy have a pretty good absorption system?

MARTIN: They improved radically the time I was there, briefing the troops before they docked, before they got off the ship. They went through chapter and verse, and these guys were pretty much on their toes. Many of them still pursued the usual pursuits in town, but I think that they covered the town pretty well. And Olongapo leaders were pretty good, or better I think in many ways, because they realized that this was their lifeblood. The local officials, the local government, and the local security forces spent a lot of time patrolling the town. And NCIS, the MPs (Military Policemen), and the base security people were all over the town, working side by side with the local officials to try to maintain security. But it was tough. It's a difficult area.

Q: Knowing the Philippines is pretty much "the" prime producer of visas, did you find yourself deluged on the visa front?

MARTIN: The visa front was a constant battle. Everybody who works in the embassy and even any American who works in the Philippines, is asked, "Do you know a visa officer?" or "Can you introduce me?" It's the usual, "Who do you know?" and "How can you get me in." and "Will you give me a recommendation?" The DAO (Defense Attachï¿½ Office) was terribly oppressed by their contacts in the military, and not only their military contacts, but their wives, daughters, sisters, uncles, aunts, mistresses, girlfriends, and nearly everybody with whom they had a relationship. I was often asked too. You get used to it. You can never get away from it. When I was back on my second tour in the front office, we were constantly inveigled for visas by contacts at the highest levels. The palace itself became a real problem in terms of referring people over for visas, expecting for us to just stamp the visas. The Philippines is one of the worst in the world for visa pressure. The consular section is a real factory.

Q: Did you have any presidential or vice presidential visits while you were there?

MARTIN: Dan Quayle came to town. That was an interesting experience. He was there only a brief time, made some calls on the president, did not make a big impression, I think, on a lot of people, came and went within about 24 hours. The only real impression I have is accompanying him on a short visit to Subic. We were standing around waiting for him to arrive at the embassy helicopter pad, and I was talking to his Secret Service detail. I can't remember what his handle, the code name the detail used for him, but it was not complimentary. They said, "The guy's never on time. He is always keeping us waiting, whether it's 30 below zero or 97 in the shade!" I thought to myself, if I had to depend on people to throw their body in front of me to take a bullet, I think I would try to be as nice to them as possible.

That was my only real impression of him. His wife Marilyn seemed like a very intense person who seemed to basically be the one who ran the show.

We didn't have a lot of visitors. The Philippines is never very high on the hit parade for CODELS or official visits, which was nice in some ways but resulted in the Philippines not getting high-level attention in Washington. Congressman Steve Solarz came regularly as he was the chairman of the Asia sub-committee of the House International Relations Committee and had a deep interest in the Philippines. He was a fireball during his visits, constantly on the move. He would start the day by playing tennis at six or six-thirty in the morning and end up with a discussion with academics at midnight, and be going constantly in between, wearing everybody out. We always made Bob Fritz, later one of my successors as DCM in Manila and then ambassador to PNG, Solarz' control officer because Steve liked him and Bob did a good job. Bob would say, "Oh no! Not another visit!" And Steve almost always came at Christmas time or New Year's, during their recess or the break. He was much involved in the Philippines because he had been instrumental in building congressional pressure during the Reagan administration against Marcos. He had known Cory Aquino's husband when he was alive, was in touch with Cory Aquino after Ninoy's assassination, and saw her regularly when he came to town. He was helpful if we needed Congress to pay attention to Philippine issues.

Senator Richard Lugar from Indiana was also interested in the Philippines and came, I think, once or twice. He had been very instrumental in helping during the transition of our policy on the Marcos era, getting President Reagan to move away from total support.

While we didn't get a lot of CODELS, CINCPAC came from time to time; and a number of State Department people came to visit. Secretary Shultz came a couple of times. He had a good feel for the Philippines.

Q: How did you find the social life there, because certainly under the Marcos regime, and even earlier, the charge has been laid that the embassy got too involved with the upper class? I mean they're a very friendly people, they have a lot of money, and they can overwhelm you. And it had a pernicious effect.

MARTIN: Cardinal Sin, who used to welcome visitors to his residence in "The House of Sin," was an engaging, influential, political and conservative person. He personally was a key figure in the peaceful overthrow of Marcos. The leadership of the church was conservative socially (family planning, economic reform, political change although many of the younger or lower ranked priests and nuns were into liberation theology. Having strongly opposed Marcos, they generally took the leftist line against the US bases and the economic control by the oligarchs.

The nuns were very effective. You recall the picture of the nuns on EDSA (Epifanio de los Santos - a ring road around Manila that was the site of 1986-87 confrontation between pro-Marcos and anti- Marcos forces) during the Marcos attempt to put down the People's Power, kneeling in prayer in front of tanks or putting flowers in the barrels of the guns. The nuns were a dramatic force. The church has its beneficial and good points, but it also has been a problem in some ways.

Q: How did your family find living there?

MARTIN: Living was comfortable. We lived in one of the Makati villages, gated and guarded communities for expatriates and rich Filipinos. During my first tour, housing was better than during my second tour for mid-level embassy personnel. The embassy had had to downgrade the housing because of greatly increased prices so people were staying in less desirable villages and houses. Housing quality goes in cycles; more recently people are living better, albeit more often in apartments rather than separate houses.

Foreign Service transfers for families can be difficult. Our daughters were at a bad age when we moved to Manila in 1987. They were in middle school, a hard age to pick up and leave a tight circle of friends. Our elder daughter was most unhappy, but our elder son fortunately came out at Christmas and told her she could make herself and everybody else miserable for another two and a half years, or she could get involved in something. Why didn't she learn to play tennis? We had been able to join the Polo Club in Manila, "the" elite club, although it was rather run down and getting shabby around the edges. Fortunately, it was the best tennis club, so she took up tennis. She ended up nearly spending her whole life on the tennis courts.

There was one humorous incident related to the polo club during the '89 coup attempt which we remember. We lived a mile from the club which was on the road to the Fort Boniface military base. Since the International School was closed because of the coup (they had coup days rather than snow days), the third day of the coup my wife drove our daughters to the polo club to play tennis. As they drove up the road, they passed two columns of troops marching down the street. The soldiers all had a white bandana tied on their arms. My wife said, "Oh, that's okay. Those are the loyal troops with the white bandana.

When she turned into the gate of the polo club, the guard said, "No! Not open. Closed! Coup! Coup! Go home!"

So she turned around and went back through the troops armed with machine guns, bazookas, ammunition bandoliers across their chests and M16s.. As she drove by with our blond daughters in the car, the troops waved, smiled and called, "Hello," "How are you?" and "Have a good time."

On the way home, she dropped off something at the ambassador's house just on the other side of the road. When she drove in, the staff was very nervous, saying, "What are you doing out? Don't you know there's a coup?"

She said, "Yes, we drove through some troops on the road, but they all have the white bandanas. They're the loyalists."

They said, "No! No! Those are the rebels!"

She had driven right through them, not once, but twice, up and down the road. But, as I said, women were not targets in the macho society. But that was fine. Having to evacuate the house at five-thirty in the morning was difficult for my daughters but they were able to use their coup experiences for their college entry essays.

Q.Were you involved in negotiations over the future of the U.S. bases in the Philippines?

MARTIN: In 1957 or 1958 when we passed the revised Mutual Security Treaty, we agreed that every five years the US-RP base agreements would be reviewed to ensure they represented current bilateral relationships and issues. 1988 was one of the five years. We assembled a negotiating team to discuss the status and functioning of the bases, which turned out to be a long process.The review was not over whether or not the bases would continue. The 25 year basing agreement term did not end until 1992 but the five year reviews gave both sides a chance to evaluate changes in the situation. The focus was on whether the bases were still useful, if they needed to be modified, whether political, strategic or economic changes required different approaches to the relationship. It was a useful exercise, which the Filipinos, of course, looked forward to in great interest because they were mainly interested in obtaining greater compensation for the use of the bases by the American forces. So in early 1988 we began to talk with the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) on initiating discussions.

Q: Was it just money, or had we been seeing a change? I mean were the Filipinos getting tired of having the bases there?

MARTIN: Oh, I think there certainly were major changes over the years. The bases never were very popular with Filipino nationalists. They were seen as a residue of our colonial involvement in the Philippines. The nationalists felt we had twisted their arms to maintain our military bases when we gave them independence in 1946 as the country lay in shambles after the war. The bases were a bone of contention throughout our relationship. By the late 1980s, after the Marcos era was over, and after Marcos had used the bases to blackmail us into continuing to support him, a lot of people felt that it was time for the bases to go. That was my view as well.

Q: What was attitude of the U.S. military you were talking to? Did you find it divided between those who understood the political situation and those who wouldn't give up Fort Apache today if they could keep it going?

MARTIN: In general, U.S. military stance was a do or die one; that they had to keep the bases because the seventh Fleet could not operate in the Pacific without Subic and Cubi. As subsequent history has shown, they have, in fact, been able to do so with perhaps a little bit more effort and perhaps a little bit more expenditure of funds. It's a little inconvenient, and Subic was a very useful and a very good popular liberty port. Our military believed they really needed to keep the bases. The 1988 discussions, however, were just a review, not the end of the Military Bases Agreement, whose term ended in 1992. So the talks in '88 were about what the relationship between us would be. There were a few little nitpicks in terms of criminal jurisdiction over minor SOFA problems, relationships with the base communities and discussions about how Philippine base commanders related to the American base commanders, since the bases had at that point legally become Philippine bases. The bottom line really was how much was the "rent" going to be. We refused to call it "rent." We called it assistance to the Philippines as an ally. They continued to call it rent. We said allies don't charge rent to each other. But it was basically how much foreign assistance or military assistance we were going to give to the armed forces of the Philippines in return for being able to continue to use the bases.

Q: Really what is the difference, as you see it, between rent and whatever else it is? MARTIN: Our objection to rent was that our presence was based upon a Mutual Security Treaty; and as allies, we have a mutual responsibility to work together. They provided the facilities by which we could have the forces in the region to be able to continue to give teeth, if you will, to the Mutual Security Treaty, which was there for the Philippine benefit as well as our own. Obviously, this was part of the effort that we made constantly in '88 - to show the security benefit that the Philippines gets from the American presence, as well as the economic benefits that the bases provided. With USIS' input, we printed a booklet with charts, graphs, and tables showing that the Philippines gained a billion and a half, or two billion dollars a year in economic benefits from the bases. The total included work force wages, spending by the bases and visiting forces in the communities, as well as the benefits that they received from the Americans being there to help protect their security and not having to protect themselves alone.

Q: As you went into this, did those that were working on the bases help?

MARTIN: The Filipino workers on the bases obviously supported continuation of the bases and their employment. The ship repair facility at Subic, for instance, was one of the best in the region, with a well-trained work force. There was another shipyard on the north end of Subic Bay, Philseco, a Japanese investment, and it was trying to do basically the same sort of ship repair, ship improvements, refurbishments. But our people were well regarded, and those who earned technical skills at the ship repair facility often left for Saudi Arabia to get jobs as technical overseas professionals. But most of the workers stayed as they thought the working environment in Subic was far better than going overseas. We had people who had worked for two, three generations in the facility.

Q: What was the ambassador's attitude towards the base talks?

MARTIN: Ambassador Nicholas Platt was directly involved. He was the head of the negotiating team that we put together. His deputy was Lieutenant General Michael Carns, the deputy CINCPAC in Honolulu who came out and spent several months in the Philippines. We had representatives from the various bases in the Philippines, both Subic and Clark, as well as Jamie Selby from the legal advisor's office at State and from the Defense Department in Washington. So we had quite a good team. The Philippine side also had an interagency team. Foreign Affairs Secretary Raul Manglapus was the chair. Department of Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Leonardis Caday, Defense Department Assistant Secretary Feliciano Gacis, Justice Department Assistant Secretary Teresita de Castro, and a representative from the Philippine base command as well as support staff from DFA and DND supported him.So we had interagency teams on both sides dealing with very specific issues. Some were involved with jurisdictional issues; others were involved with legal issues. Overall, Ambassador Platt and Secretary Manglapus were the key people who did most of the negotiation across the table.

Q: I'm told that one of the most difficult parts of any base negotiations is dealing with the Pentagon lawyers. How did you find this?

MARTIN: We didn't have a Pentagon lawyer on our team as a lawyer from CINCPAC was there. We also had an Air Force colonel who was attachï¿½. Jamie Selby from L at State was our legal powerhouse. We obviously dealt a lot with the lawyers back in Washington, including the people who were the keeper of the keys for all base negotiations. There was a whole mantra that had been written or developed over the years telling what we could and could not say. The parameters of the base formulae were really rather strict; and the Defense Department was very severe in terms of what latitude they gave the negotiating panel.

Q: But at that point, the idea was that we were going to keep the bases; just do everything we can to stay and to keep staying in the foreseeable future?

MARTIN: We definitely knew we could stay at least until the early '90s, because that's when the basing agreement actually came up for re-negotiation. In '88 it was merely a review, and when I say merely a review, it was a fairly broad review and covered all aspects of the agreement. But it was not a do or die. In other words, if we had not reached any agreement in '88, the bases would have continued under existing conditions, nevertheless, until 1991.

Q: What were you getting from our people who were monitoring the Filipino Congress? What was happening there?

MARTIN: The Philippine Congress was all over the place. We had supporters, we had opponents, and we had a lot of people dancing around in the middle who were unwilling to make a commitment one way or the other. Most of them left it to the Executive Branch to do the negotiations. They weighed in, of course, and they all talked to the press, and the press was full of all sorts of articles about the bases on a daily basis. This was "the" topic of the day for a lot of people, in between all the coup attempts launched against Cory Aquino. The base talks were a continuing leitmotif that ran throughout the public discourse during the year.

Q: Did you feel that opponents of Aquino were using the bases as an instrument?

MARTIN: In terms of whether or not the congress was using or the opponents were using the base talks against Cory Aquino, yes, of course. They used whatever lever they had to make points against her or for her. She was very careful, but she was also very frustrating to us because she did not make her position clear. Before she ran for presidency, before she became president upon Marcos departure for Hawaii, she had made some comments in the latter days of Marcos' administration, that she didn't think the bases were useful anymore, that perhaps they should be terminated. A lot of people pulled out those comments from previous years and tried to get her to take a position on the bases. But she didn't. It was frustrating in a sense, because we felt if she had come out very strongly, both in '88, as well as, subsequently and more importantly, in '90 or '91, that it could have made a difference. But she was cautious in not taking a position, basically I believe so as not to undercut her negotiating team by taking a stance one way or the other. She wanted to see what they were able to negotiate.

Q: Did the White House National Security Council play any role, or at this stage, this wasn't part of the equation?

MARTIN: Not really. We kept them fully informed about the negotiations, day-by-day or session-by-session. They weighed in occasionally, but basically it was a Defense-State Department effort.

Q: What sort of relations did you have with your Filipinos counterparts? Did you have times when you all went off and had bourbon and branch water or an equivalent; getting off informally and talking about where things were going?

MARTIN: There was a good camaraderie, to a degree, although Secretary Manglapus tended to take a fairly straight approach to the talks. He tended occasionally to voice the nationalists' position; marking out an extreme position, which we then worked on moving toward the center. This is typical negotiating stance, of course - each starts out on the edge and then fills in the gap through compromise. We, of course, started out the same way. We said that since the bases were for the Philippine benefit, we didn't think that we needed to talk about money and other crass material things, such as financing and AID money. The Filipinos replied, "We think the U.S. gets all the benefit, and we don't get any so you need to pay us more!" Starting from those positions, we tended to work toward the center.But there was a good sense of camaraderie. A lot of these people had been involved in the base talks for decades. Several of the people had been involved in the 1950, '52, '53 negotiations, initially on the Mutual Defense Treaty; and so these people were knowledgeable. A lot of us who were in on the talks really had not done this before, and even Ambassador Platt had no experience in the Philippines previously. So we were all doing it for the first time; whereas General Gacis from the Department of National Defense and others from the Department of Foreign Affairs had been doing this for at least 20 or 30 years, and they were very knowledgeable about historical precedence. And of course, one of the things the Philippines has learned from us is to be litigious. They have learned very well the importance of legal precedent, and legal actions. So they continually brought up, "Oh, but back in 1955, you said thus and so, and in 1962 you said this and that, so why is it different now, or how come you're changing position?" . I won't say we had to play catch-up ball, but we had to be on our toes all of the time because they were very good at bringing out the historical record.

Q: Well, looking at it from your perspective, did you see that these bases, other than the economic impetus, from a defense point of view, were they playing any part in the Filipinos' problem with insurgencies and that sort of thing?

MARTIN: No, we were very careful at keeping the bases and the U.S. forces out of the insurgency and counterinsurgency effort. Obviously, looking at post World War II history, the Huk Rebellion and the subsequent NPA difficulties, we were involved in terms of providing advice and support; and military assistance was generally focused on internal support for the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). The AFP's responsibility really was internal security, whereas the bases and the U.S. forces primarily took over the responsibility for the external security of the Philippines. By using the bases, we were able to project our power and to deploy U.S. Forces into the South China Sea and into the Western Pacific much more effectively.

Q: At that time, as you were doing it, what was the common wisdom of where the threat came from, the possible threat, or the need for projecting our power?

MARTIN: Vietnam was still there. The Soviets still had a base in Cam Ranh Bay. So that was the public focus, if you will, the public enemy on which we focused. China was the hidden one that was never mentioned, because the Philippines had good relations with China, and we were trying to develop good relations as well. Even though China was not mentioned, it was, "Well, you know, the Soviets are in Cam Ranh Bay, and we've got problems there, and..." So nobody said anything. But basically, the rationale was to maintain presence and stability in the region, and to keep the United States as an active participant in East Asian affairs.

Q: Were the Spratly Islands a point of contention at that time, and was it a concern of ours?

MARTIN: They were not a point of contention in the late '80s. It's only in the 1990s that the Philippines discovered the Chinese had begun to build "fishing shelters" on the Spratlies. But there was a difference between the claims. There were competing or conflicting claims over the Spratlies and other islands in the South China Sea between China, and the Philippines, and many other ASEAN countries, including Vietnam, at the time. That was considered to be one of the reasons why it was important for the U.S. to be in the area. At the same time, however, we made it very clear that our Mutual Defense Treaty was limited to what we've called metropolitan Philippines. This was the main islands of the Philippines, not any other so-called Philippine claimed islands beyond the perimeters of what was considered to be the Philippine Islands back in 1898, when we obtained the Philippines from the Spanish.

Q: Any problems at that time with Indonesia?

MARTIN: No, not really. There were a lot of Indonesian refugees and citizens living in Mindanao. The Moro insurgency was going on, as it has been for the last 300 years, and that was not a major problem. It was not as bad as it is right now.

Q: How did this base review come out?

MARTIN: We finished the review in late 1988. All together we probably spent about six months on this, more or less full-time. There were other things going on at the same time. We would meet for a few days or a week, and then there would be a break, and then we'd come back again, a couple weeks or a month later, and have some more talks. Most of the time it was in panel. Everybody sat at the table facing each other, and the lead negotiators, Secretary Manglapus and Ambassador Platt, did the main negotiation. But on specific issues, the defense people, the legal people discussed their specific issues. Over the period of time, Ambassador Platt and Secretary Manglapus would have pull asides. They would go off in a corner, and talk quietly on their own, then come back, and try to gain the panels consensus to the informal agreement they had reached on their own. We started each day of negotiations by drawing up our agenda or the points that we wanted to make, having worked on them overnight . We met maybe two or three hours a day, then we'd go back to the embassy after the session to review where we were, write the reporting cable, and discuss strategy for the next day.My role really was to be the executive secretary on the panel. I was in charge of trying to make sure that everything was working properly, that we had all the right coordinates. I participated on the panel in a full way, but more on a support level rather than as a substantive level.

Q: When you left the Philippines, did you think the bases issue would sort out, maybe at a higher price, but that our presence in the Philippines would remain, or not? MARTIN: When the '88 negotiations finished, I had two more years of my assignment. Before I left, we had started the next and final round of negotiations, basically to re-negotiate the whole base agreement. At the end of '88, after all this negotiating back and forth and hammering, we had pretty much settled on the terms for assistance levels for the Philippines for the coming year. Its like accounting - it's all there somehow; it's just how you read it. You quantified this, and you quantified that, and we came up with an overall figure that sounded very magnanimous. The Philippines counted it differently, obviously, and they said, "Well, you are not giving us very much, but we have to take it!" And so in the end, we ended up with an agreement, which did not satisfy anyone fully. We felt that it was a good agreement, but that we had been nickeled and dimed. They felt the same way - that we had thrown in everything but the kitchen sink, saying things like because the embassy was there, it was worth "x" millions of dollars and so they should be happy that we have an embassy there and that we talk to them. In the end it was not totally satisfactory to everybody, but we did finally reach an agreement. It was just a review, so it did not have to go to the congress.

Q: When you left the Philippines in 1990 were things changing on the ground in the region?

MARTIN: Yes. Vietnam was over. The Soviet Union was rapidly crumbling and the Soviet threat was disappearing. China was behaving itself although relations were chilly after the 1989 Tiananmen incident. The Philippine domestic insurgencies seemed to be settling down. I think the people began to realize that perhaps everyone needed to have another good look at the bases to decide whether or not they were still important.My personal view was that the bases had totally unbalanced the US-Philippine bilateral relationship. The security side of it, the base side of it, had tipped the balance totally out of kilter. Filipinos interpreted everything we did in the embassy that whole period was interpreted as being base related. When we released opinion poll results showing that a majority of the Filipinos supported the bases, opponents said we were trying to influence public opinion. When we offered economic assistance, or even typhoon disaster relief, the view was, "Oh, the Americans are doing this to try to influence the base talks." Everything we did - visas; consular affairs, (which is a big business in the Philippines), public diplomacy; economic relationships; visits by high officials from the U.S. - every time we had a high official, the press always said, "Oh! You brought somebody else here to beat on us or twist our arms over the bases." So no matter what we did, whether totally unrelated to the defense relationship or not, it was seen through that nationalistic lens.

Q: Was anybody pointing out the problem that you might have with volcanoes?

MARTIN: Volcanoes are a constant presence and threat to the Philippine nation. But at that point, Mt. Pinatubo had been inactive for 600 years. 600 years is a long time. People used to hike in those mountains, and it was not an issue. Nobody paid any attention to Pinatubo. There were live volcanoes. Mayon, down in Legazpi, was the one that everybody was watching. It had a perfect conical shape to it. It was a beautiful mountain, but was active. It rumbled occasionally, but nothing serious. So when Pinatubo took blew its top in 1991, everybody was shocked. The overall political relationship, I think, was okay. The domestic politics in the Philippines were difficult, partly because Cory Aquino, who was a wonderful person and a unique personality, had a difficult time running the country. She did not have much of a vision or agenda. There wasn't much of a focus as to where she wanted to go at the end of her administration. It appeared as though her main goal was just to stay in power through that whole period, and what we called "the coup of the month" syndrome continued.

Q: As you left there in '90, what did you think? What was your prognostication for the Philippines over, you know, a 20-year period or something like that?

MARTIN: The Philippines has great potential but the implementation is pretty weak. As I left, I felt that the opportunities were good, but I did not see much chance of them turning things around under the Aquino administration. Subsequently, when Eddie Ramos took over as president in 1992, things did turn around. Things got a lot better because he gave them goals which provided a sense that things were improving, and that Ramos had a program for everyone to follow. I think the mental attitude in the country changed considerably.The December 1989 coup attempt which was a serious and destabilizing event which set the country back. Leaving six months after that, I was somewhat pessimistic that they were going to be able to continue to manage. The economic situation was not getting better. Population continued to grow rapidly. The public sense of optimism was not there. Everybody was pessimistic; they didn't think things were going to change. And so I did have a sense that that they were probably going to muddle through as they have done traditionally, but they were not really going to improve, and that didn't give me much optimism. I think the 1989 coup was a watershed. During the three years that I was there, from '87 to '90, we had seven coup attempts, a period we called "coup of the month." The first coup was in August of 1987. I had been there about a month and a half. The ambassador arrived in mid August and presented his credentials just the day before the coup attempt broke out. The problem was that nobody really knew anybody, nobody knew where everything was. The procedures were new, there was a new ambassador, there was a new DCM, and we were all trying to find our way around the office, much less knowing how to operate or have contacts around the country. As it turned out, it was not a very serious coup attempt. There were some people killed, there was some fighting, but basically, the government was able to put it down without too much difficulty.There were subsequent minor, almost farcical, coup attempts that continued to distract the government and destabilize the political situation in the Philippines. The government was unable to address the problems, because many younger military officers, who had been involved in the overthrow of the Marcos regime, felt that they had been sidelined, that they had not been able to get what was due them after the Aquino administration took over.In the August of '87 coup attempt, they burned down the general headquarters building at the army headquarters. There was actually fighting on the base itself. There was a great deal of factionalism within the military. Some of the leaders behind the coup attempt went underground, and were either in the jungle, or, more often, hiding in Manila. For some reason, they were not easily found. The leader of the coup, Colonel Honasan, was actually arrested after several weeks, and incarcerated on a navy ship in Manila Bay, from which he escaped after a period of weeks, and went back underground. But that, with the NPA threat, and the Muslim difficulties down south, just made the whole country rather unstable and on edge. Finally, the most serious coup attempt was in December 1989. The U.S. became directly involved in this one. Part of the problem was, again, that the factional groups in the military felt that they needed to make a last stand to attain their 1986 objectives, and so they launched a coup. Without getting into all the details of it, it was a fairly long, drawn out affair. The coup plotters captured the Manila air base, seized the airplanes, and brought in fighter aircraft from Cebu. They had the city under siege for almost seven days from about the first of December. In an attempt to overthrow the Aquino administration, the coup leaders used their old World War II "Tora Tora" aircraft to try to bomb Malacaï¿½ang Palace. Aquino was in danger of being overthrown. The U.S. government decided that it would fly what we termed "warning missions" over Manila with phantoms from the 13th Air Force at Clark Air Base. This was our first real involvement in a domestic coup effort in the Philippines. And it was very successful.

Q: Do you recall, was there debate about doing this - flying these warning missions?

MARTIN: There was a considerable amount of debate within the Embassy and with Washington. President George H. W. Bush was on his way to Europe when the decision was made. Vice President Quayle discussed the matter with him on the phone. Joint Chief of Staff Director Colin Powell was involved in the decision. All these people were involved in the final decision - that we would do what we needed to do to try to protect Cory. We did not have to use any weapons. We did not have to shoot anybody. But just flying over the city did provide 1) a challenge that the rebellious Philippine air force could not meet, and 2) the sense of confidence that the administration would survive the coup attempt. But it took awhile, and it took a lot of effort, because the rebels dug into Makati, the major business district. They held one of the major hotels, the Inter-Continental Hotel, which was full of not only tourists, but American official military personnel who were there as an advance team for an upcoming exercise. There were rebels in the lobby holding people hostage and they had a plan to have a knockdown, drag out battle in Makati itself, in this urban district.The residential area that we lived in was just across the main highway, the EDSA Highway, from Makati. The military planned to come into the residential area and launch an attack across the highway into Makati, where the rebels were holed up. At five o'clock in the morning, we were called, saying everybody was going to evacuate the villages, and we had a half an hour in which to get out. So we evacuated the residential compounds to the Seafront Compound, the embassy's commissary, club, and residential compound. The business community went to the Weston Hotel near Manila Bay. So it was an exciting time. Everybody was trying to get out of Makati.As it turned out, the battle was not necessary. There was some fighting in the streets of Makati, but the final effort was put down without much fighting.

Q: Did you get involved, or did anybody else in the embassy get involved? Did the rebels make any overtures to us?

MARTIN: No they didn't because we made it pretty clear that we were firmly behind the administration, that we would not condone any kind of a military coup or military effort to overthrow Aquino. So there was no dialogue. The defense attachï¿½s knew many of the younger officers who were sympathetic with the rebels. The attaches had contact with them but they were putting out the straight scoop - that we were firmly opposed to the coup attempt. I think that helped because they made it clear that the rebels weren't going to get any help from the U.S.

Q: You were there, I assume, with your family and all?

MARTIN: We had two daughters who were with us, and this was part of the fun - trying to get them up at five o'clock in the morning, saying they had half an hour to leave without any idea whether we'd ever come back to a house still standing. If there was to be a serious military engagement in the neighborhood, who knew what would be left! Many of the houses, in fact, did have bullets holes in the roof, and shells in the yard. In the end, there was a good deal of firing but as the Filipinos termed it, most was "acoustically fighting" in which the soldiers fired into the air rather than at their fellow soldiers who just happened to be on the other side. They'd shoot over people's heads so that nobody gets hit. Although people did get injured, few were killed.I have two memories of that coup attempt. One was evacuating at five o'clock. Our younger daughter got up and was ready to go in 10 minutes with a little bag of things that she wanted to take. The elder daughter said she had to take a shower, do her hair, put on her makeup, and one suitcase was just not big enough for all the things that she had to take. A clear difference in personalities. The other memory was of how the Embassy coped with the crisis. A lot of us worked at the embassy for almost straight through the whole week. One thing that we did have, however, was a good control center. After the 1987 August coup attempt, right after the ambassador and the DCM had arrived, DCM Ken Quinn, who had been a deputy executive secretary in the Department, set up the executive conference room as an operations center. That turned out to be extremely valuable during the '89 coup attempt because we had all the phone networks lined up, lists of contacts, maps, radio communications, and so forth. We were thereby able to communicate well with Washington and CINCPAC. CINCPAC sent in a team with satellite communications which served as a stand by communications link in case the phone system was cut. The operations center turned out to be a very useful facility.We had people out and about around town. Some of us were working long hours. After the first couple of days, the ambassador wisely made the decision that he and the DCM were not totally indispensable, that they didn't need to both be there the whole time, but could spell each other. He then forced others who had decided that they personally were indispensable that it was time to go home to get some sleep. One quickly finds in these situations that some people feel that they have to be there so they don't miss anything. But after 24, 36, or 48 hours, their utility diminishes. I think we all learned a lot in that event. In the end, our efforts were successful as the coup attempt was put down. But again, this really destabilized the economy, destabilized the political situation, and alienated many of the military. That is how it was when I left, but for one final crisis - a major earthquake.A severe earthquake struck the hill town of Baguio in July 1990. The Hyatt hotel collapsed with considerably loss of life, communications were cut off, and the only ones able to get in and out of Baguio were the U.S. military by helicopter. US Air Force and Navy helicopters were able to bring aid, medical assistance, water, and food to people isolated on top of the mountains. It was a major natural disaster, but it showed once again the importance of having a military facility available to be able to help. The Filipinos appreciated that. Similar assistance was not so easily available the following year when Mt. Pinatubo exploded.

Q: Well you left there in '90?

MARTIN: I left Manila in July 1990 after a three-year tour.

Q: And then where?

MARTIN: I tell people I returned to Washington to spend the next two years on drugs. A lot of people say, "Well, that's not unusual in Washington. Even the mayor was on drugs at that time. I was interested in doing something different. I'd looked at a number of jobs, the usual political jobs. When a friend asked if I wanted to work with him in the Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM in those days), I decided that might be an interesting change of pace. I was assigned to the position handling the heroin traffic from Asia and Africa. Before I returned to Washington, I visited Thailand, Laos, and Burma, three of the major drug areas in Southeast Asia, as well as India and Pakistan so as to be familiar with the situation on the ground.

Q: What was the job you had, and where did it fit?

MARTIN: The job was as the chief of the Asia-Africa area, which essentially was the entire heroin account in those days. That was before Columbia drug lords began to grow poppies and make heroin. Most of the heroin in the States was coming out of Southeast Asia or South Asia - Afghanistan, Pakistan, and border areas. Burma still was the largest producer of opium and heroin. When I began the assignment, I found that 99 percent of the US government's attention was on cocaine. Resources, programs and personnel were focused on South America. There were narcotics control officers at the embassies, and military personnel from SOUTHCOM (U.S. Southern Command) in Panama were actively engaged in the effort. While there was no question cocaine and crack was a serious problem, and that we needed to spend most of our resources on sources of cocaine, I felt the amount of attention and resources given to the heroin problem was not adequate.I was able to do some traveling. I went to China with the assistant secretary, who was Mel [Melvyn] Levitsky; traveled to the China-Burma border from the Chinese side; worked with the Chinese closely in an effort to increase our counter-narcotics cooperation. I also went on a trip around the world with an interagency team - from DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency), the CIA, and Defense Department - to key capitals to talk about cooperation.My job was to work with host governments on crop substitution programs and counter narcotics prevention and enforcement training. We worked with police, military, and different ministries in the various countries trying to get them to increase cooperation with us and to cut trafficking routes as well as opium poppy growing areas. And I even got a trip to Lagos and to Benin. That was for three days, and that was quite enough!

Q: Was Africa much of a problem?

MARTIN: Africa was a problem mainly because of the Nigerian traffickers. Nigerians were just beginning to get involved in the trafficking of heroin around the world. There was a big West African community in Bangkok. A lot of people were being used as mules, or drug carriers. They had a network which persuaded various people - travelers, tourists, students - to transport narcotics internationally for $200 to $300. Many were caught and incarcerated, learning the hard way that $2-300 doesn't do you very much good in jail for 15 or 20 years. The West African traffickers initiated what we called the "swallowers." The dealers would encapsulate heroin in condoms, tie them off and have the carriers swallow them. The carriers then would get on the plane and travel to the United States, and after arriving - how should we put it delicately - deliver the goods. Occasionally, one of the condoms would burst in the stomach, and you would have a massive overdose and death right there on the plane, or at the airport. It was a messy business. When I visited Pakistan, I went to Northwest frontier and stepped across the border into Afghanistan. What a difficult area in which to work. Pakistan's northwest frontier seemed like a different world from the rest of Pakistan. We are seeing that in today's situation. I found INM to be a good job! It was interesting because I was involved with a lot of different agencies I had not dealt with before - the National Drug Control Center, the Drug Czar's Office, the Defense Department, and DEA. CIA was very much involved in counter narcotics efforts - working on intelligence backgrounds, networks of traffickers, kingpins, and ways to block the various trafficking routes and networks. Chinese triads and secret organizations, of course, actively trafficked narcotics around Southeast Asia and across the world. Mostly it was heroin. Ice, D-methamphetamines, which is very popular in Asia, particularly in Chinese communities and Japan, was just beginning to be a problem for the U.S., coming into the States through Hawaii and the West Coast. We were constantly having to find new programs and techniques to turn off the supply. I was also involved in the demand side of the drug issue - rehabilitation, education, trying to get people to rehabilitation centers, to find methadone treatment programs.

Q: What was the attitude at that time? Here was a war. Were you winning, losing, or treading water, or what?

MARTIN: Treading water at best, I would say. The amount of money involved in drug trafficking, then and now, is so fantastic that some people will take a chance on trafficking in it because the payoff is so great. Innocent, or not so innocent, tourists abroad who would be willing for a couple hundred dollars or a couple thousand dollars to try to smuggle drugs into the U.S. Many of them got caught but we had the sense that we were catching was only a small percentage of what was flowing. The amount of drugs that came in, in containers aboard ships, by air, in the mail, all sorts of different routes - it's a difficult product to lock out, and the demand is such that there will always be a market and profit for those who can bring in the product.

Q: How did you find the various American agencies worked together?

MARTIN: Fairly well. There were obviously turf battles. Part of the problem was everybody had their own agendas and their own budgets. Customs and DEA, perhaps, were the two main rival, if that's the right word, agencies. They were always trying to make the seizures so that they could take the credit for "x" amount of tons of drugs. They didn't want to share information, didn't want to share intelligence back and forth, because they didn't want the other guy to get the credit. The FBI wanted to get into the act, so they were trying to set up their own counter narcotics division. They resented their sister agency in Justice, DEA, getting all the action. There was cooperation to a degree but still a lot of rivalry.

Q: State didn't have a particular stake in this particular area.

MARTIN: State did not really have a stake in the enforcement side of things. We were mainly involved in policy. We negotiated cooperation and training programs with other governments. The only place we were involved in operations was in Central and Latin America, in Peru and Ecuador where INM had its own little air force, flying planes with State Department employees.

Q: How about foreign governments? As you saw it, what was the attitude of certain governments towards this? Were some already bought by the drug lords? Were the others trying to do it, but ineffectively; while others were effective?

MARTIN: I can't talk from personal experience about South America where we have heard about the drug lords controlling vast areas of Columbia, and problems with corrupt Mexican police, and military in other places. In my part of the world I think it was basically a matter of ineffectiveness, the inability to really do very much about it. There was corruption - no question about it - in Thailand and in Pakistan. Burma was a difficult case because the government claimed, with some validity, that they did not control the drug growing areas or drug trafficking areas in the northeast and the northwest. At the same time, they made alliances with the hill tribes that were growing opium poppies. In return for stopping their insurgency against the Central Government, Rangoon allowed the hill tribes to have autonomy, i.e., to grow whatever they wanted, which was usually drugs since that was the most profitable crop. There were always rumors and stories about the government leaders in Rangoon being involved in corruption, and drug payoffs, but there was never any hard evidence on that. China was a difficult case because China's view basically was, "We will take care of our problem [within China's borders]. You take care of your problem [in your cities]." Many countries felt, "Well, it's America's problem. It's your domain. It's your people that are doing this. If you just get them to stop buying and using the drug, we wouldn't have this problem. We're just the victims too. It's all just passing through us." I would respond by saying that the trouble is when you have a pipeline, it tends to leak. When you have drugs on the back of a truck, some falls off the back of the truck, and you pretty soon have users, addicts all along the trafficking routes. This is exactly what was happening in Burma, Thailand and China. The traffickers started paying the people along the way, the couriers if you will, in drugs, at least in part; and so they became addicted. They then became pushers themselves to pass on the drug, and China now has a tremendous drug problem. Pakistan also has a growing drug abuse problem, as does Burma. All these countries, which previously were just routes through which the drugs passed, now became users. So the problem has come home to them - that it is not only the West's problem, it's also theirs.

Q: How did you find the State Department hierarchy up above? Did you yourself get good support?

MARTIN: I think pretty good support. I attribute that mainly to Mel Levitsky, the INM assistant secretary at the time, who was very well regarded by the Seventh Floor, was able to explain his position and go after the resources that he needed. I think he was well respected by the drug czar and by other members of the community. I thought he was quite effective.

Q: Well, you left there after two years.

MARTIN: Yes, in the summer of 1992.

Q: Whither?

MARTIN: With Mel's support, and I think having done a good job, I was promoted into the Senior Service. I bid on and was selected to be the Consul General in Guangzhou. Before going there, since my predecessor was not leaving until January of 1993 and my INM job ended in the summer, I took six months of Chinese brush up, which was very helpful. I went to FSI and tried to get the old cobwebs out of my mind and the mind going again on the Chinese for about six months.

Q: Well now, Guangzhou is the old Canton, isn't it?

MARTIN: That's the old Canton, yes.

Q: Which would mean that Cantonese would be what was spoken there.

MARTIN: Right.

Q: Were you trained in Mandarin or Cantonese initially?

MARTIN: I was initially trained in Cantonese. So it was an ideal job for me. I was one of the few in the Foreign Service that actually took Cantonese. Three of us in Hong Kong back in the mid-1960s were sent to the Yale in China program at the Chinese University to learn Cantonese. The other two officers were Sidney Goldsmith and Joe Moyle. So even though my Cantonese was only at the two level, it was still useful. I was able to dust it off enough to use it for social courtesy purposes. All officials, even though they may have been Cantonese and spoke more accented or worse Mandarin than I did, had to use Mandarin in their official dealings. I found it useful to listen to their side comments in Cantonese. Once they realized I could understand Cantonese , they were more cautious.After I spent six months re-learning Mandarin at FSI, I went off to Guangzhou in January of 1993. I was there three and a half years until the middle of 1996 when I went back to Manila.

Q: What was the situation in Guangzhou? I mean how were our relations, and how was the consulate doing because this was still the period after Tiananmen. Was a cloud hovering over everything?

MARTIN: Guangdong, South China really is quite different from the rest of the country. Their mindsets are different from the northerners', particularly those in Beijing. They're different in terms of their outlook toward the west, or to the outside world in general. They've had much more contact with the world. Most of the overseas Chinese, at least until recently, have been from that part of China. Most of the Chinese American community came from four districts of Guangdong Province, speaking Toishanese and other local dialects. So in many ways there was a lot more connectivity between Guangdong, and the Cantonese people, and the rest of the world than there was with China at large. I think Tiananmen seemed like it was far away to the Cantonese, and it was not an issue that came up very much in our discussions with the officials down there.The consulate itself was primarily focused on consular work. It was the only immigrant visa issuing post for all of China. So people from all over China had to come to Guangzhou to get their immigrant visas. The reason that was put in place was because initially most of the people going to the States, because of the Cantonese emigration, had family connections with South China. So it made some sense to put all the immigrant visa work there. In future it seems to me there's some question as to whether we need to have two immigrant visa issuing posts a hundred miles apart - Hong Kong and Guangzhou. As Hong Kong becomes more and more linked into China, it makes some sense, in my view, to perhaps centralize immigrant visa issuance, probably in Guangzhou. But we will probably have to wait until after 2047, after Hong Kong's 50 year Special Administrative Region (SAR) status ends and it is (presumably) integrated into China entirely. So we had a large visa operation there. At the same time, we also had a very important economic and political reporting function, because at that point in '93, Guangdong was at the peak of its economic reforms; at the beginning of its economic boom. In 1992, Deng Xiaoping had taken a trip to the south. After the '89 Tiananmen incident, the government was forced by the conservatives in the Party, to back off on economic reforms, to back off on opening to the outside. So when Deng came to Shenzhen in '92, looked around, and said, "Hmm, this is pretty good," everybody said, "Whew!" and off they went, and started a big economic boom. By '93 Guangdong had become the powerhouse of the Chinese export market; and even today, I think, or at least until recently, almost 40 percent of Chinese exports came from Guangdong Province alone. It was really "the" major export oriented market. Businesses were in there. U.S. businesses came in and invested. Hong Kong businesses came across the border. Almost all the manufacturing that had previously been done in Hong Kong had moved across into Guangdong Province. So the Consulate had a big economic role.We had a political role in terms of what was happening politically in South China, which again, had a different perspective both on the world, as well as on how politics should be run, from what Beijing wanted done, or what they felt needed to be done. If Beijing "put politics in command," as Mao used to say, in Guangdong, they much preferred to put "economics" (in reality, money) in command.

Q: Let's look to the economic side first. Now these companies, American companies, who were investing there, would be investing in order to get cheaper laborers - essentially good cheap labor, I guess.

MARTIN: That was one factor but not the only factor. In my opinion, the factor that brought them there, was to get a toe into China's potentially huge domestic market. Most were consumer product companies - the Kelloggs, the Proctor and Gambles, soft drink manufacturers, beer companies and so forth. They were initially required to export most if not all their products, but they were all positioning themselves for a future role in the Chinese domestic market.

Q: Getting a foot in there, in the Chinese market.

MARTIN: Right, because they saw the potential for a Chinese market, and it was tremendous! Now, this is the old song, of course, which has been sung by starry-eyed foreign manufacturers for nearly two hundred years - if only every Chinese man wore his shirt one inch longer, the mills of Manchester would run forever. Given China's present domination of the textile industry, I fine this quite ironic. The Manchester mills are long gone. I think many companies felt that this was the way to ride the economic reform wave. As China opened up to foreign investment, initially foreign companies were forced to establish joint ventures with local, state owned enterprises (SOEs). Many of these local joint ventures. While some local partners made sense, others were really quite off the wall. One company, which manufactured household soap and laundry products, was joint ventured with a long-term soap manufacturer in Guangzhou. Colgate linked up with a toothpaste manufacturer. These made sense. On the other hand, a soft drink company came in and tried to partner with the Chinese air force. It didn't make a lot of sense. That endeavor did not last very long. However, military units were in the commercial business. At that stage of economic reforms, Deng Xiaoping had told the military that they were the fourth modernization, the fourth of four. The order of the four modernizations was agriculture, heavy industry, consumer industry, and military. And so the military was told, "You're not going to get a big budget increase. You're not going to get a lot of resources. But to help you out, we will let you find your own means of becoming self-sufficient. We'll let you develop your own sources of income." Well, this was opening the barn door, and off they went! There are many military units in the Guangzhou Military Region (MR), facing Hong Kong, Taiwan and Vietnam. Having been in place since 1949, often having to grow their own food, build barracks, etc., they jumped at the chance to get into all sorts of commercial enterprises. Some, such as using logistics vehicles in the construction business, were beneficial in developing infrastructurroads, buildings, factories, etc. Others were less honorable, everything from soft drinks to hotels, brothels, nightclubs, and smuggling. So every local unit had a commercial enterprise in which they were involved to try to increase their budgets. This privilege was subsequently revoked in the late 1990s and the military told to get out of their commercial enterprises. But at that point, the military was much involved in all sorts of economic endeavors. I often thought, from our perspective, it was to our advantage. One, it gave the military a stake in the economic reforms, so the communist party conservatives couldn't try to use the military to oppose Deng's economic reforms and the opening up. And second, the commercial activities diverted personnel, equipment and money from military training. They slacked off on doing exercises, PT, or other activities, which probably didn't help their combat ratings.

Q: What about Vietnam? While you were there, you would have been covering that border?

MARTIN: Yes, Guangxi Province was in my consular district. Relations were pretty frozen most of the time I was there. The legacy of the '77 war with Vietnam continued. It was still very icy. One of my favorite trips was going to the border of Guangxi Province and Vietnam, and visiting the Qing Dynasty era Friendship Gate, a very elaborate multistoried tower similar to those along the Great Wall, in the middle of Friendship Pass, a traditional trading route. The gate, particularly from the Vietnamese side, was riddled with bullet holes, absolutely pockmarked. And I thought this was an appropriate symbol of the state of Sino-Vietnamese friendship at that point. The Vietnamese had fired on it from their vantage points on higher ridges on their side of the border to prevent the PLA from using the pass to enter Vietnam. During my posting in Guangzhou, things did warm up enough for them to re-open the railway line that crossed the border into northern Vietnam. The problem was that Chinese and Vietnamese rail gauges were different. So they added a third rail so the train carriages could go to a border point where they were lifted up and transferred to a different width wheel unit. This is similar to what is done on the Mongolian border for trains entering the trans-Siberian railway system.

Q: How about the politics? Were you seeing anything in China, between you and the embassy and other posts, looking towards China perhaps breaking up?

MARTIN: We did have difference of opinions with the embassy in terms of what was happening, because they tended to report from the perspective of the capital, from the perspective of Beijing, and the people they talked to, which was accurate from that perspective.But we had a different view down where we were. We did not see China breaking up. At least I didn't. My view was that the psychological impetus for China to unite, to stay together, and for the Chinese to support the sense of oneness of being Chinese was far stronger than the regionalism, the provincialism, and the difference in economic development that was pulling South China away. A lot of people talked about Greater China, which included Hong Kong, South China, and Taiwan, as perhaps having a sort of economic bond between them which might separate them out into a separate entity from the rest of China. I didn't see that and I still don't. I think that the idea of China uniting, which is why the whole issue of Taiwan was so very important to most Chinese wherever they live, is a factor, I think, that keeps them together more than it pulls them apart.

Q: I don't understand. I mean why is the desire to bring Taiwan in? Do they feel that it might sort of suck off the wealthier coastal provinces?

MARTIN: No. I think Taiwan is the only remaining part of what is considered to be a Greater or Great China, or the traditional China if you will, which is traditional only in the Qing Dynasty, of course; and the Qing Dynasty borders are what China generally claims as its borders now. Taiwan is the last remaining piece that is not part, not ruled by a central government in China. I think that this is what is at the bottom of the whole issue - it's very important for Chinese sense of belonging to the world and regaining their rightful place in the world as a united country. That's why Taiwan is such an emotional issue.

Q: You must have been up against all sorts of Taiwanese entrepreneurs to meet you?

MARTIN: Taiwanese businessmen all over the place! Particularly in Fujian Province, which is the province facing Taiwan across the strait. The Taiwan Chamber of Commerce in Xiamen, or the old Amoy, was the largest in town by a long shot. We had a few American businesses there, but they couldn't hold a candle tom all the Taiwanese businesses that were operating there. Same thing in Guangdong Province - a lot of the Taiwanese had come in. Taiwan government rules, more than anything, set up a dummy front companies in Hong Kong, and then invested in Guangdong. We had hundreds if not thousands of Taiwan companies invested and doing business in South China and southern Guangdong Province. They even had a Taiwanese school, they had a Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce, and so forth. They were very much a part of the economic boom. But we at the U.S. consulate did not have much to do with the Taiwanese business community. They knew better than we (or U.S. businesses) how to operate in the Chinese environment. And in Fujian Province, the local language was the same. Taiwanese and Fujianese are essentially the same as is the culture. So they did not need our help. Our involvement would have complicated the "arrangements" they had made with local officials and partners.

Q: How did you see this fitting into keeping together during the '9'96 period.

MARTIN: Again, I would say that the attitude was that the south gave lip service to the idea that Taiwan needed to reunify with the mainland, and that any move to go independent would bring dire results. The missile exercises that were used in '9'96, when Lee Teng-hui was running for office, when he visited the United States, was all orchestrated by Beijing. These basically, were disregarded in the south; that was not a big issue there. They supported the national policy publicly, of course, but this was not a major issue that people spent any time worrying about or talking about. In my official contacts with business leaders or with government officials there, if it came up, they would mouth the government line, but then they'd go on to, "Well, we were anxious that the policy would impede more Taiwan investment here."My view is that the economic interrelationship is going to be the critical factor, It eventually is going to link the two sides together. Whether or not it's political, whether or not it's some sort of a federation, confederation, whatever it may be, I think both sides will eventually use the economic mechanism to work out a modus operandi.

Q: You were there when the Taiwanese president was going to the United States.

MARTIN: Lee Teng-hui got the visa to come to the States.

Q: Yes. Was this a real issue down where you were, or was this a Peking issue?

MARTIN: It was a Peking issue. It was not an issue in our area. Again, as I say, if the subject came up, officials would repeat the official line, but that's all it was. It was evident that this was not an issue that they spent a lot of time worrying about.I had four provinces in my consular district, all very different, including Fujian Province, which is the one that faces Taiwan and is the closest in relationships and linguistically with the Taiwanese. Taiwan came up more often, obviously, in my talks with the officials, but even there it did not seem to be a major issue.

Q: 199'96, we've talked about the economic boom there. Were any of your provinces deprived in economic role?

MARTIN: I'd like to talk a little bit about the differences between all four provinces. They were all very different. And I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the visitors I had there, starting with President Nixon, and a little bit about the relationship with Hong Kong.Q. First we want to talk about the difference. You had four provinces.

MARTIN: We had four provinces in the consular district with 135 million people in them, which is probably larger than most of Western Europe. The provinces were Guangdong Province, where Guangzhou was; Fujian Province to the east, facing Taiwan; Guangxi Province to the west, which bordered on Vietnam; and Hainan Island, which hangs down into the Gulf of Tonkin and the South China Sea. They were all quite different. Guangdong, obviously, had the most notoriety, the best reputation, was the most developed. It was the one that all the Hong Kong manufacturers moved into after China opened up in 1978, and so they had a tremendous amount of foreign investment. As I said earlier, Guangdong Province was reputed, at that point at least, to export about 40 percent of all of China's exports, most of which were foreign invested companies, to the United States and to Europe, also some to Japan and Southeast Asia. Guangdong province had a large amount of Taiwan investment. The province itself was really quite varied in the sense that the southern part, close to Hong Kong along the Pearl River Delta, was really developing rapidly. The north and the east were less so, and the western part, outside of the Pearl River Delta, was still fairly traditional and less developed than the delta region. The delta region was the one that you always heard about, between Hong Kong and Guangzhou. While I was there, Gordon Wu, who was a big developer in Hong Kong, built a highway between the border town of Shenzhen, which was becoming a city, and Guangzhou. It took him several years to build it, but he built a superhighway. We called it Darwin Highway, because the first three months it was open, there were about 75 deaths on the highway, mainly because nobody knew what a superhighway was. An old peasant would walk out in the middle of the highway and say, "Oh!" And wham! A Mercedes going by at 120 miles an hour would wipe him out! Similarly, a lot of people said, "Wow! A new highway! I have to drive my car on it." So these old guys would get out in their old cars. They and the car, neither of them had ever gone over 30 miles an hour, would get on the highway, floor the thing, and the car would fall apart, or the driver would lose control, and one more would be eliminated. So by the end of three months we figured that the fittest survived, as after that there were not as many accidents! But it was sobering for a while because you'd have these black Mercedes, which would usually be the government cars or PLA (People's Liberation Army) cars, going by at 120 to 150 miles an hour, and some guy would be riding his bicycle in the left lane. It was a difficult but interesting experience in modernization. Guangdong Province was uneven. There were lots of pockets of poverty and lack of development in other parts outside the delta. But generally Guangdong was a fairly forward-looking, fairly active province in terms of economic development. Fujian Province was different. Fujian was what was long considered the front line with Taiwan. The military had a great deal of influence and control over large percentages of the province. They had military forces, missile deployments, and airfields throughout the province, to maintain their face off with Taiwan. At the same time, you had a tremendous amount of investment from Taiwan in Fujian, mostly in southern Fujian, where most of the native Taiwanese people's ancestors originally came from nan-Minan (southern Minan) people. There was a large Taiwan Chamber of Commerce in the city of Xiamen. Many Taiwan businessmen came in to invest. There were many direct contacts between Taiwan and Fujian, usually at night by small boats. People would come and go. Taiwanese would come over, go to the karaokes, the nightclubs, and then go home, or they'd come for business. There was a lot of back and forth, at night, or underground, and certainly not on a legal basis.The rest of Fujian province, particularly the north, tended to be somewhat more conservative. Fuzhou City was a traditional Chinese city. It didn't have a very progressive-looking government structure, was pretty much under the thumb of Beijing, didn't have much of an independent prospective or vision of its own. One of the problems that we had with Fujian was that was where most of the illegal migrants to the U.S. originated. Changle country, near Fuzhou City, was the hotbed of illegal immigrants. People in the Golden Venture were mostly from Changle County, and most of the illegal boat people into the United States come from that particular county or the ones around it.I had a chance to visit Changle County. It is a very hard-scrabble place. Agriculture's not very good because of the rocky soil. But the houses and the accouterments you see in the villages there are really quite spectacular, mainly because they've had people emigrating from there for about the last 300 years. People with two, or three, four, five-story houses, marble on the outside, marble bathrooms, Jacuzzis, fountains in the front yard. I didn't notice any swimming pools, but I wouldn't doubt that there probably were swimming pools as well. So obviously the remittances from the people who did succeed overseas were quite useful in terms of building up the standard of living of the relatives left behind. But that was not all over Fujian, and I think that most of the places were still fairly hard-scrabble. A comparison between their lifestyle and the lifestyle of the people further into the interior of China makes it clear Fujian is doing quite well, considering the other parts of the interior. Going to the interior, Guangxi Province was probably the most underdeveloped and backward of the four provinces in my consular district. Guangxi Province really had been left behind. Officially, this is a Zhuang minority autonomous region. The autonomous region meant that you had a token governor, who was from the Zhuang minority, but the party secretary was invariably a Han, and therefore the one with the power. It had not seen a lot of progress. Nanning, the capital, had become somewhat more modernized, but was still 20 or 30 years behind Guangzhou and the delta area. The contrast was really quite striking. One of the best ways to travel into Guangxi was to fly there, and then drive around, or take the train. There were lots of places we could travel, which was useful.China was not an easy place to drive since the people had little driving experience. The roads were narrow, and people tended to drive rather quickly. My successor, Philip Lincoln, was killed in Guangxi shortly after his arrival in 1996 when a bus hit his van in a head-on accident. Beihai, a coastal fishing and increasingly a beach resort destination on the north cost of the Tonkin Gulf. It had an extensive beach - level, nice sand - but the development of tourist facilities on the edge of the beach was what I would call "with Chinese characteristics." Whereas in the west we might like some space and privacy between buildings on the beach, in Beihai, it was a solid row of establishments. Apartment buildings next to restaurants, karaoke parlors, bars, amusement parks, etc. It reminded me of boardwalks in Ocean City or Atlantic City, with little if any zoning or separation of functions.The fourth province in my consular district was Hainan Island, which used to be the penal colony, or the Georgia or Australia of China. The emperors sent their internal exiles and prisoners there, the most southern part of the empire. It is second largest island in China after Taiwan. But during my day they were trying to develop it into the "Hawaii of China." They thought that its beautiful beaches would be worth developing to bring in tourists from Hong Kong, Southeast Asia, and other places. The problem is that their sense of development, certainly to Western eyes, left something to be desired. They figured the way to develop something was to put in casinos, karaoke parlors, and lots of restaurants, and that would attract tourists. They might attract some Chinese tourists, but wouldn't attract many Western tourists. The problem was overbuilding, and internal corruption and connections. Haikou itself, the capital of Hainan, on the northern end of the island, was undergoing a building boom when I was there. Everybody was building like crazy. Every corner, every street of the city was under construction. It turned out, subsequently, that this was all speculation, that a lot of the money was coming from other parts of China. People, companies, cities, municipalities, even provinces were investing their money in Hainan real estate. When the central government's ax came down, and Premier Zhu Rongji stopped all this, or decided to require some inspection and some accountability, the money dried up. The city in Haikou became a ghost town with skeletons of buildings left half completed. One interesting aspect of Hainan was the naval base in Sanya, in the southern part, which has become much better known in the West since the EP3 incident in 2001. We didn't have much access to the military there or in any of the bases, but we did travel down there and looked around to see what we could see. The other thing of interest was that there was that there was a large overseas Chinese community in Hainan. Many Indonesian Chinese, after 1965 riots against the Chinese and the Communists, came back to China; and many, if not most, of them were sent to Hainan. They were assigned to work in the fields of the state farms there. The problem is, most of the Chinese who came back were urban Chinese, urban overseas Chinese who'd been small shopkeepers, and they knew next to nothing about agriculture. So their adjustment was really rather difficult. But they were making some progress. A lot of them now were second generation, beginning to establish themselves and become more economically prosperous than they were before.So the variety between the four provinces really was quite interesting, and it gave us a chance when we traveled to be able to see different parts of China, different stages of development, different stages of openness to the outside.We had an incident in Beihai, the beach and port city of Guangxi Province, with an American businessman of Vietnamese-Chinese ancestry. His family, originally from Guangxi, had emigrated to Vietnam several generations earlier, as many of the Vietnamese-Chinese had come from that southern part of China. He had been caught there during the French-Indochina War, had moved to Saigon with his family, and finally left in 1975 at the end of the American-Vietnamese war. He went to the States, became an American citizen, and then returned to Guangxi, to Beihai, and opened a shrimp packing business. He was quite successful. Obviously he spoke the language and fit in well with the community. He contracted with fishermen to catch the shrimp. In the plant, they would clean and quick freeze dry the shrimp. He had good sanitary conditions, so was authorized by the Food and Drug Administration to export to the United States. It was too ideal. The problem was that the local municipal officials couldn't keep their fingers out of the cookie jar. They were constantly leaning on him to do this, do that, to pay more taxes, to give them a piece of the action, to hire their nieces, nephews, friends, and what have you. Finally, he walked away. He said he could not take it anymore. He just disappeared and went home. He tried to sell the company, but could not get a decent price to recoup his investment. as the government wouldn't offer him anything. He also was concerned that he might not be able to leave. Officials said, "If you don't pay the taxes we won't let you go! We'll keep you here!" So he went to the States or Hong Kong on a business trip and never returned. Subsequently, when municipal officials asked me to encourage American investment in Guangxi, I would remind them they already had a chance blew it. The level of sophistication regarding foreign investment and working with foreigners, even then, wasn't based on the rule of law. There were few restrictions on what municipal officials could do. This was true in other parts of South China.In Guangdong we had a tremendous IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) problem. I used to call it the pirates' den, as it was the world's largest operation, many little operations, pirating CDs, pirated computer software, books, most everything else. There were probably 15 or 20 major CD manufacturing companies that were ripping off copyrighted intellectual property, making CDs and movies, movie videos, and computer tapes for a fraction of the price that you would pay legally. We went after them, working closely with the business community. U.S. companies were frustrated because they had to do and provide everything. They had to do the investigations, buy the research as to where these people were. They had to get the goods on these people. Then they had to pay the police to go out and do the raid. They had to participate in the raid so the police would go into the right house instead of the house next door; and they would have to be careful to try to keep confidentiality. Often the raid would go into the plant where the U.S. company knew counterfeit goods were being manufactured, and there would be nothing there. Or there would be one machine and a few boxes of product in the corner, which the police would seize. You knew that the guy had been tipped off, and he'd moved the stuff next door; or in the back room and they wouldn't go look for it. So it was a frustrating event. We had a lot of people who worked with us on IPR. Lee Sands from USTR (Office of the United States Trade Representative) came through many times for negotiations on intellectual property rights agreements and tried to curtail the issue. I think, finally, the government began to clamp down, and they began to really take some serious action. Much of the problem was that municipal governments were invested in township, village enterprises (TVEs) who were doing the counterfeiting. So local leaders weren't about to cut off a company which was providing income to municipal coffers, or individual officials.

Q: How about the PLA, the People's Liberation Army? What were you observing about their business practices?

MARTIN: They were very much in business at that point. As we said earlier, the military was the fourth of Deng's four modernizations. Being the last, they were given permission to get into business so as to provide for their own resources, which they couldn't get from the national budget. They got into business in a big way. They were doing everything from hotels to travel companies, construction companies to karaoke parlors, and brothels. Shenzhen was particularly bad in that sense. I would say probably 30 to 40 percent of the business in Shenzhen was military connected, and they were in everything. PLA logistics trucks did much of the construction - of buildings, highways, apartments, parks .

Q: Were we keeping an eye on the military across the straits from Taiwan to see how serious they were about doing something?

MARTIN: In terms of our access to the military, it was very limited. We had visits, consular officers would travel in Fujian regularly. We had defense attachï¿½s come in from either Hong Kong or down from Beijing and travel, but their trips were quite limited. In 1995 we had a real problem with a couple of attachï¿½s that came in from Hong Kong without informing us or getting our authorization as was required. They were picked up near a beach in Fujian, where the PLA was conducting exercises. That became a bit of a do. After holding them a few days, and registering a complaint with the Embassy, the government threw them out of the country. After that, those particular Hong Kong attaches were not allowed back in, at least during my assignment. We tightened up our requirements for others from Hong Kong to get clearances before they came in.

Q: How did you find the discrepancy? You were in provinces that were the beneficiaries of this new prosperity although you had some hard-scrabble places. Were you in consultation with any other consular colleagues? Was there any thought about China splitting up into regional warlords, or economic lords, or power centers?

MARTIN: There was a lot of speculation as to whether China might split apart or break up. South China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan was often seen as an economic cohesive unit which perhaps could become quite prosperous on its own if it had its own autonomy. It was occasionally referred to as Greater China.There was a big difference, I think, at that time between what was happening in the south, particularly Guangdong Province, and the rest of China. Guangdong really was the laboratory or the experiment that the north allowed to happen and encouraged. I don't think there was ever really any risk of it breaking off, for a number of reasons. One, I think the sense among all Chinese, even in the south, despite their frustrations with the north - their different culture, their different language, and so forth - is the sense that the oneness of China was very important, the psychological importance of that.Secondly, I think that the government really did have good tight controls over what was happening in the south. The Cantonese got away with an awful lot. They would not follow directions very well, they would interpret them in the broadest sense that they could. They would be selective in how they carried out the rules from Beijing. They were not above, like any other place in China, playing games with the accounts. They were required to send a certain percentage of their tax revenue to the central government. But every region in China starved the center, sending only the minimum to Beijing. The amount of taxes that went to the Central Government was somewhere between 13 and 18 percent of the total revenue collected in the country. And so the national government was operating on a shoestring compared to the potential or the actual revenue collections throughout the country. The provinces or regions would find all sorts of ways to finagle the taxes. They wouldn't collect "taxes" per se. They'd collect fees, tolls, service charges, or payments due. They'd call them anything but taxes, so they wouldn't have to remit so much to Beijing. Local people staffed the tax bureau, and so it was natural that the center would not be getting a very big take of the taxes.This was all under process of change when I was there. Zhu Rongji established a new tax system, with a national tax bureau, which was going to establish offices in all the cities and provinces, to ensure that the center gets its fair share. I don't think it's worked out very well at this point.The other thing to remember is that until after the Cultural Revolution and the beginning of the economic reforms, China die not have a taxation system. Everything was government. There was no private property. There was no profit. Any excess revenue, as it was called, went directly to the government, because the state sector, the state owned enterprises, were all part of the government. They were all part of various ministries - heavy industry, railway industry, telecommunications, etc. There was no taxation because everybody worked for the government. This has changed only since the economic reforms and opening up after 1978, during which the government allowed private enterprise entrepreneurs, non-state sector businesses, to operate.

Q: We knew China was a Marxist state. They had a huge apparatus of Marxist studies. How was Marxism playing by the time you were there in the '90s?

MARTIN: In South China, Marxism was rather low key. Party cadres still mouthed the usual slogans and the usual phrases. The government was still organized in terms of the Communist Party monitoring, controlling and running everything, but there really was no fervor in it. The Cultural Revolution had exhausted everybody; and the Cantonese, particularly in the south, were delighted to be left alone to do their thing. And their thing was to try to improve their standard of living, to improve their economic well being. There was the usual window dressing in terms of what needed to be said; but the sense I had was no one was a committed Marxist..The difference between Guangdong or Guangzhou and Beijing was that we got very little in terms of harangues or representations about Taiwan, about U.S. policy, about this, that, and the other thing, which, in the embassy you'd get all the time. Down there, there was almost none of that. It was very straightforward in terms of working together on economic investment, to try to improve rough situations, and so forth.However, we did have a very suspicious Foreign Affairs Office (FAO). The Foreign Affairs Office is the local barbarian handlers, responsible for keeping watch, particularly on the consular corps, but also on any foreigners in their area. And they were not helpful. They were actually very much the block, the obstacle to our dealing with the government bureaus at a provincial level. We had to go through them to get appointments, to see officials, visit offices or factories, and to travel in the consular district. Most of the time, they were obstinate. We would talk with them, try to establish good relations with them, which I think we did generally; but they were just hardheaded about it.It was frustrating because our economic officers had developed very good relations with various government bureaus, such as the planning bureau, the industrial bureau and so forth. Officers would call their counterpart whom they'd met, and say, "Well, can I come talk to you about such and such?"And they'd say, "Well, as far as I'm concerned, great! You can come over anytime, but you have to go through the Foreign Affairs Office."My officer would say, "We'll try to get permission. I'll see if I can come see you next week. Are you going to be around?"The contact would say, "Sure, Tuesday would be fine."We'd call the FAO, and they'd say, "We'll check." And we'd wait, and wait, and wait, and finally the FAO would call back saying "Oh! Well, he's out of town!" or "He's not available. He can't see you!" It was total nonsense, but that's how they operated. It was frustrating trying to work with them but we had no choice but to work through the system.

Q: In some Communist countries a consular officer could take off on his own and go anywhere, whereas a diplomat would have limitations and have to go through the foreign ministry. Were you able to play the consular ploy a bit?

MARTIN: No, because we still had to go through the Foreign Affairs Office. The provincial or municipal FAO was the foreign ministry representative locally. They often said they had to refer to the foreign ministry for approval, but most of the time, it seems to me, they pretty much had the authority to decide what they would and would not do. It varied by province or locality. The further away from Guangzhou, from the capitals of the provinces, the more relaxed everybody was. In remote areas, officials would welcome you, throw a banquet, and take you around to show you pretty much anything you wanted to see. It was really only in the urban areas that we were restricted. We just had to find ways to work around the FAO to make contacts and get information on developments.

Q: I assume there were classes in Marxism at every level of school.

MARTIN: I think there were probably a few true believers at the university levels who still taught Marxism classes. My understanding was that these were required classes - that students and officials had to take. They were usually large lecture courses on weekends or after hours. Occasionally, we were able to get ourselves invited to the universities to talk to these classes. That was kind of fun, to get into their political theory or Marxist education classes, and have a discussion with the teachers and the students. We didn't get to do so very often, but it was a good opportunity to see what people thought. The students generally didn't say very much. The faculty would carry the conversation. The students seemed to be cautious in front of professors and our FAO escorts.

Q: Did you find you and your fellow Americans hit all the time on the streets by people wanted to talk English?

MARTIN: Yes. They would be quite open about that. Everybody seemed to be learning English. At the train station, young people, girls and boys - would come up and say, "Please, sir. May I practice my English?" It was really quite striking, considering that only a few years before, being seen talking to a foreigner would have been suspicious and the people would have been nervous about it, if not restricted. Young people were all eager to learn English.

Q: Did you get a feel about how your Chinese contacts were dealing with the Cultural Revolution years?

MARTIN: Most would not talk about it. A few would. It was still a painful episode for most. A few felt talking about it, and bringing it out into the open would help them deal with it. But it was difficult for most people, I think. Most of the people that I tried to talk to would slough it off and not really address the issues. This was particularly true of the cadres. Many of the younger ones had been Red Guards while the older cadres had been under attack by the Red Guards for being the old worms, cheating, lying, capitalist rodents, for taking the Liu Xiaochi capitalist road in the party. They had had a very difficult time, because they all thought themselves as true Marxists supporting the party. Suddenly all these young kids came in, beat on them, and forced them to work on pig farms for 20 years. They came back subsequently to their old positions and jobs in the party and government. Hard to keep one's dedication to the Party I would think.The few people that talked to me about the Cultural Revolution would admit to their being involved in the violent acts. Most of them said, "Well, we were neutral. We were not one faction or another," which in most cases is probably not true because most people did take sides, either with the party cadre or with the Red Guards that were attacking them. Guangzhou, and Guangdong province as a whole, was very violent during the Cultural Revolution. I remember when I was in Hong Kong, reading in the papers about the bodies floating down the Pearl River, and the sharks growing to enormous lengths because they had a wonderful feed that summer. In neighboring Guangxi, subsequent books reported cannibalism, people actually killing opponents and eating their organs. It was an extremely cruel, violent situation.

Q: How did you find the writ of Beijing?

MARTIN: Generally, the central government appointed a few senior people to party and government positions. When I was there, the mayor and the party secretary of Guangzhou City were both Cantonese as was the Guangdong party secretary. The provincial governor was from Shanghai. Generally, Beijing assigned senior officials from other provinces or regions so as to ensure loyalty to the center rather than localities. But the second level and third level were almost all Cantonese. One could compare it to having a political ambassador with career Foreign Service subordinates. The political ambassador can make decisions, certainly, because of his connections in Washington, but the people who run the embassy are career people, That's how it was in Guangzhou and Guangdong Province.

Q: I've been in various places where I've seen this north-south business, where people in the north look down on the people in the south for somehow being less than hardy, less intellectual. How did that work in China? Was there a difference of how the north and south looked upon each other?

MARTIN: There is some historical enmity, and some sense of superiority and inferiority. The Cantonese consider themselves the true Chinese, descendants of the Tang Dynasty, one of the high points of Chinese power and culture. They call the Cantonese language Tanghua (Tang Dynasty language), and they call themselves Tangren (Tang people).Historically, southern China was absorbed into the Chinese civilization about 200 BC when (Emperor) Qin Shi Huangdi of the Qin Dynasty, who first united the country, conquered what was then called the Yue Dynasty in the south. The Cantonese still call themselves the Yue people. That's the traditional name for Guangdong Province. Yue is the same word as that for Vietnam (Yuenan). There are many cultural and ethnic relationships. China's increasing circle of civilization essentially integrated, amalgamated, conquered, or replaced local peoples as they expanded out from the centers of north China civilization. The northerners see the Cantonese as mercantilists, commercial, greedy, and business oriented, not very orderly, not very intellectual in their pursuits. The Cantonese see the northerners as cold and aloof, and sort of Prussian, rather rigid in their views. But despite historical and cultural differences, they are all considered to be "Han."There are also many minorities in the south, too. Hainan Island has several minority groups, Guangxi Province is the Zhuang (minority) Autonomous Region, Fujian has many hill tribes related to other minority groups in the area.

Q: What about the influence of American-Chinese? Canton was the area where practically the entire American-Chinese exodus came from. Did the American-Chinese play any role from your perspective?

MARTIN: They did some, mainly in the sense of business investment. Most business investment in China is, or until recently has been, overseas Chinese. Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia has been by far the source of the largest percentage of investment in China. I'd say probably two-thirds of all foreign investment in China has been from the overseas Chinese community. American-Chinese did invest there, but not in a major way.Many American-Chinese came to do business in Guangdong with various companies. Some were good; some were not. It depended on how much they identified with China, and how much they could relate to China. One officer in the consulate was, I think, third or fourth generation Chinese-American, who didn't speak any Chinese at all. He had taken some language, but he didn't have any native Chinese, linguistically. His Caucasian wife did, and so it was fun to be with them in the markets. She would speak to the stall keeper, and the stall keeper would answer to him. The wife would speak to the stall keeper again, and you'd see the latter's confusion as she would reply to the one who should be speaking Chinese. It became confusing and humorous. Many American-Chinese could not related to the political and cultural situation and did not connect well with the local interlocutors.But there was a strong connection with the United States because most Chinese-American families had come from four districts on the Pearl River Delta. We had many visitors who wanted to return to their native villages. Washington State Governor Locke's visit to his family village was a big media event.

Q: Were we concerned about the Chinese mafia, the triads, or whatever, at that time, because of smuggling illegal aliens, and other things?

MARTIN: It was a growing concern. Absolutely! The international crime organizations, of which the triads or the secret societies were a part, became increasingly active. As Hong Kong became more integrated into China, the triads and other criminal organizations in Hong Kong, developed contacts and branches across the border. The Communists had suppressed, not eliminated, but essentially suppressed secret societies and criminal organizations after 1949 by ruthlessly wiping them out, and keeping very close tabs on what everyone was doing all the way down to the individual level. But as they opened up, as Deng Xiaoping said, "You open the door, and flies come in," a lot of criminal activity re-surfaced. Some were internal, having never gone away. They had had been operating underground, surviving because of corrupt police officers and party officials. Others came in from outside, with international connections.Drug trafficking became a big issue; prostitution; karaoke parlors; gambling; illegal smuggling. More than criminal organizations were involved. Smuggling along the south coast of China - most of it from Hong Kong, but some from the Philippines or Taiwan - was carried out by the military. The navy was up to its gunwales in smuggling. And it was big business. Most of the cigarettes that came into China on the south coast came in on navy vessels. One of the reasons Jiang Zemin ordered the military out of commercial businesses is because of this smuggling problem. The army was involved to a degree, but they didn't have the resources the navy did of smuggling across the borders. I remember one particular example. During a visit to a town in the Pearl River delta, one of our officers noticed a big parking lot next to the police station was full of Jaguars, Cadillacs, Lincolns, and other cars, many of them with U.S. license plates still on them. He started asking questions, and the police said, "Oh, we found those. We've captured them." My guess is they were being resold to domestic customers rather than being returned to their owners. These were shipped into China by container after being stolen in Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York. Similarly across the border from Vietnam, we saw Mercedes and BMWs being driven across the border into Guangxi Province. So corruption was a problem. We also dealt with the illegal migrants out of Fujian Province that had gone to the States and were, when I was there, starting to be repatriated back to Fujian. Initially, INS flew them to Xiamen, and then trucked them to holding areas, where they were questioned and detained by Chinese authorities for a while, and then let go. I went to see the first flight that came back. I think there were about 40 people off one of the snake boats, as smuggling ships are called. The human rights people, of course, got very excited about this, saying that they were going to be persecuted, and detained, and so forth. Our best information was that they were detained, questioned, fined, and basically let go, because in subsequent years we found the same people showing up a second and even a third time. They'd come back, be let go, take another snake boat, get caught, and be brought back again. So after two or three times, it became sort of a cycle. One additional point on the illegal immigration of that period. I was bemused as how quickly migrants intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard before they reached American soil learned the latest "reason de jour" for requesting political asylum. First, it was their involvement in the Tiananmen protests, requiring the U.S. not to send them back to certain arrest and imprisonment. When U.S. officials quickly determined few if any illegals from Changle County had ever been out of Fujian Province or engaged in any political activity, the rationale changed to family planning. Many were given asylum by arguing that they were being persecuted by family planning officials for wanting to have more than one child. The truth came out after they were given asylum and petitioned for their families to join them under a special visa category. We had families with 3, 4 or 5 kids come into the consulate for visas. As far as we could determine, all the illegal migrants the U.S. repatriated to Fujian suffered no more than a fine and perhaps brief detention.

Drug trafficking was a big problem. We worked with DEA in Hong Kong since, at that point, DEA did not have permission to open an office in the embassy in Beijing. As the U.S tightened up the drug trafficking routes through Thailand, they began to go north from Burma into Yunnan Province, across Guangxi, into Guangdong. The drug would be repackaged in Guangdong, often along the border with Hong Kong, and then shipped out through Hong Kong to the States or wherever. Drug trafficking, drug addiction became much more of a problem domestically for China. In Yunnan Province, AIDS became a problem. I used to tell people the drug tends to either fall off the truck or leak out of the pipelines as it goes through, and people were getting addicted. And they got AIDS from the needles, or drug addiction from smoking.We had problems developing cooperative relationships with the police. They wanted us to help. We were willing to help, but they were not very good at cooperating on a timely basis. In one particular case, we had good intelligence from Bangkok that a junk loaded with heroin was going to drop its cargo offshore in the Pearl River Estuary in Chinese waters, outside of Hong Kong, and that a Hong Kong junk that would come pick it up and take it into Hong Kong. We had the location and coordinates of the drop and the time. We told the police about it, and they said, "Okay. Thank you. We'll take care of it." Well, they may have taken care of it, but not in the right way. We never heard that they ever seized it, never confiscated it, as far as we know; and these were the kind of things that made it frustrating because we could have worked out a good relationship! But they were unwilling to cross the boundaries and cooperate internationally. Everything had to be checked out of Beijing.

Q: How were relations with Hong Kong at this time?

MARTIN: I left Guangzhou in 1996. And Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. So they were well on their track to reversion. The implementing aspects of the agreement between the UK and China had been carefully formulated. There was still some nervousness in Hong Kong as to what was going to happen after '97. People were still leaving, going abroad to Australia, Canada, the U.S., punching their ticket to get their insurance policy allowing them to get back if necessary. Once they had that, many came right back to Hong Kong to work and to live. But many people were still nervous. Subsequently, I think it's turned out remarkably well. There were many detail that had to be worked out between the two Hong Kong government and Chinese authorities - border controls, immigration, customs, cross border trucking between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, and issues of tariffs. But both parties were working through those logically and pragmatically, without political pressure. In the end, I think that the reversion was calm and peaceful.

Q: Did you have any human rights issues, Americans caught or American academics of Chinese ancestry arrested?

MARTIN: At that time, no. We had some Americans who came in and got into trouble. A number of political dissidents from Guangzhou were active. A couple of them had been in jail and had been released a year or so earlier. We had some contact with them. We tried to keep in touch with them, and find out what was happening, and what their position was. Most of them were under quite strict surveillance. One was an artist who had gone back to his artwork without too much interference. The other was not able to find a job so was having a difficult time living off his family and relatives. He subsequently was able to go to the States.A few Americans would drop by the consulate to say that they had special information that they wanted to share. Some was of use; most was pretty scurrilous, wild rumors that had no basis in fact. We had a couple people who tried to walk in and ask for asylum, which is always a problem. We tried to give them advice, but then tell them to go try their luck elsewhere. If they could get to Hong Kong, generally they were in a better position to get some assistance. But we couldn't do much for them in Guangzhou.

Q: You mentioned Nixon's visit. This, of course, would have been after he'd long since been president.

MARTIN: He came to China in the spring of 1993, April or May, 3 or 4 months after I arrived. That was his last visit as he died in 1994. I don't think he had ever been to Guangzhou. Certainly not during his famous first visit to China. In any case, he wanted to visit Guangzhou. We learned he planned to visit with a small team. His security "detail" was limited to one New Jersey State Policeman since he had given up his Secret Service protection. One secretary/assistant traveled with him. Also along on that China trip were a couple of his friends - Charles "Bebe" Rebozo, and Robert Abplanalp, and Raymond Price. So there were six altogether. When I heard they were coming, I communicated with his secretary and one of the first things I said was, "When you're here, I'd like very much to have President Nixon come and talk to the American community and the consulate community." The answer I received from his staff was, "Well, it's going to be difficult to do that. You know, he's somewhat elderly. He's not been in the best of health. It's the end of a long trip, etc. etc. So you shouldn't plan to do that." I said, "Okay, but it's too bad" since we didn't get many presidents coming to Guangzhou. He arrived on a chartered (Chinese Air Force owned) "United Airlines" plane. At the airport, he was met by the Governor's representative - not the governor - Foreign Affairs Office leaders, and me. The second thing he said, after he got off the plane and greeted me, was that he wanted to come meet the whole consulate staff, Chinese and American. I said, "Great!" I got on the radio as we were going back into town, and I said, "Try to get everybody together to line up in the driveway of the consulate building, and we'll have a chance to see him this afternoon about five o'clock." That was in a couple of hours.Driving into and through Guangzhou, I noted the Chinese treated him like a visiting emperor. They closed off all the streets, police blocking each intersection, so the motorcade whipped through town in about 15 minutes. He stayed at the White Swan Hotel, which was next door to the consulate. After resting a little in the presidential suite where he was staying, we walked the block to the consulate. The entire Consulate staff and as many from the American community as we could reach, were lined up in the driveway. After I introduced him, Nixon gave a few remarks. It was probably his Foreign Service post speech number 462 but I thought it was appropriate. The gist of his remarks were: You're a long way from home. People don't appreciate what you do back in the States. But I want to let you know that I know what you're doing, how much I appreciate what you're doing. It's important, etc. etc. It was just right. And then he said, " I would like to have a chance to meet all of you." Everyone lined up and walked through the line, getting a chance to shake his hand, and having a picture taken with the President. The Chinese staff thought they'd died and gone to heaven. This was probably the highlight of their consulate career. Afterwards, everybody had the picture of their shaking hands with Nixon on or over their desk. They talked about it for months. That night the governor of Guangdong Province gave Nixon a dinner at the White Swan. In typical Chinese fashion, before dinner, the guests of honor meet the host for short conversation. The chairs in the meeting room are arranged in a u-shape with the host and VIP in the middle and others arrayed in protocol order on either side. As we walked into the room, the governor greeted Nixon very warmly. I was right behind Nixon so I shook his hand. The governor sort of nodded. I'd been there about three months but the governor had been "too busy" to see me, even though I'd asked for an appointment several times. I mentioned that to Nixon on our way to the dinner. The first thing Nixon did when he was asked for his comments was to turn to me, then looking at the governor, said, "Governor, I wanted to let you know that Gene Martin here, Consul General Martin, is one of our best Foreign Service officers. He was sent here particularly because of the importance we attach to Guangzhou, to Guangdong, and it's very important that he work closely with you."Well, I thought the governor was going to fall down and kiss my feet. Whenever I needed to see him thereafter, I was able to, and he was always friendly. I said to the president afterwards "President Nixon, that was the most helpful thing you could do." And he said, "Well, it's my pleasure - always try to help!"

Q: From all account he always had problems with the Foreign Service. But essentially, the Foreign Service respected him because he knew his brief, he was very sharp.

MARTIN: That was the only time I met him personally but I had the sense he was attentive to what he was doing and the circumstance. He seemed aware of what we do, of the importance of the Foreign Service, of the importance of our representation overseas. I remember in the mid-1960s, when he was out of power, he traveled the world and regularly called on embassies and consulates for briefings. I met him casually in Hong Kong. I also heard he never forgot FSOs who were too busy to see him, as well as those who took the time to do so, when ambassadorial assignments were given.Even the last year of his life, he was still cognizant of the Foreign Service. He did the same thing for me in Shenzhen. We saw the party secretary and the mayor who also had been too busy to see me, and Nixon made the same comment, and received the same reaction.

Q: It's hard to visualize, but for the Chinese, Nixon really is a towering figure!

MARTIN: Absolutely! He is the one that cut through the Gordian knot and made relations possible. None of us could have.

Q: And I suppose many ascribe a certain amount of changes in China, because once that opened up all sorts of other things opened up too.

MARTIN: That's very true!The other thing interesting that evening, after that high point for me, was to watch the toasts at dinner. At the dinner table, sitting around in typical Chinese fashion, there's a plethora of toasts. One has to toast almost every course that comes, every dish. Nixon did not drink at that point. He told us at the table that Zhou En-lai had taught him the importance of how one makes the rounds of a dinner table coming back with still almost exactly the same amount of (fiery) Mao-tai rice wine in your glass as when you leave. They made the rounds of the Great Hall of the People with probably 1,500 or 2,000 people when Nixon visited, and he said, "Zhou En-lai and I came back, and we still had full glasses." Since he didn't drink in Guangzhou, Bebe Rebozo was his designated drinker. I watched incredulously during dinner. Just to begin, he would have a few beers, and then came the toasts. He would drink the toast for Nixon and then drink his own Mao-tai, followed by a couple more beers. The next dish came, two shots of Mao-tai, and a couple more beers. This went on through the full twelve course dinner. I thought to myself, "How long is he going to be able to stay with us at the table." Amazingly, he got up and walked away! How he did it, I don't know, but his face became redder and redder as the meal progressed. Somehow or another he made it through the dinner. It was a memorable evening.

Q: Did you have any other visitors there that stick out?

MARTIN: We had almost all the former Secretaries of State come through. Al Haig came through regularly as he was on the board of United Technologies which had Carrier Air Conditioning and Otis Elevator plants, in the province. He also visited on his own behalf as he is well known in China and keep current on developments. It was always useful to see him and keep in touch with him.Larry Eagleburger came through once. One vignette I recall was as we were coming out of the hotel to the car, my driver held the door for him on the right side, and he said, "No, no! You're the Consul General. You sit in the right seat." And he walked around and got in the other side of the car. I thought, "There's a guy with class!" That impressed me.George Shultz came to town and had a very successful visit. Henry Kissinger came to town. We saw him from time to time. I always felt sorry for the interpreter trying to understand his accent. The only one I didn't see during my assignment was Jim Baker, but he didn't have much of a connection with China, as I recall. Those were useful visits. Other than that, we didn't get many official visitors. We had a few Congressional Delegations (CODELs). Dick Gephardt came through with a fairly large delegation looking at why the U.S. should give China Most Favored Nation trading privileges. We were able to arrange a helicopter from one of the oil companies to fly them over the Pearl River Delta. They came back with their jaws dragging on the ground because they said they never realized how much development, and how much industry, and how much export oriented manufacturing there was going on in South China. From Hong Kong border all the way north to Guangzhou was a seamless stretch of one factory after another. It was a good way of demonstrating visually to them what was happening in South China.

Q: Were you able to observe the absorption of American-trained Chinese, the ones going to our best universities and coming back

MARTIN: That had not started yet. The first people that had gone overseas were in probably the early '80s. 1981 or '82 was about the first time scholars were allowed to go overseas to study. Most were government officials, who studied a couple years and then went back. Those who came for study on their own, either privately or with government sponsorship came later. By the time I was there, they'd only had about 10 years in the States. Many had not come back. I would say that of the half dozen I met, half of them were quite happy, half were most unhappy and I think, subsequently, went back to the States. The problem was that when they came, the Chinese didn't really know how to use them. Some were put back into the old bureaucratic system, which frustrated them, and made the people who had not had the opportunities that they'd had for study abroad resentful. And so they tended to suppress their new ideas, their different ideas, or they were left on their own to try to find out their own niche. Some were successful, but it was too early to start private businesses or research endeavors. Subsequently, many more have returned, and I think in the last five or six years it's been quite a flood.One returnee I met was working at the tourist bureau as an adjunct to the Foreign Affairs Office, promoting foreign investment. She seemed to be doing okay, but it was a big adjustment.

Q: At this time, were the secret police, or whatever, trying to frustrate or set up people? With your staff? Was this a concern?

MARTIN: The Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) is the counter intelligence ministry. We had some approaches in that regard. People would sidle up to our staff, or the spouses, on the street and would try to talk to them and befriend them. The staff was pretty attentive to that. There was never any kind of a concerted press as far as we could tell. We didn't have marine security guards in the consulate. We had White Swan hotel security guards who manned our booth at the hard line, rather like the fox watching the chicken coop. But we had a lower level of classification as well as a restricted area that was kept only for American cleared personnel. Generally, we felt fairly comfortable. Diplomatic security people in the department and the embassy were not quite so comfortable, but as far as we could tell, there were no penetrations that were evident or that we were able to determine. This leads into relationships with the embassy. Relationships between embassies and constituent posts vary considerably. I saw both sides as I subsequent was the DCM in the embassy in Beijing. I think when I was in Guangzhou, our relationships were really quite distant. We were believers in the old Cantonese saying - the mountains are high and the emperor is far away. The embassy didn't bother us very much and didn't ask us for much in return. We did our reporting. We did our consular work as was required. We had irregular visits from the embassy's leadership. The Consul General would come down periodically to talk to the consular folks. Commercial and public affairs officers visited periodically. The DCM came down, I would say, one and a half times - one time because he was on his way to Hong Kong, and he just stopped in overnight; and one time he came down for a specific visit to Guangzhou. The ambassador, Stapleton Roy initially, came just once, spent a couple days and made a couple of calls on officials such as the governor and mayor and met with the American business community. Jim Sasser, his successor, came down once. But that was all during my three and a half year tour.DCM Scott Hallford came to Fujian once, where I met him and traveled with him. We had a few department visitors, mostly on drug matters. The Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics Matters (INM in those days) came to Fujian. The Pacific Command Commander, then known as CINCPAC, visit was valuable as it gave me an opportunity to meet the PLA Guangzhou Military Region commander and officers with whom I had little contact. We didn't have a lot of official visitors but they generally were helpful in giving me access to a wider range of Chinese officials. One issue we had with the embassy was their desire to send their economic and political officers down to southern China to see what was happening. We'd get messages saying, "Joe Blow is coming down to your district to report on such and such a topic. And we'd say, "Well, wait a minute now. We did a report a month ago on the same subject. Is this really necessary? The way to have said it was to ask to do a joint reporting trip with us, so Embassy officers could get a different perspective."The only real contention we had with the embassy was at one point they sent in a generalized report saying, "This is what's happening in China." It was totally from the embassy perspective. So we sent in a report, which we probably should have cleared with them first, saying, "Well, from the south it looks different to us." We got our knuckles rapped for that. But generally, we didn't have much of a problem with the embassy. The relations were cordial, but distant. We'll get back into Embassy-Consulate relations later when I talk about my Beijing experience. At that time, the ambassador and I worked consciously to create much more of a sense of a unified mission. We brought the consulate people more frequently and regularly into discussions in the embassy, had them visit periodically, and held joint conferences and meeting so we all were more or less on the same song sheet.

Q: Before we leave Guangzhou, let's talk a little about the aftermath of the Vietnam War.

MARTIN: One of the interesting things that occurred while I was in Guangzhou from '93-'96 were Chinese discoveries of U.S. fighter crashes from the Vietnamese War in my consular district of southern China. Some of these planes had been shot down; others became lost over North Vietnam and crashed. Usually the JPRC (Joint Personnel Recovery Center) in Honolulu would send experts to excavate the crash sites. Others would come down from the embassy, and we usually sent somebody from the consulate. One site was in Guangxi Province, the province bordering Vietnam. Another time it was in Hainan - the island made more famous during the 2001 EP-3 incident. But the crash sites often were in remote, isolated areas that were difficult to reach, usually by hiking over the mountains and into the jungles to find these places.I did not go along on the site visits, but some of my staff did. The reporting that came out of those trips, in addition to finding the crash sites and occasionally some remnants of the crew, was interesting. There was a tremendous contrast with the rest of South China in terms of economic development and reforms and the standard of living. One of my colleagues observed that western Guangxi Province for all appearances could have been right out of the 19th century. Almost no change from traditional China. The only thing that had changed was a small karaoke parlor in one of the villages. No paved roads, no electricity, nothing, but they did have a karaoke machine, and that's what they did at nighttime. I guess that's progress in some respect, but it was illuminating because it helped us realize that what you see on the eastern coast and what you see in the urban parts of China really does not apply all the way across the country. There are many places where it's still very remote and very primitive.

Q: A question I'd like to ask before we leave this Guangzhou time. Could you characterize how you and your fellow officers perceived what was happening in China? Was this sort of exhilarating to see great changes, or was it one where you were looking at it and saying, "This is all fine, but there are systematic problems and maybe China's not moving a way we'd like to see? How did you all look at it?

MARTIN: I think most of us were quite optimistic in the sense that the changes were really quite dramatic. I will say that the social psyche or the people had a hard time keeping up with the economic changes, because in terms of social structure, in terms of their ability to operate in a rapidly changing society, it was difficult. So it was a little uneven in that sense. Driving capabilities, being able to handle urban life, being able to interrelate in a non-structured society was difficult for a lot of people. There were imbalances, there were disconnections within society but generally the progress was positive. People were optimistic about the future. They realized the problems. When asked about corruption, of some people above the law or not having any legal restrictions, one interlocutor sited the United States in the late 1800s when we had robber barons who operated outside the law. They could do what they wanted - the Rockefellers, the Vanderbilts, and others. He said, "We're going through the same stage now. After we get a critical mass of capital, we'll then start limiting and restricting what people can do." That may have been an excuse, but there was some validity to his comment, that you have to go through a certain stage to be able to develop the infrastructure before you can limit it. But I think corruption remains a serious millstone to sustainable development in China.

Q: There is this perception that people from various areas, the Chinese, people from the Levant, including the Lebanese, Palestinians, and Jews, have a predilection for business. Did you find this?

MARTIN: Oh, certainly. Of course, we were in Guangzhou, which was the home of the Cantonese who, along with the Shanghaiese, have been known for centuries as being good businessmen. But I think in general, the Chinese are innovative, aggressive and assertive in terms of business acumen. However, in China, as in every other country, you may have five or ten percent of the population who are good at business, and the rest have no particular business capabilities. So development has been quite uneven. Many people from the countryside were country bumpkins fighting to survive in the new society.

Q: What about the role of women? In rural areas, obviously women and men just worked in the fields. Did you see women moving into the business world?

MARTIN: Women were moving. Much of the migrant population was young women who worked in the foreign invested factoriemaking shoes, electronics, clothes. A Nike factory may have 3,000 young women between the ages of 18 and 21 and maybe 50 men. This obviously caused all sorts of social problems, as you can imagine.In addition to the contract workers from rural areas of China's interior who came to the coast to work in the factories, you also had many local women who seemed to be doing much better. Although, despite Mao's statement that women hold up half the sky, they don't get half the cake. They do more than half the work, but they don't get the rewards. Even when women are graduated first in their class academically, men usually get the best jobs first. That's changing, but women still have a tough time. In state-owned enterprises downsizing, the men tend to be kept on while women are the first ones to be laid off. But I think educated women do well. Two thirds of our consulate employees were women who were extremely capable people for the most part. Several of them had good English capability. Some were recruited for jobs in Hong Kong because their English was better than that of native Hong Kong school leavers, whose English was not as good.

Q: After Guangzhou, in 1996, you were off to the Philippines. What were you doing there?

MARTIN: I went to the Philippines as the DCM. Coming up on the end of my tour in Guangzhou in the summer of '96, I noted there were two DCM-ships opening that summer. One was in Seoul, and one was in Manila. Having been in Manila, I thought maybe it'd be worthwhile taking a look at something new, although Manila was obviously of interest. I went to Seoul and had a good interview with Ambassador James Laney. I did not get that job which is probably just as well since I did not have any background in Korea, nor the language. I got the Manila job with John Negroponte instead. I fit right back into Manila very easily and was there from 1996 until 1999.

Q: What was the situation when you got to Manila in '96?

MARTIN: The situation had changed dramatically. I had left in mid-1990, six months after the December 1989 coup attempt; a couple weeks after the Baguio earthquake, which had destroyed much of the hill station of Baguio and other towns in northern Luzon; and a year before Mount Pinatubo, which had buried much of Zambales Province, Clark Air Base and parts of Subic under ash and lahar. A year later, in 1992, the Philippine senate had voted to not renew the base agreement. The U.S. Air Force had actually evacuated Clark because of the volcano, but Subic was closed in the fall of '92, leaving no U.S. military presence in the Philippines except for the attaches and JUSMAG in the Embassy. So when I came back in '96, it was really quite a different situation.

Q: I take it, in a way, certainly from the diplomatic perspective, this must have been a relief, wasn't it?

MARTIN: My personal belief was that our bases had tipped the balance of U.S.-Philippine bilateral relations totally out of alignment. Everything we did diplomatically, economically or culturally was seen as being in support of our security military presence. Our bilateral relations were dominated by the bases. So in many ways I think it was useful that the bases left. The navy, of course, complained that it might as well scuttle the fleet and fall back to San Diego because it would never be able to operate in the western Pacific again. Fortunately, it found a way to do so. It is a little bit more complicated, and the sailors, I think, all missed Olongapo liberty; but other than that, the U.S. Navy has been able to survive in the Pacific. The post-9/11 U.S. military return to the Philippines and its counter-terrorism activities is a whole different story.

Q: But those are limited so it's not the same thing.

MARTIN: The troops are not permanently based in the Philippines.When I returned to the Philippines in 1996, the mood of the country was very different from when I left in the summer of 1990. At that time, six months after the coup attempt in late '89, Cory Aquino was still president, and the economic outlook and the country's mood was quite pessimistic. There was a sense that Cory, despite being a personable and charismatic leader, did not have a vision or a program for the country, which everybody could support.When I came back in '96, Fidel "Eddie" Ramos had been elected president in 1992 and his leadership and programs had turned the country around in so many ways. There was a dynamism, optimism, and sense of progress; of serious problems being addressed that had not been in the Philippines before. So it was a more positive atmosphere.The problems were still there. A tremendous number of people still had to go overseas, as migrant workers, to earn a living. The population still continued to boom, without a corresponding increase in job opportunities. Environmental degradation of the country proceeded, as people cut down what little forests were left in the country.But in general, people felt the Philippines was beginning to get its act together. It was doing much better in terms of economic growth, up to around three something percent a year, certainly better than negative growth. The political structure, of course, had not changed very much as the oligarchs still ran the country.Q: What is your impression of the Philippine Congress?

MARTIN: The Congress continued to be a colorful institution. Members are great at seeking publicity through hearings on nearly any subject. There's never a shortage of laws. The problem is that the country is "overlawed" but the laws are not enforced. Senators are elected nationwide. So all 24 of them have the same nationwide constituency as the president, and feel that they are as good as, if not better than, the president. Elections are really a popularity contest. People with national name recognition tend to get elected. They are either from old, well-known families or media, sports or film stars. It would be like Katie Couric, Diane Sawyer, or Michael Jordan running for the Senate because everybody knows who they are and would vote for them.The House of Representatives tends to be parochial. Members are influential figures in their provinces or municipalities, and focus on getting the pork for their districts. Many are from the old families that have been the politicians in the Philippines for decades, if not centuries. You look back at the Philippine-American War, back in the early 1900s, and some of the families that were involved in politics a hundred years ago are still in politics.

Q: Did you see any change or dent in the oligarchy of these old names, these families

MARTIN: I think the major change is the growth of the Filipino-Chinese oligarchs. While the Overseas Chinese, mostly from Fujian Province, have long been commercially active, since independence they have captured much of the retail commercial market. The fastest growing sector of the economy seems to be shopping malls, owned by the Sy family, which tap into the massive amount of money remitted by the Filipino diaspora. There is a growing middle class which is increasingly important politically and economically. But it is too small to have much of an impact beyond day-to-day business. The problem, I think, is the great mass of poor people, both in rural areas as well as in the cities, and the rapid population growth. USAID has tried to provide family planning, counseling, advice and equipment, but the strong Catholic Church in the Philippines limits any kind of family planning.

Q: As DCM, you're usually stuck with running the embassy, and Manila has always been, next to Mexico City, one of the three or four largest embassies. Had the departure of the military changed this at all, or was this still a huge embassy?

MARTIN: The Embassy had changed from its heyday in the 1950s and 1960s. When I was there in the late '80s, the embassy probably had over 400 Americans, which was may not have been the largest in the world. I think Cairo was far larger because of an AID presence. When I went back, we had shrunk probably to about 60 percent of that size, somewhere around 200 at most. Part of the reason was military, but mainly it was because of the security situation, the pollution, and the living environment. In the '50s, many agencies put their regional offices and people in Manila because it was an English speaking country and the life style was good and inexpensive. This had all changed by the late '70s and early '80s. The communist insurgency caused the security situation to deteriorate, the cost of living went up, the housing standards went down, and pollution, traffic, and other urban ills got worse. Many regional offices moved to Singapore or Bangkok mainly for security reasons.So when I went back in '96, the size of the embassy was much smaller than it had been. The AID presence had shrunk considerably, from over 70 some Americans to somewhere around 20. The Veterans Affairs was still there. The military was smaller. The JUSMAG (we had quite a large JUSMAG previously) had shrunk since our FMS (Foreign Military Sales) relationships with the Philippines had shrunk as well after the bases left. As a result, we ended up with an excess of facilities. U.S. government owned property included the Chancery Compound with the Annex office building; the Seafront Compound, which contained staff apartments and townhouses, administrative offices, the club, pool, and other sports facilities, and a few other sites such as the military cemetery (the largest abroad). One of the main things that I worked on during my three years was to try to rationalize the offices we had, downsize excess facilities and move offices from commercial rentals into government owned property. USAID, the commercial and agricultural sections and the USIS library were in commercial office space. Unfortunately, those agencies and their Washington headquarters opposed moving into the Seafront compound, so the government continued to pay premium rents while owned property was underutilized.

Q: First let's talk about the ambassador, John Negroponte. How did he operate, and how did he fit into the Philippine context?

MARTIN: John fit in well. Of course, he'd had Latin American experience, in Honduras as well as in Mexico and many people consider that the Philippines to be Asia's only Latin American country. As you know, the Philippines was a colony of Mexico, not of Spain, until Mexican independence in the early 1800s. In many ways, what John had experienced in Mexico was replicated in Manila, with many similar personalities. But John and my tours overlapped only about a month. I arrived in July and he left in August. In fact, I shortened my home leave in order to arrive early as John was due to leave.I was chargï¿½ for about a month and a half before Tom Hubbard arrived and presented his credentials. Tom came from being the principal deputy assistant secretary in East Asian Affairs and had considerable East Asian experience, mostly in Northeast Asia but also as DCM in Kuala Lumpur and as DCM in Manila. So he, too, was a returnee. In fact, he and I overlapped in Manila in 1990 by a month. He left in '93 and came back in '96, so had been away only about three years. Both of us had Philippine experience, which was very useful, because we both were able to start right up without a learning curve.

Q: How were relations at this point? Our military was out and it would seem that the fact that we had withdrawn would have given sort of ammunition to the nationalists who may have felt they were on a roll. Did this cause any dislocation in our relationships?

MARTIN: No. In fact, the relationship was much better in my view because it had removed the burr under the saddle. The nationalists were much quieter. There wasn't really anything to attack anymore; and much to my pleasure, the press and the nationalists could no longer blame the Americans for everything that was going on, as was their wont previously. Occasionally old habits resurfaced but now they had to look to their own devices, structures, and institutions for a reason as to why things were not doing so well. But, as I said, the atmosphere was much more optimistic than when I had left, because Eddy Ramos had really turned the country around. He had a vision, a program and a plan that seemed to be working. People were more optimistic and happier. There was more foreign investment. There was more employment. Officials seemed to be focusing on national issues of poor infrastructure, air pollution, trash collection, and so forth.

Q: Was there, in your estimation, a pronounced diminution in the interests in the United States in what happens to the Philippines?

MARTIN: Very much so. We were very much off in left field or in outer space in many ways. We had few visitors; an occasional congressman or Hill staffer came by; Executive Branch policy-makers seldom came to the Philippines. CINCPAC was about the only real high-level visitor we'd get and then about once a year. The military still maintained a grudge about the Philippines. They said, "You threw us out, so we're not going do anything for you." There was not a lot of contact back and forth.One of the problems, of course, was that we did not have a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). So the military really couldn't send soldiers into the country without some legal safeguards. However, Ramos and the military were beginning to realize the AFP's skills and capabilities were being lost without joint exercises. Tom Hubbard and I spent much of our tours working on what we called a Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), a SOFA-like agreement. We finally were able to complete it in 1999 before I left. It took a lot of effort and time to work through the old issues. Many Filipinos, not just the nationalists, were concerned about Americans coming in again through the back door to reestablish the bases and the old dependent if not colonial relationship. The frustration of working in the Philippines is high because one constantly has to exorcise these old ghosts and mindsets, which never are very far away. We have had a complex relationship over the last century with the Philippines. We came in to help rid them of the Spanish but stayed to steal their revolution by double crossing them. We even paid Spain to buy the Philippines after the Spanish-American War. These historical colonial legacies still remain and irritate our relationship, even though I think it's better without the military security relationship that we had during the bases era.

Q: Were we trying to set a new tone? Was this something you and the ambassador were working on? And if you were, how would you go about it?

MARTIN: Our tone was that we now had a normal relationship with the Philippines, on a more even level without the bases and security issues weighing down one end of the relationship. Our focus was on economic development, on social programs. USAID was still active. We tried to get as much money as we could out of AID for the Philippine program. We still had an active economic relationship. American investment had gone up considerably. We were still the largest investor in the Philippines, mostly from our historical legacy, and we worked on various ways to increase U.S. investment by improving the investment climate. We spent time with the (Philippine) Congress working on legislation to improve the tax base for investors, improve the tariff bases, customs relationships, regulatory system etc.The consular relationship continued to be a positive yet nettlesome problem. Manila is one of the major visa mills of East Asia in terms of visas - controversial, emotional, unrelenting.

Q: I would imagine this would be exacerbated by almost a panicky feeling. I mean the people who were dependent on American military would say, "Now it's time to get the family out!"

MARTIN: That had pretty much dissipated by the time I returned in 1996 but I don't think it had been a big issue. There was some concern, obviously, right as the bases were closing. People did not know what was going to happen. Olongapo was a shadow of its former self. The Philippine government had taken over the former bases and actually had done quite well with Subic. Olongapo mayor Dick Gordon had become the chairman of the Subic Bay Special Economic Zone. Fed Ex had established its Asian hub at the Cubi Air Strip, and was doing quite well. A number of companies had opened export processing operations - Acer Computers from Taiwan, Thomson communications from France, several Japanese companies. Clark air field was looking to do the same sort of thing but Clark was a very different situation, and did not get off the ground as well as Subic had. The situation has corroded around the edges since then, but I think that they were doing quite well at that particular juncture. The consular problem was that almost every Filipino has a relative of some degree in the States, and they all want to visit them. The problem of non-returnees was apocryphal in many ways, and the problem we had was being able to help the consular officers treat everybody in a patient and polite way. This was difficult sometimes with the pressure, and endless lines of applicants, and the willingness of applicants to stretch the truth if not out and out lie in order to get a visa.

Q: One of the problems that was certainly apparent during the Marcos regime was how many of the officers of the embassy were absorbed into the higher reaches of Philippine society, which left them open to pressures, and temptations.

MARTIN: True but consular officers were wined and dined less than they perhaps had been previously or in other consular posts in which I have been. The leadership of the consular section was very much incorporated into the society and had a social life. Fortunately while I was there, we had a stolid, honest, and upright Consul General, Kevin Herbert, who made a big difference. Kevin was terrific. He understood all the pitfalls, and he understood he was following in the footsteps of previous Consuls General who had not finished their tours. The media was always willing to carry stories of dissatisfied visa applicants. Every time somebody was treated more abruptly or impatiently than they thought they warranted, the press would have a field day, saying, "The Americans are insulting and denigrating Filipinos, blah, blah, blah." And then we had to do damage control. But generally, the consular section worked very well under a great deal of pressure and a tremendous workload. We were constantly trying to find ways in which we could improve the operation, to streamline it, to make it more efficient. At one point, we had problems with people cutting the line, and getting around others. At another time, we had a squatter village outside the consulate, a line of applicants two blocks down the road. Some people were in line two or three days, waiting to get in. Fortunately, we were able to change it to an appointment system, which seemed to work out. The problem with the appointment system was that some appointments were three to six weeks out. That made it difficult for people who came up with last minute needs to travel, but these seemed to be worked out over time.

Q: When one looks at Asia, the Philippines sort of stands off to one side. They don't seem to be integrated with the rest of Southeast Asia. Everyone talks about Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand but not the Philippines as they just don't seem to get involved.

MARTIN: When I was there the first time in the 1980s, I used to joke that psychologically, the Philippines was not in Asia, but about 20 miles off of Catalina Island. They knew more about California politics and what was going on in California than they knew what was going on in Indonesia or Malaysia. And they cared not a wit about what was happening in their Asian neighbors. They did not feel a part of the region. This had changed by my second tour. Partly, it was due to Ramos' policies of closer integration with ASEAN; partly it was our withdrawal from the bases, and partly it was just that they realized that they had to begin to join and participate in ASEAN and the rest of Asia. They were much more engaged in, a part of and active in Southeast Asian activities, diplomacy, regional issues. Their focus on the Asia-Pacific region was all for the better.

Q: APEC - the Clinton administration paid quite a bit of attention to this, didn't they?

MARTIN: Very much so. President Clinton was the one that made it a summit. It had started out as a series of meetings at the ministerial level, until Seattle where Clinton elevated it to a meeting of the leaders of the economies, as the participants were called, since Taiwan and Hong Kong were members and could not be called countries. It was Manila's turn to host the annual meeting in 1996. We had quite a circus.

Q: How did it go?

MARTIN: It was successful in the sense that the meetings came off, and the participants seemed to have obtained the results they wanted. Participating "economies" had grown to the point where, when it was in Manila, there were 18 members. It's subsequently grown, I think, to 21 as they've added a few more. But it was a big, big show! In fact, one of the reasons I came out early, in July, was to start planning for the November APEC meetings. August, September, and October were focused on APEC more than anything else. We had a lot of TDY (temporary duty) people coming in to help. Even with a large embassy like Manila, we still needed a considerable number of TDY people to help us with administrative details and to coordinate support facilities. I was the overall control officer for the meetings. I was also the president's control officer, which made it difficult. It was a bad choice being both, because once the advance team arrived, I had to focus almost totally on the president's schedule, rather than the overall APEC schedule. So I ended up doing both. But things went smoothly. We had the president, Mrs. Clinton, four cabinet officers, and several hundred others from Washington. It was quite an operation. But it worked out well. The embassy staff turned to and did a good job with everybody pulling together and getting things organized. Almost all other, normal, work in the embassy stopped, particularly for the last two weeks before and the week of. The Filipinos did a good job. They were good hosts. They had a number of events which were rather humorous. They held the leaders' meeting at Subic so as to show off the Subic Economic Zone. This had started in Seattle, when they had the meetings in Seattle, and then Clinton had the leaders' meeting a boat trip away on one of the islands in the sound. Since then, hosts have arranged a remote location for the leaders' meetings. Flying up to Subic and back got complicated as it required us to establish and staff two operations centers, two control rooms, and all that. But it did work out, and I think it was quite successful. One of the things that the president did was to come to the embassy and meet the Embassy staff in the ballroom of the Chancery. That gave all those working behind the scenes a chance to at least see him. Hillary Clinton came with him but stayed only about 13 hours before heading for Australia. She spoke to an audience of about 13,000 women from all over the Philippines, the largest foreign group she had addressed at the time. Presidential trips are unique events in an FSO's career. I am always amazed at how imperial our leadership has become on these trips. They take everything but the kitchen sink, and maybe that too! Actually, I didn't notice a food taster but there may have been one in the crowd, particularly after Bush 41's stomach upset in Japan. The White House Communications Agency and Secret Service takes over the hotel for days if not weeks in advance of the President's arrival. And there is always the advance team, and the pre-advance, and the pre-pre-advance. It goes on forever, and never quite ends. But of all the visits I've done, the Manila APEC visit was not too bad. It was a lot of work and endless detail, but it worked out fairly well.

Q: What was your impression of President Ramos the time you were there, of how he operated?

MARTIN: He was hands-on, very much of a commander given his military background. He assembled a good staff who reported to him, enabling him to keep his fingers on the pulses of the nation. Personally it was nice, because during my first tour in Manila, as the pol/mil officer, I had known Ramos when he was the chief of staff and then defense secretary. The first time I ran into Ramos after my return, he said, "Well Gene, welcome back! It's nice to see you again!" To have the president of the country say that was a good way to start one's assignment. I had very good access to the palace - not to him all the time, obviously - but to his staff. That certainly helped doing the APEC planning the first few months, and it continued through the rest of his term. The Department of Foreign Affairs was also helpful. Many people with whom I had worked previously were still there, in higher positions, having moved up from the assistant secretary to the undersecretary level. Such personal contacts are always valuable. Ramos' protocol chief, who had been in the Defense Department when I was there the first time, was now his private social secretary at the palace. It proved the importance of making and keeping personal relationships with counterparts.I think Ramos was an effective president because he set the tone. He had a sense of direction, a sense of a mission and what his goals were, and he communicated this well. A number of things he did got a little over the top but I understood his motives. One was the 100th anniversary of the Philippine Declaration of Independence from Spain in 1898. He wanted to highlight that the Philippines had been the first republic in East Asia, despite our having moved in behind Spain for another 48 years. So Ramos planned a big centennial celebration, and spent a lot of money, which subsequently turned out to be riddled with corruption. They created a centennial village at Clark Air Base, a whole community in which different countries put up pavilions to show the history of their bilateral relations with the Philippines. We participated in many of the centennial activities including quite a successful pavilion at Clark.

Q: Were there any residual Marcos groups sitting around pouting or being a problem?

MARTIN: When I was in Manila the first time, we used to talk in biblical terms about the earthquake, fire, and pestilence. Shortly before I left, the Baguio earthquake occurred. The year after I left, we had the fire when Mount Pinatubo erupted. And when I came back, the pestilence had returned in the form of Imelda Marcos. We used to joke that the Philippines had to face all these biblical catastrophes. Imelda was certainly around. She had been elected to the House of Representatives, and was very visible around town with all of her jewelry, but at the same time saying how poor she was, and how difficult life was now. There were still a few Marcos's kids around. I did go up to Marcos' home province of Ilocos Norte where she kept Ferdinand's body under glass. She had refused to bury Ferdinand when she brought his body back from Hawaii because she wanted to have a state funeral and bury him in the national cemetery, the Manila counterpart of Arlington Cemetery. The government had refused her wish as it did not want to create a rallying point and monument for Marcos supporters. So Imelda built a mausoleum in his home province where his body was on display. It was quite a bizarre, morbid monument. I think she may have copied the mausoleums of Lenin, Mao and Ho Chi Min.The surviving Marcos family members continued to dominate Ilocos Norte politics. Daughter Imee was a Congresswoman, son Bongbong (Ferdinand, Jr.) was Governor, and various members of her family, the Romualdezes, also were still active in politics. But other than making sure that none of the court cases against them succeeded, and the hunt for their hidden wealth was obstructed, they weren't a big political factor anymore. The country had moved on beyond that.

Q: How about Cory Aquino? Was she a factor in all this?

MARTIN: Cory was still active, more in society than in politics. She had supported Ramos' run for president and continued to be a supporter of his until his last year in office (1998) when she took a lead in opposing his effort to change the constitution so he could have a second term. Other than that, she was not active politically.

Q: The man who succeeded Ramos, wasn't he a movie star

MARTIN: Joseph Estrada was a movie star. He liked to say that he was the Philippine version of Ronald Reagan. He was a very colorful character.

Q: Was he on the scene when you were there?

MARTIN: He was the Vice President during the Ramos administration. In the Philippines, like California and perhaps a few other states, the president and the vice president are elected individually, not on a single party ticket. So Estrada was of a different party than Ramos, and they did not spend much time together. Nor did he spend a lot of time on government. He had quite a colorful life. Dr. Loi [Dr. Luisa "Loi" Ejercito Estrada] was his first wife (or "Tai tai," as the Chinese would call the number one wife), and then he had several mistresses in different houses around town. He was doing quite well financially from various uncertain sources and was quite a man about town. He was also, officially, in charge of the anticrime task force. The crime situation in the Philippines was quite bad, particularly against the Chinese. Chinese residents, usually wealthy businessmen, were frequently kidnapped and all too often killed after the ransom was paid. Many people believed, I think with some validity, that much of the crime, much of the kidnapping, was being carried out by off duty or former policemen and soldiers. So there was an unusual connection with those charged with providing security. This affected investment from overseas and mainland Chinese who weren't about to come invest in the Philippines. We had good friends in Hong Kong who would not come visit us in Manila because of the crime situation.Estrada, whose nickname was "Erap," the reverse of "pare" (which means the masses or the people), had built his movie image as a man of the masses. His movies were of a swashbuckling good guy who always defeated the bad guys, usually with his fists or other physical means. He might be compared to John Wayne or Clint Eastwood characters. He didn't do much as vice president, but he did run for president in 1998 and won.

Q: How was our reporting on Estrada? Was it reserved? Or were we saying, "Oh, my God?

MARTIN: I think a little of both. We kept in touch with him. I saw him from time to time. Tom and I both visited with him. Initially, he was a little cool to us because he didn't want to be seen as too close to the Americans. But as he began to run for president, he reached out and invited us to dinner several times, and wanted to get together. One of his aides keep in pretty close touch to us so that we knew what he was doing and we had a channel to communicate with him. We reported on what he was doing but initially, nobody thought he had a chance of winning. As we got closer to the election, it looked like he had a better chance, and in fact, he did win.

Q: You were still there when he came into office.

MARTIN: Oh, yes.

Q: Yes. Did we see this as not signifying good things for the Philippines? How did business people view him?

MARTIN: I think we all were a little dubious as to what sort of an administration he'd have; whether or not this was going to be something that was going to continue the upward track that Ramos had initiated. We'd been quite pleased with Ramos. He had done well until toward the end of his term when he explored the idea of staying on for a second term. Under the 1987 post-Marcos Philippine constitution, presidents are limited to one six-year term. So they're not allowed to run again sequentially.There were a lot of rumors around town that Ramos wanted to run again, that maybe there would be a coup that would allow him to do it, that he would try to force through a constitutional amendment that would allow a second term, etc. The active Manila rumor mill worked overtime. Cory Aquino and Cardinal Sin got involved and held big rallies against Ramos. So there was a political split there (although Cardinal Sin had opposed Ramos' election in 1992 because Ramos was Methodist not Catholic). The rallies caused a lot of heat and emotion around town. My assessment is that Ramos probably did toy with the idea of running again by amending the constitution. I don't think he ever toyed with the idea of a coup, but his military background, his involvement in the overthrow of Marcos, kept many people on edge. This did not help the investment climate, particularly right after the 1997 Southeast Asian financial crisis. The Philippines was not as badly affected by the crisis as neighbors Thailand and Indonesia or South Korea but the economic takeoff Ramos' had helped begin slowed. One comment was that the Philippine takeoff had not gained much altitude so the landing was not as hard as others who had been flying higher. In the end, Ramos wisely backed off from his effort to stay in office, the election was held, and Estrada was elected. But Cory and Ramos had come to loggerheads and the bad blood has lasted.

Q: How did we respond to the Estrada inauguration? Were we reserved? Who went? Were we saying, "Okay. He's been elected. Let's really try to work with this guy and hope he'll be on the right track." Or was it a matter of sitting back and saying, "Well, they elected him, and let's see how it goes," and "We're an observer."

MARTIN: We were forward leaning. We said, "Let's work with him. Let's see if we can do it. We figured it would be a big change from Ramos, as it was. He was a bit of an unknown even though we'd been in touch with him. He told us he wanted to have good relations with us, and was anxious to work closely with the embassy and the U.S. We were not sure how it was going to work out, but we were willing to give him a chance and work as closely as we could.

Q: How did we view the insurgency? There were various insurgencies, weren't there?

MARTIN: Oh, yes, almost as many as Burma, not quite! Ramos had reached a peace agreement with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in Mindanao, headed by Nur Misuari. That rebellion had been going on for many years, and the 1996 agreement raised hopes the conflict would be resolved. In fact, the second month I was there, in September of 1996, I was still the chargï¿½, so attended the peace agreement signing at Malacaï¿½ang Palace. The peace agreement called for the MNLF to end its revolt and for Nur Misuari to became the governor of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), consisting of several provinces in Mindanao. The agreement provided for a four-year program to set up this autonomous area in which the Muslims would begin to run some of their own internal affairs, begin to improve the livelihood of their people and provide alternate employment for the former in MNLF fighters. USAID was quite involved. We spent some time down in Mindanao, starting new agricultural and livelihood programs for the former combatants. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) a more religiously oriented splinter group of the MNLF, refused to go along with the peace agreement that Misuari had negotiated with the government and continued to conduct operations. In addition to that, the extremist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which we now know a lot more about, was holed up on Basilan Island, off of Zamboanga. They weren't as active in my early days, but subsequently, they became violent bandits who kidnapped people for ransom. In addition, remnants of the New People's Army (NPA) of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) continued to operate in a number of provinces but was much less a threat to the government than it had been during Marcos' years. CPP leaders were still running the NPA from exile in the Netherlands but internal splits and purges had reduced the New People's Army to a much smaller group kept alive by banditry and revolutionary "taxes.

Q: Did we see any connections with terrorist groups anywhere else?

MARTIN: Oh, there were indeed! Ramzi Yousef and others plotted in December 1994 to blow up American jumbo planes across the Pacific. They had a trial run in which a plotter took a Philippine Airlines flight from Manila to Cebu, planted a bomb under a seat before getting off in Cebu, and the plane went on to Japan. The bomb exploded over Okinawa, killing the passenger in the seat and blowing a hole in the side of the plane. Fortunately, the plane was able to land in Okinawa without crashing. The Philippine police did some good work investigating the plot, and tracked down the plotters. Ramzi Yousef escaped to Pakistan, but Pakistan eventually turned him over to us, and he's now in jail here. But they had quite a cell going on in the Philippines. Osama bin Laden's brother Khalifa lived in Mindanao for a while, married a Filipina and had a family there so came in and out periodically. So there were a lot of connections. After Desert Storm, the first war against Iraq, two Iraqi "diplomats" tried to bomb the USIS library. However, the bomb exploded early, killing one bomber and wounding the other. Despite our effort to have access to the other bomber, the Philippine government expelled him. The terrorist threat remained during my tour, with the ambassador and me receiving enhances security protection. I found the protection understandable but not very logical. Tom Hubbard and my official cars were heavily armored black Cadillac. I often told the RSO (Regional Security Officer) at the Embassy that terrorists had a 50% chance of getting one of us since these were the only two black Cadillacs in the country. The New Zealand ambassador offered to sell me his armored gray Mercedes, which blended beautifully into the Manila scene, for a reasonable price. The RSO did not agree since, although the car had been armored by the same company used by the State Department's Diplomatic Security (DS), it had not been done under a DS contract. So Tom and my black limousines continued to stand out in Manila traffic with our Philippine National Police escort in the front seat. On weekends, I periodically drove our own car to church or shopping without the escort.

Q: With this stream of people going to the United States, was there a strong Philippine lobby in the United States, like the Greek lobby, and obviously the Jewish lobby? I just don't hear about the Philippine lobby.

MARTIN: No. Part of the reason, and I don't say this in a pejorative sense, is that Filipino society is a fractured society. They don't agree with each other much of the time, and the Philippine-American community in the States tends to be broken down along provincial or local lines. So you have the Cebuanos from Cebu; you have the people from Cavite; you have the Ilocanos from northern Luzon. They get along in a general sense, but they don't talk or work together. In fact, there are often separate associations of people from the same province or university because "everyone wants to be in charge" and not join a group headed by someone else. So the Philippine community tends to be fragmented and doesn't come together to exert influence. I think one of the things that they've tried to do recently is to try to establish coalitions between various components of the Philippine community and become more politically involved, because they are a very large community. They could be quite powerful if they could work together. But this is the problem in the Philippines, of course - that they've never really work together, never seem able to coalesce behind one program, one idea, one leader and get their work teams together. One issue that we did spend a lot of time on was veterans' benefits. There were many Philippine veterans, of course, who fought with us during World War II and before. They felt, and I think correctly, that the U.S. government discriminated against them after the war because they were given 50 cents on the dollar - U.S. army veterans received a dollar in benefits, the Philippine veterans got 50 cents. The government's logic was that the Philippine cost of living was lower than that in the U.S. and since the exchange rate after the war was 2 pesos per dollar, a 50% benefit would not be out of line in terms of the standard of living in the Philippines. But it was very unfair, particularly since many of the veterans were given the right to move to the U.S. but were still limited to the 50% benefit. The Embassy received a lot of pressure to persuade the U.S. Congress to revise the benefits to give Filipino veterans equal rights. The only (U.S.) Department of Veterans Affairs office overseas was in Manila in the embassy. It distributed millions of dollars each month in veterans benefit checks as well as ran a VA clinic for the veterans and dependents. It seems fair to me to give Filipino veterans living in the U.S. equal VA benefits, particularly since there are fewer of them every year.We had a big American cemetery in Manila, the largest overseas cemetery run by the American Battle Monuments Commission [ABMC]. It's a beautiful cemetery, but that took a lot of work. There were a number of internal labor and squatter problems which I dealt with. In the South China Sea, the Philippine government in 1995 suddenly discovered that the Chinese had put up what the Chinese call fishing shelters on Mischief Reef in the Spratly Island chain. While I was there, the Chinese had "repaired" the fishing shelter, which had previously been constructed out of cardboard and lumber. Now it was a solid cement foundation with a helicopter port on top and what looked like fortifications on the corners. The Philippines got very exercised about that. We supported their effort to resolve the issues in the ASEAN regional forum but made it clear we did not consider the Spratly Islands to be within the boundaries or definition of "metropolitan Philippines" as described in our Mutual Defense Treaty. Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-California) came for a visit and strongly supported the Philippine position against China. He asked the embassy to arrange for him to go scuba diving in the Spratly Islands. We said we had no facilities to be able to do that. He was able to finagle his way onto a Philippine Air Force C-130, which flew circles around Mischief Reef and some of the other sandbars while he took pictures to make his political point. Environmental degradation was a continuing problem. The Peace Corps, which had been in the Philippines for many years, worked with USAID on coastal resource management, trying to improve the fisheries, cut down on dynamite fishing (that is a problem in the Philippines) and educate fishing communities on sustainable fishing techniques.We had a Peace Corps volunteer (PCV) who was killed. He just happened to be on a fully loaded jeepney which was stopped by bandits - essentially a few local thugs that wanted to rob the passengers. The PCV and other passengers were lined up along the side of the road, and shot. So the volunteer was one of eight or nine people killed, including women and children. They caught the killers and sentenced them after a lengthy trial, but it brought back memories of the concerns the embassy had during my first tour in the Philippines over threats to PCVs from communist insurgents which resulted in all PCVs being forced to leave the country. Fortunately the quick identification and arrest of these killers indicated it was only a badly handled robbery.

Q: Were there any other issues that you were involved with there?

MARTIN: As you noted earlier, a DCM's job is generally to run the embassy, particularly a large one. I took that as my primary duty but Tom Hubbard made sure I was included in much of what he did. I joined him on many of his calls and sat in on his meetings with visitors. But I spent much of my time keeping in touch with the diverse offices within the embassy. I preferred the "walk about" management style and tried to visit every embassy office at least once a month. I made it a point to know where people worked, what they were doing and how their morale was. I was a frequent visitor to the consular section where most of our first tour Junior Officers (JOs) were assigned. They were the public face of the Embassy and their moods and attitudes made a big difference on how the embassy was perceived by the public. Manila is such a visa factory with constant pressures on officers to make numerous, quick decisions that JOs often became cynical and negative about the Philippines. To counter that, I organized quarterly evening sessions for JOs (and others if interested) on other aspects of the Philippines - history, culture, literature, opinions, etc. I believe this helped officers get a bigger picture of their environs and perhaps reduce the frustrations of an endless stream of visa applicants. As this was my second tour in Manila, I was fortunate to have numerous contacts in the Filipino community and government who included my wife and me in social events; at times too many. We found ourselves included in many evening events attended mostly by ambassadors. This gave me an opportunity to liaise with the diplomatic corps, which often approached the U.S. embassy for information as we generally had more substantive access and resources to track developments. However, I found even much smaller diplomatic missions had insights on personalities and events which we did not. I focused on maintaining contacts with the Chinese Embassy, mostly from personal interest but also because China was becoming a much more active player in Southeast Asia and its younger, more outgoing diplomats were more engaged with Filipino society and media. One final soiree before I left at the end of my assignment was off the charts. When President Estrada came to the Embassy's 4th of July party, I mentioned that I was leaving the following week. He immediately said I should let him give me a farewell dinner. I thanked him for his kind offer but said all my evenings were already committed, including a dinner Ambassador Hubbard planned to give me the day before I left. Shortly after he left the reception, an aide called back to say the President wanted the ambassador's dinner moved to Malacaï¿½ang Palace. Obviously, Tom Hubbard conceded to the president's request. The palace then invited many of the senior officers of the embassy as well as most of the cabinet officials. The evening turned out to be almost on the level of a state dinner, with musicians, singers, dancers, speeches, etc. I was seated at the president's right hand and at the end of the dinner, he escorted me to the door and waited with me until my driver was able to jockey my car around the ambassador's which had been first in the queue. It was almost an embarrassing honor but I gather the ambassador received a similar farewell when he departed the following year. I left Manila in July 1999 at the end of my second tour in the Philippines as the country was beginning a downward slide on the endless roller coaster that is Philippine politics and governance. President Estrada, who had won a solid mandate from the non-elite masses in the May 1998 elections, was beginning to reveal his weaknesses. He showed little vision or ideas for addressing the nation's major problems - population, unemployment, deteriorating and inadequate infrastructure, pollution - while seeming to prefer late night counsels with close and somewhat shady advisors (cronies) over Blue Label Scotch. He remained open to U.S. embassy approaches but abused our consular section offer of cooperation for officials by applying for official visas for mistresses, girlfriends and hangers on. The elites, who had opposed his election, were increasingly alienated and muttering about Erap pulling the country down to ruin. The optimism Ramos had brought for six years was fading and, two years after I left, Estrada's vice president, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, used public disquiet to orchestrate public street protests into a second EDSA movement which unconstitutionally removed Estrada from office.

Q: What happened in 1999 when you left Manila for the second time?

MARTIN: After 33 years in the Foreign Service and without an ambassadorship in sight, I decide it was time to retire and do something different. I left Manila in early July, moved back into our house in Washington, took the transition course at FSI, and began to look for new opportunities.

Q: But then you got called again.

MARTIN: I guess opportunity found me. As soon as I got back to Washington that July, Steve Schlaikjer, the country director for Chinese-Mongolian Affairs, called and asked if I'd be willing to go to Beijing as DCM. I said I was about to retire, and I thought it a little late to change plans at that point. In typical Chinese fashion, where one asks three times to determine if a refusal is genuine or just polite, he kept after they me. The third time, the ambassador designate, Admiral Joseph Prueher, who had been the Navy Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), called and urged me to come join him. Initially he said for three years, but since I had retired and the Department would not return me to the promotion track, I agreed to go for one year until they found somebody else. I insisted on being returned to the Foreign Service rather than going on TDY status so my wife could join me. So I was sworn back into the FS (oddly, in front of a poster of Moscow's Red Square) and resumed my career, minus promotability and extra retirement credit.

Q: When you went to China in 1999, what was the situation, both internally in China and then in Sino-American relations.

MARTIN: It was a rather turbulent time. Exchange visits by Presidents Clinton and Jiang Zemin in 1998 seemed to move Sino-American relations to a more positive level. Then Premier Zhu Rongji's spring 1999 visit to Washington fell apart when the Administration was unwilling (or unable) to conclude a permanent normal trade relations agreement at the last minute. This was followed a few weeks later by the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. No Chinese has been willing to accept U.S. explanations of mistaken targeting. The resulting anger among Chinese students and the government's need to permit managed demonstrations against the U.S. chancery further strained relations. Added to these frictions was Washington's insistence on pushing its annual resolution in the Human Rights Commission; nagging trade disputes and periodic complaints about the Chinese government's lack of control over proliferation activities of its supposed private companies. On the positive side, by November, the 13-year effort to reach an agreement with China on its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) was finally successful. The WTO agreement helped dissipate some of the earlier tensions which, between May and November, caused Sino-American relations to be very frosty. The fact that Beijing was still willing and able to make the many concessions to reach the trade agreement shows how eager the government was to join the WTO.Jim Sasser, who had been the ambassador during the previous three years, had left shortly after the May demonstrations over the Belgrade bombing (which the embassy called the "rock concert"), and DCM Bill McCahill was chargï¿½ for most of six months. Bill had been in Beijing over three years and was exhausted from his direct engagement in the WTO talks as well as the post-Belgrade tensions. I believe Washington was eager to find ways to improve relations. I think that's why Joe Prueher was picked. It was decided that it would be useful for him to go out and to try to establish a good, firm relationship with the Chinese. He had established a good relationship with the People's Liberation Army when he was the CINCPAC commander.Prueher did not seek the job. I think he agreed to do it because he realized that he probably was the only one who would or could be confirmed by the Senate. I think a career Foreign Service person could not have been confirmed by the Senate, particularly given Senator Helms views. Joe made a great effort to make sure he touched all the bases on the Hill when he was having his consultations before his hearings. The hearings went well and he was confirmed without difficulty. His military background and apolitical stance helped.

Q: Did you go out together?

MARTIN: No. I went out early. In fact, I was on leave in Michigan when he called me and asked if I would work with him. When he agreed to my proposal to go for only one year, I came back to Washington, did some quick consultations during the month of November, and went out the end of November, 1999.Being recalled to the FS was an interesting event as this was still a rather new phenomenon in the State Department. Not many people are recalled. I knew that Tom Pickering had been recalled after he had resigned or had retired, and I figured, "Well, if it's good enough for Tom, it's good enough for me!" So I said I wanted to be recalled into full active duty and not go out on TDY or as a WAE (when-actually-employed) because I wanted to take my family with me. It took some negotiation but as they were eager to get somebody out there to work with a first time political ambassador, the Department was willing to give me pretty much anything I wanted. We had already made family plans for Thanksgiving and Christmas plans but I agreed to go out in November after Thanksgiving, relieve Bill McCahill, be there until the ambassador arrived in December, and then come back for Christmas break to pack up and return with my wife in January.I arrived in Beijing the end of November and Bill McCahill turned the embassy over to me about the first of December. Ambassador Prueher arrived on the ninth. The Chinese seemed eager to have a U.S. ambassador after nearly six months so arranged for President Jiang Zemin to receive his credentials after only a few days. The credential ceremony was in the Great Hall of the People and followed by a rather lengthy sit-down discussion of bilateral relations in a small anteroom. The warm reception Ambassador Prueher received indicated the importance the Chinese attached to the relationship and their desire to move ahead and to have a good bilateral relations with the United States.

Q: Why did the Chinese turn the accidental bombing of their embassy in Belgrade into such a big thing, allowing mobs to get out and scream and yell. It would seem to be counterproductive. We were abject in our apologies as the bombing was a horrible mistake.

MARTIN: It's part of the psyche of our relationship. The leadership, I think, realized this, but the initial reaction was really a visceral one. The problem is that they still are not sure what our motives are. They read what is said in Congress and in the press. They see people attacking China on human rights issues. They learn of U.S. military planning which focuses on China as a growing strategic threat. They believe the U.S. sees China as a future competitor if not threat that we need to keep down or prevent from reestablishing itself as a world power and as an equal among nations. China's political system and experience leads the government and Party to see these disparate issues as part of a big, master U.S. plan to contain China politically and economically if not strategically with the ultimate goal of changing their communist system.This gets into the whole question of international equality and China's role in the world, China's rightful place in the world. I believe it is all part of the Chinese psyche that for the last 200 years they have been kept down by the West, first by invasions, encroachments, and extraterritoriality. They still have this sense of humiliation, of being picked upon; and so when something like the Belgrade bombing happens, the initial reaction is to see it as an intentional act by the U.S. to humble China.We said, "But it was a terrible mistake! It was a targeting error. We thought it was a different building. We didn't realize it was the Chinese embassy. Etc. Etc." And they answered, "That can't be true! You can't make a mistake! You're the world's only remaining superpower. You're the one with all the technological advantages. Your bombs are all guided so go where they are directed. You don't make these mistakes." My effort to try to explain that during the Gulf War most of the casualties on the American side were self inflicted, that friendly fire killed a lot of the Americans who died during the war. But it didn't cut any ice. And there's also a rising sense of nationalism in China.

Q: So the Chinese played the nationalistic card.

MARTIN: Yes. I think the government was discomforted because of the visceral reaction by the younger people particularly, who saw this as an out and out U.S. purposeful action because China had not been supportive of U.S. efforts in Kosovo. China opposed our use of NATO rather than the UN to legitimize our engagement and bombings. The government felt that it had to let the people, students particularly, demonstrate over the embassy bombing. I don't think they expected the demonstrations would go as far as they did. People told me, when I was there subsequently, that the government felt it had no choice. If it did not allow the students to demonstrate in a controlled manner, including throwing rocks and bricks at the outside of the embassy, students could have demonstrated against the government for not supporting Chinese interests. I think that this was their quid pro quo - they allowed groups of students to come in a controlled manner. Colleagues of mine who were there said police at the barricade at the end of the block let in groups of 50 or a 100 students at a time to protest and throw bricks at the embassy, then move on. The police served like ushers in a movie theater, keep one crowd out until the show is over by the first group. They move offstage, and the next group moves on. But after two or three days of venting, the government clamped down and banned further protests. During those two or three days, they actually bused people in. The police and the security forces maintained control of who was demonstrating, but they allowed them to demonstrate. They really tore up the embassy. The picture of Jim Sasser in the shattered doorway certainly showed the damage.

Q: Did this demonstration, and the trashing of the embassy have an effect on embassy personnel, souring their view of relations with China?

MARTIN: Yes, it soured many of them! Those who left in the summer were the lucky ones. Many of those who had to stay another two or three years became quite cynical and did not enjoy it much. That was part of my effort, to try to rebuild morale in the embassy, to help them see that it was a staged venting of Chinese nationalistic fervor wasn't against them personally.The important thing to remember is what you saw in the U.S. press and what you saw on the embassy building itself was localized. It was all within about a two-block area. Outside of that, people were not affected. U.S. businesses went on as usual; embassy staff, American and Chinese, came and went without much trouble. The bombing did come up in conversations regularly. When taxi drivers or shopkeepers learned you were American, they would say what a terrible thing we had done, why was the U.S. anti-China, etc. This continued throughout the year that I was there.

Q: I'm thinking more towards the 2001 EP-3 incident, but I remember seeing a cartoon showing an American looking rather exasperated at a small, little Chinese, like a schoolboy, and says, "All right. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Now why don't you grow up," or something like that. But I mean because in the second case, it was obviously an error on the part of the Chinese. This wasn't on your watch, but it does signify sort of a feeling that there are people that no matter what you do they'll always be looking for signs of 'Do you love me,' 'Do you hate me.'

MARTIN: They take offense quickly. Partly it's the sense that the foreigner might be trying to harass them, or suppress them, or take advantage of them. This comes again from the 200 years experience they've had with the West, from the early 1800s. As I tell my class here, there is a well-instituted sense of humiliation in China. They carry this Humiliation 101 to the nth degree. They teach it from preschool on up - that China's situation is caused by foreigners, it's only because China was weak and not strong, and it's only the Communist Party, which is able to give China back its rightful place in the world. When this mantra is drummed into students throughout their education, people will react in that way. I think the Internet is increasing information flow, and giving people access to information from other than the Party. As China opens up to the world, the Party's controls are beginning to break down. But the foundation of humiliation has been laid and will continue to influence Chinese perceptions for quite a while.

Q: What happened to business and cultural relations?

MARTIN: Business relations basically went on without much interruption. There were a couple days when American businessmen laid low; they didn't go out; they didn't have any major visits by home office people. But very quickly it was made clear by their Chinese interlocutors that they were not held responsible, that the U.S. government was held responsible. And as usual, the way the Chinese play it, the Chinese and American people are friends, there's no problem between the peoples of the two countries, and businesses can continue because it's beneficial to both sides. It's just on the governmental level. This is the typical traditional Chinese view - that if it wasn't for the government, we'd all get along wonderfully!

Q: What were you seeing in terms of changes in Chinese society in the three years you were away?

MARTIN: They had become much more open. The access to the Internet and the access to information from any number of international sources was much greater. The other thing I would mention is that I was in Guangzhou before, and I came back and went to Beijing. Beijing is very much of a capital city. Guangzhou is perhaps like San Francisco, whereas Beijing is Washington, and bureaucratic, and is more formal and official than Guangzhou. The Cantonese people tend to be less interested in politics and more interested in business, money, and getting ahead. It is a very different environment and impacts the embassy's perspective and also how the embassy and the Chinese officialdom interact. However, generally my impression in those three years was that China was continuing to develop and open up rapidly. There's a lot more of what I call personal space for people. It's not individual rights, but individual space perhaps is a better term. People talk more freely. They didn't feel as confined or as restricted in what they said. Taxi drivers, of course, like anyplace else in the world, were great interlocutors, and they were willing to talk about just about anything, and what a bunch of bums were running the country, and so forth. Shopkeepers would complain about the situation, people on the street that you'd meet, even the academics that you met in official receptions, delegations and conferences were much more open about criticisms of how China was changing. Many of them were still cautious in terms of criticizing the leadership directly or criticizing the system, but they were always trying to make the point that we are moving, we are progressing, but we need to continue to make reforms and changes, particularly on the economics side. The problem is that economic reforms have gone about as far as they can go without becoming politically sensitive. This is what we're seeing now, as the economic situation becomes increasingly difficult for state owned enterprise workers thrown out of work by bankrupt or corrupt firms or farmers protesting illegal taxes and having land taken from them by corrupt officials.Q: As you arrived, you had an embassy which still was shaken by the demonstrations. It's not a lot of fun to have not just stones thrown at you, but to feel that the government's behind it. What does that do to you relationship with contacts, friendships and other Chinese interlocutors? How do you go about restoring morale?

MARTIN: The approach I took was to try to develop more of a community in the embassy. The embassy 's staff was quite diverse. Some of them, of course, were the China cadre, who has learned Chinese, had spent much, if not all, of their career on China. They love China, they know the culture, they know the language, they have friends, and so forth. These people understood the situation better; they know that it's a transient, not a personal thing against them, that it's something that is done for political necessity. The other side of the embassy were people who didn't really know China - who are not there because it's China, but because it's an assignment. This was more difficult group of people to help. These were the people who were alienated, people who felt threatened, people who felt it was more than they could take. Trying to work with people who may not have known much about China and the causes of events - the communicators, the office management specialists, the admin officers, even consular officers - was difficult. These were the people I tried to spend some time with to try to get them to understand the situation.

Q: Could you get them out of the American community to learn more about the "real China"?

MARTIN: I wonder what the "real" China is anymore. The country is changing so fast. Beijing is light years apart from rural China which one can find just a few miles outside the rapidly expanding urban area. But one has to be motivated and interested in seeing and learning about the different aspects of the country. And after being attacked by screaming mobs, that is hard to encourage. The difficulty of the Chinese language is a real barrier. If an employee does not speak or read Chinese, or is unable or afraid to use basic Mandarin, he or she feels very isolated. "Compounditis" or cabin fever builds up and people are reluctant to go out of the Embassy community. Fortunately, unlike in the early years, Beijing has become quite a cosmopolitan city with a lot of things people can do outside the diplomatic circle. They can go to restaurants, the theater, to movies, go bowling. The embassy had few recreational facilities besides a small swimming pool and happy hour at the Marine House on Friday nights. But people had established a bowling league, for which one didn't have to have the language. A British hiking club organized walks in the countryside, on the Great Wall which appealed to some. The Beijing expatriate community had grown to probably 100,000 or more foreigners by the time I was there, and so one could have a lot of contact with Australians, Brits, or other Westerners. There were also numerous restaurants, bars, and night clubs to frequent, everything from New York delis to Aussie bars to Middle Eastern restaurants with belly dancing performances. All it took was a willingness to get out and explore what was available. My wife worked with the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) to foster an active spouses club which engaged family members in activities - tours, shopping trips, discussions. Spouses often felt even more isolated while employees when to work. When we arrived, most of the staff lived in apartments in Chinese Foreign Ministry run housing compounds for diplomats. While the Embassy administrative section provided maintenance, furniture, and support, all diplomats were lumped together so you never knew which country your neighbor may be from. Housing became one of Joe Prueher and my major endeavors.

Q: How did you find your contacts with the Chinese authorities? Were you coming down from this certain high because of the World Trade Organization negotiations?

MARTIN: Yes. I think the WTO agreement was an excellent ramp up to Joe and my assignment. By the time I got there, everybody was feeling much better because of that agreement. We felt that we had a chance to get back on track of reestablishing relations. We still had the ongoing negotiations over compensation for the Belgrade bombing mistake. The State Department Legal Advisor and others came in and out, a couple times in the first few months, negotiating over what was going to be paid to repay for the damage that we caused at the embassy.

Q: And how about the victims?

MARTIN: The victims had been paid off very early. The families of the people who were killed in the attack were paid very promptly. I think by June or July that check had already been delivered. This was the compensation for damage to the embassy itself, which I think in the end came out to 28 million dollars. The problem was more on our end, I think, because everybody who was responsible, or irresponsible, insisted that the State Department pay for it, rather than DOD, or CIA, or whoever mistakenly target the Chinese Embassy. State had to go through a Congressional budget process and get an extra line item in the budget. Congressional views of China influenced this, as in, "we're not going to pay anything to the Chinese Communists, etc." Eventually things worked out but the negotiations were pretty arduous. Several times when the delegation was there, they went on all night. The final agreement was reached, I think, at four-thirty in the morning after having gone for several days almost straight through. When I arrived, things did seem a little bit more on the up. Bill McCahill turned the Mission over to me on a Thursday evening, saying said, "Okay. It's all yours! You take it from here." The next morning the Foreign Ministry called saying they wanted Chargï¿½ McCahill to come in for a demarche. Bill says, "It's all yours! I'm out of here!" So I went over for my first meeting. My interlocutor was Yang Jiechi, (subsequently the Chinese ambassador to Washington and in 2007, Foreign Minister). We had known each other when he was the DCM in Washington and I was on the China desk. We had not seen each other for several years so he welcomed me warmly. Then we sat down, and he launched into a tough statement on Taiwan about how we were not living up to the three communiquï¿½s, encouraging Taiwan independence, etc. After I agreed to report his message to Washington, we stood up, he welcomed me to Beijing and escorted me to the door. I felt like I was right back in the swing of things.

Q: Speaking about these three communiquï¿½s, were we living up to what we said, and were the Chinese living up to what they said?

MARTIN: I think you have to look at the political situation at the time of those communiquï¿½s - the time that Kissinger and Nixon made the agreement on the Shanghai Communiquï¿½ and the subsequent ones. The recent to-do over what Kissinger agreed to, and what he said about Taiwan; the differing interpretations by the PRC and the U.S. which have come out in the press recently, all put different spins on the communiquï¿½s. At the time, I think there was less attention paid to Taiwan and Taiwan's future than there was to the importance of doing something that would keep the Soviet Union off balance. That was the main goal, both for China and for the United States. We saw our interest as being parallel in that regard, and would have been happy to have Taiwan left out. The Chinese insisted on having something said about Taiwan. We agreed to it, but in subsequent years, I think that we've taken an extremely loose and liberal interpretation of what we agreed to. Have the Chinese lived up to it? I think the Chinese have continued to push the best they can. They continued to insist that they reserved the right to use force against Taiwan if it doesn't go their way. I think they're very frustrated by the fact that they thought that the communiquï¿½s were going to start the process that would eventually force, or persuade (perhaps the better way) Taiwan to come back to the fold. But it hasn't happened, and Taiwan has become democratic now, which makes it much more difficult for us to pressure them to do anything.

Q: Were you getting from any of your Chinese counterparts or other contacts an understanding of the fact that Taiwan really has become a different country, and it'd be very difficult to meld them together?

MARTIN: I'm not sure they understand that. I don't think they understand the politics of Taiwan. They don't understand the democratic forces that have become very active in Taiwan. I think the shock of the Democratic Progressive Party, the DPP, actually winning the election in 2000 was really a shock to them. All their experts on Taiwan had predicted that he would not win, and when he did, the shock reverberated throughout the government. I think many so-called Taiwan experts in Beijing had to go through some self-criticism sessions after Chen Shui-bian won in 2000.

Q: Was this partly a problem of the Chinese embassy in Washington and other scholars reporting back what they thought their superiors wanted to hear?

MARTIN: I think it's partly that, but it's also partly that they just don't have the concept of what the democratic process is. Since the DPP won in 2000, the PRC has invited several senior Kuomintang Party (the nationalist party, the KMT) leaders, to visit China, ostensibly to visit their family homes, to meet with officials. It's all part of the united front policies, which the Communist Party used at various stages in the past. But they don't really understand by doing that, that they're not really making a big difference in terms of public opinion in Taiwan. Once someone described it to me as the Chinese think that they are the gorgeous bride, and they can't understand why the Taiwanese don't want to marry them. The Taiwanese look at them, and say, "Boy, that's a pretty ugly person, and we don't want to get linked up with them in any way!" I think that there's a very different concept.

Q: Did you see the cadre's families, the kids from the upper crusts of society, beginning to move into authoritative positions?

MARTIN: They're called princelings, and that's controversial, because several of the newer generation of leaders in China are sons or daughters of former high officials. I think that it's controversial because some of these people are corrupt, they're into special favors, and they're the elite. There's an increasing criticism in Chinese society, which is now more open and more critical with more information, particularly on the Internet and in chat rooms, about the special advantages these sons and daughters of the high officials have. More of these people are moving into private sector businesses rather than into government. They are involved in entrepreneurial startups of private companies, the high tech, the Internet, the IT (Information Technology) sector of society. The other thing that you find is that they're much more worldly. They certainly know much more about the world than their parents or their peers who never left China know, because they've studied overseas, they've traveled overseas, they're much more aware of China's weaknesses and China's lack of development. They're also, I think, much more nationalistic. Even though they've lived overseas and learned about the United States and other countries, that doesn't necessarily mean they're friendlier to the United States or that they're particularly more democratic. What they see, or what their reaction is, is that China needs to strengthen itself more to be able to compete on an equal basis with the rest of the world, not necessarily on military terms.

Q: In our exchange programs, were we trying to break away from getting the princelings to the United States and trying to reach down for equal opportunity and diversity? Could we do that, or was it too controlled by the Chinese?

MARTIN: It is controlled. My experience in Guangzhou was that a lot of the people that we wanted to send to the States could not get permission to go. The usual excuse was that they're too busy; or that their offices needed them, they couldn't let them go; etc. They weren't politically correct. The answer was often "We will decide who you can send to the States," and their candidate would usually be the office director, the bureau chief, or the Party cadre who wanted a trip to the States, and were happy to take our largesse and go to the States. These were not the people we wanted.We've had some success in breaking out of this limited universe of people. We seek out academics, students, business people, people from the provincial centers rather than from the capital. This is somewhat successful, but it's still limited in terms of the scope of the people that we could get and we could reach.

Q: This was an internal and external thing. You were out there when we were moving USIS and making it public diplomacy. How is this working within the embassy, did you feel?

MARTIN: I think it has been a difficult integration. There was a lot of resistance and trepidation within USIA which wasn't quite sure what this was all going to mean. Would they be totally subsumed in the State Department? What would be their role? Would their programs would have to be rearranged with different priorities? I think there has been some of that as they became integrated. The ambassador had a particular agenda that he wanted to carry out, and getting USIS in Beijing to do what he wanted them to do was sometimes a little bit more difficult than I think it should have been, partly because they had their own priorities and inertia. They had their traditional programs and focuses that they thought were important, having done them for years - and the ambassador had a different focus.

Q: Could we talk a bit about the ambassador, and when he arrived, and what his goals were, and how he operated?

MARTIN: Admiral Joseph Prueher was my first political ambassador, but I must say, he was a good one to work with because when he arrived, he made it clear that he did not know a lot about China. He realized that he had to depend upon the career people and the people who had experience in China, and would draw upon them as much as he could. And he did. He depended on and used effectively his political and economic officers, and worked well with other staff.He was also shocked - and that's not putting it too strongly - by the level of support and the facilities that the embassy, or the State Department, provides an ambassador. Of course he was coming from being a four-star admiral at the Pacific Command, where he had myriad minions working for him at his beck and call, who would stand up, salute and say, "Yes, sir," to whatever he asked. It was a little difficult coming in and realizing that there was little in terms of support and little in terms of adequate personnel to be able to do the job that he thought was necessary. We in the State Department have long felt that, but we usually put our shoulder to the wheel and muddle through the best we can.I think his biggest shock was that the communications system within the embassy was so antiquated that he had no way of communicating with anybody. The unclassified, the classified, the e-mail, everything was totally separated, and security requirements in China are even more rigorous than almost anyplace else in the world because of security concerns. So one office cannot talk to the other electronically. It's very difficult to operate, and I think he was frustrated by that. He was also frustrated by the lack of resources the administration section had to be able to do what was necessary. The present chancery building in Beijing was a pit. It was the old Pakistani embassy that we took over when they moved out. It was an old antiquated building, not much has been done to it, and after what the staff called the "rock concert" in May, it was even worse condition. All the windows had been broken, and FBO (Overseas Building Operations) replaced the glass, but refused to replace the wooden frames through which the winter winds howled and whistled. So the creature comforts of working in the embassy were really quite limited. The ambassador was quite shocked by that. Coming from a naval tradition where everything was painted and shipshape, it was quite a shock! The Embassy in Beijing traditionally had a hard time getting bidders on its positions. While the language was a factor, a larger issue was the terrible housing. The pioneer China-hand who volunteered for Beijing during the 1972-79 U.S. Liaison Office (USLO) period did not mind the hardships and isolation because of the adventure and excitement of being in on the beginnings of a new relationship after over 20 years of no relations. But by the time I arrived in 1999, the bad housing was a major obstacle to getting good people and their families. Joe Prueher saw that immediately and decided to make that a priority of his tenure. In good Navy tradition, Joe was keenly aware of the importance of good morale and the need for the commander to work to improve it in any way possible.Fortunately, the Foreign Ministry, which ran the diplomatic housing compounds through the Diplomatic Services Bureau (DSB), was beginning to realize the growing expatriate community could not be squeezed into the old, tired compounds. Initially, all diplomats, journalists, international organization representatives, and businessmen had to live in the compounds. The apartment buildings were poorly maintained, the standards of cleanliness and responsibility varied greatly between families from the West and those from the Third World. While the Embassy's General Services office tried to hold onto specific apartments so new generations of officers could move in and GSO upgrades maintained, the Embassy did not have much influence if DSB wanted to shift people around. Joe and I first ascertained the Foreign Ministry would agree to have U.S. Embassy personnel find housing outside the DSB compounds. Then we had to persuade the Department, particularly the Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) office to support and fund finding new, and more expensive, housing. One way Joe built his leverage was to insist that every CODEL and official visitor be taken to an Embassy apartment to see the squalor in which our families had to live. It was eye opening to Members of Congress as well as Department officials who had never previously seen the conditions. We tended to take the visitors to the worst compounds where the dark, dingy stairways smelled of mold and urine, the elevators either didn't work or were frightening to use, the apartment kitchens were dirty and cramped, and glass from windows often fell out onto children's playgrounds below. The conduit closets for pipes, sewers, electrical cables, which ran from the top to bottom of the buildings, were called "roach runs" by the residents since insects and vermin had easy access to kitchens and bathrooms. We had the Embassy doctor describe the health problems caused by the living conditions and family members described the trials of living in what was comparable to tenement housing in U.S. cities. Our campaign was successful and Embassy personnel were given the opportunity to move into commercial housing which was being built. Some moved into new apartment blocks managed by Hong Kong companies. Others opted to move out of the increasingly polluted city to Western style houses in suburban gated villages with grass, swimming pools and bike riding areas. Others chose apartments attached to upscale hotels for foreigners. I guess about 90% of the staff in the Embassy when I arrived moved out of DSB housing and morale soared. Others preferred to stay where they were, because they were due for transfer in a few months and didn't want to move twice, or because they wanted to stay close to the Embassy and downtown. Giving individuals a choice and a selection of housing greatly reduced complaints and helped with recruitment. Housing was only one aspect of a number of property issues I focused on during my year in Beijing. As mentioned above, the chancery building had been the Pakistani chancery and little major renovation had been done when the U.S. moved in in the early 1980s. After the front of the building was trashed by the post-Belgrade bombing demonstrations in May 1999, FBO decided to renovate the entire building while building a new annex on the back for additional office space. Offices and hallways were stripped to the bare brick and new electrical, plumbing and communications lines installed. The work also gave us a chance to inspect the security conditions in the building. We were reminded of being in an ancient city one day when a skeleton and old artifacts were found during the excavation for the annex. We called in the Chinese Antiquities Bureau who told us the area of the First Diplomatic Area where we were had been outside the city walls until recently and had been used as a burial ground. Based on their records and the artifacts found in the grave, they estimated the skeleton dated from around the early Ming Dynasty (14th or 15th century AD). I made the mistake of allowing the inspectors form the Antiquities Bureau "borrow" the artifacts from the grave as we never saw them again. I had hoped to put them in a glass display case in the lobby of the chancery. The Beijing Embassy property consisted of three compounds in the First Diplomatic Area just off Jianguomen Wai (outside the Jian Guo gate), the eastern extension of Chang An Lu which runs through Tiananmen. The first, which was originally the entire USLO office building and residence for the USLO Chief (including George H.W. Bush), is now the ambassador's residence and Public Diplomacy offices. The 2nd compound contains the Administrative and Consular Sections. Across the street, the 3rd compound is the chancery and Marine house. Planning for a new chancery had been underway for several years, with several different plans being proposed and abandoned. When I arrived, the plan under consideration was to tear down the existing chancery, take over the Bulgarian property next door and build a new building on both sites. Neither Joe nor I liked that idea as the Embassy would have to operate out of temporary quarters for a lengthy period, and the Embassy would still have to operate from three separate compounds, a communications, logistics and security problem. During one of FBO's frequent visits to discuss the new chancery, the Chinese agreed to give us a large tract of land in the 3rd diplomatic area in Liang Ma He, further out from the center of Beijing, to which many diplomatic missions were moving. As is always the case, however, China is a stickler for equal reciprocity and the MFA was not happy about what the State Department was offering for the new Chinese embassy in Washington. We had a long series of negotiations with the diplomatic property office of the MFA, generally amicable but tough. I felt accomplished that we were able to reach an agreement before I left in September. The Department offered the Chinese two lots in the International Diplomatic area off Van Ness Avenue which the MFA accepted unhappily. The U.S. received a large lot which is big enough to build a chancery, ambassador's residence, Marine House, and separate Admin and Consular building, all in one contiguous area. We thought we received a good deal. I left shortly after the property deal was reached so missed the lengthy negotiations over the construction details. After the disastrous construction of the new U.S. chancery in Moscow a few years ago, the Department was gun shy about another embassy in a communist country. It insisted on a hard and fast agreement that every construction worker, all building materials, and every item to be placed in the chancery had to be imported from the U.S. in secure containers and guarded constantly. Needless to say, the Beijing embassy will probably be one of the most expensive ever, second only to the new U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The Chinese of course insisted on the same privileges, so their chancery site in Washington looks like an imported Chinese construction site with workers' dormitories, Chinese cranes, Chinese security personnel on site, etc. The new chanceries are scheduled to be completed and open in July 2008, shortly before the Olympics. Could be a chaotic time.

Q: What did Ambassador Prueher bring with him in his attachï¿½ case as far as what he wanted to accomplish?

MARTIN: As I said, he was apolitical, he said he did not seek the job. But he was willing to serve, and his commitment was he would stay two years. He saw himself as a bridge between the old Clinton administration, and the new administration after the 2000 election. He saw himself as someone who could try to help reestablish cordial and useful relations between China and the United States by working on various contacts. He had three major points that he made frequently to the Chinese: 1) that he did not seek the job, 2) that he was not looking for any other onward U.S. government job, and 3) that he would tell it the way he saw it, and he did that. He was frank and outspoken, diplomatically and courteously of course, but he said what he thought, and he said what was necessary. And I think that was appreciated by the Chinese, and it was certainly appreciated by the staff in the embassy. He was able to get everyone to support his goal of reestablishing the relationship on an even keel. He believed his experience in the military and his contacts with the Chinese military (he had visited China several times as CINCPAC) would be helpful in moving the relationship forward.

Q: You mentioned in public diplomacy he had a different thrust than our people on the ground had. What was that?

MARTIN: I think the difference was that he was much more focused on public diplomacy, the selling of our policies and perspectives. He wanted USIS to get out and make sure that we communicated with as broad an audience as possible in China on what U.S. policies were, to try to deflect criticisms, misinterpretations, or misunderstandings of U.S. policy. More traditional USIS programs on cultural and educational exchanges, international visitors, Fulbright programs, and so forth should be a lower priority. He agreed these were all important programs but thought the top priorities should be getting out and selling U.S. policy. He was also looking for a good speechwriter who could craft his speeches and remarks the way he wanted. It took awhile but one of the USIS officers did a good job in that regard.

Q: At the time you were there, did you feel we were getting a good representation of our side in the media and the press?

MARTIN: Minimal. It had increased over the years., from nothing previously. In terms of percentage increases, it was quite significant, but still, it's very low compared to most other countries. Getting our views out was difficult, getting the papers to publish what we sent them, getting the media to cover things that we thought were important was very difficult. The Chinese government keeps very close control over the information flow, and so it was difficult for us to get our points out. The ambassador did a good deal of speaking, he traveled around the country as much as he could, he met with people and tried to get the word out as best he could, but it was difficult.

Q: How did the ambassador, and you, and others find the Chinese university system because often this is the place where the students get out of control. I mean there are some places where you almost can't, if you're an American, go to them at all.

MARTIN: For many years, you could not! The embassy officials for years were not allowed into the campuses except under very tight scrutiny and control.

Q: Did you get any feel for what the universities were doing? I mean vis-ï¿½-vis modernizing China, and our relations, and all.

MARTIN: Some, not a lot, frankly. I did not have a chance to get out there. I went to Beijing University several times. I gave speeches there a couple times. The ambassador was able to go there. But again, one always got the sense that it was a handpicked audience. It wasn't just a bulletin board sign on the door, saying "U.S. ambassador's going to speak. You all come." It was pretty much decided by the university, by the Party secretary as to who was going to attend. Often it was just faculty, graduate students, or teaching assistants rather than Joe Blow the student. Our contacts with students were limited even though the ambassador and the rest of us would to make an effort to get to know the students, get to meet the students at least, try to talk to them on an informal basis. Fortunately, there are many Americans attached to the Chinese universities, either as students or as English teachers. My experience in Guangzhou was that many Americans were teaching English to Chinese university students all over the country, providing a good window, on American perceptions, institutions, and philosophy; exchanging information with the Chinese.

Q: You mentioned the Internet a couple times. Could you explain what it was and how you saw its impact and its use in China during this period?

MARTIN: You have to remember that until the Internet came along, the Chinese government, the Communist Party in that sense, was the sole source of information in China. The average Chinese citizen could not subscribe to any foreign media, whether western or Asian. The Party controlled all print and broadcast media. Some foreign newspapers and magazines were available in the hotels for the foreigners, but you couldn't buy them on a newsstand. Obviously, foreigners would leave their copies, and I'm sure these would circulate in the Chinese community. But again, I'm sure also if the Party people found them, they would be confiscated and destroyed. So the flow of information was very tightly controlled by the Party.The Internet has opened a window, which makes it easier for the average person to get access to what is happening outside the country. On the Belgrade bombing situation, people knew within a couple of days that President Clinton had called Jiang Zemin and had apologized profusely for the mistake. This was not revealed in the internal Chinese press for weeks, if not months. I'm not even sure it was ever really revealed. So people were able to get information which their own government did not tell them. Same thing with the EP-3 situation - the initial government reaction was to the story from the military in Hainan Island that the U.S. reconnaissance plane had run into the Chinese fighter. Joe Prueher, was able to tell the senior leaders in the foreign ministry that could not have happened that way because he was a pilot, he was an aviator. So he knew exactly what an EP-3 can do, and the fact that it's moving much slower than a jet fighter coming alongside of it. If the EP-3 had turned, as they said, into the fighter, it would have missed it because the fighter would have been long past before it could have hit. In any case, the Chinese went with what they heard from their military sources down in Hainan, went public with that, and demanded compensation, and apologies based on the accident being the U.S.' fault.It was the Internet that helped people learn what really happened in both of these incident cases. In general they know much more of what's going on, even though a lot of the sites are blocked. The government does control the Internet. It does limit what people can get. The government says they're trying to prevent pornography and hostile information.

Q: Is it easy to block their Internet ?

MARTIN: It is fairly easy to block the Internet in China. My home computer in Beijing was very slow logging on and getting onto various Internet sites. I could, but it took a long while, and certain ones I couldn't get - Washington Post, New York Times -

Q: You couldn't get those?

MARTIN: You could not get those. But the Chinese are a brilliant people, and the people who are into computers and the Internet have no problem finding cutouts and various other servers that they can access in a roundabout way to pick up what they need.

Q: Was there at all a "Samizdat" (self-published underground Press of dissidents in the Soviet Union) type of publication? This was the self-publishing thing that went on during the Stalin time, or the Soviet era time, where it was called Self-Published, which often mimeographed sheets, you know, got circulated around. Was this -

MARTIN: There is some of that. There's also now more and more of that on the Internet. They have both the chat rooms and use sort of the private publications that people pass around within the Internet system.

Q: Did they have Internet cafï¿½s?

MARTIN: Yes, they do. They're very tightly controlled as the government is able to control what portals they can access or what sites they can access. But the growth of the Internet has been phenomenal, and I think in the last 10 years it's growing exponentially, and people predict in the next 10 years the Chinese will be by far the largest Internet users in the world. In fact, they talk about Chinese replacing English as the most common Internet language. Even though the spoken dialects - Cantonese, Fujianese and Mandarin - may be different, and everybody understands and studies Mandarin, the characters are the same, so it's a universal script.

Q: What about with the computer has this simplified putting the ideographs on computer, or is English still a lot better?

MARTIN: They've got a pretty good system for the ideographs, for the characters. They can be put on the system quite easily. There's a tremendous amount of information on the Chinese internet. One of our colleagues in the embassy was very active in terms of both monitoring and reading what was on the Internet, as well as putting out some of our documents on the Internet. He probably reached far more people than all our speeches, press releases or public events. And the Embassy website was well known for it became a target for attack whenever the U.S. said or did something which was seen as anti-China.

Q: Yes. I would think...it hadn't occurred to me before, but you'd almost need Internet officers, don't you? I mean this is all over the world now.

MARTIN: That's right. USIS was also active online but this one particular officer, who was almost bilingual in Chinese and Japanese, was able to really access, translate, and put out on the Internet information that he developed himself. He was a great source of information as to what was going on. After the Belgrade bombing, our embassy home-page was bombarded by the Chinese Internet users with all sorts of scurrilous comments, threats, and emotional messages back and forth. If we hadn't been able to access all that, we wouldn't know what the public sentiment was. The hostility toward the U.S. and nationalistic feeling was quite striking.

Q: What about trade opportunities? I always think of the book that came out in the '30s called Oil for the Lamps of China, and the idea was always "what a market China was going to be...." I remember some man who was really very interested because he sold caskets and he thought of those millions of Chinese dying every year.

MARTIN: The old saying, of course, is the British term: that if every Chinese person wore his shirt an inch longer, the mills of Manchester would be running forever! Well, the market is there, but it's not there. I mean there is a market as the Chinese standard of living goes up. As they get more disposable income, which many of them have never had, there is a market for Western things. But it is not an infinite market because 1) you've got Chinese companies that also produce goods, some of which are still competitive and good, particularly the more private sector goods. 2) You've also got competition from other companies - Japanese, Koreans, Southeast Asians, what have you - who have also invested and produce in China. But 3) you've got a limited middle class. When people look at China, they look at 1.3 billion people, and think, "Wow! This is a great potential market!" But of that 1.3 billion people, probably 900 million to a billion probably don't have much in the way of disposable income. You're talking about two to three hundred million people, which is not an insignificant market, but it's not a billion!People are moving up the economic ladder and are potentially good customers. Previously foreign products were considered to be better because they were more reliable, safer, probably what they were supposed to be, whether shampoo, breakfast cereal, or computers. But now the Chinese have moved upscale very quickly. Part of perhaps the nationalistic vent is that people now say, "You ought to buy Chinese. Don't buy American," or "Don't buy Japanese." The Japanese have always had a problem in China, particularly this last century, particularly because of their encroachments into China, their colonialism, and imperialism. Back in the '20s, after the Treaty of Versailles awarded German territories in the Shandong Peninsula to the Japanese, the Chinese instituted a boycott of Japanese products. This was one of the first nationalistic movements in China and caused a lot of friction, perhaps even provoking a more militant Japanese policy toward China. This has happened over the years since then. Recently, when Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi visited the Yasukuni shrine in Tokyo for the war dead, the Chinese internet lit up calling for a boycott of Japanese products. Many American companies invest in China anticipating a major growth in the domestic market but may find the market limited by competition with Chinese companies that appeal to consumers' nationalistic sentiments.

Q: Were we monitoring the new class of the Chinese millionaires? Every once in a while you are reminded of the old hundred flowers campaign (during the mid-1950s) which suddenly had their heads chopped off. Was there a feeling that the excesses of this class might bring the wrath down upon them?

MARTIN: Many of the most egregious excesses have been restricted lately, apparently mainly by the wealthy themselves out of self interest. Many are worried about periodic anti-corruption campaigns since many of these people did get their money through corruption - personal contacts, payoff, or bribery of officials. There is an increasing concern that corruption may be the straw that breaks China's back, because it's rampant, just everywhere. A vice mayor in Shenyang, in the Northeast, was recently reported to have squandered something like 20 to 30 million dollars gambling in Macau. At the same time, you have the workers in the state-owned enterprises out on the street, without a pension, without any kind of a social safety net. It is a serious social, economic and ultimately, political problem. Rural areas have been in recession, if not depression, for the last four or five years; and bankrupt state-owned enterprises are kept alive only by the banking system providing them loans, which nobody expects to be repaid. But the rural population is dispersed enough that it's somewhat more manageable. When the proletariat lines up on the street with 30,000 people demonstrating, that becomes a political problem.

Q: Yes. What was your impression during this 1992000 period of the Central Government, its ability to deal with the horrendous problems of this huge state?

MARTIN: It's an immense challenge. They were trying to do the best they could. Zhu Rongji, the premier at the time, had some very good ideas, but I'm not sure he was able to really succeed in all of his goals. Part of the problem is, as I said earlier, the economic reforms have gone about as far as they can without a political reform. Some movement on the political side of things is needed before economic dislocations can be adequately addressed. It is unclear whether or not the government, whether the Party's willing to do that. There is hope that the Party may transmogrify into something like a democratic socialist party in Eastern Europe, in which managers administrators are allowed to make decisions in a more democratic manner, or less authoritarian manner. Even though technically China has a strong, centralized national government, provincial governments have a great deal of power and influence. The amount of money they send forward in terms of revenue collection, in terms of taxes, is minuscule compared to most other countries. The Central Government only gets somewhere between 20 and 25 percent of the total revenue taken in the country. So they don't have a lot of resources with which to operate. As I mentioned above when talking about my tour in Guangzhou, the Guangdong provincial government finds all sorts of ways to raise money, but they don't call any of them taxes. They're fees, tolls, surcharges, or what have you. They don't call them taxes because by law they have a certain percentage of taxes they have to remit to the Central Government. This is true of all the other provinces and municipalities. The central government tries to keep all the regional and local officials working in the same direction but it is a challenge.

Q: Did you see any potential schism developing in China, including even a breaking away between say the coastal region and the interior or north-south?

MARTIN: There are many regional divisions in the country - east and west, particularly the far west, the Muslim and minority areas of Tibet, Xinjiang. The minority areas feel alienated, separated from China. They don't want to belong to China, don't feel that they are Chinese in many ways, both ethnically, or racially, and certainly culturally. That is why Beijing is so adamant about maintaining its control of Tibet and Xinjiang, because they are afraid that if they let one go, they will all drift away. Another reason why they're so adamant about Taiwan is if they give Taiwan any kind of autonomy or independence, then why not Tibet, why not Xinjiang, why not inner Mongolia, etc.As I noted while in Guangzhou, there are also many divisions between the north and south. Guangdong has traditionally been more progressive, outward looking, and integrated with the global economy than most of China. Similarly, migrants from Fujian province have gone abroad for centuries, mostly to Southeast Asia, so they are more outwardly oriented. Hong Kong has had a major impact on much of south China because of the spread of manufacturing, investment and people across the border. We called it the "Hong Kongization" of South China. But now it is Shanghai's turn to attract foreign investment and wealth, spreading development all up and down the Yangtze River basin.As to a possible breakup of the country, my usual answer is that the sense of a unitary China is psychologically so powerful that most Chinese will do anything to keep the country together. I think that's why Taiwan remains such a big psychological issue. The sense of China's coming back together as a unitary nation, or a culture (because the idea of nationhood is a recent concept in terms of Chinese thought processes), is very strong, stronger than centrifugal forces pulling regions apart.

Q: We in the Foreign Service have watched these things over the years and called things wrong a number of times. We often believe the devil we know and deal with will always be the same. The idea of the Soviet Union breaking up did not. make any sense to many officers. Are there others who've been through your experiences who were looking at it differently?

MARTIN: I'm sure there are! This is my own personal estimate at this point. But, once can always say "it depends." Depending on how things develop, whether or not the government and Party is able to address these major economic and social issues, will determine whether their country is able to make a go of it. I don't see China splitting apart into different political entities but can see regions the country becoming much less cohesive than now. I believe the Central Government will still be able to maintain control through the police, security services and military. Don't forget the Soviet Union was a forced empire of disparate nations and peoples who resented Moscow's rule and broke away as soon as the center eased up its control mechanisms. Beijing has studied the Soviet collapse carefully and is determined to avoid the same mistakes. But again, the Chinese have a great fear of luan (chaos or confusion), because they've gone through that over the last hundred years. They realize how terrible things were before 1949: civil war, foreign invasions, foreign encroachments, China being picked apart by foreign powers. I think the Chinese want to try to do everything they can to avoid that. I think even the people who don't like the government, people who don't like the Communist Party, are going to make every effort to try to avoid that situation in the future. Many people have told me, "It's a bad situation. We don't like the government. We don't like the situation here now. But life is better now than it has been for the last 150 years!" It's hard to argue with that! And the Communist Party of course constantly reminds people that it was the one that ended foreign interference and is rebuilding China's status in the world. It uses De Gaulle's line "Apres moi, le deluge" to emphasize that without the CCP, the country would revert to its pre-1949 chaos.

Q: What about the Communist Party? Are there more than 10 people who still believe in real Marxism? If you have a political system based on a doctrine, an ideology, you have to teach the doctrine. If no one still believes in it, it is an awful lot of waste of time, an awful lot of people get bored. Were they beginning to come up with another configuration, or was the government still spouting the old terms and teaching the old Marxism in the universities?

MARTIN: They still do, yes! Marxism courses are still required. The Communist Party school for cadre in Beijing runs all the party officials from the entire country through a required six-month course at certain stages of their career, sort of like training in the Foreign Service. Marxism, Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and recent revelations such as Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents" are still required study. My impression is that most people don't listen, don't pay much attention, and don't find it applicable to their life or work these days.But the Party has adapted to changing times. At the anniversary of the Communist Party founding on July 1 few years ago, Jiang Zemin, , opened Party membership to the private sector, to entrepreneurs. What kind of a Communist Party is it that allows capitalist entrepreneurs to join the party? It is a party that realizes that their hold on power is based upon their being able to provide the goods to the people, to continue to improve the economy, to continue to improve the standard of living of the people. The goal is to at least give everybody the sense that things are getting better, that they too have an opportunity to improve their life in the future. This is totally different from the traditional Chinese view that the good times were during the golden age of Confucius.

The communist perspective of course is that historical development is inevitable and society moves from feudalism to capitalism to socialism and eventually communism. Now the line is that things are getting better, the future is going to be better, China's going to reestablish itself as a strong power, that China's going to become one of the leading cultural civilizations of the world, back to where they were before. This is their goal, to resume their global position. And I think all Chinese, of all political persuasions, identify with that goal. The question is whether it going to be accomplished by the Communist Party? I think most people think not, at least as the Party is presently configured. It is going to have to transmogrify somehow.

Q: Was the Party's recruiting business people to get people with a business viewpoint into the seats of power or to make sure they did not become a separate political force?MARTIN: I think the Party realized it needed to co-opt the growing entrepreneurial sector to ensure it maintained control over a key sector of the economy. And the entrepreneurs were flattered to be a part of the power elite, partly because many had been successful because of connections with bureaucrats and cadres and partly because they saw it as a means of preserving their status. Broadening Party membership to the entrepreneurs was one of the three "represents" of Jiang Zemin who recognized that getting the new private sector to support the Party would help advance the CCP's efforts to provide economic benefits to people and thus remain in power. Ideologically, the doctrinal changes have required contorted rationalizations but the Party has always been able to find the necessary flexibility.I see two problem areas. Younger Party members are frustrated with the old rigid procedures and doctrines of the party. While they are happy to be in the seat of power, many realize the growing economic inequalities are destabilizing. They are also questioning why greater political choice cannot be given once economic options and changes have been instituted? But how do you reform politically without losing power? I think these are the dilemmas they face, and they haven't resolved.

Q: While you were there, did you see concern about China absorbing Hong Kong and then ruining it all? But it sounds almost like Hong Kong is absorbing China.

MARTIN: I left Guangzhou in 1996, a year before Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty and returned to Beijing a little over two years after. I was in Hong Kong on June 30, 1997 for the turn over ceremony and had followed developments thereafter. The transition went well and fears of Chinese suppression of Hong Kong's freedoms did not occur. By the time I was in Beijing, the issue did not come up in our bilateral relations. Hong Kong continued to dominate south China's economy as manufacturing moved out of Hong Kong into Guangdong province. As the Cantonese populated both sides of the border, the interactions were very natural.

Q: Is there a Shanghai way of doing things, and a Hong Kong way, or a Guangzhou way of doing things, or not?

MARTIN: There are differences, yes, of course. I think that there are different approaches and that they don't like each other very much. The Cantonese are active in terms of trading abroad, whereas the Shanghaiese tend to be more involved in the economic power structure within China, in terms of banking, finance, and infrastructure. I noted above during our discussion of my tour in Guangzhou that at that time I did not feel the four consulates were very well integrated into the overall mission. I did not mind being left alone then but when Joe Prueher and I arrived in Beijing, we wanted to keep the consulates informed of what we were doing. I wanted to set up a secure phone line to each of the Consuls General so I could have a weekly if not more frequent conference call. But we found that the secure communication system could not handle it. So I started a weekly informal message to the CGs and we invited them to Beijing for quarterly coordination meetings. Joe also made it a point to visit each of the consulates as did I.Each consulate had its own unique character and challenges. Guangzhou took the least attention, perhaps because I was more familiar with the situation and since the CG had worked as my consular chief.Shenyang became a problem when fumes permeated the residence apartments next to the office building, making consulate personnel sick and frightened of long term health issues. We evacuated the building and put everyone into a western style hotel while we had tests conducted on the apartment building. When no satisfactory cause was determined, we decided to move the staff into new housing which alleviated concerns and improved morale in that isolated hardship post. Chengdu was a small post responsible for nearly 60% of the land area of China (including all of Tibet and Xinjiang). Generally it was a relaxed and efficient post which had moved into new office and residential quarters. Ambassador Prueher and I had to resolve a serious internal staff problem, however, which took considerable time and care to manage emotional issues. I appreciated Joe's firm but fair approach and his insistence that he make the difficult decisions. The Shanghai consulate at times assumes the character of its host city, which considers itself China's leading metropolitan and financial center of China. With a large American business presence and frequent visitors, we occasionally had to reiterate that consulates are subordinate to the Embassy.Through Joe and my periodic visits and frequent communications, I believe we were able to create a sense of partnership and cooperation with the consulates.

Q: What about the cultural side - movies, films, TV. All of us have seen these magnificent movies that have come out of China. I'm sure these have gone through quite a filter; but still, they seem much franker than before.

MARTIN: They are very frank now, and the social issues they deal with are really quite amazing to me. That is one of the major things I saw when I returned after an absence of three years. Films are discussing more social issues - urban alienation, divorce, the environment. Traditional neighborhoods are being bulldozed, and replaced by high rise apartments being like the urban renewal tenements in Chicago. The changes in people's lives are being well expressed in the movies and relates to what people are going through.

Q: What about the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)?

MARTIN: China is moving out of a totalitarian system or a totalitarian structure of government. Chairman Mao could do what he wanted, and everybody followed him. Deng Xiaoping for the most part could as well but generally consulted a group of contemporaries called "the elders." The third generation (Jiang Zemin) had less total personal control. It's much more of a collegial leadership at the top. The fourth generation now in power, is even less authoritarian. Now it more a matter of the leaders placing their supporters in key positions in order to carry out the their policies. Not unlike a new U.S. administration putting its political appointees in key jobs. This kind of a system builds interest groups. There are factions or different interest groups within the CCP as well as out in the public. Leaders now have to listen to public opinion which previously either didn't exist or nobody dared express opinions other than what the party told them to express.I consider the PLA (People's Liberation Army) just another big interest group, a powerful one; and they sit at the highest ranks of the government! So they have interests which often do not fit well with the way the rest of society is developing. The PLA, despite being a "people' army" has in recent years been basically separated from society. Traditionally, most of the military have come from rural areas, most are not well educated. PLA modernization aims to upgrade the caliber and education level of recruits, especially officers. They want high tech people, college graduates. Much of the increased military budget is going to higher pay to draw a better quality recruit. The PLA is not having an easy time as pay is still low for university graduates and it's a rough life. Most people coming out of the university, if they have any smarts, don't want to go into the army. As the army modernizes, and gives higher priority to the navy and air force, it needs technically competent personnel to operate more sophisticated weapons systems. As the country modernizes and becomes more international in its outlook and policies, the military is fighting to maintain its political clout. It is important to remember the PLA is the combat arm of the Communist Party and not a national army under the government structure. During World War II and the civil war, the Red Army was key to the survival of the Party. The PLA maintain its central political role until Deng began his economic reforms and the PLA had to take 4th place in the modernizations. But it was recalled to keep the CCP in power in 1989 during the Tiananmen incident. Now the Party focuses on maintaining its power by providing economic development and rising living standards, not a role the PLA can play. However, as China assumes a larger regional, and increasingly, global, role, the PLA argues it has greater responsibilities to protect and advance China's interests. And there is always Taiwan, the PLA's (and CCP's) number one objective. To be able to fulfill its missions, the PLA argues for, and generally wins, increased budgetary support to purchase and develop sophisticated weapons systems, improve training, and recruit better educated personnel. They carefully study U.S. war fighting techniques in the Gulf War, Kosovo, now in Afghanistan and Iraq, and realize how far behind they are technologically and doctrinally.

Q: Yes. The PLA was predicated on mass armies, and we've gone high tech, and mass armies are more of an encumbrance than a help.

MARTIN: Absolutely! They see this, and realize that they're falling further and further behind. They're buying Sovremenny (Russian built class guided missile destroyers) destroyer-cruisers from Russia, airplanes from Russia, and developing their naval and air capabilities. A critical weak point is their defense industry. They have had 50 years to develop their military industry but continue to have problems in producing high grade metallurgy needed for modern weapons systems. They don't have the capability to build a Sovremenny destroyer yet themselves. They don't have the capability of building a Sukhoi fighter on their own. They tried to put it together in kit form. They tried to reverse engineer one. But their defense industries are not yet sophisticated enough to produce their own modern weapons systems that are required in today's world.Q: Did you get a feel that there's an intellectual ferment going on, a realization that maybe a relatively small, high-tech military would be better?

MARTIN: They're trying to do that. They've downsized considerably. They used to have something like four million soldiers in the PLA. They've downsized to two million something now, and they're cutting even more. A lot of these people have been shifted over into what they call the People's Armed Police (PAP), a paramilitary police force. Technically they are off the PLA rolls onto the PAP rolls but the PLA and PAP have close links. Their goal is to transform the people's army into more of a high tech, more of a sophisticated, modern army rather than a mass army. They've gotten away, certainly, from the idea of people's war in which you had massive frontal assaults.

Q: Yes. What about all these, I mean again, we're talking about this 1999-2000 period, these factories, and the corruption, and all. I mean the PLA seemed to be very much into its own state as far as a very lucrative one, and more like a Mafia organization than anything else.

MARTIN: As we discussed earlier, Deng Xiaoping's allowing the PLA to make up for minimal budget support in the early 1980s by getting into commercial endeavors ended up weakening and corrupting the military. Jiang Zemin ordered the PLA out of business and increased their defense budget significantly. In recent years, PLA budget increases have averaged around 17 percent although U.S. analysts believe that's probably only a percentage of the PLA's total budget.

Q: As the PLA downsized, do they have a problem with a huge officer corps as in the Soviet Union?

MARTIN: I think the PLA faced a similar problem but cut back on their officer corps as well. They've watched Russia pretty closely as to what Russia's been going through, trying to avoid the same mistakes. One problem the PLA is encountering is a lack of a strong non-commissioned officer corps, which many consider the backbone of the U.S. armed services. Without a deep bench of sergeants and petty officers, it is difficult for officers to maintain communication and command over enlisted soldiers.

Q: When you left in late 2000, did you see China, then or in the near future, being a particular menace or threat to the United States?

MARTIN: I don't think so. I see China increasing its influence around its borders - Southeast and Central Asia - but don't see that it will necessarily threaten our vital interests. Southeast Asian nations are well aware of this 600-pound gorilla in their neighborhood, and they would just as soon have somebody else around to deflect the focus of China, There is strong support for the U.S. to remain actively engaged in the region. However, the countries don't want to have to choose sides. They don't want to have to say, "We will side with the U.S. against China," or "We'll side with China against the U.S." because they want to have as good relations with both sides as possible.China, at the same time I think, wants to have as calm and peaceful of a relationship with its neighbors as well as us, to be able to continue its economic development, and resolve its internal, domestic, economic, and increasingly political problems. And I think, hopefully, this will give everybody a chance to keep calm and continue to develop and maintain good relationships without a dustup.

Q: Outside of the always difficult issue of Taiwan, do you see any potential of China wanting other areas, being aggressive anywhere else?

MARTIN: China traditionally has not been an expansionist power although, depending on the strength of the dynasty, they have expanded, or contracted their control over border areas in Central Asia. I believe China's present borders, based on the furthest reach of the Qing Dynasty, probably are beyond what they should be. They could give autonomy to Tibet within the Chinese framework; and I think Tibet would be just as happy to have an autonomous relationship with the rest of China as long as they could preserve their unique culture. But Beijing is afraid that if it give any space at all, the minority areas would all just spin out of control, and drift off.

Q: Yes. Did South Korea and North play any role while you were there?

MARTIN: Yes. Kim Jong Il came to visit once when I was in Beijing. It was interesting to talk to my Foreign Ministry interlocutors about their impressions of Kim. They were surprised as well about how sophisticated he was, how much he knew about computers, and how he was well clued in on what was happening in China and the rest of the world. He's probably one of the few in North Korea that has a computer with Internet access, and so forth. He's also not the flake that many people in the U.S. make him out to be.Korea was very much on people's minds. China has good relations with South Korea which has complicated relations with the DPRK. They are somewhat discomforted by North Korea and not quite sure how to handle Pyongyang. They feel they have an obligation, for their own interest, to try to help North Korea in its transition into a more normal country, which will be difficult.

Q: Were they as concerned as we are about the hard versus soft landing of North Korea?

MARTIN: They don't want a collapse of North Korea 1) because they anticipate hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of North Koreans flooding across the Yalu River into Manchuria, where somewhere around 300,000 ethnic Koreans already live, some of them who've been there for generations. 2) They're also concerned about what that would do to South Korea, and 3) they're concerned what a united Korean peninsula would mean for their own security interests, particularly if it's allied to the United States. I think they are uncertain how to handle all these issues.I think the South Koreans don't want it to collapse either. They see what happened with East Germany, and this would be, you know, ten times or a hundred times worse.

Q: How did you feel relations between China and our Congress were? Did members of Congress come over to see things personally?

MARTIN: Congressional views of China were diverse but the most outspoken were the negative ones. Joe Prueher was very good at was making the rounds on the Hill. He, in fact, came out, and he thought after his confirmation that he might have been able to get a slight window of opportunity to even get Jesse Helms to come out to China, which would have been a real coup. Helms never did, of course. But there was an opportunity, I think, to try to bring more people out. Jim Sasser was good at bringing his former colleagues from the Senate out to China to visit, and we strongly urged members of Congress to come as often and as voluminously as possible. We said, "You may not change your mind, but come out and see it for yourself. Don't rely upon second or third hand interest groups to tell you what's happening in China. You need to see it." Most members who came out were absolutely surprised with what they saw because this was totally different from what they expected to find in China. We had, I think, almost every cabinet secretary in the administration come to China at one point or another during the one year I was there. So we had many delegations, many business people, some for talks, others just to see what was going on. I think it was very useful. We have a lot of things going on with China in terms of all parts of the government that are involved one way or the other. What you hear about in terms of the political friction is only a small percentage of our bilateral relationships, many of which go on without much interruption despite the political ups and downs. We have a lot of scientific exchanges with technical delegations going back and forth.

Q: You talk about exchanges. You know, I can understand what would come from our science and tech side. What were we getting from them?

MARTIN: Medical, health research, medical research processes, environmental studies. We're exchanging views, perhaps more from our side going to China to try to help them with some of their environmental degradation, which is very severe. There are a lot of science and technological areas in which we're working together - computer translation facilities in terms of linguistics, working on various agricultural resources, drought problems, again, environmentally related. Right now Beijing is under a dust cloud, usual spring dust storms, that make it so you can barely see across the street from the thickness of the dust. Everything is painted orange in color.

But you know, there are a lot of areas in which we have a lot of exchanges back and forth, and it's quite productive.

Q: How were Sino-Russian relations when you were in Beijing?

MARTIN: They seemed to be fairly good. Putin and Jiang exchanged visits. They had pretty much regularized their contacts. Part of it, in my view, was to still play the three-cornered game of keeping contacts with the Russians so it didn't look as though U.S.-China relations were the only game in town.

Q: And we're not even playing that game anymore!

MARTIN: We don't play that game anymore.

Q: Tell me about your involvement in the Taiwan issue during your tour in Beijing in 1999-2000.

MARTIN: I was in Beijing during a momentous time in Sino-US-Taiwan relations. Taiwan was coming up for another round of presidential elections in early March of 2000, and the PRC was getting exercised about this. The previous election, in 1996, when Lee Teng-hui was elected, was the cause for a great deal of friction in our relationship, and the cause of PLA military exercises in the Taiwan Strait.In the 2000 election, Chen Shui-bian was running on the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) ticket; James Soong on the People's First Party, the split off faction from the KMT; and Lien Chan, the KMT candidate. Lee Teng-hui could not run because of term limits, and so there was a great deal of uncertainty as to who was going to win among these three because the three-way contest was probably going to result in a minority candidate getting elected. The Chinese were very concerned about this because they saw the DPP and Chen Shui-bian as advocating a pro-independence policy, which was, in fact, one of the planks on the DPP's political platform for years.Early in the year we spent a lot of time talking with Chinese officials and scholars about the election, giving our views about what was happening in Taiwan, and essentially cautioning them not to do anything rash. However, China continued to ratchet up the rhetoric through January and February. The third week of February a high level interagency delegation came from Washington, led by Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott, with representatives from the Defense Department and other agencies, which gave it a rather high profile. They spent two or three days in Beijing having various senior level discussions with various elements in the Chinese government. Their message was to keep it cool, not to get excited about the Taiwan election, that U.S. policy had not changed, and that the election in Taiwan was something that Beijing should take handle with a great deal of caution.The delegation left, I think, on Friday afternoon. The ambassador left to go back to Washington on Saturday because he had previously scheduled consultations and discussions on the Hill. On Monday morning, the Chinese issued their White Paper on Taiwan, which contained for the first time what we came to describe as the third "if." Previously, Beijing had said that they would use force or military action against Taiwan if Taiwan declared independence. The second "if" was if a foreign country, unnamed, but obviously directed at us, occupied Taiwan or established military relationships with Taiwan. Now they added a third "if," which was that if Taiwan did not begin negotiations for reunification with the mainland under their "one China" policy. This third "if" caused a great stir all around the world, particularly in Washington.There was a great deal of concern as to why they issued the paper two or three days after the Talbott delegation had been there without any hint of their plan during the 3 days of talks. Was this a slap in the face of the U.S.? Was it a deliberate attempt to embarrass us? Was it an attempt to try to influence the Taiwan elections, which was probably the case? And so there was a considerable amount of discussion among analysts as to what this all meant.We quickly engaged in damage control. We made a number of official representations and held a number of discussions with Chinese leaders, indicating that we didn't think this was very helpful, and urging that they continue to be calm and cautious in their response.A couple weeks later, on March 18, 2000, Taiwan held its elections and sure enough, Chen Shui-bian won the presidency. For the first time, the KMT, the Kuomintang Party, was out of power in Taiwan. The Nationalist party Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek created in the 1910s had been defeated by democratic elections. or teens, and '20s. This was a momentous change politically in Taiwan. The Chinese authorities in Beijing were absolutely shocked. They were totally nonplused in terms of what to do now. It is important to remember that the KMT (Kuomintang Party) and the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) were sister parties. They were both established as Leninist parties by the Kuomintang back in the '20s. The relationship was such that they knew and understood each other since they both came from the same roots. But in recent years, as Taiwan became more democratic, particularly as Taiwanese (as opposed to transplanted mainlanders) assumed greater leadership within the Kuomintang, Beijing increasingly did not understand the political dynamic in Taiwan. So when Chen Shui-bian was elected, the PRC was absolutely astounded. They really had no idea how to react on this.Fortunately, I think because of their being so shocked and uncertain, they didn't do much. I don't give much of the credit to us for telling them to play it cool, although I think that did help. Essentially I think they reassembled their Taiwan experts to sort out 1) what went wrong, 2) why the experts had not predicted Chen's election, and 3) what they could do about it. Eventually, in April, what they finally came up with was a wait-and-see attitude, to see what Chen Shui-bian did. Obviously if he declared independence or if he started making noises along those lines, they would have to take strong action. But they would wait and see what he did. I think that was a good policy on their part as it reduced tensions and fears of peremptory action. With periodic spikes in rhetoric, Beijing has essentially continued their wait and see policy since then.

Q: What was your reaction and your embassy's reaction to the third "if"? Did you see it as a power play by one part of the Chinese government over another?

MARTIN: We had a lot of debates as to whether this was a PLA forcing the hand, whether this was a cleared document, whether this was something that the Foreign Ministry had not cleared. The Foreign Ministry had been the hosts for the Talbott delegation, and although the delegation had met with the PLA and Defense Ministry, it was essentially a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) show. The question we all discussed at great length was whether the MFA had been cut out of the decision? Was this a power play by the PLA and others in the state council, vis-ï¿½-vis Taiwan? I think the final conclusion, after a great deal of discussion, and talking to Foreign Ministry and PLA contacts was that it was a well cleared, inter-ministerial document which had been vetted throughout the government, and reflected a united PRC policy.Why they came out at that particular juncture, why they thought that this was necessary, is unclear. My view is that they were frustrated that Taiwan was not going in the right direction, that they had to lay down this additional condition, this warning that their patience was not infinite.

Q: Had there been any Taiwan politicians talking to Communist Party members in China or elsewhere?

MARTIN: The problem was they had not had a dialog. Ever since Lee Teng-hui, the president of Taiwan, had 1) gone to the States, and 2) been reelected, Beijing had turned off the dialog. The PRC had refused to continue what looked like a pretty good start back in 1992 when they had unofficial talks between the two unofficial organizations that had been set up on either side for cross strait dialog, and that looked as though it was going pretty well. But after '95, this was turned off on the Chinese side and not restarted. We constantly encouraged them to reopen the dialog, to find ways in which they could reestablish talks, reestablish connections, reestablish communications because there were a lot of issues that needed to be resolved. But this was not done at that point. It has been subsequently, although it's not on the formal level.

Q: Yes. It seems like the Chinese government makes these statements, and then, I mean they're, you know, crying, "Wolf! Wolf!" but most of the time, they're ones that really everybody knows, at least in the short term, aren't going to happen.

MARTIN: Well, you don't know that, I mean in a sense, because they've continued their missile buildup in Fujian Province and in the provinces that are facing Taiwan. They have been rattling the sword, if you will, at least in the PLA press and the PLA media, about Taiwan saying that, you know, their patience is not infinite, that they can't' wait forever, that they need to restart the talks. After Chen Shui-bian got elected, they waited a while to see what he would do, but then they continued to emphasize the need for "one country, two systems" for Taiwan to recognize "one China." Fortunately, I think Chen has been very cautious in his public statements and in his actions. He has repeatedly indicated a willingness to talk to the mainland, to have discussions with them, but he insists 1) on an equal basis, and 2) without the Chinese precondition of recognizing "one China," that Taiwan is part of "one China." Because of the way Beijing has defined it, "one China" means Beijing is the capital and Taiwan is a subordinate entity. It's not a province perhaps, but a subordinate entity under Beijing.

Q: You were a chargï¿½ when the third "if" came out. How were you received when you talked to officials?

MARTIN: They would reiterate their policy line, which followed what the White Paper had said, that this was their government policy, that they were concerned about Taiwan. They wanted to make sure that everybody understood their position. We reiterated our point that it was not helpful because it threw down the gauntlet. This added threat to use force was also destabilizing because of its vagueness in timing (how long a wait for Taiwan to unify was too long?).Also in March of 2000, the National People's Congress was holding its annual sessions in Beijing. Many people will remember the picture of Premier Zhu Rongji with his finger pointed in the air, shrilly saying that, the Taiwan situation is very dangerous, and in the forthcoming election the Taiwan people need to think carefully about who they're going to elect, etc. I think this was another blatant effort by Beijing to try to influence the elections in Taiwan. Once again, as it had been in the previous election, it backfired. Some believe it may have helped split the election returns three ways. Chen Shui-bian won only by about 39 percent of the vote, James Soong came in second with about 37, and the KMT candidate came in much lower, around 23 percent. Chen was elected president, but the KMT retained majority control of the Legislative Yuan. Chen has had a difficult time getting any of his program or legislative agenda through.

Q: Why was the KMT doing so well in the legislative assembly?

MARTIN: Basically local politics. They had the local election system pretty well sewn up, either through patronage, corruption, name recognition. Being the beneficiaries of the party in power for so long, they had a large war chest in the party coffers, and they were able to essentially spread the wealth around during elections, for roads, public services, etc. But that is how democracy works. One of the things that Chen has been trying to do since he was elected is to have electoral reform, to changes in the system by mandating better accounting, and more transparency in the electoral process. With democracy, if you don't have transparency, but have a dominant political party which has run everything for the last 50 some years, you've have a lot of networks and interests which can affect election results.

Q: Going back to Mainland China, did you see any seeds of democracy developing there?

MARTIN: I think there are indications of it. They have the much touted village elections, which they started at the lowest level, the village level. The township is the lowest level of governmental authority. The village, which is under the township, is perhaps equivalent to a neighborhood or community of several tens of houses. In the village elections, the government allows people who are not party members to run for election as village chiefs. In many cases party members still get elected. In other cases non-party members are. There's been a lot of foreign interest and attention to these elections. Former-President Jimmy Carter has been an observer; the Carter Center's been involved in monitoring and studying this process. I think it's a good step forward, but it has not moved very far. The National People's Congress pass a law to expand village level elections with the unstated suggestion that they might be elevated to the township or higher level eventually. It's a start, but it's got a long way to go as it is still below the bottom rung of the governmental bureaucratic structure. Often, if the non-party member is elected, he of she is then persuaded become party members. The elections thus become sort of an entry level test for the Party. People elected by their peers as being competent, uncorrupted, good leaders are attractive to the CCP.

Q: I think we touched on this before. Did you have the feeling the party, the ideology, was gone?

MARTIN: There's not much ideology left in the party. They still have the rhetoric. They still have their study sessions. President Jiang has come out with a campaign called the Three Represents, and everybody's trying to decide what this really means. It's his way to sort of follow in the tradition of Chairman Mao's thought, that he was a great ideologue and a great philosopher. But Jiang is not. Jiang is an engineer, and he's trying to come up with, you know, kind of a political mantra or political campaign, which can represent his ideology. It's not taken very seriously. Everybody has to study it in the party, but basically what the party is doing is finding ways to stay in power, and the way to stay in power is to continue the economic benefits to the people. Q: I notice you're talking about the three "ifs" and the three this, and the seven those. Just as aside, I imagine in the embassy, there must have been jokes in the corridor along the lines of ,"Oh, God, here is Martin with his four others and six formers...."

MARTIN: The four yes'es, three no's; the six do's, and four don'ts; and the one up, and two downs. There are lots of jokes around, within the China cadre about this. The Chinese themselves are rather inured to all this because they always have threes of this, fours of that, pluses and minuses, and so forth. But it's all part of the rhetoric that they've gone through for the last 50 years. And the numeration is just a short hand for longer campaign slogans used so even the most illiterate farmer can remember it. While foreigners may think the terminology humorous, the political campaigns can be deadly serious for Chinese. Much more so during Chairman Mao's day when people were killed or exiled during the incessant campaigns, but anyone in a government or Party position has to go along with the campaign de jour or risk his job.

Q: You'd been in and out of this for a while. Do you have any comments on the China hands, the ones like yourself and others who are coming around? Can you characterize them? I'm talking about the State Department and others who are dealing with China. Are they cynics? Are they optimistic? Do you have any feel for the thought process, including your own?

MARTIN: I think one cannot generalize on a diverse cohort across a broad time spectrum. Am I a cynic, or am I an optimist, or a pessimist? It depends on what day of the week you ask because it does vary. One's attitude and mood has its ups and downs, often influenced by the vagaries of our relations with China.Those of us who spent our careers studying or trying to learn about China, trying to understand China, realize the complexities of the country, realize the complexities of our relationship, and it's very difficult to make generalizations. It's dangerous to make generalizations. As Stapleton Roy, the former ambassador, has put it, which I think sums it up - predictions are very difficult, particularly about the future - and so you have to be very cautious in how you predict things. But if I have to generalize, my sense, is that over the last 20-25 years, China has gone through a tremendous period of change, a dramatic transition, both economically, under the economic reforms that were started by the former paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, and socially. But the social changes have not kept up with the economic changes. Now you have serious problems in the state-owned enterprise sector, the state sector of the economy, which basically is bankrupt. People are being thrown out of work, being thrown out on the street with no safety net after having been in the "birth-to-death" cocoon where the work unit took care of all one's personal needs. Lacking any national social safety net - unemployment insurance, social security, pension system, health benefits - millions are left on their own. These social problems quickly become political problems. The dramatic rise in public protests and demonstrations is the result. The government sees and understands the problems but has not been able to solve them.I think most of us who have dealt with China hope that the problems can be resolved peacefully and equitably. If they are not, the internal dislocations, strife, and friction will be tremendous, and the repercussions, certainly in the region and probably around the world, are going to affect all of us. There are optimists and pessimists. People are all across the board. The important thing to remember is that just because people know about China, have studied China, perhaps have an inkling of understanding about China, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are any more in favor of what the government is doing. Knowledge does not result in endorsement. Those of us who have lived and worked in China are probably among the strongest opponents and critics of the communist system for we see the weaknesses, the brutality and unfairness of the system which perpetuates and exacerbates the problems. At the same time, we recognize and credit the CCP and government for the successes it has had - economic development, rising standards of living for hundreds of millions, greater choices and opportunities for individuals. We try to report events as we see them, and I think generally report it in a fair and unbiased way.

Q: I've talked to many Soviet hands and many saw the Soviet Union as a potential if not present enemy. Their efforts within the United States have been to play China as an enemy given the PRC's buildup of its military force. So there are elements within the United States who look on China as being not only a trade rival, but a huge, looming military and political rival. Was this a feeling that permeates the China hand corps, of seeing it as the enemy?

MARTIN: I go back to the old saying, "Your position is determined by who issues you the paycheck. If you're with the Defense Department, your job is to look out to the future and think about potential rivals, potential competitors strategically, militarily. In the State Department, I think we look at it more in terms of how can we resolve this diplomatically, how can we work out an understanding or a relationship with China which will prevent us from becoming military competitors or rivals.I think that the important thing is that we try to work both sides of the issue; to maintain our preparedness militarily, but also work with China to try to prevent a zero sum game in which one side wins and the other loses. We can't lead them, but encourage them to see the rationale of moving in directions which will prevent them becoming a military competitor. I believe most FSOs support opening China for trade and encouraging China entering the WTO despite all the problems and difficulties that's going to cause. Educational exchanges, having people come to the States to study, can increase Chinese understanding of our society, what our system is like. Perhaps some of this will rub off, and moderate Chinese policies.The option is having China develop on its own, as we saw back in the '50s and '60s, when they were contained and isolated. That didn't turn out very well. The Great Leap Forward and subsequently the Cultural Revolution almost tore the country apart. China supported all sorts of insurgencies and conflicts with their neighbors. I think that's not something that we want to see in the future. Nor would we benefit it China falls apart and civil war breaks out between regions or ethnic minorities. An unstable, insecure China would cause far greater chaos in the region and world than what we see today.

Q: What about China's policies towards Central Asia, places like Kyrgyzstan on the border of China? With four and a half million people, they are a little bit nervous about having China with its billion and a half population next door. Did there seem to be much of an outward thrust towards those places, or concern about them?

MARTIN: When I was in Beijing, no, because the U.S. was not focused on Central Asia at the time. But China was attentive because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the new independent status of all these Central Asian countries. Beijing well understood the need to worry about what these weak, struggling nations would do. Historically, Central Asia was the area from which most of China's troubles came. The nomadic peoples were constantly pressing against the settled areas of the border lands. And, in certain periods, non-Han invaders, including the Mongols, conquered and ruled China. Currently, Beijing is concerned about ties between minorities in Xinjiang Province of Western China - Uighurs, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, and Tajiks - and their tribal counterparts across the border in Central Asia. And the growth of fundamental Islam and groups willing to use terrorism to advance political goals adds to China's concerns. At the same time, Beijing is eager to establish good working relations with the governments of Central Asian countries, for political, economic (mainly energy) and security reasons.

Q: So it's not as though China was casting greedy eyes towards the others.

MARTIN: There's no indication the Chinese, at this point, have any ambitions to expand their borders westward. They have enough problems managing the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. At the same time, there are economic issues, over which they want influence, particularly oil and gas resources as well as minerals. Since 9/11, the increased U.S. presence in the region as part of our war on terrorism is of greater concern to China. Many in Beijing see U.S. military forces on their western borders as just the final brick in the containment wall that we are building around China. You talk about people in this country seeing China as a future military or security threat. The Chinese look at our policies, look at where we are, and they see us increasing our presence all around China, and they begin to wonder, "Who's the threat? Are we a threat to the U.S. or is the U.S. a threat to us?"It's a mirror perception. They are concerned about what our policies are, and they often, as we used to say, put two and two together and get five and a half or six. Many Chinese perceive a grand orchestrated U.S. strategy by the U.S. to contain or keep China down from its rightful place in the world. They see our trade and military policies, our diplomatic initiatives as being manipulated and controlled by a master hand in the White House or someplace. These are the perceptions that we need to address in our bilateral relations.

Q: While you were there, did India come up? It's going to surpass China in population soon, and it's had a completely different experience. With all its problems, it is a democracy, and things are moving there. Was China looking over its shoulder at India?

MARTIN: I think the Chinese are paying more attention to India now. They've always had their alliance relationship with Pakistan because Pakistan was the only one that supported China's policies around the world. They saw India as a potential and a growing rival, both in geopolitical terms as well as a potential threat to their control over Tibet and the Himalayan regions. They also see democratic India as an alternative model for the third world, which China always sees itself as. They keep saying that they don't want to be a leader of the third world. They're just one of the gang. But they do see their system and their ways of doing things as an example for other underdeveloped countries. And China's successful economic development is quite a selling point.

Q: India's restrictive trade practices, which are finally being removed, are in a way has almost an advantage over the Chinese, because they have many aspects of the Western world.

MARTIN: Right. They have an underlying foundation of the British common law system, which the British left them. They have more of a rule of law than China has. But I think the countries are very different in many ways. The chaotic nature of Indian politics and society makes Chinese blanch. And Indians looking at China see it potentially as a hostile power. In reality, if you look at geopolitical relationships, the Himalayans are a wonderful barrier! Not much gets through there! There are a few passes, but it's not a broad boulevard in which you're going to send lots of goods, people, or troops back and forth. There are certain areas in which they rub up against each other, and there's friction, but it's not the north German plain. The WTO angle is interesting. India, of course, was quite concerned about China joining WTO, mainly from a competitive point of view. The end of textile quotas in 2005 made other textile producers, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, concerned that there's going to be a great sucking sound as China took all the textile markets around the world by being the low cost producer. While it has not reached that extent, China and India are essentially economic competitors.

Q: Yes. Are there any other areas we should cover?

MARTIN: I want to mention about PNTR, about WTO.

Q: Yes.

MARTIN: The conclusion of 13 years of Sino-U.S. negotiations on China's entry into the WTO in November 1999, just before I got to Beijing, led directly into one of the main issues on our plate during my year tour. That was getting Congress to pass a bill giving China Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status. Once China entered the WTO, the old Most Favored Nation (MFN) trading status became illegal. So the annual congressional debate over China's human rights behavior warranted renewal of China's MFN, renamed Normal Trading Relations(NTR) status. Congressional critics of China and human rights groups' used the annual debate to castigate Beijing's poor performance although Administration advocacy always assembled enough votes to renew NTR.For several months in the spring of 2000, beginning around the time of the Taiwan election, we launched a concerted effort in conjunction with the administration in Washington to convince Congress to pass the Permanent Normal Trade Relations bill. Commerce Secretary William M. Daley was the point man in D.C., coordinating the efforts of other Cabinet secretaries and departments. He and Agriculture Secretary Daniel Glickman were to organize congressional delegations to China, to talk to the Chinese, determine Chinese perspectives, and learn how the Chinese were going to implement the WTO agreement to which they had agreed. That spring was a contentious time in our relations. The Cox report on China's nuclear espionage highlighted the Wen Ho-lee case in Los Alamos in which Wen was accused of selling warhead secrets to the Chinese. Perhaps to mollify human rights critics, the administration decided to again submit a proposal to examine China's human rights record at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) annual meeting. All these things came together along with the Taiwan elections in the first half of 2000, making it a tense time in our relationships, and a very busy embassy.The PNTR campaign went well and in the end, obviously, Congress did pass the legislation. Secretary Daley and Secretary Glickman were unable to get very many members of Congress who were willing to come out to China at that point, I think for domestic political reasons more than anything else. Many Members felt it was not politically wise to be seen traveling to China for whatever reason, so we only had a couple congressmen that came out with Glickman. But I think it was a useful campaign, and the legislation passed by a larger majority than we expected.

Passage of PNTR in the late summer removed a big thorn from our bilateral relationship. I believe our public, transparent campaign impressed the Chinese and began a period of improved relations after more than a year of tension and problems. But those of us working in China get used to undulations Chinese-U.S. relations and we expect improvements to be followed by new issues. And the next spring we had the EP-3 incident.

Q: How about the Olympics? Does that come up during your time?

MARTIN: The Olympics was after my time. Obviously, they were very much in the throws of preparing their case. The Olympic committees came for visits, Beijing was being spruced up with grass plantings to make it all look cleaner, etc.We had visits by almost every cabinet member in the U.S. government during the time I was there. I think only the Secretary of Labor, who kept planning to come, but never could quite get away, was the only one that didn't come. Two that came in the summertime were Secretary of State Albright and Secretary Cohen of Defense. Quite a contrast between the two - the Secretary of State now travels in a much more imperial fashion than others, and the contrast between Secretary Albright's visit and Secretary Cohen's visit was quite dramatic. For Albright's visit, nearly all normal Embassy functions were sidelined as the Secretariat had to be staffed 24 hours a day, site officers had to dedicate themselves to each site and event, and the ambassador and I were on call if not involved most of the time. Two weeks later, Secretary Cohen came in, on a USAF airplane, as she did, but accomplished his visit with hardly a ripple or disruption other than perhaps the Defense Attachï¿½ office. Cohen's visit was much lower key with minimal storm and stress.

Q: This does raise a point. Secretary Albright had a reputation within the Foreign Service that was not a warm, cozy relationship. Part of it was because of the feeling that she was somewhat cut off, and public relations, particularly the people around her, were more important than the substance. Did you have that feeling or concern?

MARTIN: I think in many ways this was similar to other secretaries we've had, where the secretary tends to have his or her own circle of advisors and staff, and people that she or he trusts and works with. My experience, having served under secretaries, is that the morale, efficiency, and effectiveness of the State Department is best when the secretary draws upon the expertise and the resources of the department and the Foreign Service. When they isolate themselves, and use their own coterie of advisors and their own staff, and don't let the professionals in, you have bad morale, more security leaks, and you don't have very good foreign policies.

Q: Describing the American-Chinese relationship, it's a little bit like dealing with a jealous spouse or partner who is always looking behind comments and actions for hidden meaning. It makes for a very stormy relationship.

MARTIN: Yes, you could use that analogy, or you could say it shows a basic lack of trust between two parties. One often doesn't quite know why the other side is doing something. You don't know what they're going to do next, and you're not sure of your relationship with them. Whether it's a marriage, or a bilateral relationship, it's a matter of history and past actions. One of the things those of us who study and work in China try to do is to look at the total picture - history, culture, perceptions, relationships - and try to figure out why they're doing these things. They don't do them just for fun or because they want to be mean to us. They do them for historical, psychological, internal, domestic, political reasons. The important thing now, looking at China's reaction to events, in addition to all those mentioned above, is to remember China is changing so rapidly. It is not the totalitarian country it used to be. It's not a dictatorship run by Mao, who could do what he wanted, no matter how crazy it was, and no one dared object. Now there are interest groups in China, different factions, different sectors, that all have a strong voice in the councils of government, and they make their views known. In WTO relationships, how do you implement the WTO agreements that they've had? You've got a lot of people in different ministries who are going to drag their heels as best they can because its their ox that's going to be gored. Premier Zhu Rongji came under heavy pressure from the Agriculture Ministry after he signed the WTO agreement which gave many concessions on agricultural imports. That would never have happened twenty or thirty years ago. Everyone doesn't just salute and go along with the leader's decision anymore.

Q: One last question. There was a nuclear spy episode in the United States. That happened during your time there.

MARTIN: Yes. Wen Ho-lee, the Chinese-American scientist in Los Alamos.

Q: Obviously, both the United States and the Chinese are going to be looking at each other in not completely overt ways. Was Chinese spying in the United States, from your perspective, a problem in our bilateral relationship?

MARTIN: It certainly is an irritant. Both government know both sides seek to obtain classified information of the other. It's an irritant mainly because they do it. We do it to them; they do it to us. It's a very different kind of spying than what we're used to, at least according to movies and the historical record in terms of the Soviet Union or the Eastern Europeans. You don't have people in trench coats making secret drops or handoffs, and this sort of thing. That may be part of it but the Chinese methodology is like a giant vacuum cleaner. They just suck up everything that they can get, and they have the resources to do it. Thousands of Chinese students are in the U.S., some of which undoubtedly work for of report to the Ministry of State Security. There are growing numbers of travelers, visiting officials, as well as hundreds if not thousands of people sitting at computer terminals in China on the Internet, picking up every little piece of information they can about a long list of topics. And eventually, little by little, the missing pieces of the puzzle, or unknown fact, can be reassembled. There is an enormous amount of information in public domain in this country and other countries around the world on just about everything, from strategic issues to weapons systems, to economic data, to commercially sensitive data, etc. So do the Chinese on us? They do it through agents, but they also do it through Chinese students, scientists, travelers, officials who are encouraged to look for information of specific topics while in the U.S. and then debriefed on their return. It can be as simple as, "What did you learn in the States?" They are able to learn a lot as we have a lot to offer.

Q: But can they do anything with all the information they suck up?

MARTIN: Too much information is a problem for all of us. Sorting it out and knowing what is useful and what is not is a challenge. But the Chinese are patient and have a wealth of resources devoted to it. We just need to ensure we don't make it easier for them.

To sum up my Foreign Service career, I would say it has been fascinating to be a witness to the dramatic changes in Asia over the past 40 years. By spending most of my time on China and Southeast Asia, I think I had some of the most interesting and rewarding assignments. The great aspect of being involved with China is that it is a fascinating country to study. As the Chinese say, "You can study until you're old, you can learn until you're old, but there's still a large percentage that you'll never know." So I often describe myself not as an expert but as a mere student of China. I left Beijing the end of September 2000 and re-retired, but remained connected to the Department as a contractor, chairing the area studies course for China and Northeast Asia.

Following that, from 2004 to 2007, I worked for the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) to facilitate the peace talks between the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF),... but that is another story.

End of interview