

September 22, 1971

Mr. Harvey M. Ames Jr.  
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Dear Harvey:

My delay of replying to your letter of June 11 is partly because I fanned it out to various people who might help in regard to your career plans. Regarding training, they ascertained that you have never contacted your backstop, Alberta Talbert, A/PM, Room 406 B, Rosslyn Plaza, A.I.D.. If you want training at some point you should contact her directly. She is very helpful. I have been universally told that the FSI Economics course is outstanding and suggest you take that if you decide to go for training.

I was transferred from VTC in June and now have a sort of staff job in East Asia as Special Assistant for Narcotics Control. The idea is to get East Asian countries to stop producing the stuff, which may be easier than trying to prevent sale of the finished product on the American streets. Most of the action is in State or the Bureau of Narcotics at this stage, although A.I.D. will play a major role in the long run. After my brief trip to Vietnam last January, I went again to Bangkok in June, spending a couple of days in Saigon on the return trip, and recently took three weeks vacation, two in Tunisia and one in Montana. I believe you are familiar with the Rockies, but I must say that even the wilds of West Virginia seem pretty tame by comparison. I am a wild dry fly fisherman and the solitary matching of wits with trout in a mountain stream in the Rockies must be the closest thing to paradise on earth, at least as regards nontropical paradises. Actually 1971 has been a poor year healthwise although I am in better shape now.

Regarding your career, I suspect that, for a period of years, the main interest and action will not be in the foreign aid field, but rather in domestic affairs, particularly the environment, and possibly in the private sector overseas. The day when the world was a great big vacuum with everybody needing what America had to offer and wanted to give away has gone. Now we seem to be in the position of wanting to export our problems rather than our solutions, and naturally the market is more limited. Obviously there will be a lot of social work being done

overseas, but I do think the great days of foreign aid are over for the time being, if not permanently. If I were your age I would be receptive to involvements in other frontiers. One example: How to prevent the remaining marvelous areas of the U.S. from being loused up by the combined forces of population and industries. It is a very complex problem, obviously. Places like Montana and Idaho are still great only because people have a hard time making a living there, which keeps the population pressure down. How could one increase the prosperity of those areas without inevitably attracting more people, and if more people came, how could they coexist with nature so as not to destroy it? This would seem to be a major challenge for your generation. On the other hand, you might want to just make money in a lush tropical setting, which would be great until age 50, after which you would tend to become a character from Somerset Maugham or Joseph Conrad, etc.

In any case you state you will be here around New Year. Clearly we should have a reunion at the farm in West Virginia. You can dig holes in the ice for me to put trees into in the spring. Maybe you could round up Mary Maughan and Susan Crane to liven things up a bit. I guess they are about as opposite as girls can be but I like them both. Above all, let me know how things are going in Vietnam now. The press here has always taken the view that everything was going to hell in a handbasket out there, or they hoped it would, whereas the operators in the field for their part tended to overlook the deficiencies of the Vietnamese out of appreciation or sympathy for their good qualities. What are the odds that the South Vietnamese will hack it after the United States air and artillery are removed, or before? The enemy is nasty but he has always been willing to fight for what he wants, whereas the Southerners are much nicer and don't want to be taken over but are less fanatical about fighting for what they want.

Hoping to hear from you soon,

All the best,

Ogden Williams

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