

replacement tires. In other words, you have to support the grant aid," the end items, as we called it. An end item is a gun or a tank or a plane. So they had to support the grant items. That's the way it started, and as it went on, we said, in effect, to countries, some of them developed, "Okay, you need 100 of these. We'll give you 50 if you'll buy 50. You pay full price for 50 of them, we'll give you 50 more." So we were cutting back on grant aid.

The Marshall Plan was a big deal in the late Forties and early fifties, both in military and in economic support. We were coming along in the late fifties and sixties tearing that down. So that when on every three months, and then a real review every year.

Q: I guess in terms of reviews in the late sixties and maybe into the very early seventies, would also include items that would be purchased under credit, like FMS credits or allocations that would be given Iran, in which they would make their purchases of American weapon systems and so forth. I guess the annual review included that, as well.

Williamson: Yes, it did include that, but actually, the military didn't get into that. The Iranians, by the time I got there, were handling everything. Hanover Manufacturers Bank, for instance--

Q: Private credit.

Williamson: Private credit. They were handling a major, major portion of Iranian credit. We didn't get involved in that. There may have been some of it going on back in the States. In effect, we had been told that the Iranians could afford this, it was up to the Iranians to figure this out. Several times I worked with General Toufanian, the guy that did all the purchasing, before he came to the States, but he made trips to the States several times just to work out finances.

Q: You mentioned that at the May '72 meeting of the Shah and Nixon, Nixon said that he could buy anything he wanted short of nuclear weapons. Did you believe at that time the Iranian armed forces could use anything that it bought?

Williamson: No, not by any means. I worked very, very closely with all three of the services. The commander of the Imperial staff, as he was called, he was actually a combination of what we have over here, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Commander of the Imperial Staff. Our offices were side by side. We worked very closely, almost on a daily basis. I went in and discussed this with the Shah quite frequently. My one main point was capable, trained people, in the right numbers. I must have repeated that dozens and dozens and dozens of times, saying, "Don't buy things until you can use

it optimally." We went through that time and time again. I have a couple of anecdotes on that that I think prove my point.

We were involved one time in the initial stages of this helicopter building. "You can't run this race until you get a lot more than just pilots." I said, "You're not talking about just one skill. We're talking about maintenance people, engine experts, airplane experts, radio repairmen, administrative people." I said, "We're talking about a lot of technicians. You need a hurry-up basis, but you can't hurry up so much so that all this stuff will come in and just inundate you, physical things that you can't use." The next day I got a notice that the entire graduating class of one of the universities had become inducted into the Navy. Then another time on the aviation. "You don't need college graduates. You need people with the mentality to become college graduates if they go to school long enough. But there's a lot of technician-type jobs that if you take a high school graduate and give him the proper education, the proper training, technical training, he will probably make you a more satisfied serviceman." They had the national service requirement over there; everybody had to give two years. I said, "If you take a man with a college degree or an advanced degree, take him in the service and make him a radio mechanic, you have a dissatisfied customer right then. He'll never be happy. But if you take a high school graduate who can't afford to go to college, and you give him that skill, he'll probably make you a good military man. If he doesn't stay in the military, he'll

make a good technician out in the civilian world." I said, "You don't need all of these college graduates right away. You'll be doing your country a disservice. But you do need a lot of people on a time schedule." The next day I got a call from the chief of the Imperial Staff, "We're having a meeting this afternoon, and we want you to attend." General Azhari was the top man. General Khatami was the commander of the Air Force, General Minbashin was in command of the Army, Admiral Atai in command of the Navy. He even had Hoveyda there, the prime minister. There were 25 or 30 top people in the government. They had set up a commission to prove me wrong, and they announced, "We don't have the numbers of trained people available on the proper time schedule, so our job is to figure out a way to get them."

So I said, "Gentlemen, if you can prove me wrong, I'll be the happiest person in this room. I'd be delighted to be wrong, but it just appears to me that if you take every available mentally capable person and cram him into the armed forces, you're going to do your country a great disservice. That's just too fast a move." So that was one of our jobs. It still moved faster than we wanted to.

In their discussion about how we were going to get people, I told you they had a national service, everybody came in. You had to either come in the armed forces for two years or be in the literacy corps, which was a fantastic thing. They would take a high school graduate, send him to school six months to learn how to teach, and then put him out in the tribes. They'd go back to

the tribes and teach. They had a literacy program, and another good one in sanitation, which was just basic sanitation, just how to get the surface water out of your drinking water, things of that sort. They were doing a lot with the national service.

The way it worked, if a guy was a draftee, he came in for two years' service at the lowest possible level and stayed there. He didn't advance during the two years. He learned a limited skill, and he functioned. He did that thing, whatever it was, for two years. If a guy decided that he wanted to enlist, be a regular, he enlisted for life. He didn't enlist for 20 years or 30 years; he enlisted for life. He came in, and the stipulation was, "You will be trained to the maximum level of your mental capacities. We will take you just as far as you can go in many different fields. When you finish your schooling, you are a non-commissioned officer." They never served as privates; they became non-commissioned officers from the first day after their schooling. So they had these two: two years, lifetime.

The Iranians thought, "We've got to have a short term in this." So they came up with a good idea of a short term. I asked, "What do you mean?" Their short term was eleven years. [Laughs] So their attitude toward the military was considerably different from ours.

Just to give you an example, my driver, my sedan driver, was a sergeant. He won the national lottery. Here was a man with a high school education--[inaudible]--good driver, dependable driver, always dependable. But he won the national lottery,

which all of a sudden gave him \$5 million. So I asked him, "What are you going to do?"

He said, "Well, I'm going to buy my parents a farm. My father has always wanted to own his own land. I'll buy them a farm. I'm going to take this Mercedes and trade it in on a Pekan," which is the little locally produced car. He said, "A man of my stature just has no business driving around in a Mercedes." [inaudible] "And then I'm going to buy a house in a different part of town."

I said, "What do you mean, a different part of town?"

He said, "I have two little children, and I want my house close to a good school."

I said, "And then what are you going to do?"

He said, "I signed up for life. I'm in the Army for life, and I gave them my word." He had no thought of leaving the service. He had given them his word that he'd stay for life.

I said, "If you were released from that obligation, what would you do?"

He said, "I'd go home and farm with my father." Eleven years to them their short term.

After weeks and months of discussion, I think I finally won and got them all to accept the fact that trained personnel in the right numbers should be the pacing factor of their expansion. Before that, their pacing factor was how quickly they could buy hardware. Just before I went over there, they bought a bunch of C-130 airplanes. They literally intended to put them in storage.

We worked out a wonderful deal on that one with Lockheed back here, and worked very closely with them. Lockheed gave them a good financial deal; Lockheed said, "If you buy this many, I can give them to you at a greatly reduced price." And the Iranians were getting financially a real good deal on the price of the airplanes, but the delivery schedule was so much faster. It was costing several millions just to warehouse them.

As it went on, the producer here in the United States found sales for them in other foreign countries about as fast as they could make them, so every time they could sell one in Latin America, for instance, that would delay the ones for Iran a little bit. But that kept going on. I don't believe they ever put a single airplane in storage.

Q: I gather during the mid-seventies there was a big concern in Washington whether Iran had the capacity to use all the weapons they were buying, and whether the infrastructure was adequate.

Williamson: Infrastructure was not adequate at all. For instance, the Army aviation program, I've mentioned that several times, but that was by far the biggest one that required trained people. You can take a big airplane. Say you spend \$30 million on airplanes. You don't get many airplanes, and you don't require many technicians. But you spend \$30 million on helicopters, you get a lot of helicopters and trained technicians and facilities and things of that sort. So the pacing factor was

really terrific for these people. The ability to keep up just wasn't there. They couldn't produce as fast as the Shah wanted.

So they took over a complete air force base in Isfahan, the whole airfield. Then we got a team of American specialists and sent them to seven different bases here in the United States. In other words, Fort Rucker, Alabama, was our pilot training base. Fort Eustice was for transportation. Dayton, Ohio, was another one. We had seven major Army aviation activities going on. So this team went to each of those bases, the teams made up of U.S. personnel, went to these bases, selected the most vital activity that this base had and that one had, and then they spent about three months drawing up a fantastic master plan of how we could consolidate those best features into Isfahan. Came over, and my staff and I worked and worked and worked. The Iranian staffs worked and worked the Shah.

Some of the things the Shah did to get it started, there was one big 22-story hotel, just fantastic, he gave it to them. He said, "You take this hotel and that can start off as part of your requirement." As I recall, it was \$150 million, some large figure. He said, "You have a line of credit. Start your construction, and when you need more, let me know." The Americans were just absolutely ecstatic. A lot of our people had worked for years at Fort Rucker, for instance, and said, "I wish we had this. I wish we had this." All we had to do was say, "We ought to have it," and the Iranians said, "Build it." So it

turned out, to this day, it is a fantastic facility. We don't have anything in the United States as beautiful. The Shah pushed it. People were the deciding factor. Their technical training was excellent to a fantastic degree.

The commandant of the school had all these courses available. This one wasn't filled and that one wasn't filled. In a very short time, he was screaming for help because all his classes were just overflowing. But they went to work.

Q: You were talking about the remarks made by President Nixon and Henry Kissinger, the military locations of the meeting. Were there any other aspects between them and the Shah that are worth mentioning or that you know of?

Williamson: I was privileged only to the discussion of the military aspects. I am confident that they talked about a lot of things that were not mentioned to me.

Q: By the Shah?

Williamson: As I said, though, I personally sat there and heard President Nixon discuss the meeting, and I heard Kissinger discuss it. Then the following day, I sat down with the Shah, and the three seemed right together on their understanding of what had happened. Chances are very great that Dr. Kissinger and

the President discussed a lot with the ambassador when I was not there. I was not privy to know all that.

Q: For example, I've read that one of the things that was discussed was the question of special aid to the Kurdish insurgency in Iran. That was apparently brought up in the meeting.

Williamson: If it was, I don't know it. That Kurds problem was a real dilly, because several times while I was there, the Iraqis just gathered up thousands of them and drove them down the road, said, "Get the hell out of Iraq." And Iran set up tents alongside the highways, just thousands of them. Then the Iraqis would just say, "Get out. We don't want you." The Kurds would move, come over, and be taken care of by the Turkish or the Iranian people, and kind of get absorbed and go away in time. But it was just a heartless thing to see the people driven down, and I saw this, people just driven down the road like sheep. It was in the wintertime, so it must have been--I'm not sure whether it was '71 or '72.

Q: When you were stationed in Iran, were you in touch with the Pentagon officials who worked on Iranian issues? Who were some of the people that you worked with, who were stationed at the Pentagon?

Williamson: The Secretary of Defense had a Admiral Pesh, Admiral Peat, and the Army had a civilian, 'Dave Alne'. That wasn't his name, but we called him Dave because he read Henry David Thoreau so much. I don't recall what his real first name was. I never called him anything but Dave. You know of him.

Q: He was Army staff.

Williamson: He was Army staff, yes. During his visit he was working on behalf of all the Secretary of Defense.

Q: Did they visit Iran from time to time?

Williamson: Yes.

Q: How much interest did Secretary of Defense [Melvin] Laird have in Iran?

Williamson: During the time that I was over there, the only contacts or knowledge I had was his specific work with regard to Iran. His name was used quite frequently. "Secretary Laird has decided this." Whether his name was being used by another individual, I just don't know. But the few times, the very few times I talked to him, he seemed to be quite knowledgeable, very interested, A time or two I thought he wasn't very supportive. I say that, but by the time we had cut the Iranian personnel down

from 3,000 to 1,000, and cut to 600, I figured he was kind of cutting my throat on that. [Laughs] So in my own mind, I accused him of not being supportive. But officially, I think he did a good job for us.

Q: Did he make any visits to Iran while you were there?

Williamson: No.

Q: Were you in touch with officials from other agencies in Washington, or was it mostly just Pentagon contacts that you focused on?

Williamson: A fair number of State Department people came over to Iran, not specifically the military part, but the military part was the part I was in. Joe Sisco came over, Bill Sullivan came over. I visited with them. Senator "Scoop" Jackson came. Several congressional committees came.

Q: Did you brief them on arm sales issues?

Williamson: Yes. With respect to Senator Jackson, he didn't want to see anything. He was just passing through at that time. My activity was really one of the pacing factors, as to how well Iran was doing. Our ambassador was so insistent, that he said, "All right, I'll have breakfast with him." [Laughs] So I went

down to the hotel at 7:00 in the morning and sat down and had breakfast with him. We talked a little bit. I knew that he didn't want to talk. I wasn't trying to sell him a bill of goods at all. During the conversation, I said, "You're from the state of Washington, aren't you?"

I said, "I signed an interesting contract just day before yesterday in your state."

He said, "Oh, you did? What was that?"

"Boeing."

"How much?"

"\$360 million."

He dropped his fork right in his plate. [Laughs] He just literally turned his fork loose and said, "What did you say?"

I said, "Oh, yes. Long-range aero surveillance planes." I forget just what it was for--\$360 million.

He said, "My plane is leaving at 8:00 o'clock. I'm going down to Saudi Arabia. I'll be back later to see you." He got very, very interested.[laughs] He said, "You can't imagine. I've worked for years trying to get multi-million dollar contracts. Here's \$360 million and nobody even told me about it."

So we did have a good group of people coming through, and a good many of them were surprised at what they found there. John Connelly was there one time.

Q: Treasury secretary.

Williamson: Yes. He came in on Friday. We exchanged telegrams. I asked him, "Would you be willing to speak to the press?"

He said, "Sure." So we set up a press conference. He did beautifully, stood up there at the mike, fielded their questions. When it was over, he talked to my wife and said, "That was a pretty good press turnout. I didn't expect that many."

And she said, "Yes, it was a very nice turnout, considering it's the Sabbath."

He looked at her and said, "My God!. Your husband sent me a telegram telling me that Friday was the Sabbath, and I didn't believe him."

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE; BEGINNING OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

Q: When you first came to Iran in '71, Douglas MacArthur II was ambassador then.

Williamson: That's right.

Q: How closely did you work with him?

Williamson: He was a very interesting individual to work with. He was very dynamic, he was very positive, self-assured individual, self-reliant individual. He literally didn't feel

beholden to anyone. He worked in such a way that he had a lot of the traits of General Douglas MacArthur. He was sort of on stage, and he was presenting himself, and he was Mr. Big. But he wasn't jealous at all of how information was gathered or who accomplished something. He didn't seem too concerned about who got credit for getting it; he wanted the job done. He was a delightful man to work with.

You asked how closely I worked with him. I would say I personally met with him at least once a week, maybe twice. He was a good man to work with. He was not hesitant, he was not bashful at all. You knew exactly where you stood with him. He spoke right out, he said exactly what he thought, and he invited me to do the same thing. I was in a field somewhat different from any of his activities, and he respected my opinion. He was a delightful person.

Q: Can you give an opinion on how effective you think he was as ambassador?

Williamson: I have to go right back to my previous comments. The Iranians respected the Americans to a fault. They never would criticize. I don't think they would have thought of him being anything other than very effective. From my standpoint, he was very good. I never heard any criticism, except for a few what we call lazy people that felt like he pushed them pretty hard. But that's little criticism.

Q: You mentioned earlier that to some extent the Iranians trusted military people more than they did people from the embassy, in general.

Williamson: Maybe "trust" is an overstatement. They were more comfortable working with us. They really felt that the military man was completely out in the open, his rank was exposed, his position was known, and they just felt like everything was on top of the table. The Iranians, their own culture was built around the military. In other words, over there, even in their country, they would not give a civilian a top-secret clearance. No civilians.

Q: Only military people?

Williamson: None of them had top-secret clearance. The Shah would bring somebody, the prime minister, for instance, into his confidence and tell him something, but as far as the official line was concerned, nobody outside of the military had a top-secret clearance.

Q: The next ambassador was Joseph Farland. Did you work with him fairly closely, as well?

Williamson: Very closely. He was a completely different type of individual. Although that was the fourth country he had been ambassador to, he was not what you'd call a career professional. He was a very wealthy man and successful. He didn't have the years of background and experience that gave him near the confidence that MacArthur had, so if I had any criticism of Joe Farland--I still consider him as a personal friend--he was insecure. He's a personal friend and a nice guy. My only criticism, if I had to give one, would be he didn't have the self-confidence that he should have had.

For instance, when I went to the palace to talk with the Shah, I think my shortest period the whole time I was there was an hour and 45 minutes. I would have habitually a two-hour or so visit. I had finished my military discussion in about 20 minutes, and then the Shah used me to philosophize, as a bounceboard, as he said. The Shah told me. " I'm glad I have you. In my kind of government, I can't get my subjects to disagree with me. I often have a difficult time finding out what they think, because they're trying to tell me what they think I want to hear." And he said, "You are open and above board, and if you think I'm wrong, you let me know it." And he used me that way. Not that I was smarter than the ambassador or more capable than other people, but I was one that was there with the book wide open, no bone to pick. I could be honest with him. I could ask him, "Have you really thought this through?" I never did tell him I thought he was a damn fool. [Laughs] I never did

anything that brash, but quite frequently, I said, "Are you sure? How about this? Will that end up, in the final analysis, what you want?" So we would go back and forth just almost ad nauseum, and he'd bring up this subject and that subject.

After each audience, as it was called, I would send back a message to State and Defense, called an audience report. A lot of it was intelligence stuff. A lot of it was military stuff. But 80 percent of it was not in my field at all. It used to drive the top floor of the State Department crazy. "What is General Williamson discussing with the Shah?" I must have gone back more than one time to say, "Look, I didn't bring up this subject. I was a bounceboard." And that would placate them for a few weeks, and then they'd send me another, "Why did you discuss agriculture with the Shah?" I said, "I didn't discuss it. He did." But he used me as a bounceboard.

To get back to Ambassador Farland, it just irritated him to death that the Shah would talk to me about things he wouldn't talk to the ambassador about. But again, it goes back to where we were an hour ago: the Shah would talk to me, bounce it back and forth, and just sort of philosophize. If he talked with the ambassador, that's the equivalent of talking to the top man in our sovereign government, and it was government to government, not an open discussion. And that used to embarrass Ambassador Farland. It bothered him very much.

Q: Former CIA Director Richard Helms followed Ambassador Farland as ambassador in early '73. What kind of a working relationship did you have with him?

Williamson: A lot of this was completely outside of my purview. I had nothing to do with it. Ambassador Farland learned that he was being relieved by a telegram that said, "Take Richard Helms' name to the palace and get it approved." That's the way he learned he was being relieved, just devastating for the man, because he had been in the United States just a few days before. He came back from the States, got back to Iran, only to receive a message, "Take this name up there and get it approved." That's the way he learned what was going on. And Farland had been rushed over there very quickly to arrive before President Nixon got over there. And Farland was packed up and moved out in very, short notice. He thought he was to stay a long while. Well, I don't know whether they were dissatisfied with the way he did the job or whether Richard Helms was leaving the CIA and had to have a spot for him. There was philosophizing on that point. I don't have any information on this. Farland left in a hurry.

Helms came in as the former CIA director, and everybody said, "What the hell is this all about?" Well, personality wise, Richard Helms is sort of a cold fish. He looked at you, did not focus on your eyes, but just over your shoulder, and you could never really know whether he was agreeing with you or not.

Q: In the embassy or Iran?

Williamson: If the Iranians had any objections at all, I had not heard any. I didn't get the slightest indication there was anything wrong there.

The only real problem I had, the only questionable thing I had at all with Dick Helms was he wanted to put one of his agents on my staff. We've already discussed that. He just insisted. My instructions were very explicit, and unless I got instructions from the United States [inaudible], I could not accept one of his people on my staff and have him working in intelligence. It just wasn't kosher. So he decided he had this man coming over anyway, so he put him over somewhere outside of my field.

To make matters worse, one of the top men in the Iranian Government came to me and said, "We understand so and so. We don't want that man in this country, but we certainly do not want to declare him persona non grata. So what can you do to get rid of him?" I discussed it with Ambassador Helms. I always had a feeling that Ambassador Helms thought I put the Iranian up to it. I didn't. I didn't know anything about it. I figured it wasn't my business. The man wasn't assigned to me. The man was there about ten days, and left. Whether the Iranians went to the ambassador or not, that's the only problem of any kind that I had with that. Dick Helms came in about the time that I had a serious illness. I stayed in-country for a while, but Dick Helms was very considerate of me and let me work at my own pace. I see

Dick Helms--I haven't seen him now for about a year or more, but he's nice. So I have no criticism of him at all.

Q: Besides the various ambassadors we talked about, did you work with any embassy officials fairly closely from time to time? Do any names stand out in particular on the embassy staff?

Williamson: Only periodically, just in passing. Not enough to pass any judgment.

I do want to make one observation. In the fifties, when I was working with the military assistance program, we've already talked about the fact that these programs were controlled in varying degrees from the Washington area, and as the guidance and information back and forth between the Washington scene and individual countries, the ambassador and his role varied quite a bit.

President Eisenhower stepped in and formalized what had been originally going on and on, what they called the "country team." He let it be known that the ambassador was the number one U.S. representative to each and every country. That may sound simple on the surface, but as you go to countries at that time, like Vietnam, Taiwan, Korea, Greece, Turkey, there were a good many countries where the military element overshadowed everything else. So the U.S. military top man was a pacing factor in many, many activities to such an extent that in some of them, at least, the ambassador was sort of relegated to a back seat, and in some

other countries, where there was even a close contest, the contest got rather uncomfortable.

This was particularly true in Vietnam. I understand they put bugs in each other's offices and things of that sort. So the country team was the thing that was formulated. Eisenhower said, "No more bickering. The ambassador is the key man and will always be recognized as such."

From my background, when I arrived, I knew that each time we got an ambassador, I went to him personally and said, "I understand the situation. You don't have any problems with me. I don't have the privilege of a personality conflict. I accept you as being the number one representative to the President." To the best of my knowledge, there was never a real knock-down drag-out argument between our ambassador and our military in Iran, certainly not while I was there, because I always went in and cleared the air before it got out of hand.

In Vietnam, in '60, they couldn't talk to each other without using profanity. Unbelievable. Vitriolic debates, just mean to each other. I don't know whether they didn't like each other or didn't trust each other, but each thought the other was crazy as hell. That's something that developed as time went on.

Q: But these types of problems never approached that level in Iran?

Williamson: We did not have that in Iran. I think I had a lot to do with ensuring it didn't come up. There was also another individual who eased the situation, Douglas Heck. Doug Heck was a rather low-key, smooth, mellow gentlemen. They used to call him "unflappable Doug." He didn't let things boil up and explode. I would go in and talk with the ambassador. If there was a misunderstanding, we got it cleared up, so we didn't have any problems.

Q: When you were chief of the military mission, did you receive CIA reports on missions in-country? Did you receive intelligence reports from military people, CIA people?

Williamson: CIA, as such, no. I don't believe I received what you'd call official CIA reports. I very frequently got information from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the State Department, or one of the individual military departments. "We have concerns about this, we have heard this." CIA, I don't recall ever receiving from them.

Q: Did you meet with the station chief from time to time?

Williamson: We were on a very friendly basis. He was always present when we had station meetings. He was supposedly undercover, not recognized as having a rank. He was a civilian at a working level. He never placed a requirement on me nor did

he ever tell me anything in confidence, we were completely separate and apart.

Q: Did any other countries have military missions in Iran? Did the British have a military mission?

Williamson: No. Our bilateral agreement excluded all other countries from having missions. The Russians were extremely interested in getting a foothold. The Russians offered the Iranians military equipment for way, way less than cost. They even offered a helicopter for about one tenth of what it would cost us to produce it, they were just very, very anxious to get a foothold. The Shah did buy trucks, enginner equipment and armored personnel carriers. He had as a very hard and fast rule that one, he'd never buy anything that was so complicated that the Russians had to send advisors with it. The Russians even offered to take their students to schools in Russia, send them to the schools free, and pay them a living stipend while they were there. The Shah turned them down. He would not buy anything from the Russians that they had to be involved in the operation of.

One other point. He would not buy anything from the Russians that they had to have people spread out in his country. In other words, they built him a steel mill, they built several bridges, but he would not let them work on communications lines or anything that they had spread out. If they could come in and

build a bridge and be physically tied to that geographical location, he would accept it. But he would not let them spread out. He didn't trust the Russians.

Q: You mentioned, in our last interview, that you did a lot of traveling around the country.

Williamson: I tried to go to a different location twice a week. I had my own airplanes, I flew myself. I had complete carte blanche. No one could question where I was going or why I was going. I was at complete liberty to go wherever I wanted to and talk to anybody.

Q: Since you saw a lot of the country in this period, how would you characterize the social and economic conditions that you saw?

Williamson: In my travels, my interest was military, so I would always make my initial contacts with the military people. But as I went, I habitually took with me one aide, either my Iranian aide or my American aide. I very often took my wife and took one of my staff officers with his wife. We turned the ladies loose to look around--they call it shopping. They visited the schools, the hospitals, and shopped. The Iranians just loved to have visitors, so we would always send them a message one day that, "We're coming tomorrow." They would have someone to meet me, and my staff officer and my aide would take off, looking at military

things, and somebody would be there. My wife and the other lady would take off with sometimes a man, sometimes a woman, sometimes several people, and they would go. We'd meet back for dinner. As a rule, we went into these places and stayed overnight. We'd go in, arrive around noon, leave early the next morning. We had an airplane that had special landing gear so we could land on just about anything we wanted, even a road. It didn't have to be an airfield. So we went into big places, real little by-ways, and we always asked the ladies what they saw. Sometimes we found time to look around.

For instance, we went to Shiraz, way up in the northeast. We were told that an American Peace Corps volunteer had drawn up the plans and had engineered the construction of a beautiful garden area, a botanical garden, a park. I said, "That's interesting. I'd like to see it."

They said, "Fine. We can go over. How about 5:00 o'clock?"

"Fine." I said, "Contact the ladies. I'm sure they'd like to go, too." So we arranged that at 5:00 o'clock, we arrived at this park. It turned out to be, I guess, 25, 30, 35 acres, a pretty good sized park, with all kinds of trees and ponds, little bridges. It really looked like he was designing a golf course.

Two interesting things happened. When we got there, much to my embarrassment, I looked around and saw that there were no people at all. Much to my embarrassment, when I asked where the people were, they had cleared the park so my wife and I could walk in private. [Laughs] They had run hundreds of people away

just to let us go on a walk. So that was embarrassing. I said, "Let the people back in," so they did.

Then as we were walking around, all of a sudden I heard this voice come out over the horizon, a beautiful voice, and I stopped and listened. "That's the most melodious voice I've heard." That mullah calling the people to prayers has a wonderful voice.

"That's not a mullah. That's a man advertising a belly-dancer show tonight." [Laughs] So you run into crazy things.

But we did contact, talk with the working level, the peasant type, the low level class, quite frequently in that way. We got insight that a lot of people didn't have.

Down south we built a fantastically large tank rebuilding factory. They were rebuilding World War II tanks, had a workforce of about 800 people. I was walking around talking with the workmen and what have you. I stopped one man working on an electronics circuit--I asked him if he felt as though it was a good job. I said, "Is this a worthwhile job, one that you can be proud of?" He said, "It has to be a worthwhile job. I've got six mouths to feed." I thought that was an interesting.

A few days later, I was talking to the Shah. And I said, "I ran across an interesting thing. Workman told me he had a good job and he had to have a good job because he had six mouths to feed." The Shah said, "Oh, we try so hard on birth control." I said, "No, this wasn't a birth control breakdown. As soon as he

got a good job, two uncles and two aunts moved in with them."

[Laughs]

They instituted a very ambitious program to try to help the lowest level of the economy. You've got to realize that over there in 1961, the so-called white revolution started. It was about 5 percent of the people who were educated and wealthy who were in control, and all the rest of the people were literally peasants. They were just uneducated, unwashed. So they were working real hard to develop the middle class. The Shah wanted to develop a middle class and invite them to participate in what he called nation building. He says, "That's the thing you have to control. When you get someone that has never had anything at all, you give him a loaf of bread, he's glad to have a loaf of bread. But you give him ten loaves of bread, he wonders why he doesn't have 20. So you have to control the development of this middle class."

He started the birth control as part of his helping to keep the lowest level from growing in numbers faster than the middle class would be developed. He started a series of television shows programs to explain birth control methods. They didn't want to understand. They had American advisors, they had everybody and his brother trying to make the program work. They couldn't get to first base. Finally, someone realized. The way they fixed it--and it corrected just like this--they took the man or a woman that was explaining the birth control approach, and right beside him or her they had a mullah. The mullah didn't say

a word, except at the beginning, he would say, "My advise is that you listen until you understand." The program caught fire and went well.

Q: We were talking about social conditions in the country. When you were in Iran during this period, how stable do you think the political situation was? Were there any signs of political instability?

Williamson: When I first arrived over there, I thought the country was absolutely solid. I would have said no question. They had their big October 1971 2,500-year anniversary celebration, which I've described as a debutante ball. The Shah said, "We are coming out, and we are accepting our rightful place among the developed nations." He had, visiting him during that four- or five-day period, the very top individual, personal representatives of many countries. He had the top level representatives from 69 different countries. Many were separated in their ideas so much, they wouldn't be caught within B-29 range of each other. [Laughs] To see Haile Selassie from Ethiopia talking to the King of Greece and Turkey was really something. So they had these top people there, and they had this village that was built just for them. Each one of these country representatives had a separate little cottage that had been built--they call them tents, I'd say they were cottages with tents on top of them. Only the roof was a tent. Underneath was

a little two-bedroom cottage. The plan was to turn into them into tourist motels afterwards. I'm not sure what happened.

But anyway, those people lived in that village down in Shiraz, Persepolis, they associated back and forth. They had convoy buses going back and forth from the airport. There was no military unit brought in for protection. Each of the little villages was told, "It's your responsibility to maintain order." It was just unbelievable. We would drive 20 or 30 miles in and among all these little villages, and the people were out there waving and all that. In Persepolis, where they had the big parade, the major participants in the parade were military people. There were thousands and thousands of military people there, and they were dressed and equipped, as the people were, many years before.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO; BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE TWO

Williamson: When I first got over there there was just no signs at all of discontent. In reading a lot of these historical things, apparently it was there. But it was insignificant _____ it was not widespread. The so-called peasants were unsophisticated to the point that they'd believe the last thing you told them anyway. So to a great extent there just wasn't any unhappiness at all. And as I say I took a trip at least every week, usually twice a week--all over the country. And I just didn't see it.