

Hawaii Vietnam Training Center Debriefing

INTERVIEW WITH MR. BERT FRALEIGH

at the University of Hawaii - Vietnam Training Center,
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First of all, ^{let me} give you a little background about myself personally.

personal

I am 46 years old. I started working in Asia, courtesy of the U. S. Navy in Saipan in some of the landings there. I worked in Navy Civil Affairs as a pharmacist mate, both for the U. S. Marines and a U. S. Navy Civil Affairs team ~~with primarily~~, ^{studied civil engineering at} ~~at Fairbanks,~~ ^{at Fairbanks,} ~~Okinawans in 1944~~ Prior to that I ~~went to the University of Alaska~~, and my first real contact with non-caucasian culture came with the Alaskan Indians in building ^{at Galena} an air field in central Alaska in 1942. I ~~studied civil engineering in Alaska~~. I was in the Aleutian Islands for eight or nine months--I enjoy rough and wild areas which might explain some of my adventuresome spirit. I ~~got out to Asia with the Navy as a pharmacist mate.~~ In Saipan I worked directly with ~~Okinawan~~ ^{Japanese} civilian prisoners of war; people we had encouraged to come out of the hills, ~~there and~~ ^{who} had not attempted to commit suicide. We helped to resettle them and build a considerable ^{infrastructure} ~~civil support unit~~ for them. I worked directly with them, ~~utilized them and supervised them.~~ ^{utilized them and supervised them.} We achieved ^{local} a very rapid rapport and they were able to work quickly; ~~if even~~ ^{had} ~~the Navy Seabees working next to us,~~ ^{not more quickly than the} ~~Seabees in similar constructions.~~ ^{and was}

From there, I went on to Okinawa; ~~I~~ was shipwrecked in a big typhoon there just ~~at~~ ^{after} the end of the war and lived on the beach ~~there~~ ^{local} with some folks for awhile. I was ~~very~~ ^{deeply} impressed with the poverty and very sad conditions. I happened to read ~~UNRRA~~ ^{by} (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) about the ~~UNRA~~ ^{in TIME magazine} ~~so~~ ^{and} I thought ~~that~~ I would like to go to China and help out in the China situation because I felt you couldn't have these two very different standards of living such as we enjoyed and the Asian people were ^{poverty} ~~enjoying~~ ^{enduring} ~~coexisting~~ in the world. So I wrote a letter expressing the same idea and surprisingly, I got an offer to go to Shanghai with the UNRA. I went out to China with the understanding that I was going into the ^{Yellow River} flooded areas which were up ⁱⁿ Honan province but I never really made it much beyond Shanghai. But I did make it to Shanghai and immediately went to work with the Chinese people and that started my

involvement with China. I made very many interesting contacts. I was always working on an operational sort of thing, not very much with theory or not very much in a scholastic type of bent. In so doing, I was recognized as being very ~~friendly and~~ ^{friendly and} ~~sympathetic~~ ^{friendly or} ~~a good foundation~~ and got along very, very well with the people. During that experience I met Chou En-lai and had a fairly good friendship with him, and also of course, many of the Chinese Nationalist leaders. I stayed on when the UNRA ^R closed and became one of the first employees of the first United States ~~AID~~ ^{AID} mission to China in December 1947. I stayed on in China in that capacity until the Chinese Communists entered Shanghai and I then went to work as the manager of ~~an~~ ^{a large} American firm there, a bakery ^{/ confectionary} ~~type~~ with about four hundred employees and also operated some restaurants there. I had some real interesting experiences in that job. That was during the period of the Chinese Communist occupation. It took me nineteen months to get out of that, although I didn't really try until I was there about eight months and I saw it was a hopeless situation ^{business wise}. Then I tried to leave the country and finally succeeded eleven months later after some hair raising experiences-- including a lot of brain washing and all the rest of it. I then went back to the United States and worked a year with the Asia Foundation in San Francisco. I didn't like that because it was very sedentary, they were theorists and not ^{action} ~~actively~~ oriented. I then volunteered and applied to go back with AID and I went into Formosa with AID in June 1952 and stayed there for nine and a half years, although I went to other nearby Asian countries for short periods. During that time in Taiwan, I married a Chinese girl and became (I think I can speak without too much modesty or immodesty) probably the foremost American authority on Formosa and also one of the most knowledgeable persons on Communist China. I know many of the leaders in Communist China and I also know the Communists inside-out. I've been subjected to them. I speak Mandarin very fluently and can read it (although mostly newspapers).

Question: How did you learn Chinese?

Answer: Just by association. During the Communist period, I learned the Shanghai dialect because ~~that was~~ ^{there were} hours on end of indoctrination and different sorts of meet-

ings and what not. I worked in Taiwan on a number of very interesting programs and some of them were very complicated and difficult programs for AID, and as such, I became known as (you might say) the great expiditer and trouble shooter. I was sent over to Laos to work in the rural program and when I got over to Laos I met this fellow ^{Ruf}_^ Philips, and he and I worked together. Our views usually ^{were} ~~are~~ too rich for the blood of the average AID mission and it takes people who understand or are operationally oriented to get along with us. So neither he nor I were terribly popular over in Laos because what we were trying to do was just not understood by our contemporaries. This was in 1959 and 1960. Philips then went back to the United States and left government service. However, he was a good friend of General Lansdale and he had worked previously with General Lansdale in Vietnam when he was a very young Army captain. He is a graduate of Yale and an outstanding football player, and a great big tremendous man--a hulk of a fellow but with a tremendous mind; very much in the ^{view} of John Kennedy; very young and with the same kind of courage and dynamic feeling. This feeling, of course, transmits immediately to Asian people; he had a tremendous empathy with the Asians. Although he was only twenty-three, he became very much respected by Vietnamese leaders, Ngo Dinh Diem and the rest of them. Meanwhile, back in Washington, the situation in Vietnam was becoming more and more alarming and General Taylor went out to Vietnam in late 1961 and made a study of the situation for the jointschiefs of staff and also for the president. He came back stating that we had to take some pretty quick, definite action out there or we were going to be confronted with just what has materialized. The AID mission out there was not oriented in any way toward what was happening in the country. One of his recommendations, of course, was to help the government of Vietnam ^{de}centralized and become effective and responsive to the needs^s of the people. In order to implement this, they looked around in Washington for somebody to go out and do the job. They talked to the Department of Defense and General Lansdale ^{who} at that time was in the Dept. of Defense and he suggested Ruf Philips. Philips ^{was} went out and selected to do the job; and Philips knew me and knew that I knew AID.

Philips had not previously worked with AID; when he was in Laos he was working with CIA. He asked if I could be made available to join him in his studies; I didn't know anything about this until I received a cable in Taiwan asking me to go, so I did go. When I got to Saigon, the 11th of May, 1962, Philips had already been there a few days. He and I stayed in a small room he had and we operated for about twenty-three days analyzing the situation from all aspects and based upon which we developed a report to AID Washington with recommendations. We found when we got there that the AID mission at that time had approximately one hundred and twenty people on its roles in Vietnam, and of that number only three were actually stationed outside Saigon. It was pretty much a business as usual operation, although the mission had already taken some steps to implement what they called a counter-insurgency program and they were pointed in this direction. Fortunately, the ^{Saigon AID} ~~mission~~ ^{Bill Fippin}, acting director of the ~~mission~~, had worked previously in Taiwan with the JCRR as an agriculturalist. He knew me and had confidence in me so he was willing to listen to anything that I would recommend. Philips was also accepted with him. So we got full cooperation from him. Had we gone into an alien situation it would have been much more difficult. We suggested immediately that it was necessary to orient the AID mission toward (we were using the word at that time) a counter-insurgency operation and get representation as rapidly as possible throughout the country. We found that throughout the country in most provinces there were already ^{US military} MAAG sector advisors--now the sector means an advisor to the ^{Province} ~~Province~~ Chief and he is a military man. So there were small teams of American military men in most of the provinces--very small teams, maybe five or six men. But no civilians out there. Meanwhile, we found that Ngo Dinh Diem was already going to embark on the Strategic Hamlet program, in fact he tried a few operations under this--the first operations had been launched. There had been some American support from the AID side but it was not really programmed or directed. He was anxious to move right ahead in that direction. Almost overnight, Philips and I developed ^a framework for ^{carrying} ^{to the provinces} American aid and an ^{for this} Organizational Administration and a program. We did this not independent of the

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Vietnamese—we were in complete consultation with the Vietnamese and in complete coordination with their plans for the Strategic Hamlet Program. Because we did this working with the Vietnamese, which is not the way the U. S. often works, but because we did it hand in hand with them, we got their support and we got them to agree to some things that ordinarily could only be achieved by very high diplomatic negotiations. Since Philips had this ^{to Pres. Diem} entre and this great personal contact—they trusted him—I also was able to ^{Empathize with} ~~express empathy for~~ them—they agreed without any kind of real diplomatic negotiations. For instance, the placement of Americans ^{civilians} in each province as ^{and development} advisors to their Province Chiefs.

Question: Who did you deal with at the Vietnamese level?

Answer: Philips would explain ^{ideas & programs} ~~this~~, if necessary, to President Diem himself. Otherwise, he would explain ^{them} ~~this~~ to the Secretary of State at the Presidency (?), a man by the name of Tuan and Tuan could usually give approval. It was a ~~very~~ unique situation, I think perhaps unprecedented anywhere, that we were able to do so much in such a short period and get so many things going and done.

Question: With Philips would you say it was his personality rather than anything else? Did he speak Vietnamese?

Answer: No, he did not but he did speak French. It was his personality, his prior contacts with the Vietnamese government and the fact that they trusted him. Also it might have been known that he was close to General Lansdale and General Lansdale had the complete confidence of Diem. Also there had been a cleavage between the ^{official} Americans and the Vietnamese—a continually ^{widening} ~~widened~~ cleavage—so Ngo Dinh Diem was extremely happy to see Philips arrive on the scene because he felt that here was an American he knew and trusted and ^{one who} would work in the best interests of Vietnam. He was not always sure that other Americans ^{would run} ~~were~~, not by purpose necessarily, but he felt that many Americans were opposed to him. So there was always this suspicion toward the Americans but he did not have this suspicion toward Rufe Philips, at least, it was not visible. I was coming up with many of the ideas and ^{handling} Philips was ^{by} getting them bought ~~at~~ the Vietnamese. I must say he did an absolutely

marvelous job. We came up with the idea, in order to carry through the decentralization, placing civilian provincial representatives as rapidly as possible in each province. They would have authority to work with the province chief and advise him on all matters of civil operations. We also decided to position directly at the province level resources through Vietnamese channels (American resources, money and commodities) which would be utilized in plans developed at the province level by the province chief and his staff and the USAID provincial representative. This was a completely new concept; in fact, this was decentralization. Formerly if anything happened at the province level it was something that was planned and developed in ~~and implemented by Saigon bureaucrats thru infrequent provincial visits.~~ Saigon. Very seldom had any kind of input ~~from~~ from the province itself, and it was a long, long way from a Ministry in Saigon to the province--getting anything really down. In order to make this really work--there was a little sweetener for President Diem--the United States agreed to provide the equivalent of ten million US dollars ~~Vietnamese~~ ^{dollars} in piasters. We actually imported and purchased from the Bank of Vietnam ten million dollars in piasters and we put these piasters out in kind to be utilized at the province level for approved activities developed at province level but approved within the broad framework of the counter-insurgency program. We also put these out to be ~~by the Province Chief, the MAC Sector Adviser and the Aid Provincial Representative, approved~~ ^{Agreement} and this was a key point that we were able to put across and we put it across without any negotiation whatsoever. This was just incredible viewed in retrospect that these piasters and commodities which we were using to back them up could only be utilized based upon a joint sign-off of the province chief or his representative, ~~and the MAC Sector Adviser.~~ This gave us two things; it gave us a certain amount of control over the way ~~the money~~ and commodities used, ^{would be} and it also gave us some assurance that they ~~were~~ not diverted. It gave the Vietnamese something too; it gave them a chance to share responsibility for actually expending money and commodities on a local level.

and if there was any difficulty in getting this across, it would be to collect this information from the Vietnamese having the right to veto.

Question: Was there any difficulty in getting this concept across?

Answer: No. We conceived this ourselves at, let's say, eleven o'clock in the morning; at three o'clock in the afternoon the ~~Vietnamese~~ ^{Rafe Phillips} had called the Secretary

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of State ~~at~~ the Presidency ~~of~~ and he agreed to telephone; ^{by} five o'clock in the afternoon the instructions went out ^{to the Provinces}. That was really one of the most important things, I think, we ever did in South Vietnam. However, subsequently this was destroyed by a new AID ~~Mission~~ ^{James} Director who arrived on the scene in 1964, a person by the name of James Killen. He walked in and he was the type of man who arrived and felt that everything that ever happened before he got there was wrong. One of the things that he was most adamant about was this idea of a joint sign-off. There was something interesting about the joint sign-off because actually when we first started and first made our recommendations in ~~April May and June~~ ^{May 1963, May & June of 1962} ~~for~~ ^{for} this type of program to be carried out, we didn't really start ^{the whole program} ~~it~~ right at that moment. We did leave the framework and we left behind a man delegated from the AID mission to go ahead in this direction. Then we went back and presented a report on how this program should be carried out by sending people to the provinces, by sending out money and material to the provinces, delegating responsibility at the provincial level, support from Saigon as required by technical divisions, a Counterinsurgency Committee within the USAID ~~Mission~~ and within the whole US ~~Government~~ ~~Mission~~ in Saigon including the military and the embassy and the CIA and the US Information Service, to coordinate activities and to get things pumped into this counterinsurgency pipeline and out to the end. This ^{was} ~~is~~ essentially the basis of our recommendations, and these were submitted by Philips when he returned to Washington in mid-June and I went back to Taiwan. He submitted these and they were immediately bought. He also suggested they set up an office in the AID mission in ~~Office~~ ^{with an Assistant Director that there would be} Saigon known as the Assistant Director for Rural Affairs. That meant ~~there was a~~ ^{an} Director of the mission, a Deputy Director, and two Assistant Directors (there was an assistant director for program and economic policy).

Question: Did you have any talks with the military advisors and JUSPAO (or whatever was present at that time on the American side) before you presented ~~it to them~~ your proposal to the Vietnamese government?

Answer: On many of these things, no. We did discuss at great length with the US military what the problems were and what needed to be done but on some of these

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smaller matters, we did not. We did get clearance from the US side about the idea of sending people out as ^{USOM} provincial ~~Representatives~~. The military was very happy about that.

Question: This is what I wondered--if the military thought they could do it just as well if not better.

Answer: Not at that time. They were exceedingly happy. They did not see this as their responsibility. They were very happy to see the civilians step in for the first time and show some interest in taking responsibility ~~and~~ to do something. At that time, there was no jealousy of any kind on the part of the military toward what we were trying to do. We had full support from them.

Philips presented this report and immediately, AID said, "All right. We buy this. We want to set up this office you recommend. Now we want to get somebody to do the job. Who can do the job?" Then finally prevailed on Lansdale to prevail on Philips to go back. Philips then prevailed on me, so we both went back together after some hesitancy. I arrived there first, ^{about} the 20th of September, 1962 and Ruf arrived about ^{two} weeks later. I was really the first person on board with authority to implement the program fully as we laid it out. It was at that time that we went ~~through~~ ^{about} dispatching the first ~~provincial~~ ^{representative}. As I recall, I arrived in Saigon on the 20th of September and we dispatched the first ~~provincial~~ ^{representative} on the 28th of September. 1962.

Question: Where did you find the first people?

Answer: That was very interesting. We asked for volunteers from the existing AID personnel and nobody would go. So we deputized an IVS man who had been in the country for some time. The first person to go was an IVS fellow by the name of Bob McNeill. ~~Phu Yen Province~~ ~~He~~ ~~who may still be in VIETNAM~~. He went to Phu Yen province as our first ~~representative~~. We sat down before he went and gave him sort of a charter on what he was supposed to do, and what his job was, and how we thought. I still have copies of that letter, incidentally; historically this is rather interesting. I would say that what we authorized him to do and the way to do it has not changed particularly from what

the men are still authorized to do today. This pattern, incidentally has subsequently been copied in some other countries ~~of~~ with Aid operations.

Question: This was entirely something that you thought up or was there a model for it?

Answer: When we were up in Laos we attempted to do something like this but we got bogged down in bureaucracy. We had had some thinking on what should be done but in Laos we actually had gotten some people out who we called USOM representatives but they didn't have this authority to work at local level and develop ^{from there} it and have resources in their hands to work ^{with} it and to respond immediately to local needs.

Question: In view of this question that comes up repeatedly as to what kind of a person is best equipped to do this job; what kind of a person would you send out?

Answer: Philips, when he came out to Vietnam to work in this job was only twenty-nine years old. I, myself, am always oriented toward young people and I have always, thought from the beginning that younger men are the best. I think ~~they~~ need a little bit of experience in the country; ~~and they have motivation~~, they are ^{more} willing to accept ~~the~~ direction; they are also not so troubled with theory; they are able to go out and to learn quickly; they have the energy, the health, the motivation and the empathy with the local people and can push things ^{thru}. A lot of people say that the Asians respect age and you can't get anywhere unless you are old. The people ^{with} we were dealing generally were young Province Chiefs and young District Chiefs. On the Vietnamese side ~~the~~ officials were quite young--the senior officials ^{most senior} ~~excepting the technical service functionaries~~. ~~not the service chiefs at the province level who are mostly old~~, In a sense, what we were trying to do anyway was to hit ^{all of} them with young ideas too. If Vietnam is a failure today, it is because, I think, of this old mentality, and as we call it ^{"lycée} ~~for the name for French Schools~~ Mandarin.

Question: You haven't changed your view in other words?

Answer: No, not at all and neither has Philips. Philips was able to draw on people he had worked with previously in Laos and other countries, and to recruit. So he put together, in Washington while he was getting ready to come out in September, about ^{Almost} twelve or fifteen fellows that he knew. ^{All of them were young and energetic--a few}

were people who had worked with Lansdale in the Philippines; they were more of a senior type who could, in a sense, also give direction to some of these younger men. We got our men there, and we immediately attracted in Vietnam a number of young people to us. Many people had been sitting there for a number of years and they were feeling very frustrated. Not so many from within the AID mission, although a few. They were more from within the military ^{set} up and people whose military duty was nearly up. ^{there were young} Of course, a lot of the people who had two years service with IVS and spoke pretty good Vietnamese. Then a few people throughout the world heard about this and they all wanted to get in. These fellows came over and they formed the first group of men that we sent out to the provinces.

Question: You must have decided very early that you were going to take Americans only and not nationalists of other countries--you might have thought of Filipinos?

Answer: We did take a number of Filipinos but most of the Filipinos we took were Filipinos who had acquired American citizenship--men from the Philippine Army who had opted for American citizenship. In that category, we took about three men and some of them are still in Vietnam.

Question: ^{we} The reason for this was that because this was a government organization ^{in a} you had to have citizens?

Answer: In a sense yes, although neither Philips nor I care about that. That was an unnecessary qualification. We don't necessarily agree that this job could not be done better by Asians. In fact, we would prefer to do most of the work by Asians, even to this day. This is especially true in the agricultural field. We did bring down from Taiwan Chinese agriculturalists and they are infinitely better than most of the American agriculturalists because they understand tropical agriculture and they understand Asian agriculture, both of which are different than what most American county agents are used to. We also brought in, at a very early date, through contract with the Filipinos, a number of men who worked with President ^{MacArthur} (~~MacArthur~~?) in the Philippines and they served with us as civil affairs advisors, (*Viet Cong Surrender*) and subsequently in the Chieu Hoi program. From the beginning, we had an idea of

operations that was different than anything the United States normally had--it was more or less of a gung-ho Special Forces type of thing, that is, an esprit de corps, team work idea. We told our people that we were going out to these provinces and we were going

to support them with only per diem, we expected them to manage the rental and obtaining of their own house; their own food and everything else; we were not going to utilize the limited support aircraft to carry out ~~buddha~~ gas for their stoves or refrigerators or any of that sort of thing; they were going to live off the economy out there; we were not going to spend all of our time with administrative back-up or housekeeping.

The kind of men that we recruited loved that idea, in other words, there was a Peace Corps type of feeling among these people. They were so fed up with the traditional AID way of doing things, that they didn't want to have any part of it and they wanted to go with the pendulum swinging over the other way completely. We capitalized on that. We also wanted to keep our organization very small but very close and very hard hitting; we wanted to keep it very, very close to the Vietnamese side. That's why we wanted to keep only one ~~man~~ ^{American} in each province, if possible, plus picking up young Vietnamese to work with our people, not as interpreters (from the very beginning we refused to call them interpreters)-we called them area specialists or area assistants. Actually one of their main functions was interpreting for many of these people who had not been in Vietnam previously, but we wanted them to feel that they were involved in a revolutionary effort, too; and to feel as part of the group and team! All of these things were different concepts than had previously been utilized. We wanted to give maximum responsibility to ^{our field} these men and make them feel able to move, ^{independently fearing we would fully took back them from Saigon,} we also emphasized their working with the local Vietnamese.

Question: What was your thought at that time, knowing that most of the service chiefs were older established people in the civil service hierarchy; what was your idea of how these younger people would cope with that situation?

Answer: We gave them lots of briefing on this. We told them that they had to do their very best to get along. Because they were young, they had to be especially careful and they had to earn respect from performance. Most of our people did

gain great respect, largely through performance. They were such a different breed of cat. For most of ~~these people~~^{the local Vietnamese officials}, ^{when he} went ~~out~~^{out} to the province, he would arrive at ten o'clock in the morning, he would get out and look around a bit, drink a little tea and shake hands, then they would have a big lunch (really huge lunch) and have some beers; then maybe two o'clock in the afternoon they would go out and look a little further, then the American would get into his airplane or car and ~~drive on~~^{fly away}. This would be the usual visit of an American technician to a province. There were very few Americans who went out and stayed for any length of time. So when they suddenly saw young Americans get into working clothes and work with the people, and so knowledgable and traveling everywhere in the province--and ^{our} the people traveled without fear--they went to the places where the US military would not go--the military said, "It's impossible." but our people said, "It's our job; we go." When they say this sort of spirit, this thing rubbed off on a number of these people. We had much closer contact with the Vietnamese. Another thing that happened--we told these people, "When you get out there, you don't have guards, you can't hire guards; you don't need any police around your house; you live in a very simple fashion. You must not rent a ^{large} house or arrange quarters that are ostentatious. If anybody gets a house out there which is half the size of the province chief's house, he's had it." At that time we were some of the first civilians out there and it was very easy to rent spacious accommodations at very low cost but we discouraged that sort of thing. One of our men did that and we had him out of there in twenty-four hours after we saw what had happened. Meanwhile, the US military, of course, lives in these provinces in barbed wire compounds. The average Vietnamese does not wish to try to enter because if he does he is subjected to what he considers indignities of challenge, search and sometimes otherwise. But here was the first civilian American out there who was living simply and was available and accessible at all times of the day. We immediately had much better local contact and rapport with the Vietnamese than the military did. This is the background of how this whole thing got started.

One interesting thing happened and this relates back to the sign-off. We couldn't find enough civilians to send out to all of the provinces, so Philips and I had an argument over this. He thought that we should concentrate on eight or nine provinces and not try to cover them all (at that time, I think there were thirty-five provinces). I held that since the military was already in thirty-five provinces, the Viet Cong were operating in all thirty-five provinces, and since it was intended to carry out the Strategic Hamlet Program in all thirty-five provinces, we had to make an appearance as rapidly as possible in all thirty-five provinces. We couldn't obviously, find the staff to do this, so we decided that we would deputize the US military MAAG sector advisor to be acting USAID Provincial Representative until we got a civilian to take over the job. Philips went over and talked to General Harkins and General Harkins agreed with this idea in about twenty minutes time. We drew up a joint message with MAAG (MAAG at that time) and we sent this thing out. Overnight these sector advisors also became responsible for the USAID program in provinces where there were no civilians and also became responsible for signing-off for USAID with the Province Chief for disbursement of funds and commodities. They very much enjoyed this role and for the first time they had some ~~leverage on~~ ^{MAAG} held over the province chief. Many of them were sitting out in provinces and they could go to see the Province Chief but they really had no business with the Province Chief. The Province Chief wasn't very interested in their advice since he already had all of the equipment and supplies from the US military ~~they~~ that were available--they had been turned over to the Vietnamese Army in Saigon. Very often the Vietnamese military would have all very nice vehicles and all sorts of good equipment and the Sector Advisor had nothing and couldn't even borrow ~~it~~ ^{things} from the Province Chief ~~they were~~ ^{them} because ~~it was~~ theirs. The Province Chief in order to do something with the civil funds had to get the signature of the Sector Advisor, so for the first time the Sector Advisor began to have some real role to play. This helped them out very greatly in their whole responsibility.

Question: Were they chosen as having some interest in civilian affairs or were they

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chosen mostly as military advisors?

Answer: They were chosen because they happened to be in the province?

Question: It was a pretty random process?

Answer: Yes, there was no way to make a selection or to reshuffle them around because they had been sent out by MAAG to be military advisors. The interesting thing is that when we then sent out a civilian to take up the job of ~~Provincial Representative~~, the MACV people did not want to give up this sign-off. We had some more talks with them and then finally agreed that we would have a three-way sign-off. When they started the three-way sign-off we were concerned that if the two Americans agreed and the Vietnamese didn't that they might consider this as a vote, so we immediately stated that there was no voting involved; that if any one of the parties vetoed the expenditure would not be made. In effect, we had what was like a troika; ~~in fact it became odd troika in this arrangement~~. It was very interesting. The Vietnamese never once complained about this arrangement until the USAID Mission Director arrived in 1964. Then they said that this was an affront to Vietnamese sovereignty and was not done anywhere else in the world and had to be stopped immediately. As soon as he raised this issue, the Vietnamese having been told by the Americans that it affronted their sovereignty, they had no choice but to say, "Yes, this is. Let's stop it." This was wiped out. When this was wiped out, the USAID program, the American effort in Vietnam suffered a serious defeat.

Question: The role of the provincial representative wasn't wiped out also, was it?

Answer: He also tried to abolish this, yes. He had a very serious effect on the whole program. We were sticklers for keeping the operation simple, effective and hard-hitting. ~~He wanted to return the program to Saigon and the Vietnamese~~
~~Ministries~~

Question: Was Philips still Director at the time Killam came in?

Answer: No, he was not. Philips had left about the first of November, ^{1993,} actually a little early although he kept the title, because his father was dying. They had a very large sole-owned business in the United States and Philips had to go home

and take over the business. When that happened, I became Director. I was Director for about three months. Unfortunately, in the middle of all this, I got hepatitis. I carried on working with the hepatitis until finally it almost killed me. I was knocked out for about six months. When I got knocked out, I appointed ^{Len} Maynard. That was when Maynard came into the picture. He was there at the time and was serving as our ~~Regional~~ Representative.

Philips and I felt, when we set this whole thing up, that we would probably have about a year and a half or two years of effective operations before the bureaucratic hardening of the arteries ^{would} set in and everything was slowed down and in effect ~~is exactly what happened and things were~~ (what we considered) pretty well lost. That's about what happened--that's about the amount of time that we did have. In order to keep it small and hard hitting, we conceived ~~Provincial~~ Representatives with a very small back-up staff in Saigon--no more than six people--but with a considerable Vietnamese back-up staff and some Filipinos. We also ~~considered~~ ^{established} a Command Center or operations center in Saigon which managed this provincial effort. Then we visualized four ~~Regional~~ Representatives. The ~~Regional~~ Representatives position was not as a Director and not as a man living in the field, but as a man who was quartered in Saigon and spent four days a week traveling through various provinces in his region and picking up all the problems, talking to the fellows, talking to the ~~Province~~ Chiefs if necessary, helping to smooth out problems--an older man ~~but no one in Vietnam~~--then coming back to Saigon and sitting down with us on Saturdays and Sundays and going over the problems and what was needed in the way of support. Then he would help them solve ~~this~~ their problems.

Question: Like a trouble shooter?

Answer: A trouble shooter and expediter. This is what the role was. I must say that this worked very, very effectively. We did not have any ~~Regional~~ Offices, no ~~Regional~~ Staff. Each ~~Regional~~ Representative maintained in Saigon one back-stop officer and one ~~secretary~~ (or a Vietnamese secretary, and an American secretary) so that when he came back he had somebody to put it all on paper if this was necessary;

the back-stop officer would sit in at these meetings ^{on} of the problems and the back-stop officer would be told to solve this. While he was in the province, if some real problem came up, he would cable directly or he could telephone directly. We had a most incredible operation. It was one of the only operations that I've ever been in where there was no backbiting and nobody seemed to be jealous of anybody else. Everybody was pointed in one direction and that was toward doing the job.

Question: I presume that you brought Borreson in because he came in from Laos?

Answer: We brought Borreson in subsequently because we wanted to streamline the Vietnamese accounting procedures. We knew that he worked in Laos; we had heard about him. He came down with us with the sole function of helping them to keep the records straight and help them streamline their bookkeeping and to break up any money roadblock that got in the way because of paperwork. Paper roadblocks ^{to} the money. We had, ^a ~~I presume~~ (and you can ask any of the men that were there at that time) an operation with incredible morale. The morale of the people working there --some of them almost worked themselves to death--we didn't encourage this; we didn't want this--but they were so dedicated in what they were trying to do. They were extremely effective.

We also set up one other function in our headquarters office. We set up for the first time in AID/Vietnam a small logistics staff. We did this because in the past AID's procedure had been to procure commodities for whatever they were trying to do and ^{give} ~~assign~~ them to the particular Vietnamese Government ^{in Saigon} Ministry and then forget about them. When they arrived on the wharf, that ministry would be responsible for clearing the customs, taking delivery, and sending them to the province and it was a hit and miss, ^{hope} ~~hope~~ ^{pray} action, and most of the ministries let stuff pile up. One of the first things I did when I got to Vietnam and made an inspection trip was to walk on the wharves. I found in one particular place about five ^{thousand} hundred dollars worth of medical supplies that had been there maybe three years on the wharf and nobody had moved it out. I also found great quantities of educational supplies and other types of commodities. I came back to a staff meeting and pointed

all of this out. I was not very popular. I got all the answers from the usual technicians--this wasn't particularly their responsibility because the Vietnamese themselves didn't have the money to move it and all this sort of thing. I didn't want arguments over who was responsible, if ~~they weren't~~ ^{our guys really weren't}. In order to break all of this up and to assure that the stuff got out, we set up in our office a small logistics staff consisting of four Americans and thirteen Vietnamese and five Filipinos. We budgeted for this staff to work with the Vietnamese ~~Government~~ and we got the Vietnamese government to appoint one agency to be responsible for receiving and getting this stuff out. We gave sufficient budget so that we could hire civilian truckers, trucking agencies, the railway, civilian shipping line and so forth so that as fast as this stuff hit the wharf ^{we} ~~to~~ get it out. We moved, in the first year about five hundred thousand tons of cargo--more so than AID has ever moved since ^{its inception} as far as I know, in spite of all this logistics mess. We did it with only a very small staff; we did this working through Vietnamese but we knew how to do the job.

Question: Is it part of the explanation that the military's demand for space has precedence?

Answer: That is part of the explanation. But at that time the US military was trying to move seventy-five thousand tons of barbed wire ^{for the Strategic Hamlet Program} and it was trying to use ARVN (the Vietnamese army channels) and it couldn't move it. ^{So} We moved their wire for them through our civilian channels. Very interesting but that is true. Also one other thing that made it easier to move it at that time, was that there were more routes open. The railways could still be utilized most of the time all the way up to Quang Tri and we could also truck to Quang Tri. We then checked over the existing AID programs to see how they would fit into what we were trying to do, and ~~they~~ ^{did they} really get down to the people? We designed one type of program which has now become the Revolutionary Development ^{Program} which was to support the strategic hamlet effort. Then we took a look at all of the other programs and tried to focus ^{the Rural} ~~them on~~ people.

Question: What was the role of the technical division in relation to what you were

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trying to do?

Answer: We organized the Counter-insurgency Committee to coordinate their efforts and to focus them on what we considered to be the rural population.

Question: Was that easy?

Answer: It was terribly difficult. We had very good cooperation only from one division and that was the education division. We actually started the hamlet school program at that time. They were very pleased that we were interested. They never were jealous that we were interfering in their business or that we had some suggestions; they just went right along and cooperated very well.

Question: Is that still true?

Answer: Yes, that is still true. They were immediately willing to let us finance the hamlet school program through our new channels. That is the only ^{national} program we financed by sending money to the province and that is financed at province level as schools are built and includes the teachers' training. It does not go down thru the Ministry of Education channels.

Question: How did the Vietnamese Minister of Education react?

Answer: He was willing. We tried to do the same with the Public Health program and we did get it through one year and it went much, much better. That was the only year that the health workers ever got paid on time. We tried to do it for all of the programs. By this time, as I said, the bureaucrats were closing in on us. ^A ^{Joe Brant,} The new mission Director arrived and I had also worked for him in Taiwan, so he trusted me.

Question: Are you talking about Killen?

Answer: No, this is a fellow named Joe ^{Brant} ^{Fipkin}, following ~~Brant~~ ^{Fipkin} before Killen. Killen was an absolute disaster. This was ^{Brant}, so he backed me. He felt ^{nervous} sometimes, because he was getting all of this playback from the technical divisions, "These guys are just taking over the mission and they are just running things here and they don't know what they are doing. They forget about cross-cultural patterns and they forget about this and they forget about that." You know, the usual stuff.

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Question: No. I don't understand about 'cross-cultural patterns' because why would the technicians know about cross-cultural patterns?

Answer: They were using all sorts of reasons and theories to try to shoot us down. One thing that we were doing was that we were playing up that they never got into the field; that they had not been effective in the past. We were trying to do this diplomatically; we weren't out looking for fights. We had enough trouble fighting the VC. Our way of operating was so alien to anything that had ever been done before and anything they had seen and to their traditional way of thinking and working. Many of them are men who had been working with AID for a number of years; many of them are pretty advanced in age. They just felt that this was wrong and they couldn't stomach this. So they were out to get us in any way possible. This was especially true with the agriculture people. I am one who believes that we are not going to do anything in these underdeveloped countries unless we increase agricultural productivity and the income of the farmer. After all of my years in Taiwan, I knew exactly what to do based upon our success in Taiwan where we had only one of the real major successes in increasing agricultural productivity of AID anywhere in the world. I immediately attempted to import ideas from Taiwan which were successful. This was transferable because the climate is the same, the crops are about the same, and the way of farming is about the same. In other words, relatively small plots intensively farmed.

Question: Are the values of farmers and their outlooks somewhat similar or compatible?

Answer: Very similar and very compatible. I also worked to bring in Chinese working level technicians to help. Every step of the way I was opposed by our agricultural division people. I dreamed up a program--the so-called Pig-Corn program. This was the program which we were going to put out in the hamlets and pacified areas to have a rapid increase of income for the farmer. That plus improved rice seed and fertilizer. These programs all came out of the top of my head based upon experience that I had elsewhere in Taiwan. For instance we went into the ten central lowland provinces. When we went up there, I found out that there was no fertilizer

being used and there was no fertilizer for sale. Chemical fertilizer had not previously been used. We drew up a program. To show you how fast we worked, we drew up this program in the first few days of September after I was there, and we programmed the immediate import of twenty thousand metric tons of fertilizer for Central Vietnam, to be given out on ~~the~~^a basis of sufficient for one half hectare of rice land for every family who worked in building the fences for the strategic hamlets as payment. The fertilizer came and it was distributed. We increased rice productivity for that particular crop an average of thirty-five percent, on the first time it had ever been used. We put it out on the basis that the second year we would introduce and sell it at half price; the third year it would be sold at full price. We had gone ahead with that program. The second year we imported forty thousand tons which was sold at half price. This last year I am told that there was a demand for one hundred thousand tons but that they couldn't get it. They couldn't land it and couldn't move it. That goes from zero use to a demand for a hundred thousand tons in just three years.

Question: The first time you gave it out in return for building fences?

Answer: The first time around, yes. It was never a throw away gift but it was given to people and families who participated in building the fences for the strategic hamlets in central Vietnam.

Question: I have talked with a large number of provincial representatives but I was always told that bulgar wheat was given as an incentive; no one ever mentioned fertilizer.

Answer: One problem is that most of the people that you have coming through here were not there in ~~these~~ days. This was in late 1962 and early 1963 (January). This was the introduction of fertilizer. At the same time we started the Pig-Corn program.

Question: ~~Who was the presidential advisor who was out there last year roaming around, about July?~~

Answer: Komer.

Question: Yes, when Komer was out there, apparently word was all over, "We need

~~fertilizer, we have to give the farmers fertilizer.~~ I gather that this must be something that came through your efforts.

Answer: The second year, I extended this program nation-wide. First we started with the ten central provinces and we did it through the NACO. To do this, every step of the way I was fought by our agriculture division--every step! They wanted trial demonstrations--they wanted this--they wanted that--we couldn't do this--but we did it. I remember, I promoted a program in 1963 here at the Honolulu Conference which was held with McNamara and so forth in November, to increase rice production one million tons in South Vietnam by fertilizer. The director of AID was Dave Bell and he said, "We can't do that, we haven't got the money." I stood up and I said, "It is imperative that we try. I think in this situation that we have to think in large terms; that this is a war out there." He said, "Well, we can't do it." McNamara stood up and he said, "Dave, that man is right. If you haven't got the money in your budget, I'll give him the money from the military budget." So we got much of our fertilizer--we didn't get the whole business. Then I got sick and after I got sick the whole thing collapsed because nobody else was interested on the American side in Saigon. It did come in and we did get it introduced in most of the rest of the country. Eight provinces around Saigon had already traditionally used fertilizer but the rest did not. Today fertilizer is a big deal in Vietnam; still we probably only use about one-fifth of what we could of chemical fertilizer.

Question: How is it distributed? Through cooperatives?

Answer: Yes, largely through cooperatives. We tried commercial channels--some does go through commercial channels still--maybe more than through the cooperatives. The commercial channels are very unreliable, they are adulterated, it is mixed with dust and everything else--there are all sorts of problems through the commercial channels. This is the one thing that the farmers association or cooperatives or National Agricultural Organization has done a good job on. ^{Another is the} ~~They also did a good job on our~~ Pig-Corn program. When we got there we found out that there were very few improved pigs in the country. We wanted immediately, as I mentioned, to get

the farmer more cash in his pocket so we developed this program whereby we distributed three improved pigs to every family who signed up for the program on a loan basis. We also gave him corn as the basic feed for these pigs and we gave him seven bags of cement to build an improved pigsty according to our design. We introduced this first in central Vietnam; there was not one white pig in central Vietnam when we got up there. We did this again--introduced by two young Americans who had come over to us from IVS. They were two of the most dedicated young men I've ever met in my life. These fellows lived and worked in those hamlets for more than one year. They got this program out. Today, I'm told, that forty percent of the hogs sent to the slaughter houses in central Vietnam are white pigs. You can see the tremendous impact that these things had on the people. We distributed approximately fifty thousand of the improved piglets in the first year of the program.

Question: What was the reaction of the VC to these programs, particularly the fertilizer and the Pig-Corn program?

Answer: The situation has changed so radically security-wise. In late 1962 and 1963 when we were working until the coup overthrew Ngo Dinh Diem, there wasn't too much VC activity in the areas where we were working which were primarily the ten coastal lowland provinces with the exception of Quang Ngai and Quang Tin probably where they were in deep. But the VC started their own pig program, this is true. Fertilizer--a lot of propaganda, but that's about all. ~~Normally~~ ^F the VC don't normally interfere with these types of programs because these are benefitting the people. The VC are very careful to not try to do things which have the appearance of hurting the people.

Question: These programs were done through the Vietnamese government?

Answer: Completely through the Vietnamese government. Also against opposition, we had the bags marked with red and yellow, the national colors.

Question: No clasped hands?

Answer: No, no clasped hands. We put on the national flag and we also put on signs to beat the communists -- Be doa com soa (?) which means to knock down,

strike down, beat the communists. We had a lot of opposition even doing that. You had all of these people who weren't with it; at least, they weren't with it in the same way we thought we were.

Question: You had a real intense and good period in 1962 and into 1963?

Answer: Yes, we had a very, very effective period.

Question: Then came Killen?

Answer: Then came the coup--the overthrow of Diem--that did destroy security in central Vietnam because Diem's brother ruled as a fiefdom and he had a tremendous apparatus stretching down to every hamlet. Local--some people might call them bully boys--but they prevented the VC infrastructure from really getting started. They were known as the Force Populaire. When Diem fell, that force melted overnight and left a vacuum.

Question: When you talk about central Vietnam, is this now Region II and III?

Answer: Region I and II. Primarily Region I. When that melted away it left a vacuum which the VC filled very rapidly--the Buddhists and the VC together filled it. The Buddhists didn't have any ^{real organizational} ~~reorganization~~ strength from the bottom up--no real cohesion--the VC moved in. That's literally how we lost central Vietnam rapidly.

Question: Where do Tanham and the people that he describes in his book fit in?

Answer: The original fellows described in the book, Rob Warren and Earl Young, were hired in our very first group; they were original Prov Reps.

Question: Manny Voulgaropoulos was part of your group?

Answer: Manny went with us pretty well--I like Manny--I'll vote for Manny anytime. He was head of the Public Health Divison. We got along all right with Manny. He was young and he felt the same way we did.

Question: This is an exception to the general public health types that you worked with?

Answer: More or less, yes. When we first started Manny was not chief. He came about along/after a year after we got started. You know Manny got shot down in Vietnam

too, largely by Killen. When I went to the hospital and was knocked out, Maynard was in action. Finally, somebody was appointed over Maynard for no really solid good reason. That man was Augie Williams who is now in Chieu Hoi out there; he only lasted a couple of months. Then Tanham was appointed (I was still sick) and Sam Wilson was appointed as a deputy. Then I recovered, so Tanham had two deputies. Tanham came out and he got there about early July, 1964. Up until this time we were still operating the same way--regional representatives reporting back to Saigon; no structure at region--I mean nobody living at region--no bureaucracy at region or no intermediate level. The province reps ^{who} were always looking for direction, if any, went back to the ^{or came} ~~Regional Representative~~ and ~~coming~~ themselves into Saigon. We held frequent meetings ^{with} ~~of~~ the prov ~~reps~~. We would call them back about every three weeks. We had a tremendous interplay. In other words, either Philips or myself, our door was never closed and our houses were never closed so these men were always with us. We knew exactly what was going on; they knew what was going on in Saigon. We all had a common concept at that time, although there wasn't too much time for thinking, we spent so much time in discussion with them that out of this some thoughts emerged of what we were trying to do. We also maintained good relations. There was one other aspect of the program at that time which has never since existed--that was, that in the US overall mission there was a Coordinating Committee for this whole program--for the whole US rural effort.

Question: Isn't that in a sense a prototype for what is happening now except that it is more complex than ever now?

Answer: Yes. At that time the coordinating committee was chaired by a minister from the Embassy, a fellow by the name of Bill Trueheart. This met every week usually in USAID. At this committee sat the actual people involved in operations--Philips and myself representing USAID; occasionally the USAID director would come if he were interested; the head of the USAID Safety Division; the working man level in JUSPAO, often the director of JUSPAO; the working G-3 or G-4 out of MACV, for a long while ^{R. chand} it was General Stillwell who is now in charge of Thailand; the head of Special

Forces; the people from CIA who were in charge of field operations. We would all get around the table and we would call in every week usually two or three province representatives and sector ~~advisors~~ and they would brief us on their province and what was going on. We would give them direction; anybody who wished could present a program at this meeting or a suggestion which would then be discussed. The meeting would usually last about four hours but they were really good because it was the only time, that I have ever seen in Vietnaam, where things got laid on the table, there was some analysis of what was going on, decisions were made on the spot, and if the decision was made you could be sure that it would be carried through. The people who were responsible for carrying through the decisions were present. As soon as Lodge arrived, this committee was suddenly escalated to a level above that of working people, ~~and it's not~~. A new man came and for a while he made this ^{meeting} ~~meeting~~ suffieiently for the Heads of the Mission; the Mission heads were not ~~extremely~~ in touch with actual operations to deal effectively. From that day on--down to the time when I left Vietnam--there ^{way} is no real coordination ^{of} with the US program. We have suffered very, very gravely for lack of that. General ^{Richard} Stillwell told me that to him that was the single ^{most} serious weakness in the whole US effort in Vietnam. I saw him after he went to Thailand and he said that he still felt that way. I can't recall whether he has done anything like that in Thailand but I doubt that they have.

Question: The people in Thailand now wonder what went on in Vietnam so that they can learn from the Vietnam situation and apparently much of it is lost: I'm this much interested in your history; I don't know that anyone other than those who participated have ever recorded this.

Answer: No, this as I am giving it is not known.

Question: This is very operational, very important.

Answer: This is some of the background of this experience. Now you will probably have better continuity because only two people have the continuity--myself and Maynard.

Question: I've never had a chance to have a long talk with ^b Les; one day I would like to. Did province chiefs ever attend these meetings?

Answer: Once in a while we invited Vietnamese and occasionally, someone like General Thompson, the British ⁶¹ Advisor. He was there frequently. I opted from the very beginning for a joint operation ^{with the Vietnamese}. I wanted to take the USAID building which is now where OCO is, and set that up as a joint operation--joint Vietnamese and American--because I had worked with the joint Commission for Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) in Taiwan, and I felt that this was the only way to really operate. ^{U.S.} Philips supported this and so did our ^{U.S.} Mission Director from Taiwan, ^{Joe} Brent. We just got this sold to the Vietnamese before the first Buddhist incident in Hue, I think it was May 7, 1963; the thing that put Diem on the toboggan. Through long persuasion we had the Vietnamese about willing to try something like this. Had we set this up on a joint basis it would have been an infinitely more effective effort. Even today if we put it on a joint basis it would be more effective.

Question: Speaking about today, who would you involve? People like General Thanh, for instance?

Answer: Yes, of course. General Thanh, and certainly a representative of the Premier's office. I've drawn up, and have long since submitted the whole overall plan and program for a joint operation and exactly how it would work down to the organic laws and ^{have} had some good names for the thing too--it would be VARD, Vietnamese American Revolutionary Development Organization--anyway it ^{has} not ^{happened}. Subsequently, after the first coup I got the Vietnamese to buy it again. Then, I'm told that the idea went back to Washington and ran into so many roadblocks there that the United States was unwilling to enter into it at that time. I do know that wherever we have tried throughout the world to set up something parallel to the Chinese experience, a joint ^{U.S.} Rural Reconstruction Commission, that we have run into objections, especially from the Department of Agriculture. They had this ^{phobia about} idea of surrendering any kind of sovereignty to a foreign nation for management of agricultural type efforts. They are a parochial organization. That just shows you some of the problems you get into in the United States in getting ^{to} something of this nature. They have never liked the JCRR in Taiwan.

To get into the period when Killen arrived. Killen, of course, was a disaster and is an abnormal individual. A man who had no formal education; comes from a labor union movement; a very rough, brusque, tough, intelligent, highly articulate person (articulate for about fifteen minutes and then he would ramble). I think that he had tremendous mental problems. He arrived and from the very first day (even before he left Washington AID suggested that he talked to Philips); he talked to Philips and ended up by insulting Philips but this he did to everybody that he talked to. He had made up his mind before he ever got to Vietnam that he was going to destroy USAID ~~Rural Affairs~~, because he said, it was a mission within a mission, and it was also doing too much for the Vietnamese and the Vietnamese were going to have to do things for themselves; he was going to make the Vietnamese government work; he was going to cut off all aid. This is exactly what we were not doing. If any people were ever aware of the necessity of having the Vietnamese do the job it was ourselves. He arrived on the scene and he immediately took exception to Dr. George Tanham who had already arrived. Tanham ^{was} is a very good man, very intelligent; I don't think he is a terribly good leader or a particularly good administrator (this is my personal opinion) but he is a courageous person and an extremely decent person and he is intelligent. Killen proceeded to attempt to embarrass him and to chop him into bits which he succeeded in doing although Tanham had the strength to resign very early after this pressure was put on. It did so hurt Tanham's feelings and motivation and ~~what~~ his dedication that it resulted in his almost having a nervous breakdown. It was complicated by an automobile accident the night before Tanham was to leave Vietnam in which a Vietnamese was killed. I think it had just an incalculable effect on his psyche and I think all of this obviously contributed to his subsequent heart attack. Killen started out not only to get him but to get anybody who was in any way associated with this program.

Question: Were you back at that time?

Answer: I got back in August although I was still not recovered from the hepatitis. But I'm a fighter too. Killen set out to pamper Sam Wilson; he chose Sam as his boy. He was very smart in his selection because Wilson is a very ambitious person. Wilson saw this as a chance to feather his own situation, always under the guise of "If we can work with this guy, I think we can win him over. We've got to work with him." Well, there is something to be said for that; I don't deny that. Wilson went over to Killen's side. Then Killen proceeded to try to work on me. The view in retrospect--really the way the man worked is just incredible. For instance, when Tanham left, immediately he appointed Wilson as the director and I was still the deputy, but on ^{Mission Administrati}~~the~~ papers which would come out he would never list my name as ~~Deputy~~; he would ^{never} ~~^~~ recognize me. He would call all sorts of meetings but he would never call me to these meetings even though I was responsible for things. If Wilson was out of the office, he would call somebody else further down the line. When Wilson went on leave--the bureaucracy had arrived and whenever anyone went on leave they always issued a notice saying who was in charge--but when Wilson went on leave he issued a notice saying that the executive officer in our rural affairs was in charge; never any mention of me. The executive officer would always be embarrassed and say, "What shall I do?" "Just do what you want but I'll carry on here." I got caught a couple of times and once ^{at the Program Office Annual year ahead presentation} I had to present our entire program to ^{I alone, knew the whole program.} Killen. It was very interesting because this could be viewed by all the vultures as the end of ~~Rural Affairs~~--when we were going to present our program for the following year. It was presented in the AID ~~Mission~~ Conference Room and these meetings were open to anyone who wanted to come. Normally there would be an attendance of about five but all of these other people wanted to come for the assassination and the hanging. At this particular meeting about seventy people showed up.

Question: Where was Len then?

Answer: Len was on leave, too. ^{He} had been a ~~Regional~~ Director and had gone on a long ^{How} leave. So I remember presenting this program. I prepared it very, very well.

Vince Puritano and I worked together and we made, I thought, an excellent presentation. It shook Killen. The interesting thing was that he would hardly recognize me and yet I was talking for hours on end presenting point after point after point. Everytime I presented something, he commented something and he would always look at somebody else. Finally, I presented something to do with well-drilling (hydro-jet well-drilling). We had a system of well-drilling which was infinitely better than what the ^{AIDS} ~~technical~~ ^{public works} division had ~~our~~ ^{public works} division; we were doing it with ^a very simple Asian method developed in Taiwan and utilized throughout Southeast Asia; we don't need heavy equipment and it is ^{worked very well} ~~very good~~ in soft soil. He took off on this program, ~~sexxx~~ and he ~~sexxx~~ and he said that the program was corrupt and how bad it was; I said, "Well, I don't know anything about what you are saying. I agree that if what you are saying has really happened this is very, very bad and cannot in anyway be condoned. But what I am doing here is measuring by the number of holes that are in the ground from which water is now coming out to the people in Vietnam who need it. I'm measuring the results and I am also measuring the cost of this." He just screamed and swore and he beat the table and he said, "Goddamn it!!!" Then he just went ^{on with a string of} ~~into this~~ violent oaths-well!!! I was so surprised!!

Question: What was bothering him?

Answer: The fact that I would perhaps challenge him or that I would make a statement that would defend something that he felt that had been so successfully shot down with a series of allegations. When he said this, I looked at him and just smiled and after he had stopped, I just went on with the presentation.

Question: Why was it that he didn't get after you and try to make you resign?

Answer: He was trying to force me to resign. This was his method.

Question: Yes, but he never came with any direct ^{charges?}

Answer: He did. He sent out his investigators to investigate me. They went all over the world investigating everything I had ever done previously. He also sent out his investigators on a number of our personnel and he got one man to act as an

informant in accusing some of our provincial representatives as being (and this is perfectly all right) as homosexuals. This was NEVER corroborated. He also got the others for supposedly fudging on their travel vouchers--the amounts of the fudging amounted in one case to \$9, in another one \$20, in another one \$1--there was no fudging at all; this was subsequently proven because we had dedicated people. He had on his side the man from AID's internal investigation department in Washington (the so-called MIS, Mission Internal Security). This man had worked with him in Korea and this man was a weak person but he saw where the power was and he just went along and wrote up these reports. Everytime they put out these reports, if I ever knew they were being made or got copies, I would immediately put in rejoinders. I tried to defend all of these people and, as I said, nothing was ever proven on these people, but they were sufficient for him to make his point that we had a bunch of people in the field who were non-professionals and who were too young and immature. So he said, "The first thing I am going to do is get this thing under control and I am going to appoint ~~Regional~~ Directors who have been former AID mission directors and they are going to report directly to me." So that is where the idea of the ~~Regional~~ Directors came from. Then he said, "We are going to appoint provincial representatives who are FSR-3 in rank or above and they have to be over thirty-six years of age, and they have to be experienced AID professionals." It went back to Washington all this business for procurement of all of these people and all of the men who were out there and doing such a bang-up job were suddenly overwhelmed by these people of higher grade if they could be found. Of course, the people of higher grade were rigid and what-not. We, of course, immediately pointed out that according to the standards ^{many of them famous} Bobby Kennedy and ~~all the rest of the~~ people would not even be qualified to be ~~provincial~~ Representatives but if ~~made no~~ was of no use. This made no difference in the AID bureaucracy in Washington at the time, since General Taylor had agreed that Killen would be appointed; Washington was not about to take any action on changing things out there although it was apparent to everybody what was

going on. Since I didn't yield to all this pressure and since he didn't scare me at all. I actually had nothing to lose except that I was so furious that he was ruining the program. At the same time he attacked ~~this~~ ^{the} troika ~~business~~ ^{arrangement}, he also attacked the business of our giving per diem to people in the field. He said, "We have to set these people up in positions in the field of respect so that people will respect the way they live and we have to give ^{them} ~~all~~ sorts of support." So he just changed everything around--the whole concept. From that day on--well, today when you attend meetings in Saigon within AID, you will find that ~~before the OCO was organized, that most of the time~~ ^{is} spent by province reps or regional people ~~who had come in by~~ ^{Butane} talking about how to get the ~~buddha~~ gas out and getting the prefabricated houses built or getting the kerosene refrigerators out or this kind of business--or getting generators. It is all tied up with supporting personnel rather than with the program.

Question: This started under Killen and was carried on even though Killen eventually left?

Answer: Yes. Once you get something like this going, you don't turn it off; especially when you bring in as your regional directors people who had been former AID Mission Directors or Deputy Directors because Parkinson's laws are immutable, unless you are really tough.

Question: Is that what happened with people like Naughton and others who were brought in?

Answer: This is what has happened. The result is, I understand, in Region I that the latest programming calls for almost two hundred Americans on the staff in Da Nang and similarly very high staffing elsewhere. It is just out of control. Now I am giving you one side. There ^{may be ..} ~~are~~ when anything is done, ~~there is always~~ some justification for the other side--but I have not seen any justifications for many of the actions which ~~have been~~ ^{were} taken which in any way can be proven through the results, ~~that it has been a wise decision or a wise action.~~

Question: What was Killen bound for eventually?

Answer: Finally Killen ordered me out of Vietnam. He just sent a note to Washington saying, "Call Fraleigh to Washington immediately." I got the cable from Washington to proceed to Washington for thirty days consultation. So I left, leaving my wife in Saigon. I talked to Wilson because I wanted to take my wife with me since I thought it was very obvious--I knew what was going on--Wilson said, "It's obvious you're not coming back. He doesn't like you." I said, "How well I know!" I never even met the man--this was the incredible thing.

Question: Just in briefings and so forth--no personal contact.

Answer: Well, yes. He didn't like me before he ever saw me, as he didn't like the rest of our people--the people he destroyed. He threw out all together, of the original group of what is known today as the Tigers, about thirty-two of the Tigers. The best men that we have ever had in Vietnam because most of them had high Vietnamese language capability with all of this experience and all of this dedication.

Question: Was John Van in this group.

Answer: No, not John Van. John O'Donnell is. He wanted to get Wahrmund out although Wahrmund went along with him. There were a number of people--anybody who he could touch. So I got on the plane and went to Washington. There was one problem and that was that I knew the vice-president ^{Hubert Humphrey} very well commencing from earlier contacts with some of his staff in Taiwan in 1960. Then, whenever I went to Washington they asked me to have a talk with him when he was Senator about what was going on in Asia. I had briefed him in 1962 and told him in 1962, incidentally, that the problems that they might have in Vietnam would be the ^{they would ever have.} ~~most serious,~~ I told Humphrey at that time that I envisioned that Vietnam would be the biggest single problem the United States had ever run into in Asia. It might easily turn into that and we had to do things properly and we had to do them quickly. I also mentioned, just after the election, two days before he was sworn in as vice-president, the same thing and put it all down on paper as to what the dangers were and what was happening and the issues at stake. It turned out to be pathetic because at that time Washington wasn't paying much real attention to Vietnam. I think the President had hardly even heard

of Vietnam. I told him (Humphrey) that this could easily be an issue which could influence re-election. This is when I was home on leave in 1964 before I ran into Killen. He was very interested in Vietnam and he usually is an excellent listener --for five or six hours while we would go through great detail such as the politics of the situation or the progress or failure of progress in the war. He had heard from Philips that I was coming in to Washington. ^{Later, when Killen threw me out,} When I got there on January 4, 1965, I got there in the morning and was summoned to his office in the afternoon at four o'clock. We stayed in his office until nearly eleven o'clock at night going over the problems together with Philips and a couple of others. I told him what was happening to the USAID effort out there. ^{had} He told me when I first walked in the door, "It is not necessary for you to waste much time talking about this guy Killen. We already know all about him out there and I am aware of that situation." He had by this time taken a considerable interest in Vietnam.

INTERVIEW WITH MR. BERT FRALEIGH

February 6, 1967

Question: Could we discuss how a provincial representative works; the kind of problems that come up; the factors that lead to making decisions in terms of a very specific narrow problem or broader problem as you prefer.

Answer: From our experience out there, I believe the most important qualification that a provincial representative must have is self-reliance. This is probably directly related to his own self-confidence. We know from our earlier experience when we first organized our program that when we sent young men to the field they asked us, "What are we going to do?" The answer we gave them was, "You go out there and see what needs to be done, come back and tell us what needs to be done, and then we'll help you do it." We, of course, tried to give an over-all concept. We did give an over-all direction which was always from the beginning, to try to make the Vietnamese government more effective, and able to respond to the needs of its people, and to make it a genuinely popular and democratic government if this is possible; then at the lowest level, to help the people to develop economically, socially and politically. So we sent these young men out with this over-all focus asking them to determine how best this should be done at the local level.

Question: One of the things that undoubtedly happened, in fact we had it discussed right here and Bob was one of the people who gave us very good examples, are the difficulties of a young man running into an established hierarchy, particularly I am thinking of a service chief and his organization, let's start out with maybe agriculture and a specific plan of putting across an agricultural project such as your interest in doubling or increasing the income of the individual farmer.

Answer: Of course, what we ran into was the traditional bureaucracy and it is a highly inbred system and it is very much the government filease (?) mandarins, a government in the French tradition with typical viewpoints of a ^{French} civil servant. The idea is a highly centralized government, an official at a local level who does

not wish to do anything without instruction or reference back to the central level of Saigon through chains or communication systems which guarantee an answer only ten or fifteen percent of the time and within a period or a time frame of maybe months of getting an answer. We are also dealing with people who have been educated felice mandarins as we call them, away from their own people and they are not really interested in looking downward toward helping their own people but in looking upward and carrying out an overall directive from the central level which is conceived by people at the central level who have scarcely been out in the countryside and know their own people (this is on the agriculture side). So you have, in fact, government of ignorance of the actual people at the end of the line who are supposed to be helped. Secondly, you have the grave fear of all bureaucrats which is pronounced in Vietnam and that is unwillingness to take responsibility because if you do take responsibility you make mistakes and if you make mistakes you get in trouble, whereas, if you don't make mistakes you get promoted. And not doing anything is not making a mistake. Then you also have tradition. That is, you have people out at the end of the line, the service chiefs, trying to execute programs that may have dreamed up years previously and for which support may have come down two or three years after the program was dreamed up and so they are working really in a great vacuum so far as having something done which is practical and worthwhile. They tend to develop programs and present them back to the central level asking for much more than what they really need believing that the central level is going to adjust their requests downward, if in fact, it does approve them. The programs often bear no reality to the local need or situation and programs are not based upon having made good local studies. They lack vision and they lack dynamism--it's a pretty ^{short} ~~stalled~~ thing.

Question: When you developed the idea of increasing the income of the farmer to what extent were you aware of needs? How did you discuss needs with the individual farmer?

Answer: What we really did as a result of the Honolulu Conference a year ago,

February 6, 1966, when the U. S. and the government of Vietnam made pronouncements about what they were going to do in the civil field, we then in Vietnam, chose this particular area in Vietnam, An Giang province which had very good security as a result of the Hoa Hao people in the province who comprise about eighty-five percent of the population and they have sufficient spiritual conviction within this group to prevent the Viet Cong from building an infra-structure and without an infrastructure the Viet Cong cannot operate except in force and they operate in force without local support. [The result of that is that they can move in and get their units so they do not choose to commit large units to operate when they have no infrastructure formed.] This is why we choose this area because we wanted to show what the free world had the capacity to do given a situation in Vietnam where there was security. In my own capacity I had worked in tropical development in Taiwan and in China and in other countries, such as Laos, for a total of nearly fifteen years. Fortunately, it was really good experience because it was work down with the people and we had gotten results in similar conditions. I went down to the area and based upon ~~this~~
~~other~~ experience in similar areas ^{and} similar types of crops, we were able to determine immediately that there were tremendous possibilities which were not being utilized. Based upon actual field studies, checking statistics, knowing the territory so to speak, we were able immediately to see some of the things that could be done. In addition, we had help from Chinese technicians from Taiwan who had been through similar development programs.

Question: What kind of contacts did you have with the farmers?

Answer: We went out and talked with the farmers. I physically went out as did the Chinese technicians and then, of course, we talked to local farm union leaders. There ~~is~~ ^{was a} tenant farmers' union. We talked to the local agricultural services and held meetings with them. We brought them with us, of course, our own technicians from within the AID program, and we set up meetings where we reviewed, with the local officials what it was they were doing, what they thought could be done, and what they wanted to do if they had unlimited, rapid assistance. We poured all of this

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into the mix.

Question: What kind of response would you get, particularly in meetings in which the agricultural people would attend?

Answer: It would depend upon the individuals. Some of the individuals ^{were} ~~are~~ very excellent and one of the great hopes in South Vietnam is that you do have a considerable sprinkling of young men who have not yet been drafted and who are still in fairly responsible positions.

Question: What kind of positions would this be, for instance?

Answer: For instance, we have a chief of animal husbandry in this particular province, ^{he} I think is twenty-seven years old, and is a graduate in agriculture from the local university and, I think he has had a tour abroad (an observation tour). At least, he is idealistic, he wants to work for his country and he also is willing to listen to outside ^{advice} ~~assistance~~. In a sense, although he is partially a ~~wise~~ ^{wise} mandarin, he is still pliable clay, he can be molded and he is perceptive. We found a man who wants to do something but had felt that the bureaucracy in Saigon previously had never really helped him as it might.

Question: Was he likely to get into a conflict because on the one hand, he might threaten his own superiors?

Answer: He was the superior man in this particular province in his field.

Question: So he was directly responsible to the ~~Ministry~~ in Saigon?

Answer: That's correct. We found when we got there that the heirarchy consisted of the Province Chief who was very strongly militarily oriented, a Deputy Province chief for ~~Administration~~ (this man was a graduate of the National Institute for Administration where he had long contact with Americans at Michigan State University); he was fairly receptive to new ideas although he was quite suspicious of us when we got there, because I think he thought, well, just another American just talking and nothing is really going to happen.

Question: Did you talk in Vietnamese with him?

Answer: No, I spoke in English--I can speak some French. Most of these people do speak English, at this ~~level~~, and they enjoy speaking English.

Question: The meetings are held in English?

Answer: Most of the meetings are held in English, some in French. There is a problem in French because not all of the Americans speak that so they normally speak English. After awhile by playing tennis with the Deputy for Administration and working with him for about a week--I had never previously met him--he soon determined that we meant business, that we were going to do something. His original scepticism turned slowly to support and then enthusiasm.

Question: How was his scepticism expressed?

Answer: It was something that was felt rather than necessarily expressed. For instance, we asked him to set up a meeting and he would set it up and then arrive thirty minutes late or something like that. It was obvious that he was going through the routine as we had requested but he didn't really believe that this was much use. But when he saw that we meant business, he really came around rapidly and gave us support.

Question: How old was he?

Answer: He was about thirty-five years old.

Question: What do you think convinced him that you meant business?

Answer: The thing that convinced him was that we didn't get discouraged. But there were several things. We would schedule meetings for, say two o'clock in the afternoon in a building where the temperature was probably about a hundred degrees--very hot. We would show up; we would be very persevering. If his people didn't show up we went out and got them and literally that is what we had to do. The people who were supposed to come didn't come so we went and grabbed them and got them. We also showed great enthusiasm--a sustained enthusiasm--we also stayed ^{fly} for a number of days, it wasn't just the usual trip where a man would ~~go~~ in and stays for two or three hours, and a great conference is held and then he flies away and they may not hear anything from him again. If they do it may be a year later.

Question: What was the specific project that you were developing?

Answer: We were developing what was known as the An Giang Priority Area Development Program. With the people, for the people. This was, in fact, the overall program. That's why we were dealing with the Deputy Chief for Administration. He was positioning the various service chiefs. There are twenty-seven Service Chiefs in An Giang province. It is a very complicated bureaucratic or organizational structure. Although the Service Chiefs are nominally under the Province Chief, in fact each of them reports directly to a parent Ministry or Bureau in Saigon which also pays them. We have tried to have the Vietnamese government give strong authority to the Province Chief to control the Service Chiefs and also to hire and fire them. On paper this has been done, but in practice this does not exist. The Service Chiefs still feel that they can do nothing without reference to their Ministries.

Question: Does that mean that there are twenty-seven ministries?

Answer: It means that there are twenty-seven ministries or ^{Bureau} within the ministries. For instance, within the agriculture Ministry you have several Directorates. You have a Directorate for Agricultural Services and within that ~~you have~~ there are four or five sub-directorates, each of which has a director down in the province but each of these directors of service in the province reports to the particular directorate within the ministry in Saigon and that is where he gets his power. In a sense the personal determination on the part of Americans is able to motivate the Vietnamese. So slowly we motivated the Deputy for Administration. We dealt through him. As soon as he had made the introductions to the service chiefs, we then dealt directly with the service chiefs. We found differing reactions among them. We found that one man who was responsible for what is known as agricultural services in the province (under agricultural services you have the rice service, the ~~pest~~ ^{pest} service, the extension service, the plant protection service--that is, insecticides and disease control--and the fishery service). The man we were dealing with, the head of all of these branches, was not responsible for land affairs, ex

agricultural machinery, or livestock or animal husbandry; but he was responsible for all of the other services. He was an old French civil servant, about forty-five years old, and he let it be known that he just didn't believe that anything was going to happen (although he appeared to be cooperative); he didn't believe that anything could happen; this thing obviously was not approved by Saigon, although we had people from his ministry in Saigon with us. I neglected to mention that when we made our first trip to the province and announced this plan, we also took representatives of the ministry with us--all who would come.

Question: Were they superior in rank to him?

Answer: Yes they would be. In his particular ministry, the man who was supposed to come didn't show up at the airport. We expected to have about fourteen different people from ministries and only about five showed up for the trip. That is an indication of lack of enthusiasm in Saigon or unwillingness of the people in Saigon to go to the provinces. Although we arranged for a special airplane, gave special invitations, and made personal visits to see that they came, we expected this however. We were not undaunted by this reaction. We laid this particular visit out so that it would last five days in the province. During that five days, our individual technicians, after we met their technicians, broke down into groups and made individual studies of their plans and also what they thought could be done. Meanwhile, we took field trips throughout the province and talked to the local people and the farmers.

Question: Would the agricultural service chief actually put up some resistance or blocking?

Answer: Yes. Subsequently, when we actually got into the format, he said, of course that he would be very happy to discuss with us but he could not decide anything because it would have to be decided in Saigon, or he could not take any particular action without this type of formal approval, that his program was already made up and he did not have sufficient people to carry out an additional program. He was very busy with what he was doing. He gave all sorts of excuses.

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Question: How would you counter this type of excuse?

Answer: I would sit and discuss with him. Tell him that he if didn't have the personnel that we would help him get the personnel, in fact, he needed additional personnel. I would then tell him that it was very easy for us to get the additional approval in Saigon and that wherever he had problems we would help him to solve them. He didn't particularly appreciate this kind of pressure. Subsequently, when we actually got into program operations where he was involved, he would often fail to take the action which he had promised to take, for instance, in getting certain commodities or certain support from his ministry. Then we would be confronted with an emergency because he hadn't done what he was supposed to and we would have to jump in ourselves with emergency support.

Question: Could you give a specific example of this?

Answer: A specific example was that when we first got to the province, we found that on the books he had scheduled a considerable program to plant soy beans. We made our first visit in February, the soy beans should be planted by the first of April. They had fresh seed in rather considerable quantities. We didn't pay much attention. We asked him if everything was all right and he said, "Yes," that he would have the seed, he was going to get it in such-and-such a place. It got down to about the tenth of April in this particular case, and after we got down to the province we found that he had taken no action to buy the seed. Well, he had taken action--he had written a letter--once he wrote the letter, his responsibility was finished. He wrote to his ministry and asked his ministry to get the seed. Once he had done that, he made no follow-up whatsoever. When the seed had not come he just sat there and folded his hands, but his responsibility was over because he could produce a letter; he was no longer responsible when the seed didn't come.

Question: Did you bring in any extra seed?

Answer: No, we did not plan to bring in any seed. In fact, our own agricultural people were opposed to bringing in seed. They also said seed was available in

Vietnam; that it could be purchased in Vietnam.

Question: It had to be done through the ministry, and that, for the service chief, was the crucial factor in getting the seed?

Answer; As I said, he had written a letter to the ministry. But nobody had ever gone to see if there was seed at the supposed source, including our agriculture division which was accepting the ministry's word and the agricultural service chief's word that there was seed. On April 10 when no seed had come, I personally paid attention to this problem. When I got back to Saigon, I immediately went to determine, in fact, if there was seed available. I found out that there wasn't any seed available in Vietnam.

Question: Who had given the wrong information?

Answer: It was an assumption by everybody that the seed would be grown in a different province and after it was grown that the farmers would be willing to sell it. The fact was that they grew some soy beans in another province but the farmers were not willing to sell any of their seed because they wanted to replant for another crop. So there was no seed available at any price. Immediately, I drew upon my friends in Taiwan and went right out on a limb (I really stuck my neck in a noose, if anybody had wished to pull the noose), I ordered the seed by telephone from Taiwan. I arranged with the U. S. Air Force to fly sixteen tons of seed from Taiwan to Vietnam.

Question: With what kind of payment?

Answer: Payment was promised from U. S. AID. I had been told earlier that this program would get the highest priority and nothing was to stand in the way. I had been told this by our deputy ambassador and also by the mission director. ~~Based upon this assurance~~ This was the first real crucial showdown where we started to spend money. Based on this assurance, by telephone, I committed our mission in Taiwan to go ahead and buy the seed and told them we would send the money. This was about the eleventh of April. Our mission in Taiwan is very small and worked with the Joint Commission of Rural Reconstruction. They had brand new seed bought,

cleaned, treated, and tested in Taiwan and shipped so that it arrived in Vietnam in five days which is really a miracle. Sixteen tons is no small amount of seed. We flew it to the closest large airfield about fifty kilometers away and then trucked it from there. Of course, it was much better seed than we could have bought in An Giang. I would say that once those people saw that seed arrive on that kind of a basis and knew the story. Incidentally, the bureaucracy within our mission subsequently in making payment, a lot of people were offended that I had gone ahead and committed this to pay for this but I pulled out the assurance of our mission director and the ambassador so they went ahead.

Question: What is written assurance?

Answer: No, it was verbal.

Question: But you were backed up?

Answer: Yes, they came through on that one. But this dramatic effort impressed the Vietnamese no end, that is, the Vietnamese officials.

Question: You had the seed coming--where did it go to?

Answer: We already had a list of farmers who were participating in the program. We had done this in cooperation with the service chief--partially with him. We found out that his lists were faked. We also sent into the province, by the first of April, a team of four Chinese technicians from Taiwan--local level Chinese technicians, some of whom spoke Vietnamese. They started immediately to work with this agricultural service chief and his staff of extension people. Now the extension people were on paper--I think that he had nine of them. In fact, most of them were not ever even leaving his office. So these lists are also that he had done by bureaucratic method. He sent letters out to the village chief and said, "Now we are going to have soy beans coming in." He had done this five or six months earlier. In fact, we were building this on his own program. Then, he had said (to the village chief), "Please send in a list of who wants the soybeans and how much they need." So this list had come back up, in certain cases, from certain villages and it was a shadow list, there were no people there. The village chief expected to get

possibly some seed which he would then say that he had distributed, and would probably take it and eat it or sell it. It didn't take us long to find out, after the Chinese got there, and we had them go out and start checking these lists, together with their extension personnel, that this was the condition. By the time the seed arrived, we were able to verify about half of the lists. We were in such a bind--it had to be planted by April 20--that we were really working night and day with them in getting this out. We helped provide the trucks. We had to push the ag service chief because he never believed the seed would come in the first place.

Question: Did the service chief have trucks?

Answer: He had one truck but he was reluctant to use his own truck. We borrowed trucks from the police, from all different forces; we borrowed boats.

Question: You literally took this seed out to the hamlets?

Answer: Well, I took it out to the villages and then called in the village chiefs and they would call the hamlet chiefs and supposedly the people on these lists. It got confused. We actually had enough seed to plant 550 hectares. We probably, actually got about maybe 350 hectares planted with the improved seed. There was slippage because their lists weren't accurate and the whole thing, on their side, was so poorly planned--it was a dream or a myth. This is often the case and this is why things go astray in Vietnam. You have these myths at this level.

Question: They don't believe it when it really happens and are not ready?

Answer: Not only that but everybody does everything by letter or by document. This is often done with the knowledge that it is hollow; just as there are plenty of soldiers on the payroll who are dead. We call them "ghosts". They draw the money for these people and it goes into the commander's pocket. It is the same thing in any kind of program. The village chief would send in a list on which half of the people were ghosts.

Question: Did you actually find yourself with seed on your hands that couldn't be planted?

Answer: No, we didn't find that. We actually distributed them. We were able

to get them to villages. In the first place, we wanted to have a broad distribution. Our ag service chief was concentrating his program in only one small part of the province, we immediately expanded it to all the districts because we wanted to introduce soybeans on a broad scale. He said that they wouldn't go in these other areas. We asked him for plausible reasons why not. He had no plausible reasons. We immediately had checked this with our Chinese technicians, and we had already lined up model farmers in these other places.

Question: Your relationship with the service chief must have been a very difficult one.

Answer: It was difficult. Everytime I came down, I brought gifts and gave them to him, and in order to keep him fairly happy, I always gave him great face. Everything that was ever done, I always did it in his name. In other words, if we sent out anything, he always asked me to go but he always ended up as the guy who was doing this. All of our people did this; our Chinese were always very cautious about this too. We never did anything directly, by that I mean, if we did it directly we always did it with Vietnamese with us, and with the Vietnamese doing the job, I mean the Vietnamese getting the credit. Although by our presence, especially the presence of the Chinese I think we gained the confidence of the farmers. We had already found out in this particular province (this was the most secure province in Vietnam, so this is obviously the case through all the country) that the/civil servant is already bankrupt in the eyes of the population because they don't expect anything good, generally, from their own government officials. In fact, they hardly ever expect to see them. When these officials go out, it is traditional to stream up in a great whirling cloud of dust, and get out as a military review, if you would; then a dry speech; a drinking of a bottle of beer or a cold orange; then climbing back in the car and away--that's it, because it is very feudalistic. I think that we gave them much more credibility because they saw our people getting down and actually beginning to work with them.

Question: Did they pay for the seed?

Answer: This is an interesting point. Originally it was supposed to be a loan and they were supposed to repay from the crop. When we got the seed there we found out that the agricultural service chief had not made any provisions for this whatsoever. This was on paper. In fact, we had insisted that he do this. He assured us that this was done and that it was done through the village chiefs. When we got there-- signatures that this was done. But when it came later and we had all the seed planted and harvested the crop, and we went out to collect we found out that the village chiefs had not done this. We only got a very small amount back--maybe a few hundred kilograms when we should have gotten back sixteen tons. There was nothing to do but to see to it that the second cycle. For instance, if we are talking about soy beans let's see what our plan was. Our plan was that in the first phase we would plant 550 hectares, then to get the seed back, hold the seed. This first phase was planted in April and was harvested last July; from that harvest to collect back approximately four and a half tons of seed from which we would plant, this past December, 125 hectares from which we will get back the four and a half tons of seed which we had given out. The whole balance of approximately one hundred eighty tons we were going to buy, less four and a half tons which would be used this April to plant 6,000 hectares. ~~SS~~ We had in earlier years planted in this province (or they had planted with the Chinese coming down from Saigon and working with them) they had introduced and planted about fifteen hectares and they had a phenomenal result; the yield is two or three times the yield of the local variety. This was an improved US variety--Palmetto beans coming through Taiwan, in other words it had been introduced to Taiwan very successfully. We then got this seed from Taiwan but it was the Palmetto variety. We had, as I said, very ambitious plans. We were going from fifteen hectares to five hundred and fifty hectares to six thousand hectares, this year. So that in the future we wouldn't be depending on imported seed but seed locally produced.

Question: This was not in the service chief's original plans?

Answer: No, no. The Chinese had talked with him and helped him develop a five hundred and fifty plan and he had put that on paper from the earlier fifteen hectares.

He concentrated this in one part of the province. He hadn't even any plan for only five hundred and fifty hectares the next year. We came in and moved this thing upward, and also gave him the wherewithal and assurance that we would have the funds there to buy ~~xxxx~~ sufficient seed to do this. He said that this was impossible. After we had asked him how much he possibly could expand, the most he wanted was fifteen hundred hectares. Since there are approximately, according to our estimates, about sixty thousand hectares that could be planted, if we had tractors and if we had people understanding this, we thought that six thousand hectares was a tremendously ambitious goal. No where else in Vietnam had anyone in AID undertaken a goal like this. In AID it is usually on a demonstration basis not on a very broad extension basis.

Question: This is supposed to happen this coming April?

Answer: The six thousand hectares will be this coming April. We drew out a whole program in prime phases for every crop--for soy beans, watermelons, vegetables, rice--we are also going into a complete change in the rice pattern. We are moving out of floating rice, in the areas where it is possible, into the paddy rice which has a yield of about three times that of floating rice; and is a tremendous cultural change. The result of deploying the soy beans from Taiwan proved to/very, ^{be} very dramatic. We actually checked on about 230 hectares which were planted--we made a survey covering 230 of the estimated 350 hectares that got planted--we had an average yield of 1430 kilograms per hectare of beans against the average yield for the local variety of only about 600 kilograms. The maximum single yield was 230 kilograms per hectare. We didn't use any fertilizer because he had it all lined up to get fertilizer down there for this program and he had not followed through so no fertilizer got there. We did use insecticide, which we got primarily through Chinese sources, so we used some insecticide but we used new cultural practice, new planning methods. The Chinese went out with his extension agents had about 100 model demonstrations. We actually, in a sense caused a revolution in the province. With 1430 kilograms per hectare, the price was fifty piasters per kilogram, which meant that on a 1400 kilogram yield that

the farmer took in seventy thousand plus piasters, whereas, from a hectare of rice he only got fifteen thousand piasters ~~in~~ from a yield. The farmers were really ecstatic about this. The result was that when we announced this year and had done up what we called the "Package Loan Program". (this Package Loan Program is that we asked the farmers to apply who wished to plant soy beans and tell us how much land they wished to plant on. Then we would physically go out and inspect their land and determine if during the dry season they had a water source; if they had a water source and if the land is suitable then we measured how much of the land is suitable, then we gave them a ^{loan} ~~loan~~ of so much fertilizer for that particular area of land, so much seed, so much insecticide, one sprayer, and if they needed it a water pump. That we called the Package Loan) Then we (ourselves working with the Vietnamese) also then signed an agreement with them to buy the whole crop at a fixed price which will be the market price and if they take good care of it and produce it as we wish, ~~a seed selected~~ ^{if it is of good quality} --we will buy the whole crop at ten percent above the market price. Then we would deduct from this the amount of the loan. If this works (it is just now going on) this will be the first time that anyone has made a loan to farmers in South Vietnam and gotten their money back.

Question: When you say "we"--how did you work this? Through extension agents?

Answer: We were working this through extension agents. We have completely revolutionized their extension agents there. What we have done is--we went to every village there are 38 villages in this province. We had the people in the village nominate who they consider to be the best farmer. We also took the farmers who had been our model farmers before. We asked the agricultural service chief to nominate one; the people in the village to nominate one; and the Chinese and USAID to nominate one. Then we get these people in and have interviews.

Question: Would this be three different people?

Answer: Yes, although sometimes there would be four or five. We asked the tenant farmers union to nominate; we asked the Hoa Hao religion to nominate.

Question: So that you would get everyone involved. Would there be any overlap?

Answer: Sometimes they all nominate the same person. These were nominated as the best farmers and we had an upward age limit on these men. Then they would come in and be interviewed and then they would be selected. Then we would pay them at the same rate as a man drafted into the local militia. This man is to work half a day on his own land and a half day as the extension agent. He is now the man who is carrying the program to his own village and he has to be a good farmer. In addition, as soon as we bring him in for training, we are going to send him to Taiwan for one month's observation. This will be the first time in Vietnam, that any local real farmer level man--a man who probably never had a pair of shoes on his feet in his life is going out of the area and will have his eyes opened as to what can be done in his own area.

Question: What is the reaction to the service chief to all of this?

Answer: The service chief complained that he had a heart attack and high blood pressure and he finally asked to be transferred. He has now been transferred. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture people although at first they were skeptical about all of this too--USAID's agriculture division did detail some men to the province. One of the two people detailed to the province is extremely enthusiastic about this program but he was not very smart, so he wasn't really much help, but he wasn't really much hindrance either but he was very, very enthusiastic. Back in Saigon, reaction was mixed. There were either people who were tremendously enthusiastic or people who were just bitter as can be.

Question: Why were they bitter?

Answer: They were bitter because this program was being done by non-agriculturalists. It was being done completely ~~according to~~ against their traditional ways of doing things, which was to work from the top down.

Question: You mean from the top of the Ministry?

Answer: Yes. Initially, many of the people in the Ministry were also opposed to this but subsequently (again we tried to get them to adopt it as their own program and we arranged many, many plane flights for them; accompanied them down to make them

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feel it was theirs), today, they now realize it is a big success so far. So they are giving it good support on the ministerial side now. Initially, not much; but now it is coming along.

Question: At any time did they try to block you?

Answer: Not particularly at the ministry level. It was just indifference mostly. Our agriculture division in Saigon tried to block us at every step of the way.

Question: How would they do that?

Answer: Good grief!! In processing the documents--the failure to process documents, the failure to approve things. What we were doing was a 21 different fields of activity program in An Giang province, ranging from public works, rock quarrying, vocational education, secondary education, hamlet education--you name it, we've got it--21 different disciplines. We tried to run this through our technical divisions; to get them involved; make them responsible; get them to go out and work. I was coordinating the whole thing.

Question: You would go back and forth?

Answer: Yes, I was going back and forth.

Question: What would happen when you would get to Saigon? Could you give a specific example?

Answer: In Saigon things are generally all right. We have a problem again with this business of lack of continuity. We are always changing people. So you get one man to agree to do something and when you go back to Saigon you find he is either away visiting his wife somewhere or he had already left and his successor had arrived and didn't agree and wouldn't honor the first man's commitment. So, in effect, ~~in~~ to ~~something~~ carry out anything like this, you have to have one person who is ~~is~~ almost a dictator for this program. To get the technical divisions really involved and really carrying their share is almost an impossibility. It probably is not worth the effort. Since they are concerned with 45 provinces and since they do not generally get down to the province level, it's a good thing to try although you probably, in a sense, waste more time ^{reaching them} to get something done than if you try to do it yourself.

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Question: You don't have a regional man?

Answer: We have regional people but they also did not support the program because they considered that this was also an intervention from Saigon in something going on in their region. They did not particularly hinder us though, because there was too much steam behind this coming from the Ambassador's office. The Ambassador was the man who put the real steam in it plus myself.

Question: How could they prevent you from doing things? Would they have to sign-off for supplies?

Answer: Do you mean the technical divisions? Yes, they had to sign-off on/supplies and procurement documents and some of the program documents. A number of activities which should have been initiated have, to this day, not been initiated. When I had been in Washington, ten days ago, a stiff cable had gone from Washington ordering them to initiate these actions which had been promised for months.

Question: Could you say who you would go to in Washington to get these things done?

Answer: Yes. I went to the Deputy Administrator for the Far East Bureau of AID, then also to the White House, of course, Mr. Homer's office because they are interested in this. This thing was fairly sexy in Saigon for a couple of months. As a sexy program and something that everybody was interested in. Then, of course, another program would come up and another and another which has now taken pretty much of the glamor off this one. Meanwhile, we have been plugging away at this program.

Question: Who would backstop you at the Ministry?

Answer: In most cases, I did this personally. Because of having worked in Vietnam for four and a half years, I was very familiar with most of the ministers.

Question: If I understand this then, you actually had more cooperation from ~~xxxx~~ the ministry than from your own people in AID?

Answer: Very often, that is correct. That has very often been my experience in Vietnam. Within my mission in Vietnam we have always had pretty good cooperation ~~xxxx~~ traditionally from our education division. We had good lip service from

our public works division but not much action. Because that involves signing contracts and they were very reluctant to do much contracting. The only out and out opposition that I encountered in the program came from our agriculture division and some of it out of our regional office--nowhere else.

Question: On your first go-round when you expected the seed to be returned can you think of specific incidents when you met with the village chief and he said, "Mr. Fraleigh (or whoever he talked with), I don't have it," how did this look?

Answer: First of all, we found all sorts of reactions among village chiefs. I personally went out to a number of villages and we found that the village chiefs had sold them (well we presume they sold them, at least they didn't give them to the people). Presumably they pocketed the money. We went out and ask for lists, and to see the people who were on the lists, and they either didn't exist or they hadn't received them. Then we went back and told the village chief and he would be very, very embarrassed.

Question: Who would be there when you would do that?

Answer: In this case, it was ourselves and usually the extension cadre, AID, the provincial representative and maybe one of the Chinese, maybe the agriculture extension cadre. We had a very interesting experience with the agriculture extension cadre. When we got to the province we found that there were supposed to be about 17 on the payroll but there were actually only nine working. The others had resigned and they couldn't hire anyone to take their place. We found that of the nine actually working only two or three were actually ever going out in the province. However, the Chinese attached one to a cadre or two cadre to one Chinese, and the Chinese every morning would go to the cadre's house, pick them up, load them in their car and take them out. The cadre soon became very interested. They were not interested but when the Chinese started going out and taking them with them, the cadre developed a considerable interest in this type of work. The cadre's excuse for not having gone out earlier was that they didn't have transportation, and secondly they had no facility for paying for their lunch, no per diem. The Chinese got a per diem and

invariably, day after day, if they stopped in a small restaurant somewhere, they would invite the cadre to eat lunch. So they overcame these problems. Once they gave some inspiration to the Vietnamese extension cadre about seven of the nine shaped up into pretty effective men.

Question: Could you have gotten some per diem for the cadre?

Answer: No. We programmed it the subsequent year. Actually, we have changed things around now. Now we are doing the cadre on a village basis so the cadre would have no excuse in the future for being out of his area at lunchtime. We do have enough cadre now to cover this province.

The village chiefs did not collect the beans so we felt that this was a lost cause.

Question: You obviously don't investigate or make an issue of it?

Answer: We made an issue--we pointed out that we thought that this was very bad and we pointed out that in the future there would be no chance for slippage. We would design a program in which there wouldn't be any slippage and that is why we are getting into the Package Loan.

Question: The village chief is elected or appointed by the district chief?

Answer: He is appointed by the district chief and the province chief. We explained this all to the district chiefs and the province chief. They, of course, held the ag service chief responsible because he ~~was~~ assured us that we were going to get this seed back. But we figured that there was just no way we were going to make the village chief pay for it because he has no funds to pay for it. We were just wasting our time over that particular seed. We also figured that the sixteen tons of seed had actually been extremely successful because it had succeeded in convincing the farmers in this province that soy beans were really the thing to do. For instance, when we called the meeting in one village to ask people to come and discuss the second phase soy bean planting, we asked them how many would come. The

village chief said that about sixty would show up. Actually about eight hundred farmers showed up--to show you the interest in this sort of thing. This thing we considered as really quite a revolutionary field in that particular province. We had other successes in other crops in which we are deeply interested. But getting back to your question--there are certain things that if you harp on them as an issue you probably waste more--and you lose sight of the bigger goals, the bigger objectives. Our objective (of course, is to have a better, improved, efficient and honest government, that also means on the village chief level), our overall objective in this particular program with soy beans, was to have soy beans introduced on a scale which would prove successful, sufficiently successful to convince thousands of farmers to plant a second crop because these soy beans are planted during a season when they normally don't plant anything. So our objective was to increase productivity. We weren't going to lose too much time on this side issue but we were going to protect ourselves in the future to see that this did not happen again.

Question: In this kind of side issue, do you get Americans who are too concerned with democratic process or diplomacy?

Answer: We do. We get too many Americans who are concerned with small points, and small details that they lose.....

Question: How do you prevent that?

Answer: I think that this has to be a question of a man's own vision and this is where, perhaps, his direction wherever it comes from at a higher level, will be able to clear things up for him. In this respect, I have been to meetings, where the question of honesty has been discussed with Secretary McNamara in Vietnam. He has said the same thing that we have told our men--that you have to understand that their standards of morality are different than ours and you cannot reshape them according to American morality which sometimes may be a little Puritanical. We have to expect some loss, some slippage in Vietnam. The thing to do is to do your best through example and through a certain--well, face and loss of face--to the people and to keep it as low as you can. This is the advice I always give to our people.

If they are going out there on a white horse, and going to have everything done the same way that it is done in Allentown, Pennsylvania, you are not going to be very successful.

Question: Why is your new system going to be more foolproof?

Answer: It is more foolproof now because the people, first of all, know the thing is successful. We have gone out and physically talked and we are working at the end of the line with the end farmer. The farmer at the end of the line is inclined to be a fairly honest individual in Vietnam. A man who is willing to repay his loan; he considers it an obligation, a traditional responsibility, a matter of face. If this is explained to him adequately--what he is getting into and that he actually makes a profit in what he is doing--the average, there is probably a higher percentage of people there who are willing to repay than there would be here in the United States.

Question: How does he feel about things disappearing at other levels?

Answer: This is why he has no faith, in many cases, in his own leadership or government. This is the great problem in Vietnam.

Question: So this goes right down to the village chief?

Answer: It goes down lower; it goes down to the hamlet chief. The hamlet chiefs for a long period of time and until near the end of the Diem regime we had hamlet elections. In some places we are having elections again but it is not uniform. What we are trying to do in An Giang, is I think the most comprehensive effort that the United States has ever made in any country to rapidly improve social and economic conditions.

Question: Could we talk a little more about the agriculture service chief and/the program worked under his direction because he seemed to have full authority.

Answer: Under his direction, of course, there was much more inefficiency. We are doing poultry, primarily hog production, but also poultry and poultry extension and also loans.

Question: Either you or Bob talked about piglets that were given on loan for breeding purposes. how did this work?

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Answer: This generally, we don't anticipate that there will be much problem with this program because he is going out physically and explaining. He has no intention, we think, of not getting it back. It was obvious that the ag service chief has no intention of replacing the seed. Whereas, this man has every intention of replacing it. We haven't had a chance to judge yet. But ~~this~~ we are quite confident that things will work out there.

Question: I understand, coming back again to the agricultural service chief, in some of your top programs that the service chief continued his own parallel programs.

Answer: This is another reason, yes. The programs that he had on his books and with his ministry--since we became so interested in An Giang, his own ministry became more interested. They had programs on their books for An Giang and they began to send the money down to do the things in An Giang because they knew that we were looking so hard. He continued to do his own programs. We knew fairly well what they were but he would not intermingle his programs and he would not cooperate between the two programs. We had to force him to cooperate. We forced him by going to him and having an absolute showdown. We would go physically to his house and call on him and say, "Now look, this is your program and you are going to have so much seed produced in a certain crop and over here is this priority area program and we need this seed, and we don't think there is any need to buy it anywhere else if you are getting it from here. We want this used here." He would say, "Well, maybe, I have to ask Saigon." We would say, "Don't worry. We will ask Saigon for you." or "If you are going to ask we'll send a cable for you."

Question: How would he react to that?

Answer: He wouldn't like that. First we might give him a chance to send a cable and usually he wouldn't. We knew his stalling tactics, so he eventually knew that we were not going to tolerate any of his stalling. The next thing was too, we had long since gotten the province chief on our side, in this case. In fact, the province chief told us, after he had been there working for about a month, or a month and a half, that if you have any trouble with some of these people as I am sure you are,

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you just let me know and I'll crack the whip over them. And he had called in these people several times and told them to cooperate. A new deputy chief for administration arrived mid-way in the program who has become the greatest supporter of this program. The new man is just outstanding and a great leader. ~~box~~ The province chief and the deputy province chief considered the Americans in AID working in his province (the few that there were of us), he didn't differentiate between Americans and Vietnamese in doing this. This type of rapport has been achieved there. Then everybody was inspired to move ahead in this program. The man who we put in as provincial representative is a young foreign service officer, 37 years old, who is a most unusual person. He is a man who while he was in training in Chinese language in Taiwan, and at the conclusion of his training, he got together with four Chinese, and got an old Chinese junk without an engine. They sailed this junk (no engine) from Taiwan to San Francisco. Subsequently, he was assigned to duty in Vietnam and while there he married a woman who was half Chinese, half Vietnamese who had four children at the time he married her. So, I mean, he is not a standard foreign service officer. He's not afraid of anything. He is the foremost Chinese language officer in the Foreign Service. He served in Warsaw as the U.S. interpreter for the Chinese Communists for three years. He is also an excellent linguist in Vietnamese; he trained for six months after volunteering for service in Vietnam. He got out there and he had this tremendous rapport with the Asian people. He is also so dedicated in his desire to really do something and get something done that he is just too energetic, I suppose, for the American bureaucracy out there at the regional level. Also, he was very impatient with them. He had arrived down in An Giang and he moved forward to the place in his relationship where he, in effect, ~~was~~ (with the understanding of the Vietnamese leadership) he was a real key in the civil government there on the social-economic side.

Question: He came in after the February Conference here in Honolulu?

Answer: Yes, he did. He will be here in the course and you can talk to him in about five or six days. He is going to pass through here on his way back to Vietnam.

Question: He is going back to Vietnam but not into the province?

Answer: For the moment, not into the province. I do not know whether he may get back to the province or not because Washington is extremely interested in this program.

Question: In a sense, this was a program that you had conceptualized, that you were carrying out yourselves. This must have been a very awkward situation for you, as well as for him.

Answer: In Vietnam, it was extremely awkward and it was awkward for him too, but both of us were committed to this as were Bob Traister, our Vietnamese staff in the province, we also had nine Chinese there from Taiwan--all our personal friends.

Question: You had support directly from the deputy ambassador, was that support withdrawn somehow?

Answer: Apparently, this man told me when he got back to Washington about ten days ago.....

Question: This happened after you left?

Answer: His removal from this province happened, I think, on the 17 of January. He was called to Saigon and told by somebody in COO that he was going to be transferred to a different province and that the reason was that he did not get along with Americans nor Vietnamese. He was told then to go back down to the region and see the regional director. He went to the regional director in the region, and the regional director told him that, "You don't get along with Americans or Vietnamese; you've just got too many problems with all of these complaints so you have to be moved." So he said, "Well, who is complaining?" And they named three people--three Americans; the ~~Corps Commander~~ American advisor to the Corps Commander, a brigadier general; the agricultural advisor at regional level (USAID); and the chief of the USAID agriculture division in Saigon. Then he said, "Well, on the Vietnamese side?" "Oh," they said, "obviously there are no Vietnamese. That's a mistake, no Vietnamese are complaining." It would be very obvious to me that no Vietnamese would complain with the possible exception of that old ag chief who had been long

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since gone. He wasn't there making trouble.

Question: What was the effect on the province chief and the Vietnamese group in An Giang with Americans feuding, in a sense, with each other?

Answer: I had received a letter from the deputy province chief in An Giang who was absolutely shattered and stated that the removal of this man was an indication of why the United States was not winning in Vietnam.

Question: You had left when this whole thing came about?

Answer: I had been gone two months. Had I been there they would not have dared do this, I'm sure. I had been out there four years and eight months. I had only stayed for this additional program because I was personally asked to go there by Vice-president Humphrey.

Question: I see, so your time was up?

Answer: My time was up in Vietnam for two years. I had been hanging on there because I was getting these requests to stay.

Question: After you had served here at the Conference you left, then this all happened after you returned?

Answer: The first time, I was sent home by Killam but I was returned there three days after he left--not because I wanted to go particularly because it meant separation from family.

Question: In other words, you had been gone for awhile, then this whole thing collapsed in part because your intermediary role was lacking?

Answer: Because of my particular job out there--my job title--I was a senior person in the OCO back in Saigon.

Question: You could probably have handled the province rep, in a sense?

Answer: I could have protected him because they would not have dared, I do not think, to remove him if I had been there. Had they done so they knew first of all that I would have taken it up immediately with the deputy ambassador and they ~~were afraid~~ ~~that~~ were afraid where I would take it up in Washington. I think they waited until they thought I was sufficiently gone out of the picture--I can only

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presume this.

Question: I still can't understand the working of the organization itself, since obviously there was very high level interest in An Giang's program.

Answer: Our man, Cal Mehlert, after going back to the region, then immediately disabused them of trouble with two of the three people named. I presume there was trouble with the military man because we had been very strong on wanting to keep American military presence in this particular province to an absolute minimum. The province is pacified. We had extremely good relations with the MACV sector advisor but they had moved two hundred U. S. Navy men into this province and this is a pacified province. In assense the little provincial capital is an absolute Garden of Eden, a much nicer city than Hilo, Hawaii, for example; a beautiful place, almost a paradise. The two hundred navy men had a very hard grating on the culture of that town. We had continually drawn the attention of this to the deputy ambassador. So much so that Westmoreland had sent his deputy down there to investigate the situation and had confirmed that what we were reporting was correct. Normally, no one reports ~~exdex~~ on the U. S. military and their behavior, so they did not appreciate this I'm sure. I think this is what must be at the bottom of it.

Question: This strikes me as odd that the regional director for USAID would take this role.

Answer: The regional director for USAID, up until recently was an army lieutenant colonel. He identified with the military. Further, he did not like either Mehlert or myself. But he didn't do anything about it. When Mehlert then went back to Saigon and went to see the deputy ambassador and said, "I am a Foreign Service officer, I volunteered for service in AID and this is what has happened and I do not feel that I wish to stay identified with AID any further in Vietnam. If this is the kind of thing that happens in AID, I would therefore like to have an assignment with the Foreign Service within the U. S. Embassy framework. What do you recommend?" The ambassador said, "Why? What's wrong in An Giang?" He didn't even know that this man had been withdrawn and he was furious (according to this man) and

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he said that he would cause an investigation to be made. This was two or three days before this fellow left Saigon, so we do not know what has happened in the interim.

Question: Is this what is keeping Bob here right now?

Answer: Well, Bob, again, was identified with us (if you will, you could say the developers) so he would also be persona non grata to the deputy regional director who is the former regional director. He is reluctant to go back there at this moment. Mehlert was replaced by a retired colonel who is not too bad a man but he is not very imaginative. And an active duty major, this is rather interesting.

Question: Will the thrust of the agriculture program continue do you think?

Answer: Yes, because as far as we know the nine Chinese are still there. I have already written two letters, one to Deputy Ambassador Porter, who I think is an excellent man, telling him there is too much at stake and too much has been done to let personality conflicts among Americans interfere with overall American objectives. That I am sure, somehow or other, in his great wisdom, he will be able to see that this doesn't happen. I've written to the deputy and told him that this situation is just incredible.

Question: But Mehlert definitely will not go back?

Answer: Mehlert doesn't want to go back after all this, although he only has seven months or six months left to go in Vietnam and I think he would be willing because we considered that with another six months service there that this thing would be so far along that nothing can turn it around. Even at this point we don't think anything can really.....

Question: Do you think the Vietnamese have taken it over?

Answer: Yes, the Vietnamese have, of course, without full U.S. support they will have trouble.

Question: You didn't mention at all, the role of the Revolutionary Development program and budget.

Answer: This program is funded through the Revolutionary Development Ministry. We got them to buck it because the individual ministries are so slow in moving that